

Exploring the Academic, Residential and Social Experiences of Donor-Funded International Postgraduate Students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Ekow Attom Prah
Senior Assistant Registrar, Centre for Coastal Management
University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana
E-mail: ekow.prah@ucc.edu.gh

Abstract

International students have an undeniable effect on the higher education landscape worldwide, from social, cultural, economic and political strategies to higher education efforts to focus on and improve students' experience. However, the focus of this study is on the academic, residential, and social encounter of international students. Using a descriptive survey, 30 international donor-funded postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana were given questionnaires to complete. Students reported various experiences ranging from academic, residential, and social as they pursue their studies in the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Additionally, responses from students indicated that students focus on both academic (i.e. performance in written assignments, mathematical skill courses, course information, etc.) and non-academic aspects of their experiences (i.e. social interactions, friendships, travel, clubs and societies, etc.) when reflecting on their international experiences with staff and students. These students had a lot of success in terms of integrating or adjusting to academic, residential and social matters at the University of Cape Coast, which is an indication that University of Cape Coast has a good environment that supports international postgraduate studies. These were exhibited in these students' involvement in campus activities, integration and adoption into Ghanaian culture and society, academically performing well in written assignments, performing well in mathematical skills courses, students' understanding in information presented in courses of their study programmes. However, the flight cost to and from their country of origin was a challenge to these students as this was not covered by the scholarship package of the international students. The recommendation is that, in future scholarships to international postgraduate students, the flight cost to and from the country of origin for some number of trips should be added to the scholarship package to ease the burden of these students.

Keywords: experiences, donor-funded, international, postgraduate students

DOI: 10.7176/JEP/16-9-15

Publication date: August 31st 2025

1. Introduction

International governments have viewed study abroad opportunities as vehicles in which to build academic, scientific and technological capacities (Teferra, 2002). International student recruitment has emerged as a policy priority in contemporary universities. In 2018, more than 5.6 million students globally were studying abroad (OECD, 2020), up from two million in 2000. The OECD predicts that, by 2025, eight million students will be studying abroad. There are many positive outcomes of international study, such as increasing the diversity of students' population, adding new perspectives to classroom conversations, increasing one's awareness, and appreciation for other countries and cultures. However, despite these positive outcomes, international graduate students often face significant challenges when studying abroad, including adjusting to a different culture and educational system. Feelings of isolation, challenges adapting to different learning and teaching styles, financial constraints, and difficulties acclimating to unfamiliar climates and cultures have been recognized in the literature (Jones et al., 1999). Over the past decades, the world has become interconnected in different areas, such as trade and commerce, research and development, information technology, and education. Currently, the donor-funded international postgraduate student population enrolled in the University of Cape Coast has grown considerably for the past five years. The reason that has accounted for the increase in the number of international postgraduate students is the emerging scholarships for these students. The scholarship or financial support of most of these donor-funded international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast covers tuition fee, research grant, monthly stipend, accommodation, conference support, among others.

In addition, because these students come from different geographic backgrounds, they significantly contribute to the promotion of cultural diversity in the classroom and on campus, enriching the academic environment and adding educational value to it. International graduate students complete research that attracts grants and helps guarantee future faculty and programme growth. Moreover, the diversity of these students provides contact with other cultures and worldviews for fellow students and brings different research perspectives and life skills into the learning environment. By virtue of living and studying in a foreign country, international students exemplify drive

and resourcefulness that could be modeled by all students. Nevertheless, given their culturally diverse backgrounds, international students may experience adjustment strains within their host environment that are unique to them, such as cultural differences, language constraints, and social behaviours. Even though research on the adjustment issues of this student body is extensive (Ward et al., 2008), there seems to be a dearth of efforts in the literature to integrate findings (Yoon & Portman, 2004; Andrade & Evans, 2009). Adjustment difficulties are more prevalent among international students of colour, those with stronger foreign accents or communication difficulties, or those whose cultures differ significantly from that of the majority of the host country (Hanassab, 2006).

International students are being considered as clients by many higher institutions of learning but quite surprisingly, little attention has been given to their experiences after enrolment, which has been causing much of these international students' dissatisfaction in most universities (Constantine et al., 2004). Some international students feel isolated even with the core activities of a university which are teaching and learning. Researchers have also noted a catalogue of adjustment problems facing international students as a whole, including educational challenges, communication problems, financial difficulties, accommodation, social isolation, serious nostalgia problems, worries about immediate and extended family, discrimination, and the adjustment to social customs and cultural differences (Andrade, 2006). The following research question guided in exploring the academic, residential and social experiences of donor funded international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast: What are the academic, residential and social experiences of donor-funded international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast?

