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**African transnational student mobility: A case study of Malawian students at selected
South African universities**

By

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY
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I, Pemphero Theodora Magaba, Student Number **21728985** declare that:

- The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, titled “**African transnational student mobility: A case study of Malawian students at selected South African universities**”, which I hereby submit for the degree MSocSci Development Studies at the University of Pretoria is my original research.
- This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- This dissertation does not contain other persons’ data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
- All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, in the reference sections.

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Date: 24/11/2022

Supervisor’s signatures:



Date: 24/11/2022

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to past, present and prospective Malawian transnational students aspiring to study in South Africa.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
DESA UN	Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAMP	Southern African Migration Project
UCT	University of Cape Town
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
USA	United States of America

ABSTRACT

This study focused on understanding the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa and their economic and sociocultural experiences in selected South African universities. It was motivated by the paucity of scholarly literature about the migration of Malawian transnational migrants to South Africa for educational purposes. To interrogate this, the study used the Transnationalism, Aspiration, and Agency conceptual lens to examine the lived experiences of Malawian transnational students living in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Using a qualitative research methodology and case study design, the empirical data for this study was collected through semi-structured individual interviews with ten (10) Malawian transnational student. The data was thematically analysed in line with the objectives of the study.

Based on the empirical data collected from the individual interviews, the study produced the following findings; firstly, the migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa was facilitated by a combination of factors, which comprise of socio-economic resources and aspirations. In addition, the fact South Africa's higher education system provides more opportunities; particularly at postgraduate level, when compared to the Malawian system was identified as a significant factor that contributes to the migration of Malawian transnational students. Secondly, the choice of South Africa as a study destination was based on South Africa's positive image among Malawian transnational students, and the socio-economic resources that South Africa has to offer, as the most prosperous nation within the SADC region. Thirdly, Malawian transnational students had different economic and sociocultural experiences in South Africa. The positive experiences of many Malawian transnational students included the establishment of strong relationships with some South African local community members, South African students, and fellow Malawian students. Despite some negative experiences with South African citizens, Malawian transnational students were able to build strong relationships with their fellow students. Fourthly, these students encountered challenges such as unfamiliar culture and food, language difficulties, crime, isolation, and feeling homesick. They adapted to these challenges by socialising within co-national networks, participating in social activities, contacting and visiting family in Malawi (transnational kinship ties), and making critical choices that were influenced by their aspirations. Finally, the study argued that the presence of Malawian students

in South African universities should be considered as an important factor towards the advancement and strengthening of cooperation in the transnational student mobility and international higher education arena between Malawi and South Africa.

Based on these findings, the study provided the following recommendations to the Malawian Consulate General in South Africa and South African universities with Malawian students. Firstly, to encourage socialisation between the transnational students and locals, the Consulate General of Malawi and South African universities should establish social activities. Through these activities, students from both countries can get to know each other better and develop a deeper understanding of each other's culture. Secondly, the Malawian Consulate General in South Africa and Malawi should negotiate with employers to facilitate employment and work-based opportunities for transnational students both in Malawi and in South Africa. This can motivate students to finish their studies on time and assist in keeping track of the statistics and narratives of the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa. Finally, policy makers in both South Africa and Malawi should design policies to assist and create a conducive learning environment for Malawian transnational students. These policies should aim to welcome and value the contributions of students from Malawi and other countries within the SADC region to South Africa, as this can contribute towards maintaining South Africa's regional reputation and influence as a destination of quality teaching and learning on the African continent, particularly within the higher education sector.

Key Words: Malawi; Students; Transnationalism; South Africa; Experiences; Integration; Aspirations.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO STUDY.....	1
1.1 Introduction and Contextual Background.....	1
1.2 Research Problem Statement	5
1.3 Significance of Study	6
1.4 Research Main Aim and Question	7
1.4.1 Main Aim of This Study.....	7
1.4.2 Objectives of This Study.....	7
1.4.3 Main Research Question.....	8
1.4.4 Sub-Research Questions	8
1.5 Delineation of the Study	8
1.6 Research Design and Methodology	9
1.7 Ethical considerations	9
1.8 Description of Chapters	10
1.9 Chapter Conclusion.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Brief History Migration in the Southern African Region	13
2.3 Patterns of Migration in the Southern African Region	15
2.3.1 <i>New trends of migration in Southern Africa</i>	17
2.4 Migration into South Africa: Push and Pull Factors.....	18
2.5 Malawian Migration in the Southern African Region	21
2.6 Transnational Student Mobility in the Southern African Region	24

2.6.2.1	<i>Culture and Language</i>	28
2.6.2.2	<i>Discrimination</i>	29
2.6.2.3	<i>Xenophobia</i>	30
2.6.2.4	<i>Finances</i>	30
2.7	Conceptual Framework	32
2.7.1	Transnationalism	32
2.7.1.1	<i>Transnational kinship ties</i>	35
2.7.1.2	<i>Transnational social fields</i>	35
2.7.2	Aspiration	37
2.7.3	Agency	38
2.8	Chapter Conclusion	39
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		41
3.1	Introduction	41
3.2	Research Design and Methodology	41
3.3	Research Objectives and Questions, Data Sources and Analysis	43
3.4	Description of Research Location and Participants	45
3.5	Research methods and Data Collection	47
3.6	Data Analysis	49
3.7	Data Trustworthiness	51
3.8	Chapter Conclusion	52
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS		54
4.1	Introduction	54

4.2	The Contemporary migration of Malawian Transnational Students.....	56
4.3	The Economic and Sociocultural Experiences of Malawian Transnational Students ..	59
4.3.1	<i>Financial ability of Malawian transnational students.....</i>	60
4.3.2	<i>Economic opportunities</i>	64
4.3.3	<i>Socialisation with other students</i>	68
4.3.4	<i>Participation in Social Activities</i>	72
4.3.5	<i>Cultural Experiences</i>	74
4.4	The Push and Pull Factors of the Mobility of Malawian Transnational Students	77
4.4.1	<i>The Perception of Poor Quality of Higher Education in Malawi.....</i>	77
4.4.2	<i>The Perception of Quality of Education</i>	80
4.4.3	<i>Academic Benefits of South Africa Universities</i>	82
4.4.4	<i>Transnational Social Networks: Pull Factor.....</i>	83
4.4.5	<i>Personal Aspirations.....</i>	85
4.5	The Challenges Encountered by Malawian Transnational Students.....	86
4.5.1	<i>Language an Integration Barrier.....</i>	86
4.5.2	<i>Discrimination, Xenophobic Attitudes, Crime.....</i>	89
4.6	Experiences of Malawian Transnational Students and the Influence on Integration and Aspirations	93
4.7	The Coping Strategies of Malawian Transnational Students.....	97
4.7.1	<i>Use of Co-national networks: Transnational social fields</i>	97
4.7.2	<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	100
4.7.3	<i>Close Family and Friends: Transnational Social Networks.....</i>	101
4.7.4	<i>Personal Aspirations.....</i>	102

4.8	The Influence on Malawian Government’s Responses in South Africa.....	104
4.9	Chapter Conclusion.....	108

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE

RESEARCH	110	
5.1	Introduction.....	110
5.2	Summary of Chapters	112
5.3	Key Findings of the Study	114
5.4	Recommendations.....	116
5.5	Limitations of the study and Area for further study	118
5.6	Chapter Conclusion.....	118

List of Tables

Table 1: Data Sources and Analysis 43
Table 2: Details of Participants 46

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Clearance Letter 146
Appendix 2: Informed Consent Document..... 146
Appendix 3: Personal Interview and Questions Guide 150
Appendix 4: Sample Transcript 155

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO STUDY

1.1 Introduction and Contextual Background

The number of transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa (SA) has significantly increased over the past five years. This has led to South Africa becoming the top study destination for transnational students from Malawi. According to the Malawi Census 2018 report (2019:29), the number of students from Malawi who migrated to South Africa increased from 914 in 2013, to 5,268 in 2018 (IOM 2014). Factors that may be contributing to the growth include the increasing number of young people in developing countries who are looking for higher education. In countries, such as Malawi, young people often consider universities available in their country to provide inadequate standards of education, that will not propel them into good careers (Browne 2017; Kayange 2021, Gondwe, Kasiya, Maulidi & Munthali 2020; Malawi Government Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) 2019). Due to the limited economic opportunities and quality of education in Malawi, many students from the country do not aspire to further their studies in Malawi. This is why they prefer to study in other countries. One of the main factors that has prevented many students from attaining a qualification in Malawi is the lack of access to internationally recognised degrees (Karlidağ-Dennis 2020). Other factors such as the inadequate number of courses and research programs are also contributing to the increasing number of students from the country studying in South Africa. Another issue that has prevented many students from attaining a qualification in Malawi is the lack of alignment between the curriculum and the employment needs of the country's various sectors (Kamninga, Phangaphanga & Masanjala 2020). This can affect the relevance of students' qualifications, as well as their prospects of employment after graduation.

Despite the progress that Malawi's higher education sector has made, the number of transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa continues to increase. This is because most Malawian students who migrate to South Africa come from middle-class and aspirational families (Browne 2017). However, in a country such as Malawi, the middle class only make up around 20 percent of the population (Kondowe 2022; Corcoran 2014; Benson, Erman & Baulch 2019). Moreover, this because of some of the country's residents have completed a post-secondary education. Although the numbers are small, they aspire to white-collar jobs and are likely to pay

higher education fees outside the country to achieve those jobs (Browne 2017). The Malawian students who migrate for educational purposes are limited to those who come from families that can afford to pay for costly university accommodation and tuition abroad (Browne 2017). These families believe that studying at foreign universities can help these young people achieve their goals.

In addition to being able to afford to study in a foreign university, more transnational students from Malawi are migrating to South Africa due to South Africa's status as a regional hub for education. Apart from scholarships, other factors such as financial assistance and the availability of diverse postgraduate programs have contributed to the growth of this student population (Kwaramba 2012). South Africa is a country that offers a wide variety of educational opportunities to international students. Besides being able to obtain internationally recognised academic qualifications, international students also have the opportunity to study in multinational academic settings (Kwaramba 2012). In addition, the country has a variety of research institutions and public universities that can provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in their chosen field (Kwaramba 2012). South African universities are highly ranked among the top universities internationally, and its professors have the necessary training to excel in their respective fields of research and teaching. According to the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) 2019 Report (Schwab 2019), South Africa is leading the region with regard to research institutions. In addition, it is regarded as one of the most economically active countries in the world (Jooste & Hagenmeier 2019).

Another reason why South Africa a preferred study destination for many Malawian transnational students, is that it is relatively cheaper than the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) (McGregor 2014). While international students are usually charged higher fees than domestic ones, it is cheaper for them to study in South Africa than in Western Universities. This is because the country's universities provide a variety of financial support to postgraduate students. South Africa also allows transnational students from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to study there; they pay similar fees as their counterparts in their home countries (SADC 1997). Nevertheless, compared to other nations in the region, South Africa's tuition fees are still high for Malawian transnational students. It is relatively high because Malawi

has low level of development compared to South Africa; therefore, it becomes costly for Malawian transnational students. Regardless, Malawian nationals are drawn to South Africa because it is an ideal destination for foreign students within the region (Bryceson 2006; Kalipeni 1992; Thomas & Inkpen 2013), and it has world-class universities. While there are more affordable study destinations in Southern Africa for transnational students from Malawi, South African universities are better off than those in Malawi are (Kwaramba 2012).

The increasing number of transnational students, not only from Malawi, but also from SADC coming to South Africa is a reflection of the country's robust education system. However, it is also a clear indication that the region's migration policies are focused on addressing the issue of illegal and labour migration. Unfortunately, for most of the countries in SADC, including South Africa and Malawi, migration policies tend to prioritise restricting the free movement of people (IOM 2019). Both countries' aim to minimise the negative impact of migration on their economies. Thereby ignoring the need to develop policies and practices that can enhance transnational student migration within the sub-region. This is because government officials do not take into account the perspectives of transnational students in general, and specifically the experiences of students from a relatively underdeveloped country within the region like Malawi. The lack of comprehensive policies and procedures addressing the experiences of transnational students on migration in Southern Africa suggests that the region's migration policy is not addressing the needs of Malawian transnational students.

Moreover, the geographical closeness of South Africa and Malawi, as well as minimal visa requirements are some of the factors that have contributed to the steady growth of Malawian transnational students in South Africa. Because both countries are in the same region, which means that they are only two hours away from each other (Bhoojedhur & Isbell 2019). Making it cheaper for Malawian students to travel to and from South Africa due to the close proximity. There is also a historical migration connection between the two nations, which contributes to the growth. For instance, various categories of Malawian migrants have lived and migrated to South Africa on a regular basis and irregularly for many years (Christiansen & Kydd 1983; Banda 2017:2; Chiumia 2016). However, due to the historical migration connection between the two countries, many Malawian transnational students already have preconceptions about South Africa and already

established social networks. Although they may face various challenges when they arrive in South Africa as international students, Malawians continue to leave Malawi for the purpose of study.

Despite the advantages of living and studying in South Africa, international students still face challenges, which negatively affect Malawian transnational students' overall experience in the country. According to researchers, South African universities have not put adequate measures in place to address the non-academic issues faced by international students such as; discrimination, financial difficulties, and homesickness. This negative experience caused by the perception that the increasing number of international students poses a threat to South African students, in a context of limited places for university admissions at tertiary institutions and high levels of youth unemployment in South Africa (Chinyamurindi 2018). However, the experiences of international students, such as Malawian transnational students would not be spotlighted because research on the experiences of international students in South Africa has mostly focused on the experiences of students from Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), thus, often overlooking the experiences of Malawian student (Mda 2010:1). They are overlooked because these countries have a high number of international students in South Africa universities. Nevertheless, many students from Malawi now live and study in different universities in the country and the numbers have continued to increase.

This study argues that there is a need to shift the research focus away from labour migration and undocumented migrants from Malawi to South Africa, to transnational student mobility because, education is also a major factor that contributes to the migration patterns between the two countries. This shift is necessary because the future of the internationalisation of universities in South Africa depends on the integration of foreign students with the local community. The experiences of transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa are very important to understand, as they can provide valuable insights into their overall development and goals in South Africa. Besides being able to interact with their environments, life at university can also be very important for these students as it can help them develop their skills and confidence. This study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa and their economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South African universities.

1.2 Research Problem Statement

In face of the accelerating migration climate in the SADC region, South Africa is the most desired study destination for an increasing number of transnational students from Malawi (Malawi Census 2018 Report 2019:29; IOM 2014). The rising number of transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa reflects the quality South Africa's higher education system, which attracts African transnational students within the SADC region and beyond. It also suggests that education is a vital component of migration patterns in the region. However, for many countries in the SADC region, especially those that are heavily affected by illegal migration like South Africa, research and policy has largely been shaped by the need to manage the movement of labour and irregular migrants. Consequently, the experiences of some transnational students have been ignored, particularly those from less popular countries like Malawi, when compared to other countries like Zimbabwe. However, multiple studies conducted in the past few years have shown that many Malawian nationals are migrating to South Africa as casual and transnational students (Nyirongo 2019; Banda 2017; Chiumia 2016; Kapindu 2011; Christiansen & Kydd 1983). These studies have revealed that their social vulnerabilities and experiences are aligned with those of the communities they lived in. However, the experiences of transnational Malawian students are yet to be comprehensively documented.

This study argued that the neglect of the experiences of Malawian transnational students in existing literature is a missed opportunity for understanding the experiences of less researched transnational African students in South Africa. A gap is also left in the research on the various factors that influence the integration and aspirations of Malawian transnational students. This is important as it can help them develop their goals and enhance their experiences in South Africa (Ziguras & Harwood 2011). Due to the limited research on the experiences of transnational students from Malawi, studies on the country's migration into South Africa have not been able to address the various challenges that they face. There is also a paucity of research on the socio-cultural and economic backgrounds of the Malawian students in South Africa. Therefore, this study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the aspirations and integration of Malawian students in South Africa. The study also highlights the challenges that Malawian transnational students' face, in order to explore how it could affect South Africa's

internationalization and its ability to improve its reputation as an attractive academic destination for students in the region.

1.3 Significance of Study

The increasing number of international students entering South Africa has prompted this study to explore the various dimensions of human mobility within the SADC Region. Through a conceptual framework that combines the concepts of transnationalism, agency, and aspirations, it aims to contribute to the knowledge on this subject. The conceptual approach utilised in this study provides a framework for understanding the various aspects of the migration experiences of Malawian transnational students in South Africa (Gomes 2015; Hari, Nardon & Zhang 2021). Through the interrelated concepts of transnationalism, agency and aspirations, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the integration and challenges faced by students from Malawi in South Africa. Apart from the academic standards at South African universities, integration within local communities and socio-cultural life at university are important factors that international students consider when choosing a university to study. According to Deardorff (2006), transnational students from Africa face unique linguistic and cultural challenges when they arrive in South Africa. It is why the education system and environment of a country must be designed to accommodate the various cultural and linguistic backgrounds of its citizens. Ammigan and Jones (2018) also stated that the quality of life in a host country is very important when it comes to welcoming international students.

This is a relevant topic not only in South Africa, but also in Malawi, the regional and suffice to say globally. Because in the face of the increase in migration discourse, the study aligned itself to sustainable development goal 10 “reduction of inequalities” and particularly 10.7 that states that countries should by 2030 “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies (UN General Assembly 2015). Therefore, Malawian transnational students are a vital part of the academic community in South Africa but also contribute to the establishments that they attend. They drive campus internationalisation and contribute towards the cultural diversity and academic excellence of these institutions. After graduating from a South African university, transnational students from Malawi can play a vital role in their country's development by contributing towards

the growth of the Malawian economy; they can become ambassadors of the country (Okusolubo 2018:7). Therefore, the study aimed to analyse the unique experiences of transnational students from Malawi who are studying in South Africa in order to inform the South African's government policies and programs that can encourage them to return home and contribute to Malawi's development. If more students from Malawi return home after graduating, the number of students from this country studying in South Africa could decrease. However, a rise in transnational migrant students who are more likely to remain in South Africa will increase problems such as brain drain to the Malawian economy (Pathera 2014). Moreover, it can worsen the growing trend of discrimination and prejudice against Malawian migrants in the South Africa. Thus, South African universities are at risk of losing their regional reputation (Bhoojedhur & Isbell 2019). Therefore, findings from this study could be useful in developing policies that can harness the potential of Malawian transnational students towards the Malawi's development by becoming highly skilled professionals, as well as in improving policies and procedures related to the education sector of South Africa and South Africa's internationalisation.

1.4 Research Main Aim and Question

1.4.1 Main Aim of This Study

The purpose of the study was to understand the contemporary migration experiences of Malawian transnational students to South Africa and their economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South African universities.

1.4.2 Objectives of This Study

- To investigate the push and pull factors influencing Malawian transnational student mobility to South Africa.
- To analyse the challenges that Malawian transnational students encounter while in South Africa.
- To understand how the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students affect their integration, and aspirations at selected South African universities.
- To explore the strategies that Malawian transnational students use to ease their integration.
- To examine the implications of economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian students for the Malawian government's responses to the challenges of transnational students.

Main Research Question and Sub-questions

1.4.3 Main Research Question

Why do Malawians migrate to South Africa for study and what are their economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South African universities?

1.4.4 Sub-Research Questions

1. What are the push and pull factors influencing Malawian transnational student mobility to South Africa?
2. What are the challenges that Malawian transnational students encounter while studying in South Africa?
3. How do the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students affect their integration and aspirations at selected South African universities?
4. What are the strategies used by Malawian transnational students to ease their integration in South Africa?
5. How can the experiences of Malawian transnational students help the Malawian government response to the challenges of transnational students in South Africa?

1.5 Delineation of the Study

The topic of African transnational student mobility is a broad one in South Africa. This study aimed to explore the experiences of students from Malawi who are enrolled at two universities in the Gauteng Province. These two universities were selected because of the high number of international students from Malawi studying there. The large number of Malawian transnational students in the province of Gauteng made it easy for the researcher to access the study's participants. Although the researcher was also interested in studying transnational students from Malawi in other provinces of South Africa, such as in the Western and Eastern Cape provinces, the decision to focus on Gauteng was due to its geographical proximity, limited resources and time constraints. Gauteng is a diverse province that is considered one of South Africa's cultural and business centres (Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh & Susuman 2018). It has several prominent universities and is highly urbanised, which made it easier to find a diverse number of Malawian transnational students.

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

Chapter Three of this dissertation provides a comprehensive discussion on the design and methodology of the study. Through a qualitative research methodology, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural and economic experiences of Malawian transnational students at selected South African university. Therefore, the study applied a case study design that involved studying a group's collective experience (Hafiz 2008). It used the concepts of transnationalism, agency, and aspirations to analyse the cases (Mohajan 2018:12). Each participant represented a single case in the study. The design of the case study allowed the researcher to explore the various experiences that transnational students from Malawi have. It also highlighted the differences between them and their peers. Through the collective case study design, the researcher was able to provide a more personal and individualist representation of the students' experiences (Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery & Sheikh 2011).

The study used a combination of methods to select the participants, including snowball and purposive sampling. These two methods were very cost-effective and appropriate for data collect in this study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016). The sample size was made up of 10 transnational students, who were postgraduate and undergraduate students from Malawi, studying in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The study recruited transnational students from various backgrounds in Malawi. The study participants were aged 18 to 35 of all genders. The interviews lasted an hour on average. The researcher was able to record the interviews based on the consent of the participants. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and transcripts were thematically analysed. Through this method, the researcher was able to gain a deeper understanding of the various aspects of Malawian transnational students' lives in South Africa (Simons 2009:7). The study triangulated data collected, which comprised of document analysis and interviews to generate findings.

1.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria (Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Letter). The principles of respecting autonomy, protecting privacy, and treating participants fairly were used to minimize the risks associated with conducting the study (Hammersley & Traianou 2012). In order to protect the privacy of the study's participants, a written consent form was created. Once the participants agreed to participate, they

were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time. During interviews, the interviewer prohibited from asking any questions about participants' psychological distress, and the participants were given the right to share their life experiences voluntarily.

Before starting the interviews, the participants were asked to sign the informed consent forms (Appendix 2: Informed Consent Document), which clearly stated that they were participating in the study voluntarily. They were also given the option to withdraw from the study at any time (Connelly 2014). This ensured that the researcher had the necessary respect for the participants' autonomy and that they were aware of their rights as voluntary participants who could withdraw from the study at any stage (Fleming & Zegwaard 2018; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012). Before the interview started, the participants were reminded about the purpose of the study and how it would affect them (Somekh & Lewin 2005). They were also told that the data collected would be used for the purposes of research only.

Due to the potential risk that the information collected could be shared with other authorities, such as the South African immigration authority, the researcher used various methods to protect the privacy of the participants. For instance, pseudonyms were used to safeguard the identities of the participants. The data was never shared or linked to them personally (Bryman 2015). To protect the privacy of the data, audio recorded interviews and transcripts were kept in a safe place and were not shared with anyone. The researcher was the only one who had access to the audio interviews, and they were stored on a computer that required a password to access. The study did not provide any direct benefit to the participants. Instead, it acknowledged the participants' efforts in taking part in the study, without promising them anything (Connelly 2014; Bassegy 1999).

1.8 Description of Chapters

The dissertation consists of five chapters are as follows:

Chapter One: This chapter has provided a background to the topic by contextualising transnational student mobility from Malawi to South Africa. The chapter also outlined the research problem and the significance of the study, within the broader literature of transnational student mobility in the SADC region. It also delineated the scope of the study, and outlined the research questions, study objectives and structure of the research report.

Chapter Two: Literature review and conceptual framework: This chapter provides a historical context of migration in the SADC region, with a focus on the patterns of migration within the region. It also examines literature on the migration of Malawians to South Africa, focusing on push and pull factors. This is followed by an analysis of transnational student mobility in the SADC region, with a focus on the experience of Malawian students in South Africa. The chapter also conceptualises transnationalism, aspirations, and agency. Transnationalism was used as a concept that provides a frame for understanding the transnational experiences of Malawian tertiary students, by revealing the social, economic, and cultural processes that are involved in their migration. The concept of aspirations was considered important because it is at the core of debates about transnational student migration and it is linked to ambitions, both in terms of future employment goals and in terms of the intrinsic desire to succeed in higher education. Finally, concept of agency was considered important because it is central to most aspects of transnational human mobility in general, and student mobility in particular.

Chapter Three: The research design and methodology. This study employed a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative research methodology helped the researcher to understand how Malawian students interpreted and made sense of transnationalism, their aspirations, and migrant agency. The study research design was a Case Study, which involved studying the collective experiences of a particular group. The study used the research design to analyse several cases of Malawian transnational students alongside the concepts of transnationalism, aspirations, and agency. The study used purposive and snowballing sampling approaches to select participants for data collection. The two approaches were suitable methods to obtain information quickly and inexpensively. The study triangulated the data collected through interviews, and an analysis of literature on Malawian migrant student mobility. Finally, the empirical data collected was transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed to identify patterns.

Chapter Four: The research findings and analysis. This chapter provides a discussion of empirical evidence on the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students, with a focus on the economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South African universities. The chapter describes the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students and their economic opportunities, social and cultural interactions. Then, the chapter highlights the push and pull factors of Malawian students in South Africa. Thereafter, it provides a comprehensive analysis of

the various challenges that face this group of students as they try to integrate into their host's communities. It also explores the aspirations of Malawian transnational students, how these experiences affect their ability to succeed. Finally, it examines strategies used by participants to adapt and cope as transnational students.

Chapter Five: Reflections, recommendations and future research. This chapter highlights the main findings and their implications for the experiences of Malawian transnational students in South Africa. It also provides recommendations that can influence policy and shape future research on transnational student mobility within SADC.

1.9 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter argues that while the experiences of African transnational students and undocumented Malawian migrants are well documented and recognised, there is a lacuna in literature when it comes to the economic and sociocultural experiences faced by Malawian transnationals students at selected South Africa universities. The next chapter provides a brief history of migration in the SADC region, highlighting the push and pull factors of migration to South Africa. This is followed by an analysis of transnational student mobility in the Southern Africa region, with a focus on the experiences of Malawian students in South Africa. The chapter also defines important concepts like transnationalism, aspirations, and agency, which provide a conceptual framework for the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The study sought to understand the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa, with a focus on their economic and socio-cultural experiences at selected universities. This chapter focuses on this kind of literature to understand the migration trends of Malawian transnational students to South Africa, identify the gaps in the literature and the ways in which this study can contribute towards addressing these gaps. The review of the existing literature on migration and transnational student mobility in the Southern African region would help shed light on the importance of education as a primary driver of migration in the region, particularly within the context of the recent increase of Malawian transnational student mobility as shown in chapter one. The chapter also discusses three interrelated concepts that provide a framework for this study; namely transnationalism, aspirations, and agency, and explains why these concepts were suitable for understanding the experiences of Malawian transnational students at selected universities. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the various challenges that transnational students from Malawi face when they study in South Africa. It also argues that these students' aspirations to study in South Africa are not affected by the potential of negative experiences they might encounter.

Therefore, this chapter is structured as follows; it briefly discusses the history of migration in the Southern African region, mainly focusing on the patterns of migration as well as push and pull factors. This is followed by an analysis of transnational student mobility in the SADC region and beyond, with the experiences of transnational students as a focus. Next, a discussion of Malawian migration to South Africa is examined with an emphasis on the experiences of Malawian students. Finally, three interrelated concepts, namely transnationalism, aspirations, and agency are examined in relation to transnational student mobility.

2.2 Brief History Migration in the Southern African Region

Understanding the history of migration in Southern Africa is very important to explaining the recent increase in the number of students from Malawi studying in South Africa. This is because the region's migration history dates back to pre-colonial times. It started when the Bantu kingdoms

were established in the 1800s, and migration was centred on agricultural activities (Hall 1987:2). The first contact with Europeans was made in 1488, and the establishment of the mining industry in the Southern African region followed afterwards. Migration was regarded as the most important factor that contributed to the development of the Southern African Region's labour market during that century, as colonialism and mining activities gripped various countries in the region (Oucho, Gelderblom & Van Zyl 2006:47). These activities helped strengthen the region's economic backbone and transformed the Southern African Region into a single regional labour market (Oucho *et al.* 2006:47).

The exploitation of the region's resources by mining companies led to the development of unskilled labour migration. Thus, this phenomenon created an interdependence between the countries that supplied and those that received labour. From 1900 to 1990, the majority of migration in Southern Africa was concentrated in areas such as mines, plantations, construction, and domestic service industries (Williams 2002:64). From the mid-nineteenth century to the late-nineties, various countries in Southern Africa started sending and receiving migrants from other countries such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Mozambique (Crush 1997). Due to the lack of border controls, the region became a magnet for labour migrants from these three countries. Due to the high demand for labour migrants and formal contract labour system in the mining industry, it became difficult to employ and this led to the hiring of migrants outside the law (Oucho *et al.* 2006). During this time, employers also tended to hire non-local workers due to their lower salaries and better exploitation (Williams 2002). This resulted to employers not being held accountable for hiring migrants who were not authorized to work in the receiving country. Thus, instead, the authorities of the receiving countries focused on deporting and identifying the illegal immigrants (Williams 2002).

By the end of the apartheid state and the global economic crisis in the 1990s migration priorities for countries in the SADC had changed drastically (Evans 2010:103). Due to the different issues that emerged due to the lack of proper management of migration in the Southern African Region during the apartheid era, un-managed migration became a pressing problem (Nshimbi & Fioramonti 2013). Some countries that received migrants criticised the free movement of people within the region and thus seek for stricter policies and enforcement (Oucho & Crush 2001). Various factors contribute to the development of unsystematic migration in Southern Africa at the end of the apartheid era. These include the rising cost of living, increasing tensions between

migrants and locals, and the lack of proper migration management. Although these issues have been around for a long time, they are still considered significant due to the various factors that affect the region's economy (Nshimbi & Fioramonti 2013). As a result, the focus of SADC countries on managing migration became exclusively related to the management of illegal labour migration.

According to the 2019 regional strategy released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2019), South Africa struggles to keep up with the changes in the flow of migrants, especially from the SADC region. Most of the countries in the region, especially South Africa, consider managing the borders as an integral part of their strategy to maintain their stability and ensure that they can handle the increasing number of migrants. This is because they want to maximise and handle the impact of migration on the region's development (Crush, Williams & Peberdy 2005). On the other side of the migration discourse, security concerns, economic incentives and livelihood opportunities are not the only important agendas to developing countries, other agendas such as education can also be a motivator for migrants in the region. It is against this backdrop that the study sought to understand the contemporary migration of transnational students from Malawi to South Africa.

2.3 Patterns of Migration in the Southern African Region

The rapid emergence of new economies and the need for skilled and semi-skilled labour are some of the factors that have contributed to the migration of people within the SADC region. However, the region has also experienced various changes in recent years; one of which is population increase compared to the number of migrants, which has occurred between 1990 and 2019 (Carciotto 2020). On the contrary, in various countries such as Seychelles, Angola, and Botswana there has been an increase in the incoming number of migrants (McAuliffe & Khadria 2020).

The increase in the number of migrants in these countries is due to the favourable conditions for informal migration. For example, Borat, Ewinyu, and Yu (2017) noted that migrant workers make up around 10 per cent of the labour force in Seychelles. They are mainly employed in informal sectors of the economy, such as construction and tourism. To address the Seychelles' labour needs, the government of Seychelles started implementing temporary work programs to attract migrants. During this same period, South Africa attempted to do as Seychelles did and it became a popular

destination for African migrants. As a result, contributing the most to the continent's migration. According to the United Nations' 2019 Migration Report, there were over 3.6 million foreign nationals residing in South Africa in 2019 (UN 2019:24-25). Aside from South Africa, Angola is also a popular destination for migrants from other SADC countries. They mainly come from countries in the region such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Mozambique. Some of the other countries that are contributing to the migration flow include India, Pakistan and Ethiopia (Carciotto 2020:4).

