WORK-LIFE BALANCE EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL PHD STUDENTS IN UK HIGHER EDUCATION

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DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institutes of learning.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty, who saw me through this doctoral journey.

I also dedicate this in loving memory of my beloved father, Uduma. O. Ude, who amongst everything desired to see my go through this journey but passed away years before I commenced. Also, in the loving memories of my beloved mother, Esther. E. Ude, father-in-law Henry O. Evwerhamre and my mother-in-law Rachael .E. Evwerhamre all who passed away in the course of my PhD studies.

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explores the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students studying full-time in UK higher education. This research sought to answer the question: how do international PhD students maintain a balance between academic demands (work) and personal life? It intends to understand how these students manage the demands of their research and personal life while considering the financial needs, language barrier, attrition rate and visa requirements they face during their studies. Drawing on interpretivism, this phenomenological study uses the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews to explore the personal experiences and perceptions of these individuals. The participants were recruited, utilising purposive and snowball sampling. The research sample was from 26 participants who were students at a University in North West England from various fields and different levels of study. The data collected was analysed using the step by step guide of thematic analysis outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). The findings of the research indicate that the major challenge these students face in their PhD journey is financial constraint. They also experienced challenges such as language barriers and isolation as a result of being distant from their extended family, although most of them had their spouses and children around. Despite the challenges experienced, the desire to complete their PhD led them to develop coping strategies such as prioritising, setting out a plan and working with a schedule. The support from their family and society also helped them to maintain a good work-life balance. Additionally, the support from their supervisors, institutional workshops and seminars as well as their colleagues acted as a form of organisational support, thereby helping most of them to balance their work (study) and family lives.

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<div align="center">**CHAPTER ONE**</div>

1.1 Introduction

This doctoral thesis is a study to explore the work-life balance (WLB) experiences of international PhD students studying full-time in UK higher education. This introductory chapter starts with a research background which gives a brief introduction to the dissertation topic. It also explained when the studies of work-life balance started attracting scholarly attention, areas of work-life balance studies previously researched and the reviews of work-life balance for PhD students. The research sought to identify the limitations of previous research and the research problems of this study to set a scene for the present study while deciding the methodological approach to be used. Additionally, the rationale of the study is explained, followed by the research questions. The initial introduction of the gap in literature will be identified, followed by the outline of the thesis.

1.2 Research Background

International education in the global market has increasingly proven to be significant to higher education institutions (HEIs) and the economy (O'Mahony & Jeske, 2019). The increase in the number of postgraduate research students across the UK and globally has also contributed to the increased interest in the doctoral student experience (Waight and Giordano, 2018). Between 1992-1993 there was a record of 25,100 international postgraduate students in higher education institutions in the UK out of which 8% were from the EU and 92% from the other parts of the world (Green, 2011). This figure by 1997-1998 increased to 81,000, with 33% from the EU and 67% from the rest of the world. The number of international students in the UK keeps rising considerably from 231,000 in 2000 to 370,000 in 2009 (HESA, 2013) and by 2016, about 442,375 (UKCISA 2018).

With this increase in the number of international students in UK universities, international PhD students account for more than 40 per cent of the entire population of PhD candidates (Shen, Wang & Jin, 2016). In this regard, Ong and Ramia (2009) suggested that higher education institutions have made the student's academic and personal experiences a priority by providing support initiatives. The remarkable increase in the number of doctoral students and the institutions granting doctoral degree over five decades have indicated an essential change in the type of the degree and people who undertake it (Offerman, 2011). Hence,

Powell & Howard (2007) suggested that the doctoral degree became more important when in the 1990s, the demand to make research relevant to the needs of the national economy increased (Green, 2011). Therefore, undergoing a doctoral degree programme requires continuous effort and commitment for some years. While a doctoral programme entails been an individual research training programme, it can be a challenging phase for the PhD student when the progress made on the research is slow (Mantai & Dowling, 2015).

The increase in the number of international PhD students coming to the UK to study brought about a radical shift in the doctoral student cohort (Ryan, 2012). Therefore, Offerman (2011.p21) identified that the literature on doctoral education and the emergence of non-traditional doctoral students had shown an essential change in the students population. For over five decades, their reason for pursuing a degree, how they fund their studies, and how they participate in their programme. Although Archbald (2011) suggests that there was no particular time that signifies the emergence of non-traditional doctoral students, the primary driver was the shift to mass education which commenced in the early 1900s. The traditional PhD students were students who came from high socio-economic backgrounds where they had adequate funding to embark on their doctorate. In contrast, their non-traditional counterparts were a diverse cohort who were full-fee paying international students, older, mature-age students who were studying part-time (Munro, 2011).

Offerman (2011) identified the traditional doctoral students as individuals who pursued a doctoral degree at a young age, mostly male, white, most of them were unmarried and had no kids. This class of individuals studied full-time, and funded their studies through tuition waivers or stipends while serving as teaching or research assistants and entirely devoted to their studies. The non-traditional students, on the other hand, were older, married and had children. Due to the nature of their research, this class of people seeks greater flexibility while pursuing their doctorate degrees. Their significant characteristics included being older, more involved in family and work life, financially independent and studying part-time. The non-traditional students face the challenge of bringing about a balance to all their responsibilities which accounts for the reason for seeking flexibility in their programme.

In a study of over 800 female graduate students, Stimpson & Filer (2011) identified that these students are less satisfied with their ability to balance their work and personal life. However, this concept of balance is not just applicable to the female students alone (McCoy & Gardner

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2011). Graduate students are often faced with the struggle to balance academic pursuits as well as their individual lives and responsibilities (Brus, 2006). Furthermore, Brus (2006.p31) identified "this groups of graduate students who face this challenge of balance include: women, students of colour, students with physical or learning disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, older students, international students, students with caring responsibilities". In higher education, academic staff develop different strategies to enable them to have a good work-life and maintain their wellbeing in the early years of their academic careers which is usually the years spent on their PhD studies (Schmidt and Hansson, 2018).

The numerous studies on work-life balance in higher education emphasised on faculty, which are the teaching or research staff (Damiano-Teixeira, 2006; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Nikunen, 2012). There has also been an increase in the number of research on the impact of work-life balance on the academic life of college students as illustrated by Martinez et al. (2013) but literature on work-life balance for international PhD students in UK universities is limited. Previous research on work-life balance for doctoral students had focused on students in a particular department, gender (Paksi, 2015; Haynes et al., 2012; Stimpson & Filer, 2011), ethnic group, had funding, had teaching-assistantships (Martinez et al., 2013), were either single or married. However, this research focuses on exploring the work-life balance of these international PhD students from different ethnic groups, various departments, had different sources of funding, both single and married and at varying stages of their studies. This study will help to give a general overview of the various aspects of their experiences, their coping strategies in different capacities, and what can be put in place to improve on doctoral education for international students.

As a result of this limited literature, it is vital to explore the outcome of the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students. This study will expand our theoretical understanding on work-life balance in higher education as studies have proven that the start of an academic career commences from the early career days of doing a PhD when academics start developing ways of maintaining their wellbeing (Schmidt & Umans, 2014; Stubb, Pyhältö & Lonka, 2011). Additionally, this group of individuals are significant in that they produce publishable academic research when they make contributions to their field. The impact of their research influences the research ranking of their institution of study.

Additionally, international PhD students bring about a diverse cohort of PhD students to their institution as well as adding a potential diversity to the local labour market.

A PhD signifies the beginning of an academic career (Schmidt & Hansson, 2018; Matos, 2013; Nelson,1933). Gropel & Kuhl (2009); Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003) stated that work-life balance predicts wellbeing and overall quality of life which is also crucial to the PhD student in the course of their study and degree completion. Therefore, Callary, Werthner & Trudel (2012) described the PhD as a transition period from being a student into a future faculty member while going through a series of learning and development. Hence, Nelson (1933) referred to the PhD as a 'union card' to gain access into an academic career. At the PhD level, the students begin to develop ways to balance the demands of their academic work, other work roles and personal life/family responsibilities to enhance their wellbeing in preparation for a future career in academia. On this note, Park (2005) suggested that before becoming an academic, the PhD student is expected to have exhibited the ability to carry out academic research and made a substantial contribution to knowledge and awarded a doctoral degree which is the highest academic degree that UK universities award after completion.

The focus of this study is to explore how these international PhD students can navigate the numerous demands of their research and individual life as the unique needs of PhD students are different from other graduate students. Additionally, the maturity of this group of students comes with financial responsibilities and demands from friends and family, identified as one of the reasons for an increase in attrition rate. Hence, Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine & Hubbard (2018) found that the demands and responsibilities of PhD students result in higher stress levels which in turn affect their work-life balance. Other studies have also shown that PhD students are unable to balance the demands of their work (research) lives and personal lives and has resulted in high attrition rate (Castelló, Pardo, Sala-Bubaré & Suñe-Soler, 2017).

Although, Ransome (2007) described 'work' as a 'formal paid employment' and 'life' as everything outside the work domain including family life recreational activities and personal life (Guest, 2002). In the context of this study, the focus of balance is between the student's work (research) lives and personal lives. Therefore the concept of 'work' in this study, will be referring to the academic demands of these PhD students while 'life' will be referring to their family life (married and single), personal and recreational time. On this note, life satisfaction will encompass the student's perception of wellbeing, which is influenced by

events around the life of PhD students. In this regard, Stubb, Pyhältö & Lonka (2011) described course work, research and thesis writing as the PhD student main work despite most of these students having part-time job roles. Beyond the demands of academics, other factors like finances and inadequate support can also contribute to international PhD students attrition. It is also important to note that these international students experience extra pressure in terms of time constraint because of their visa requirements (Tannock, 2018). Furthermore, the aspect of time constraint will be considered as well because of the restrictions on their visa, implying the need for degree completion within a stipulated time.

1.3 Work-life Balance

The subject of work-life balance has been challenged in literature with assumptions that both domains (work and life) should be treated differently rather than viewing one as an aspect of the other (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). Therefore, Fleetwood (2007) suggested that work-life balance is a vital socio-economic and socio-cultural subject for present-day organisations as well as the community. Hence, Khallash & Kruse (2012) argued that the idea of work-life balance is built on the assumption of separating work and personal life stating that when both aspects of an individual's life are divided equally, balance is achieved. Over the last three decades, there have been underlying changes that occurred in the circumstances and conditions of work in the United Kingdom (Kinman & Jones, 2008). These changes occurred when most women with children became part of the work-force and also an increase in the number of dual-career couples (Wolf-Wende & Ward, 2015; Elloy & Smith, 2003).

A report by Office of National Statistics (Statistics 2013) indicated that between April and June 2013, 67% of women aged 16-64 were in the work-force, which signified an increase from 53% in 1971. The expansion of women in the work-force made the dual-income family more common, thereby increasing the need to balance the demands of work and family life by both genders (Karkoulian, Srour & Sinan, 2016; Doble, & Supriya, 2010). Besides the increase in the number of women in the work-force, the improvement in technology, diversity in family structures, as well as the cultural shift in the approach towards the relationship between work and family, led to the increase in scholarly attention given to the work-life interface (Hirschi, Shockley & Zacher, 2019; Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Allen, 2012; Guest, 2002).

Similarly, Beauregard & Henry (2009) suggested that besides the global changes and the changes in the circumstances around work stated above, the work-force also experienced demographic changes. These changes occurred when more women joined the work-force, longer working hours, technology allowing regular contact with the workplace, which triggered the attention given to the issues of work-life balance. Hence, these changes and an increase in dual-career couples increased the number of scholarly publication on work and family (Whiston & Cinamon, 2015; Unger, Sonnentag, Niessen & Kuonath, 2015) and grew the interest in the literature of work-family interface (Greenhaus & Powell, 2017). In this regard, the potential to advance positive outcomes for both individuals and organisations has made the subject of work-life balance to continually attract scholarly attention (Russo, Shteigman & Carmeli, 2015).

Having stated that the work-force experienced some demographic changes which gave rise to attention to the issues of work-life balance, the population of the PhD students also underwent a demographic shift (Offerman, 2011; Brus, 2006). A significant consideration when discussing work-life balance and graduate education is changing demographics. In the past, getting into the university for a doctoral degree was made available to a few people who were privileged mainly white men, aged between 22-30, single, had no children, immersed in study, worked in teaching-assistant roles, funded through tuition waiver and given stipends (Brus, 2006). This class of individuals is called traditional doctoral students. Presently, admission into the doctoral programme is made accessible to more people and doctoral degrees obtained by more women and people of colour (Archbald, 2011). This demographic change has brought about enrichment to the individuals involved, the society and the work-force.

However, the available limited literature on work-life balance for PhD students focused on women (Paksi, 2015; Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Haynes, Bulosan, Citty, Grant-Harris, Hudson, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2012). The above reason points to the fact that most of these women had challenges in meeting up with the demands of family responsibilities, academic needs and their personal lives (Carter et al., 2013). With the demographic changes in the population of doctoral students, most of these women were mothers with children. Nevertheless, the challenge of balancing academic demands and personal lives presently is not just limited to female graduate students alone. McCoy& Gardner (2011) stated that

students (men and women) making a transition from full-time employment to become full-time graduate students also face the challenge of maintaining a balance.

Similarly, Sallee (2014) argued that men experience pressure just like the women do; therefore, work-life balance is not just a woman's issue. Thus, the inability to maintain a balance between academic demands (work) and personal life is known to be the cause of pressure and stress for graduate students (Lin & Huang, 2014). Extant literature has viewed work-life balance traditionally as a significant concern for women with children despite present-day initiatives aimed at encouraging men to engage actively in the home front and partaking in the caring needs of other family members (Raiden & Räisänen, 2013). This trend created an awareness which has seen more men showing caring abilities at their workplace and the family hence the need to consider their needs in terms of work-life balance.

The demographic changes involved the people of colour and brought about the issue of graduate students migrating from their countries of residence to other countries as international students (Offerman, 2011). Therefore, in UK universities, a proportion of PhD students are international students (UKCISA, 2018; Unit, 2016). Of all the PhD candidates in UK universities, international students account for more than 40 per cent (Shen, Wang & Jin, 2016). However, not much is known about the work-life balance of these individuals as there is limited research on work-life balance for international PhD students. Therefore, it is necessary to engage in research that will help identify the work-life balance experiences and outcomes as well as how these international PhD students can maintain a balance to degree completion.

1.4 Purpose of the study

This research aims to explore the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students. While understanding the strategies they apply for work-life balance and the outcomes, this study will explore the support in place to help them achieve a balance to develop recommendations for improving the work-life of these students.

1.5 Significance

There are various studies on work-life balance in different sectors like medical, construction, healthcare and higher education**.** But there is a limited study on the work-life balance of international PhD students in the UK. Researchers who explored work-life balance for doctoral students explored how these doctoral students in a US university strive to achieve a balance (Martinez et al., 2013), work-life balance of female PhD students in engineering (Paksi, 2015). This study will serve as a blueprint for current and inspiring international PhD students in adopting practical steps in coping with the challenges of doctoral studies until degree completion.

1.6 Concept of Insider researcher

The essence of conducting research either addresses an issue or improve on it. In conducting qualitative research, it is also essential to describe the researcher's role to enhance the credibility of the research. It is either the researcher is part of the group being researched or a total stranger (Unluer, 2012). An insider-researcher chooses to study a group they are a part of, whereas the outsider-researcher do not belong to the group. On this note, (Saidin & Yaacob, 2016) suggested that playing the role of an insider-researcher could assist the researcher to have a better understanding of the subject. Therefore, (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002) outlined the various advantages that come with being an insider-researcher such as having familiarity with the research participants which aids in openness and judging if the report given is accurate. This relationship implies that the insider-researcher have a general knowledge of how things work in the organisation and how best to approach its participants which might be a difficult task for the outsider-researcher.

Additionally, other advantages include having a better understanding of the phenomenon being explored as well as maximising the natural flow of social interaction. Although (Saidin & Yaacob, 2016; Unluer, 2012) also identified the potential challenges that may arise which could result to loss of objectivity and bias as a result of the familiarity with the researcher participants. Furthermore, an insider-researcher may be faced with the challenge of bringing about a balance in having two roles as a researcher and the role of the participant (for

example, students, teachers, etc.). On the other hand, the insider-researcher may have access to sensitive information about an organisation. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of the adverse effects of bias, and consequently, the insider-researcher must ensure to follow completely the ethicality involved in conducting credible research.

1.6.1 My Role as the Researcher

In conducting this study, I served as an international PhD student/ Researcher, and my phenomenological research explored the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students in UK higher education. The research setting was also an area I worked on; hence my collection of data was done as an insider researcher. Therefore my role as an international PhD student/ researcher was utterly different from being an international PhD student alone or a researcher. However, my role as an international PhD student/researcher made it easy to be accepted by the participants. While I was aware of most of the challenges they might be going through, being a part of this group of people made it easier for the research participants to open up on the challenges they experience while studying. Additionally, as a part of this group, I can identify with the challenges they face because I have experienced most of these challenges as an international PhD student. My interaction with the participants made it easier to understand what measures and policies put in place by the institution and the initiatives working for these students and the ones which are not working.

1.6.2 African Researcher Identity

 In conducting research, the concept from which a researcher works will influence the research design, the data collected and the data analysis (Giampapa, 2016). Additionally, it will also impact the researcher's perspective on the role played in the research. In quantitative research, the role of the researcher and impact on the research is limited compared to qualitative research which is centred on an insider or outsider researcher and the extent to which they bring objectivity to the study. As an international PhD student from West Africa precisely a Nigerian, a wife, mother, and a part-time employee in a supermarket, I am also living the experience of the phenomenon I am studying. Similar to other international PhD students, I had always gotten to the point when I contemplated dropping out of the programme because of the numerous challenges I encountered. My experience includes different challenges ranging from bereavements of parents and parents-in-law in the course of the programme, having a child through an unplanned surgery in the course of the programme, financial setbacks which affected the funding for the programme.