2. Literature Review

International education has a long history dating back to the Grand Tour of the 17th and 18th Centuries. In those days, scholars and students travelled to the intellectually dominant countries to seek knowledge (Lee & Rice, 2007). This tradition has continued to this day. Nonetheless, the emphasis on international education is now shifting towards internationalisation and globalisation. There are multiple, interrelated definitions of "international students". Mainly, international students are those who received their prior education in another country and are not citizens of their current country of study (OECD, 2023). The OECD (2023) defines international students as: Those who received their prior education in another country and are not residents of their current country of study. When information on international students is not available, foreign students – students who are not citizens of the country in which they study – can be used as a proxy. This definition captures the most important group of international students: those living in a foreign country for educational purposes (OECD, 2023).

Different types of international students can be identified. Firstly, there is a full degree programme abroad (Knight, 2012). This involves students who enroll and complete a full degree at an institution in a foreign country. They are awarded their degree by the host institution. There are also those who participate in short-term, study-abroad programmes, as part of the degree programme at their home institution. This is normally for a duration of one semester or one year, and the degree is awarded by the home higher education institution. There are also cross-border collaborative degree programmes between two or more institutions or providers. Here, students register for an academic programme involving two or more higher education institutions or providers working collaboratively to offer a degree programme. There is also the cross-border supply where students stay in their home countries and enroll in courses abroad. E-learning-based distance education programmes typically reflect this form of cross-border education. This type of education has been facilitated by exponential technological development which has resulted in the proliferation of online institutions and massive open online courses (MOOCs; Knight, 2019).

There are diverse reasons for prospective students to study abroad and head towards particular destinations. These could be more related to positional and transformative rationales (Pyvis & Chapman, 2007). The positional rationales are more strategic and aim towards professional development. It includes the desire to develop an international career, benefit from lower university fees, learn a new language, or undertake a specific course that is not available at home (Altbach & Engbert, 2014). The transformative is more personal and includes the desire to seek knowledge, adventure, and excitement, and also to gain independence. These categorisations are overlapping and not too distinctive from each other. Whilst individuals may seek to strategically develop their international career, they may equally seek opportunities for adventure and other social engagements. Although student mobility has been historical, the recent emphasis on globalisation and associated internationalisation has made it more exponential.

Globalisation is conceptualized as "the process of strengthening the worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local events are shaped by circumstances at other places in the world" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). It is a "process that is increasing the flow of people, culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology, and economy across borders resulting in a more interconnected and interdependent world" (Knight, 2012, p. 45). Deriving employability skills has been identified as a key determinant of students' flow (Jones, 2013). Jones distinguishes between employment skills and employability skills. Employment skills refer to specific professions for which qualifications and credentials are a key factor, whilst employability skills are more generic. It involves personal and interpersonal skills and attributes including empathy, understanding, appreciation and recognition of

difference, and team-working. These skills are independent of an individual's field of study but make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. Various studies have confirmed greater connections between international exposure and the development of employability skills (Jones, 2013). It has been argued that employers appreciate these values more than disciplinary-based skills. Such reasoning has also fuelled the desire to attend a world-class institution and the associated prestige of acquiring a foreign degree remains a key motivation for student mobility.

Though it has been difficult to define what exactly a world-class university is it has over the years been tied to a Western elite university model - a prestigious research-intensive with a high concentration of talented faculty from the national and international contexts and produces highly intensive research in its partnerships with industry and in the creation of patents. These universities are perceived to function in an environment that nurtures competitiveness, unrestrained scientific inquiry, critical thinking, innovation, and creativity. Excellent students from wealthy homes are mostly attracted to these universities. By attending such universities students hope to acquire excellent training, make the right "connections" and attract prestigious career opportunities. This desire has become more prevalent based on the importance of international ranking systems which now play decisive roles in international education. Most global universities continue to embark on rigorous and committed strategies to position or consolidate themselves in top positions in international rankings to reflect and ascertain their power and prestige. The strategies include the publication of papers in high-ranked journals and the ability to attract top-notch students (Celis & Guzmán-Valenzuela, 2021).