Skilled migrants are commonly involved in cross-border trade and mining activities in Mozambique's provinces (Carciotto & Baggio 2014). On the other side, low-skilled individuals are mostly employed in the extractive and education sectors. In Zambia, migrants from West Africa and China are commonly employed (Carciotto 2020:4). Some residents from other countries, such as Malawi, also migrate to Zambia to work in the agricultural and domestic sectors. In 2017, over 14000 individuals from Malawi were residing in Zambia. Due to the lack of strict immigration laws in Zambia, many migrants are unable to remain in the country (Carciotto 2020:4). Political unrest and economic issues are some of the factors that have caused migration to and from Malawi to increase. Many migrants from other countries, such as Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea, cross into Malawi and start informal businesses (McAuliffe & Khadria 2020). While others go to South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe as casual migrants. Due to the political and economic issues in Zimbabwe, the number of Zimbabwean migrants in countries such as Botswana increased for example. However, despite the decline in labour migration from other countries, such as Zambia, a large number of Zimbabwean migrants remain in South Africa (Carciotto 2020).

From this analysis, the number of international migrants moving into and out of Southern Africa varies significantly depending on the country. For instance, the percentage of migrants in Botswana, Namibia, and Seychelles was over 13 percent, while in other countries, such as the DRC, it was below 2 percent in 2020 (Carciotto 2020). The UN's department for economic and social affairs noted that South Africa has a higher number of migrants than other countries in the region. South Africa also has higher average annual growth rate of migrants than the world average (DESA UN 2019). The organization estimated that the annual net migration in South Africa could reach up to 200,000. However, due to limited information, available regarding migration trends in the SADC region, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive picture of the region's migration

population. Nevertheless, what the data shows is that South Africa is the hub for migration, not only in the region, but also in the continent.

2.3.1 New trends of migration in Southern Africa

Following the end of the apartheid state in South Africa, the country has gradually integrated itself into the SADC region. Consequently, new categories of migrants have entered the country, such as refugees and human trafficking victims. The emergence of diseases and the feminisation of migration, have also affected migration trends in the region (Wentzel, Viljoen & Kok 2006). Mass displacement and forced migration is prevalent as well. Conflicts in Mozambique and Angola have destabilised the region, as re-occurring civil wars in other African nations have led to an increase in refugee populations (Carciotto 2020). With the end of conflicts in some countries in the region, efforts have been made to address the issue of forced migration by repatriating and integrating refugees. The number of people looking for jobs has also increased due to economic crisis in most SADC countries, as Zimbabwe and Malawi (Carciotto 2020).

Despite the negative effects of migration on the region, some households have used migration as a strategy to increase their resources and improve their lives (Crush *et al.* 2005). For many households in the SADC region, migration is a vital part of their lives, as it helps them avoid poverty and hunger, and it can provide them with a financial boost to start small businesses (Wentzel *et al.* 2006). Besides helping to start and establish small businesses, migration also provides them shelter and education (Carciotto 2020). This implies that migration can be a viable and essential part of the lives of individuals and households because it can help them avoid extreme forms of poverty and hunger (Crush *et al.* 2005),

Over the past couple of years, there has been a significant increase in the number of migrants crossing into South Africa. This has resulted in heightened tensions in the region (Parshotam 2018). Some countries, such Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, have started experiencing xenophobia and intolerance (Crush & McDonald 2000; Crush & Pendleton 2004; Nyamnjoh 2013; SAMP 2008). Most countries in the region view in-migration as a threat rather than an opportunity and led to the focus being placed on controlling and excluding migrants, rather than as human capital. Most of the SADC States have no pro-active immigration policies and this has made it difficult to access permanent residence and settlement, for SADC migrants and thus discouraging

migration in the region. Until the 1990s, South Africa was the only country in the region that had a pro-active immigration policy (Crush & Pendleton 2004; Nyamnjoh 2006; SAMP 2008). However, the policies started to turn against skills import and immigration in the region following the 1994 National Policy on Immigration, which has deported over a million individuals since 1994 and most of these individuals were sent back to countries like Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi (Crush & Ramachandran 2009).

Since the implementation of the National Policy on immigration in 1994, tensions between SADC countries and South Africa have been simmering for some time. Despite the various initiatives that have been made to address the issue of illegal migration, bilateral commissions have not been able to produce solutions (Parshotam 2018). One of the main issues that most SADC countries have is the perception that immigration is a threat to job security for citizens (Carciotto 2020). As a result, despite the benefits of regional integration, nationalist sentiments remain prevalent in some countries. The legal drawbridge will not be able to accommodate the increasing number of SADC migrants as long as the perception of migration as a threat remains. This has led to the exploitation of the working class and the creation of illegal economic activities. Crush (*et al.* 2005) noted that the increasing number of migrants entering South Africa has led to the emergence of a massive trade in forged documents. This has also led to the disintegration of professional management practices and police corruption (Parshotam 2018). Therefore, the increasing number of migrants in the region has generated debates on how to control and prevent it. Some of the SADC countries that have started implementing legal frameworks aimed at discouraging people from entering their borders include; Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia (Parshotam 2018).

2.4 Migration into South Africa: Push and Pull Factors

South Africa is a popular destination for migrants from across Africa and there are wide ranges of factors that have influenced migration into the country. Most of these are related to the South Africa's economic status and better prospects for migrants in many facets of life (Anjofui 2018; Hungwe 2020; Kanayo, Anjofui & Stiegler 2019; Rasool, Botha & Bisschoff 2012). Some of the theories that explain the factors that influence migration include the micro or meso level and personal reasons, household decision-making, and social networks (Chikowore & Willemsse 2017). These are focused on the idea that migration is a strategy that people use to spread risk (Stark & Taylor 1991). Others argue that the importance of networks, culture, and chains is also important

in keeping the movement going. Thus, the consensus of mobility in the SADC region is that people tend to improve their quality of life by moving (Chikowore & Willemsse 2017: 87).

At first, it was believed that poverty was a major driver of migration. However, since the 1990s, it has been acknowledged that the poorest people are not able to migrate due to the resources required to support international migration, according to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2009), Van Hear, Bakewell and Long (2012). Due to the increasing number of studies linking migration and development, the relationship between these two has become more complex (Chikowore & Willemsse 2017). For instance, it is debated whether development can stimulate more migration or reduce the pressures that cause people to move. Although the literature identifies various factors that can affect migration, economic opportunities are often considered as a major driver (Mlambo 2018). Although well-acknowledged drivers can influence migration, the factors that can prevent people from making a decision to relocate are also different from those that can affect their decisions. Some of these include the availability of educational opportunities and the obligations to relatives in the form of remittances (Anjofui & Stiegler 2019). Other factors such as political and security incentives can also affect the decision-making process (Awumbila 2017). Personal characteristics such as education, wealth, sex and age can influence migration as well. For example, Kanayo, Anjofui and Stiegler (2019) found that the marital status of female domestic workers was a key factor in influencing the decision to migrate to South Africa. This is because according to several studies, migration does not occur in isolation from other factors. For instance, Black, Adger, Arnell, Arnell, Dercon, Geddes & Thomas (2011) observed that environmental factors such as land use and density could affect the decisions of migrants. If the high densities in a region are combined with low income, then people may decide to leave. Thus, migration is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that can affect various aspects of African society (Awumbila 2017).

Historic and more recent migration trends indicate that various factors affect migration patterns between SADC countries and South Africa. For instance, the civil wars and severe droughts in Mozambique and other countries in the region contributed to the migration flows to South Africa. The independence of some of the region's counties, such as Zimbabwe and Angola, in the 1970s and 1980s, also contributed to the large-scale black Africans migration to South Africa. The rapid industrialisation of South Africa during the 20th century and the development of agricultural

techniques in the country were also some of the factors that contributed to migration flows to the country. While many migrants from the region, such as those from Lesotho and Mozambique, were looking for employment opportunities on farms and mines (Adepoju 2006; Crush *et al.* 2005; Oucho *et al.* 2006). Following the collapse of apartheid South Africa and economic challenges after 1994 in the region, which led to unemployment and poverty in Zimbabwe, migration flows to South Africa from the SADC region has continued increase. Political conflicts in other countries, such as Angola, Mozambique, and the DRC have also contributed to the migration flows. Political stability following the end of the apartheid era and South Africa's economic role in the global economy have led to improved living conditions, have attracted migrants in search of work in South Africa (; IOM 2005; Khan 2007; Landau & Wa Kabwe Segatti 2009).

Currently, the main reason for migration in the SADC region have branched out to matters relating to business, tourism and education (Crush *et al.* 2005). This has created new kinds of migrants, which are referred to as circular migrants (SAMP 2008). These migrants cited medical treatment, study, and business as their reasons for crossing the border. They are referred to as circular migrants as they temporarily and usually repeat their movement between their home country and host country (Awumbila 2017). Major migrant-receiving countries such as Botswana and South Africa are attractive destinations for circular migrants because they have economic opportunities, prospects of employment, business hubs and tourist attractions (Awumbila 2017). Other factors such as family safety and educational opportunities are also considered when it comes to choosing Botswana and South Africa.

Although there are various factors that can affect migration in and out of the SADC region, the focus is on poverty and violence (Mlambo 2018). Studies conducted by Flahaux and De Haas (2016) and Awumbila (2017) revealed that the increasing number of people moving out of their home countries and into other regions is not driven by the traditional factors such as poverty and violence. Instead, it is due to the various social transformation taking place in the continent that have increase the capabilities of people to migrate (Mlambo 2018). Although mobility transition theories state that, the increasing number of people moving out of the country is linked to the increasing economic development and social transformation. However, better infrastructure and transportation systems, the access to information and networks and the rising levels of education are some of the factors that have increased the capabilities of people to migrate (Flahaux & De

Haas 2016). These are some of the factors that are expected to continue contributing to the number of people migrating. According to Carling (2002) and De Haas (2007), instead of focusing on “migration aspirations”, it is important that the focus should be on the various factors that can affect the movement of people. This reveals how these factors can influence the incentives for people to migrate.

2.5 Malawian Migration in the Southern African Region

The number of migrants from Malawi within Southern Africa since the 1970s has increased (Anglewicz 2012; Banda 2017). This section aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the various factors that have affected these migration trends, including the experiences of Malawian students in South Africa. Historically, migration patterns in the Southern African Region have been characterised by the movement of labour migrants from Malawi to various parts of the region, such as Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. These individuals typically earn money to supplement subsistence agriculture, support their families and return home (Anglewicz 2012:56). Labour migration from Malawi was very prominent between 1970 and 1990. It was a significant source of income for the country's rural population, and due to Malawi's strategic location and the favourable economic and political climate in southern Africa, labour migration has been a leading factor in its bilateral and political relations within the region (Thomas & Inkpen 2013). During the 1990s, the decline in the mining industry in South Africa and the increasing number of local mineworkers in South Africa affected Malawi's male labour migration and this resulted in a significant decrease in the number of labour migrants from the country (Banda 2017).

Deteriorating economic conditions and rising unemployment rates were also the main factors that led to the accelerated migration of Malawians after the 1990s (Dayton-Johnson & Katseli 2006:19). Today, Malawians of diverse demographics are involved in migration on a regular or irregular basis within the SADC region. According to Banda (2017:2), the migration of Malawians after the 1990s is regarded as the second wave, as it mainly consists of unskilled and casual migrants. This is in contrast to the first wave, which was mainly contract and recruited labour-related migration. The second wave of migration from Malawi to South Africa started after the political transition to democracy and the decline in labour-mine migration to South Africa (Andersson 2006; Banda 2017). The introduction of coaches between the two countries also contributed to the increase in the number of people moving to South Africa (Chiumia 2016). As a

result, created a mixed flow of Malawian migrants, multiple types of cross-border movement, and diverse migrant characteristics between Malawi and South Africa (Crush, Chikanda & Tawodzera 2015).

The main reason why many migrants from Malawi moved to South Africa is due to their desire to earn money and have a better quality of life (Banda 2017: Chiumia 2016: Andersson 2006). In the past, they would typically spend their money on investments in their households. After they completed their jobs in the mines and farms, they would return to their country of origin and invest in farming. However, today migration to South Africa is a common strategy used by many people from Malawi to escape from their economic hardships; a strategy allows them to earn money and return home faster (Nyirongo 2019). Despite the small size of the country, there are still not many opportunities for all its citizens (Kapindu 2011). When people from Malawi move to South Africa, they usually look for work in various fields such as domestic workers, shop assistants, and business establishments. Malawians also migrate to South Africa for purposes of family reunion, marriage, education, and other reasons such as medical treatment (Malawi Census 2018 Report 2019:18).

Over the past decade, the political and economic state of Malawi has been a significant factor that has contributed to the transnational migration of Malawians to South Africa. Studies have revealed that the multiple motives that individuals have for moving to South Africa are mixed (Frouws & Horwood 2017). Despite the progress that has been made in reducing poverty in Malawi, the country's volatile climate, poor economic growth and rapid population growth, contribute to migration of Malawians to South Africa (McCarthy, Brubaker & De La Fuente 2016). Most people in Malawi also look for opportunities outside the country due to the lack of jobs and the increasing number of informal and self-employment opportunities in South Africa (Nyirongo 2019). Food insecurity is also a common cause of out-migration to South Africa, and it is due to the high costs of farming and continuous droughts (Nyirongo 2019). As a result, this has made it difficult for them to maintain their household food supply. Despite poverty, unemployment and hunger being the most common reasons of Malawians migrating to South Africa, research on Malawi migration into South Africa highlights the less researched area of migration of Malawian transnational migrants to South Africa for educational purposes. The section that follows examines past research on the experiences of Malawian students in South Africa.

2.5.1 Malawians as Transnational Students and Their Experiences in South Africa

There is limited literature on the experiences of young people from Malawi who have migrated to other countries to pursue higher education. This is because most studies on international labour migration from Malawi have focused on the effects of migration on the sending households. Besides these, other studies also look into the effects of migration on agricultural productivity and household welfare. For instance, Chirwa (1997) investigated the effects of international migration on remittances, while Anglewicz (2012) and Mtika (2007) examined international migration with regard to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Malawi. In addition, Makande (1980) and World Bank (2016) analysed the effects of migration on household welfare and agricultural productivity. Therefore, one can argue that the literature on migration from Malawi ignores education as a primary factor that influences the country's migration trends. Furthermore, limited research has been conducted on the roles of agency, transnationalism, and aspirations among Malawian students within the SADC region. Most studies on migration out of Malawi have focused on the rural and labour sectors of the country. This indicates that there is a need to understand other trends of transnational migration in Malawi.

Muula and Broadhead (2003) are one in a few who have researched on Malawian transnational students in South Africa. However, the critic of Muula and Broadhead's (2003) study is that it looked at the experiences of Malawian medical students between 1992 and 1995. This is contrary to what this study aims to understand. Regardless, this is a relevant source to the study as it provides information of the challenges faced by Malawian students in South Africa.

According to Muula and Broadhead (2003), these Malawian students were not prepared for the myriad of domestic issues that they would encounter when they moved to University of Cape Town (UCT). The students dealt with costly accommodation, multi-racial learning environment, cultural and language barriers. To manage of these social issues, the Malawian medical students had to learn Xhosa and Afrikaans in order to meet the demands of their daily lives (Muula & Broadhead 2003). The mobility of medical graduates from Malawi to UCT allowed these students to acquire skills that they could use to improve their economic status and contribute to the healthcare sector in Malawi (Handler 2018).

2.6 Transnational Student Mobility in the Southern African Region

The study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how transnational students from Malawi are moving into South Africa. Despite the progress that has been made with regard to research on international student mobility over the last decade, the exact definition of mobile student and the issues related to student mobility remain unclear (De Wit, Agarwal, Said, Schoole & Sirozi 2008). According to UNESCO (2006:30), the term mobile student can refer to people who are studying in other countries after crossing an international boundary. They are individuals who have lived in their home country for a certain amount of time and are looking to pursue higher education in another country (Richters & Teichler 2006:83).

Although the term migration has been used to describe Africa's problems such as labour, poverty, violence, powerlessness, and mass displacement, these factors are not the same for every country. Instead, in contemporary society, one of the reasons why people are driven to relocate to other countries is due to the desire to improve their quality of life and this can be achieved by getting a higher education (Browne 2017). Due to the increasing number of foreign students studying in South Africa, various measures have been made available to enhance their experience. Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015) noted that South Africa's higher education system is instrumental in helping African students move seamlessly into and out the country, especially those from the SADC region. Through the agreements signed by SADC and other international organisations, South Africa has been able to establish a framework for the internationalisation of its higher education system (UNESCO UIS 2012). This has made South Africa a valuable part of the transnational student mobility process across the continent, especially the Southern African region.

However, Malawian transnational students are often unobserved migrants in the Southern Africa migration discourse due to increasing trends of irregular migration between Malawi and South Africa. The frequently observed transnational students in literature are from countries that send the most international students to study in South Africa, such as Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho (DHET 2016). Indeed, previous studies on African transnational students in South Africa have often grouped Malawian students together with their African counterparts. Thus, has

led to the invisibility of Malawian migrant students and their experiences in recent literature on transnational student mobility to South Africa

On top of this, the number of students going to South Africa for higher education has significantly increased over the past couple of years. In 2018, there were 4.8 million international students in South Africa (UNESCO UIS 2012). According to the statistics released by the Department of Higher Education (DHET 2016) in 2014, over 70 per cent of the country's international students are from African countries. Around fifty-five percent of South Africa's international students are considered to be contact learners, while the rest are distance learners. This indicates that African transnational students prefer to study close to their country of origin. For instance, in 2014, most of the international students in South African universities were from Zimbabwe (DHET 2016). Students from countries such as Namibia, Lesotho, and Swaziland also experienced an increase in number in South Africa (DHET 2016). The high number of students from these countries can be attributed to the execution of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training (McLellan 2009). The largest number of international students from outside of the-SADC region come from Nigeria. In 2014, over 1310 international students from the USA were also studying in South Africa's public universities (DHET 2016). However, a review of the literature indicates that most European and USA students prefer short-term exchange programs in developing countries such as South Africa to broaden their cultural and educational experiences (McLellan 2009). This is evident in the movement of students globally in the international migration system (Szelényi 2006). What needs to be explored is push and pull factors of student mobility in South Africa, which the following section does.

2.6.1 SADC Student Mobility in South Africa: Push and Pull Factors

Zheng (2014) argues that factors influencing students' decision to study abroad can be categorised into; economic, educational, personal and social factors. Cultural and political factors also influence students' decisions. South Africa is a country that appeals to international students due to its low cost of tuition fees and the country's economic stability compared to highly ranked universities in developed countries (Mudhovozi 2011). Other factors such as the use of English as a main mode of communication is also considered when it comes to choosing South African universities (Kwaramba 2012). Furthermore, due to the limited resources available in their home

countries, many international students choose to study in South Africa (Lee & Sehoole 2015). South Africa's universities are also well resourced as well as provide a wide range of programs, which makes them an attractive destination for international students (Rouhani 2007). Besides its low tuition fees, South Africa also offers various international initiatives and supportive environments. The SADC protocols are part of the region's efforts to improve the cooperation among its member states (McLellan 2009). One of these is the agreement on education and training, which requires that universities treat students from the region the same as domestic learners (Sehoole 2006).

According to other studies, African international students are attracted to South Africa due to various characteristics such as its prestige image, historical connections and proximity to their home country (Pineteh & Mulu 2016:385; Mda 2010:1; Madge, Raghuram & Noxolo 2015:686). Lee and Sehoole (2015:57) and Mello (2013:410) also noted that many African students are eager to study in South Africa due to various advantages. They contend that their home country's universities are not very good at providing them with the necessary academic programs and are overcrowded, which pushes them to South Africa. Understanding the various factors that influence the mobility of students to South Africa is very important for developing a better education system in the region. Due to the increasing number of transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa, it is important that we understand their experiences and integration in South African institutions.

2.6.2 Transnational students in Southern Africa with a focus on their experiences in South Africa

Transnational students go through a process known as socialisation, which involves transferring their academic and social skills into the host community. Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) defined socialisation as the acquisition of knowledge and skills that make an individual more effective in society. Through interactions with other members of the society, a student can acquire skills and knowledge that will help them in becoming a member of a group or society (Weidman *et al.* 2001). When the student has gotten the necessary skills and attitudes, they are accepted into the community, this enables integration with others (Weidman *et al.* 2001). The process of socialisation involves the students, their universities, and the external environment (Arkoundis &

Tran 2010). According to Watson (2013), the socialisation of transnational students begins before they arrive in their study destination. This is because the orientation program for new students usually begins before they are able to settle in. This process helps new students become aware of the various challenges they will likely face upon their arrival (Watson 2013). It also helps them establish friendships with other students. Additionally, this can help alleviate the culture shock, loneliness and isolation that they might feel when they enrol in the host institution (Bamford 2008; Mudhovozi 2011).

Most of the literature on the experiences of international students focuses on the UK, Australia, and the USA. However, there have also been studies on the experiences of students from other countries, such as the SADC and African nations. Although these studies were focused on the integration of students from these regions, the researchers did not consider the experiences of those from Malawi. International students need to be integrated into a host country in order to achieve their academic goals. Studies from Tinto (1975), Koen (2007), Severiens and Schmidt (2008) have shown that an absence of student integration can affect retention. A study conducted by Ralarala, Pineteh, and Mchiza (2016) revealed that the social and academic experiences of African international students affected their academic success at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). For Karp, Hughes and Gara (2008) international students have a sense of belonging when they are integrated into a university campus. Integration can be achieved through various activities that are available in a university (Ghalayini 2014).

Lee (2010), Koen (2007) and Tinto (1975) have argued that background and previous experiences also influence the experiences of migrant students in a host university. Transnational students may find it hard to manage when they arrive at host institutions due to differences in language, cultural values and customs (Mudhovozi 2011). For instance, an African student from different countries may experience academic and social integration differently than an Asian or European student in the same institution (Lee 2010). Likewise, Ratshilaya (2017) claims that African students in South Africa experience discrimination and xenophobia when in their host institution. Although international students have a negative experience when they are in South Africa, European and American students are more likely to feel positive about their stay. This is because they are able to adapt to the culture and environment of the country (Mudhovozi 2011). The following sub-

sections discuss some of the experiences that transnational students have had in terms of discrimination, financial difficulties, and language while studying in South Africa.

2.6.2.1 Culture and Language

When students from other countries enrol at a foreign university, they experience a wide variety of cultural diversity (Jeannin 2013). Transnational students often encounter cultures that they would not encounter in their home countries, and interactions between them and local students can either be positive or negative (Evivie 2009). This can result in some integration issues. For instance, when black African students from Rhodes University moved to their new institution, they did not anticipate the various cultural barriers they would encounter (Daki 2019). These challenges comprised of language barriers, differences in dress code, and issues related to sexualities, especially for Zimbabwean students who came from deeply conservative and patriarchal backgrounds.

Another common experience that international students face is learning a new language or the lack of understanding of the language of the host community (Moghaddam, Ali & Jia 2011). In most cases, migrant students have little or no knowledge of the local language. This can be very challenging to interact with people from the host country. It can also lead to students having a hard time acquiring the necessary information to complete their studies, as well as not being able to purchase the necessary supplies from local shops. Pineteh and Mulu (2016) reported that Gabonese and Congolese students at CPUT relationships with lecturers as unusual. In a university like CPUT, where English is the main language of instruction, the socialisation of the Gabonese and Congolese students depended on their ability to interact with their peers and staff members. Having the necessary skills to communicate in English can help mitigate discrimination and improve the social relations between international students and their local counterparts in an English host speaking country (McCarthy 2004). However, some international students who are transferring to non-English speaking African country may end up having to learn a new language in order to complete their studies. This can be part of their course requirement or an adaptation strategy. Having the necessary skills to communicate in multiple languages is very important for international students, as it can help them secure a job and improve their social relations (Coracini 2014). According to McCarthy (2004), having the ability to learn a new language while studying overseas is one of the most positive experiences international students can have.

Studies have shown that students who have poor language skills are more prone to experiencing emotions of isolation and frustration (Mudhovozi 2011; Bartram 2008). This issue can also limit their social interaction and networking with other people. In addition to this, cultural and language barriers can make international students feel lonely even more and isolated (Wu, Gorza & Guzman 2015).

2.6.2.2 Discrimination

According to Zugel (2012), international students are often discriminated against due to their race, nationality and other factors. This action usually occurs because the locals tend to associate with individuals from the same group. This can result in international students being left out of activities and being abused physically or mentally. While discrimination against African international students is still prevalent in South Africa, it is also common for other African nationals to be called belittling labels such as “Amakwerekwere”. These labels are used to ridicule and refer to foreigners from Africa who have darker skin tones (Buthelezi 2009; Pithouse-Morgan, Pillay, Chikoko, Rajpal, Morojele, Naicker & Ramkelawan 2012). According to Buthelezi (2009), discrimination against international students can be seen when they are not allowed to participate in educational and employment opportunities in the host institution. Lee (2010) also stated that some foreign government regulations and services could have discriminatory effects on international students.

In South Africa, strict regulations are in place regarding the work hours of international students. According to the Department of Home Affairs, students are only allowed to work up to 20 hours per week term-time and full-time during vacations (DHA 2016). Concerns have been raised about the unfair treatment that international students receive when they apply for visas at South Africa’s embassies. In 2016, the Department of Home Affairs appointed a Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) to handle the processing of international students’ visas. Due to the new regulations, many students have been unable to secure a study visa in time. In 2015, hundreds of international students were unable to return to South Africa in time to continue their studies (The Mail & Guardian 2015). Also, due to the lack of capacity at the VFS, many international students were not able to secure extensions of their visas (DHA 2016). The issue with the processing of visa extensions was caused by the government's failure to identify the necessary appointments. Wu *et al.* (2015) noted that various individuals, such as members of the host community, domestic students, and officials,

were contributing factors to the discrimination faced by international students. The discrimination against international students spreads to other areas of the country, such as in residential areas and in extracurricular activities (Pithouse-Morgan *et al.* 2012). This can result in negative experiences and perceptions about their host nation (Lee 2010).

2.6.2.3 Xenophobia

There are growing concerns about how international students are treated in South Africa. Although there has been a significant increase in the number of international students studying in the country, some are still being treated poorly by their hosts (McLellan 2009). Pithouse-Morgan *et al.* (2012) reported that black South Africans often mistreat and attack international students, especially African migrants. In many studies, transnational students often report afraid to socialise with South African local community members and domestic students because they fear being targeted them. This resulted in them isolating themselves to avoid confrontations with local students (Pithouse-Morgan *et al.* 2012). Thus, this has negative effects on the participation of international students' in various extracurricular activities, which limits their chances of integrating in the local community and university.

2.6.2.4 Finances

According to Hunt (2008:7), household income is a vital factor that influences the decisions made by international students with regard to choosing a university abroad, as well as their experiences during their stay in the host country. This is because there are various costs associated with studying in another country. However, research has shown that having strong parental financial support can help improve a student's happiness and wellbeing in a foreign country. Some transnational students usually acquire part-time jobs that help them to supplement their income from parents, sponsors or from scholarships (Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell & Utsey 2005). These jobs do not require much experience and can be arranged in a way that does not affect their academic timetable (Lee & Rice 2007). These jobs usually involve working on weekends and holidays, and in some cases, after classes. Some of the most popular jobs that university students perform are tutoring, shop assistants, working in the library and childcare (Evivie 2009).

According to Lee & Rice (2007), many international students from disadvantaged backgrounds experience financial difficulties in host communities. This is due to factors such as; lack of

sufficient funding and visa regulations that prevent them from working legally (Selvadurai 1992). These factors can lead to stress and other psychological issue that are exacerbated by the lack of money to pay rent, buy groceries and afford other amenities (Constantine *et al.* 2005)

2.6.3 Strategies used by transnational students to deal with negative experiences

Maundeni, Malinga, Kgwatalala, and Kasule (2010) noted that many international students experience anxiety before and during their stay in a host country and institution. This is because they are not familiar with the nature and routine of the host nation. It is therefore important that they develop effective strategies to deal with challenges and negative experiences. Thus, this section aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the various strategies Malawian transnational students use to cope with the challenges they encounter in South Africa according to existing literature (Wang 2004).

Studies report that international students are often not well equipped to adapt to the culture of higher education, and it is because there are a variety of university facilities and programs that help them navigate in the host community (Hyams-Ssekasi, Mushibwe & Caldwell 2014). For example, in the UK there are also programs and services that cater to international students (Schweisfurth & Gu 2009). Some of these include opening bank accounts, hosting welcoming events and offering helpful classes for those with limited language skills. In addition, universities also provide induction programs for new international students. In South Africa, some universities conduct orientation programs to help students get used to campus and its various activities. According to Mudhovozi (2011), For example, universities in South Africa provide international students with various social support services. These include support groups and counselling facilities. Moreover, all these activities can help transnational students successfully integrate into the host country.

However, some international students in South Africa do not use the services of universities. This is because they prefer to use other forms of support. According to Hyams-Ssekasi *et al.* (2014), some students from Asia and black Africa often ask their parents for advice. In addition to this, international students cope with the loneliness and isolation they experience using social media or phone calls to their families back home (Myburgh, Niehaus & Poggenpoel 2006). According to Myburgh *et al.* (2006), international students can benefit from sharing their feelings and thoughts

with their families, as it provides them with a sense of comfort and support. In addition, by interacting with their families, students can freely express their opinions, which they may not be comfortable with sharing in other places (Eviwie 2009). Myburgh *et al.* (2006) further noted that international students who join support groups or organisations such as student associations benefit from experiencing a more positive experience when it comes to dealing with the loneliness and isolation they feel in a new environment. These student groups or associations allow international students with different backgrounds to interact with one another (Hume 2008). These support systems can help international students live a stress-free and comfortable life in their new country of residence (Hume 2008).

According to Eviwie (2009), international students also tend to adopt negotiation and critical thinking skills in order to improve their interactions with local communities. They also tend to integrate some of the local culture into their daily lives (Myburgh *et al.* 2006). These include adopting a culture of harmony and understanding when interacting with their local communities and building strong relationships with the locals by displaying their culture and lifestyle (Myburgh *et al.* 2006).

2.7 Conceptual Framework

This section discusses the concepts of transnationalism, agency and aspiration, in order to show how they contribute towards the understanding of the contemporary migration experiences of Malawian transnational students in South Africa. These closely related concepts were used as a lens to understand the economic and socio-cultural experiences of Malawian transnational students within communities in South Africa. The concept of transnationalism is relevant to the experiences of transnational students from Malawi who migrate to South Africa, as they often rely on networks to cope with the various challenges of their new life in the country. The concept of aspiration and agency are used to frame their subjective experiences, as these are concepts that are used in their decision making and manage their experiences.

2.7.1 Transnationalism

Transnationalism is a concept that is gaining recognition in the field of migration in the context of higher education, as it involves a variety of people and geographies (Van Hear 1998; Portes, Guanzino & Landolt 1999; Lazar 2011). It also highlights the importance of equity in the

development of social fields. Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992:1) noted that the phenomenon of immigrants building social fields to link their home countries is referred to as transnationalism. The concept of migrant transnationalism is similar to that of other forms of migration, as it involves the presence of different geographical locations through transnational linkages (Kapindu 2011). According to Van Hear (1998: 5), this phenomenon allows immigrants to retain their homeland's memory and to aspire to return to it. This lifestyle of migrant transnationalism allows individuals to build networks of social, educational, economic, cultural and political identities. It also provides them with various benefits and challenges (Skerrett 2015; DeJaeghere & Vu 2015; Levitt 2001; Vertovec 2009).