Additionally, I can identify what it entails to work part-time, perform my duties as a wife and mother. I believe that the ontology of multiple realities comes to play in this situation as no two experiences are similar or a reflection of my experiences. Having said that no two experiences are the same, my role in this research would be to connect the similarities in the narratives given by the participants to determine that essence of the phenomenon which is their work-life balance experiences. I have also tried to project the voices of the participants by removing myself from the study even though I have had similar experiences. Moreover, my epistemological assumption is to identify the vital experiences of these individuals to relate them with their reported individual experiences. In doing this, I am trying to reduce the tendency of being biased between the participants and as the researcher. I solely want to know the experiences of these international PhD students and how they are balancing their academic demands and their personal lives despite their varying roles and responsibilities.

In terms of my axiological assumptions of this study, I must acknowledge the values and biases I bring into this study. I am also experiencing the same phenomenon I am exploring, thereby causing me to have certain assumptions as an international PhD student/researcher, part-time employee, wife and mother. As a self-funded student, I work part-time in a fast-paced retail store/supermarket, this I do to help raise funds to augment some expenses. Besides carrying out my duties as a cashier, I am also the wife to my husband who works full time and a mother to two young kids, ages 7 and 3. My personal experience of balancing the demands of my academics and personal life is a struggle as a result of my numerous duties. Despite all the support I get from my spouse and my kids, I often struggle with the thoughts and feelings of inadequate attention to my various roles which gets me anxious and feeling stressed.

1.7 Research questions

1. What are the challenges the international PhD students experience in maintaining a work-life balance?
2. How do international PhD students maintain a balance between academic demands (work) and personal life?
3. What is the existing institutional and societal support available to International PhD students?

4. To what extent have these institutional initiatives, and societal support influenced the work-life balance of International PhD students?

1.8 Contributions

This study contributes to the work-family literature by extending the theorising of work-life balance to international PhD students. They are an essential group in the educational sector both financially and academically as they make valuable contributions to research through their academic work; however, to date, little is known about their work-life balance challenges. Although there is a large body of literature regarding the many aspects of work-life balance in higher education, most of which discussed faculty (Stimpson & Filer, 2011). There is limited research on doctoral students and their work-life balance experiences. Walsh, Hargreaves, Hillemann-Delaney & Li (2015) referred to PhD students as the major players in any economy in terms of knowledge and innovation and as such issues concerning them should not be overlooked.

Additionally, Barry, Woods, Warnecke, Stirling & Martin (2018) attributed over half of the research conducted in the university to the PhD students who at the end are the society's future knowledge workers. The work of these PhD students amount to a significant contribution to scientific advancement as the major requirement to do a PhD entails making an original contribution to knowledge (Levecque et al., 2017). Furthermore, these international PhD students are an asset to higher education institutions. A growing inflow of international PhD students is a clear indicator of a global higher education market where institutions are competing directly with each other to attract students and the money they bring with them. The fund generated from their tuition fee is a considerable addition to the economy of their country of study (Pásztor, 2015). Despite the contributions of these international PhD students, very little is known about their work-life balance.

Existing studies looking at PhD students, in general, have mainly been conducted in the US (e.g. Martinez et al., 2013). This research will be contributing to knowledge by situating this study in the context of international PhD students in UK higher education. Given the increasing numbers of international PhD students in the UK, the academic year 2016-2017 had a total of 442,375 non–UK students (see statistics by UKCISA 2018). In this regard, Shen et al., (2016), stated that of all the PhD candidates in UK universities, international

students account for more than 40 per cent, which emphasises on the importance for more research into this group of individuals. As earlier stated, there has been an increase in their number over the years (Waight & Giordano, 2018; UKCISA, 2018). Therefore, the growth in the number of postgraduate research students across the UK and the world at large has increased the interest in research that explores PhD student experience.

Hence, it is imperative to note that the number of international students in the UK keeps increasing considerably from a population of 231,000 in 2000 to 370,000 in 2009 (HESA, 2013) and by 2016 about 442,375 (UKCISA 2018). The UK ranks second in the global list of countries that receive international students after the US. With the figure above, it implies that the international students with a total number of 370,000 as stated earlier constitute 15% of the student population in the UK. (Pásztor, 2015; Ryan, 2011). The increase in the number of international PhD students indicates that their country of study is economically competitive in terms of the nation's advancement in science and other aspects of research. Matos (2013) emphasised that even though there is an influx of international students into the UK, there is a presumption by (BBC, 2008) that this increase might not be a continuing process. In respect to this, ignoring the work-life balance for these international PhD students might lead to attrition. Earlier research has noted the higher attrition rate of PhD students results in a financial loss to higher education institutions and the economy in the long run. Economically, there will be a negative return on investment (ROI) in doctoral education and on the human level, negative consequences on the candidate's self-esteem and wellbeing. It is, therefore, necessary to understand successful measures used by these group of students to balance their work (study) and family lives such that they are less likely to be stressed and hence less likely to drop-out.

1.9 Outline of thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters. Chapter one provides a general overview of work-life balance experiences for international PhD student. This chapter will also identify the research problem, the purpose of the study as well as research objectives and questions. The contribution of this study to literature has also been outlined.

Chapter two of this study will be a review of the literature on work-life balance. It commenced with the discussion of work-life balance, work-life balance and theoretical

underpinnings and moved on to conceptualise work-life balance in higher education and amongst PhD students.

Chapter three discussed international PhD literature and Higher Education responses to the internationalisation agenda. It also explores factors that affect doctoral students work-life balance.

Chapter four of this thesis outlined the methodology used for the study. The research design for the study includes the sample selection, data collection methods and data analysis. It also discussed the rationale for each approach chosen.

Chapter five will present the results gathered from the data collection and building them into themes identified from the analysis of data.

Chapter six summarises the findings, present a discussion while linking the outcomes back to the literature and research questions.

The concluding chapter, which is chapter seven summarises the findings of the study. This chapter will identify how the context of the findings can be applied elsewhere as well as determine how this problem can be understood better and recommendations to assist these individuals on their journey as international PhD students. This chapter will identify how the context of the findings can be applied elsewhere as well as determine how this problem can be understood better and recommendations to assist these individuals on their journey as international PhD students. It further discussed the implications of these findings while highlighting the limitations of the study and make suggestions for future research.

2.1 Introduction

In the previous section (Chapter One) of this study, there has been an overview of the literature on work-life balance. The changing demography in the work-force attracted scholarly attention to this concept hence the discourse on work-life balance in higher education and how doctoral students experience this phenomenon in the course of their studies. The contributions of this study have been outlined, as well as the aims and rationale for this study. This chapter will discuss the concept of work-life balance, and theoretical underpinnings since the intent of this study is to explore the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students and then viewing it in terms of its application in higher education in the UK. Furthermore, it will review the work-life balance for PhD students, while focusing on areas which required further exploration, which is the motivation for this study and aims at answering the research questions. The chapter finishes with a discussion on the link between available support to these international PhD students, their coping strategies and their work-life balance.

2.2 Defining Work-life balance

The relationship between work and other life roles and responsibilities has received significant scholarly attention in the last five decades (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013). While the work-force experienced an increase in the number of women, there was a cultural shift in people's approach to their relationship between work and family as well as diversity in the family structure (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Allen, 2012). With the changes in the work-force, there has been an increase in the academic and general interest in the way and manner individuals manage their work and family roles successfully. Howbeit, this has led to an explosion in the research on the work-life interface in this last five decades (Powell, Greenhaus, Allen & Johnson, 2019). Employers, individuals and the community at large identified that work and family lives of individuals are connected and continuously have an effect on each other (Allen, Cho & Meier, 2014; Kanter, 1977). Therefore the challenge of balancing the demands of work and family has become one of the major concerns of

individuals and organisations. In this regards, Allen (2012) suggested that comprehending the way work and family roles depend on each other has encouraged the rapid increase in scholarly research on the intersection of the two domains.

While Duxbury & Higgins (2001) described work-family balance as the absence of conflict, (Halpern & Murphy, 2005; 2013) referred to work-family as a balance beam that has the responsibility of the family on one part and work on the other part. Therefore, "The first, and most widely held meaning of work-family balance is a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles" (Frone 2003, p. 145). In the same vein, Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003, p. 513) defined work-family balance as being "equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work and family roles". All the above definitions describing work-family balance aim to explain the need for equality in both domains to prevent giving more attention to one aspect than the other.

However, Voydanoff (2005) disagreed with the idea of equality as stated by other scholars thereby suggesting that the resources available to work and family are sufficient to meet the demands that arise in both domains while enhancing active participation in both areas. Thus defining work-family balance as "a global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains" (Voydanoff 2005, p. 825). However, Valcour (2007, p.1512) had a different view of balance and gave a definition of work-family balance "as an overall level of contentment resulting from an assessment of one's degree of success at meeting work and family role demands". Moreover, Grzywacz & Carlson (2007, p.458) defined work-family balance "as an accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains.

Therefore, Greenhaus & Allen (2011) noted that the term "work-family balance is an overall appraisal of the extent to which individuals' effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are consistent with their life values at a given point in time". Despite this definition of work-family balance by Greenhaus and Allen, they suggested that work-life balance is the more inclusive term. Hence, Chang, McDonald & Burton (2010) suggested the term work-life balance as an all-encompassing term that covers all the different concepts that link the daily activities and management of both paid work and other non-paid domestic activities. In addition to all the definitions of work-family balance or work-life balance, Greenhaus &

Powell (2017) suggested that work and family are two vital spheres of an individual's life. There was an increase in demands in the family domain which came as a result of an increase in dual-earner couples, single parents, families that had either childcare responsibilities or requirements to look after their aged parents. The workplace on its own has undergone some changes in global economies (Miller, 2012) as well as a change in the demographic pattern (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). This demographic change resulted in more women in paid employment (Wang & Verma, 2012) and as a result drawn the attention of researchers to study the boundary between work and family lives of employees (Saeed & Farooqi, 2014). Hence, Fleetwood (2007) argued that the attempt by the government to help women back into work encouraged many women to undertake part-time paid work which has created more burden for these women. As a result of these part-time roles, the demand for flexible working (Lazar, Osoian & Ratiu, 2010) has been on the increase to create a balance between paid work and unpaid domestic roles.

Therefore this demand from these women for a better work-life balance has not been translated into action because it is not just an issue related to a particular gender. Fleetwood (2007) further emphasised that the demands of working women do not only drive the work-life balance agenda. Hence, Ehrhart, Mayer & Ziegert (2011) suggested that these changes in the work-force contributed to the idea of work-life balance (WLB). This demographic changes in the work-force triggered the attention given to the issues of work-life balance (Khallash & Kruse, 2012; Beauregard & Henry 2009). For organisations and working professionals, work-life balance is an essential focus because it is necessary for overall health and wellbeing whilst creating a positive, productive work environment (Mazerolle & Barrett, 2018). The concept of work-life balance has been a subject of concern for some time now. In the 1980s, employees were making unhealthy work-life decisions to meet up with the demands of work which interfered with their personal life and affected their relationship with friends and family (Pookaiyaudom, 2015). There has been a broad interest by different scholars in different fields on the subject of work-life balance since the 1980s (Daverth, Cassell & Hyde, 2016). Therefore, studies on work-life balance have been conducted in different contexts like the corporate world, medical field, construction industry and higher education (Martinez et al., 2013). The subject of work-life balance in higher education placed more focus on faculty than graduate students (Stimpson & Filer, 2011). Concerning this study in the context of work-life balance in higher education, it is a significant subject as work-life

balance policies is a useful tool in recruitment processes in universities (Martinez et al., 2013; Salle, 2008).

Demographic changes in the work-force gave rise to the attention given to the issues of work-life balance. Similarly, the doctoral students' population also experienced a shift in demography (Offerman, 2011), which prompted the discussion of work-life balance amongst the doctoral students. This change in demography in the population of doctoral students, as stated by Offerman (2011) was seen between 1900 and 1960. In the early 1900s getting into the university for a doctoral degree was made available to a few people who were privileged mainly white men, aged between 22-30, single, had no children, immersed in study, worked in teaching assistant roles, funded through tuition waiver and given stipends. There was a remarkable change in doctoral students demography after 1960. More women obtained a doctoral degree between 2001- 2002 and this increase of women, as well as other students of colour, have been on the rise till date. However, a significant consideration when discussing work-life balance and graduate education is changing demographics (Brus, 2006).

Having stated that work-life balance is a universal issue that has received extensive attention globally, different scholars have conceptualised work-life balance from different perspectives. The concept of work-life balance means different things to different people hence an outline of what various scholars had to say about this concept. Delecta (2011) described work-life balance to be the way and manner an individual can meet up with work and family responsibilities as well as other non-work responsibilities. The concept of work-life balance is about handling obligations at work, bearing in mind career goals as well as responsibilities at home and the community at large (Dhuru & Rao, 2016). There is a common belief that having a proper balance between a successful career and personal life can be challenging and it has an effect on the employee performance and job satisfaction (Broers, 2005). Therefore, Deepika & Rani (2014) argued that work-life balance is the boundary an individual form between a career, which could be a job or business, and every other aspect of one's personal life.

Chandra (2012), explained that it is about responding to individual situations to aid these employees to meet up with their obligations and goals leading to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society at large. Chandra emphasised that people should have a measure of control over their time at work and how they go about it. Hence, Greenhaus,

Collins & Shaw (2003) suggested that the explanations of balance are not entirely constant with one another, as its effect on the wellbeing of individuals has not been firmly ascertained because measuring work-life balance is challenging. Therefore, they consider balance being self-reliant on an individual's needs or values. Additionally, (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Edwards & Rothbard 2000), in disagreement with the popular notion of balance being a mechanism to link work and family argued that there is no specification as to how the role in one domain is the cause of the experiences in another role. They instead explained work-life as an indication of an individual's attitude across various life roles invariably interrole phenomenon. Furthermore, Marks & MacDermid (1996) described work-life balance from a different perspective stating that it reflects an individual's belief across different life roles.

Nonetheless, Russo, Shteigman, and Carmeli (2015) emphasised that work-life balance is known to be an essential means to enhance people's views of being emotionally, physically or mentally available to take on several roles that release the positive force to meet with several works and life demands successfully. Moen (2011) suggested that work-life balance is accomplishing satisfying experiences in every field of life both at work and the home front. Hence, Rehman & Roomi (2012) described it as achieving and performing appropriately on both fronts (work and home) with minor responsibility discrepancy. On the contrary, Lewis (2015) saw work-life balance from a different perspective as an unattainable task and stating that if work-life balance is possible to find satisfaction in both your personal life and your career, why have so many work-life balance experts left corporate America. In other words, work-life balance is viewed by a school of thought as a false way of unfolding a grave complexity in our workplaces (Lauristen, 2012). On this note, Lazar et al., (2010) argued that it is vital to understand that the term work-life balance does not mean dedicating the same amount of time both paid and unpaid work responsibilities. WLB should be the satisfactory level to which individuals get involved in the multiple roles in the life of such an individual. Therefore, Lazar et al., (2010) emphasised that in comprehending the subject of work-life balance the individual should be aware of their various demands required of them as well as the available resources to make a proper allocation of resources.

A state of imbalance between work and life is seen as a challenge that affects the well-being of the individual and leads to conflict (Pookaiyaudom, 2015; Kofodimos, 1993). Therefore this imbalance leads to work-family conflict, which is one of the most discussed concepts in the work-family interface. There are literature addressing the connection between work and

family considering both as two different domains that are continually striving for the time and attention of individuals (Santos & Cabral-Cardoso, 2008; Byron, 2005) hence leading to conflict. Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict which arises when the demands of work and family domain are mutually incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The varying nature of work and family responsibility has brought about a rise in research focusing on work-family issues that arise from this change (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998).

While the pressure and conflict that occurs between work and family might be common, cultural and societal context plays a significant role in the level of conflict as well as the circumstances that gives rise to that conflict. Therefore, Brough & O'Driscoll (2005) links stress to work-family conflict. Similarly, Frone, Rusell & Barnes (1996) suggested that depression is another outcome of work-family conflict as well as poor physical health. Greenhaus & Powell (2006) in their study linked negative emotions and dissatisfaction with life to work-family conflict. Frone et al., (1996) and Grzywacz & Marks, (2000) attributed work-family conflict to heavy drinking, while (Gareis, Barnett, Ertel & Berkman, 2009) connected it to self-rated mental health. The study of work-family conflict is significant as findings made from past research have shown that the number of children individuals have, influenced their ability to put up with family responsibilities as well as work demands (Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark & Baltes, 2011; Bedeian, Burke, & Moffett, 1998; Kelly & Voydanoff, 1985). Most of these individuals are either parent who has family responsibilities like childcare or ageing parents who require caregiving as well or individuals who have other responsibilities to handle outside their work environment.

Furthermore, it is essential to note that younger and dependent children require more care, as well as resources from their caregivers. However, Neal & Hammer (2017) in support of the notion above, stated that parents with younger and dependent children report having more conflict between work and family. On the other hand, Molina (2015) suggested that as a result of this conflict between work and family, these parents have less time and energy resources. Therefore, people with young and dependent children report having more conflict between work and family. In all of these experiences relating to work-life balance, studies have proven that the quality of life and well-being of an individual is likely to be improved when they can balance the demands of their work and personal / family lives (Wong & Go, 2009; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Guest, 2002).

2.3 Work-life balance and theoretical underpinnings

The subject of work-life balance has been discussed extensively in literature (Jones, Burke & Westman, 2006; Guest, 2002). There are various definitions of the concept of work-life balance which has populated the literature. Work-life balance has been defined in terms of multiple roles, equity across numerous roles, satisfaction between various roles, fulfilment of role salience between multiple roles, relationship between conflict and facilitation and perceived control between multiple roles (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). While there is an extensive range of literature on the issue of work and family life, previous research has described the relationship between the two domain as one which conflicts with each other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work and family are also two domains that are separate and have little interaction as described by the segmentation model (Roehling, Moen & Batt, 2003). The theories named above regard work and life as two separate independent domains. However, research on work-life balance has continued to evolve and a significant change in the focus of research. Various scholars in several disciplines have developed different theoretical approaches to describe the connection between an individual personal life and work life. They are exploring the positive and negative relationship that exists between work and family life.