Cultural and social globalisation is another key determinant of international student mobility. It is a "phenomenon by which the experience of everyday life, as influenced by the diffusion of commodities and ideas, reflects a standardization of cultural expressions around the world" (Watson, 2022, para 1). Prospective students are motivated to choose destinations with which they share a common culture, and social relationships. The idea of "likeness" boosts the academic, cultural and socio-economic integration of international students and makes adaptation to the destination institutions easier. Language and physical proximity have therefore emerged as key determinants of student mobility. In this case, the English Language has become very important in determining destinations for study. Many students will choose English-speaking countries. The ability to speak English has therefore become a critical factor in acquiring a prestigious job. In the Ghanaian context, there have been efforts both at the national and institutional levels to attract international students. However, most of the strategies and policies are embarked on at the institutional level (Gyamera, 2015). These strategies include the development of mission statements to emphasise the position of the universities to deliver world-class and excellent programmes, international collaborations with perceived prestigious universities abroad and the use of foreign experts. The universities also engage in direct advertisements in neighbouring countries where the universities attract most of their students. Various programmes have also been introduced to make the curriculum more attractive to international students. The government through the regulatory bodies in Ghana mandate the universities to reserve a 10 per cent quota of total enrolment for all institutions for international students Ministry of Education (2019). The government also encourages institutional cooperation and networking and facilitates the acquisition of visas by foreign students and faculty.

Immigration policies and their effect on international students have been a prominent research topic, particularly with regard to visa restrictions, work permits, and post-graduation opportunities. The political climate in host countries can greatly impact students' experiences, with some facing uncertainty regarding their future in the country. International students often struggle to build strong social networks outside their cultural groups. Research shows that peer support programmes and international student organizations play a critical role in fostering a sense of belonging and reducing isolation.

3. Methodology

The University of Cape Coast (UCC) is a public University in the Central Region of Ghana. The University was established in 1962 as a University College, and became a full-fledged university in 1971. The University has been conferring its own degrees since then. The University was initially established with the mandate of training graduate teachers for secondary schools in Ghana. This initial mandate has however changed overtime with a widened focus to train not only teachers but also people of different professions for the country, Africa and the world at large. The University started with only two departments, which were Arts and Science. These departments were developed into faculties in 1963. In 1964, the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Economics and Social Studies were created. The fifth faculty (now School of Agriculture) was added in 1975.

The University over the years, positioned itself to meet the numerous challenges facing humanity worldwide as well as keep pace with demands incurred by developments in higher education environments. In connection with this, the University now trains students in a wide range of academic fields, including Medicine, Pharmacy, Law and Business Administration in addition to the Basic Sciences of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. The University keeps evolving and currently has five (5) Colleges, 17 Faculties/Schools, 89 Academic Departments, 13 Centres, three (3) Institutes and three (3) Units as well as a Graduate School. The School of Graduate studies

coordinate the activities of all graduate programmes in the departments of the University. With the objectives of ensuring that graduate programmes are relevant in the promotion of socio-economic, scientific and technological development of Africa; and to deepen graduate training on the continent, the school ensures the highest standard of quality of graduate training in the University.

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

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

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

4. Results and Discussions

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

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

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

In terms of the ages of the respondents, two of the respondents were within 21- 25 age category, four respondents were within the 26 – 30 age category, eleven of the respondents were within the 31 – 35 age category, two of the respondents were within 36 – 40 age category, one respondent was within the 41 – 45 age category, and four of the respondents were within 46 – 50 age category. Respondents within the 31 – 35 age category were the majority, indicating that most international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast are within this age bracket and are within their youthful age. This confirms the studies of Richardson (1994) that the age group of 31-35 is often associated with postgraduate education due to various factors, including career advancement,

personal growth, and the pursuit of specialized knowledge. In addition, some research highlights that mature students, including those in this age range, often perform as well as or better than younger students in higher education.

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

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

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

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

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

In terms of where respondents resided or accommodated during their studies in University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about ninety-five percent (21) of the respondents indicated that they were accommodated in the University's Hall while about five percent (1) indicated he/she was accommodated in a Hostel around the University campus.