In spite of the multiple identities that transnational migrants create, these identities are a strategy to adapt in the host country. Arthur (2010: 55) stated, "These identities are reconfigured and given new meanings in transnational spaces and contexts by merging old identities with the new ones they establish abroad". Along these contours and in the context of transnational students, they are constantly connected to their families and communities through virtual interactions and regular home visits (Skerrett 2015). This is important for them as it allows them to maintain a strong sense of belonging to their roots. Through a transnational lens, the study was able to gain a deeper understanding of how transnational students from Malawi maintain cross-border connections and communicate with their families and communities. In the context of this study, transnationalism explains how Malawian transnational students constitute and maintain strong cross-border economic, social and intimate connections, and frequently communicate and travel back to Malawi during their holidays (Geddie 2013). According to Murphy-Lejeune (2002), transnational student mobility is inclusive of personal history, family history, language competence and previous experience of adapting to new surroundings. In other words, the concept of transnational social networks refers to the ways in which students from different countries can assimilate and maintain a sense of belonging to their native home in a host country (Crush & McDonald 2000; Erdal & Oeppen 2013; Portes 2003; Schiller *et al.* 1992). Hence, transnationalism is used in this study to understand the ways in which Malawian students make use of transnational social networks to integrate into their new environment.

Critics of the concept of transnationalism often argue that it is not a good idea to use it as a framework for analysis. Scholars such as Tedeschi, Vorobeva and Jauhiainen (2020) argue that transnationalism is a complex concept that and is difficult to apply as a clear theoretical framework. For instance, when referring to diaspora communities, the concept usually only applies to specific groups. Critics have also argued that transnationalism refers to the weakening of a country's control over its people and borders (Tedeschi, *et al.* 2020). As immigrants assimilate into their new communities, their political, social, and cultural connections become less strong. However, proponents of transnationalism argue that it allows scholars to consider the multiple cultural and social contexts that surround transnational people, like students (Bilecen & Lubbers 2021). Other critics have argued that much of the empirical research that applies a transnational framework has been produced through a western lens. This is true as there is still a lot of knowledge about the migration of African students to Europe and the USA, despite the widespread belief that this phenomenon is transnational. Fortunately, there is evidence of the growing interest in the African context in using the transnational frame. For instance, Pineteh and Mulu (2016) published a study that explored the social experiences of students from various countries in South Africa. Similarly, Afulani and Asunka (2015) and Bischoff (2017) explored the various aspects of the lives of African migrants within the continent, using the transnationalism framework to study their language, cultural practices, and development.

What the recent studies show is that strong transnational social networks can influence migration and migrants from Malawi living in South Africa as well. Some the strong transnational social networks that Malawian migrants in South Africa may maintain include their network of friends and contacts, as well as their involvement in religious and community matters. For instance, Vawda (2009: 83) noted that migrant students are able to participate in decision-making processes in their home country despite being in a different country. Similarly, transnational students have strong networks that are rooted in their families, friends and fellowship. Because of these networks, they can influence a student's behaviour and decisions, and they have a major role in determining their life choices in a host country. The presence of strong transnational linkages in the lives of Malawian students can be seen as a reflection of Malawi's cultural and educational environment (Beech 2014; Findlay, King, Stam & Ruiz-Gelices 2006:314). However, most students from Malawi cannot fully integrate into South Africa and this could prevent them from achieving their

goals and completing their studies. This study investigated the ways in which Malawian transnational students used transnational networks to cope with their economic and sociocultural experiences. There are two aspects of transnational social networks, namely transnational kinship ties and transnational social fields.

2.7.1.1 Transnational kinship ties

Being able to maintain strong ties with family and friends is very important for migrants. They consider it as a vital part of their well-being while living in a host country (Mbiba 2010). This is also true for transnational students. Kinship ties help students manage their daily challenges and provide them with emotional support (Beech 2014). This is similar to findings by Brooks (2005) which stated that the most common source of support for young people experiencing negative experiences come from their family and peer group. International students' families, peers and friends shape their attitudes when they encounter difficulties.

Critics of transnationalism believe that students rely on their experience to make informed decisions and that the strength of their connections with strangers in other countries can help them make better decisions. This is in line with Granovetter's (1973) study, which states that those with whom people are more familiar with provide support and being able to connect with people in a regular manner can help Malawian transnational students feel more connected to the host community. These relationships can also help them develop a stronger understanding of their own identity (Granovetter 1973; Levin & Cross 2004; Walker, Wasserman & Wellman 1994). Even though they may not meet with their families back home on a regular basis, transnational students still rely on their friends and family members for support when they need it most. This is because they consider them their key informants. Some students may also try to distance themselves from their relatives and friends, and this is because they aim to have a sense of independence in the new environment they live in (Beech 2014). Overall transnational kinship ties are important not only for circular migrants, but transnational students as well.

2.7.1.2 Transnational social fields

The concept of transnational social network is used to study various elements of a transnational society (Lubbers, Verdery & Molina 2020). One of these is transnational social fields, which is a combination of symbolic and social ties that can be found in multiple international locations (Faist

1998:216). Thus, transnational social fields are spaces where people from different backgrounds come together to share information and experiences (Levitt & Schiller 2004).

This concept is one of the first examples of using various forms of communication to maintain relationships (Koehn & Rosenau 2002). In addition, according to Alzougool, Chang, Gomes and Berry (2013) the use of media technology by international students has become an integral part of their experience. They noted that the use of technology allowed foreign students to interact with their new surroundings and people in other nations, as it allows Malawian transnational students to maintain their ties with their home country (Koehn & Rosenau 2002; Alzougool *et al.* 2013). Unfortunately, there are instances where power imbalances could develop due to local experiences and can affect a student's decision-making and interaction with the host community. Regardless, Malawian transnational students can still maintain their relationships with their families back home because of the use of technology and social media (Durance 2016).

The second transnational social field is pre-existing relations in South Africa. Pre-existing relations are established because of circular use of modern communication devices (phones) and transport facilities (planes and buses) (Kastoryano 2001). When transnational students can use their pre-existing relations or ties in the host nation, they are able to rely on them to make decisions and live a comfortable life in the country. This is evident in Wise's (2019) study which reported that international students are more positive about their experience if their pre-existing relatives and friends have been successful in the host country that they are currently living in.

In addition to having established relations both in Malawi and in South Africa, Malawian transnational students can also establish their own social networks in South Africa. According to Strayhorn (2012:111), international students often get involved in various campus clubs and organisations to feel like they are part of the larger host community. While some international students can make friends with fellow co-national students in a host country, others chose not to socialise. Being involved in groups of similar cultural or national backgrounds can help improve social and academic integration, and it can lower stress levels. Rienties, Beusaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet and Kommers (2012) stated that being able to participate in groups of similar backgrounds could help improve the academic and social integration of foreign students. In a host country, activities such as clubs and societies are designed to introduce transnational students to

their host country and can help them develop a deeper understanding of their host nation's culture and improve their intercultural relationships (Becker, Dong, Kronholz, & Brownson 2018). Although there are many activities and programs that can help Malawian transnational students settle in South Africa, only a few can truly make a significant impact on their experience (Kuh 2009). As the number of Malawian transnational students study in South Africa continues to rise, concerns can be raised about South Africa's social and cultural environment. The objective of the study was to find out how transnational students from Malawi can use social networks to address various issues they encounter when they are studying in South Africa.

2.7.2 Aspiration

Most transnational students aspire to migrate before they start working toward a degree. This stage is often referred to as a prerequisite for migration (Carling 2002: 12). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2009), aspiration is a longing or action for something higher than one is. It can be expressed in terms of a dream or a desire. These personal goals are built on the individual's perspective on life. The concept of aspiration refers to an individual's intentions and desires about achieving a particular goal in life (Haller & Miller 1971). It can be expressed in different ways, such as through behavioural and conscious behaviour.

Although it is the most common phase of migration, aspirations related to migration are less studied from the angle related to integration, push, and pull factors of migration. Despite the importance of aspirations, it is hard to measure and operationalize them because they are not directly observable (Glick, Schiller & Salazar 2013). This study aimed to provide a framework for understanding the role of aspirations in the integration process of the contemporary Malawian transnational student migration in South Africa. Apart from academic and social integration, the aspirations of Malawian transnational students are acknowledged in various phases of migration and this approach can help them understand their experiences in the country and develop a deeper understanding of transnational migration. For instance, if a Malawian transnational student wants to stay in South Africa but their current situation in the country is not achievable, then their dreams and aspirations might have an influence in their decision-making process (Adu 2019: 24).

Besides financial resources, other factors such as the experiences of family members who migrated are also taken into account when it comes to the aspirations of international students (Richter & Taylor 2008; Tsegai 2007). Most of these are related to the improvement of their lives and their collective needs (Özden, Wagner & Packard 2018). These are also the main factors that influence the academic and social integration of migrants (Cai, Esipova, Oppenheimer & Feng 2014). According to Appadurai (2004), people need to have a capacity to aspire to improve their lives and this is because their cognitive, economic, and emotional resources can help them envision a better life (Sell & De Jong 1978). Although relocating can increase an individual's chances of achieving their life goals, it can also decrease their aspirations (Czaika & Parsons 2017). This is because migration can make an individual's aspirations change, as migration cannot always determine success and realise their goals in a host country (Boccagni 2017).

Thus, when it comes to choosing to migrate to South Africa, the decision of Malawian transnational students can be motivated by either their intrinsic value or their desire to pursue another goal. For instance, if students' aspirations are linked to their education, then their mobility is an integral part of their overall journey. According to Tartakovsky and Schwartz (2001: 89), the aspirations of Malawian transnational students serve as a guide for their lives. Although their experiences may reflect on some of their goals, these are usually more situation specific and can be influenced by various factors. Despite the factors that can prevent Malawian transnational students from achieving their goals in South Africa, their aspirations are considered as a guide for their future. The study noted that these aspirations are likely to be the reason why more students are migrating to the country and are likely to stay after graduation.

2.7.3 Agency

The goal of this study was to explore the various forms of agency that Malawian transnational students have in South Africa. It is believed that by exercising their agency, they can influence their social and educational trajectories (Tran & Vu 2018; Marginson 2014). According to Klemenčič (2015), the concept of agency relates both to the foreign students' autonomy in a host country, and their adjustment to a new social and academic environment. It is a person's way of perceiving and responding to the world (Edwards 2005). Thus, Malawian transnational students can exercise agency, which in turn can modify the challenges experienced with regard to socialisation and integration while study in South Africa (Lawrence & Valsiner 2003: 728). In

addition to language, culture and finances, other factors such as relationships with individuals can also affect the way that Malawian transnational students respond to these conditions (Wertsch 2007).

Tran and Vu (2018) noted that transnational students have multiple forms of agency, before and during their transnational journey. This is because agency plays a vital role in the mobility and engagement of Malawian transnational students, as it enables them to respond to the needs of their new country and develop their talents (Tran & Vu 2018: 167-168). Unfortunately, it is not always acknowledged and understood properly. The goal of this study was to explore the various forms of agency that Malawian transnational students have in South Africa. It is believed that by exercising their agency, they can influence their social and educational trajectories (Tran & Vu 2018; Marginson 2014).

2.8 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter explored the various literature on migration in Southern Africa. It focused on how the region has evolved from its traditional labour market to a more dynamic political and economic environment (Wentzel *et al.* 2006; Carciotto 2020; Chikowore & Willemse 2017; Awumbila 2017). The chapter also explored the various factors that influence migration in Southern Africa. It identified the political and economic conditions that are responsible for the region's shift from its traditional labour market to a more dynamic one (Adepoju 2003; Anderson 2006; Freemantle 2011). The literature presented in this section indicates that the movement of workers from both countries (Anglewicz 2012:56) has influenced migration patterns between South Africa and Malawi. However, over the past decade, the movement of casual and unskilled workers from Malawi has been the main factor that has affected the migration patterns between the two nations (Malawi Census 2018 Report 2019; UNCTAD 2018; IOM 2014). The most comprehensive case study on transnational students from Malawi was conducted during the time of South Africa's democratic transition from apartheid. It analysed the experiences of the students who were studying at Cape Town University. The study revealed that they faced various cultural and domestic issues, as well as language barriers and multi-racial environment. However, there is a need to look into the experiences of Malawian transnational students studying in various universities in Gauteng and look at their current experiences since the 1990s.

This chapter explored the various aspects of transnationalism, focusing on the transnational experiences that students may encounter as they study in South Africa (Beech 2014; Findlay *et al.* 2006:314). It also explored the various factors that influence student mobility from the Malawi to South Africa. This chapter aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the multiple challenges that face transnational students from Malawi as they move to South Africa. Through the theoretical perspectives of transnational social networks, aspirations and agency. The next chapter explores the study's main objective, methodology, and previous chapters. It also provides an overview of the data collection process. It also explains the findings of the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was to analyse the contemporary migration of transnational students from Malawi to South Africa, and it focused on their socio-cultural and economic experiences. The first chapter of the study provided a general overview of the topic and its research objectives. The first chapter covered the main findings and presented the study's significance. The second chapter reviewed existing literature on migration and transnational student mobility in Southern Africa and discussed the theoretical concepts that were used to analyse the experiences of transnational students in South Africa. The study applied the following theoretical conceptions; transnationalism, aspirations and agency as prisms to analyse the experiences of Malawian transnationals in selected universities in Gauteng. This chapter describes the study's methodology. It provides an overview of the various steps involved in carrying out the study, such as selecting the research participants and collecting data. It also explains how data analysis was performed to ensure that the study's credibility was maintained.

3.2 Research Design and Methodology

The goal of this study was to understand the experiences of transnational students from Malawi living in South Africa. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the Malawian transnational students' individual backgrounds by collecting information about their lived experiences, aspirations, transnational relationships, and their sense of agency (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee 2006; Babbie & Mouton 2001: 53). This method, which is commonly used in social studies, aims to collect data that can be used to improve a person's understanding of their identity (Gillham 2010). The study used a qualitative method to look into the various factors that influence the transnational experiences and the decision-making process of transnational students from Malawi when choosing South Africa as their university destination. It also revealed their perceptions about their homeland and their agency (Mohajan 2018:2). Through the qualitative method, the researcher had the opportunity to identify the participants and collect valuable information about them (Whittaker 2012; Cartwright 2020).

A Case Study design was applied to this study to have get a deeper understanding on the sociocultural and economic aspects of transnational students from Malawi studying in South

Africa. This design was selected due to the lack of sufficient qualitative research on the experiences of these students. A Case study design was relevant as it focuses on the analysis of single units such as an individual or a community. According to Henning, Nielsen and Hauschildt (2006), this type of research design is different from other designs as it allows for detailed descriptions of data. In addition, according to various authors such as Babbie & Mouton (2001), Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, and Sheikh (2011), a Case Study is ideal for explanatory or descriptive studies. This type of research design seeks to explain or describe certain events or phenomena in everyday life, thus, it can help researchers develop theories about how and why certain things happen. This study analysed the socio-cultural and economic experiences of students from Malawi studying at South African universities, using a Case Study design was most appropriate since it explored the collective experiences of a group (Baxter & Jack 2008).

Case studies allow researchers to analyse a topic in various settings and can identify the differences and similarities between transnational students from varying backgrounds. According to Yin (2003:47), collective case studies are important because they can be replicated with a literal or theoretical replication. Although collective case studies are generally considered to be reliable and robust, they can also be very costly and time-consuming to conduct (Yin 2003:47). However, the study needed to analyse multiple cases of Malawian transnational students in one research. This type of Case Study design combined the concepts of agency, transnational networks, and aspirations to identify the various factors that influence a Malawian transnational student's academic success and allowed the researcher to come up with relevant ideas and themes for the study (Mohajan 2018:12).

3.3 Research Objectives and Questions, Data Sources and Analysis

Table 1: Data Sources and Analysis

Research objective	Research question	Data method/source
<p>Main aim: To understand the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa and their economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South African universities.</p>	<p>Main research question: Why do Malawians migrate to South Africa for study and what are their economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South African universities?</p>	<p>Triangulated the data collection: Individual interviews, an analysis of literature on Southern Africa migration and transnational student mobility, and theoretical analysis of transnationalism, aspirations and agency.</p>
<p>To investigate the push and pull factors influencing Malawian transnational student mobility to South Africa.</p>	<p>What are the push and pull factors influencing Malawian transnational student mobility to South Africa?</p>	<p>Individual interviews. Literature on aspirations, patterns and trends of migration in the Southern African region, migration into South Africa: Push and pull factors and transnational student mobility in the Southern Africa region.</p>
<p>To analyse the challenges that Malawian transnational students encounter while in South Africa.</p>	<p>What are the challenges that Malawian transnational students encounter while studying in South Africa?</p>	<p>Individual interviews. Literature on the experiences of transnational students from the Southern African region, the experiences of Malawian students in the SADC region with a focus on Malawians</p>

		as international students, transnational networks, and agency.
<p>To understand how the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students affect their integration, and aspirations at selected South African universities.</p> <p>To explore the strategies that Malawian transnational students use to ease their integration.</p>	<p>How do the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students affect their integration and aspirations at selected South African universities?</p> <p>What are the strategies used by Malawian transnational students to ease their integration in South Africa?</p>	<p>Individual interviews. Literature on aspirations, transnational networks, agency, and the adjustment strategies of transnational students from the Southern African region.</p>
<p>To examine the implications of economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian students for the Malawian government's responses to the challenges of transnational students.</p>	<p>How can the experiences of Malawian transnational students help the Malawian government response to the challenges of transnational students in South Africa?</p>	<p>Individual interviews. The research's findings, review of previous policies on migrant student mobility between South Africa and Malawi.</p>

3.4 Description of Research Location and Participants

The study was conducted in Gauteng, South Africa, where Malawian transnational students were interviewed. The study focused on two South African universities in the Gauteng province located in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The province was selected as it has a large intake of international students, as it has some well-developed cities with diverse peoples and cultures, advanced infrastructure, and other offerings (Gregory & Rogerson 2019; Mashayamombe & Vally 2020). Johannesburg and Pretoria are two cities in the province constantly infused by the African international student population every year, bringing more socio-cultural diversity to the two cities (Hendriks & Flaherty 2018). The two cities are filled with urban environments with student cultures and lifestyles, and beautiful, safe, and stable campus settings, which attracts Malawian transnational students and allows them to enjoy student life to the full (van Noorloos & Kloosterboer 2018). Gauteng was also selected because it has several prominent public and private universities. It is against this backdrop that this study chose Johannesburg and Pretoria as case study locations in the investigation of the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students and their economic and socio-cultural experiences at selected universities.

The students who volunteered to participate in the study were from one public university in Pretoria and the other from a private university in Johannesburg. The Malawian transnational students migrated to South Africa in the last seven years when they were over eighteen and single. The study interviewed six female and four male transnational students and were from either Lilongwe or Blantyre in Malawi. Although their socio-economic backgrounds were similar, the Malawian transnational students had different goals and aspirations. The demographics of the participants are further summarized in Table 2, and their names are pseudonyms due to ethical reasons. All participants self-identified as coming from middle-class families and this relates to Browne's (2017) study, which reports education is a factor that influences migration among middle-class and aspirational young people. As previously notes, in a country like Malawi, the middle-class population is relatively small. Only about 20 percent of the population has the necessary skills and resources to be considered middle class (Kondowe 2022; Corcoran 2014; Benson, Erman & Baulch 2019). Although only a small proportion of the general population in Malawi have completed post-secondary education, these individuals aspire to white-collar jobs, and higher education is needed to meet these goals.

Table 2: Details of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Location of Interview	Year of arrival in SA	Residing city in Malawi	Level of University
Student 1	F	24	Single	Pretoria	2014	Lilongwe	Masters Degree
Student 2	M	29	Single	Pretoria	2014	Lilongwe	Honours Degree
Student 3	M	25	Single	Pretoria	2017	Blantyre	LLB Law Degree
Student 4	F	22	Single	Johannesburg	2019	Lilongwe	Third Year
Student 5	F	23	Single	Johannesburg	2017	Lilongwe	Third Year
Student 6	F	24	Single	Pretoria	2021	Lilongwe	Second Year
Student 7	F	22	Single	Johannesburg	2019	Lilongwe	Third Year
Student 8	F	24	Single	Pretoria	2021	Lilongwe	Masters Degree
Student 9	M	21	Single	Johannesburg	2019	Blantyre	Third Year
Student 10	M	29	Single	Pretoria	2020	Lilongwe	Masters Degree

3.5 Research methods and Data Collection

Given the main aim and research question of this study was to understand the individual and personal experiences of Malawian transnational students, the key research method to collect data was through individual interviews. Supplemented by an extensive literature review prior to data collection, this study gained a deeper understanding of Malawian transnational students involved using participant interviews as a data collection method (Bryman 1988). Through a snowball and purposive sampling method, the researcher was able identify key informants which were Malawian transnational students residing in Johannesburg and Pretoria. According to Alvi (2016:31) and Rapley (2014), purposive sampling is a method utilized by researchers to select individuals for their studies, by selecting those that fit the particulars of the study.

Using snowball sampling, the researcher was able to approach the Malawian transnational students who were already selected and ask them for referrals to other participants (Alvi 2016:33). According to Yin (2009), researchers should be flexible in order to adapt to unexpected situations during the research process, thus with the use of snowball sampling, the researcher was able to change their strategies and procedures whenever something went wrong and get more participants. The researcher used the two sampling techniques because they were both cost-effective and practical for data collection (Etikan *et al.* 2016). The sample included ten individuals from Malawi who were studying at postgraduate and undergraduate levels. The participants were all of varying ages, ranging from 18 to 35. The study also recruited individuals from all genders.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews because it allowed for flexibility in the data collection process. According to D’Cruz and Jones (2004), this type of approach is ideal when the researcher is looking for something that is not known and it allows them to collect data with a high degree of flexibility. This method is best for collecting contextual information about participants (Bryman 1988). Through this process, the researcher was able to collect detailed information about the participants' experiences (Bryman 1988). Through interviews, the researcher was also able to use the data to improve the understanding of the subjects' backgrounds. According to D’Cruz and Jones (2004), interviews were also ideal because it enables participants to express themselves in their own words.

In most cases, the interviews were conducted on-site, with audio recordings. Others were conducted virtually and with the participants' informed consent. Wang and Park (2016:212) recommend that researchers use methods such as audio recording and transcribing to ensure that the data collected during the interview is accurate. This is because it is very important to have a record of the full range of information that is collected during the data collection period. To collect the data, the researcher used apps on cell phone to record the interviews. In case the device malfunctioned, the data was backed into a drive. Before each interview, the researcher asked participants to give their verbal and written consent. The recordings were then transcribed and coded. The participants chose a convenient location for the interview. For instance, on June 28, 2022, a face-to-face interview with student 6 was conducted at University of Pretoria (UP) Hatfield campus at 10:30 am. Although the interview occurred after lockdown, the participant asked the interview adheres to the guidelines of the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (2020), which requires the use of masks, hand sanitising, and social distancing. The respondents were reminded that they could speak freely and they were at the liberty to choose the interview location that they were comfortable with. The interviews were conducted in English and Chichewa, and they lasted for around an hour. One example was the one conducted with student 10 online on June 29, 2022, which happened at 4:00 pm. Although lockdown in South Africa ended on the 4th of April 2022, the participant found it convenient to conduct the interview virtually. Prior to the interview, the researcher informed all participants about the study's purpose and the various steps involved in carrying it out.

A follow up interview was conducted after the first interviews to further analyse the various issues that were discussed in the first interview with the Malawian transnational students. This interview was more thorough, as the researcher aimed to get a deeper understanding of the participants. For instance, on August 12, 2022, student 3 was able to talk about some of the positive experiences he had during his time in Hatfield with a group of individuals outside his student accommodation. To contribute to the information gathered in the interviews, the study thoroughly reviewed existing literature on Southern African migration and transnational student mobility within the region. This enabled the researcher to identify gaps in literature that related to the data collected from the key informants.

3.6 Data Analysis

After collecting and transcribing data from in-depth interviews, the researcher started the data analysis process. According to Clifford (1997), in qualitative research, data analysis is a dynamic process, which involves identifying key units of meaning and ideas in the literature. This type of analysis is commonly used to identify and analyse the patterns and themes in the data collected through interviews. The researcher found the thematic approach to be suitable for analysing qualitative data sets that are characterised by thick descriptions. It can also be used to report on the characteristics of a data set (Braun, Clarke & Weate 2016). The study's thematic analysis was carried out using the guidelines of Braun, Clarke and Weate (2016), which emphasise the importance of capturing the diverse experiences and voices of Malawian transnational students. Thematic analysis was a process utilised in the study to identify the various patterns and themes that are relevant to the findings (Marks & Yardely 2004). It was also beneficial in developing a deeper understanding of Malawian transnational students' agency and aspirations.

Thematic data analysis in this study was applied to explore reoccurring features of the data (Braun *et al.* 2016), which were analysed for meanings about Malawian transnational students' experiences in South Africa. Through concepts maps, the data was broken down into different codes and coded into themes, which were then examined to see how these themes could be grouped together or reworked to create new ones. These categories focused on the interactions between students' social networks, as well as their agency and aspirations. It also identified the behaviours and practices of Malawian transnational students. According to Braun *et al.* (2016), the key to successful thematic analysis is to identify patterns across a dataset and this is done using a sample that is large enough to allow the researcher to make meaningful observations. Braun *et al.* (2016) suggested that a minimum of six interviews should be conducted for thematic data analysis and by using 10 interviews; this study met the requirement of having a sample that is large enough to allow the researcher to make meaningful observations during the process of data analysis.

The study used a six-phase thematic analysis process to analyse the data. The first phase of the process, which was familiarisation, involved immersing oneself in the collected information (Braun *et al.* 2016). Through the interview, the researcher was able to collect data and make notes about the various factors that affected the participants' responses (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche &

Delpont 2014). For instance, the various aspirations, cultural and economic experiences that the students had to face in their new environment were also taken into account.

The coding process was a key component of teasing out and analysing for meanings of Malawian transnational students' experiences. Braun *et al.* (2016) explained that a code is a label that describes a potential relevance to a particular piece of data. As the transcripts were repeatedly read, the researcher used special colours to emphasise certain sections. These included identifying texts and sayings that belonged to a specific category. Creswell (2007) states that coding refers to the process involved in organising and arranging data. During the process, the researcher recorded the various terms and phrases that associated with a specific code. After the researcher finished sorting and arranging the data, the code names were added to the list of other codes. The next step of the study was to develop new themes and add new features to the existing ones. According to Braun *et al.* (2016), this process is carried out through the multiple phases of the framework's thematic analysis. The researcher was tasked with creating a rich analysis of the data presented by the new themes, thus created sub-themes and themes related to the codes. The words and phrases that were underlined in a similar colour were then allocated to the corresponding codes, which helped to connect the various elements of the study to the themes that were most relevant to the research. Themes were also extracted from the descriptions that the participants used in their responses.

According to Braun *et al.* (2016), the final phase involves revising and developing existing analytic writing. Braun *et al.* (2016) also argued that this process involves situating the finished overall report. During this phase, the researchers identified various themes that related to the participants' experiences at selected South African universities. These included economic and sociocultural experiences, integration experiences and aspirations, push-pull factors, challenges and coping strategies. In addition to being able to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data, thematic data analysis helped the researcher make effective use of the information gathered (King 2004). The researcher chose to code the qualitative data manually. The researcher did this because a thematic data analysis is a process of interpreting multiple meanings in the same text as it emerges in the transcript. Unfortunately, the software could not capture all of the meanings that were typed into it, leaving the researcher with only a set of options.

3.7 Data Trustworthiness

In order to improve the quality of the case studies, the researcher followed various principles that were aimed at avoiding criticism that comes with the method. These principles were created to avoid the study from being labelled as biased or generalising (Koch & Harrington 1998). To improve the quality of the study, the researcher employed various methods to increase the credibility of the findings. One of these was establishing truthfulness in the responses using research ethical strategies suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). For example, through a purposive sampling procedure, the researcher was able to select the individuals who would fit the study's requirements. The 10 transnational students selected from Malawi were chosen based on their residence in South Africa, nationality, and student status.

Polit and Beck (2012) stated that credibility is a process that involves ensuring that the information that the researcher provides is accurate and complete. The goal of this process was to ensure that the findings of the study were based on the experiences of the individuals participating in the study. In addition to analyse the data, the researcher ensured that all of the participants' experiences were included in the analysis. Sandelowski (1986) stated that a qualitative study is regarded as credible if it can show that the experiences of people are similar to those of other individuals.

To confirm that the study is credible, the researcher ensured the data was representative of the participants' responses rather than their biases (Cope 2014:89). In order to do so, the researcher had to explain how the interpretations and conclusions were established. The assumptions that informed the study were initially influenced by literature, but it was later revealed that the findings were not influenced by literature at all. Instead, the researchers used direct quotes from the Malawian transnational students to avoid bias.

According to Polit and Beck (2012), authenticity refers to the degree to which researchers express their feelings about a participant in a faithful manner. To ensure that the quotes used in the study were entirely accurate, the researcher ensured that the information was only used in an unbiased manner. The objective of this study was to analyse the data using the primary and secondary validity criteria of Whitemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001). This criterion ensured that the findings are thoroughly analysed and that the researcher is able to provide a valid analysis of the data. Despite the researcher's efforts to maintain the data's integrity, it was still hoped that the reader

would gain a deeper understanding of the students' experiences. This process involved gathering all the necessary information to come up with a conclusion. According to Koch (2006), a study should be considered reliable if it can be replicated with the same individuals in the future.

Finally, it was important that the study thoroughly triangulated the various methods used in the study to ensure that the findings was credible. Doing so allowed the researcher to analyse the literature and come up with an effective conceptual framework for analysing the findings. A thematic analysis process was also carried out to reinforce and confirm the themes that emerged from interviews.

3.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter described the design and methodology of the study, as well as the various steps involved in gathering and analysing the data collected. It started by introducing the study's objective and summary of the previous chapters, which also identified the tools and methods used to gather and analyse the data. A table that summarised the research's data sources, participants, and objectives followed afterwards. This was followed by an explanation of research methods and data collection process used. The primary research method used was personal interviews. Additionally, the researcher conducted a recruitment process using a snowballing sampling technique and a purposeful selection method. The data analysis process began after the researcher finished collecting data from the participants. The findings were then analysed using a thematic framework that was developed by Braun *et al.* (2016). To enhance the analysis, the researcher coded the qualitative data manually and organised it according to predetermined themes. The last section explained how the researcher ensured that the study was conducted ethically. The researcher used the following ethical factors to ensure that the data they collect is reliable: credibility, authenticity, and triangulation.

The next chapter, chapter four of this study explores the data collected and analyses it in detail. It also discusses the methodology used and the outcomes of the research design. The objective of this chapter is to analyse the various factors that influence the integration and aspirations of Malawian transnational students in South Africa. The chapter also looks into the strategies that these students use to deal with negative experiences. In addition, it explores the influence of their migration on the Malawi government's responses to their challenges.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The study sought to understand the socio-cultural and economic experiences of Malawian transnational students. In addition, although there is a lot of information about the people from Malawi who migrate to South Africa, there is little known about the experiences of other transnational students. (See, for example, Kasese-Hara & Mugambi 2021; McGregor 2014; Mda 2010; Mpinganjira 2011). Little is known about these students because during the apartheid era the movement of cheap labour in Southern Africa heavily affected the region's migration patterns and trends. Although the situation has changed following the end of the apartheid era, the focus is still on undocumented workers from Malawi into South Africa (Banda 2017; Chiumia 2016; Andersson 2006; Nyirongo 2019). Due to the increasing number of transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa, the topic became an area of interest and led new opportunities for further research. Against this backdrop, the main aim and objectives were:

- To understand the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa and their economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South African universities;
- To investigate the push and pull factors influencing Malawian transnational student mobility to South Africa;
- To analyse the challenges that Malawian transnational students encounter while in South Africa;
- To understand how the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students affect their integration, and aspirations at selected South African universities;
- To explore the strategies that Malawian transnational students use to ease their integration;
- To examine the implications of economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian students for the Malawian government's responses to the challenges of transnational students.