Further research also developed models that illustrate other ways individuals come up with managing their work and life domain. The work-family interface has been conceptualised using different models and theoretical approaches to explore the connection between work and family life such as work-family conflict, segmentation, compensation, spillover, border theory, resource drain theory, enrichment. It is beyond the scope of this study to go over all the work-family constructs, however, (AlHazemi & Ali, 2016) argued that several theories had been proposed to explain the concept of work-life balance such as spillover, compensation theory and border theory.

2.3.1 Spillover Theory

The concept behind the spillover theory implies that work and family life cannot be separated (Paksi, 2015); the experiences in one role affect the other. Various research has explored spillover in terms of skills, behaviours, values, mood (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Therefore, this theory indicates a spillover of emotions and behaviour from one role to another (Singh, 2019). Hence, AlHazemi & Ali (2016) suggested that individuals carry the

emotions, skills and behaviour they form at work into their individual and family life. On this note spillover can be positive or negative; therefore (Morris & Madsen, 2007) identified that both experiences of work and family are identical meaning that both domains can either be positive or negative. In positive spillover, the achievement and satisfaction an individual encounters in one domain, for example, work can bring about achievement and satisfaction in family and vice versa. Based on this experience, various scholars started developing ideas from the interaction experienced by the individual. They came up with concepts like work-family positive spillover, work-family facilitation or enhancement. However, Greenhaus and Powell summarised these concepts that had to do with positive work-family interface and called them work-family enrichment. In the same vein, negative spillover occurs when the individual carries the challenges encountered in one domain, either work or family into another domain. However, Singh (2019) suggested that allowing their work-related emotions into family life and vice versa have an impact on the work-life balance of individuals.

2.3.2 Compensation Theory

In the work-family interface, the compensation theory describes the effort of an individual in circumventing the negative experiences they encounter in one domain through an increased effort for positive experiences in another domain. Compensation theory is regarded as complementary to spillover theory, suggesting an inverse relationship exists between the two domain when people put the effort in work or family, augmenting what is missing in each domain (Clark, 2000). Hence, (Singh, 2019) described this theory attributing it to a situation when people have a negative feeling in one domain, they put the effort in another domain attempting to fill in the gap created by the other domain. Just like the spillover, the compensation theory also supports previous research evidence that suggests work and family life have an impact on each other. Therefore individuals, employees and the society at large cannot ignore one domain to the detriment of the other.

2.3.3 Border Theory

In the work-family border theory, unlike spillover theory, the interaction between the work and family domain is not emotionally connected but human (Clark, 2000). On this note, Clark argued that people are border-crossers that make daily transitions between two worlds which is the world of work and the world of family (Clark 2000: p748). Individuals can differentiate

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the various timelines between their roles in their work and family life (Singh 2019). Therefore, the boundaries these individuals have developed are classified into physical, temporal and psychological boundaries. Individuals tend to create a physical boundary by ensuring there is a physical space between their work and individual lives. The temporal boundary indicates the timelines these individuals have set up for their work and family, meaning they stop work at precisely the time they should and switch over to attend to their family affairs. The psychological boundary implies that individuals separate their work-life from their personal life psychologically. These individuals ensure to separate work-related emotions from their individual lives and also the reverse for their individual and work-life. In creating a border, the people tend to shape their environment and even the environment, in turn, shapes them. This relationship turns out contradicting, which has made work-family balance a challenging concept in the work-family interface. Therefore, the work/family border theory is an attempt to help describe this complex interaction that exists between work and family domain and border crossers. This theory, therefore, predict when conflict will arise and provide support for attaining balance. Work-border theory is dedicated to work, and family domains and the interest of the outcome of this theory is work-family balance (Desrochers & Sargent, 2004).

2.4 Work-life balance in higher education

The subject of work-life balance in higher education focuses more on faculty more than graduate students (masters degree and doctoral students) (Sallee, 2015; Stimpson & Filer, 2011). Scholarly articles have suggested that doctoral students have related work-life challenges like members of faculty (Serrano, 2008). Despite the implementation of family-friendly policies in higher education, graduate students who are parents are often overlooked even though most of these graduate students have reported having dependent children (Theisen, McGeorge & Walsdorf, 2018). There has also been a general assumption that work-life balance is a gendered issued and applicable to just women (Emslie & Hunt, 2009). On the contrary, research has proven that men and women strive to achieve balance both at work and their personal lives. Although in higher education, work-life balance comes off as a gendered issue as most scholars assert that women go after jobs regarded as less challenging to have a balance in both domain.

Wyatt-Nichol, Cardona & Drake (2012) suggested that most women are attracted to the teaching profession, which has an outward look that seems to imply great independence and flexibility in terms of their work. Those outside the faculty consider faculty position as the best career path to individuals who seek for balance between their work roles and family demands. This perception ignores the fact that the independence and flexibility in a faculty position have some setbacks as there is a possibility of blurring the boundaries between work roles and family demands hence leading to a conflict. Therefore, the difficulty women experience mostly in the sciences as a result of the workload and the challenges faced as a mother makes their obstacles to become greater hence hindering their opportunity to attain tenure (Adamo, 2013). This difficulty is considered from the angle of parenting while making efforts to achieve tenure to phased retirement (permitting older employees to reduce the work hours gradually before the actual retirement date) and national associations.

Work-life balance is the way an individual can balance the responsibilities at work and home to attain a meaningful life. Zheng, Kashi, Fan, Molineux & Ee (2016) suggested that most organisations implement programmes and policies to support their employees. In academia, such programs and policies are flexible work arrangement, paid leave (for childbirth, eldercare, adoption), adjustment of tenure clock and phased retirement, which is only applicable for those in faculty. However, work-life issues in academia affected more women with children than men, as they are faced with the pressure of postponing childbearing for a while to achieve tenure (Wolf-Wende & Ward, 2015; Lester, 2013). Nonetheless, most of these women neglect the use of this tenure clock for fear of being seen as unserious and less productive. Therefore, full-time employment and commitments to the family and the home have always been the definition of this concept.

Thus, when discussing work-life balance in higher education concerning PhD students, the definition is slightly altered (Stimpson & Filer, 2011). In this regard, Schmidt & Umans (2014) suggested that doctoral students are a select category of individuals amongst the university staff. These doctoral students report having regular pressure from their peers, financial difficulties, large workload, demands to publish, meeting up with paper deadlines and in all of these remain active and participate in their scholarly community. In this light, the alteration in the definition of work-life balance for these individuals stems from the fact that their work roles differ from academics; hence their work-life aspect is unique. When considering the concept of WLB of these individuals, it is essential to note that their work

roles may involve academic workload, research, assistantships, internships as well as part-time employment (DuBransky, 2014). Outside these work roles are family responsibilities (commitments to parents, children and other family members), friends, hobbies and religion.

For a doctoral student who is studying full-time, trying to balance studying with family responsibilities as well as work might be a challenge to get involved in other activities (Goodall & Keyworth, 2016; Dowsell, Hewison & Hinds, 1998). Research also indirectly connects work-life issues to retention in graduate school for female doctoral students as well as to reduced aspirations of entering the professoriate (Kulp, 2016). Attention to the work-life needs of postgraduate students has the potential to support persistence and pathways to future faculty careers. In academia, work-life balance for students is referred to as school-work-life balance (Martinez et al., 2013). Therefore, Misra & Mckean (2000) connected WLB for employees to the same strategy of effective time management which students engage to achieve an excellent academic performance as well as dedicating some personal time for leisure and engage in other activities to reduce stress. Therefore, Doble & Supriya (2010) emphasised that from the student's perspective, the excessive workload and anxiety emanating from the university's academic demand on the students affect their work-life balance (Byers, Smith, Hwang, Angrove, Chandler, McAlister-Shields & Onwuegbuzie, 2014; Pearson, 2012).

Additionally, Grund, Brassler & Fries (2014), regarded this to be as a result of the extreme focus on studying. The challenges encountered by students have become a source of concern to universities indicating the need for centres with counsellors to assist these students with counselling. The establishment of recreation and leisure facilities by the institutions increase the wellbeing of the students as well as prevention of stress (Guan, Xie & Boyns, 2018; Coleman, 1993; Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993), self-development (Trainor et al., 2010), and quality of life (Lloyd & Auld, 2002). Considering the work-life balance of doctoral students while focusing on international PhD students, entering and progressing through the doctoral experience means negotiating many tensions as they cross multiple boundaries. Therefore, doing a PhD across borders can mediate personal, academic and professional development (Nguyen, 2014). Despite these tensions, the progress the students make in their doctoral studies is as a result of persistence and determination linked to the motive behind the student seeking a doctoral degree (Byers et al., 2014; Geraniou, 2010). Moreover, (Zhou, 2015; Morton & Thornley 2001), identified popular motives behind the student's decision to pursue a doctoral degree among both genders. These decisions include the individual's interest

(Grover, 2007) on the subject matter as well as the personal satisfaction of the individual to obtain a doctoral degree amongst other reasons. Doctoral education serves as an avenue for scholars and researchers to receive training. Pyhältö, Peltonen, Castelló & McAlpine (2019) emphasise on the significant role the interest of the student plays when making a decision to take up a doctoral study as well as being the driving force that keeps the student resilient in the face of challenges to complete their education.

Additionally, Stubb, Pyhälto & Lonka (2011) linked the interest of the student with completion of studies on time, thereby reducing the attrition rate as well as minimising the distress level. In the same vein, Leonard, Becker & Coate (2005) stated that most students mentioned development in research skills as well as personal growth as being the reason behind them overcoming adversities to completing their doctoral degree. Therefore, the doctoral programme advances both national and international intellectual as well as economic development by providing a professional labour force (Pifer & Baker, 2016). Hence the growing importance of doctoral education has given rise to questions about the effectiveness of the programme, degree completion, diversity and internationalisation (Shin, Kehm & Jones, 2018). While paying attention to the importance of doctoral education, it is also imperative to understand how these students can navigate their responsibilities to get to degree completion. It is essential to realise that the student's ability to persist through challenges and the demands that come with studying for a doctoral degree to complete their studies is made possible with loads of compromise on their various roles.

Therefore, Isaacs (2016) argued that it is vital to note that while trying to get the right work-life balance, it is also necessary to regard our interpersonal relationships. The same preceding argument emphasised that since work-life balance implies having control, the person who feels in control of both domains (work and life) most likely feels in control of their work-life balance. As a result, there have been various reports on the high level of distress which doctoral students experience and calls for an in-depth understanding of the nature of the programme, the challenges encountered and the impact of their experiences to their well-being in the entire process (Pyhältö, Toom, Stubb & Lonka 2012). Previous studies have shown that in the doctoral student's experiences, both attrition rate and distress is high amongst the students. The experiences of these students also include other challenges like the workload of the student, learning capacity, supervision, inadequate academic writing skills, an imbalance between the demands of the research and personal life (Pyhältö et al.,

2012, p.2). Nevertheless, the support from the scholarly environment in which the PhD student gets trained is significant as it either encourages the progress of such student or hinders the progress hence leading to doctoral student degree completion or dropping out (Pyhältö et al., 2019). Also, the feedback obtained from the supervisory team is highly essential as it forms a part of the emotional well being of the student while persisting throughout the entire period of their doctoral programme (Pyhältö et al., 2012, p.2).

2.5 Work-Life Balance amongst PhD students

The increase in the number of postgraduate research students in the UK and the world at large has intensified the interest in understanding the experiences of doctoral students (Waight & Giordano, 2018). The rise in postgraduate research training is a vital aspect of research-related activity in tertiary institutions (Barry et al., 2018). While the doctoral degree is the highest level of education, (Theisen, McGeorge & Walsdorf, 2018) argue that the process can be challenging which is evident when most of the students are either parents or have other responsibilities to members of their family. Hence, Byers et al., (2014) stated that if obtaining a doctoral degree was an easy process, the educational value of its degree diminishes. Therefore it is vital to understand how these individuals can maintain a balance in their work setting where their academic work is performed and their personal life which comprises of their family responsibility and other roles outside work (Schmidt and Hansson, 2018). Graduate students in addition to their roles as students often have other duties as a parent, spouse, son, daughter or even an employee (Haynes et al., 2012; Stratton, Mielke, Kirshenbaum, Goodrich and McRae, 2006). Several studies have shown the challenge they experience in trying to meet up with their various obligations. Therefore, graduate students go through a struggle in order to balance the multiple aspects of their lives.

Work-life balance has been discussed in terms of work and personal life which occurred as a result of the changes the workplace underwent in global economies (Miller, 2012) as well as a change in the demographic pattern (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). This demographic change resulted in more women in paid employment (Wang &Verma, 2012) and as a result drawn the attention of researchers to study the boundary between work and family lives of employees (Saeed & Farooqi, 2014). Hence, Ehrhart, Mayer & Ziegert (2011), suggested that these changes in the workforce contributed to the idea of work-life balance. In the same manner in which the workplace experienced a shift in demography, the population of PhD

students also underwent a demographic change (Offerman, 2011; Brus, 2006). Therefore, Sallee & Lester (2017) argued that work-life balance in the last two decades has taken over an essential place in the literature of higher education. While the research in higher education grew, Sallee and Lester (2017) further suggested that this development happened to incorporate some tenets and leaving others. Hence, in the study of work-life in higher education, the primary focus is always on faculty who were parents leaving out other non-parents and other members of staff (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). The students and factors which affects their work/life balance were overlooked. Therefore it is vital to have an academy that is concerned with implementing policies for everyone involved from the faculty, other staff and students as well.

However, Byers et al., (2014) suggested that rigours of the doctoral programme, the persistence of the students throughout the programme are a pointer to their motivation. Hoskins & Goldberg (2005) also argued that doctoral students who are likely to persist in their programme are motivated professionally and personally. Additionally, Byers et al., (2014) emphasised that despite the rigorous nature of a doctoral programme and the challenges these students encounter, research has also shown that some factors considered as unimportant, as well as the course work, might influence the drop-out rate out of the doctoral programme. These challenges ranging from family issues, the emotional toll of a separation or death, financial burdens to the relationship with a supervisor can have an impact on the success and completion of a doctoral degree.

2.6 PhD students' roles outside academia

Stimpson & Filer (2011) suggested that when discussing the work-life balance of PhD students, the definition is slightly altered because their roles differ from that of academics even though the PhD is the start of their academic career. Additionally, Ong & Ramia (2009) pointed out that when discussing the subject of work-life balance, there are limitations because the circumstances of these students vary from non-students or employees emphasising that international students have a different status in terms of their condition not only as immigrants but also as full-time students. Stratton et al., (2006) suggested that graduate students often have a variety of roles and responsibilities which comes in addition to their academic demands. While trying to meet the requirements of their academic

programme, they struggle to meet up with the needs of other roles that satisfy the different aspects of their lives. Carter, Blumenstein & Cook (2013) described the doctoral student experience as a socialisation process into academia. Although in the context of this study the term 'work' (refers to their academic responsibilities) first before every other work role such as assistantships and internships and other part-time employment (DuBransky, 2014). 'Life' on the other hand refers to other 'non-work' roles as a spouse, parent, son or daughter as well as other commitments which they are responsible for in the community.

Additionally, Demerouti, Peeters & van der Heijden (2012) stated that asides from individuals carrying out their roles at work, these people are sons, daughters, siblings, friends, members of social organisations, spouses and parents. These students also have relevant roles to play in all of these work and non-work roles in the different stages of life. Therefore it is essential to factor in these various aspects listed above to capture the real essence of their experiences in the course of their doctoral studies. For the female doctoral students, (Trepal, Stinchfield & Haiyasoso, 2014) argued that the number of women in the United States who enrolled in doctoral education in the 1960s increased. If the trend continues and the increase sustained, their number might become the majority in professional degrees. Moreover, Haynes et al., (2012) indicated that the number of doctoral degrees obtained by females in the US between 1997 and 2007 increased by almost ten per cent surpassing the male students for the first time.

However, most of these women were mothers and research linked the process of having and raising kids to the attrition rate most graduate student experienced in the States (Trepal et al., 2014; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009). In support of the argument above, Aud, Hussar, Johnson, Kena, Roth, Manning & Zhang (2012) stated that women constituted to over 53% of doctoral degree conferred in 2010. These female graduate students, when compared with their male colleagues, explained they experience a higher level of stress, attributing it to the additional role of being a student alongside the already existing responsibilities of being a caregiver and handling other family responsibilities (Aud et al., 2012; Oswalt & Riddock, 2007). At this rate, this increase in the number of women obtaining a doctoral degree meant considering if it was paramount at that point to become a mother, which implies that most of the women enrolling for a doctorate might as well decide to put a hold on childbearing.

With this increase in the number of women obtaining a doctoral degree, it is essential to understand the impact of motherhood when these women get into academia and the challenges they might be likely to face in the process. Furthermore, Aud et al., (2012) emphasised that despite the records of women obtaining half of the doctoral degree in the United States, only a few accept to go the path of tenure-track or assistant professors role compared to their male colleagues. Hence, researchers have suggested that balancing the demands of motherhood and pursuing a career in academia has its unique challenges and sacrifices. In this regard, Philipsen (2010) reported that most of these women confirmed undergoing pressure on decisions to either raise a family or not, as the years they chase tenure coincides with the years of bearing and raising children. Therefore, Goulden, Mason & Frasch (2011) emphasised that the women who started off raising children in the first five years of their academic career were less likely to achieve tenure when compared to their male colleagues.

Nevertheless, Holm, Prosek & Godwin Weisberger (2015) argued that women struggled to make hard choices to pursue their career in academia or have children and spend a longer time to achieve tenure. In this light, Gatta & Roos (2004) stated that some universities had implemented policies that enable a member of faculty to stop the tenure clock. A process of delaying the review process when the faculty member is going through the phase of new parenthood. In the same vein, the multiple roles of female doctoral students can impact on wellbeing and the possibility of completing their doctoral studies. Given these various roles, there is a possibility for conflict between roles if not adequately handled as stated earlier that research has proven and refuted the assumption that work-life balance is a gendered issue and applicable to just women. Various research has shown that both men and women strive to achieve a balance both at work and their personal lives (Parker & Wang, 2013).