4.2 Respondents' satisfaction in terms of services or facilities enjoyed at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana

In terms of respondents' satisfaction with regard to services or facilities enjoyed or used at the University of Cape Coast; a little above four-tenth (10) of the respondents were satisfied with assistance from an International Students Officer while about one-tenth (2) were dissatisfied about the assistance received from an International Student Officer at the University of Cape Coast, meanwhile about thirteen percent (3) were very satisfied with this assistance. This finding supports the works of the Office of International Relations at the University of Cape Coast. This Office is dedicated to the welfare of all international students and ensures that all services that need to be provided for international students in terms of orientation, excursion, and immigration services, among others are provided to make these students comfortable on campus.

In addition, about seven-tenth (17) of the respondents had not used English/French tutoring services while about one-tenth (2) of the respondents were very satisfied with this service. The University of Cape Coast offers these services to international students who are deficient in either English or French based on the programme they are studying at the University of Cape Coast. The international postgraduate students who accessed this tutoring service were from francophone countries and they used this service to better their communication skills in English language to ensure quality writing for their assignments and theses. In terms of counselling services, almost six-tenth (14) of the respondents had not used this service while almost three-tenth (7) of the respondents were very satisfied with this service. This finding supports the services rendered by the Counselling Centre of the University of Cape Coast. This Counselling Centre of the University is mandated to provide counseling services in the area of academic, career, social, relationships, among others. Ghanaian and international students can access this service both in-person and online, based on the preference of the students. Most students prefer the online counselling service as it ensures that their confidentiality and privacy is enhanced.

In terms of housing services, about forty-six percent (11) of the respondents were satisfied while about nine percent (2) of the respondents were very satisfied, meanwhile about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents were very dissatisfied with the housing services. Most of the respondents were given accommodation by University of Cape Coast for the period of their studies as part of their scholarship package and they were taken to the best halls on campus and this explains why most of the respondents are satisfied with the housing services. In addition, in terms of respondents' satisfaction with regard to recreational facilities on campus, about thirty percent (7) of the respondents were very satisfied, about twenty percent (5) of the respondents were very dissatisfied, meanwhile thirty-four percent (8) of the respondents had not used these recreational facilities at all on campus. The University of Cape Coast has well-constructed recreational facilities for both students and staff. Some students used their leisure hours and weekends to enjoy these recreational facilities to relax from academic pressures and keep fit. The University also organizes inter-hall sports competitions, and some international postgraduate students take part in this programme to exhibit their sporting talents. This facilitates the integration of some international students into the larger community and makes them feel part of the University community.

In terms of facilities for religious worship, a little above forty percent (10) of the respondents were satisfied, while about twenty percent (5) were very satisfied, meanwhile about twenty percent (5) of the respondents had never used any religious facilities for worship on campus. The University of Cape Coast is a secular University but is dominated by Christians, followed by Muslims. There is a greater degree of religious tolerance in the institution. The University has facilities for both the various Christian denominations and Muslims students. In addition, half (12) of the respondents were satisfied with the health services of the University of Cape Coast, about thirteen percent (3) were very satisfied, meanwhile about seventeen percent (4) were dissatisfied with the University's health services. The University of Cape Coast has a well resource University Health Services for both students and staff. In giving health services, priorities are given to international students and the health bills are absorbed by the University as part of their scholarship package. This could account for the reason why half of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the University's health services.

In terms of career services, about forty-six (11) of the respondents had not used this service while about forty-two percent (10) were satisfied with the career services at the University of Cape Coast, and about eight percent (2) were very satisfied with these services. In addition to the career counselling services offered by the Counselling Centre of the University to students, the Office of Dean of Students Affairs of the University also organises programmes for both Ghanaian and international students on career guidance. Faculty members also support this service as they mentor students assigned to them. In addition, in terms of Academic adviser service, about sixty percent (14) of the respondents were satisfied while about seventeen percent (4) were very satisfied with academic adviser service, meanwhile about twenty percent (5) of the respondents had not used this service on campus. Every student at the University is assigned an academic adviser/counsellor to assist them navigate their way through their

academic journey smoothly. Faculty members have performed this support service with dedication and commitment and this could explain why the majority of the respondents are satisfied with this service.

In terms of Registrar's office services, about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents were satisfied with this service, about thirteen percent (3) were very satisfied with the Registrar's office services, and meanwhile about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents had not used these services on campus. The Registrar's office in the University is in-charge of administrative support for students and staff. International students are given more attention in terms of their orientation, matriculation, registration of courses, examination issues, congregation, and certification, among others. In addition, in terms of financial aid service, half (12) of the respondents had not used this service on campus, about thirty percent (7) of the respondents were satisfied with the financial aids service, meanwhile about five percent (1) of the respondents was dissatisfied with this service. This confirms the literature that most universities offer hardship funds for international students experiencing financial difficulties and this may include funding for study materials or a one-off payment to help with living costs.