To achieve these objectives, the study aimed to analyse the various factors that affect the movement between South Africa and Malawi. According to the literature, one of the main factors

that contribute to the migration between the two countries is the management of illegal immigrants. However, according to UNESCO (2010), the number of Malawian transnational students studying in South Africa has increased significantly since the end of apartheid. Moreover, although the number of transnational students from Malawi studying there has increased, there are few studies on these students (Malawi Census 2018 Report 2019:29; IOM 2014). The number of these transnational students migrating to South Africa has increased due to Malawi's low international recognition, the lack of access to high quality education, and universities in Malawi regarded as uncompetitive (Kayange 2021:2080). In addition, when these students arrive in South Africa, research has shown that they experience challenges similar to Malawian undocumented migrants, such as adjusting to their new surroundings and dealing with the language barrier (Banda 2017:92; Crush *et al.* 2018:24).

To understand the experiences of the transnational students, the study used migration concepts such as transnationalism and transnational networks, as well as aspiration and agency. The concepts of transnational networks and aspiration were used to analyse the factors that influenced the decisions and experiences of Malawian transnational students (Domingo 2014). By learning about their experiences, the study was able to get a deeper understanding of how Malawian transnational students respond to and perceive their environment in South Africa (Carling 2002: 12; Klemenčič 2015).

The use of qualitative methodology and a Case Study design enabled the study to collect data on the various experiences of Malawian transnational students studying in South Africa. The researcher's choice of research questions and objectives was influenced by the data collection method and the qualitative method. The study sought to collect data of the subjective experiences of 10 Malawian transnational students who are studying in Pretoria and Johannesburg. Through detailed interviews, the 10 Malawian transnational students were then selected using a snowballing technique and a purposive sampling process. The data from the interviews was then analysed and interpreted using the concepts of agency, transnationalism, and aspirations.

This chapter begins by describing Malawian transnational student mobility patterns and characteristics in South Africa based on the data collected from the interviews. It then moves into the second section, which explores the economic and socio-cultural backgrounds of the Malawian

transnational students. The chapter then goes on to look at the factors that influenced Malawian transnational students' decision to migrate to South Africa. The quality of education and personal aspirations of the Malawian transnational students were some of the factors that influenced their decision to study in South Africa. In addition to this, factors such as South Africa's perceived advantages and the affordability of studying were also taken into account in deciding to migrate. Finally, the chapter reports on the findings of the challenges Malawian transnational students encounter and how these students cope with these issues.

4.2 The Contemporary migration of Malawian Transnational Students

Over the past five years, the number of Malawian transnational students who look to pursue tertiary studies in South Africa has increased significantly. In addition, the increase is due to South Africa's image, which continues to attract international students all over Africa. For example, as of 2014, 5,268 Malawian nationals migrated to South Africa as students (IOM 2014), and despite the students' awareness of the consequences of their migration, it does not seem to prevent them from leaving Malawi to study in South Africa. This section reports the findings drawn from the main aim of the study, which is the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa, and discusses the research question: Why do Malawians migrate to South Africa for study? From an analysis of previous studies and finding from empirical data, it was evident that the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students fell under what Kumpikaite and Duoba (2011) categorised as vertical student mobility. A process in which students take a full degree abroad. Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015) noted that this type of mobility has been the main factor that has influenced the mobility of undergraduate students in Africa. Although the Southern African Region is acknowledged as a significant contributor to postgraduate education, however a new development of undergraduate student mobility appears to emerge rapidly in the region (Jooste & Hagenmeier 2019). This is due to the role that South Africa's Higher Education System in implementing the SADC Protocol on promoting higher education access within the region (Jooste & Hagenmeier 2019).

The increasing number of students from the SADC region studying at postgraduate level is a positive sign and can contribute to the development of the region's overall education system. With regard to the participants in this study, about half of the students were undergraduates, while the other half were studying for Master's degrees. This finding revealed that South Africa's higher

education system has a real value proposition when it comes to providing opportunities at the postgraduate level for Malawian transnational students. This is evidenced by the data that the students provided in the interviews, which clearly indicated that international higher education is taking place in a Malawian context (Jooste & Hagenmeier 2019). This, the increasing number of postgraduate and masters programs in South Africa has raised Malawi's profile in international higher education (Jooste & Hagenmeier 2019).

Furthermore, the study revealed that the migration of Malawian transnational students is part of a larger wave of migrants into South Africa (Banda 2017:2), which consists of a mixed flow of individuals, who are also looking for work and the opportunity to establish businesses. This then confirms that Malawians national do migrate for not only work and are undocumented migrants, but also simply interested in improving their education. Most of the Malawian transnational students interviewed were generally optimistic about migrating to South Africa for the purpose of study. They talked about their expectations of success in the country due to the current situation in Malawi. The following views expressed by the students shed some light on this:

How do you describe the situation in Malawi? People are losing hope. There is generational unrest and people are protesting the economic state of the country. There are symptoms of systemic issues in Malawi that are institutionally weak. We (Malawi) do not have the institutions that could perhaps alleviate some these social ills. These issues relate to how Malawi government has to figure out how are they going employ the youth. Even though these challenges are similar to SA, Malawi is worse because we are small country that relies on agriculture and informal businesses for employment... This employment issue is keeping Malawians in a vicious cycle of poverty. Malawian students have skills and the knowledge, but they cannot apply these skills to Malawi, so it's easier to go to SA and find formal employment. The issue is the fact that Malawian students want employment, but the government is not giving them the environment to apply their skills and not supporting those that know the trade in the country that can create companies to employ all these people. (Student 2).

Browne (2017) states that for many young people, the only way to attain the right education is through studying abroad. It is aligned with the expectations that transnational students from Malawi have regarding studying and attaining qualifications in South Africa (Rice 2014). They were aware of how important it was for them to study there, but a small number of them could not achieve their goals due to this mobility. For example, one participant noted:

Yes. Initially I wanted to be an economist and get a job as an economist. Then I switched to data analyst, then I wanted to be working as a financial analyst, then I wanted to be anything in the field economics, then I wanted to make economic policies. Then I realised that in SA I could not make a career out of being an economist. Yes, in SA you get a high pay compared to Malawi, but the life expense in SA are higher compared to Malawi. So, what is that increment that I will get in SA that is so different from Malawi because even in Malawi you get the same pay but life expense is low. Initially I thought studying at South African university I would get a job in SA, but I realised that unemployment affects every country and my qualifications makes it even more difficult, so I have resulted in having a business when I am done with my studies. My mind-set also shifted when I couldn't get a job in SA (Student 1).

The increasing unemployment rates in South Africa and its declining education system are two factors that may have contributed to most of the participants sharing this view and their mobility did not allow them to achieve their goals and ambitions. While an internationally recognised degree from South Africa is still important for many of the Malawian transnational students, it is also important to note that employment can be a vital part of their aspirations once they have moved (Browne 2017).

Another finding revealed from the interviews was that a majority of the Malawian nationals who came to South Africa were young people. Previous studies have shown that most of Malawi's working-age migrants do not cite education as a reason for migration. However, in the context of this study, the Malawian transnational students that were interviewed were of the working age group that ranged from 21 to 29. This is true for Nyirongo (2019), Andersson (2006) and Banda (2017) agree that educational issues are not prevalent among the young Malawian migrants in South Africa. This is because according to their studies, the majority of Malawian migrants' plan to migrate to South Africa in pursuit of a better life through opportunities for work available to them and stay in the country. However, this study found that young Malawian transnational students are the group of Malawian nationals in South Africa who strongly considered migrating for education to South Africa, in line with their primary concerns of getting good qualifications leading to a good job. Therefore, it shows that the contemporary migration of Malawian students' is a way toward a better and improved life through education.

Furthermore, the study also revealed that most of the Malawian transnational students who migrate to South Africa were from middle-class families. For Browne (2017), the increasing number of young people from middle-class backgrounds migrating is a result of their desire to pursue higher

education. According to Punch and Sugden's (2013) study, Malawian transnational students who migrated to South Africa should be mainly from families that can afford to pay for education abroad. Browne (2017) also noted that higher education is very important for such students and friends as it allows them to pursue white-collar jobs. The following statement by one participant is note-worthy:

I am an only child biological. My parents passed on. I came from a poor background, but when I was 10 my uncle, my dad's brother took me in. I have been raised by my uncle and his wife. It has been an amazing journey. They have given me every opportunity in the world. They have raised me as their own. They have four children but they take me as their older sister. We have not struggled as a family. We live comfortably. Therefore, my family can be classified as middle class (Student 8).

From the above quotation, the findings of this study suggest that the resources and aspirations of Malawian transnational students worked together to facilitate their migration to South Africa. Moreover, these are in contrast to the findings of previous studies, which were based on different assumptions, for example Anglewicz (2012), Banda (2017), Nyirongo (2019), and Andersson (2006) studies. According to their studies, the Malawians who can migrate to South Africa tend to be the poorest individuals. Regardless, the studies that discuss the legal migrants in South Africa also argue that the legal migrants were highly qualified before they arrive in South Africa (for example, Muula & Broadhead 2003). Thus, this study demonstrates that education can also be a driver when it comes to migration between Malawi and South Africa. However, Malawian transnational students are not always tracked due to the large amounts of undocumented and casual Malawian migrants in South Africa. In addition, search terms for "Malawi student" and "education" tend not to be used for the contemporary migration between Malawi and South Africa, which means that information about Malawian transnational students will not always be accurate. This suggests that there is a shortage of studies on Malawian transnational students in South Africa.

4.3 The Economic and Sociocultural Experiences of Malawian Transnational Students

The economic experiences of international students are often linked to the employment opportunities and living expenses, they can expect in their host country (Mpinganjira 2011:263; Calitz, Cullen & Jooste 2020:279; Tendai 2012:225). Forming bonds with fellow students is also important for international students. (Tinto 1975). Through their participation in various social activities, transnational students from Malawi can make a significant contribution to the

development into South Africa's environment. This section explores the findings of the study on the social and economic experiences of these students in South Africa. It provides responses to the research question: What are the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students at selected South African universities?

For the purpose of this study, the data collected during the study were categorised into five themes: financial experiences, socialisation with others, participation in cultural activities, and participation in other social activities.

4.3.1 Financial ability of Malawian transnational students.

According to the literature, many students from disadvantaged backgrounds aspire to study in South Africa in order to secure a job that will allow them to supplement their financial needs (Woodhall 2004). The lack of paid work can negatively affect the time students spend on their academic goals. While it is common for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to have, difficulties finding work during their studies, Fernex, Lima and de Vries (2015: 402) noted that students from families with higher incomes might look for employment for professional experience. Most Malawian transnational students said they did not have financial problems while they were in South Africa. Most of them reported that they receive financial support from their parents, while others worked extra jobs to supplement allowances from parents:

My parents finance my life and education... for me, I never really have issues with my tuition or accommodation. But, I have had issues with pocket money. Sometimes it would come in late because of the means of getting pocket money. The transaction cost is too high. This would be stressful on me because I have to travel to places to get the money from other people. I would also have to go to western union, which is not close to where I stay. So, I resulting in getting part-time jobs to add onto my pocket money when it delays (Student 1).

From this student's experience, financial ability can affect how Malawian transnational students allocate their time for their studies. In other words, instead of being able to allocate their time to their studies, some of them were self-employed or had to work in order to supplement their pocket money. One of the participants claimed that it was very challenging to balance his studies and work:

Financial issues have been the biggest challenge for me. Of course, they were a blessing in disguise because that was how I got to meet and know people in my industry. But, it was still a challenge because my friends were studying the time I was working. So, time management was a struggle for me. Because as a student I would never recommend to a fellow Malawian student to work 50 percent and the other half study. I think studying should be 70 percent or above and the rest working. I was also thinking about how other people were living their life was a challenge. I would see my friends spend more than R5,000 and I would have used that money for my school. So, comparing one's life to another can be depressing (Student 10)

Thus, it is widely believed that for Malawian transnational students who are self-employed or have part-time jobs, the time they spend studying decreases as they wait for their extra money from their jobs to arrive. This is similar to the argument by Fernex *et al.* (2015: 403) that the expected increase in employment leads to a reduction in study time. This assertion is also in line with Woodhall's (2004) study, which found that international students who are self-funded often face serious economic problems, which can result in them being unable to complete their studies or working part-time while studying. Other experiences include failure to finish their degrees and having to take a break from their studies. However, the ability to work and study showed this Malawian transnational student's agency in a country where they have no support structures. The participant's response revealed that financial support and aspiration are the main factors that influence working while studying in universities in South Africa. The participants also stated that they were able to understand the reasons behind their decision to work while studying. This means that Malawian transnational students are able to gain a better understanding of the effects of working part-time while studying in a new environment (Sanchez-Gelabert, Figueroa & Elias 2017). As a result, this allows them to improve their academic performance and develop their employment prospects (Stone & O'shea 2013; Ziskin, Fischer, Torres, Pellicciotti, & Player-Sanders 2014). Based on the response, the combination of financial benefits and work experience will ultimately enhance opportunities for Malawian transnational students in South Africa. Although Creed, French and Hood (2015) contend that studying full-time and working part-time can have various positive outcomes, participant student 10 believed that employment in South Africa was a necessity to maintain a successful higher education career and survival in the country.

Some Malawian transnationals students reported that they were able to establish and start their own businesses in order to supplement their income. For instance, participant Student 10, who had

a job, was able to start a vegetable and fresh egg business for his fellow students at his student accommodation:

Small scale businesses were available to me, here in SA. I started a business of selling fresh eggs and vegetables to my fellow students. I would buy and sell and make profits. I was earning something good. Just before I stopped, I saw someone also doing the same thing. I know people who make and sell cakes as well. I know someone who used to borrow out graduation gowns. There are many opportunities for me to make money in SA quickly and I take advantage of what I can afford to do to balance my time and school...but like I said earlier I would not advise someone to work and go to school at the same time. One has to give (Student 10).

Through this business, student 10 was able to make more money and help himself to finish his studies. He was also able to develop his own personal dispositions, such as being creative, entrepreneurial, determined, and resilient (Tran & Vu 2018; Bandura 2001; Reyes 2009). Thus, he exercised agency. Agency is dependent on the students' personal dispositions (Klemenčič 2015). For instance, if students are capable of acting as entrepreneurs, generative or creative, then they are more likely to have agency (Klemenčič 2015). According to Oakeshott and Fuller (2001:35), agency is a person's understanding of themselves and their powers, which allows them to create opportunities for themselves. In the case of student 10, he was able to act with agency and create opportunities for himself through entrepreneurship.

During the interviews, participants raised the issue of high costs of living and hidden costs in South Africa. This is a common experience for international students (Calitz *et al.* 2020; Tendai 2012). Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010) analysed the financial vulnerability of international students and found that they pay higher fees than local students pay, for instance health insurance plans that are not available in their home country, and have to pay for books. Most of the Malawian transnational students interviewed described living in South Africa as expensive compared to Malawi:

The cost of living in SA is quite expensive. The culture in SA is also different from Malawi. I am more restricted here because of being Malawian, a foreigner in general. It is a natural instinct, where my body feels that I am not at home (Student 1).

The cons are that being a student here is hard because I do not have access to things like a personal car, mobility is very hard and expensive. Medical aid in SA is also expensive and it is not as useful as people think it is (Student 5).

The participants' responses relate to several studies which report that the unstable prices of

commodities and continuous fluctuations of the exchange rate make the money that transnational students receive worthless (Mudhovozi 2011; Nwokedi & Khanare 2020). According to most Malawian transnational students, the rising cost of commodities caused them to feel the pinch of rising prices. This is seen in their concerns about the financial burden that their education in South Africa places on their parents. For example, participant student 4 expressed her concerns about the high cost of living on her parents:

When I look at the economic crisis back home, studying in SA becomes a bit expensive. So, now when I look at things... I then say to myself right now I am doing my undergraduate and I think about it and reflect back to the conditions in Malawi... I ask myself if I should continue to study. This is because, studying in SA is expensive for my parents. So, these are the factors that become demotivating because I am thinking of returning to Malawi to get job because of how life in SA is expensive. If I return to Malawi, I will be lifting a weight off my parent's shoulders. So, those are the factors I consider and they are the challenges that become demotivating from achieving my goals (Student 4).

From this student's experience, the financial ability or lack thereof of Malawian students can be an impediment to their aspirations. Because of lack of adequate financial support, the interviewee was unsure about continuing with postgraduate studies in South Africa. In addition to this, finding suitable accommodation and support services in South Africa was also challenging for Malawian transnational students. According to Waterfield and Whelan (2017), economic capital can help alleviate some of these issues. Participants resorted to various forms of employment, such as starting a business or working part-time. For instance, Student 1 took up a part-time job as a tutor online to help her mother, who was unable to send money to her. Others asked their fellow participants for help when they had a hard time coming up with funds. For instance, Student 10 noted that his friends helped him manage his finances:

There were times I would not get money. I would borrow money from my friends or family members or alternative resources. Overall, I was just patient, and being organised with my money. For example, I plan my budget (Student 10).

This means that Malawian transnational students need to develop strong agented resources, which can help improve their interactions and quality of life in a host country (Biesta 2008). These can include the establishment of self-regulation, proactivity, and self-organisation (Klemenčič 2015:7).

The section has presented findings on the difficulties transnational students from Malawi faced when they moved to South Africa. It is revealed that they did not have the necessary resources to live comfortably in the country. It was argued that due to their limited economic capabilities, many Malawian transnational students resorted to agency when they needed to. Which led them to be entrepreneurial and start their own businesses. Additional to this, due to the high prices of commodities, many Malawian transnational students in South Africa could not meet their financial obligations. Moreover, this led to them reconsidering their studies in South Africa and seeking help from fellow students.

4.3.2 Economic opportunities

One of the main themes that emerged during the study of the financial experiences of Malawian transnational students was the importance of economic opportunities and benefits in South Africa. Sivize (2017) noted that South Africa is a country that provides many opportunities and linkages international students. This study revealed that the Malawian transnational students found the career fairs held by their schools to be very beneficial. They said that these events allowed them to interact with and acquire internships from various professionals in their field. For instance, participant student 9 stated the various opportunities available to him, not only provided his university, but also surrounding area:

I mean there has been some expos and career fairs at my school, where various companies come and we sign up for internships but they have never contacted us after those events. It is always silences after those events. If I had to look for the opportunities, it would have to be trading business. Where I would buy things here and sell them in Malawi. This is the easiest opportunity offered in the city, exporting goods. With my career, I can get opportunities to work with car dealerships. How I like cars has influenced that opportunity. There are a few dealerships around my area and I did apply for an internship... (Student 9).

The selected Malawian transnational students in the interviews said that it was a challenging experience, but it was also beneficial as South African universities provided various programs and activities that helped them develop their skills and interact with different people. Some of the other advantages of studying in South Africa were the chance to use state-of-the-art equipment and the opportunity to meet other like-minded individuals. South Africa has many advantages for international students. According to Tendai (2012:225), several factors make studying in South Africa an ideal choice for international students. These include the country's many career

opportunities and modern technology. According to survey respondents from a study by Atkins (2002:56), South Africa's high educational standard and variety of courses were some of the factors that attracted many students to the country. Others were satisfied with the opportunities they were provided by their universities:

Before I came here, my first goal that I had set up for myself was to use the opportunities with the WIFI, with the workshops the school provides. I just wanted to dive into the world of my profession, which I never got in Malawi. I have attended every workshop provided by the school... The exposure my university provides is an added advantage to launch my aspirations. The benefit of SA is that I can actually have a relationship with my supervisor or professor. With my professor, she has become my mentor but in Malawi I could not have that. In SA, I get to learn directly with or from my professor. SA gives me access to different people who are leading my profession... From the public university perspective of Malawi and from my experience, is mostly theoretical. I am doing econometrics, when I was in Malawi and I would go into class, I would just see words on the board or projector but my course says I have to have laptop and software to practise the subject. In Malawi, I did not have the practical experience. Imagine I was learning statistical packages without the software, just theory. Some other public Malawian universities do try to improve with educational resources, but my past university and others, it is just theory. But coming to SA was one of the best decisions in my life. It was really interesting to go to class and find code that has been printed out for me. I am in computer lab and I got to practise my econometrics. I was so impressed that this was exactly what I wanted to do. I never had this in Malawi. I mean if people back home have the money, they should run to SA and do their school here (Student 8).

Most participants said that studying in South Africa provided them with the necessary practical knowledge to prepare them for their future careers. One participant noted that he gained more practical knowledge in South Africa than what he learned in Malawi:

I think the higher education system in Malawi is very poor. I will give specific examples. I was at Bunda College doing animal science. When I came to SA to do my masters, I had difficulties to catch up because the standard at which I was taught in Malawi was bad. I had to enrol for other courses just to catch up. I think maybe it is a few institutions in Malawi, but I think they just offer the theoretical aspect of courses and Malawians do not have the practical knowledge or hands on experience of their course. For example, when I talk about the farms that I have visited in Malawi, they are way behind. It was a struggle for me to catch up with curriculum this side because of the poor background I had of the course. Maybe now things have change, but back then it was not good. Even when I compare the standards of other undergraduate students here it is 50 times better than of Malawi (Student 10).

However, even with the positive economic opportunities provided by the South African universities, the respondents felt that they were discriminated against when it came to getting work experience in South Africa. They noted that it was not only hard for them, but also students from other African countries to access work experience. McLellan (2009) noted that international students often face discrimination and xenophobia while studying in South Africa. Buthelezi (2009) also stated that exclusion from educational and employment opportunities in South Africa often occurs against African students. Lee (2010) agrees that some government legislation is discriminatory towards international students in many countries. For example, South Africa has strict regulations regarding international students' working hours. Participant student 4 raised concerns about how the university staff treated her when she tried to get work:

My views have changed quite a lot because all the South Africans I have met are not welcoming towards foreigners. It does not matter what you are coming to do or your purpose is in the country. They have a negative approach when it comes to foreigners and it becomes sad for me because as a student I would like to get work experience. I experienced this first hand and currently dealing with right now, at my institution there issues of xenophobic attitudes towards or discrimination against foreign students. This not necessarily shown and I will explain why. International students at my institution are not allowed to work, but our student permit allows us to work for certain hours. The school has made a certain policy that says international students cannot work at all. So, now I am troubled by this because the school wants us to come learn here, pay school fees and all that stuff but when it comes to us getting employment on campus it because an issue. After doing my research, it is not only at private institution level but even the outside. (Student 4).

Similarly, student 9, who was part of a group that applied for an internship, said that he received no response from the dealerships that he contacted:

There are a few dealerships around my area and I did apply for an internship but they did not respond to my application. I chose not to chase after them once they ghosted me. I just accepted and my holiday was short. This demotivated me but I am still going to push to get something (Student 9).

In this quotation, the participant's sense of agency was evident from the way they approached the issue of internship and lack of opportunities. Even if students do not have a clear idea of their goals and actions, they can still act intentionally (Klemenčič 2015:6). This is because a clear understanding of their intentions does not support some of the factors that influence their actions. For instance, student 9 had to have a good anticipation of the likely outcomes of his actions and

the belief that he can achieve them through his own actions. Thus, Malawian transnational students' sense of agency is displayed through learning how to make choices and manage obstacles (Klemenčič 2015:6).

Furthermore, through their stay in South Africa, the participants were able to improve their personal and academic skills. They were also able to study various subjects. One of the most important factors that the participants were able to take advantage of during their stay was the opportunity to study a particular discipline:

Like I said, when I was coming to SA I was going to go with the flow of things, which was just learning at school. But, my other goal is to specialise, acquire more skills. In as much as I am almost done with my studies. But, I can tell you have already enrolled in different online short courses just to make me be more efficient and skilful. They are changing as opposed to when I was in Malawi. I never thought beyond my studies. But now I take different courses to build up my CV (Student 10).

The other dimension of agency is that it focuses on students' ability to control their actions and ideas. This is because, as they develop their skills, they are able to make better decisions and manage their time (Bandura 2001). According to Adair (2014: 224), agency helped student 10 reach his full potential. It also helped him make choices that would allow him to achieve his goals and become who he wants to become. Student 10, who talked about how experiences have allowed him to expand his potential, demonstrated this:

Before I came to SA, I was willing to go with the flow. I feel like, with my experience and exposure I have had, I want to be somebody who has a name for himself. If people were to talk, I work with chickens and I do a good job with them not only in SA but also Malawi or the core SADC region. I aspire to be that. My aspirations are more leaning towards my career and other areas in my industry (Student 10).

From this quotation, many Malawian transnational students were exposed to various economic benefits and opportunities either provided by their university or their community. These included working, starting businesses, and partaking in workshops. Despite the various advantages and opportunities that Malawian transnational students have in South Africa, they were still discriminated against when it came to obtaining work experience. One participant said that they were not given the same opportunities to apply for internships because of South Africa's strict labour laws and another said they did not get responses when they applied for internships. The

exposure they gained through economic opportunities allowed them to expand their scope of potential and develop their talents. While they did not get the benefits, those who did get the opportunities made the most of them by persisting and making the most of them.

4.3.3 Socialisation with other students

Socialisation is an essential part of transnational and international students' social and academic integration into a host community. According to Weidman *et al.* (2001), interacting with other people can help students develop the knowledge and skills they will need to become part of the host's society (Weidman *et al.* 2001).

During the interviews, the participants talked about their strong relationships with other international students. They also stated that most of their friends were from other countries compared to locals. One participant stated:

I am not in touch with Malawians. I have no interest in them. It is something I have been exposed to with every school international community I have been in, you find that people like to stick amongst themselves and I have never liked that. I do not like conformity, I do not like going with the trend and people form cliques. But, I am that type person who wants to talk to everyone. I really do not care about your creed, race or gender, or ethnic. I care about personality. Wherever I am, I always find people to blend with. I get it, Malawians miss home and they want that sense of community, but for me bearing in mind my upbringing of travel, it has forced me to make connections with locals and other people. I know is always going to be there, so eventually I will be with Malawians again. Most of my Malawian friends in SA are those that I went to high school with. I did not come to SA to look for a Malawian community. I never made Malawian friends. I really, do not want to do the same things in Malawi in SA (Student 2).

Being able to interact with people from different backgrounds was very exciting for student 2 and other participants. This allowed them to expand their knowledge of various cultures in South Africa. However, most international students are typically monolithic in new countries (Antony 2002). Nevertheless, socialisation theories argue that they have the abilities to manage their intercultural and personal situations in a foreign country (Herman & Meki Kombe 2019). Because of their ability to connect with other students from various backgrounds. For example, some of the Malawian transnational students were encouraged to start interacting with international students. One participant noted that this process helped them break out of their circle. One participant mentioned that:

It is good, even though I do like being alone. I do have a lot of friends, who I usually go to my car activities and events with. I usually go to the movies, play football and bowling, and car events and hiking. Basic traveling and activities around Johannesburg. We get together to these things maybe like once a month and it is group of friends. I am the only Malawian in my group, the rest are South Africans, Tanzanian, and Zimbabweans (Student 9).

Interacting with other international students was made easy for the Malawian transnational students, not only because of their interactions with them in the classroom but also outside the classroom. The students reported that being in the classroom made them more known to their fellow students. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that participation and interaction in classrooms can help facilitate social integration in a new environment for Malawian transnational students. Indeed, international students are expected to develop positive social interactions in the classroom due to the shared values they can associate with. According to Luzio-Lockett (1998), participating in class and other important aspects of the class can help students feel more accepted and appreciated outside of the classroom. However, not achieving these can negatively affect their experiences in a host country.

The participants further reported that they had a great time living with and studying with local students, and this made it easier for them to develop strong relationships with them. According to Turner (2006), strong relationships between international and domestic students are developed easily because of the shared classes and them living together in same student accommodations. Regardless, international students still view domestic students as cold and uncaring (Russell 2005). Thus, to remove this cold and uncaring notion about domestic student studies language can have a significant influence on how international and domestic students further interact. One participant noted that the use of language was very important in forming a strong relationship with South African students:

It has been smooth because I am able to communicate with most of them. What makes it smooth is that there is no language barrier, we all speak English to each other, and also it is because I do not like going out there and talking to strangers because I am not sure if they will understand me. I usually wait to see if they speak English to make things easier (Student 9).

However, language alone does not affect the integration between Malawian transnational students and domestic students. Afro-phobic issues do not make it easier for the two groups socialise,

especially outside the university spaces. From the interviews, the study suggested that feeling unwelcomed by the Malawian transnational students made them take time to form relationships with local residents, especially with language differences. Selected participants stated that it was hard for them to form friends with the locals as they spent most of their time hanging out with other Malawian transnational students because of their languages. One participant mentioned:

The language barrier was a big challenge for me to make friends because I was unable to communicate with the locals on campus and off campus. For example, I met a local at checkers recently and spoke to them in English and responded to me in their native language and I couldn't understand. This makes me scared to speak to locals because I have that fear that they will insult me. Another example, is that I have South African roommates and I have sometimes fears that they talk about me, as a result I am always cautious with my actions and words. The language barrier makes me uncomfortable (Student 1).

The responses from the Malawian transnational students, thus, suggest that it is easy to form friends with South Africans that also speak English and live together with them. Indeed, language is very important in influencing how international students are integrated into new university culture. Schafersfurth and Gu (2009) stated that academic and social integration can only be successful if the participants can communicate effectively with their peers and members of the community. Apart from dealing with language barrier and afro-phobic treatment, Malawian transnational students also found it hard to connect with their local counterparts due to the perceptions that they were taking scarce resources from the local South African communities. This perception led to some students experiencing negative interactions with locals. One participant shared her frustration about interactions with locals as follows:

What demotivates me about study in SA it has to with the locals' attitudes and perception towards foreigners. I mean, I am here paying taxes, and you are getting money from me, and you think I am here taking your opportunities? Which opportunities am I taking? So, it is very annoying that locals think I am here to do something bad. I am just here to get my education and going to go back. The locals think that SA is heaven on earth. So, they every foreigner who is here to settle or take their jobs. Which is an issue, but I am not here to do that. They should not accuse all of us. It is a really annoying perception that foreigners are here to steal their resources and opportunities. I feel like I want quickly finish and get out as quickly as possible (Student 8).

On top of that, poor socialisation with local students was also caused by the racial groupings in their universities. Some participants reported that in their interactions with local South African

students, they tended to only socialise with fellow locals based on their similar language and racial background. One participant provided an example of such segregation behaviour:

There was one time in foundation (the first year in SA), I worked with my fellow students in a group project in marketing. It was a pleasant experience working with people with different cultural background. I found that I was marginalised when the group had other members from a different race as me. So, in this specific group, we were divided. The black students were working on the other side, the Asian girl and coloured girl from Durban worked on their own, the white members were on their own (sometimes work in-between). This was not the first time it happened to me. Every time I have a group project, my members divide themselves by race or cultures. I do not know why that happens. It is often automatic. These group projects do not go smoothly at all. I often fail in these group projects because we did not collaborate and working in a divided manner (Student 5).

Although socialisation with local students would have been made easier if the Malawian transnational students often met and interacted with each other, however, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, limited the interactions with the local students. The Malawian transnational students only visited the university to attend classes during this time, and they would leave once they had finished them. One participant said:

To be honest, I have not had a lot of opportunities to interact with other locals because of the pandemic. Most of my interactions are individual or school group projects, which was once. I have very limited interactions. I can't really think of an example to answer the question. Because once I am done on campus, if I had to be there, I would just return to my place afterwards (Student 6).