In this regard, it is vital to understand the roles of male doctoral students. Presently, most modern families have both spouses pursuing their career while combining their work, family (childcare, caring for the aged, other family members) and their personal life (Van der Lippe, Jager & Kops, 2006). Raiden & Raisanen (2013) argued that there is a disadvantage to having both spouses seeing to the financial wellbeing and caregiving of the family. The joint participation is to ease the stress off the mothers, somewhat stress, and other experiences on the work-home interface are gradually turning out to be the usual way of life for both fathers and mothers. The UK government in February 2011 announced extending paternity leave to

six months and further plans to improve upon father's right by 2015 to encourage work-life balance for parents. Gregory & Milner (2012) implied that other policy advocates and academics doubted if this action has actually moved the priorities of these fathers from paid employment to domestic responsibilities.

2.7 Global representation of the demography of PhD students

There has been an immense increase in the number of PhD students and institutions granting doctoral degrees. This increase signifies a change in the way the programme is run and the individuals enrolled in such programmes. Offerman (2011) description of the profile of a non-traditional doctoral degree student is related to the change in the purpose of these individuals, their participation in the programme as well as how they fund their PhD studies. The present-day PhD student is highly non-traditional compared to traditional PhD students (Cross, 2014; Offerman, 2011). Their demography characterised these two classes of individuals. The traditional PhD students were mostly white, male, from wealthy homes, single, funded, sometimes childless, studied full-time and between ages 22-30. In contrast to this, the non-traditional students were from different countries which meant a lot of students of colour enrolled to do a PhD, more females also enrolled, married, self-funded, studied part-time and were mostly above the age of 30.

This study also emphasised that the traditional doctoral students were particular about preparing to become full-time faculty members as they did not have an existing career. The non-traditional or contemporary doctoral students are pursuing the doctoral degree to improve on a current career or a change to another career. Contrary to the suggestion made by Offerman stating that the traditional PhD students studied part-time, in the present-day doctoral programme the students who fall into the category of non-traditional students as described earlier, study both part-time and full-time. It is also essential to understand that not all non-traditional PhD students have an existing career. The decision to enrol in the doctorate programme was to give an edge in terms of career prospect and give a good head start as (Nelson, 1933) implied that doing a doctorate served as a 'union card' into the academic career. Considering the non-traditional PhD students, Archbald (2011) argued that there was never a particular period that signified the emergence of non-traditional doctoral students. Instead, a shift to mass education in the early 1900s when the demand arose for more graduate college instructors, the needs for doctoral education also grew and expanded

with non-traditional students enrolling for the programme. The doctoral programme started with two to three years coursework before writing a dissertation in subsequent years. These students had funding which was in the form of having teaching assistantships which assisted in covering the cost of living. The traditional doctorate is the start of one's professional life, which kicks off at an early age (22-30) hence validates the funding received at the commencement of the programme while giving full attention to studies and research. Archbald (2011) emphasised on the growing diversity of the population enrolling for a doctoral degree but further made it clear that the doctoral degree will continue to evolve. Below is a table illustrating the characteristics of traditional and non-traditional doctoral students, as shown by Offerman (2011).

Characteristics	Traditional Doctoral Students	Non-traditional Doctoral Students
Origin	White	Diverse
Gender	Male	More female
Age	22-30	Over 30
Marital Status	Single	Married
Children	Childless	Children and/or dependent parents
Reason for studying a PhD	Preparing to be scholars	Numerous purposes
Teaching Assistant Roles	Worked in an assistant role	Have a career outside their programme
Mode of study	Full-time	Part-time
Funding	Funded through tuition waiver and stipends	Self-funded
Attitude to study	Immersed in study	Study in addition to career and family

Table 2.1: Characteristics of Traditional and Non-traditional Doctoral Students (Offerman 2011).

In the table above, there has been a dramatic change in the profile of doctoral students over the years. There are implications of this change as it affects the way the students perceive

their motive for pursuing a doctoral degree. Additionally, this profile change impacts their flexibility and how they can balance out their career, study and personal life, what they expect of the programme and how they will fund their education. Contrary to the suggestion by Offerman (2011; p.23) about contemporary doctoral students studying part-time, most of the international PhD students presently study full time. There is a restriction on their visas which implies that they must be studying full time and expected to finish up the programme at a stipulated time.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERNATIONAL PHD LITERATURE, RESEARCH AND THEORY

3.1 International PhD students

In an emerging economy, the number of graduate students in the country gives the economy an advantage in terms of knowledge (Durette, Fournier & Lafon, 2016). It makes such country remain globally competitive (Wendler, Bridgeman, Cline, Millett, Rock, Bell & McAllister, 2010). Khawaja & Stallman (2011) identified international students as one of the largest service export industry in developed countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Yang & Farley (2019) attributed the growth in international students as a positive contribution to the cultural diversity of the host universities as well as financial sustainability of the universities undergoing the challenges of a reduction in government funding. Hence, Ecochard & Fotheringham (2017) highlighted that the increase in the number of international students signifies a vital economic driver to the higher education sector which they emphasised in the rise in the number of publications on this subject. In this regard, the student body in the UK is diverse and comprises of ethnic minority students, mature students, care leavers and international students.

Ryan (2011) argued that international students represent a large number of diversity seen in UK universities, with 15% of the total number of students being international students. Because of the impact of having international students as an essential economic driver of the higher education institutions, it is paramount that these students get the best experience which is vital in the competition for these students (Hegarty, 2014). It is important to note that most of these graduate students in the intellectual community who proceed to do a doctorate are the future of academia. In higher education, internationalisation is a significant movement and a worldwide trend (Teichler, 2017). The multi-faceted trend of globalisation includes the mobility of students from their home country to another country to study. There has been an increased interest in research, which comes with the cost of funding.

In most cases, a single country or institution may have limited resources to carry out such research. Having stated that internationalisation is an ongoing trend, this helps to augment the resources from other countries and institutions when the students move abroad out of their

home country to study. Most universities with a high reputation for scientific advancement in terms of research are highly internationalised, and this places them in a global advantage where these institutions are perceived to be of high quality. With the advent of international ranking, the key performance indicators of these institutions include international presence. Therefore, internationalisation is a sustainable approach to increase the reputation of these higher education institutions in the eyes of global peers and stakeholders. Also, there can be an increase in the number of international students who pay full tuition hence increasing the sources of revenue generation for their host country.

3.2 Internationalisation of UK higher education

There have been obvious trends of globalisation when countries engage in international trade and foreign direct investment (FDI). More impact has been made with an increase in the number of international students coming from their home country to their host countries to study (Zheng, 2014). In the last decade, there has been a revolutionary internationalization of higher education which brought about an increase in the migration of students from their home countries to other countries to study (Oluwasegun & Congman, 2018). Therefore, it is essential to note that besides promoting the economy of the host country in terms of the financial contribution, the tuition from these international students contributes to the economy, (Lomer, Papatsiba & Naidoo, 2018), their influx encourages diversity socially and culturally (Marginson, 2010). However, a report by (OECD, 2018) stated that in 2016, an estimate of 3.5 million international students enrolled in tertiary education programmes across OECD countries. Out of this total number of international students, four English-speaking countries were the most attractive and received over half of these mobile students. The United States is the top OECD destination country and enrolled 971, 000 students. At the same time, the United Kingdom accounts for 432,000 and occupies the second position as the largest host country for international students, followed by Australia 336,000 and Canada 189,000 (OECD, 2018, p.221). Therefore, the UK higher education with an increase in the number of international students has become one of the significant UK exporting industries.

Ploner (2017) argued that the UK higher education in the past decades had undergone internationalisation, thereby making the UK a major destination for international students. A report by the organisation for economic cooperation and development (OECD) evaluated in 2000 that about 2 million international students were studying outside their home country.

Ryan (2013) stated that in 2008 about 3.3 million students were studying outside their home country, the number had doubled and would likely get to 7 million by 2020. The population of international students in the UK experienced a significant increase the same period from 231,000 (11 per cent of the entire population of students) in 2000 to 375,000 (15 per cent) in 2009 (HESA, 2013). As of 2016, the number increased to about 442,000 (20 per cent) (HESA, 2018).

Therefore, higher education in the UK emerged the fifth largest service export, which indicates that the British higher education is undergoing an increase (Pásztor, 2015). Further emphasizing that every year, about 2.5million students get trained in British universities amongst this figure, the number of international students have experienced an increase (Pásztor, 2015). Presently the doctoral degree is the highest level of education (Pásztor & Wakeling, 2018; Park, 2005) and involves an increasing rate of international students. Also, amongst all levels of education, the doctoral degree is the most internationalised (Shen, Wang & Jin, 2016). The population of doctoral students increased in 2012 from 44,000 and grew to an estimate of 47,000 in 2016. Therefore, globalisation and internationalisation are two driving forces that encourage the development of doctoral education (Lumby & Foskett, 2016).

Additionally, Soo & Elliot (2010) found out that the contribution of the higher education sector to the UK economy is significant. They argued that in the 2004/2005 academic year, about 2.48 million students have enrolled in the UK higher education thereby generating a total income of £18 billion by that sector. It is important to note that of this number of students enrolled in the UK higher education as stated above, a proportion were overseas students (non-UK and non-EU) students. Emphasizing the importance of these international students, in that same 2004/2005 academic year these students were a total of 218,000 and the monetary value of income generated from these students was a total of £2.87 billion which meant high financial impact to the UK economy (Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007). Besides the monetary value of these students, finding a job after graduation meant increasing the number of highly skilled people in the UK economy. Other non-monetary benefits to these higher education institutions include diversity and building up a vast alumni network after graduation. Therefore it is essential to note that attracting overseas students is still very important to the higher education sector most importantly, the financial contribution. Nevertheless, they also bring a diversity of experience to their various programmes.

3.3 Higher Education responses to the internationalisation agenda

The increase in the number of international students in UK universities has called for the need for higher education to respond to the internationalisation agenda. Luxon & Peelo (2009) identified that there had been an increase in the number of non-UK students recruited into the UK higher education and therefore, has posed a new challenge to the universities. The influx of these students was in a quest to access the unique features of British education. Other opposing views indicates that these students from all over the globe in British universities comes with international richness and diversity, which also impacts on the institution's nature of education. The key driver of student's recruitment is tied to tuition, necessary for the institutions' economic wellbeing. Besides the financial benefits of higher education to internationalisation, diversity is also an essential aspect of internationalisation. The higher education institutions in the UK can attract the best brain all over the globe and will gain from an international perspective. Additionally, the students trained in the UK universities can return to their home country and be a source of influence in their society either politically or otherwise.

As an institution, Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) has adopted an internationalisation strategy which focuses on enhancing global presence by making the brand available overseas as well as other activities like joint research, summer schools, student and staff exchange (LJMU, 2020). Various objectives have been identified to support LJMU in meeting its strategic goals. These include but not limited to, attracting new international students, through global partnership activity. They are increasing the diversity of students internships and placements established and partnership relations. Additionally, developing the range of joint research opportunities as well as conference participation and symposia with international partners. Amongst the LJMU strategic plan for the year 2017-2022, are the visions outlined to meet up with this plan (LJMU, 2020). One of the vital ideas in achieving this goal is the outstanding student experience which includes ensuring the student have an enriching student experience characterised by social diversity, cultural relevance and a global perspective. There have also been indicators of success as seen in student engagement, satisfaction and high completion rate. Additionally, the students also report having academic support and the ability to participate in LJMU programmes. The university also has the vision to give out impactful research and scholarship by supporting and developing targeted areas of world-leading research excellence with success indicators such as having research delivering benefits to the society.

3.4 Doctoral students and attrition rate

The doctoral degree as suggested by Jairam & Kahl (2012) is the peak of education and grants the student an opportunity to attain the highest degree achievable through university education (Cornwall, Mayland, van der Meer, Spronken-Smith, Tustin & Blyth, 2019). An intense selection process precedes the commencement of a doctoral degree. This selection process qualifies the PhD students as high achievers, the best and most intelligent students (Wollast, Boudrenghien, Van der Linden, Galand, Roland, Devos, De Clercq, Klein, Azzi & Frenay, 2018). Despite all of these selection process these individuals undergo, most of these PhD students tend to leave at the beginning of their programme, and at least 40% of students who commence a doctoral programme fail to complete it (Golde, 2005). In this regard, Akanwa (2015) suggested that the host universities to these students must be jointly involved in meeting the academic and social needs of international students by implementing strategies to ensure the student's success and degree completion.

The complexity of the lifestyle of PhD students differentiates them from other graduate students who have completed their degrees successfully in the past. This complexity reflects in the demands on the PhD students, which include family responsibilities (to their children, ageing parents and other family members), financial responsibility, community responsibility, demands from friends. Therefore, Rockinson-Szapkiw (2019) suggested that adding the role of being a doctoral student to other family responsibility leads to internal tension as well as an inter-role conflict because of the incompatibility of these roles and limited time and attention given to them. Besides the overwhelming impact of these roles on the student, the resultant effect comes with guilt, shame and anxiety. The students also deal with the inability to manage the limited time they have to meet up with the demands for family, academic needs and personal life. The aftermath of these demands and responsibilities on the PhD student leads to an increase in their stress level.

In this regard, Castelló et al., (2017) stated that the most frequent reason why doctoral students consider the idea of dropping out of the doctoral programme stems from the inability to achieve a balance between their doctoral studies, work, and personal life as well as challenges with socialization. On this note, Castelló et al., (2017) implied that dropping out of the doctoral programme is directly linked to the work-life balance of these students. Similarly, studies have shown a link between social isolation, stress and attrition rate of

doctoral students (Jairam & Kahl, 2012; Ali & Kohun, 2006; Lovitts, 2001). Additionally, Hunter & Devine (2016); Bair & Haworth (2004); Golde (2005), suggested that the field of study of the student can foretell the chances of dropping out. They referred to the rate at which students' drop-out was higher in social sciences and humanities compared to their counterparts in the sciences (Janta, Lugosi & Brown, 2014) with a figure of 67% in humanities and social sciences against 24% in biomedical and behavioural sciences (Gardner, 2010).

Similarly, Allan & Dory (2001) suggested that based on the examination of different areas of discipline that the drop-out rate in the natural sciences is lower when compared to the social sciences and humanities. Therefore Hunter & Devine (2016); Bauer (1997) attributed this to the interaction that occurs in the laboratory sciences which brings about team atmosphere as well as regular contact with an advisor which may contribute to a higher rate of completion. Nevertheless, this is in contrast to doctoral students in the social sciences and humanities who typically work alone and have less time of interaction with other students as well as few meetings with their advisor (Carter et al., 2013). Similarly, the doctoral students in a science-related field and other STEM subjects stand a higher chance of getting funding to support their studies as they make discoveries that can be life-changing. At the same time, self-funding is the predominant case in the social sciences (Pyhältö et al., 2019).

Additionally, Stubb, Pyhältö & Lonka (2011) argued that most PhD students in science-related courses tend to be much younger, studies full time and have better sources of funding while they work in research groups. These factors above are in contrast to PhD students in non-science courses like education. Some of them study part-time, previous employments, in the middle of their career, giving them more responsibilities of juggling between their academic demands and the work/career responsibilities. In support of the argument above, Wao and Onwuegbuzie (2011) linked the availability of finances to the progress doctoral students make in the course of their degree. There are studies which emphasise on the influence of social, cultural and institutional factors on the timely completion of a doctoral degree (Greene, 2015). The impact of the institutional factor, such as the student's supervisor within the social working environment of the student has received much attention. The supervisor is considered a significant person during the doctoral degree programme, and this is because the supervisor provides support in terms of a productive supervisory relationship while giving constructive feedback (Woolderink & Putnik, 2015). This form of social support

helps not only in terms of timely completion of the doctoral degree but also the feeling of satisfaction by the students throughout the entire programme.

While maintaining an excellent supervisory relationship, this relationship enhances mutual respect, proper communication between the student and the supervisor, flexibility in terms of adjustments to the student's needs as well as having definite plans on how to make progress towards earning the doctoral degree. Still, at the institutional level and beyond their supervisors, doctoral students also interact with other students. While this aspect of social integration with their colleagues plays a vital role in the course of their programme, researchers have found that its absence may negatively impact on the student. Still, it is not enough to lead to the students' dropping out. There are other aspects beyond the social working environment that can influence the rate of students dropping out, ranging from the socio-demographic factors to the type of employment before the commencement of their doctoral degree programme. Examples of these factors are gender, area of study, the institution and the type of funding received. Besides these are also the features of the doctoral degree programme, psychological and physical variables.

In this regard, adding the demands of obtaining a doctorate and coping with the responsibilities mentioned earlier leads to stress and affects their work-life balance. The attrition rate is linked to the work-life balance of the doctoral student (Castelló et al., 2017) and earlier in this study, it indicated that poor work-life balance leads to stress. Hence, Waight & Giordano (2018) suggested that these individuals also report they experience stress in their programme which calls for the need to examine the effect of the graduate programme on the increase in attrition rate. There are certain factors which pose as stressors in the course of studying as a doctoral student, and they are academic demands, time limitation, poverty, anxiety. That notwithstanding, it is also expected of these doctoral students to behave in a way that is acceptable to society when they assume this new role while building and maintaining new relationships and creating a professional identity. However, as the doctoral students make progress through their programme, their stress level tends to persist and increase as a result of the demands placed on them. Gardner (2009), emphasised on the importance of the higher education institutions paying close attention to the attrition rate of doctoral students as its effects impact hugely on the institution as well as the student. Gardner, therefore, listed reasons why this is important to the higher education institution.