4.3 Respondents' success in adjusting to academic, residential and social matters

In terms of respondents' success in adjusting to academic, residential and social matters; about eight-tenth (19) of the respondents indicated that meeting academic demands was a lot of success to them while about two-tenth (5) of the respondents indicated that they made some successes. This finding supports that the academic environment at the University of Cape Coast supports respondents to successfully adjust to academic matters. In addition, with regard to being involved in campus activities, half (12) of the respondents indicated that it was a lot of success to them while about twenty percent (5) of the respondents made some successes, meanwhile about thirty percent (7) indicated that they had little or no success in terms of involvements in campus activities. Furthermore, in terms of living in Ghanaian culture and society, about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that they made a lot of success, while about thirty-eight (9) of the respondents indicated that they had some success, meanwhile about thirteen (3) of the respondents indicated that they had little or no success with regard to living in Ghanaian culture and society.

In terms of respondents performing adequately in written assignments in the University of Cape Coast, almost eight-tenth (19) of the respondents indicated that they had a lot of successes, while about two-tenth (5) of the respondents indicated that they had some successes. In addition, with regards to respondents performing adequately in courses requiring mathematical skills, about fifty-eight percent (14) of the respondents indicated they had a lot of successes, while about thirty-three (8) of the respondents indicated that they made some successes, meanwhile about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that he/she had little or no success. Furthermore, in terms of respondents understanding information presented in courses in their programme of study, seventy-five (18) of the respondents indicated that they had a lot of successes while about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that they had some successes.

Also, in terms of respondents finding help or solution to questions or problems during their studies at the University of Cape Coast, about seventy-one percent (17) of the respondents indicated that they had a lot of successes, while about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that they had some successes, meanwhile about eight percent (2) indicated that they had little or no success with regard to finding help/solution to questions/problems.

4.4 Respondents' participation in campus activities

In terms of respondents' participation in student activities/groups during their studies at the University of Cape Coast; almost (23) of the respondents attended international students' events/programmes. In addition, about twenty percent (5) of the respondents indicated that they have joined students' unions on campus, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that they joined students' clubs, and the same number of respondents also joined multi-cultural associations on campus. In addition, some respondents joined volunteer clubs, and the same number of respondents also joined sports teams. Others also joined special interest clubs, religious groups/fellowships. In addition, in terms of respondents' interpersonal relations (contacts) with other students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about seventy percent (17) of the respondents indicated that they interact with both Ghanaian and international students on campus while about sixteen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that they interact with both students from their country of origin and international students. In addition, about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that he/she interacts with Ghanaian students, the same number of respondents interact only with students from their country of origin, and other international students.

4.5 Respondents' interpersonal relations with Ghanaian students and staff at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana

In terms of respondents' interpersonal relations with Ghanaian students and staff at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; twenty-five percent (6) of the respondents indicated that they somewhat agree that Ghanaian students are hard to get to know while about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree, however, twenty-five percent (6) of the respondents indicated that they strongly disagree that Ghanaian students

are hard to get to know. In addition, in terms of respondents' agreement to the fact that Ghanaian students are friendly when they get to know them; about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents indicated that they somewhat agree, while about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree, however, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that they neither agree nor disagree. Furthermore, in terms of how Ghanaian staff and staff show interest in respondents' country and culture; about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that they somewhat agree with the statement while about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree with this statement. However, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents neither agree nor disagree with this statement while about eight percent (2) of the respondents strongly disagree that Ghanaian staff and students show interest in respondents' country and culture.

In terms of respondents' preference to mix with students from their own culture; about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree with this statement while about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents neither agree nor disagree with this statement. However, twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents strongly disagree that they have the preference to mix with students from their own culture during their studies on campus. In addition, in terms of respondents' agreement to the statement that they would want to have more experiences of Ghanaian culture and family life; about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree with this statement while twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents neither agree nor disagree with this statement. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents strongly disagree with this statement. Furthermore, in terms of whether it is difficult for respondents to meet other Ghanaians outside the University of Cape Coast community; about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that they somewhat agree with this statement while twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents neither agree nor disagree with this statement. However, about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that they strongly disagree that it is difficult for respondents to meet other Ghanaians outside the University of Cape Coast community. Also, in terms of whether Ghana is a welcoming and tolerant society; about half (12) of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree with the statement while about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that they somewhat agree with the statement. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated they strongly disagree that Ghana is a welcoming and tolerant society.