While for other participants, personality contributed to their poor socialisation with other students. Most Malawian transnational students would not interact with others because of their personality and this prevents them from participating in several social events. When making this point one participant said:

From the social aspect, since I came during the lock down, I have not really socialised much. I have just a few friends. I have not socialised as much. Plus, I am an introvert, so I do not really do social events. But it is fine I guess, no problems (Student 8).

Unlike the other Malawian transnational students who tend to interact with other students as a way of integrating, student 8 chose to negotiate her space by herself. She understood her personality and she did not need to socialise with many people in order to adapt in the lost community. Indeed, socialisation can be a process that differs from one person to another, as Mudhovozi (2011),

emphasized that personality and preference is what people use to meet the needs of the environment when socialising. For instance, student 8 might have not been able to integrate in a conventional way but she was able to still aspire to achieve her goals in South Africa.

In addition to this, different social background interferes with the establishment of strong connection between Malawian transnational students and domestic South African students. One participant said that she had a hard time establishing a friendship with South African students because of this:

The only difference I see from Malawi is that SA locals like enjoyment and having a good time. Now with that is I have had difficulties in creating good friendships with locals because I need friends I can stay with and go shopping with and for many locals, this is boring, they want someone they can go clubbing with or adventures with and someone who can spoil them with money. This lifestyle is not for me. I came here for school and if I see someone is trying to distract me from school, I avoid that friendship (Student 6).

To summarise, some of the extracts from the study revealed that socialisation and social relations are important factors that influence the development of Malawian transnational students' agency. Due to this agency, the socialisation levels of Malawian transnational students differ. While others are able to build strong relationships within their local communities, the rest find it hard interacting with the locals due their perceptions of South Africa's political and cultural history. This poor socialisation of Malawian transnational students led to negative social experiences. This was because they felt unwelcomed. Therefore, indicating socialisation and the development of agency an integral part of the experiences of Malawian transnational students at selected South African universities.

4.3.4 Participation in Social Activities

According to Karp *et al.* (2008) and Ghalayini (2014), being able to participate in various events can help international students feel more accepted on campus. Most of the time, however, Malawian transnational students reported not participating in social events. However, some of them were involved in various off-campus activities. One participant noted that he was involved in a group that was run by students from Malawi:

Yes, I am in touch with other Malawians, especially students. My other friends finished and others that have just arrived in SA. We have a UP Malawian student group, so we have

become like a family. Sometimes we get together (Student 10).

The Malawian student group facilitated a positive social interaction, for not only participant student 10, but also other Malawian transnational students. However, most of these groups are not officially established by South African universities. Regardless, they are important to such students as they allow them to participate in various social activities. In the interviews, many of the Malawian transnational students suggested that the international offices at South African universities and the consulate general of the country of Malawi should regularly coordinate social events or gatherings that involve both resident and other Malawian students. These social activities would help increase the contact between the students and the locals. Another participant noted that participating in social events or gatherings would help the locals and the students appreciate each other's cultures:

The Malawian embassy should help bring networks for us bring together for socialising and networking opportunities, and even inspirations. An association at our universities would also be good because it will help with adapting and adjusting... where there is many there is voice. I only get to know some of my fellow Malawians when they leave and other SA locals are not aware about the traditions of Malawi. Imagine someone once told me that they thought Malawi was in West Africa. So, ya, I think coming together is important (Student 7).

This extract suggests that community activities and student events would help improve the assimilation of Malawian transnational students into the society.

What is observed here is that some Malawian transnational students choose to engage in activities that are purely for their own enjoyment or for collective purposes (Klemenčič 2015:7). Being part of a group of Malawian students in South Africa is regarded as a way of maintaining the Malawian roots. It is also considered a collective act of friendship that contributes to their integration (Isin & Nielsen 2008:2). Collective agency is the power that international students have to fight against unjust and undesirable situations (Isin & Nielsen 2008). In this case, Malawian transnational students partook in social activities to avoid the negative effects of socialisation, which include alienation and loneliness. According to Hopwood (2010: 110), the agency of Malawian transnational students is exhibited by their willingness to find fellow Malawians in their area in order to feel comfortable. This strategy was captured in the interview excerpt that focused on recommendations from the Malawian transnational students about future students. They suggested

ways that could help improve the sociocultural and economic experiences of their fellow students in South Africa:

A student association that is Malawian based and some organisation that can give us more information before we arrive in SA. This will help us adjust or adapt easily and learn more about SA before we make decisions as students. To know where can get affordable student accommodation, or good schools or even where it is safe for students to be. I mean, initially we have no any idea of what to do. And then myself, we should organise all the Malawians to go to the consulate general office here in Malawi. Yeah. And we would collect forms that we need to organise a student association. We met our consular over there and we mention our reason of what we need as Malawian students in SA (Student 5).

This quotation highlights the vulnerability of Malawian transnational students when they are not integrated. In student 5's interview, she described her initial reaction as being lost when she arrived in South Africa. Her agency was demonstrated when she suggested being proactive and quick to respond to the issues when encountered while studying in South Africa but establishing a group of like-minded individuals. When describing her student group, student 5 shifted her focus from being an individual to being part of a collective. This is a significant development in her agency. According to Edwards (2011:34), this is because being able to recognise the resources and motives of other individuals are very important in order to expand one's goals and aspirations. In this case, student 5 was able to recognise the similarities between herself and her fellow Malawian transnational students, thus being able to achieve collective knowledge (Edwards 2011:35).

In conclusion, in order for Malawian transnational students to successfully integrate into South African universities and fulfil their aspiration, they had to engage in social activities and gatherings both on and off campus. Thus, their participation in South African community and Malawian student groups helped them develop social skills and further improve their interactions with the host community.

4.3.5 Cultural Experiences

Getting to know their host country's culture is very important for international students to fully integrate. According to Mudhovozi (2011:293), this allows them to improve their social interaction and develop a deeper understanding of the local environment. During their time in South Africa, Malawian transnational students reported having the opportunity to interact with different people from different backgrounds all over Africa. Because of the vast diversity of South Africa's society

due to its global attraction, many of the Malawian transnational students expressed their appreciation for the culture and diversity of the country's universities. This appreciation was expressed through their willingness to share experiences and knowledge with local students. Selected Malawian transnational students stated that by learning more about different cultures, they gained a deeper understanding of South African communities. One participant expressed his appreciation for South Africa's diversity:

It has been generally fun. I have enjoyed meeting a lot of people and learning about different cultures in SA. I have been able to meet a handful of people who have changed my perspective on everything compared to living back in Malawi. You know back home is not a very open society especially with people with different sexual orientation. Ever since I came to SA, I have been able to find friends who are in same sex relationships and this helped me form a deeper understanding about that demographic of people. So, it has been a good experience. These are things I would have never learnt back in Malawi (Student 3).

Most participants found South African's universities to be multicultural and this was a positive sign as it shows that students are willing to submerge themselves in different cultures. Some also noted that being exposed to a diverse society was very important for them:

I like being culturally exposed because I see SA as a hub for the rest of Africa and the world. Therefore, it becomes easier to branch off from SA to the rest of the world than Malawi. I mean, not many flights come to and from Malawi compared to SA... The ratio or odds of me meeting someone from a different country in Malawi is very low and here in SA is very high. It is also not me meeting SA locals, but also people from Europe and Asia. Also, there are worldwide events hosted in SA and the food is also worldwide, I get to get a taste of countries that I have never been to while here. There is a wide variety of things in SA. These things are available in Malawi, but there very few and do not happen often. Language as well. These give me new knowledge which can help me commune n social environments and putts me at advantage of settling down anywhere in the world. It also helps me be more marketable and diverse in working with various groups of people. To me, exposure means I come dynamic (Student 6)

Achieving goals and aspirations as transnational students was not only about studying but also enjoying the cultural diversity in South African universities. Some of the participants stated that they were exposed to other cultures when they came to South Africa, and this made them appreciate the way other people live in the country. They also said that they were able to and assimilate with the other cultures on and off campus, which helped them achieve a satisfactory integration into the new society.

The dressing was a shock to some students, especially those who came from patriarchal and conservative backgrounds. They said it was very different from what they expected. Student 1 said:

The dressing aspect is also different. I feel like the students are freer to dress how they want and please. For example, short dresses and skirts and crop tops, while in Malawi girls are more restricted on how they dress. So, in general, how people treat each other in SA is different in Malawi. People are more outspoken in SA, and Malawians are very conservative (Student 1)

In addition to this, some of the Malawian transnational students said that they had a hard time finding food in South Africa tasty due to their limited knowledge about how food was prepared there. They also expressed their disappointment with the lack of variety of food:

The food lifestyle in SA is also different from Malawi. The taste of food in SA is different in Malawi. I would have to carry certain foods from home to feel no difference (Student 1).

Food is also something I was shocked by. Back in Malawi, there are local foods and places available to get organic foods. But in SA, it is quite different and the food tastes not organic (Student 4).

What these extracts indicate is that habitus and cultural capital is important to the integration of Malawian transnational students. As Bandura (2001) noted that different cultures have varying cultural conditions when it comes to the implementation of socialisation. What the study found is that one of the most important factors that Malawian transnational students can consider when it comes to developing their social network is the establishment of strong cultural capital.

Therefore, the importance of food and culture in the social integration of Malawian transnational students has been identified. According to the participants, their exposure to various cultures has increased their appreciation for South Africa, which would benefit them in life after school. However, it was also revealed that their lack of familiarity with food and price contributed to their difficulties in integrating. The issue culture shock for Malawian transnational students in terms of freedoms of people also stood out the most. For instance, the freedom of dress expressions and sexuality, which defines the current higher education space in South Africa universities. This has presented by the Malawian transnational students highlights how advance international nature of the South African compared to the regional universities, particular in Malawi. Therefore, the

participants' narratives are a reflection and indication of the reality of what other transnational experience in South Africa.

4.4 The Push and Pull Factors of the Mobility of Malawian Transnational Students

Due to the end of apartheid in South Africa and the start of democracy in the country, there has been a substantial increase in the number of transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa. As a result, this has made South Africa a top choice for transnational students from the country. This section outlines the various reasons attributed to the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa and it addresses the research question: (1) Why do Malawian transnational students decide to study in South Africa?

Lynn and Lee (2013) argue that student migration between countries occurs when international students leave their home countries if they are dissatisfied with their education in their country of origin. This is because the desire to improve their education is not attainable in their own country, thus informing their decisions to studying outside their country (Roberts, Chou & Ching 2010). The sub-sections below present the findings on the pull-push factors of Malawian transnational students to South Africa. Although they had multiple factors that influenced their decision-making process, their perceptions of the Malawi and South Africa were the most common factors that influenced their decisions.

4.4.1 The Perception of Poor Quality of Higher Education in Malawi

Kritz (2013) argued that many African families are able to let their children study in other countries because of the difficulties they experience when it comes to securing admission in their home country universities. The concept of quality is a complex one to explain, as it is used in different education systems all around the world. Although it is subjective to some extent when it comes to assessing the quality of education in a country, it is possible to make a judgement based on various factors that are considered when it comes to higher education.

The results of this study revealed that the parents of Malawian transnational students and the students themselves considered Malawi's education system to be mediocre. They also considered South Africa's education system to be superior. The following comments reflect Malawian transnational students' perception of the quality of education in Malawi as a push factor:

From the public university perspective of Malawi and from my experience, the quality of education in Malawi is mostly theoretical. I am doing econometrics, when I was in Malawi and I would go into class, I would just see words on the board or projector but my course says I have to have laptop and software to practise the subject. In Malawi, I did not have the practical experience. Imagine I was learning statistical packages without the software, just theory. Some other public Malawian universities do try to improve with educational resources, but my past university and others, it is just theory. But coming to SA was one of the best decisions in my life. It was really interesting to go to class and find code that has been printed out for me. I am in computer lab and I got to practise my econometrics. I was so impressed that this was exactly what I wanted to do. I never had this in Malawi. I mean if people back home have the money, they should run to SA and do their school here (Student 8).

When international students start a new course, they make comparisons between the various teaching styles used during their studies (Kritz 2013). Although the participants mentioned a large amount of work, they felt that they had gained a lot from the universities (Wong 2004). For instance, participant student 10 noted that they had gaps in their knowledge about research methods after they had been exposed to the curriculum in South Africa compared to in Malawi. On this aspect, the participant commented:

I think the higher education system in Malawi is very poor. I will give specific examples. I was at Bunda College doing animal science. When I came to SA to do my masters, I had difficulties to catch up because the standard at which I was taught in Malawi was bad. I had to enrol for other courses just to catch up. I think maybe it is a few institutions in Malawi, but I think they just offer the theoretical aspect of courses and Malawians do not have the practical knowledge or hands on experience of their course. For example, when I talk about the farms that I have visited in Malawi, they are way behind. It was a struggle for me to catch up with curriculum this side because of the poor background I had of the course. Maybe now things have change, but back then it was not good. Even when I compare the standards of other undergraduate students here it is 50 times better than of Malawi (Student 10).

The significance of this quotation is that it shows the differences in the quality of teaching between South Africa and Malawi from the perspective of Malawian transnational students. It also highlights the value that Malawian Transnational students attach to acquiring the necessary competencies in a discipline.

Due to the different field of education in SADC, the educational systems in the region varies significantly (Hahn 2005). Moreover, due to the varying educational systems in Malawi and the different types of curriculums that are used, the participants were able to compare their current and

past experiences with Malawian and South Africa. One of the most common comments made by Malawian transnational students was that the curriculum design in South Africa was very different from Malawi:

From my experience, I think my fellow Malawian friends, from my previous school for example, it takes forever to complete your studies, especially post graduate studies. A two-year program can take five to six years because the supervision in Malawian universities is bad. Lecturers would have other jobs to top up their low paying jobs. While in SA, students are assured that they will finish in good time. From what I have heard, from other Malawian transnational students that is the main reason. They want to do their studies in short period time or required time and get done with their degrees. They do not want to five years to finish their masters for example, when it is two years. The education system works is in SA (Student 8).

Most importantly, completing their studies in record time played a part in deciding to study in South Africa. The following participant in the study said that it is very important for him to finish their studies in record time so that they can start their life after school:

My friends whom I left in high school around grade 10 are in a state of limbo. They do not know when they are going to finish university in Malawi. Those same friends I left in Malawi at age of 16 have effectively been in university for 10 years and they don't have degrees. This is a stuck reality, so it's a cost-benefit analysis so Malawians decide to migrate to SA because they want to get their degrees in good time and they complete their school... As I said, I have friends to this day who have not finished school and gotten their degrees, so I did not want to be like them. The strikes in Malawian universities delay one from getting a degree in good time, and that's very discouraging (Student 2).

The deteriorating state of a country's higher education system is often a barrier for students to finish their studies on time (McMillan 2005:27). This issue has caused many Malawian transnational students to migrate to South Africa. The lack of progress in addressing Malawi's higher education needs has also caused many Malawi transnational students to leave the country. Protests and strikes, poor management of public services, the limited teaching and learning infrastructure, and the increasing number of student uprisings are some of the issues that contributed to Malawian transnational students to migrate to South Africa. In 2016, student protests led to the closure of several universities (Nyasa Times 2016). Due to the delays caused by the university closures, many students were not able to finish their studies on time. However, Teferra (2014) states that due to the quality of the education system in South Africa, students may not be affected by the delays in completing their studies. This is because the country's universities

are more competent than those in Malawi are. Despite the various issues that face universities in the country such as protest, South Africa's universities still have the necessary infrastructure to address these issues.

Therefore, Malawi's higher education system is not designed to promote the necessary quality of education and curricula that not only meets their academic and professional expectation (MoEST 2019), but also why many Malawian transnational students turn to South Africa to fulfil their academic and professional aspirations.

4.4.2 The Perception of Quality of Education in South Africa

Park (2009) argued that the pull factors are the perceptions of students about the education they are getting in foreign countries. These factors can influence the students' decision-making process when it comes to studying abroad. Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Nair and Ragavan (2016) states that students performing a comparative analysis of the various factors that affect their choice when it comes to studying abroad. Another factor the participants considered when choosing to study in South Africa was quality of education provided by South African universities. For Van Ginkle and Dias (2007), the quality of education in a university should include the operations of its various departments and units. These include the teaching and learning schedules, academic and non-academic staff, and the environment. The study revealed that the quality of education that was offered at two South African universities influenced the decision of Malawian transnational students to study in South Africa. The following quotations from the interview validate this finding, namely:

I decided to study in SA and not Malawi mainly because of the quality of education. And on top of that, before I came to SA to study for my first degree, I was at the Malawi College of Accountancy where I studied accounting for a year. When I was there, I realised that the quality of higher education in Malawi was not great. Now when I compare the quality of education in the two countries, SA is much better... I think the main factors have to do with getting a better quality of education and getting a well-recognised paper, which most Malawian students are looking for...The ranking of SA universities also plays a role, as they are further advanced than other African universities. I believe they are looking for the best quality of education (Student 1).

Another participant added:

I feel like they are migrating to SA because of the reputation of universities in SA. SA has, compared to Malawi I would say, better universities. SA universities offer a wide range of courses. Malawians are therefore able to study what they want to study that they might have not been able to in Malawian public universities. Also, the ranking of SA universities is international standard, so their degrees are seen to be more valuable and marketable for Malawians. I think those are major factors (Student 10).

The statements above imply that Malawian transnational students were motivated by the poor quality of education they received in Malawi and the perception of better education in South Africa. They also believed that South Africa's education system could help them improve their international outlook and contribute to their own social transformation (Arvanitaki 2014). According to Meštrović's (2017) study, high education standards are very important in attracting and retaining international students. They can also be used to endorse the effectiveness of higher education institutions in the marketing of their products and services (Dado, Petrovičova, Riznić & Rajić 2011).

Thus, choosing a university or program in South Africa, transnational students from Malawi look into the country's educational institutions and programs to make informed decisions to migrate. They then interpreted this data in supporting their choice of schools and universities. This concept is similar to the concept of perceived value, which refers to an evaluation of a product or service based on the customer's needs and preferences (Nicklen, Rivers, Ooi, Ilic, Reeves, Walsh & Maloney 2016). According to Murphy (2007), international students consider a curriculum that is designed to meet their learning needs as valuable when it comes to their career development and knowledge transfer. For instance, student 2 stated that a career development that is geared toward innovation is very beneficial for their future, which motivates him to migrate to South Africa:

The social aspect of SA is appealing and drawing. One would have more accessibility to certain things that can help with their career in SA, especially commercial. Whenever there is new innovations or technologies, they usually use SA as a pilot market for the greater African region. So, Malawians want to get exposure to such things quicker and they become up to speed with what's happening globally and in the Africa region (Student 2).

On top of this, the choice of South Africa as a study destination for Malawian transnational students was motivated by the affordability of tuition fees when compared to Europe and America and the availability of various educational activities and teaching methods. It was based on a positive image that the country has gained from its international standards. It is also argued that

the resources that it has to offer influenced the students' interest in South Africa and Malawian transnational students were aware of these opportunities because of the amount of energy and time that they spent on the search for information that could help them make an informed decision (Park 2009).

4.4.3 Academic Benefits of South Africa Universities

Student choices and decision-making processes in higher education migration is complex and can be viewed from different perspectives such as the global, and curriculum (Gandolfo & Vannozzi 2014). The choices at the SADC level are related to the course selection process (Gandolfo & Vannozzi 2014). And the study revealed that the lack of course availability and the desire to specialise in certain fields drove many Malawian transnational students to look for universities in South Africa that offer courses that can help them improve their professional skills. It is in line with the findings of Wilkins and Huisman (2011) that revealed that the main reason why many international students choose to study outside their country is that their courses of choice are not available in their home countries. In this vein, one respondent revealed:

What made me migrate to SA...it was my course. I am doing a double major in environmental impact and assessment with development studies. So, the reason I migrated to SA was because Malawi, does not necessarily have the course structure that I was looking for. It was more basic in Malawi, it is just environmental science, I wanted it to go deeper into what I wanted to do. SA universities have those options and that's one of the reasons, which is to complete what I wanted to study from the beginning (Student 4).

Participants discussed various concerns about the relevance of education in Malawi to job prospects and industry training. For instance, participant student 5 noted why many Malawians students migrate to South Africa to study:

There are some courses in SA that ensure you get a job the moment you graduate, courses such as accounting. My friends who did their studies in SA and took accounting, they got jobs here in SA because it is a critical skill here. So, I think Malawians students migrate to SA to get better job opportunities quicker, especially high paying job opportunities. I do not think in Malawi there are that many job opportunities for accountants and I do not think they get paid as much as they are paid in SA (Student 5).

For this student, achieving their aspirations was about having access to range of courses and South African universities provided these courses. Therefore, they have a better chance of getting a good education than in Malawi. For example, student 9 had this to say about the matter:

SA universities offer a wide range of course. Malawians are therefore able to study what they want to study that they might have not been able to in Malawian public universities (Student 9).

Therefore, for Malawian tertiary students who can afford and aspire to study in South Africa universities, the right education can only be attained outside of Malawi. For instance, getting a qualification in Malawi limits the students' chances of securing a job and personal development (Karlıdağ-Dennis 2020). Besides the limited number of courses that are available in Malawi's universities, other factors such as poor quality and inadequate research programs are also contributing to the country's education system's shortcomings. According to an analysis done by Kamninga *et al.* (2020), universities in the country have, a limited understanding of the employment needs of their students. This is because they do not have the necessary industry consultations.

In sum, the findings of this study indicate that if a Malawian transnational student wants to pursue a particular field, then they search for universities in South Africa that can provide them with the necessary professional training. According to Wang and Ho (2014), the choice of a country for Taiwanese students to study was influenced by their desire to obtain the necessary training. According to the study, the quality of education, curriculum design, and cost of living were some of the factors that influenced the decision of students from Taiwan. Thus, curriculum design was regarded as one of the most influential factors when it comes to choosing a university for Malawian transnational students.

4.4.4 Transnational Social Networks: Pull Factor

Ma (2009) states that parental influence can play a significant role in providing financial support, guidance, and counselling to their children, as well as training their children in the appropriate ways to study. According to Pimpa (2005), the influence of parents on their children's higher education is also stronger when it comes to studying abroad. It has been argued that parents of the Malawian transnational students had the power to influence their children's professional interests by developing their own personal standards. This is because they have the necessary expertise in

a particular field to make informed decisions. The following quotation highlights appropriate influence by the parents as follows:

My family and I heard from my mom's friend that SA has very good schools, especially the one I am currently in. She told us that SA has friendly people (Student 5).

Taylor, Clayton, and Rowley (2004) explored the role of parental involvement in the development of their children's academic attitudes and behaviours. They found that the influence of parents on their kids' academic accomplishments comprises of their beliefs and actions. In order to make the best choice for their students, the parents of Malawian transnational students focused on the course preferences. Although the study found that the influence of parents on Malawian transnational students' academic performance varied, it also noted that the family's financial situation and the cost of living were the most important factors that they considered when choosing South Africa as a study destination (Cheung 2013). The role of parental influence in the choice of a study destination is suggested in the following statement:

I think other Malawians are migrating to SA for studies through word of mouth. For example, friends and parents recommend other parents and friends. For instance, my dad was able to recommend one of his friends to send their child to the university of Pretoria based on my experience (Student 1).

The desire of parents to provide their children with the best possible education is a central theme in this study. In addition to being able to provide their children with the necessary financial support, for example Chinese immigrant parents in Canada played a significant role in their children's academic success. However, this study argues that the level of influence that parents exert on their children's academic success is dependent on their beliefs and experiences during their formative years. According to Taylor *et al.* (2004), peer support and parental involvement significantly influenced the academic success of European-Americans compared to those from African-American and Asian backgrounds. It is also believed that the influence of parents on their children's academic success is dependent on their beliefs and perceptions about the importance of education. It is very important for students to consider the various factors that affect their decision to study abroad when it comes to choosing a destination. For instance, according to student 5, her family's influence was very important when it came to choosing a country:

I come from a family that is very strict on education. My mom has a PhD and my father has a Master's degree. I come from a background where higher education is such a serious thing, here everyone has to be educated, where everyone has to get at least a master's degree. My parents do want me to do my PhD, personally, I am not interested. But I am being forced to fall in line with everyone else's path, especially my mom, her brother, her cousin and dad. So, they SA has one of the best place can afford to accomplish all the things I have mentioned (Student 5).

In Ireland, strong family ties and social connections were cited as factors that caused fewer international students to study in the country (Cairns 2014). This conclusion is supported by the literature, which shows that the influence of various factors such as parents, social relations, and peer influence can influence the decisions of Malawian transnational students to study in South Africa. It is also believed that strong family ties and social connections can influence the decisions of Malawian transnational students to study in South Africa. For instance, if a family has a positive past migration record, then more Malawian transnational students would be inclined to study in the country.

4.4.5 Personal Aspirations

Before international students start working toward their degree, they usually aspire to migrate. This stage is regarded as the first step in their migration process (Carling 2002: 12). It is also the reason why many international students start looking for a country and institution where they can achieve their goals in (Kiiza 2019). Most of the time, when talking about their ambitions, Malawian transnational students only discuss their future employment and higher education goals. However, most of them noted that higher education in South Africa is beneficial for them in terms of their career goals. The study revealed that Malawi transnational students consider studying in South Africa as an opportunity to live their lives independently and develop their potential. They also noted that they would be able to survive away from their family members and parents. Participant 2 stated that:

I knew at the time that I would have more options when I get to SA and I will get my degree in good time. I knew I would get a feel of what I wanted, SA was going to be my launch pad, a stepping stone for me. I did not know what would be next, but I knew I would figure it out once I was in SA. My expectation was that SA was going to be my sand box where are will experiment and figure out myself because of how people back in Malawi would describe it as a land of opportunities and freedom (Student 2).

Regardless of their goals and ambitions, most of the students from Malawi stated that higher education in South Africa is beneficial for them. They also noted that it would enable them to gain better employment opportunities. Although they have different views about the importance of education, most of the students agreed that it would make them more marketable as seen in the extract that follows:

Looking at the ranking of African universities, SA has the best universities. Getting an education in SA would mean I would qualify at a popular educational hub in the continent with the best international practises. So, that being the case, it would differentiate me from someone else with the same degree from Malawi. The ranking and the quality of education is international standard, so now if employers would put me and the other person on a pedestal, I have a better chance of getting the job because of the facilities I have been exposed to (Student 4).

The results of this study revealed that Malawian transnational students have a clear understanding of what they want to be when they graduate. According to Marginson (2014), international students have a professional and academic image of themselves, but they will only achieve this by transforming themselves through a process that involves disengaging from their parents' control.

4.5 The Challenges Encountered by Malawian Transnational Students

While international students face various non-academic issues, such as discrimination and financial difficulties, they are not as well known as their counterparts in the traditional academic realm. This is because a growing body of literature has addressed these issues. Some of these include prejudice and discrimination, as well as financial difficulties. For the purposes of this study, themes relating to language as an integration barrier, discrimination, xenophobia and crime, emerged from the data. The sub-sections discuss findings on the challenges experienced by Malawian transnational students at selected South African universities and responds to the research question: (2) What are the challenges that Malawian transnational students encounter while studying in South Africa?

4.5.1 Language an Integration Barrier

Language is very important to African international students in South Africa as it allows them to access various social services and facilities. These include registration and transport, as well as accommodation. Language is also very important to socialisation of African communities

(Ralarala *et al.* 2016; Tshotsho, Cekiso & Mumbembe 2015; Mudhovozi 2011). Most Malawian transnational students are fluent in English (Muula & Broadhead 2003). However, this language was very challenging to use for social interaction with the South African local community because of the multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment.

The biggest challenge for the interviewees to socialisation in South Africa is the language barrier. They said that English was the most challenging language to communicate with, as it was not the home language for most South African local students and community members, as it was for the Malawian transnational students. Due to the language barrier, it was hard for both locals and Malawian transnational students to make any meaningful conversation. One participant said that he had a hard time understanding his guard at his accommodation:

There is always a language barrier between myself and actual locals. For example, right now in the building I am staying in, there is a female guard who does not speak English at all. Whenever I try to communicate with her, we are always lost in translation. Other than that, it has been well with my fellow students but some are not the friendliest (Student 3).

Some participants had a hard time interacting with the local students, as they would often start talking in their language while others did not understand them. This behaviour made them feel isolated and lonely, and it affected the other Malawian transnational students. According to the participants, the use of native languages can have a negative impact on their relationships with other people. Two of them expressed their concerns about resident students who spoke their local language in their company:

I have moments where I wish I would be in Malawi, where I feel safe. I have South African roommates that constantly speak in their native language is makes me feel isolated and segregated. Sometimes I wish to move out. I am currently planning on moving out because of the language barrier. Now I can't stick up for myself, I can't defend myself because I am in a foreign country, so I can't say the wrong things. So, to avoid conflict I just have to move out. These things are stressful, and I can't go to my room because I have deal with such (Student 1).

There are times where I am in a group with my friends and they are speaking the local languages, I feel like they are trying to talk about something they do not want me to know. I feel like locals use their languages as a weapon to harm foreigners. To make people feel isolated (Student 7).

In addition to the university, social integration among Malawian transnational students also extended beyond the campus. This is because many of them have experienced social interaction outside the university. They noted that the language barrier is a major issue when interacting with local residents. Participants talked about their frustrating experiences due to the language barrier. Many of them noted that South Africans would not understand them when they spoke English, forcing them to use the local language. Many Malawian transnational students also found this to be very frustrating as they did not understand the multiple languages used in these countries. According to Mudhovozi (2011), people tend to detach themselves from people who do not speak their local language. Some participants noted that they were fine with being able to converse with other students in Zulu, even though her main language of communication was English:

Funny story. I was at the mall and some random man comes to me and starts speaking Zulu. Now I have acquired some understanding Zulu. So, I did not respond the way he wanted me to, so I told him to speak English. He was shocked and asked me why I did not speak his language. He asked me where I was from. So, I just walked away. He began to insult me. This experience just made me lose hope in communicating with strangers in SA (Student 6).

Many transnational students from Malawi encountered issues with South Africa's black community. Many people in South Africa expected students from other countries should be able to speak their local languages. However, selected Malawian transnational students were not able to do so. One participant expressed this frustration:

One time I went to gold reef city and I went to the bathroom, some local lady greeted me in a local language and I greeted her back in English and she started asking me where I was from. I do not why locals here always assume everyone who is of colour is South African, when we are not are. So, this lady started shouting at me for speaking English and asked me what language I speak at home. I told her I speak English because I do speak English at home. She went on shouting about what am I doing here. It was so unpleasant and awkward (Student 5).

Some Malawian transnational students tried to understand the importance of learning about the South African local way of life. Participant student 6 and other participants tried to create some understanding between the locals and themselves by portraying the South African lifestyle and culture to them (Myburgh *et al.* 2006). They also tried to align themselves with other students who share the same beliefs:

I have learnt to speak Zulu and lingo of Xhosa and Tswana. It has helped me a lot because even if I greet someone in their native language, even if going forward I speak English, they give me the benefit of the doubt as oppose to starting the conversation in English. I also mimic the way SA locals behave socially. For example, people here like to greet each other all the time, not matter if you have already met, so I do that to make me feel so comfortable (Student 6).