First, recruiting the student involves substantial financial commitment from the institution throughout the recruitment process before the student is enrolled and commences the doctoral programme. A student on assistantship gets tuition and stipends paid in the course of study. If the student drops out before completion, all these money spent is lost, and the purpose of offering the assistantship in the first place is defeated. Second, there is an impact of the social consequence on these students dropping out. It is important to note that these doctoral students, upon completion, become leaders in their various fields, bring up novel ideas in their research, great scholars, as well as influence the education sector. Therefore it is essential to understand what works for them and come up with initiatives that can assist them in achieving this purpose. Otherwise, the economy will be lacking in people who contribute to the knowledge and keep such a nation recognised globally. Third, is the impact of dropping out of the doctoral programme on the lives of the individuals. Wollast et al., (2018) classified those who seek to obtain a doctoral degree as high achievers and have undergone an intense selection and consider themselves capable of surmounting any academic challenge. Leaving the doctoral programme before completion can impact the confidence of students and affect their future accomplishment in the labour market or their individual lives.

In discussing the attrition rate of doctoral students, some factors can either aid degree completion or drop-out rate. While some authors attributed the completion rate to gender, other authors disagreed and stated that they found no effect of gender on the completion of doctoral studies. On the other hand, Groenvynck, Vandevelde & Van Rossem (2013) reported that studies which implied that gender had no impact on completion rate included multiple academic fields. Besides the case of gender on doctoral degree completion or drop-out, the effect of nationality comes into play. Morrison, Merrick, Higgs & Le Métais (2005) suggested that some studies in the US and Europe have discovered that international students had a better completion rate that the home students. While some of these factors had an impact on the degree completion, other authors had contrasting views. It is on this note that the factor of PhD students who had a high grade point average (GPA) in their undergraduate days tend to complete their degree better than those who had a lower GPA. Another different study indicated that this academic achievement is not useful in determining doctoral degree completion. While Stubb, Pyhältö and Lonka (2011) found age as a determining factor for completion of a doctoral degree stating that the younger students had a better completion rate than their older counterpart. Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012) disagreed with this

statement that age does not differentiate those who completed their doctoral degree from those who did not. Instead, active students who are more engaged in their doctorate are less likely to drop out. Having considered the demographic factors that may have an impact on doctoral degree completion, the element that had to do with the funding seems to be a more potent force. The students awarded a fellowship had better chances for degree completion than those who had assistantships and even tend to be worse for those who are entirely self-funded.

3.5 Factors that affect doctoral students work-life balance

While existing research has highlighted on the fact that doctoral students have experienced high stress levels because of the demands of their studies, it is essential to identify the factors associated with their experiences in the course of their doctoral studies. In a review of articles by Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine and Hubbard (2018), categorized the factors that impact on the doctoral students experience, their progress and completion of the degree into two: external and internal factors. According to Sverdlik et al., (2018), the external factors are those relationships which involve the students, institutions and resources available outside the student and have an impact on the progress of the doctoral students' either directly or indirectly. Under this category of external factors are the supervision in place, departmental socialization, individual/ social lives, and financial support available. On the other hand, the internal factors focus on the processes directly involved with the doctoral students and cover the psychological and mental processes. These include the students' motivation, self-regulatory strategies, writing skills and academic identity.

3.5.1 External factors that impact on doctoral students experience

Supervisory Team

Previous studies have shown the significant role the supervisory team plays and its impact on the experience of the doctoral student (Devos, Boudrenghien, Van der Linden, Azzi, Frenay, Galand, & Klein, 2017; Bui, 2014; Fenge, 2012). The supervisor's academic and personal support to the student aids satisfaction (Overall, Deane and Peterson, 2011). This support the supervisor offers to the student has an impact on the progress the students make and how productive they will be in the course of their studies (Tenenbaum, Crosby, and Gliner, 2011).

The choice of a supervisor starts with finding the right match for the doctoral student (Gube, Getenet, Satariyan and Muhammad, 2017). Thus, the area of research for the doctoral student should be the expertise and area of interest of the supervisor. In this case, the supervisor possesses professional knowledge in a specific discipline, which should be an avenue to guide the doctoral student through the research process (Gill and Burnard, 2008).

Thus it is vital to understand the pairing between the student and supervisor (Joy, Liang, Bilimoria & Perry, 2015), how the relationship grows over the years to determine if the impact of this relationship has a positive or negative effect on the completion of the doctoral degree (Ray, 2007). It is expected of the supervisor to provide feedback on time, hold frequent meetings with the student and provide support. In contrast, the student carries out his/her responsibility without expecting to be spoon-fed by the supervisor. Once doctoral research commences, it is expected of the student to structure their work independently. Being a doctoral student means working independently. They may not work successfully as a result of the challenge they encounter while self-regulating their research when compared to other graduate studies where the students work with a structure. The aftermath of this challenge can pose a risk for these students and result in anxiety. It is at this point that the supervisor plays a vital role to guide and counsel the doctoral student while monitoring their progress to ensure timely completion of their doctoral programme.

Despite previous literature linking dissatisfaction with supervision to be one of the reasons why students' drop out before the end of the programme (Joy et al., 2015; Lovitts 2001) most authors have attributed this to the fact that the institution assigned supervisors to most non-completers of the doctoral programme. As a result of this finding, it is necessary to ensure that any supervisory arrangement for the doctoral student should be on a common interest in terms of the research area, agreed cooperation and shared responsibility. Martinsuo and Turkulainen (2011), suggested that the issue of an unsuccessful outcome of doctoral studies and non-completion of the degree can be solved if the university adopts person-centred solutions that will match the student's expectations and the faculty to support their studies. Gardner (2009) made a brief overview of a study from existing literature and the reasons why doctoral students drop out of their programme. These reasons ranged from funding, advisor relationship, gender, race, discipline, and socialisation experiences.

However, Lovitts (2001) brought to light the multifaceted reasons why doctoral students drop out of their programme. This study showed the role of the faculty advisors (supervisors), faculty and the students in the attrition rate of students. While most of the responses from this study by Lovitts indicated that the faculty advisors attributed student departure from their doctoral studies to the student's inability to meet up with academic demands, the students, on the other hand, linked their departure to be from personal, academic and financial reasons. With personal reasons topping the list for their departure as against academic reasons as stated by their supervisors. Various empirical studies have highlighted the importance of a good working relationship between a supervisor and the doctoral student and its impact on the emotional wellbeing and academic persistence of the student (Mainhard, van der Rijst, van Tartwijk and Wubbels, 2009; Ferrer de Valero, 2001). The student's responses about their supervisors were positive regarding getting support and feedback. The only clause in the student/supervisor relationship was the divergence in the student's expectations which caused anxiety for most students. These studies showed that despite the support and encouragement from the supervisor if the supervisor is not intellectually invested and unavailable when needed, the students still report frustration. Therefore supervisors need to follow the code of conduct as required by the institution while carrying out their responsibilities in terms of research guidance and prompt response to the students at the point of need as this will foster satisfaction, emotional wellbeing as well as academic progress for these students.

The most crucial period when the doctoral students need their supervisors occurs at the beginning of their doctoral studies and the end which accounts for the socialization period into the doctoral programme, completion of the thesis and employment guidance. Meeting the demands of the student in terms of their expectation, the students perceive an ideal supervisor as one who will guide them all through the entire process. Despite the prompt response of the supervisor, the student should be allowed some independence during the research. In discussing the roles of the supervisor, studies have highlighted some factors which are highly dependent on the students (Woolderink, Putnik, van der Boom, & Klabbers, 2015). While the supervisor ensures that the student becomes an independent researcher and the student respect timelines and show that they are receptive in terms of feedback, then the supervisor-student relationship will be significantly improved. As it stands, it grows into a well-established relationship where the student sees the supervisor as a mentor and a source of guidance even beyond their doctoral studies.

Balancing Personal and social lives

The desire to balance family and social responsibilities alongside the academic demands of the doctoral student will require taking some decisions and setting out priorities on every responsibility (Sverdlik et al., 2018). While handling these responsibilities, other aspects should not be neglected, such as their relationships, physical health which may lead to a feeling of imbalance for the doctoral student. Asides neglect in some areas of the individual's life, these students response also shows that their interactions with others reduces and they have difficulties in meeting with family demands as a result of the requirements of their programme. Therefore this absence of time to have social interactions with others as well as leisure time for this doctoral students have been reported to be linked with the increased lack of wellbeing for these doctoral students, increased burnout and depression. These students attested that the only form of social interaction they engage in is with other graduate students which, to an extent, is limited as both parties have academic responsibilities. On the aspect of leisure time and physical activity, these students stated that they experience difficulty maintaining a regular physical activity upon the commencement of their graduate study. Due to lack of time and motivation, doctoral students experience guilt engaging in other activities asides their academic work.

Further studies found that the responsibilities of a doctoral programme go on to weaken the relationship with family members and friends which occurs when the doctoral students are unable to communicate their research to these people who most likely are unfamiliar with the context. Thus, these doctoral students described above experienced social isolation from their colleagues as well as family and friends which is not only unfavourable for these students but also causes a decrease in positive emotions because of their lack of involvement in other non-academic activities. Levecque et al., (2017) in a study of Belgian doctoral students attributed the lack of social support and conflict to impact on wellbeing negatively and increases the rate of mental health challenges and psychological distress amongst doctoral students. On the other hand, other studies have shown that students who were able to balance their academic demands and their personal lives tend to be more satisfied, motivated and hardly depressed. As a result and they are less likely to consider dropping out of their doctoral programme.

Additionally, the impact of having children and balancing academic needs and personal life is significant for doctoral students. Therefore several studies have shown that female doctoral students with children and in the STEM discipline experience lower motivation, experience

conflict and generally complains of stress, health challenges and reduced wellbeing. It is important to note that as a doctoral student, the academic demands and the individual responsibilities these students have can negatively impact on physical health and the wellbeing of the student which then affect their academic performance and the timely completion of the doctoral degree.

Institutional (departmental) Structures

The institutional structure is one of the vital factors that have an impact on the experience of the doctoral student. These include the way the institution provides support for the students academically, financially, socially and professional development. A study by O'Meara, Knudsen & Jones (2013), looked at how the students in the STEM subjects get support in terms of career advancement by their department. This study showed the important role the department played, helped the new students get socialised into their discipline as well as access to opportunities in the course of their research to shape the career aspirations of these students. The rate at which doctoral students drop-out out has been examined, considering the role institutional structures by the department impacted on the experiences of the students. Therefore Lovitts (2001), suggests that the department attribute the attrition rate of doctoral students to be as a matter of personal decision as a result of the student's inability to meet up with the academic demands. Similarly, Castelló et al., (2017) argued that supervisors on their part mostly agree to this, stating that most students drop-out as a result of personal characteristics.

Furthermore, Lovitts (2011) suggested that these students drop-out without giving any reasons to their department as to why they dropped out and therefore confirming the fact that these doctoral students drop-out because of personal reasons rather than the department. With this assumption in place, it will be challenging for the department to carry out evaluative measures on the already existing structure in place to support these students and improving upon them to benefit the students in future. In contrast, other researchers have found a link between doctoral students satisfaction and progress to departmental factors. These studies identified that the department played a vital role in attrition rate students as well as the interest of the students in their various disciplines. As a matter of fact (Gardner, 2010; Ali & Kohun, 2006; Hoskins and Goldberg, 2005) stated that a constant issue that arises is usually a mismatch of expectation of students and the department. This mismatch of expectation occurs when there is inadequate information upon commencement of the programme outlining the

student's responsibilities while studying. While this information seems to be under the radar, the students tend to discover this information on their own while they try to integrate into the departmental culture. No matter how formal or informal the nature of information passed on to the student might be, getting the students integrated and socialised into the departmental culture is very vital for their progress in the course of study as well as success and completion of the degree.

Studies have found that the effective socialisation of the student facilitates a high completion rate (Ferrer de Valero, 2001). This effective socialisation into the department comes from having a supportive relationship with the student's supervisor and colleagues. Most of the colleagues of these students serve in the peer-mentoring programme, which has proven to have a positive impact on international students (Ryan & Deci, 2013). Alongside this peer-mentoring programme, most of these students tend to identify other students informally who might be able to assist them in the process of getting integrated into the institution (Bagaka's, Badillo, Bransteter & Rispinto, 2015). Alongside effective student socialisation, is having financial support and getting adequate information that gives a proper orientation to the student as well as the development of skills. For departments that had low completion rates, the students lacked effective socialisation, which was evident with poor communication between the department and the students and this conflict impacts on their academic progress and the doctoral degree completion.

Finances

Financial opportunities are another vital external factor in the experiences of doctoral students. El-Ghouroury et al., (2012) identified funding and financial limitations as one of the potential sources of stress for doctoral students. There are various ways these students assess finances to support their studies in the form of scholarships, grants, loans which invariably is a form of debt for the students, research and teaching assistantships within their institution of study (Ampaw & Jaeger 2012). Some doctoral students take up employment roles outside the academic community to enable them to meet up with financial responsibilities (Cornwall et al., 2019). In doing this, reducing the time and attention the student gives to study as the commitment to work intensifies. The availability of funding is either motivation or obstacle to the progress these doctoral students make to complete their studies (Greene, 2015). Previous research has shown that British and American doctoral students who are in the natural sciences have reported having access to financial support in their department

compared to their counterparts in the humanities, arts and social sciences (Barnes & Randall, 2012).

The overall level of satisfaction of the student can is achievable and a reduction in the attrition rate when there is access to funding (Breier, 2010). The sponsored students linked their ability to persist in the doctoral programme to available financing, while the self-funded students referred to a lack of funding as an obstacle to continue and complete their studies. In the same vein, most of these international doctoral students who are self-funded are left with no choice as they have to support themselves financially, which means less time on the academic demands. With the continual rise in tuition in universities and international students not having any form of sponsorship, there will be financial strain while they undergo their doctorate. If these international students do not get assistantships or fellowships, then they are left with relying on loans (which are not so easy to come by) to finance their program. The entire process puts much strain on the students and a possible cause of stress for the student and if not adequately managed lead to attrition (Devos et al., 2017). Therefore, these doctoral students need to understand the financial implications involved in undergoing a doctoral programme. Golde & Dore, (2001) implied that at the time of enrolment besides making a decision concerning their programme, they should also understand the impact of financial support in their academic achievement and well-being in future.

Ali & Kohun (2006) argued that the more available finances are to the students in the form of loans, the lesser the rate at which they drop out. These loans will amount to a substantial debt on the student upon graduation but would have allowed them to focus on their studies and complete it. However, access to departmental funding tends to have a better impact on the life of the student and the extent to which they persist in their doctoral studies especially when the institution considers the diversity of the students and initiate an approach to support them financially. Similarly, Gururaj, Heilig & Somers (2010) argued that access to scholarship and research grants have a significant impact on doctoral students persistence and degree completion. Other studies have shown the effects of financial support in the doctoral students experience through the doctoral stages of transition, development and research stage. This study has shown that the students who have access to research assistantships tend to persist through their doctoral studies than those who received any other form of financial support, such as teaching assistantships or scholarship. While research assistantship gives financial support to the doctoral student, it also makes socialisation easy for the student as part of their

responsibility includes being part of a research team. The numerous studies on the access to financial support indicate it is a significant boost to the students' persistence through the doctoral programme. Additionally, student loans offer short-term relief for the students to focus on their studies. Thus, access to departmental funding tends to have a more significant impact and aids the development of the students throughout their programme.

3.5.2 Internal factors that impact on doctoral students experience

Motivation

Motivation plays a vital role in the experience of doctoral students and engagement in their studies (Sakurai, Vekkaila & Pyhältö, 2017). Previous literature has suggested that the lack of structure in a doctoral programme requires the student to remain self-motivated throughout the programme (O'Meara, Knudsen and Jones, 2013; Gardner, 2010). Self-motivation is essential at the end of the dissertation stage, where there is a need for new knowledge creation by the student. Studies have shown that the institution and the students have identified lack of motivation amongst the students as the main reason why students drop-out out of their doctoral programme at an early stage (Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Gardner, 2009). In most cases, students who rely on external motivation can succeed when undergoing coursework as in undergraduate programmes but may face challenges in developing research skills and working independently. Some external factors, such as financial support and support from the supervisor, can aid in motivating the student and encourage progress. Self-regulation on the part of the student is the most important as it will determine if the student will complete their programme or dropout in the long run (Sverdlik et al., 2018). In this regards, studies have shown that motivation on the part of the student predicts progress and persistence in doctoral education (Lovitts, 2008). Although the motivation of these doctoral students accounts for internal factors that influence the students' experience, it can also be affected by external factors like socialisation, fit with supervisor, joint learning and family support.

However, these students had to develop strategies to enable them to stay motivated on the programme until completion. They develop internal survival strategies which include interest, achievement, and self-reliance staying focused and overcoming the obstacles. It is important to note that these strategies developed by the students are linked with them staying positive,

satisfied and persistent irrespective of the challenges. On the other hand, they also establish external survival strategies by seeking support from their peers, supervisors or the faculty. The students engage in scholarly activities to build confidence, present their research and get feedback from colleagues and other academics. In addition to exploring the amount of motivation these students need to progress in their academic pursuit until degree completion, studies have shown that to explore the qualities of students motivation while undergoing their doctoral studies. Furthermore, it is also essential to consider the rationale behind the students' decision to undertake a doctoral degree.

The same way there are internal and external strategies for staying motivated; there are also internal and external sources of motivation. The internal variables include developing intellectually (Leonard, Becker & Coate, 2005), gaining research experience (Stubb, Pyhältö and Lonka, 2012), their field of interest (Brailsford, 2010), to make a change in life. The external variables include the prestige that comes with doing a doctorate and increase in employability prospects (Stubb, Pyhalto & Lonka, 2012; Brailsford, 2010; Leonard, Becker & Coate, 2005). Of all these variables listed above, those who pursued a doctoral degree for a vocational reason were the most unhappy. Students who were more particular about coming up with new ideas in the course of their dissertation and completing their degree rather than those receiving a doctorate with the prestige that goes with it explained that they had good wellbeing. Therefore it was found that the students who were self-motivated and had their focus on making the best out of the process of the doctoral programme had better wellbeing, higher satisfaction and had good academic success in the course of their programme (Stubb, Pyhalto & Lonka, 2012).