4.6 Respondents' level of concern when it comes to paying for the following while studying in University of Cape Coast, Ghana

In terms of respondents' level of concern when it comes to paying for accommodation (e.g. rent payments, including utilities such as electricity and water); about sixty-seven percent (16) of the respondents indicated that they are not concerned at all in terms of paying for accommodation while about twenty-one (5) percent of the respondents indicated that they are somewhat concerned with this. However, about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that they are very much concerned in terms of paying for accommodation. This finding confirms that these respondents are being funded for their education at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, because most of these expenses are being paid by the donor institutions. The finding supports for the respondents cover accommodation for the period of their studies. In addition, in terms of respondents' level of concern when it comes to paying for school-related expenses (e.g. tuition, textbooks, school supplies); about fifty-eight percent (14) of the respondents indicated that they are not concerned at all in terms of paying for school-related expenses while twenty-five percent (6) of the respondents indicated that they are somewhat concerned in terms of paying these expenses. However, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that they are very much concerned about payment of school-related expenses. This finding confirms that these respondents are being funded for their education at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, because most of these expenses are being paid by the donor institution. The finding supports for the respondents cover tuition fees for the duration of the study programme. According to Paddy (2019), research on the determinants of international students' choice of universities in Ghana examines factors influencing students' decisions to study at institutions like the University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. It identifies the cost of tuition, reputation of institutions, and the high cost of living as significant considerations.

In terms of respondents' level of concern when it comes to paying for social services (e.g. going to pub or snack shop with friends); about forty-six percent (11) of the respondents indicated that they are not concerned at all in terms of paying for social services while twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents are somewhat concerned about paying for these expenses. However, thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that they are very much concerned in terms of paying social services. This finding confirms that these respondents are being funded for their education at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, because most of these expenses are being supported by the donor institution. All respondents are given a monthly stipend to support subsistence as they pursue their studies. In addition, in terms of respondents' level of concern when it comes to paying for food, clothing, and transportation; about fifty-four percent (13) of the respondents indicated that they are very much concerned in terms of paying for these expenses while about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that they are somewhat concerned in paying for these expenses. However, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents

indicated that they were not concerned at all in paying for food, clothing, and transportation during their studies at the University of Cape Coast. Research by Africa Education Watch discusses broader financial challenges, including food costs, faced by students in Ghana. These reports often analyze the economic implications of policies and their impact on students. In addition, a study by Matey (2024) titled food habits among international students at the University of Ghana explores how international students adapt their eating habits after arriving in Ghana. It highlights changes in food practices, consumption patterns, and dining environments due to exposure to new cultural experiences, cuisines, and costs.

4.7 Respondents' indication of how safe they feel in the University of Cape Coast

In terms of how safe respondents' feel on campus; about sixty-three percent (15) of the respondents indicated that they feel very safe on campus while about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents indicated that they feel fairly safe. In terms of how safe respondents' feel in their accommodation; about sixty-three percent (15) of the respondents indicated that they feel very safe in where they are accommodated while about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that they feel fairly safe in where they are accommodated on campus. Gyebi (2021) research on Controlling Criminal Activities for Peace and Security of University of Cape Coast Students focuses on students living in hostels outside the campus. It discusses the challenges of ensuring safety in surrounding communities and suggests measures like building more halls of residence and enhancing security systems.

In addition, in terms of how safe respondents' feel in public transport (e.g. bus, taxi); about fifty-four percent (13) of respondents indicated that they feel very safe while about forty-six percent (11) of respondents indicated that they feel fairly safe in public transport on campus and around Ghana. In terms of how safe respondents' feel in public spaces (off campus locations in the city); about fifty-eight percent (14) of the respondents indicated that they feel very safe while thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that they feel fairly safe. However, about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that he/she felt not safe at all in public spaces. This finding refutes the research of Gyebi (2021) that the surrounding communities of the University of Cape Coast has challenges in terms of students' safety.