Learning a new language can help students adapt to the new culture and life in a foreign country. Ward, Chang, and Lopez-Nemey (1999) noted that students who are fluent in the host language tend to have fewer social problems than those who are not proficient in the language. Through her agency, participant student 6 was able to transform her world by learning the local language. Scholars such as Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (2001) have shown that people can develop their identities using language and dialogue. The participants learned about the importance of language and how it can be used to improve their communication skills in South Africa. From a practical perspective, the limited capabilities of these students can be a handicap when it comes to their aspiration and agency (Adenekan 2020:17). However, despite their limited knowledge of the native South African languages, they still considered themselves capable of communicating effectively. They believed that their ability to speak other languages would allow them to overcome the various challenges they would encounter in South Africa. They also noted that their ability to communicate effectively would help them excel in their studies. Thus, language barriers can have a negative effect on a person's academic success, social interactions, and employment (Adenekan 2020:17). Thus, the main barriers to social integration between South African and Malawian students were language and local community members' unwillingness to speak English. This resulted in the students not interacting with the locals, while others took the initiative to learn local phrases to make their integration easier.

4.5.2 Discrimination, Xenophobic Attitudes, Crime

Prejudices and stereotypes against international students can prevent them from developing strong relationships with their host country nationals (Constantine *et al.* 2005). It is because African immigrants in South Africa have different experiences from their native counterparts (Tella 2016). This study shows that xenophobia is not limited to undocumented Malawian migrants in South Africa; it also affects Malawian transnational students. Despite the presence of multicultural universities in South Africa, the experiences of Malawian transnational students were still very

different from those of their native counterparts. There were also instances of discrimination against them.

Many Malawian transnational students said they experienced discrimination at the hands of officials. They pondered if the judgement they were experiencing was due to their culture or nationality. One participant said she was worried about getting a job because of the situation:

So, here at school when there are vacancies on open day, I would send my CV and the staff at HR would tell me that I cannot look at your CV because you are a foreigner. The staff did not want to hear me out or understand that I need some extra money. They do not even touch other international students' documents. Even the advertisements, state that this application excludes international students, only locals. Now I ask myself, what's wrong with international students? (Student 4).

Apart from being subjected to discrimination by officials, some participants were also disturbed by racist remarks made by members of the surrounding community. One participant recalled being called a monkey and an incident with an Uber driver:

So, I used to stay in Hillcrest, around this area a lot of white people stay there and other people you can meet. I remember one time; I went to get food and I think there was a person who called me a monkey. I was very surprised. Xenophobic attacks, I can say I was grapping an Uber and the driver saw my name and asked me where I was from and I told him I am from Malawi. He became to talk ill of Malawians and foreigners in general. At the end of the day these experiences I have encountered, I knew it was going to happened sooner or later. I knew I was going to experience racism or xenophobic attacks. There is no way I can be in country where these things happen on a daily basis and it doesn't happen to me (Student 3).

Xenophobic attacks are common in South Africa and for this participant, achieving their goals and/or aspirations was about dealing such attacks or general anti-African sentiments. Some participants believed that university structures like the Student Representative Council and other institutions at universities were contributing to the discrimination against Malawian transnational students. According to the participants, these organisations only cater to the needs of South African students and ignore the various issues faced by international students from Africa. This was apparent when a participant said:

Discrimination! I can tell you a short story. What happened was, I am currently in my third year and I contested in the SRC elections. I won the role as International students' officer and I am the only international student who is part of the SRC. Now, because of the school

policy that foreigner students cannot work on campus, the people on campus seem to have put me in that position to look like they care about international students. But, when we have meetings, whatever I say is not necessarily taken into consideration. This was my first-time experiencing discrimination, and when I would raise an issue, my issues were not taken seriously by staff at the school. Yet, they were taking the other SRC officers' issues, who were locals, seriously. I really felt that the school was just putting me there to show case that they care for international students (Student 4).

It was revealed that many participants felt that universities were discriminating against them due to how they had to pay their fees in full and pay an international student levy, while students from South Africa were allowed to pay in instalments. One participant also supported this frustration:

Right now, what demotivates me has to do with the change of administration with my school. I am now truly seeing a difference in how SA higher education is like. My previous school was run by Monash Australia, but now the locals have taken over and it has not been a pleasant experience, especially for international students. One thing I do not like, is the fact that we get charged international student levy now, which we did not get charged with Monash Australia (Student 5).

According to the participants, they were also subjected to various derogatory comments from the community. Many people who are foreign in South Africa are called names such as "makwerekwere," which is a derogatory term for individuals who do not understand the language of the country (Buthelezi 2009; Pithouse-Morgan *et al.* 2012). One of the participants said that members of the community called her a "makwerekwere":

What demotivates me about study in SA it has to do with the locals' attitudes and perception towards foreigners. I mean, I am here paying taxes, and you are getting money from me, and you think I am here taking your opportunities? Which opportunities am I taking? So, it is very annoying that locals think I am here to do something bad. The fact they even call us makwerekwere is very disappointing. I am just here to get my education and going to go back (Student 8).

Many participants were disappointed by how their South African counterparts, especially black South Africans, treated Malawian transnational students. Most Malawian transnational students experienced discrimination when they interacted with the community. Some of them have experienced mistreatment by taxi drivers. Participants also stated that members of the community in South Africa racially profiled them.

The only bad social interaction I have had is an example when I went to Johannesburg CBD and there was a taxi conductor who came up to me and grabbed me to force me to get on his taxi (Student 1).

There are some areas where black people go and whites go to. For example, I remember the other time I went to a bar in Lynnwood, which is predominantly white, before I got into the bar the bouncer told me not to cause any trouble and searched me. I told him that I was not going to cause trouble and I asked him what made him assume that. Now, everyone that was coming into the bar after me was not searched, so he assumed because I was the only person of colour in that bar (Student 3).

Although they did not witness incidents on campus, participants noted that they had witnessed instances of xenophobia in the community between black South Africans and foreigners. The participants believed that the increasing number of foreigners entering South Africa had led to an increase in xenophobia. One participant stated that he had stopped telling his friends about his achievements because of the fear that the news might trigger xenophobic attitudes:

When I talk about xenophobic things, I would not say directly. I would say, sometimes when I am doing well other black locals might be threatened by me, thinking that I want to steal their jobs. I could sense that with my other friends. But I am really working hard for this. As a result, I stopped sharing my achievements with my local friends. I think if you show off your achievements, it might trigger some xenophobic attitudes by locals. Even if you are friends (Student 10).

Despite the fact that they did not encounter xenophobia on university campuses, participants admitted that other people did encounter it in South Africa in various forms. This kind of act affected their social interactions with the local population. Some studies have shown that despite the various difficulties that transnational students face, they are able to overcome these obstacles and achieve their goals (Borg & Cefai 2014; Wu, Garza & Guzman 2015). These studies also indicated that their experiences enhanced their identity and helped them develop and adapt to their new environment. Through these experiences, Malawian transnational students were able to develop their positive experiences and become individuals that are more resilient. It also helped them become more successful and active participants in South Africa universities. Various studies have shown that international students can improve their personal and professional life by developing their social support, gaining more confidence, appreciating and respecting differences in cultures (Bista 2015; Borg & Cefai 2014; Lillyman & Benneth 2014). These factors can also help them function effectively in their home countries (Rajpal 2012). In addition, they can improve their knowledge and develop their critical and innovative skills (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day 2010).

Selected participants stated that crime also led to social integration issues. Most of them said that they were victims of violent attacks and robberies. One participant said:

Before coming to SA, I was always warned and saw how people got mugged randomly. So, I was always cautious of my valuable items in places I think where not safe. When I got here, I was doing exactly that, just trying to stay away from places that are dodgy, keeping my valuables safe. Now, I was at the mall and shopping. When was done, I ordered an Uber to get back home, little did I realise that someone was following me. I have this happen when I know the number plate for the Uber, I put it straight in my bag. Unfortunately for this time, someone grabbed my phone from hands and went into a getaway car. So, lucky my Uber driver had arrived in time and I was able to get home (Student 6).

Most of the crime that was described during the interviews were committed off-campus. It occurred when the participants were traveling to or from university. Malawian transnational students experience social integration challenges in South Africa due to crime and discrimination. However, they noted that they did not encounter xenophobic attacks in their universities. According to De Haas (2006:76), transnational students from Malawi were not expected to have similar experiences to those of South African citizens, especially since South Africa's history has been heavily affected by racial segregation and colonialism (Crush 2006:103).

4.6 Experiences of Malawian Transnational Students and the Influence on Integration and Aspirations

This section reports the findings on the influence of the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students on their integration and aspirations, and responds to the research question: (3) How the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students impacts their integration and aspirations at selected South African universities?

The study presented and revealed several findings on the factors that influenced the economic and socio-cultural experiences of Malawian transnational students. These factors firstly included how socio-economic background and economic capital affects these students. It was observed that being financially capable helped the Malawian students with securing good accommodations and support services while studying in South Africa. To deal with these challenges, they were able to establish their own businesses and manage their finances; they were satisfied with their stay. Thus, their agency was a vital component of the integration process in South Africa, and according to

the findings of this study, it is beneficial for Malawian transnational students to integrate into the country's universities. Despite the advantages of transnational education, poor economic backgrounds can prevent many students from integrating seamlessly into the study environment (Fernex *et al.* 2015: 403). Therefore, this revealed to the study that poor economic backgrounds could prevent Malawian transnational students from seamlessly integrating into South African universities and fully achieving their goals. It shows that socio-economic background can determine the number of opportunities a student has in a host country like South Africa.

The second factor that the study found was how the availability of economic benefits and opportunities made Malawian transnational students see their potentials and talents from a different perspective (Marschall 2017:220). Because these benefits and opportunities, the Malawian transnational students were also more likely to take the initiative to create and manage their own opportunities. This made the students exhibit a willingness to be purposeful in their actions and said that living in South Africa has made them realise their goals. One participant exhibits this point:

I am just motivated to live a certain type of life and lifestyle. I think back home I was not exposed to a good lifestyle like SA, like super cars and estates. I have gotten a picture of what kind of life I aim to live. The exposure is vast in SA (Student 3).

Being in South Africa has given Malawian transnational students new perspectives on the country. While they were studying, they maintained their goals and aspirations despite the challenges that they faced. These students were able to maintain their goals because of their individual and environmental sustainability and through the exercise of agency (Azmat, Osborne, Rossignol, Jogulu, Rentschler, Robottom & Malathy 2013). For example, one of the Malawian transnational students, student 9 had set goals to get a degree and settle in South Africa after his studies:

I will be looking for a job here in SA, 100 percent. Might also look for a job in Malawi. I am leaning both sides. If I stay, I stay. If I go back to Malawi, I will go. But, I will be tied to SA, I will try to find a way to return to SA (Student 9).

Initially, he wanted to be an accountant, but after seeing how hard math was, he decided to switch to marketing. Although external factors could not influence his decision, the agency that helped him reach his goals was able to help him to find other alternatives and reach his full potential.

Through the agency that helped him reach his goals, he was able to make his own choices and pursue what he wanted to do. The various career opportunities in South Africa also influenced his decision-making process.

The third factor was negative interactions with locals affected the experiences of Malawian transnational students. Many of the Malawian transnational students said they were not welcomed by them and were subjected to unfair and judgmental comments:

Xenophobic attitudes are an issue, especially language. if we do not speak like Zulu it is like we are being rude and when we tell them we are not from here, the locals give you this look (Student 5).

The behaviour of the locals affected the Malawian transnational students, who were left feeling isolated and excluded. This issue spotlighted the need for social integration in order for the students to succeed. According to Song (2013), the success of international students should be measured not only by their degree, but also by their social integration. Social integration is a process that involves building strong relationships with other people (Tinto 1975). This can be done through various extracurricular activities and peer groups, which many of the Malawian transnational students partook in for successful integration.

The fourth factor revealed after the data analysis was the language used by transnational students from Malawi was instrumental in their integration into South Africa. Unfortunately, they had a hard time connecting with their local counterparts due to their limited knowledge of the local languages. The study also revealed that when the students socialised with other people, their language was a barrier to their interactions:

The language barrier, the culture shock. Because I was unable to communicate with the locals on campus and off campus. For example, I met a local at checkers recently and spoke to them in English and responded to me in their native language and I couldn't understand. This makes me scared to speak to locals because I have that fear that they will insult me. Another example, is that I have South African roommates and I have sometimes fears that they talk about me, as a result I am always cautious with my actions and words. The language barrier makes me uncomfortable (Student 1).

In addition to this, they were racially and ethnically segregated because their language barrier. However, by exercising agency some of the Malawian transnational students were able to integrate

into the local society by imitating their mannerisms and learning the local languages. Nevertheless, others were left feeling, isolated and lonely because of the language barrier (Song 2013; Mudhovozi 2011).

The final factor that influences the economic and socio-cultural experiences of Malawian transnational students' integration and aspirations was their participation in extracurricular activities and events. Although many of the Malawian students lacked the necessary social skills, such as language to interact with the local communities, social activities and groups helped enhance their social integration in South Africa's universities. After participating in these activities, several Malawian transnational students said that they were able to improve their skills in speaking different languages:

I am mostly exposed to Xhosa because I work with a few of them. I love their language, especially how it sounds and how they dress in their traditional attire. When I hang out with my Xhosa friends at social events or we go out, or we are just hanging out... I ask them to learn the language and they do teach me (Student 7).

This aligns to the findings of Ali *et al.* (2016), who found that participating in extracurricular activities enhanced local and international students' interaction as they shared and taught each other how they can pronounce words and phrases in their native languages.

Peer group associations helped Malawian transnational students connect with other students. However, their integration was restricted due to their fears of discrimination and crime by the locals. After finishing her studies in Malawi, student 6 wanted to look for a job in South Africa. Before she moved to South Africa, she was mainly focused on Malawi. Nevertheless, after she started studying, she realized that South Africa was a better place for her:

My aspirations... Personally I would like to work in public service. So, those are your charities, developmental organisations. I want to empower people. Here in SA, if I have the opportunity to get employed, I would like to do that here. I also want to take any opportunity that arises... SA will connect me to the rest of the world and Africa, so it makes it a good platform for me to be exposed to different things. Malawi, for instance, still gives you exposure but not as much as SA. For example, a lot of NGOs that I know and would like to be a part of are established here in SA. Almost all of them, I believe. The ones that I know in Malawi are three or four that I would like to work for. So, SA has a bigger economy and that means I have options (Student 6).

She changed her goals after she saw the numerous economic opportunities that were available in the South Africa. However, after she was mugged, she was afraid that she would be affected by the incident and asked herself how she would survive in South Africa if she remained after her studies. As a result, by exercising her agency, she befriended South Africans that also spoke English and similar experiences as her and mostly engaged with her fellow Malawians. Similarly, other Malawian transnational students that shared the same experiences and tended to avoid getting involved in social activities that could attract crime and discriminatory interactions with locals.

4.7 The Coping Strategies of Malawian Transnational Students

According to literature review, international students face various challenges when they relocate to a new country. Some of these include adjusting to a new culture, food and language barriers, and homesickness (Ghalayini 2014). This study revealed that transnational students from Malawi also experienced loneliness, crime, and unfamiliar cultures and foods. These factors had an impact on their integration and achieving their aspirations. This section reports the findings on the tactics used by Malawian transnational students to ease integration, and responds to the research question: (4) What are the strategies Malawian transnational students use to ease their integration?

4.7.1 Use of Co-national networks: Transnational social fields

International students need the support of their families, friends and school to overcome the challenges they face when they move to a new country (Beech 2014; Findlay *et al.* 2006:314). In addition, they need to establish social networks that can help them cope with their new environment. According to Tanaka *et al.* (1997), international students tend to build social networks that can temporarily act as their country of origin's social networks. These social support systems help international students cope with the challenges they face when they move to a new country. They also help reduce their stress levels and improve their interactions with the host nationals (Lee & Rice 2007).

Apart from being away from their families, friends, and other transnational students in South Africa, Malawian transnational students had a hard time maintaining support structure. The students aimed to help themselves form new ones by connecting through their social networks (Strayhorn 2012:111). During the adjustment period, many of the Malawian transnational students relied on their friends for support. Also formed strong bonds with other African nationals due to

their similar of their backgrounds. Indeed, having supportive friends can help boost one's self-efficacy, which is important for agency (Klemenčič 2015). Most of the participants also resorted to socialisation with friends to cope with their difficulties. They said that they could not trust the locals. One participant said:

An overall opinion, I have never really experienced anything with locals because I really gravitate towards, Zimbabweans, Zambians and other foreign nationals, not really locals. This is because there are a lot of stories I hear that amongst locals relating to gender based violence, rape and murders. So not being around them is a defence mechanism, I just completely avoid interacting with at all. I would not necessary say that they are safe people, but it would be safer not to interact with them all or if you do, it should be at a distance (Student 4).

Besides the fact that most Malawian transnational students socialised with other African international students due to the shared experiences and cultures they had, some preferred being friends with fellow Malawians as they were comfortable with the language and culture. In support of this observation, one participant said:

I have my own Malawian community of friends and I think it is nice. It makes me feel closer to home and I do not feel home sick. Just the fact that we the same habits, values, traditions gives me that sense of home, that I am not alone and things will be okay (Student 7).

Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010) suggest that Malawian transnational students favoured to chatting with fellow Malawians as they have cultural connections and know each other from back home. Such friendships are essential as they provide them with someone to talk to in time of despair. One participant noted that the students supported each other:

Before the lock down, Malawians students at my school used to meet and organise get together. Those that were new to the school were helped by this group of Malawians. This group was very important because it would help other Malawian students to settle down, who to contact in case of an emergency. I mean, being alone in a foreign land, one needs a community of their nationality. Being in a community also helps one adjust or respond to culture shocks. But, because of the lock down and others graduating and leaving, the group died. I still think it is important to have such things. It also helps to speak your language since locals force us to speak theirs (Student 10).

An essential part of any social network of international students is the presence of co-nationals (Maudeni 2001). This can other include migrants, students, and relatives from the home country. The study found that the strongest social network ties for Malawian transnational students are those

of co-national network. Many of them also established their own networks before they arrived in South Africa. These pre-existing social networks allowed them to gather information about their new environment and choose what university to attend. One participant gave an example of this:

No, I did not have issues of adjusting. It is because I had friends from Malawi who were already here, they really helped from the first day I landed. They helped with very thing, showing me around and the public transportation, opening my bank account. Things did not take me forever to get accustomed to. So, I adjusted really quickly (Student 8).

Through the co-national network, Malawian transnational students were able to discuss their personal issues and political concerns in their own language (Herman & Meki Kombe 2019) and enjoyed cooking together with their fellow nationals. One of the participants, participant student 4, said that her fellow students would often gather around to prepare their favourite local food. The co-national network can provide various support services such as food, accommodation, and transportation (Herman & Meki Kombe 2019). However, this support was limited due to the financial constraints of many students in the country, as they did not have the funds to visit them. Nevertheless, the close co-national network of Malawian transnational students had its disadvantages. One participant noted that there were instances of unhealthy competition among students:

No, for me it is not important. At least have one Malawian friend. I think that's enough, if you have one or two you would be fine. I mean you cannot be friends with everyone. I cannot get along with everyone. Having a Malawian community never works. I mean if we were people who have unity from within our own nation, but even within our own nation there is no unity. How can one create unity because we are in another country? It never works (Student 5).

Although, the Malawian network was not established by the university, which is a common expectation. Instead, it was established by the Malawian transnational students who were dissatisfied with the lack of student societies in their universities. This group organised events and advocated for common goals. The findings presented in this section that most Malawian transnational students in selected South Africa socialised with each other due to their shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They also formed networks based on their backgrounds (Al-Sharideh & Goe 1998; Bentley 2008). Mudhovozi (2011) stated that African international students in South Africa tend to have many social networks made up of their friends from their home countries.

4.7.2 *Extracurricular Activities*

Gatherings and social events, such as sports and community programs, can help students develop social skills and improve their integration into their new surroundings. These activities can also make them feel more at home (Becker, Dong, Kronholz, & Brownson 2018; Rienties, Beusaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet & Kommers 2012). Selected participants suggested that transnational students from Malawi joined various extramural and social activities in order to integrate into South Africa. One participant stated that he felt welcomed after participating in gatherings or social events:

It is good, even though I do like being alone. I do have a lot of friends, who I usually go to my car activities and events with and that's how we met and bonded over. I usually go to the movies, play football and bowling, and car events and hiking. Basic traveling and activities around Johannesburg. These activities definitely made me feel welcomed and at home (Student 9).

South Africa's universities need to improve their operations and provide better services to their students, according to participants. They suggested establishing an official student organization for Malawi, and they noted that increasing awareness about other cultures could help improve the interaction between students and South African locals. To achieve this, participants suggested that schools create programs that highlight the various aspects of their culture:

I think the experiences of Malawian students can be made easier if different stakeholders play a role. Firstly, if a Malawian student comes to SA for the first time, we should be able to meet up with them and get to know each other. For example, I only got know about you because of this study and you have been at UP for two years. Without this opportunity, I would have not met you. I mean, if there was platform to make us get to know each

The Malawian transnational students who partook in extracurricular activities were exercising their agency, as they saw that socialisation in the classroom was not enough for them to feel comfortable in South Africa (Bong & Skaalvik 2003). The extracurricular activities helped them further develop their self-concept, which in the end helped them enjoy social activities and deal with tasks that are more challenging (House 2000).

4.7.3 *Close Family and Friends: Transnational Social Networks*

In addition to being able to communicate with family and friends back home, social sites such as Facebook and Instagram are used by transnational students to keep in touch with family while in the host country (Brooks 2005). These websites enhance the exchange of information and staying in touch with back (Koehn & Rosenau 2002; Alzougool *et al.* 2013).

Family networks in both South Africa and in Malawi provided Malawian transnational students with emotional support. For instance, participant student 3 said that whenever he felt depressed, he would visit his brother in the same city in South Africa. Another participant said that she would often call her sister back home to provide support:

I believe my family and friends have been supportive. Like, for example, when I have difficulties in school. I usually call my younger sister and friends and they would remind me that everything will be fine, and giving me advice to cope. They would guide me on how best to handle the issue. The school stress would be too much and calling them would make things much easier and made Malawi much closer (Student 1).

Transnationalism refers to maintaining cross border relations with family members and friends. In this case, many Malawian transnational students often travelled back to Malawi during the school holidays to visit their relatives and friends but also reconnect with their Malawian roots (Kapindu 2011). The need to go home was influenced by various psychological needs, including the longings and memories of experiences, the emotional attachment to people and places and the need to belong (Marschall 2017). Many transnational migrants acknowledged the importance of contact with Malawi. According to Johannes, Dzingirai, and Chirisa (2021), the strong economic and social ties between Malawi and Malawian migrants is evidenced by frequent visits to relatives in Malawi and this study revealed that many of the Malawian transnational students experienced homesickness and stress during their stay in South Africa. Therefore, going back home was a strategy they used to relieve themselves from these issues in South Africa. This was exemplified in the experience of student 9 and student 10 who had not visited Malawi since arrival:

Because I have not been to Malawi in a long time, I would have loved to be going to Malawi twice a year... Going back home would be a chance for me to embrace my Malawian culture. I get tired of just speaking English, I want to be with people who I can speak my mother tongue with. Speaking English every day can be stressful. I feel like once in a while it is important for one to go back home just to refresh and be with family, so that when I

return for school I am rejuvenated. I know some other people who I work with have not been back to Malawi in a long time, they do not look stressed but I would strongly advise them to do so. The reasons why I would go back to Malawi would let me release myself because I get so stressed and tensed up in SA. Your home is your home., (Student 10).

While most family members encourage and support Malawian transnationals in South Africa, the negative perceptions about the country's culture and environment caused many students and families to feel uneasy. These fears were mainly caused by the xenophobic attacks that have occurred against refugees and immigrants from Africa. In this scenario, safety was very important for students:

I like where I stay because of the fact that it is far from the distractions and influence of the negative things that happens in Johannesburg, such as crime, xenophobic attacks in the informal townships, trafficking and mugging... Safety was important because I am far from parents, so that puts anxiety. It gives me a peace of mind and my parents as well and ensure that my parents know I am protected (Student 7).

These findings are evident in Guan, Larose and Boivin' (2004) study, which investigated the link between parental attachment and social support in transnational students. The findings of the study matched those of this study, which found that transnational students from Malawi had higher levels of loneliness and social anxiety, but also missed their parents (Guan *et al.* 2004). The study revealed that as they moved to South Africa, transnational students from Malawi felt more secure and appreciative of their parents' support and their expectations of support from their parents were related to security perceptions. Having a secure relationship with your parents can improve the quality of life for some students (Guan *et al.* 2004).

4.7.4 Personal Aspirations

Nussbaum (2016) noted that students' goals are determined by various factors such as their social backgrounds and previous experiences. For many Malawian transnational students, their ambitions and plans were driven by their career expectations and plans after their studies (Danziger & Eden 2007). Most of the Malawian transnational students in the study were motivated by the desire to gain higher education and employment. Even though they a good understanding of the country's challenges such as discrimination and xenophobia (Pithouse-Morgan *et al.* 2012). Nevertheless, that did not hinder them from achieving their aspirations and goals in the country.

From the findings, it was revealed that the aspirations and goals of Malawian transnational students were identified as instrumental in the development of their lives. It was not only instrumental in their choice to study in South Africa, but also their ways of navigating challenges (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson 2015:626; Emirbayer & Mische 1998). In the following quote, a participant named student 10 talked about his strategy for choosing a school in South Africa. He has gained a deeper understanding of himself by sharing his thoughts on his plans:

The main aspiration is just to be somebody in the industry who has a name for himself. Before I came to SA, I was willing to go with the flow. I feel like, with my experience and exposure I have had, I want to be somebody who has a name for himself. If people were to talk, I work with chickens and I do a good job with them not only in SA but also Malawi or the core SADC region. I aspire to be that. My aspirations are more leaning towards my career and other areas in my industry. I feel like getting a higher education in SA will make me more qualified and employers will see me as more knowledgeable. It will put me in a better position. The more qualifications and skills I get in SA, the less competition it puts me with other people whom I am with at the same level. The things that I know now as compared to what I learnt in Malawi and friends in Malawi right now, I feel like it puts me in a better position (Student 10).

The decision of student 10 to pursue transnational education was influenced by how he viewed his past, present, and future self. This is because his past self-positioning provided him with a glimpse into his future self-image (Harré & van Langenhove 1999). The past-self positioning of student 10 depicted a migrant from Malawi who was motivated to pursue his education no matter what. This aspiration is reflected in his future self-position as a businessperson with the necessary qualifications to be the best poultry producer in the region. Taking a leap from his past to his future self-perception is what inspired student 10 to pursue transnational education and it kept him going during challenges. This is because he believed that formal education in a country with highly ranked universities such as South Africa would allow him to enhance his professional skills and experience.

Additionally, student 7 had set her sights on finishing her studies and finding a job in South Africa. She also wanted to be independent and successful. After studying in South Africa, she was able to achieve these goals and is currently working on finishing her studies. Her exposure to the local lifestyle and the earnings of influencers helped also her realise her goal of becoming a successful and independent individual. The participant had this to say:

I have met people here who have shared their personal stories and achievements which have enlightened me with the redirection of my goals and aspirations. I have seen the way people work here, it has given me the skills to improve my business and lifestyle. Also, the negative experiences such as seeing others fail here even if it is the land of opportunities, it has pushed me to work harder on goals to not end up like that. It shaped my mind. I was in a bubble in Malawi, but here I see everything and learn from what others do and learn from (Student 7).

From this quotation, there is evidence of positive self-confidence, which made them feel that they could handle challenges. This participant's expression of agency is being able to deal with a range of challenges in South Africa, some of which have been mentioned in the previous sections. This belief increased their likelihood of taking on more difficult tasks and achieving higher goals (Hamachek 1995). According to Hamachek (1995), high-concept students are more likely to achieve success. In student 7's excerpt, she stated that her success motivated her to set realistic goals. However, other students from Malawi were more likely to have low self-concept and set goals that are hard to reach; this led to them not being able to achieve their goals. For instance, Student 1 initially wanted to be an economist in South Africa. However, she realised that she could not pursue this career due to the high cost of living and the language barrier. She shifted her goals to becoming a business owner once she finishes her studies and gets a job in Malawi.

Therefore, the aspirations of Malawian transnational students influenced their decision to continue with their studies even when they encountered various obstacles (Hart 2016). According to Danziger and Eden (2007), the students' commitment to their goals was influenced by positive self-concept. In addition to being influenced by social and economic factors, the decision of transnational students from Malawi to stay or drop out of studies in South Africa was also influenced by their individual goals and commitments.

4.8 The Influence on Malawian Government's Responses in South Africa

This section discusses how the experiences of Malawian transnational students can potentially inform policy, and addresses the research question: (5) How can the experiences of Malawian transnational students help the Malawian government's responses to the challenges of transnational students in South Africa?

According to Bista, Sharma and Gaulee (2018), the mobility of students is a vital component of international relations and foreign policy. This is especially true in South Africa as the country's

universities are experiencing a flood of African students. According to Malawi Census 2018 Report (2019:29) and IOM (2014), the number of Malawian nationals studying in South Africa increased significantly and resulted in the country to be the preferred destination for transnational students from Malawi. Moreover, due to the country's high number of students, it has maintained its position as the leading destination for them.

The increasing number of international students studying in South Africa has contributed to the country's internationalisation efforts. In order to address the needs of these students, the government and universities should develop policies that will help improve the experiences of these students. In a study conducted by Riaño, Van Mol and Raghuram (2018) noted that the lack of policies aimed at encouraging and assisting students from Malawi to study in South Africa has a negative effect on both the education sector in both countries. Sichone (2006) also noted that South Africa has not created the necessary environment to encourage the mobility of other African international students. Thus, future policies related to the contemporary mobility of transnational students from Malawi should not be limited to statistics, but should involve a variety of factors, such as narratives. In order to ensure that students integrate seamlessly in South African universities, policies should be informed by the sociocultural and economic experiences of foreign students in South Africa. These policies should be ethical in their representations of people, especially those from Malawi who are seeking higher education.

South Africa has long benefited from the relatively open immigration and visa policies for international students (Schoole & Jenny 2020). In addition, many institutions and individuals rely on the presence of graduate students and international scholars in South Africa as they pay tuition fees to get education and they contribute towards the internationalisation of higher education agenda of South Africa. However, there are raised concerns about the negative impact of these policies on transnational students. Despite the various measures that have been implemented to minimise the impact of the policies on international students, they remain unable to do so on special case like Malawian transnational students. Some of the factors that have not been able to help minimise the impact of these policies include the South African government's efforts in establishing a more efficient visa processing system and the universities' responses to the needs of international students (Schoole & Jenny 2020). Many international students are still not able to

secure study visas in time due to the implementation of new regulations. They also face various issues when it comes to staying in South Africa. One participant explained their experience with the Visa Facilitation Service (VFS) as follows:

When I was applying for the renewal of my visa, it was deemed fraudulent by the VFS and it was not true. I mean, I entered the country with that same visa, they scanned at the airport and the issue was that there was no barcode. So instead of contacting the Malawian embassy to find out what happened, why did not have a barcode, they just immediately banned me from SA because I had overstayed. Then I had to involve the Malawian embassy, the Zambian embassy, and Home Affairs. The home affairs were not so helpful, so I got a Malawian lawyer based in SA to help. The lawyer was able to overturn the ban. This was a terrible and depressing experience (Student 5).

Participant Student 5 is just one of many Malawian transnational students affected by this experience. In 2015, many international students in South Africa were unable to return home due to the lack of space at the VFS (The Mail & Guardian 2015). In addition, due to the government's failure to address the issue of overcrowding at the agency, many students were not able to extend their visas (The Mail & Guardian 2015). Without a valid visa, Malawian transnational students are not able to cross the border into South Africa and this situation leaves them vulnerable and depressed, and afraid of being arrested and deported. In addition, students' bank accounts are frozen, leaving them vulnerable to experiencing financial distress. In some cases, they have been placed on standby for several months without any chance of getting a new visa. Despite these challenges affecting international students, the number of Malawian transnational students studying in South Africa is likely to continue growing. As long as the country's image as a desirable destination for education and employment remains the same, the country's attractiveness to Malawian students will not be affected.