Writing Skills

In obtaining a doctoral degree, there is an acceptable method of writing. The concern of the writing process in a doctoral degree has received much attention with the extent of emotions and stress involved (Sala-Bubaré & Castelló, 2016). In the STEM disciplines, the writing process is about the idea of natural selection, and the doctoral students in this field of study who are unable to write at this standard are unlikely to complete the doctoral programme successfully (Aitchison, Catterall, Ross & Burgin, 2012). Scholars have discovered that doctoral writing comes with a lot of positive and negative emotions, and in most cases, the negative emotions take over every discussion on a doctoral thesis (Aitchison et al., 2012). Doctoral students are attached to their writing emotionally, which they consider as a way of

developing their identities academically. Further emphasised that the supervisors consider doctoral writing as a means to which these students can disseminate their research and make valuable contributions to their field.

Sverdlik et al., (2018), suggested that the difference in what writing meant to the supervisors and the students led to inadequate support and high expectations from the supervisors hence adding negatively to the students' experience. On this note, some studies have looked at some strategies to regulate doctoral writing to prove that these strategies will help to achieve the required standard while decreasing the impact of negative emotions and anxiety on the part of the students (Koltz, Odegard, Provost, Smith & Kleist, 2010; Castelló, Inesta & Monereo, 2009). Students struggle in writing which takes place at different stages of their doctoral programme (Castelló et al., 2009). From the planning stage, revision stage, structure stage, control stage and voice stage. Studies have proven that in the writing process, students who engaged in the planning and revision process are less anxious and more confident in their doctoral programme. Similarly, the students who focused on their writing style made a better output in terms of their research compared to those who concentrate on vocabulary and grammatical arrangement of work.

In exploring on the writing skills of these doctoral students, various studies have shown the impact of joint writing in the emotions of the student as well as the process of acquiring knowledge compared to the lonely circumstance in which doctoral writing occurs. There are benefits of joint writing for the doctoral student, which includes motivation and positive emotions, improved quality of writing and good time management and proper monitoring. The place of jointly writing with colleagues has helped to make the process of the doctoral journey a bit easier and less lonely. Writing with supervisors have shown to serve as a means of the student undergoing some form training into the way and manner writing should be done and their argument properly presented (Maher, Fallucca & Halasz, 2013).

Academic Identity

Doctoral students have a way in which they perceive themselves within their scholarly communities and literature have shown that students tend to build up their academic identity by getting involved in writing, socialisation within the faculty and research (Gardner, 2008; Lovitts 2001). There are activities which these students described that aided in their sense of

belonging and membership in the academic community. While these activities involved meeting up with the student responsibilities, which are essential to the student's academic identity, it also gives such student a sense of belonging and academic membership. The students acknowledged socialisation and interacting with their peers have assisted in the development of their academic identity even more than their contact with the faculty emphasising on the impact of the peers in their academic community (McAlpine, Jazvac-Martek & Hopwood, 2009). The place of the community cannot be overemphasised in describing the academic identity of these doctoral students. McAlpine & Amundsen (2012) differentiated in the student's academic identity, the difference between their individual and collective identity, which is solely determined by their interactions with their institutional communities in the faculty. Therefore, the individual identity developed through academic work emphasised the student's role in their department as well as foreseeing their future career. While in collective identity, the students who become part of some groups or communities such as research groups or other students organisations begin to tell the difference between the students' and other members of the community.

Despite the structures put in place to aid the collective identities of these students' to improve their doctoral students' experience, there might be the challenge of these students building their sense of self-worth and how efficient they can be to their field of study and the institution. Regarding the self-worth of these students, while there has been limited research on this area, researchers suggest that the student's face the challenge of uncertainty and unworthy of pursuing a doctoral study. While considering the self-worth of these students, (Longfield, Romas & Irwin, 2006) identified some themes associated with the changes that happen to the self-worth of these students during their doctoral programme. This changes they identified as delayed gratification when the students face academic obstacles such as paper rejection or revision but as soon as they achieve their aim when the paper is received then their self-worth gets a boost. Another theme they discovered was the status and sacrifice which occurs when some students feel fulfilled because they have accomplished the status of a graduate student.

In contrast, other students experience lower self-worth considering the status they had to forego to enrol for a doctoral programme. They also identified another theme which they referred to as elevation and depression cycles. In this case, the students identified that they experienced fluctuating periods throughout their studies when they experienced up and down

moments feeling competent at one point and getting overwhelmed with impostor syndrome at some other time. For undergraduate students, external regulation which involved their interaction with family, colleagues and professors is connected to their self-worth. Conversely, the self-worth of graduate students was reliant on the way they evaluated their work. Another factor which influences the identity of these doctoral students is self-efficacy. This factor has to do with the student's capability for learning while accomplishing their desired goals. Self-efficacy affects the interest the student has in research and as well as their research output of scholarly publications.

Further studies have shown that drop-out intentions are high when the student is uncertain about their academic competence. The faculty support encourages the student to be in control of their actions and the outcome of desired goals. In this regard, there is an increase in the way and manner the student view their competencies which positively impact their academic identity. On the other hand, when the level of self-efficacy of the student is low, the students want to avoid been seen as not capable and lacking the ability to do a doctoral degree. These doctoral students who fall into this group have been described by (Schwinger & Stiensmeier-Pelster, 2011) with specific attributes such as procrastination, poor time-management, and engaging in low-priority task. Also, Ahern & Manathunga, (2004) identified that students' who refuse to be regularly in touch with their supervisors, faculty or other students as well as delay in submitting their work for regular feedback are showing signs of a low level of self-efficacy. The students who exhibit high-level of self-efficacy have a great interest in their research, persistent and the innate desire to achieve their goals. Low-level self-efficacy have a negative impact on the student's academic identity and delayed development which can also affect the quality of their dissertation and timelines.

3.6 Other factors which impact on the experiences of international doctoral students

In the preceding section, there has been an exploration of external and internal factors which influence doctoral students work-life balance. This section will be focusing on other factors which have an impact on the work-life balance of these students but do not fall into the category of internal or external factors.

3.6.1 Acculturation

There is an initial culture shock that comes with leaving one's home country to study in a foreign land. The transition of these international students from their home country to their

current country of study comes with many challenges while they try to adjust in their new environment (Alharbi and Smith, 2018). They experience what is known as acculturative stress, which describes the difficulties encountered in the interrelation of social factors and individual thoughts and behaviour. Besides English proficiency which impact on international students experiences, there are other cross-cultural issues associated with academic culture shock and the difference in the education system which has implications on the student's relationship with other students and lecturers (Martirosyan, Hwang and Wanjohi, 2015). Other factors, such as the nature of the host country and demographic group of international students. The type of acculturating group and cognitive features of the individuals influence the link between stress and acculturation.

On the other hand, studies have found that the English language proficiency, their geographic origin, social support network and connecting socially has aided in the quick adjustment of these students into their country of study and as a result, reduce acculturative stress. Studies also indicate that international students who had a level of familiarity with western culture and had a better English language fluency tend to adjust quicker. Rice, Choi, Zhang, Morero and Anderson, (2012) identified that Indian students experienced less acculturative stress than Chinese students. Despite being located close to each other in the continent of Asia, China and India have different cultures and history, which might influence how they perceive and navigate through acculturative stress as international students in the UK. Additionally, the British colonization of Asian India aided in the fluency of their English Language.

In this regard, Sam (2001) identified that this adaptation difficulty could be as a result of the cultural distance of the students home country and their host country. Hence, supporting the fact that Indian students tend to experience less acculturative stress than Chinese in that India is closer to the United Kingdom when compared to China. The individual view the students have about themselves and what they anticipated the university environment would be, made a significant impact on how these international students adjusted into a new culture for studies (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). Even though acculturative stress is one of the most popularly reviewed in literature, studies suggest that these international students are more concerned about their academic issues which they placed on the list of significant factors. This decision by the students happens to be the cause of mental health issues that comes with stress (Yasuda & Duan, 2002; Hull, 1978). Additionally, the strain that comes with challenges in meeting up with the academic demands of the university and the course load is

the cause of poor mental health amongst these students which negatively impacts on their work-life balance.

3.6.2 English Language Proficiency/ Barrier

The ability to communicate is an essential factor in the adjustment of international students in their country of study. Language proficiency can be a barrier and negatively impact on the experiences of these international doctoral students. Therefore, Sam (2001) described language proficiency in the context of international students to be the ability of these students to communicate in English as well as been able to write in an acceptable academic language (mainly English). There have been links of proficiency in English language to quick adaptation in a student's country of study as well as academic success. In this regard, a lack of language proficiency as Alharbi and Smith (2018) identified can also affect the academic achievements of these students. These students may likely struggle to understand the content of what is taught (mostly in workshops and seminars for doctoral students) which at the long run may affect their writing or future exams. There is numerous literature on challenges students encounter with language proficiency. With excellent support from the institution and their country of study, these students can relate to people effectively while working on their language skills. Therefore, Beech (2015) identified that studying in the UK have provided the opportunity for international students to develop their English language skills as well as being culturally diverse, which aids their communication and understanding. Upon achievement of this great feat by the institution, the students can adjust quickly as well as have a pleasant experience.

3.6.3 Loneliness and Isolation

International students experience isolation and loneliness when they are far away from family and friends (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia, 2008). The reason may be due to the way they adjust in their country of study, their English language proficiency and in some cases, these students have reported instances of perceived discrimination (Alharbi and Smith 2018). In most cases, researchers have identified that the loneliness these students faced, which was indicated earlier in terms of their English language proficiency was also as a result of their cultural distance (Barron, Baum & Conway, 2007). Studies had also found that international students experienced isolation mostly when they just arrived at their country of study. This feeling of isolation usually occurs when they are unable to contact their family

members as it used to be, which results in personal loneliness. Additionally, when they lose their network in their home country, they experience what is known as social loneliness and cultural loneliness when they do not have access to their usual culture and language.

3.6.4 Discrimination

In the case where the international student does not feel accepted into their host country, there have been reports of this challenge resulting in perceived discrimination which the students have identified as being a source of stress. Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune (2011) identified friendship as a factor that satisfies deep personal and emotional needs of these international students. As an important aspect of acculturation, friendship has a significant impact in the lives of individuals in most cultures which brings satisfaction, social support and accomplishment for international students in their host country (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Studies have shown that international students experience difficulties and put in much effort into creating social relationships (Pritchard & Skinner, 2002). These students also face cultural adjustments which imply they either adapt or adjust to the culture in their host country rather than the institution making provisions to accommodate their needs (Lee & Rice, 2007; Bevis, 2002). Language and communication barrier are factors which influence the international students experiences and determine if the student will be able to manage and handle any racial prejudice (Alharbi & Smith, 2018; Nilsson, Butler, Shouse & Joshi, 2008).

3.6.5 Academic Stress

Studying can be mentally, physically and emotionally demanding. Therefore academic stress is a global challenge faced by students all over the world be it in their home or host country (Struthers, Perry, & Menec, 2000). It only becomes a concern for international students because of the difference in teaching and learning pattern between their home and host country (Irizarry & Marlowe, 2010). There are other sources of stress that impact on the international students' experience, which could be a lack of resources, meeting up with deadlines, work overload. When these students also face some life changes (sickness or loss of a loved one), it can affect the goals they have set to meet up with their academic demands. Contrary to some reports of international students facing more academic stress than their domestic counterparts, some studies have identified that most domestic students face more academic pressure than their foreign counterpart (Misra & Castillo, 1995). Conversely, other studies which disagree to this point of view have identified that these international students

may have decided to answer these questions of academic stress pleasantly just to stay away from the shame that comes with reporting their inadequacies.

Another reason why international students experience difficulty could be in the subject area, which might require having an understanding of the culture, such as is seen in courses like studying law. The student will need an understanding of the culture to be able to comprehend what the legal system entails (Svarney, 1989). Due to this challenge, an international student studying law may find it demanding to adjust academically because they are coming from their home countries which have different culture and tradition. Asides the subject area of studying law, other courses which entail having to relate with clients such as social work, nursing, counselling and psychology, might be challenging at the beginning for international students. Besides the anxiety that comes with it, it becomes stressful and demanding academically if there is a language barrier which makes communication challenging. Different culture and values of the student's home country and their health care system might entirely be different from what is obtainable in their host country. This factor makes it challenging to get the most out of their learning experience and the services they to render when studying. This challenge has have a negative effect on their academic performance. Relying on their high performance in their home country and assuming the same would happen in their host country and getting disappointed might cause them stress which invariably leads to depression. On the other hand, high academic performance reduces the amount of academic stress encountered by the student. Lee (2017) suggested that academic issues for international students and the challenge with language, negatively affect them, making it difficult to adjust to their new academic and social environment compared to domestic students.

3.6.6 Demographic Variables

This factor would be considering the impact age, gender and ethnicity have on the experiences of international students. Studies have reported that younger students experience more stress when compared to their older colleagues (Alharbi and Smith, 2018). In the same vein, female students express more anxiety and depression compared to male students (Rosenthal, Russell & Thomson, 2008). The ethnic background of these international students influences their experience in the host country. Hence, the closer the cultural background of these international students, the lesser the stress they experience in acculturation.

3.7 Personal and interpersonal factors that affect doctoral students experience

There are other personal and interpersonal factors which can overwhelm the doctoral student, affect their work-life balance and in extreme cases, leads to situations where the students abandon the program. There are personal and interpersonal factors that affect doctoral student work-life balance. These factors include but not limited to the following; (i)Family responsibility (ii)Time constraints and overload (iii) Relationship with significant others

3.7.1 Family responsibility

In society, individuals have various family responsibilities and play specific roles as spouses, parents, son or daughter, aunt or uncle (Boss, Bryant & Mancini, 2016). Not only are individuals meant to carry out parenting roles but will have to extend their caring responsibility to numerous extended families. However putting together the demands of obtaining a doctorate and family responsibilities which comes with caring responsibilities and financial needs can be overwhelming for a doctoral student (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). In meeting up with the task of this two domain which is the family and schoolwork, the doctoral student handles the role of meeting up with time for the family and time to attend to the demands of studying. Then comes the feeling of worry, guilt, anxiety, anger as the student is trying to create a balance between the needs of studying and family demands. In some cases, the doctoral students experience this challenge in the course of the entire program.

3.7.2 Time constraints and overload

As a doctoral student, many things are demanding for time and attention. The international doctoral student has got a limited time in their country of study, alongside the challenge of meeting all requirements within the time stated in their visa (Tannock, 2018). The numerous demands come from meeting up with academic responsibilities, family demands, support system, coping with employment demands as well as meet up with financial needs. Having all these listed as requirements, the student has to attend to adequately, leaves the student with a depressing feeling. Over time, time constraints and overload have are the leading causes of stress for a doctoral student. However, overload appears to be a part of the student's life as every doctoral student will always have loads of responsibilities to handle as well as meeting up with the demands of their doctorate. There is a lot of juggling and the need to balance their personal life, family responsibilities and demands of their program. An increase

in pressure leads to an imbalance in both domains. Then comes the decision of dropping out of the programme hence an increase in attrition rate.

3.7.3 Relationship with significant others

One of the major issues doctoral students face is handling their relationships with significant others. There is a challenge of balancing time for study and maintaining a healthy relationship (Haynes et al., 2012). This challenge can be within the family or outside the family as the case may be. Once involved in an intimate relationship, these students experience the problem of time. Having stated above that these students already face the challenge of time constraint, there is usually a limited amount of time to share with someone else at this point. There are two sides to it if the student gets emotionally involved in a relationship in the course of the programme, then the issue of time becomes a challenge. On the other hand, most students are worried that going for more degrees would mean fewer partners available to them upon completion of their doctorate. Both cases, however, have proven to be a source of concern which causes tension and stress for the doctoral student.

3.8 Prevalence and causal factors of stress for international students

3.8.1 Stress

There is a general concept by most researchers that undergoing stress is a common trend for every student in the university which comes as a result of academic demands (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017; Bamber & Schneider, 2016; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005). These students encounter this stress at the beginning, middle or the end of their studies which arose as a result of life changes and linked to stress-related illnesses. At the beginning of studies and the years that follow, studies have identified that both international and domestic students have the same challenges in terms of academic stress and demands. However, in the case of international students, researchers place their focus on some form of stress which affects them like academic stress and acculturative stress. Acculturation is one of the causes of mental health challenges for international students. Tension arises when the demands of a situation are beyond the expectation of an individual. In this regard, it can occur either in a positive or negative situation. Therefore, studies on the findings on stress indicate that the perceived stress in terms of international and domestic student did not change.

On the contrary, several studies disagreed with this finding of domestic and international students experiencing the same stress level (Redfern, 2016). In other to understand the most situation that causes stress for these students (Chavajay & Skowronek, 2008) reported that their findings indicated concerns with social life and loneliness. Other studies found that the academic workload and the student's lack of clarity could also increase their stress level. Additionally, when there is a high expectation of family members from the student, this could increase the stress level of these international students. Stress is generally known to be the cause of most medical health conditions and daily exposure to it in the lives of these international students can make them vulnerable in terms of their health. The model proposed by Misra, Crist & Burant (2003) indicates that when the levels of academic stressors are high, it is an indication of high-stress levels and the level of social support being low.

3.8.2 Depression

Adjusting into a new location have been identified to come with some levels of depression and anxiety (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). For international students seeking help in the form of counselling from the well-being services in the university, studies have shown that depression is one of the primary concern of these international students. Rice et al., (2012) found that acculturative stress leads to depression. In the same vein, studies have shown a negative link of English language proficiency with depression. International students whose English language proficiency was low, turned out to be more depressed. This challenge was evident when they could not express their thoughts which is a crucial factor in their mental health condition.

3.8.3 Wellbeing

The causes of stress have been identified in the experiences of international doctoral students. Thus, it is essential to identify factors which facilitate their health and wellbeing as well as their academic performance. The concept of wellbeing is complex, with three fundamentals related to mood and emotions of the students. These fundamentals include life satisfaction, positive and negative effect. However, Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders (2012) definition of psychological wellbeing defined it as a concept that comes in different aspects which include: positive relationships, self-acceptance, personal growth, environmental mastery, autonomy and purpose in life. Therefore, Ward and Dearle (1991) proposed a model that covers the psychological and sociocultural aspects. The psychological element explained the mental wellbeing of these students in a new environment. The socio-cultural perspective handles the

ability of the individual to culturally adjust in the host community and relate with its members. Studies on the adjustment of international students have proven that when these students experience positive acculturation, their sociocultural adaptation is easy compared to their academic adaptation or psychological well-being. Neri & Ville (2008) found that when these students take part in activities within or outside the university, build relationships; there was a tendency to improve their wellbeing. In contrast, the inability to do so and lose of identity could have a negative impact on their wellbeing (Praharso, Tear & Cruwys, 2017).