4.8 Respondents' plans, satisfaction and recommendations on their studies at the University of Cape Coast

In terms of respondents' plans for additional educational activities after they complete their current academic programme; a little above four-tenth (10) indicated that they would study another degree programme outside Ghana and their country of origin, most of these respondents are Master of Philosophy students. About three-tenth of the respondents indicated that they have no plans for further studies after their programme of study and most of these respondents were Doctor of Philosophy students. In addition, in terms of respondents' plan for work after completion of current academic programme; about majority of the respondents indicated that they would return to previous job in country of origin or look for work in country of origin or look for work in another country other than country of origin; other responses indicated were to work for up to three years in Ghana, before returning home, and work permanently in Ghana.

With regards to respondents' overall satisfaction in terms of all aspects of their Ghana education experience; a little above sixty percent (14) respondents indicated they are "satisfied", about thirty-five percent of respondents indicated "very satisfied", and only one respondent indicated that he/she was "very dissatisfied". This finding is confirmed by Akwensivie, Ntiamoah, and Obro-Adibo (2013) on Foreign Students' Experience in Ghana highlights that international students generally express satisfaction with their education in Ghana. Key factors contributing to this include the quality of teaching, accessibility of lecturers, and professionalism of support staff. The study also notes that Ghana is becoming a popular destination for higher education, particularly among African countries.

In terms of whether respondents would recommend the University of Cape Coast to other international students; the almost seven-tenth (16) of the respondents indicated "definitely yes" while about three-tenth of the respondents indicated "probably yes". The reasons given by the respondents to justify their responses were: I had a good experience and would like to share to others; I enjoyed my stay here and everyone was willing to assist; because of the higher education rating; because it is the best institution; I like the teaching methods and the general school atmosphere; education quality, campus, Ghanaian people and culture; so far, it has been safe so I will recommend to others.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings reported in this study, international donor-funded postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana enjoy a convenient environment in terms of academic, residential and social experiences on campus and within the Ghanaian community. These students had a lot of success in terms of integrating or adjusting to academic, residential and social matters at the University of Cape Coast, which is an indication that University of Cape Coast has a good environment that supports international postgraduate studies. These were exhibited in these students' involvement in campus activities, integration and adoption into Ghanaian

culture and society, academically performing well in written assignments, performing well in mathematical skills courses, students' understanding in information presented in courses of their study programme.

In addition, international postgraduate students were very satisfied with regard to these services or facilities as they enjoyed or used during their studies at the University of Cape Coast; assistance from International Students Officer, English/French tutoring, counselling, housing, recreational facilities, religious worship, health services, career services, Academic adviser service, Registrar's office services, financial aids service

Furthermore, donor-funded international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast were generally comfortable with regards to payments for accommodation (e.g. rent payments, including utilities such as electricity and water), school-related expenses (e.g. tuition, textbooks, school supplies), social services (e.g. going to pub or snack shop with friends), food, clothing, and transportation. The reason these students were comfortable in paying these expenses was that most of these were covered by the scholarship for their programmes of study.

In summary, there was a high level of satisfaction in terms of the overall satisfaction of donor-funded international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast and their entire educational experience in Ghana. This finding is confirmed by Akwensivie, Ntiamoah, Obro-Adibo (2013) on Foreign Students' Experience in Ghana highlights that international students generally express satisfaction with their education in Ghana. Key factors contributing to this include the quality of teaching, accessibility of lecturers, and professionalism of support staff. The study also notes that Ghana is becoming a popular destination for higher education, particularly among African countries. These students were highly motivated to recommend University of Cape Coast to other international students. However, some international students were faced with homesickness, loss of relationships, and a high academic grading system as compared to their country of origin. In addition, flight cost to and from their country of origin was a challenge to these students as this was not covered by the scholarship package of the international students. The recommendation is that, in future scholarships to international postgraduate students, the flight cost to and from the country of origin for some number of trips should be added to the scholarship package to ease the burden of these students.