In addition to this, participants in this study had different views about some of the myths about foreign nationals in South Africa. While some planned to return home after their studies because of anti-immigrant attitudes, some indicated they would stay in South Africa, while others preferred to migrate to other countries. For Student 5, they have no plans of staying in South Africa in the future. Instead, they intend to pursue their studies in the UK or other developed countries:

At first, I wanted to return to Malawi and work there. But the Malawian economic crisis is discouraging. I want to go somewhere else. I am thinking of taking a holiday in USA or

Canada and finding a way to stay in the country. Even if means marrying a white man. I do not want to stay in SA (Student 5).

In this quote, the participant's plan is not to complete her studies and return home but rather to seek greener pastures in North America. Interestingly, the participant's survival strategy is not their academic qualification but the hope of a comfortable experience in a foreign land. This shows their desperation to escape the hostility in South Africa and economic woes in Malawi. For this participant, South African Policy promotes the notion that international students are merely consumers instead of educational partners or temporary citizens (Riaño *et al.* 2018). It also links their status as immigrants to their selectivity, and it creates binaries between those who contribute and those who are deserving. One participant stated that he had a hard time interacting with local residents due to this perception:

The general xenophobic attitudes do sometimes make me reconsider working in SA...Do not get me wrong, I really want to work here but it will always be something holding me back. (Student 9).

For this participant, negative perceptions about foreigners created a sense of nostalgia and the need to return home. The quote highlights some of the myths about foreign nationals in South Africa. The hostile immigration policy of South Africa has created a representation of undesirable Malawian migrants instead of skilled and highly desirable individuals (Sichone 2006). This perception can be linked to the country's increasing number of tough immigration policies such as Immigration Act, No. 13 of 2002 (South African Government Print 2002). Given that South Africa's immigration officials regard the perceptions of international students as other individuals, it confirms the discrimination Malawian transnational students encounter at the national and institutional level (Sichone 2006). This perception has affected the way transnational students from Malawi view themselves and the country. Thus, the results of this study suggest that the perceptions of South Africa's immigration officials and policy makers on the mobility of Malawian transnational students have a stronger effect on their mobility than the specific goals or targets that they were set to achieve.

4.9 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter explored and presented findings on the economic and socio-cultural challenges faced by transnational students from Malawi, currently studying at two selected universities in Gauteng province. In addition, this study looked into the various factors that motivated several Malawian transnational students to pursue their studies in South Africa. These included their perceptions of Malawi and South African education systems (McMillan 2005:27), transnational social networks (Pimpa 2005) and personal aspirations (Kiiza 2019). It identified factors that are relevant to their social interactions, cultural experiences, and financial backgrounds, in order to understand how these issues affected students' aspirations to accomplish goals and their ability to integrate within host communities. Despite having strong economic backgrounds, many of these students were still not able to access the necessary goods and facilities in South Africa (Constantine *et al.* 2005). As a result, they exercised their agency and started their own businesses or take up employment to adapt and cope in the host environment (Waterfield & Whelan 2017).

In addition, chapter explored the various aspects of social interaction among Malawian transnational students in South Africa. It revealed that they had a better chance of connecting with their fellow Malawian students due to shared cultural norms, which fostered strong relationships with them compared to local residents. Despite their negative experiences with local residents, the Malawian transnational students were still able to maintain strong relationships with their South African peers. This was because they were able to socialise through various peer groups and activities. Most of the Malawian transnational students in South Africa participated in extracurricular activities off campus and involved in student groups and community organizations, which helped improve their social interactions. (Becker *et al.* 2018; Rienties *et al.* 2012) The chapter also noted that culture and food were influential factors that shaped their social interaction (Bandura 2001).

Furthermore, the chapter explored the factors that influenced the decision of Malawian transnational students to study in South Africa. Findings indicate that the main factors that influenced their decisions were their perceptions of the education systems in both countries, their personal aspirations and social networks. However, due to their economic backgrounds, Malawian transnational students were more likely to face challenges (Fernex *et al.* 2015: 403). These

challenges include; discrimination, language barriers, crime and xenophobia. The findings also suggest that positive experiences and economic background were instrumental in the decision to continue to stay in South Africa, in spite of challenges experienced by this group of transnational migrant students. The study revealed that the availability of various economic benefits and opportunities in South Africa made it easier for Malawian transnational students to see their potential. For instance, the South African economy provided opportunities for some transnational students to demonstrate their agency and fulfil their aspirations through entrepreneurship. This was evidenced by their actions and their desire to create opportunities for themselves (Marschall 2017:220). The availability of extracurricular activities, language, and social interactions allowed transnational students from Malawi to expand their scope of interests and aspire to make their dreams come true.

The chapter explored the various strategies that Malawian transnational students used to cope with challenges. These included establishing a transnational social network (Guan *et al.* 2004), participating in extracurricular activities (House 2000), and using personal aspirations (Kiiza 2019) to overcome them. The chapter also explored the various factors that can influence the formulation of policies. According to the findings, the policies of the South Africa government on immigration have an undesirable influence on the potential of transnational students from Malawi (Riaño *et al.* 2018). Thus, South Africa should welcome and value student migrants in order to establish a hub for skills development and knowledge creation within the SADC region.

The next chapter discusses key issues that have emerged from this study and puts them into the context of the broader field of African transnational mobility in Southern Africa. It also summarises the previous chapters, the overall findings, and finally provides suggestions to improve the experiences of Malawian transnational students, as well as recommends areas for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

The study set out to investigate the experiences of Malawian transnational students in two universities in South Africa. Against this backdrop, the main aim of the study was to understand the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa and their economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South Africa universities, and objectives were:

- To investigate the push and pull factors influencing Malawian transnational student mobility to South Africa;
- To analyse the challenges that Malawian transnational students encounter while in South Africa;
- To understand how the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students affect their integration, and aspirations at selected South African universities;
- To explore the strategies that Malawian transnational students use to ease their integration;
- To examine the implications of economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian students for the Malawian government's responses to the challenges of transnational students.

The study was carried out in response to a research problem that studies on international student migration into South Africa has researched less on the migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa for educational purposes. It is less researched area because the vast focus of the experiences of other SADC countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho, and DRC. In addition, the research on migration to South Africa from Malawi has focused on the experiences of labour migrants and undocumented individuals (See for example, Kasese-Hara & Mugambi 2021; Nwokedi & Khanare 2020; Daki 2019; Ratshilaya 2017; Pineteh & Mulu 2016; Mudhovozi 2011). The main objective of this study was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the various factors that influence the mobility of Malawian transnational students in South Africa. The study interrogated this using the transnational lens to investigate the strategies the Malawian transnational students employ in the two selected South African universities.

To achieve the study's objectives, a thorough review of the history of migration between South Africa and Malawi was done. The literature review revealed that the quality of education and economic development of South Africa has contributed to the increasing number of individuals from Southern Africa migrating to the country (Bhoojedhur & Isbell 2019; UNESCO 2018; Browne 2017; Mlambo 2017; Chien & Kot 2012; Teferra 2007). As a result, many Malawian transnational students flock to South Africa for vast education and employment opportunities the country can offer to them. However, this increase in migration causes concerns about the various financial and social exclusion Malawian transnational may encounter in the country (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi 2021; Chien & Kot 2012; McGregor 2014). Indeed, studies show that students often encounter issues when interacting with the local South African environment and university (Gonzales & Nuttall 2021; Lehto *et al.* 2014; Ziguras & Harwood 2011). Moreover, this has raised concerns about the country's safety as a study destination (McGregor 2014; Mda 2010; Pineteh & Mulu 2016). Despite these concerns, the desire of Malawian transnational students to study in South Africa has not changed.

As the number of Malawian transnational students studying in South Africa increases, there are various non-academic issues that they experience while studying in the country. One of the challenges Malawian transnational students encounter is the negative perception about them by local residents; that these students are threats to South Africa's limited socio-economic resources. Therefore, locals treat such students unfairly or are unwelcoming towards them. Thus, leaving such Malawian transnational students feeling unwanted, isolated and lonely. However, through exercising agency, Malawian transnational students use various strategies to deal with these challenges, such as the use of transnational social networks, aspirations and agency. Through these findings and empirical evidence, the study was able to make recommendations that could affect the Malawian government's responses to the transnational students' challenges in South Africa (Carling 2002: 12; Klemenčič 2015).

The study used a qualitative method to gain a deeper understanding of the students' individual experiences and their agency and this was achieved through in-depth interviews with ten Malawian transnational students (Yin 1994; 2009; Hafiz 2008; Crowe *et al.* 2011). Through purposive sampling and snowball analysis, the researcher selected ten individuals for the study (Alvi 2016:31-33; Rapley 2014). In addition, the data collected during the course of the study were then

analysed and interpreted using a thematic analysis method (Braun *et al.* 2016). The resulting transcripts were then categorized according to the various themes and codes identified by the researcher, which aligned with the study's concepts of transnationalism, agency, and network.

5.2 Summary of Chapters

Chapter one provided a comprehensive overview of the study's main objective and aims. It also explored the various aspects of the study, such as its research problem and the main sub-questions. It additionally described a brief description of the methodology of the study, ethical considerations, and chapter outlines.

Chapter two critically reviewed the historical context of migration in Southern Africa. While also analysing the trends and patterns of migration within the region. Literature indicated that since the end of apartheid and the advent of a democratic South Africa in 1994, African international students have been flooding to South African universities seeking quality higher education (UNESCO 2010). In the same vein, an increase in Malawian nationals migrating to the country for study purposes has been noted (Malawi Census 2018 Report 2019:29; IOM 2014). The increasing number of middleclass transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa has been attributed to the desire to improve their personal experiences and access high-quality education. The other factors that have contributed to this are Malawi's limited access to higher education and the decline in the quality of its universities (Kayange 2021:2080). Literature further indicated that the experiences are characterised by challenges with accommodation, encountering discrimination, adjusting to cultural and language barriers, which affects their integration in the host country (Muula & Broadhead 2003). Chapter two also provided a conceptual framework for the study by defining the interrelated concepts of transnationalism, aspiration, and agency, and explaining how and why they were an appropriate lens through which the empirical data collected was analysed (Schiller *et al.* 1992; Carling 2002; Klemenčič 2015).

Chapter Three of this study provided a comprehensive review of the methodology and design of the study. It started by presenting the study's main findings and objectives. It then discusses the different aspects of the research design (Hafiz 2008; Crowe *et al.* 2011; Yin 1994; 2009). This chapter covered the various aspects of qualitative research data gathering and the interviews that were conducted (Wang & Park 2016:212; Bryman 1988). The study used two of methods to select

the participant's data, such as the snowballing and purposive sampling techniques (Alvi 2016:31-33; Rapley 2014). This chapter further explored the various aspects of qualitative research data gathering and presented a thematic analysis approach that aimed to make sense of the data gathered (Braun *et al.* 2016). It also discussed the researcher's ethical responsibilities in maintaining the quality of the data.

Chapter Four analysed empirical evidence on the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa, with a focus on their economic and sociocultural experiences at selected South African universities. The findings of the chapter were presented within the context of the body of knowledge on transnational student mobility. The chapter began by describing the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students. Findings indicate that the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students was influenced by a combination of aspirations and resources to facilitate their mobility. This was followed by a discussion on the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students at selected South African universities. These experiences were classified into the following themes: the financial ability of Malawian transnational students (Fernex *et al.* 2015: 402); economic opportunities and benefits (Sivize 2017); socialisation with other students (Weidman *et al.* 2001); participation in social activities (Isin & Nielsen 2008:2); and cultural experiences (Bourdieu 1977; 1990). The chapter also explained the push and pull factors of Malawian transnational students to South Africa. Their perceptions of Malawi and South African education systems (McMillan 2005:27; Van Ginkle & Dias 2007), transnational social networks (Cairns 2014) and personal aspirations (Carling 2002: 12) were presented as the dominant factors that influenced decisions to migrate to South Africa. In addition, the chapter presented findings on the challenges encountered by Malawian transnational students at selected South African universities. Themes relating to language as an integration barrier (Ralarala *et al.* 2016; Tshotsho *et al.* 2015; Mudhovozi 2011), discrimination, xenophobia and crime were examined (Constantine *et al.* 2005; Tella 2016; Haas 2006:76; Crush 2006:103).

The chapter also examined how the experiences of Malawian transnational students influenced their integration and aspirations. The findings revealed that a positive socio-economic background and experiences, accompanied by agency facilitated integration in South African universities for Malawian transnational students and this led to the achievement of their aspirations. The chapter

also identified the strategies that Malawian transnational students used to facilitate their migration. These included co-national network as transnational social fields (Strayhorn 2012:111; Sherry *et al.* 2009), extracurricular activities (Becker *et al.* 2018; Rienties *et al.* 2012), close family and friends: transnational kinship ties (Guan *et al.* 2004), and personal aspirations (Nussbaum 2016). In addition, the chapter examined insights that contribute to the understanding of how the experiences of these students help the Malawian government's response to the challenges of its citizens studying at South African universities. The findings revealed that the South Africa policies on immigration and quality have a negative influence on the current and future experiences of Malawian transnational students (Riaño *et al.* 2018; Sichone 2006). Such migrants need to be valued and welcomed in order to establish South Africa as a regional hub for knowledge creation and skills development.

5.3 Key Findings of the Study

Using empirical data collected from 10 Malawian transnational students from two selected universities in Johannesburg and Pretoria, the study produced interesting findings. Firstly, the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa is regarded as a vertical student mobility phenomenon (Kumpikaite & Duoba 2011). This is because the combination of resources and aspirations of these students has allowed them to migrate seamlessly. South Africa's education system has the ability to provide opportunities at postgraduate level and is a significant factor that contributes to the development of the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students. The increasing number of Malawian transnational students studying in South Africa is also a reflection of the decline in Malawi's education system. It shows that the South Africa's education system is a vital factor not only higher education development of Malawi, but also the SADC region.

Secondly, the choice of South Africa as a study destination for Malawian transnational students was based on the country's positive image and the student's employment interests in the country, as well as the resources that it has to offer (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumley 2010; Meštrović 2017; Dado, Petrovicova, Riznic & Rajic 2011; Gandolfo & Vannozzi 2014). Other factors such as social relations and parental influence also affected the decisions of the Malawian transnational students to them during and after their studies to migrate to South Africa (Ma 2009; Pimpa 2005; Taylor *et al.* 2004).

Thirdly, Malawian transnational students have different economic experiences. They face different challenges when it comes to dealing with fluctuating prices and the lack of resources. However, once they started operating their own businesses, they were able to manage their finances well. The positive experiences of many Malawian transnational students were facilitated by their agency. However, poor economic backgrounds prevented them from fully integrating into South Africa environment. This is because the higher expectations of students and the anticipated increase in employment limited the time they spent studying (Fernex *et al.* 2015: 403). Through their experiences, they saw their potential and further developed their own goals (Marschall 2017:220). They are also more likely to take on projects and create opportunities themselves. Because being in South Africa influenced many Malawian transnational students to pursue a better life. Additionally, they have positive interactions with the South African local community and students. Despite the negative experiences with some local residents, Malawian transnational students were still able to build strong relationships with their fellow students. These relationships were facilitated through various activities and peer groups and language.

Fourthly, when Malawian transnational students migrate to South Africa, they experienced various challenges such as loneliness, unfamiliar culture and food, and language barriers. To deal with those challenges, resort to social interaction amongst themselves (co-national networks) (Maudeni 2001). These forms of socialisation included; participating in social activities (Becker *et al.* 2018; Rienties *et al.* 2012), contacting and visiting family in Malawi (transnational kinship ties) (Koehn & Rosenau 2002; Alzougool *et al.* 2013), and making critical choices that are influenced by their aspirations (Danziger & Eden 2007), to adapt and cope.

Finally, the increase in the number of Malawian transnational students studying in South Africa should be considered as a contributing factor to the development of relations between Malawi and South Africa. The development of policies aimed at encouraging and assisting the migration of students from Malawi to South Africa should have a comprehensive understanding of Malawi's cultural and economic conditions. Which includes local authorities and other stakeholders in the process. As Riaño *et al.* (2018) noted that the lack of policies aimed at encouraging and assisting the migration of students from Malawi to South Africa could hinder their growth and contribution to human capital in the two countries. This is because the study of transnational students' movements cannot be restricted to statistics. It involves a variety of factors such as narratives of

their experiences. The policies should be designed to welcome and value the contributions of students from Malawi to South Africa. This can help maintain South Africa's regional reputation and influence. As ambassadors of the South African higher education, the experiences of Malawian transnational students can help improve the South Africa's image and inform policy.

5.4 Recommendations

Enhancing the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students at selected universities in South Africa is fundamental for them to achieve their aspirations. The findings of this study can provide a basis for the Malawian government's responses to the challenges of its citizens studying at South African universities. To this end, the study makes the following recommendations to the Malawian Consulate General in South Africa and South African universities with Malawian students.

Firstly, the study revealed that most Malawian transnational students preferred to build friendships with fellow Malawian students instead of with locals. This suggests that there is a limited interaction between the local community and the students. Studies have shown that international students have strong bonds with their co-nationals. According to Westmont and Glass (2014), international students are more prone to experiencing difficulties in forming friends compared to their domestic counterparts. Thus, to encourage socialisation between the students and the locals, the consulate general of Malawi and universities should establish social activities. Through these activities, students from both countries can get to know each other better and develop a deeper understanding of the other's culture. This will help ensure that integration does not become superficial. According to studies conducted by Chinyamurindi (2018: 212), Rose-Redwood, and Rose-Redwood (2013), those who have a lot of contact with domestic students are more likely to fit in well. Additionally, according to Rawjee & Maharaj (2013), international students develop better communication skills and are more confident in their ability to use their language when they integrate into host communities. Iwara, Kativhu & Obadire (2017) also revealed that greater contact with local students could improve the quality of teaching. It leads to higher social and academic satisfaction (Arkoudis, Watty, Baik, Yu, Borland, Chang, Lang, Lang & Pearce 2013; Glass & Westmont 2014).

In South Africa, the Malawi consulate general should establish an association to support the country's efforts to expand the number of Malawian transnational students. This type of organisation can help bring together the local population and the foreign students. Apart from being able to provide a bridge between the local communities, immigrants also have advantages of having dual social belonging (Lacomba & Cloquell 2014:41). The activities of the associations can help new migrants to integrate and adapt to the South African society. In most cases, they provide advice to help newly arrived Malawian students to maintain their social and emotional stability (Encinas 2016). According to Pineteh (2011: 403), the objective of such an association is to provide a place for transnational students from Malawi to stay and have 'at home away from home' feeling. The members of these associations can also be encouraged to participate in the activities of their local communities, which will help promote integration and cohesion in the communities where they reside.

Secondly, the study reported that many of the Malawian transnational students were struggling with the availability of employment opportunities and the time constraints they had to complete their studies. The Malawi Consulate General in South Africa and Malawi should negotiate with employers to facilitate employment and work-based placements so that they can finish their studies on time. According to Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac and Lawton (2012), a period of work experience can help graduates develop their personal attributes and gain employment. Through these programs, transnational students from Malawi would be encouraged to return to their country after their studies and become human capital to Malawi. The goal of this program would be to provide a comprehensive view of the number of students studying in South Africa from Malawi. Although migration statistics in some of the countries of the SADC are generally good, they do not take into account the actual number of students coming from other regions (Crush & Williams 2010). In addition, there are also various data gaps and the data is not always available on a regional basis. Thus, this will help fill this gap to help improve the effectiveness of the bilateral policy and the internationalisation of the South African universities (Gonzales & Nuttall 2021). As, ambassadors of the country, the experiences of these Malawian transnational students can help improve the South Africa's image and strengthen their regional position (Okusolubo 2018:7; Riaño *et al.* 2018; Sichone 2006).

5.5 Limitations of the study and area for further study

The goal of this study was to provide a comprehensive study of the various aspects of the student mobility of Malawian transnational students in South Africa. However, since it only used a limited sample, the study could not be generalised to other Malawian transnational students in South Africa. Thus, this study was conducted at two universities in South Africa.

Although the researcher was also interested in studying transnational students from Malawi in other provinces of South Africa, such as Western and Eastern Cape, the decision to focus on Gauteng was due to its geographical proximity as well as time and resource constraints. For instance, conducting a comparative study of the experiences of transnational students in different universities in South Africa would be beneficial. This would bring forth a more comprehensive understanding of the various factors that affect the development and maintenance of student interfaces in South Africa's tertiary education system. It could also provide a glimpse into the socio-cultural and economic experiences of the students from Malawi in various areas in South Africa. However, the study was limited to the analysis of the relationship between the experiences of transnational students from Malawi and their integration and goals in two selected South Africa universities. Thus, further research can examine from a longitudinal perspective how transnational students from Malawi who studied at South African universities cope during and after they have completed their studies. Such a study can use a larger sample of participants to understand the complexities of transnational student mobility and their experiences at different South African universities over time.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter presented the main findings of the study, as well as the various limitations of the study. It also presented the recommendations that were made following the study. This chapter aimed to introduce the study's main objective: to look into the experiences of transnational students from Malawi studying in South Africa and discuss the findings from the interviews. The study revealed that the contemporary migration of students from Malawi to South Africa is regarded as a vertical student mobility phenomenon (Kumpikaite & Duoba 2011). Secondly, the choice of South Africa as a study destination for Malawian transnational students was based on the country's positive image and the students' interests in the country and the resources that it has to offer (Altbach *et al.*

2010; Meštrović 2017; Dado *et al.* 2011; Gandolfo & Vannozzi 2014). Thirdly, Malawian transnational students have different economic, social, cultural experiences. Through their experiences, they saw their potential and developed their own goals (Marschall 2017:220). Fourthly, when Malawian transnational students in South Africa are faced with challenges, they resort to socialising amongst themselves (co-national networks) (Maundeni 2001). Other strategies comprised of participating in social activities (Becker *et al.* 2018; Rienties *et al.* 2012), contacting and visiting family in Malawi (transnational kinship ties) (Koehn & Rosenau 2002; Alzougool *et al.* 2013), and making critical choices that are influenced by their aspirations (Danziger & Eden 2007), to cope with challenges. Finally, the continuous increase in the number of students from Malawi studying in South Africa should be considered as a contributing factor to the development of relations between the two countries. Riaño *et al.* (2018) noted that lack of policies aimed at encouraging and assisting the migration of students from Malawi to South Africa could hinder their growth and initiative. The policies should be designed to welcome and value the contributions of students from Malawi to South Africa. This can help maintain South Africa's regional reputation and influence. The experiences of these students can help improve South Africa's image and inform policy. Furthermore, the chapter provided recommendations for the Malawian Consulate General in South Africa and South African universities with Malawian students. Lastly, this chapter provided areas for further research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Letter



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo



25 March 2022

Dear Miss PT Magaba

Project Title: African transnational student mobility: A case study of Malawian students at selected South African universities
Researcher: Miss PT Magaba
Supervisor(s): Dr PE Angu
Department: Anthropology, Archaeology and Development Studies
Reference number: 21728985 (HUM051/1121)
Degree: Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 25 March 2022. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KH'.

Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof KL Harris (Chair); Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr J Okeke; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Ms D Mokalapa

Room 7-27, Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa
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Appendix 2: Informed Consent Document



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo

Department of Anthropology and Archaeology



APPENDIX 2

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Student: Pemphero Theodora Magaba

Student Number: 21728985

Name of Institution: University of Pretoria

Name of Participant: _____

TITLE OF STUDY: African transnational student mobility: A case study of Malawian students at selected South African universities.

The purpose of this study is to understand the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students at selected South African universities. The data for this study will be collected through personal interviews with 10 Malawian students.

The selected students will participate in 30 minute individual interview each. The interviews will be conducted either virtually or face to face at a time and place convenient for all participants. During the interviews, participants will be required to share the aspirations, hopes, dreams and challenges in South Africa.

Sanna Sechele | Senior Administrative Officer
Department of Anthropology and Archaeology
Room 8-15, Level 8, Humanities Building
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa

1. Purpose of the interview:

The purpose of this interview is to understand your scholastic experiences and how they have influenced your life as a Malawian transnational student in South Africa. The questions will focus on your hopes, dreams, aspirations and challenges.

2. Procedures:

The researcher and participant will decide on a time and venue for face-to face interviews. The interview shall not be longer than 30 minutes. Online/virtual/telephonic interviews because of covid-19. Should you prefer a face-to-face interview, all Covid 19 protocols such as social distancing, sanitization and wearing of masks will be implemented. Please note that your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You will not be coerced to answer any question(s).

3. Benefits:

There will be no direct benefit for participating in the study. However, the researchers will provide recommendations in the thesis, that can contribute to address some of the challenges faced by Malawian students in South Africa.

4. Compensation:

There is no financial compensation for participating in the interviews.

5. Availability of Data and/or Documents:

All the data collected for this study and any relevant documents will be stored in a very secure place for a minimum of 10 years and the transcripts of your interview can be made available to you on request. The data and other relevant documents are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria.

6. Confidentiality:

All information obtained will be handled confidentially and your personal identity or information that may reveal your identity will not be used in the thesis. Each participant will be assigned a special code or pseudonym when quoted in this study. All data will be kept in password protected files at the university of Pretoria for a minimum of 10 years. The data shall be used strictly for non-profit research and academic purposes. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information.

7.

For further information or in case of any concerns you can contact met at pempheromagaba@gmail.com or u21728985@tuks.co.za, cell number 0609246593 or +265993960628 (WA).

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Iconfirm that the researcher has clearly explained the purpose of this study to me and I have read and understood the contents of this consent form. I have therefore agreed to participate in this study voluntarily and I do not expect any financial or any other form of compensation from the researcher.

This document was signed at on theday of 2022

Interviewer's signature  Participant's signature.....

I understand that the interviews will be voice recorded. I give consent that it may be audio recorded: YES / NO

Sanna Sechele | Senior Administrative Officer
Department of Anthropology and Archaeology
Room 8-15, Level 8, Humanities Building
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa

Appendix 3: Personal Interview and Questions Guide



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo

Department of Anthropology and Archaeology



APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE AND QUESTION GUIDE– MALAWIAN TRANSNATIONAL STUDENTS

Study: African transnational student mobility: A case study of Malawian students at selected South African universities.		
Aim: To understand the contemporary migration of Malawian transnational students to South Africa and economic and sociocultural experiences outside of the universities they attend.		
Researcher: Pemphero Theodora Magaba	Date:	Venue:
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION		
Name:	Gender:	Age:
Residing City in Malawi:	Year of arrival in South Africa:	University in South Africa:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Research Question:** *Why do Malawian transnational students decide to study in South Africa?*

Leading in Questions

- Why do you think Malawian students are migrating to SA for the purpose of study?
- What do you think pushes Malawians to migrate to SA for the purpose of study?
- How would you describe the employment situation in Malawi for the youth?
- How would you describe the higher education system in Malawi?
- What is your family background and structure? How would you describe your family's socio-economic class?
- What made you to migrate to SA for the purpose of study?
- What goals did you set for yourself before you arrived in SA?
- Why do you think Malawian transnational students gravitate towards studying at universities in Gauteng province?
- What gravitated you towards deciding to study at your current university?

2. **Research Question:** *What are the challenges that Malawian transnational students encounter while studying in South Africa?*

Leading in Questions

- What demotivates you about studying in SA?
- How have you dealt or are dealing with the things that demotivate you while studying in SA?
- What challenges demotivate you from achieving your goals and aspirations?
- What negative experience have you gone through while studying in SA?
- How did that experience make you feel?
- How has your experience been like at a public/private university?
- How would you describe Malawian transnational students in SA?
- How has your experience been like living in JNB or PTA?
- What are your views about staying in your area as a Malawian student
- What made you like or attracted you to stay in your/ live in JNB or PTA
- What do you like about living in your area or JNB or PTA
- What are the necessary components/ resources you consider when you are picking a place to live
- How has your economic life been like in your area?
- What are the economic opportunities do you have in your area or JNB or PTA
- Tell me some of the positives/benefits of staying in your area or JNB or PTA
- What are the economic challenges you encounter where you live
- How is your social life in JNB or PTA?
- What kind of activities do you get up to?
- Describe to me how your cultural interaction been like with locals?
- Which SA cultural norms or practises have you been exposed to ?How do you feel about them?
- Why is important for you to be culturally exposed?
- Where do you often face discrimination in your area
- Who are the people you have had positive interactions? If so, why?
- Who are the people you interact with outside of school? If so, why?
- Where do you spend most of your time? If so, why?
- What is the best about studying SA in general?
- What is the hardest thing about studying and living in SA as a Malawian student?
- Why did you decide to study in SA regardless of the negative expectations or views of the country.

3. Research Question: *How do the economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawian transnational students impact their integration and aspirations at selected South African universities?*

Leading in Questions

- What are your dreams or what do you hope to achieve in SA?
- Why do you think getting a higher education in SA is beneficial for you to achieve your goals and aspirations?
- What were your expectations of SA or what were your views of SA before you arrived to the country?
- How would you describe studying SA?
- What are your current views about being a Malawian student in SA?
- Reflecting back to your previous expectations of SA, have your views changed since you are studying in SA? Why?
- With your stay in SA, who or what has financed your life and education?
- What do you think made your goals and career aspirations change/maintain?
- How has your social interactions been like with locals in SA?
- Tell me about a time you interacted with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.
- Describe a time when you found it difficult to interact with someone from a different background as yours.
- Describe a situation that required you to consider a different perspective from your own when exploring an issue.
- Give me an example of a situation where you had to take into account the sensitivities of different parties.
- Generally speaking would you say that most locals in SA can be trusted or that one can't be too careful in dealing with locals in SA?
- Where do you stay? Describe the people you live with. How would you describe your living situation?
- All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life in SA? Why?
- How satisfied are you with your financial situation in SA? Why?
- All things considered, how satisfied are you with your current school and the place you live? Why?
- Have you been to any other major city in SA? why?

- What is your marital status?
- How do you cope if the bill is not paid or not paid on time? For instance tuition, accommodation, pocket money?
- Do you think your experiences so far have had an influence on your goals and aspirations
- Which experiences do you think have had an impact on your goals and aspirations. This can be positive or negative. What challenges/ opportunities have had an effect on your goals and aspirations? If so, why?

4. Research Question: *What are the strategies used by Malawian transnational students to ease their integration in South Africa?*

Leading in Questions

- Have you dealt with challenges relating to xenophobia, language barrier, adjusting or adapting, financial issues, accommodation or visa issues?
- Are you in touch with other Malawian students? What is your Malawian network like?
- Do you think other Malawians transnational students face the same face challenge as you do here in SA? This can be economically, socially, educational.
- How often do you go back to Malawi?
- What would it mean to you returning to Malawi often?
- Do you think it's important to have fellow Malawian students around? Or a community of Malawian nationals? Why?
- Do you have family in SA? How would you describe your friends and family support throughout your journey studying in SA?
- What are some of the strategies you have taken up during your challenges? Or what are your coping mechanisms.
- While studying in SA, what keeps you motivated?
- What are the necessary things for you to stay motivated? Or What encourages you to keep going through tough situations or rough times?
- Has there been a change or shift in your goals and career ambitions over time you have studied in SA?
- What have you done to or what measures have you taken up to make your experience easier in your area or in JNB or PTA in general?

5. Research Question: *How can the experiences of Malawian transnational students help the Malawian government response to the challenges of transnational students in South Africa?*

Leading in Questions

- When you have completed your studies, what are your plans after?
- What would you recommend to other Malawians about achieving their goals and aspirations whilst studying in SA?
- What would you recommend to other Malawians about having a pleasant experience whilst studying in SA?
- What would you recommend to other Malawians about enhancing or helping their economic and sociocultural experiences outside of the universities?
- What should be done or could be done to enhance or help economic and sociocultural experiences of Malawians outside of their universities?
- Who/what in particular do you think can help Malawian students in addressing our challenges in SA?