The mood and emotional feeling of the student as a result of feeling happy and having good relationships with others is just an aspect of a student's wellbeing. There are different aspects of wellbeing which assist in considering neglected areas of the student's life. This other aspect could be in the form the university course and environment and its positive or negative impact on their feelings. The role of support from the university and wellbeing of the students, (Cho & Yu, 2015) found international students rely solely on universities which leave the university with the responsibility of providing them with the most support. The model Cho & Yu came up with has proven that support from the university impacts positively on the international students' wellbeing as it increased their satisfaction with school life and decreased their psychological stress. The university identifying the needs of the students created a positive impact on the students' perception of school-life satisfaction.

3.9 Work-life balance strategies adopted by full-time doctoral students

There are different strategies people develop to respond to stress and the ability to cope with stressful situations. In the context of the international students, Lazarus (1993) described coping to be the ability to which these students develop intellectual ethics to manage the demands that come with academics within the resources of the student. As these students encounter challenges, they develop various coping strategies to manage these stressors. There is numerous literature on coping strategies these students adopt to enable them to adjust into their country of study as well as maintain their wellbeing. Studies have also found that these students utilise effective strategies to reduce stress hence positively impacting on their academics. Domestic students, as seen in the US resort to using some behavioural strategies such as smoking which in the long run, harm their health (Misra & Castillo, 2004). In the same manner, female international students used emotional reactions to address the issue of stress.

In contrast, male students make use of intellectual abilities to handle the issue of stress as against their emotions (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). Others turn to religion as a means to cope through challenging experiences in the course of their studies which is common amongst the Muslim students but gradually reduces when they finally adjust to their new environment. However, studies have shown that the mental health cases of international students are linked to their ability to cope with stress which means if they can cope, there will be fewer cases. The reverse will be the case if their coping ability is less than the stress experienced. Martinez et al., (2013), identified strategies adapted by full-time doctoral students to achieve a school-work-life balance. These students were able to achieve balance in the following ways;(i)Time management (ii)Seeking for wellbeing (iii) Support (iv) Making adjustment tradeoff.

3.9.1 Time management

Martinez et al., (2013) reported that the research participants in their study had to manage their responsibilities on purpose despite the demands they had in a bid to have a school-work-life balance. These students manage their time, roles and responsibilities as well as giving precedence to what matters most. For a graduate student, time is an essential factor to consider when trying to have a school-work-life balance (Forbus, Newbold, and Mehta, 2011). Dedicating more time to one domain (either school-work or life) means the other domain gets less time and vice versa. However, doing a doctorate entails mastering how to balance your time differently as a result of the various responsibilities that come with the program. Therefore, these graduate students always referred to time management as very important in balancing their obligations at school, work and personal life. Despite laying much emphasis on this, they still contend with time management as they always run out of time in meeting up with deadlines.

3.9.2 Managing Responsibilities

The doctoral students have numerous responsibilities which demand and compete for the attention of the doctoral student. These different roles and responsibilities of these doctoral students could have a positive or negative impact on their fulfilment in their studies and life generally (Haynes et al., 2012). Hence, these students must manage their differing roles in order of priority. It implies that daily as the responsibilities come, it is up to the student to attend to what is urgent and vital at the moment. Hence, these students need to prioritize their

roles just as they have prioritized their task. These students, alongside their responsibilities as doctoral students, also have other roles such as a parent, son or daughter, spouse, uncle or aunt. These different roles can either be of assistance to them in the course of their program and balancing their life responsibilities or bringing about an inter-role conflict between their academic roles and personal life (Stratton, 2016). However, these students have different roles but have worked to overcome this challenge as they made efforts to manage their school work alongside their other responsibilities in their personal life.

3.9.3 Seeking wellbeing

In making efforts to juggle different responsibilities, the student's wellbeing is affected. However, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) suggested that a lack of work-life balance can have a negative impact on an individual's wellbeing. To achieve a work-life balance, students have to seek for their wellbeing by preserving their health, keep the stress level down and make out some personal time for themselves. The students preserved their health by maintaining their physical and mental wellbeing as well as using some coping strategies like exercise to reduce the impact of stress on the students (Byers et al., 2014). Stress is not uncommon amongst graduate students (Ansari, Oskrochi and Haghgoo, 2014), as the demands on them in relation to school, work and personal life bring about increased pressure. Every graduate student reported stress as a result of multiple demands which brings about conflict unique to each of the students. In general, deadlines, family issues, inadequate finances, time, additional responsibilities could lead to stress. Having stated earlier on the challenges of time management, the effect of meeting deadlines is one of the primary causes of the pressures these students go through. That notwithstanding, they also stated that the stress that accompanies the pressure that comes with meeting deadline has an adverse effect on their wellbeing. However, the students indicated that having their time was significant as they use that opportunity to keep up with their wellbeing.

3.9.4 Getting institutional support

Having a sound support system in place is one significant factor when doctoral students strive to achieve work-life balance. Even though these group of students have in the previous years gone through higher education does not mean that they do not need any form of help to go through their doctoral degree. These forms of support these students look forward to getting includes but not limited to institutional support and social support. Undergoing a doctoral degree can be very demanding and at the same time challenging (Silvester, 2010), the

student's emotions, finances and strength are also overstretched. In some cases, these students are unable to go through these challenges, and the need for support comes in. The institution's wellbeing department comes in at a point when stress-related issues begin to affect the work of the student.

At other times, the faculty, as well as advisors, play a significant role too by being flexible with the graduate students. The students also stated that in addition to getting support from the student's wellbeing department and faculty, they also got financial support from being part of the university's assistantship programmes. They also obtained the students travel grants to participate in conferences and other students related activities to improve their student's experience. The students recognized the vital role having support plays in achieving a right work-life balance (Benjamin, Williams and Maher, 2017).

On the other hand, the family, friends and peer groups play an essential role in helping these doctoral students achieve and maintain a balance between the demands of school, work and personal life. Understanding on the part of the family will go a long way to cushion the effect of the pressures the doctoral students face in the course of the program. The support they get when involved in activities that bring together other doctoral students goes a long way in helping the students achieve work-life balance.

3.9.5 Getting support from friends and family

The amount of social support international students receives upon the commencement of their programme aids in their transition and adaptation to a new culture. This form of support comes from the help they get from other individuals. While this form of support comes primarily from the student's family, it does not rule out the support offered from peer groups, colleagues and the community at large. A support system in place for a doctoral student acts as a cushion against stress and help them to be efficient (West, Gokalp, Pena, Fischer & Gupton, 2011). Having a proper support system enables these students to build and harness some confidence in their ability. A sound support system in place for a particular set of students puts them at an advantage over other students. Therefore, Lakey & Orehek (2011) stated that there is a link between support and good mental health which encourages actions that reduces the impact of stress. An international doctoral student who is far away from friends and family feels all alone to handle difficult situations.

The absence of a support system can transform a minor setback to a significant problem which might lead to the student dropping out of the programme before help comes.

Therefore, access to social support has proven over time to enable these students to adjust quickly as well as make excellent academic progress (Liu & Winder, 2014). As a result, international students have reported the importance of support from family and friends to their academic success. Studies conducted between international and domestic students have proven that international students have lower levels of support compared to domestic students (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). Most domestic students either lived with their family or lived close to their family members and other relatives. It has also been proven by research that married students experienced higher levels of support than single students (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker and AlTimimi, 2004). With the arguments above, Praharso, Tear, & Cruwys (2017) suggested that when individuals are away from people who assist them and provide some form of care, the support they get becomes inadequate. This support is particularly when it has to do with a significant life transition, such as students leaving their home country to study in another country with different cultural norms and values. In having access to social support, it goes beyond the quantity but the quality of support which reduces the impact of the stress these international students experience while making a transition.

3.9.6 Making adjustments (trade-offs)

Many students at the doctoral level attempt to balance their academic demands and social/family responsibilities which require difficulty in making decisions in respect to priorities and allocating resources (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Achieving a balance between demands of school, work and personal life involve making some adjustments and compromise which can be in the form of time, money. Before the time most graduates students enrolled unto the programme, the majority has been in full-time positions at their various places of work which meant more money. However, getting scheduled to do a full-time doctoral would suggest doing a part-time job. Although the students are now working part-time, it still feels like a full-time job because of the demands that come with doing a doctorate and earning less because of the limited time of paid work. Sometimes the adjustments have to be made in terms of time with family or personal time.

Conclusion

In addressing the gaps mentioned earlier, this study will be conducting an in-depth analysis of how these international PhD students make decisions in maintaining a balance between their academic demands and their personal lives. The use of a semi-structured in-depth interview

has been employed to capture the personal views of these students, and how they deal with the demands, they are faced with regularly as a PhD student.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Being an international PhD student comes with its demands as a doctoral degree is considered the peak of education (Jairam and Kahl, 2012). In addition to their responsibilities as parents, siblings or children while pursuing doctoral studies, they are faced with using their resources to maintain a balance. The life of an international PhD student depicts the picture of an individual who spends much time on their academic work and in most cases working on a part-time basis. As initially identified in previous literature, the effectiveness in their academic work most times reflects in unbalanced family life. The focus of this study is on the experiences of international PhD students who persisted in their doctoral programme while carrying out their roles as parents, siblings, spouses. This study aimed to identify their work-life balance experiences and suggest a blueprint to enable present and prospective international PhD students to persist in their doctoral studies until degree completion.

This chapter aims to describe the research process by discussing the methodological approach used in this research. The use of a phenomenological approach will be considered in the development of this study. Therefore, in addressing the gap on the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students, this study will be exploring the unique coping strategies these students have adopted to maintain a balance between their academic demands and their personal lives. Additionally, what support and initiatives are in place to enable them to complete their PhD programme as well as their perceptions about the support in place. I have discussed in this chapter the research design and explain why a phenomenological study was chosen. I further readdress the research questions while introducing the research setting. Furthermore, I explained the setting, discuss the participants, procedures and my role in the research. I have also described my personal experiences and bracket my experiences out in the course of the data collection and analysis to reduce any form of human bias. The opinions of the participants are vital, their experiences will be reported in the findings, including their voices in the research process. Achieving the above is made possible by conducting qualitative research drawing on interpretivism, which implies that people develop the individual meaning of their personal experience, which brings about multiple meanings

(Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016). Hence, the data collection will be through semi-structured interviews. The ethical considerations will be stated and choices made, as well as a location for the research interview. A brief description of the limitations of the study which will be discussed further in details in the subsequent chapter. The methods and approach used in this study were specifically developed to aid in answering the research questions. Within this research, the strategies these students applied for work-life balance, as well as the outcomes, will be outlined. The study will further explore the support in place to help them achieve a balance to develop recommendations for improving the wellbeing of this group of students. While focusing on addressing the research objectives of this study, the methodological approach will aid in answering the research questions that guide this study as outlined below.

RQ1. What are the challenges the international PhD students experience in maintaining a work-life balance?

RQ2. How do international PhD students maintain a balance between academic demands (work) and personal life?

RQ3. What is the existing institutional and societal support available to International PhD students?

RQ4. To what extent have these institutional initiatives, and societal support influenced the work-life balance of International PhD students?

4.2 Philosophical paradigms

This study on the work-life balance of international PhD students aimed at exploring their experiences and how they persisted in their studies while carrying out different roles as doctoral students, parents, spouses, children, siblings and employees. A qualitative approach was adopted to place the researcher into the lifeworld of these students by listening to their stories and understanding their experiences. Achieving the above is made possible by conducting qualitative research drawing on interpretivism, which implies that people develop the individual meaning of their personal experience, which brings about multiple meanings (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016).

A carefully planned and reliable set of assumptions will amount to a trustworthy research philosophy, which will support the researcher's choice of methodology, research strategy, data collection method as well as how the data collected will be analysed. However, it is

important to note that we must be conscious of the philosophical decisions made via our research strategy as it has a vital impact on how we go about our research. Therefore, Creswell (2014) emphasized that a researcher, when planning research needs to thoroughly think through the philosophical assumptions or paradigms in which they intend to bring to the study. They also need to know the research design that is linked to these assumptions and detailed methods that brings to practice the research approach.

4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology, as a branch of philosophy, deals with the essence of phenomena and the nature of their existence. Cassell (2015, p.10), defined ontology as "the study of being, existence and reality". In a further explanation, Cassell stated that ontology deals with questions which try to find out if these entities exist. Therefore, ontology can be said to be concerned with the nature of reality. Killam (2013, p.7), stated that there are basic ontological questions like "what exists? What is true? How can we sort existing things?". There can be one reality that is context-free or multiple realities that are bound by context. In addition, Williams (2015) suggested ontology as the study of how something exists which aids to explore questions that ask how an entity came into existence, how do we know it is real and how it can be identified.

Additionally, ontology aids to handle some vital questions like "is something real or ideal, actual or abstract, fact or opinion, empirical or reasoned, known or believed" (Williams 2015, p.11). Hence, Kouppanou & Standish (2013) argued that ontology prompts us to assert what something is. In ontology, while there are two main paradigms, they are also contrasting. These ontologies are also known as realism and relativism. King, Horrocks & Brooks (2018) implied that ontological positions are often explained as realist or relativist. Therefore it is essential to note that realists believe that truth exists and can be separated from human behaviours. On this note, realism is bound by natural law, it can be objectively measured, and its outcome generalised. As a foundation of science, the truth can be determined using scientific laws which are carried out via experimentation. There is a further believe that once a truth is known, it cannot change.

Relativism, on the other hand, believes in getting subjective meaning rather than seeking the truth. As the case may be relativists, believe that context should not be separated from reality as it is the meaning gained from the individual experiences that make obvious what is

regarded as the truth (King, Horrocks & Brooks, 2019). In this regards, relativists believe that what is regarded as truth is influenced by different perceptions meaning the reality cannot exist outside the individual (Smith, 2012). They do not look for truth since this is an assumption that it can change based on the individual's experience. Therefore relativism assumes there is no objective reality or universal truth (Mathison, 2005). Rather than carrying an experiment to establish the authenticity, relativists try to gain in-depth understanding by speaking to the people and listening to their stories and placing value on their individual experiences. Ontology as a system of belief that shows the interpretation that constitutes a fact by an individual is linked with questions enquiring if social entities are perceived as objective or subjective (Dudovskiy, 2018). Objectivism describes the situation that social entities exist in reality, external to social actors. A subjectivist, on the other hand, believes that social phenomena are generated from the perception, understanding and consequent actions of social actors. The objectivist applies the realist approach in that the researcher is eager to understand the respondent's view of a particular phenomenon, which is known to exist outside the social actor or respondent thereby comparing it with the account of other respondents. On the other hand, the subjectivist applies the relativist approach, which believes that truth is contextual, which there can be multiple realities.

Therefore, ontology relates to the features of the nature of reality. In qualitative research, the researcher comes with the concept of multiple realities. Not only does the researcher embrace multiple realities, but the participants to be studied also have this idea of multiple reality as well as the audience who will be reading the research outcome. In conducting research of international PhD students who are the participants of this present study, the qualitative researcher conducts research bearing in mind to report multiple realities from the outcome of the study. In describing the lived experiences of these students, the phenomenon of work-life balance is considered from different perspectives and different viewpoints as expressed by the participants. These multiple realities reflect the ontological stance of this study which is shown in the numerous ways themes are developed from the words of participants with different points of view over the same phenomena in this study.

4.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is a branch of research philosophy concerned with the questions 'what is knowledge?', 'what are the sources and limits of knowledge?' (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2011), 'how is knowledge acquired?', 'how do we know what we know?'(Killam, 2013).

However, epistemology is the study of the standard we use to ascertain what does and does not constitute acceptable knowledge. This brings us to the point when we try to understand the concept 'truth' and determine if some claim, as well as ours, is true or false (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The ontological stance of this study is subjective with the opinion that social phenomena are generated from the perception, understanding and consequent actions of social actors hence yielding multiple realities. It is also important to state its epistemological consideration which will inform the suitable methodology which comprises of our philosophical assumptions and methods (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In conducting qualitative research, an epistemological assumption entails the researcher coming in close contact with the participants. The personal information gathered from these individuals are based on personal views from their experiences. This process, however, leads to how knowledge is known and it is, therefore, necessary to conduct research in the natural environment of the participants as it aids in comprehending the context in which the participants narrates their experiences (Creswell, 2013). In doing business and management research, there are three paradigmatic approaches which are positivist research, interpretive research and criticalist research (Hallebone & Priest, 2009). However, this study will be adopting the interpretive research approach.

4.2.2.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is often described as social constructivism. The primary assumption of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed, emphasizing that people develop an individual understanding of their personal experience, which brings about multiple meanings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Creswell (2013) argued that philosophical assumptions are deeply rooted in some interpretive framework which the qualitative researcher uses when conducting research. In research where the researcher is particular about comprehending the world in which they live in, they come up with a personal understanding of their experiences towards a specific phenomenon. Because this leads to different and varied meanings which might make it difficult to understand, the participant's view of the situation been explored is very important. Therefore the interaction with participants helps to bring to light their individual experiences.

A constructivist study explores the experiences of individuals in their world from their understanding and personal point of view which they make known in the course of interaction. Individuals in social constructivism seek to understand the world in which they

live and work, thereby developing a subjective meaning of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This subjective meaning arises from interaction with individuals due to the cultural norms that operate in the life of an individual. In this case, rather than starting with a theory which is what is obtainable in positivism, a qualitative researcher, develops a pattern of meaning or theory inductively. In aqualitative research, a pattern of meaning is generated from open-ended questions which the participant expands on while the researcher gathers adequate information from the participant via interaction. The researcher gets the opportunity to listen and observe in the life setting of the participant. In the end, the researcher interprets what they discovered.