References

- Akwensivie, M. D., Ntiamoah, A. J., Obro-Adibo, Gorkel. (2013). Foreign Students' Experience in Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(28), 99-106.
- Altbach, P.G. and Knight, J. (2007) The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11, 290-305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542>
- Andrade, M. S. (2006). International Students in English-Speaking Universities: Adjustment Factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5, 131-154.
- Andrade, M. S., & Evans, N. W. (2009). International students: strengthening a critical resource. Rowman & Littlefield Education
- Canadian International Students Survey Questionnaire (2018). <https://www.bu.edu/usc/leaveandwithdrawal/student-experience-questionnaire/>
- Celis, S., & Guzmán-Valenzuela, C. (2021). Special issue: Internationalisation and the global South. *SOTL in the South*, 5(1), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.36615/SOTLS.V5I1.179>
- Constantine, M. G., Okazaki, S., & Utsey, S. O. (2004). Self-Concealment, Social Self-Efficacy, Acculturative Stress, and Depression in African, Asian, and Latin American International Students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 74, 230-241. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0002-9432.74.3.230>
- Dag-um, I. J., Guiruela, I. J., Murillo, A., Tadlas, M., & Taja-on, E. (2024). Spousal Commitments and Student Life: A Study on Married Students in Higher Education. In *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal* (Version 1, Vol. 23, Number 3, pp. 381–394). *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13256958>
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaty (1975). Retrieved from: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/49217f4c2.html> (accessed on 2nd March, 2025).
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gyamera, G. O. (2015). The internationalisation agenda: a critical examination of internationalisation strategies in public universities in Ghana, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 25:2, 112-131, DOI: 10.1080/09620214.2015.
- Gyebi, F. B. A. (2021). Controlling Criminal Activities for Peace and Security of University of Cape Coast Students
- Hanassab, S. (2006). International students in higher education: Identification of needs and implications for policy and practice
- Hart., C. (2012). Marriage and participation in postgraduate study: Exploring the motivations and experiences of married female Psychology Masters students

- John, T. E. R. (1994). Mature Students in Higher Education: Academic Performance and Intellectual Ability. *Higher Education*, 28(3), 373-386. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3447777>
- Jones, P.D., New, M., Parker, D.E., Martin, S., & Rigor, I.G. (1999). Surface Air Temperature and Its Changes over the Past 150 Years. *Reviews of Geophysics*, 37, 173-199. <https://doi.org/10.1029/1999RG900002>
- Jones, V. F., & Jones, L. S. (2013). *Comprehensive Classroom Management: Creating Communities of Support and Solving Problems*. Sydney: Allyn and Bacon.
- Knight, C. (2012). Social workers' attitudes towards and engagement in self-disclosure. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 40(3), 297-306. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-012-0408-z>
- Knight, J. (2019). *Instructional Coaching for Implementing Visible Learning A Model for Translating Research into Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA Corwin.
- Lee J. J., & Rice, C. (2007). "Welcome to America? International Student Perceptions of Discrimination and Neo-racism." *Higher Education*, forthcoming.
- Matey, E. (2024). Food Habits among International Students at the University of Ghana
- OECD. (2020). Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators Indicator B6. What is the profile of internationally mobile students? <https://www.oecdilibrary.org/sites/974729f4-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/974729f4-en>
- OECD. (2023). International student mobility (indicator). <https://doi.org/10.1787/4bcf6fc3-en>
- Online course or massive open online course (Mooc)
- Paddy, L. P. (2019). Determinants of International Students' Choice of Universities in Ghana: A Case of University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
- Pyvis, D. & Chapman, A. 2007. Why university students choose an international education: A case study in Malaysia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27 (2), 235-246.
- Riaño, Y. (2016). International Student Migration - An Annotated Review of the Literature. *International Student Migration*.
- Richardson, B. (1994). Crisis Management & Management Strategy: Time to "Loop the Loop"? *Disaster Prevention & Management*, 3, 59-80. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653569410795632>
- Ward, A.; Tawila, G. A.; Sawsan, M. A.; Gad, M.; El-Moniary, M. M., 2008. Improving the nutritive value of cottonseed meal by adding iron on growing lambs diets. *World Journal of Agricultural Science*, 4(5), 533-537
- Watson, B (2022) Leisure and the Legacy of bell hooks: A Personal Reflection from Beccy Watson. *Leisure Sciences*, 44(3), 401-402. ISSN 0149-0400 DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2022.2044985>
- Wilkins, S. (2024). International branch campuses: The influences of country of origin and campus environment on students' institution choices and satisfaction. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 46(2), 182-199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2023.2272231>
- Yoon, E., & Agahe Portman, T. A. (2004). Critical issues of literature on counseling international students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32(1), 33-42 <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A112794004/HRC?u=anon-b83cab4b&sid=googleScholar&xid=432fb348>