Appendix 4: Sample Transcript

STUDENT 10		
RESEARCHER: Pemphero Theodora Magaba	DATE: 29 June 2022	LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Pretoria
INTERVIEWEE: Student 10	GENDER: Male	AGE: 29
RESIDING CITY IN MALAWI: Blantyre	YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA: 2019	UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA: University of Pretoria Master's Degree

List of Acronyms: **STD 10**= Student 10, **PTM**= Pemphero Theodora Magaba, **SA**=South Africa

PTM: Hello participant. Thank you for agreeing to be part of this interview and research. My name is Pemphero Magaba and this is an interview for the research study of African transnational student mobility: A case study of Malawian students at selected South African universities. I hope you have read the informed consent document and you understand everything cited in the document? If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

STD10: *Yes, I have read it and I signed the consent form. I give my consent to partake in the study.*

PTM: The purpose of this interview and study is to understand your scholastic experiences and how they have influenced your life as Malawian transnational student in SA. The questions will focus on your hopes, dreams, aspirations and challenges.

PTM: Let me begin by asking why do you think Malawian students are migrating to SA for the purpose of study?

STD10: *I feel like Malawian academic institutions and their standards are going down. I feel like the quality of education being offered by different institutions in Malawi is very low, such that on the global market I do not think one who has gone to a Malawian institution can stand a chance. So, I guess most Malawian students are aware of this hence why they migrate to SA. SA offers better access to better quality of education. I am one of the examples. I had the opportunity to study in Malawi but I turned it down and opted to migrate to SA. I think the quality in Malawi is really bad now.*

PTM: Apart from the factors you have mentioned, what do you think pushes Malawians to migrate to SA for the purpose of study?

STD10: *I guess people are also looking at opportunities after getting a degree. Assuming that they want to get a job in SA, so when they compare the two countries, they see SA as a place that they can find opportunities straight after they graduate. I think SA offers good employment opportunities even as some studies.*

PTM: **How would you describe the employment situation in Malawi for the youth?**

STD10: *I say it really bad. If I would rate it like five percent or 5 out of 100. The rate at which the main source of employment being the government, I think the rate at which they are employing graduates is extremely very low or very poor. In my case, I graduated in 2014 and only managed to get an internship three years later.*

PTM: **How would you describe the higher education system in Malawi?**

STD10: *I think the higher education system in Malawi is very poor. I will give specific examples. I was at Bunda College doing animal science. When I came to SA to do my masters, I had difficulties to catch up because the standard at which I was taught in Malawi was bad. I had to enrol for other courses just to catch up. I think maybe it is a few institutions in Malawi, but I think they just offer the theoretical aspect of courses and Malawians do not have the practical knowledge or hands on experience of their course. For example, when I talk about the farms that I have visited in Malawi, they are way behind. It was a struggle for me to catch up with curriculum this side because of the poor background I had of the course. Maybe now things have change, but back then it was not good. Even when I compare the standards of other undergraduate students here it is 50 times better than of Malawi.*

PTM: **Tell me about yourself. What is your family background and structure, your upbringing?**

STD10: *Well, in my family we are just two of us, my sister and I. Both my parents managed to go to college and get a minimum of a degree. So, they also encouraged us to aim at that. My family was not able to support my post graduate education. So, when I was coming to SA I did not really have scholarship. I did manage to get an opportunity to work and sponsor my studies in SA. Maybe, that is also one of the reasons I migrated to SA.*

PTM: **How would you describe your family's socio-economic class/position?**

STD10: *I think we are middle class. We can afford the basic things that are needed.*

PTM: **What made you to migrate to SA for the purpose of study?**

STD10: *One. When I graduated, and saw how my industry people are corrupt and connected, I felt like if I go to SA and they notice my capabilities and skills perhaps I will stand a better chance to prove myself. In the class that I was in Malawi, it was only four who were politically connected that managed to get a job. The rest of us we couldn't. It took us time to get other opportunities to study. One of the other reasons was that if I head to SA and prove that I am a hardworking and smart guy, perhaps I will be employed. Secondly, it was about the money. I have a relative who works in SA, does not have secondary education*

but they were earning R6,000, and when I compare to that in Malawi, it is the salary of a government employee who has graduated or has a master's degree. So, I thought to myself, maybe if I go to SA perhaps it will be even better for me. Basically, it was about me not getting opportunities in Malawi because there was a lot of politics involved in my industry. So, SA was more ideal as it was a neutral place I can develop and grow. Thirdly, the mentality my lecturers in Malawi gave me of just writing exams and just passing, not really know the practical stuff. I really wanted a different experience.

PTM: What goals did you set for yourself before you arrived in SA?

STD10: The first was to work hard. Second was to create a name for myself. Third, was to explore any opportunity. Because when I was coming to SA, I was willing take any job, even as a cleaner. That is how it all started. Even for me to get to where I am, I had to start very low. The fourth was to try and be strong. Since I came to SA in 2020, I have not really gone home. I knew I would miss my family but I told myself that I really have to make a name for myself. I have to be strong to achieve those intended goals. It is more like surviving.

PTM: Why do you think Malawian transnational students gravitate studying at universities in Gauteng province?

STD10: I feel like the setting of Gauteng it is a melting pot of Africa and the rest of the world. You find different people. The infrastructures appeal to the Africans and they like to settle in towns in the province, like Pretoria and Johannesburg. I have been in the other provinces, nothing beats Gauteng. In these other provinces, you can easily be seen or identified as a foreigner. But when you are in Gauteng you blend with the crowd. When I go to the other provinces, there not nice things like Gauteng. I also try to advise Malawians who come to SA to stay in Gauteng because I feel like they would be lonely in the other provinces. There are a lot of Malawians in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

PTM: What gravitated you towards deciding to study at your current university?

STD10: I think for me it was because of luck. The program I applied for and wanted was only offered at UP and Stellenbosch. So, I weighed my options and saw that Stellenbosch was too far from a community I was used to, then I picked Pretoria because it had people I already knew. Assuming I had other options or choices, I would have gone to another university in Gauteng. But, I think this is was just a coincidence that I was accepted at UP. Which was not a bad choice.

PTM: Tell me about your aspirations. What are your dreams or what do you hope to achieve in SA?

STD10: The main aspiration is just to be somebody in the industry that who has a name for himself. Before I came to SA, I was willing to go with the flow. I feel like, with my experience and exposure I have had, I want to be somebody who has a name for himself. If people were to

talk, I work with chickens and I do a good job with them not only in SA but also Malawi or the core SADC region. I aspire to be that. My aspirations are more leaning towards my career and other areas in my industry.

PTM: Why do you think getting a higher education in SA is beneficial for you to achieve your goals and aspirations?

STD10: I feel like getting a higher education in SA will make me more qualified and employers will see me as more knowledgeable. It will put me in a better position. The more qualifications and skills I get in SA, the less competition it puts me with other people whom I am with at the same level. The things that I know now as compared to what I learnt in Malawi and friends in Malawi right now, I feel like it puts me in a better position.

PTM: What were your expectations of SA or what were your views of SA before you arrived to the country?

STD10: I really had fear because I was not sure if I will be able to match with the standard at which things are done in SA in terms of technology and all. So, I had a little bit of fear whether I will be able to fit into the society. I also expected that I will meet friendly people who will support my goals and dream, supposed to Malawi where people are like free range chickens [laughs]. I thought I would find more mentors in my industry in SA. I expected softer life. I expected good food. I had different expectations from food, career, the people I will interact with and those that will mentor me. I did also have negative expectations of SA. This was because of my peers and parents. They would tell me that there is xenophobia, high crime rates. So, this made so afraid of coming to SA. They told me that the locals are not friendly as well. The negative expectations made me a little bit nervous.

PTM: How would you describe studying SA?

STD10: I would say studying in SA is a wonderful opportunity because I am given several choices and options. I would recommend other Malawians to come this side. I look at their education standard is on top, high grade. When I look at the equipment and technology is vast. There are many opportunities here. I feel like SA stands a better chance. All the academic institutions in SA are better as compared to Malawi. The type of support systems I am given as a student is very nice.

PTM: Reflecting back to your previous expectations of SA, what are your current views about being a Malawian student in SA? And if your views changed since you are studying in SA, why did they change?

STD10: I feel like being a Malawian in SA you have to be someone who works hard. I have to take the opportunities I get. I do not think I am to have the luxury of how people do things here. I will give an example of people in my class who are doing the same program but are doing it five years now. But as a Malawian, I do not think I have be following that. Regarding my

positive and negative expectations I had, I feel like as a Malawian I have to be vigilante in SA. Even though those things people told me about SA does not happen to me, it does not mean it will never happen. I just have to be aware of my environment and not get too comfortable anything can happen. So, my views have not really changed because every day I am always aware of what is happening in SA. I always try to be on the lookout of what is happening in the country.

PTM: **With your stay in SA, who or what has financed your life and education?**

STD10: *I have financed myself. Because when I was in Malawi I had part-time jobs which helped me finance myself. Of course, I got a bursary for my tuition only, but I can say 80 percent of my studies have been self-sponsor.*

PTM: **While studying in SA, what keeps you motivated?**

STD10: *Is that I will get better opportunities in SA. And the fact that I already have a job, keeps me motivated.*

PTM: **What are the necessary things for you to stay motivated? Or What encourages you to keep going through tough situations or rough times?**

STD10: *For me it is the goals and positive experiences I have. So, attaining those goals and achievements makes me feel not defeated. So, reflecting on the positive things that are happening in my life makes me not be defeated. Otherwise there are times that I am defeated and low. But, looking forward to the future and reflecting on the past make it better.*

PTM: **Has there been a change or shift in your goals and career ambitions over time you have studied in SA? Why?**

STD10: *Yes, there has been. Like I said, when I was coming to SA I was going to go with the flow of things, which was just learning at school. But, my other goal is to specialise, acquire more skills. In as much as I am almost done with my studies. But, I can tell you have already enrolled in different online short courses just to make me be more efficient and skilful. They are changing as opposed to when I was in Malawi. I never thought beyond my studies. But now I take different courses to build up my CV.*

PTM: **What demotivates you about studying in SA?**

STD10: *I think because I was self-sponsored and got a bursary, I had to work twice as hard as the next person. When my friends were busy sleeping, that was the time was waking up.*

PTM: **How have you dealt or are dealing with the things that demotivate you while studying in SA?**

STD10: *By accepting that this my circumstance. As, I said I had to woke up early to things that other Malawian students are not doing maybe. I accepted that this was my life, and that maybe I might not be the only one who can help me.*

PTM: What challenges demotivate you from achieving your goals and aspirations?

STD10: *Financial issues have been the biggest challenge for me. Of course, they were a blessing in disguise because that was how I got to meet and know people in my industry. But, it was still a challenge because my friends were studying the time I was working. So, time management was a struggle for me. Because as a student I would never recommend to a fellow Malawian student to work 50 percent and the other half study. I think studying should be 70 percent or above and the rest working. I was also thinking about how other people were living their life was a challenge. I would see my friends spend more than R5,000 and I would have used that money for my school. So, comparing one's life to another can be depressing. When I reflect on my peers who have full time scholarships, I do not think they had much challenges apart from the social aspect, like trying to fit in the environment and different cultures.*

PTM: What negative experience have you gone through while studying in SA?

STD10: *Perhaps the COVID-19 pandemic. It really delayed my school. It slowed a lot of stuff for me. Secondly, not getting feedback from my mentors and supervisors on time, but this happens once in a while.*

PTM: Have you had issues with discrimination or xenophobic attitudes from locals?

STD10: *Yes. In the industry that I am in is dominated by white people and not knowing the local languages, sometimes I feel segregated because it is normal. At first it would be annoying because my supervisor and I would be speaking English and when their friend comes they would change to Afrikaans. So, at first that was intimidating me but I just accepted it, and maybe that is why I forget it was an issue. Where I am currently working right now, I think I am the only black guy and the rest speak Afrikaans. So, I have just accepted it and taken it as normal. When I talk about xenophobic things, I would not say directly. I would say, sometimes when I am doing well other black locals might be threatened by me, thinking that I want to steal their jobs. I could sense that with my other friends. But I am really working hard for this. As a result, I stopped sharing my achievements with my local friends. I think if you show off your achievements, it might trigger some xenophobic attitudes by locals. Even if you are friends.*

PTM: Are you in touch with other Malawian students? What is your Malawian network like?

STD10: *Yes, I am in touch with other Malawians, especially students. My other friends finished and others that have just arrived in SA. We have a UP Malawian student group, so we have become like a family. Sometimes we get together.*

PTM: What challenges do you think other Malawians transnational students face here in SA? This can be economically, socially, educational.

STD10: *I think it depends on the person's financial stand. Those that have finances do not have economic challenges like paying school fees and groceries and juggling work and school for themselves, like I do. I do not think we face similar challenges. Most of the challenges I hear relate to social aspects such as adapting or adjusting.*

PTM: How has your experience been like at a public institution?

STD10: *For me it has been an interesting journey. When I came to my school, I saw that there were opportunities that one can join things like SRC, I can do a lot of leadership work. So, I ended up trying to running to be in the SRC, in as much as I lost, I ended up participating in other public events and debates, which made my experience even more fun. It was also an experience for me to discover my skills, which I believe my fellow Malawian graduates were jealous.*

PTM: I know you spoke of having a lot of Malawian friends at your university, why do you think they came to your institution?

STD10: *I think some came because of the reputation of the school. Others maybe because they got scholarships or bursaries to study here. I think also, this was the school that they only applied to and got accepted.*

PTM: How would you describe Malawian transnational students in SA?

STD10: *I think Malawian transnational students have a culture of minding their own business. We tend to not be vocal of who we are as a country. We tend to throw away our Malawian ways to fit into the crowds of locals, perhaps for them not to be or feel threatened by us. As a result, we push our fellow Malawians in SA away. For example, I have more friends who are locals than other Malawians who I learn with simply because of what I am saying which is we like to mind our own. But, I do see other Malawians getting along, they go out for shopping, vacations trips and other outings together. But according to me, I think they like to submerge themselves in the SA culture and mind their own business. I can also tell you, where I am staying there are also other Malawians. We meet and greet each other but that's where it ends. The other day I was actually disappointed that one of my Malawians friends was struggling financially and begged me for food. That's also the problem, we tend to side line ourselves when we can help each other. I might be wrong, but that is how it is here.*

PTM: **How often do you go back to Malawi?**

STD10: *Because I have not been to Malawi in a long time, I would have loved to be going to Malawi twice a year. From my other Malawian friends, they go once a year, and I would also want to go once this year.*

PTM: **What would it mean to you returning home often?**

STD10: *Going back home would be a chance for me to embrace my Malawian culture. I get tired of just speaking English, I want to be with people who I can speak my mother tongue with. Speaking English every day can be stressful. I feel like once in a while it is important for one to go back home just to refresh and be with family, so that when I return for school I am rejuvenated. I know some other people who I work with have not been back to Malawi in a long time, they do not look stressed but I would strongly advise them to do so. The reasons why I would go back to Malawi would let me release myself because I get so stressed and tensed up in SA. Your home is your home.*

PTM: **Do you think it's important to have fellow Malawian students around? Or a community of Malawian nationals? Why?**

STD10: *Before the lock down, Malawians students at my school used to meet and organise get together. Those that were new to the school were helped by this group of Malawians. This group was very important because it would help other Malawian students to settle down, who to contact in case of an emergency. I mean, being alone in a foreign land, one needs a community of their nationality. Being in a community also helps one adjust or respond to culture shocks. But, because of the lock down and others graduating and leaving, the group died. I still think it is important to have such things. It also helps to speak your language since locals force us to speak theirs.*

PTM: **Do you have family in SA? How would you describe your friends and family support throughout journey studying in SA?**

STD10: *Yes, I have an aunt but we speak here and there. The support has been morally. She would wish me happy birthday. When I am bored with school or work I visit my aunt. If they were in a better situation, I know they would have helped out a lot more but they are my social support. The same applies to my friends. They have been there for me in terms of finances and escorting me to places.*

PTM: **Why do you think it's important to have support from your friends and family throughout journey studying in SA?**

STD10: *Being one man is not good. There are some days I am met with different challenges and I go to my friends and family and I explain to them. I remember there was time I was heartbroken so I had to go to my aunt's house and stayed for two days and I felt much*

better. I also remember the time I was running to be in the SRC, my friends and family were there helping with the campaigning. When I lost, they were also with me to provide the moral support. I feel like such is important.

PTM: **What are some of the strategies you have taken up during your challenges? Or what are your coping mechanisms?**

STD10: *Number one is accepting. When I know that I am going to be disappointed, I quickly react by accepting that this has happened to me. I have also tried to be more understanding of my circumstances. I also go to a school psychologist because I had a problem with being upset too quickly. I try to find solutions, other than crying about it.*

PTM: **When you have completed your studies, what are your plans after.**

STD10: *I want to settle down here. I am not returning to Malawi any time soon. Give me 10 or 15 years in SA and I will return to Malawi.*

PTM: **What would you recommend to other Malawians about achieving their goals and aspirations whilst studying in SA?**

STD10: *They should set their goals to be smart. I think this very important because as a immigrant student it is very important to know what you are in that country for. They should stick to their goals and aspirations. They should often monitor themselves. They should also do small things right and making sure they are on the right path. If they do not follow this, as a result they will be all over the place.*

PTM: **What would you recommend to other Malawians about having a pleasant experience whilst studying in SA?**

STD10: *I recommend them to work very hard with their academics, as a result will put them in a better position to do many things. At my school for instance, reward students who do well or achieving in their academics and they would get financial assistance because of such. If they position themselves in the right circles, they can get various opportunities.*

PTM: **What would you recommend to other Malawians about enhancing or helping their economic and sociocultural experiences outside of the universities?**

STD10: *They should be open to understanding the diverse culture of SA. They should not always view SA from a cultural perspective, because this will just make them narrow minded and they will not be able to embrace other countries if they travel again.*

PTM: **How has your social interactions been like with locals outside your university?**

STD10: *I think I have interacted more with local students and this is because where I stay there are a lot of South Africa. As such, I believe we had a good relationship because we shared similar goals. The interaction has been normal and easy. I am assuming this would be different if I was in a location where I was not with students. The interaction would have been different. But with my day to day to activities, when I stop to ask someone something and I speak English I do not get a positive response. I do think locals in SA mind their own business. For example, if I was facing a problem or heading the wrong direction, I do not think they can help me. But, overall it has been just fine.*

PTM: Tell me about a time you interacted with individuals from different cultural backgrounds outside your university.

STD10: *With regards to working in a team... my first job I got as a student I worked with a Zulu guy, Pedi woman and two men who were Afrikaans. In general, I had already accepted the fact that these people would think differently from me, so that I could not expect quite a lot from them. I did not want to pay attention to what they were doing. But, overall I think we worked quite well. I could feel some segregation sometimes and I could see sometimes that the Black locals were not getting along with the white locals. It was like natural selection. For example, if there were tasks we had to work together, we would group up based on our race. I have also noticed that the black locals have a sense of entitlement. It is easy for them to express their views regardless of whatever the point their superiors are holding. With black locals, when something goes wrong, they question the next person, or hold them accountable for their actions. I can't really complain. Overall, it has been fine.*

PTM: Describe a time when you found it difficult to interact with someone from a different background as yours outside your university.

STD10: *The only time I found it difficult to interact with someone else was with a Zulu woman. She was so entitled and empowered to express and whatever she wanted. There are times she would come to work late and she would opt to do the less work that we were given. This made it really difficult for me. At first I used to think maybe because she is a lady, perhaps I should just be a gentleman and do the hard tasks. But then as time went by and I realised that we are all getting the same pay. I realised that we were all getting the same pay, so I was not going to let her behave in that way. So, I began to mimic her behaviour to let her see what she does. In general, what made it difficult was her working habits or working behaviour. But, I eventually stopped and continued with my work, even though we did not finish.*

PTM: Describe a situation that required you to consider a different perspective from your own when exploring an issue outside your university.

STD10: *There has been times with my local friends when things have not gone according to my perspective. When I make suggests, they are not really taken into consideration, maybe it has something to do with me being a foreigner? But what has been really important to me is to do the right thing in the right manner. For example, where I work at the farm, I would*

suggest tasks but the team would not consider my task. So, what I would do is go for what the majority wants because it will not affect me significantly. So, I would just weigh my options and see what will affect me directly, and it does I just postpone. If it does not affect me, I go with the flow.

PTM: **Give me an example of a situation where you had to take into account the sensitivities of different parties outside your university.**

STD10: *From a cultural perspective, I was once aware of what my team members were not comfortable eating or talking about certain types of meat. They did not consume as a result of culture. Me, knowing this, I had to respect them and I had stopped bringing up such meat because I did not want to hinder myself from having fun. So, I am very respectful to how they or perceive things.*

PTM: **Generally speaking would you say that most locals in SA can be trusted or that one can't be too careful in dealing with locals in SA? Why?**

STD10: *I would say, one does not have to trust the locals in SA. I would say don't trust them 90 percent, the 10 is for the benefit of doubt. Compared to the Malawians, do not trust locals in SA. I have been scammed by the locals, therefore I lost trust in them. I have to be careful and play my cards right. The locals have gotten to the point where they are like a fox in a sheep's clothing. They present the scam in a thing that seems very legit, and one might be very tempted to go for the thing. But no, the level of scamming each other in this country is at an advanced stage.*

PTM: **Where do you stay? How would you describe your living situation?**

STD10: *I stay at student residency just outside the main campus. Over the years I have stayed with people from different countries. I have stayed with Malawian, South Africans, Mozambicans, Zambians, and Ghanaians. The living conditions have been normal because we all minded our own business. We had challenges where we had to set aside rules on how we should conduct ourselves. On many occasions, I would find people from Malawi or Zambia, people I thought would have an understanding, would still not follow the rules. Even myself, there are times where I would break the rules. Living conditions were good, we had our challenges, but they were not so major that I had to change housemates. We lived well.*

PTM: **All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life outside your university? Why?**

STD10: *As a student, like I previously mentioned, I had to work so hard to sustain my life and put food on my table. I have been able to get jobs and get money. So, I am 60 per cent because I am self-sponsored. I do find the rand much stronger than the Malawi kwacha, this makes it much easier for me to be satisfied because I get a wider choice of things.*

PTM: All things considered, how satisfied are you with your current school and the place you live? Why?

STD10: *I am very satisfied with my student res. I like the rules they have put for us students; they take serious action. This makes my life easier. The infrastructures are good, the WIFI is strong, they would maintain my things quickly, they have a study area I use often. They have so many things in place to make my experience nice.*

PTM: Have you been to any other major city other than the ones in Gauteng? Why?

STD10: *I was privileged to visit to all the major cities in Sa and this was all because of school work related activities. I was involved in a school competition which was a countrywide activity. I am assuming if I did not have all of these opportunities, I would have just visited Johannesburg because I have a cousin living there.*

PTM: What is your marital status?

STD10: *I am single, I do not have any dependants.*

PTM: How do you cope if the bill is not paid or not paid on time? For instance, tuition, accommodation, or pocket money?

STD10: *I have not come across such a situation because my pocket money was coming from the work I was doing. There were fixed dates I would get my money and they did not inconvenience me. But, there were times I would not get money. I would borrow money from my friends or family members or alternative resources. Overall, I was just patient, and being organised with my money. For example, I plan my budget.*

PTM: Here ends the interview. Thank you for your time and thank so much for your participation. Let's keep in touch.

INTERVIEW 2 STUDENT 6

RESEARCHER: Pemphero Theodora Magaba	DATE: 12 August 2022	LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Pretoria
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PTM: Hello participant. Thank you for agreeing to be part of this second interview. The purpose of this follow-up interview is to reflect on what was talked about in the first interview. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

STD6: Sure, no questions from me.

PTM: How has your experience been like living in PTA?

STD6: So far so good. Last year I was living in Brooklyn side which close to the Embassies. So, there was quite a lot of security. I could take a walk safely because of the security. So, I feel safe here. My area is also really pretty. It is also close to school as well. It is also near several malls making it very convenient for me. I was not really part of the community in Brooklyn side because some of our neighbours were private owned homes. Now in Loufsters Park, it is the same thing as well, there are a lot of embassies. So, it is very safe and the electricity does not go off. There also a lot of students around as well and that is very comforting. There is also a mall nearby as well, which is nice. It is also close to campus as well. I have not complained about where I live and where I have live in Hatfield.

PTM: Why is safety important to you in your area?

STD6: Being that I am in a foreign country; I think safety is a high priority because I do want to put myself in a situation that would cause harm. I want to be in a place where I can easily get access to help, it's a good thing we have a police station close by. I do not want to cause worry for my parents.

PTM: How has your economic life been like in your area?

STD6: I would say only up to recently, the inflation crisis in Malawi and SA has made me more mind of prices and things that I buy. But otherwise, if I would compare the cost of living in SA is a bit lower than Malawi and that is in terms of general items, such as groceries and food items. I would say Hatfield is quite affordable and its surrounding areas but not Pretoria as a whole. Definitely in my area there is a vibe of students, such as discounts, benefits. If you go outer of my area, the prices become normal. No lie...things are cheaper I Hatfield. There are a lot of student deals and packages. This area does accommodate a student life. With accommodation, this has to do with preferences, there are cheap accommodations and expensive ones. I think the good thing about here, I get to choose which one works with my budget plus liking. Generally, though, apart from on campus Res, accredited student accommodations are they affordable and make students very comfortable. For example, in their rental fees they include WIFI, water and other basics. But the expensive ones, you make up for what is not included.

PTM: **What are the transportation expenses in your area like in area??**

STD6: *All these I need one daily basis are found by nearby malls. So, when I spend money on transportation has do with my social life. Here I usually take an Uber or train. I like this because it fits with my student budget because I do not have access to a car, it saves my pocket money. And, it is very convenient for me because I do not have much to do outside of Pretoria.*

PTM: **What are the necessary components/ resources you consider when you are picking a place to live?**

STD6: *I look for all-inclusive and close to campus. What I do not want is paying for electricity, water and WIFI separately, these are the things I need included in the rental prices. For me it makes it easier for payments. Instead of splitting payments or allocating budgets, it is all in one. I only want to deal with it once.*

PTM: **How is your social life in your area and Pretoria?**

STD6: *Because of COVID pandemic, it was hard to make friends because I was not on campus. In terms of student accommodation, it is much easier to make friends. Usually if I want to find a social life, I have to go find it, where is a lot of people gathered. Such as events and parties. I am not a party goer as much; I do attend events but I do not club like that. I do not go out every week. I am also limited to the people that I meet.*

PTM: **Describe to me how your cultural interaction has been like with locals in area?**

STD6: *As side from other Malawians and South African students, the interaction has been with Xhosas and Tswanas. I think I have interacted with them that way because of the surrounding provinces of those ethnic groups, if because the school is close to them, they come here and I see them a lot. I think Pretoria is Xhosa territory, so a lot of people I interact with speak IsXhosa.*

PTM: **Which SA cultural norms or practises have you been exposed to? What did you like or dislike about them? If so, why?**

STD6: *Dressing! In terms of dressing, I did not like and did not pick up on that norm. I am generally modest. I did not up on wearing short skirts and dresses, shorts because it is generally not my thing. I am fond of the whole Sangoma thing because I am a church goer. I do a lot of bible study and church around my area which I really like that they have my domination around where I stay. I also say the only difference I say from Malawi is that SA locals like enjoyment and having a good time. Now with that is I have had difficulties in creating good friendships with locals because I need friends I can stay with and go shopping with and for many locals, this is boring, they want someone they can go clubbing*

with or adventures with and someone who can spoil them with money. This lifestyle is not for me. I came here for school and if I see someone is trying to distract me from school, I avoid that friendship. I am also like this in Malawi.

PTM: Tell me some of the positives/benefits of staying in your area or Pretoria?

STD6: Firstly, because this is an administration capital, so distractive things such as protests, strikes and looting is not can often. The law enforcement in this area is big and the people here are mostly diplomats and their families. So, in that regard, if I want to party, I have to search for it. With my experiences with Johannesburg and Pretoria, my comparison would be that Johannesburg has so many things going and each man for his own. But Pretoria is more protected and secure. In my area, it is also calm and collected. If you find yourselves in craziness here, it is because you looked for it. Many of the plays here are secure and protected. I am also close to the train station, so I get to move around areas in Gauteng easily and at an affordable price.

PTM: What about your accommodation?

STD6: I would say it is a bit louder than my past accommodation, but location of the place is very peaceful and secured. I also think because we are close to Embassies and they do not tolerate noise and parties. You would rarely hear busy things this side. The only thing I would say I do not like, is that it's close to the stadium and when there are events you can hear everything. But it is not that loud.

PTM: Where do you spend most of your time? If so, why?

STD6: My room but if I have found some time to explore I walk around surrounding neighbourhoods. I also like to discover new places, like malls and touristic attractions. So, if I am not doing school, I am outside walking or exploring. Clubbing is 2 out of 10. It gives me time to clear my mind and see what is available in my surrounding areas.

PTM: What is the best thing about studying SA in general?

STD6: The quality of education, I think it carries a lot of weigh. I like that is worldwide recognised. I like being culturally exposed because I see SA as a hub for the rest of Africa and the world. Therefore, it becomes easier to branch off from SA to the rest of the world than Malawi. I mean, not many flights come to and from Malawi compared to SA. Development and advancement, in Malawi I struggle a lot with get things, so I result in ordering online. While in SA these are already available and they are very close, which makes things very convenient and affordable for me.

PTM: Why is it important for you to be culturally exposed?

STD6: *The ratio or odds of me meeting someone from a different country in Malawi is very low and here in SA is very high. It is also not me meeting SA locals, but also people from Europe and Asia. Also, there are worldwide events hosted in SA and the food is also worldwide, I get to get a taste of countries that I have never been to while here. There is a wide variety of things in SA. These things are available in Malawi, but there very few and do not happen often. Language as well. These give me new knowledge which can help me commune n social environments and putts me at advantage of settling down anywhere in the world. It also helps me be more marketable and diverse in working with various groups of people. To me, exposure means I come dynamic.*

PTM: **What is the hardest thing about studying and living in SA as a Malawian student?**

STD6: *Homesickness. No matter what, I get to the point I want to be surround by the things that remind of home, the food, my family and fellow Malawians. If it really gets bad, it can sometimes affect my school and how I live. It is that realisation that I am not home and I am far from my family.*

PTM: **Why did you decide to study in SA regardless of the negative expectations or views of the country?**

STD6: *The positives out weighted the negatives, although I knew about the high crime in the country but it was more affordable than the West. are recognised and it close to home. There is a variety of things to do here and more opportunities. Definitely, the benefits out weighted the throwbacks.*

PTM: **What have you done or what measures have you taken up to make your experience easier in your area or in PTA in general?**

STD6: *I have learnt to speak Zulu and lingo of Xhosa and Tswana. It has helped me a lot because even if I greet someone in their native language, even if going forward I speak English, they give me the benefit of the doubt as oppose to starting the conversation in English. I also mimic the way SA locals behave socially. For example, people here like to greet each other all the time, not matter if you have already met, so I do that to make me feel so comfortable.*

PTM: **Who/what in particular do you think can help Malawian students in addressing our challenges in SA?**

STD6: *To be honest with you, have never head the Malawian embassy and consulate is interested in our community. I am really disappointed in the fact that I am not aware of a Malawian student community that is solely for the purpose of engaging with one another. Or general, a Malawian community in SA to come together in diaspora. Or Malawian events for Malawians only in SA to embrace our culture.*

PTM: Here ends the interview. Thank you for your time and thank so much for your participation. Let's keep in touch.