The entire process makes meanings of participants views of their world. This process accounts for the reasons why qualitative research is referred to as interpretive research. Therefore, the focus is on the involvement of human sense-making as the situation comes up, as interpretive researchers do not assume dependent and independent variables but rather try to comprehend phenomena based on the meaning people give to them (Myers, 2009, p.38). In most cases, a constructivist worldview is mainly evident in most phenomenological studies where individuals explain their experiences of a particular phenomenon. From an interpretive point of view which emphasizes that reality is socially constructed as well as single events having multiple realities, this research fits within the qualitative methodologies (Benner, 2008). Interpretive researchers strive to view phenomena through the meanings that people attach to them as they believe that access to reality that is socially constructed is made possible through social constructions like shared meanings, language, consciousness and instruments (Myers, 2009). This study will be adopting an interpretive research philosophy as it involves understanding the phenomena based on people's experiences.

The rationale for choosing interpretivist research philosophy

Interpretive researchers place their focus more on context as they want to understand the meaning of a phenomenon which explains the situation to make something out of it. This constructivist paradigm often manifests in phenomenological studies, whereby individuals describe their personal experiences. This method of research helps the researcher to understand the context in which an individual took a decision. This can only be achieved by getting into deeper levels of discussion using questioning strategy in speaking to the persons involved, which are made possible by conducting semi-structured interviews. Interpretive

research asserts reality to be socially constructed, meaning different interpretations can emerge from a single event Merriam (2009). Understanding the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students which have to do with their lived experiences and how these individuals perceive this issue can be made possible by employing the interpretive research philosophy.

4.2.3 Axiology

In axiology, the beliefs and values of the participant are taken into consideration to help construct a reality. Axiology addresses the nature of ethical behaviour and is known to be the term that covers the philosophy of values (Hiles, 2012). Therefore, it is the level the researcher's values impact the research process. While in philosophy, axiology refers to what the researcher believes is valuable and ethical, it also guides the researcher's decision-making process (Killam, 2013). In the process of inquiry, there should be a balance between the values of the researcher and the ethical considerations while carrying out research. On this note, the researcher remains detached and stays neutral on the subject.

 Creswell & Poth (2018) argued that both quantitative and qualitative researchers bring value to a study, but the qualitative researcher makes known their values in the study. Further emphasised that the inquirers in a qualitative study acknowledge this particular set of value while reporting it, they also make known values and biases. While axiology addresses ethical behaviour, it also guides the researcher when taking a decision and balances the researcher's value and the ethical considerations in the study (Killam, 2013).

Table 3.1: The philosophical stance of this research summarised in the table illustrated below.

Philosophical stance	
Ontology 'concerned with the nature of reality'. "What exists? What is true? How can we sort existing things?"	Multiple reality
Epistemology 'What is knowledge?' 'What are the sources and limits of knowledge?' 'how is knowledge acquired?' 'how do we know what we know?'	Interpretivism/Social Constructivism
Methodology	Phenomenology

4.2.4 Deductive Reasoning

The relationship between theory and social research is represented in a deductive theory. The researcher deduces a hypothesis drawn from theoretical ideas and what is known in a particular domain (Bryman, 2016). However, whatever is found must be subjected to empirical scrutiny. Reasoning involves the process of drawing conclusions which are used to ground various approaches in social science research. Deductive reasoning starts with a general understanding of a phenomenon and moves to more specific data (Nickerson, 2012). This type of reasoning commences with broad theories about the social world and moves on to break down to hypotheses that are specific and can be tested. As illustrated in quantitative research which begins with a theory, reduced to hypotheses which can be tested to support or

disagree with the initial theory of the study (O'Leary, 2007). This form of reasoning is used to substantiate theory after the data has been collected, and the results analysed to ascertain if it supports the theory.

4.2.5. Inductive Reasoning

The inductive reasoning is the opposite of deductive reasoning as the researcher hypothesizes his or her findings based on the theory that prompted the research. Creswell (2013, p.45) suggested that "qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the "bottom-up", by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information". Inductive reasoning begins with a question and proceeds to data collection (O'Leary, 2007). It commences with collection of specific data such as observations, interviews or field notes which may focus on an event or a single community and moves towards identifying larger patterns to derive more generalized theories or better comprehension of the phenomena been studied. In inductive reasoning rather than attempting to accept a hypothesis, the researcher is open to different possibilities which aim at coming forth with results to explain the phenomena.

4.3 Qualitative Research

The methodological framework for this research is informed by a qualitative research method which is devised to aid researchers to have an idea as to why people act the way they do (Myers, 2013). With the research philosophy identified, a qualitative design is the most appropriate for this study as it avails the researcher the opportunity to conduct an in-depth study of the research participants' experiences and the multiple meanings they attach to their academic demands and individual lives. Making use of a qualitative research approach will provide a means to explore the work-life balance experiences and the perceptions of these international PhD students. Furthermore, qualitative research from the participant's point of view tries to comprehend human behaviour and phenomenon. In qualitative research, the researcher is conscious of the nature of reality been socially constructed and situated within the context of the study which encompasses the participants, research setting and the data collected (Yates & Leggett, 2016). It is conducted when there is a need to explore an issue or a problem. When the need arises to have a detailed understanding of a complex issue, qualitative research comes in handy. Since quantitative research is linked to causal models

and theories which illustrates a general view of an issue without explaining the process the individuals experience the phenomenon nor why they responded the way they did, the qualitative research is carried out as a follow up to these linkages.

This study is aimed at capturing the work-life experiences of international PhD students; hence quantitative research may not be able to capture vital issues like gender differences as well as individual differences. Summing up the data collected to a statistical mean might be ignoring the exceptional information the participant brings to the study. The qualitative research as a research strategy is generally inductivist, constructionist and interpretivist. However, qualitative researchers do not always subscribe to the three features (Bryman, 2016). It is multimethod in focus as it involves using an interpretive and naturalistic approach in observing its subject matter. This implies that a qualitative researcher study things in their natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) which helps to make meaning of the subject being studied as well as interpret the phenomena and the meaning it brings to people in question (Trumbull, 2005).

Additionally, Saunders & Townsend (2016); Eby, Hurst & Butts (2009) suggested that qualitative interviews tend to give insight into rich account and aids to make sense of complex realities while offering ecological validity. Hence, Creswell (2013) argued that qualitative research starts with assumptions and utilises either an interpretive or theoretical framework. Either of these frameworks informs the research study while addressing the meaning people attach to a social or human problem. In carrying out qualitative research, the studies involve the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experiences, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual text (Trumbull, 2005, p.101). The qualitative approach is said to be inductive as it describes multiple realities, develop a deep understanding and capture everyday life and human perspectives. Usually, the focus of the research is to examine the full context and interact with participants while collecting data which in most cases are face-to-face from participants (Taylor, 2005).

In qualitative business research, the aim is to provide an opportunity for the researcher to pay attention to the intricacy of business-related phenomena in their contexts. This is because human decisions and actions can only be understood in a context which explains why an individual responded in the way they did (Myers, 2009). The only way this can be understood

is by talking to these individuals. In doing this, it creates new knowledge on how things work in a real-life context as well as why they work in certain ways thereby making meaning as to how they might be changed (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011). A qualitative researcher asserts that it is almost impossible to understand why an individual took action or why an incident took place in a setting without speaking about it with the people involved (Myers, 2013). However, the aim of understanding a phenomenon from the participant's point of view as well as its particular social and institutional context is lost when the textual data (data obtained from words) is quantified (Myers, 2013). Qualitative research is unique in that it can find out the 'how' and 'why' of a particular issue better than quantitative research (Yates & Leggett, 2016; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Therefore, Reinecke, Arnold & Palazzo (2016) suggested that qualitative research moves inductively from data to theory while investigating domains and questions. In contrast, the quantitative research method requires great effort to devise hypotheses or get adequate data.

4. 3.1 Rationale for choosing qualitative research approach

Yin (2016) argued that the qualitative research method would aid the researcher to comprehend how the respondents or participants cope with their real-world settings. Therefore, another primary reason why a qualitative approach appeals to many is that it enables the researcher to conduct in-depth studies on a broad selection of subject matter from everyday life experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This method of research analysis presents a vast opportunity to choose topics of interest because other research methods are controlled by the inability to set up research conditions and unavailability of data. Therefore, Richards & Morse (2013) suggested that the use of qualitative research is as a result of the researcher wanting to discover the many-sided, unstructured data to learn about individuals' lived experiences.

This study intends to explore the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students by analysing the current institutional initiatives and societal support in place to help these group of students maintain a good work-life balance. In addition to this, socio-cultural factors will be investigated that might influence the work-life balance of these individuals. In-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with international PhD students to understand their experiences in the course of doing a PhD and how they maintain an excellent work-life

balance. Since this research will be relating to institutional initiatives and societal support and how the individual perceives it, the qualitative research method has been adopted.

4.3.2. Limitations of using a qualitative approach

Qualitative research has its limitations as it cannot be used to simplify a vast population and when a large data is involved, a quantitative method is better used (Myers, 2013). The sample size in qualitative methods that is usually smaller than the quantitative method makes it difficult to generalize the data gotten from the research participants. The observation method is used to conduct qualitative research. It is an unobtrusive and very flexible way to discover knowledge and obtain reliable results. This qualitative method is time-consuming, requires a lot of preparation and the availability of the researcher to visit the location where the incident occurred. But also the observation method is time-consuming as well as other qualitative methods like ethnography and in-depth interviews. In the selection of research participants in conducting in-depth interviews, participants have to be carefully selected to avoid bias.

4.4 Research Design

In the research design, the various qualitative research approaches will be considered, and the best research approach adopted, which will inform the study. It is vital to note that qualitative research means different things to different people, and there are methodological approaches in conducting qualitative research. Creswell & Poth (2018) outlined these methodological approaches and referred to them as the five primary qualitative research approach. These approaches are narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research and case study research. In narrative research, the researcher explores the life of an individual while the individual tells a story of their personal experiences. Narrative research commences with the participants expressing their lived experiences by telling individual stories. This process of qualitative research approach involves the selection of one or more individuals who are willing to share a life experience by telling personal stories.

The researcher here spends quality time with the participant while collecting their stories through some standard methods such as interviews and conversations. In some cases, some narrative inquirers make use of artefacts to trigger the telling of stories (Given, 2008). This information gathered by the researcher from the participant is retold by the researcher in the

form of narrative chronology (Creswell, 2014). The data collected from the narratives come as a combination of the participant's experiences and the view of the researcher. Denzin & Lincoln (2011, p.415) suggested that "narratives are socially constrained forms of actions, socially situated performances, ways of acting in and making sense of the world". However, narrative researchers often write in the first person hence emphasizing their narrative action.

Unlike the narrative research, which focuses on the life of an individual to retell their story, phenomenological research involves the researcher describing the lived experiences of participants about a particular phenomenon (Williams, 2007). In this case, different participants describe how they individually experience the phenomena been explored. The focus of phenomenological research is to describe what the participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. After the data collected from these individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, the researcher combines the different experiences of what the individual experienced and how they experienced it, which reflects in what the experience means to them (Moustakas, 1994). For grounded theory, the researcher develops a theory from data gathered from interacting with the participants (Williams, 2007). It usually commences with an initial coding of the data collected (Charma z & Bryant, 2008).

In grounded theory, it is expected that the theory has to emerge from the data collected rather than from previous research literature. An ethnographic research approach entails the researcher studying a pattern in terms of action, behaviour, the language of a particular cultural group over a long period. The collection of data here is often through interviews and observation. For a case study, a researcher aims to develop an in-depth analysis of a case which can be an event, process or activities. It could be for an individual or more as well as an organisation or more organisations. Collection of data could be restricted in terms of time and activity. The researcher is expected to gather detailed information using different procedures for data collection such as interviews, archival records, documentation, participant observation, direct observation and physical artefacts over some time. This study entailed exploring how different international PhD students experienced work-life balance as a phenomenon. This will involve the participants explaining how they were able to navigate through the academic process as an international PhD student from their point of view. In so doing, the focus will be on the participant's perception of work-life balance, and the study will attempt to answer the question of this experience. Therefore, this study will be adopting the phenomenological research approach because this research aims to capture participants'

experiences and examine how they make sense of their experiences in the phenomenon of work-life balance been studied.

4.4.1 Phenomenological research

Phenomenological research aids to explore the meaning of the lived experiences of people to identify the main essence of human experience or phenomena as described by research participants. The focus of the phenomenologist is to explain what participants who have experienced a phenomenon have in common. Phenomenology is the study of everyday lived experiences, and the meaning people attach to them (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). This research is focused on the experiences of these international PhD students' work-life balance; hence the phenomenological qualitative research approach has been adopted. Adams and Van Manen (2012) described phenomenology as "the reflective study of prereflective or lived experiences". In other words, it is "the careful and systematic reflective study of the lived experience" (Usher & Jackson, 2017). It is important to note that phenomenologists are dedicated to understanding what people's experiences are in the way and manner it occurred. They do not intend to develop a theory to explain the world. Instead, they aim at getting a more in-depth insight into an issue (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). In using a phenomenological qualitative research approach, the respondents can say it the way they experience a phenomenon. This method is suited for research that seeks to understand the respondents experience.

As a research design, phenomenology goes with disciplines that place a high value on understanding the patient/client experience. Seidman (2006) describes phenomenological interviews as one which focuses on the experiences of the participants and the meaning made out of such experiences. Adams and Van Manen's described phenomenology as "the reflective study of pre-reflective or lived experience'(Adams & Van Manen 2012, p.782).To say it somewhat differently, a main characteristic of the phenomenological tradition is that it is the study of the lifeworld as we immediately experience it, prereflectively, rather than as we conceptualize, theorize, categorize, or reflect on it". While phenomenological research aims at reducing the experiences the individual encounters to describe a universal essence, qualitative researchers identify a phenomenon as an object of human experience.

4.4.2 Rationale for adopting the phenomenology approach

Within this research in using a qualitative research method, a phenomenological approach will be used as it is most appropriate to gain insight into participants' lived experiences concerning the work-life balance experiences of being international PhD students in UK higher education. As a result of the qualitative nature of this study, there is no intention to generalise the work-life balance of international PhD students but to provide new insights to the work-family literature. This can be achieved by laying aside assumptions about participants experiences, listening to their account and gathering the required information.

4.4.3 Limitations and challenges of a phenomenological research

Although phenomenology provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by individuals, it can be restricted because of the streamlined nature of data collection. Data collection in phenomenological research involves either single or multiple interviews whereby the researcher can interview participants more than once if there are specific passages in the initial interview that was unclear and needs clarification (Englander, 2012). In this regard, Giorgi (2009) noted that it would be unjustifiable for the researcher to attempt making theoretical interpretations to clarify such areas during data analysis. Before conducting a phenomenological study, Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) suggested that the researcher must have a broader understanding and be able to identify the philosophical assumptions in their research. These concepts of these philosophical assumptions are abstract and not easily identified in a phenomenological study. Therefore, the researcher needs to select participants who have experienced the phenomena. Additionally, if the researcher has experienced the phenomenon been discussed or have a vague idea of the subject, it might be challenging to 'bracket' the personal experience of the researcher. Hence, to overcome this limitation, it is expected of the researcher to suspend whatever initial idea they had about the phenomena as the data collected may exceed what the researcher thinks they know.

4.5 Researcher's Role

In a phenomenological study, the qualitative researcher collects the data in the natural setting of the participants using various methods such as interviewing, case study, focus groups (Creswell, 2013). However (Moustakas, 1994) explained phenomenological research as one

in which the researcher has to go to the participants to get information about a phenomenon been studied, and go back again if the need arises to immerse oneself completely and have different points of view as no experience is ever finished or exhausted. Moustakas further emphasised that the process of completely immersing oneself is to take in what is offered without prior judgement or bias (p.65). Although this phenomenological study entailed I 'bracket' my personal experience, I acknowledge that some bias will exist in the study. As the researcher of the study, one of the bias I brought into the study revolves around me living the experience I was studying. Before this study, I had my ideas of the positive and negative experiences in maintaining a work-life balance. One of the assumptions I brought into the study as an insider researcher was the challenge of managing the limited time and the many demands. As an international PhD student, I am a wife and mother to two young kids. My spouse works full-time while I have to work part-time in a fast-paced supermarket and cater to the kids. In all of this, the demand for the limited time I had resulted in being stressed. However, as an international PhD student, I had to order my priority to complete my programme. The limited resource I had led to comprising in some aspects of my life leading to feelings of guilt and dissatisfaction. However, in the course of this study, I consciously focused on the lived experiences of the participants.

4.6 Recruiting Research Participants

In conducting qualitative research, individuals serve as a source of information as long as the researcher is not depending on existing research materials from past interviews carried out by others, documents or materials that have been archived (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The recruitment of research participants is a process where the researcher identifies a set of people who fit into the eligibility criteria for the study and invites them to take part in the study (Eide, 2012). These participants who meet up with the eligibility criteria also represent a source of rich information linked with the subject. Therefore, it will be necessary for the researcher to strive to identify a person, a group of people or an organisation that can take part in the study and their response will provide answers to address the research questions.

Using a sampling strategy and recruitment process guarantees, to a large extent, a maximum discovery and knowledge about the phenomena. Therefore, Saunders (2012), suggested that the selection of research participants should be based on the focus of the research to enable the researcher to meet up with the research aim as well as answer the research questions.

Castellan (2010) explains that participants interviewed in a qualitative interview are purposefully selected as they aid in the expansion of the developing theory. On the other hand, in several quantitative research, participants are randomly selected to ensure the characteristics of the subject appears in the same proportion as they exist in the total population (Castellan 2010. Pg 6). However, in non-probability sampling, purposive sampling is the most commonly used. The essence of purposive sampling is to have access to rich data that gives the researcher needed in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon.

The participants for this study were international PhD students in a teaching University in North-West England, United Kingdom. These students had to meet certain criteria to be selected for data collection: These criteria were; (a) The participants are international PhD students (Non-UK and Non-EU students); (b) Participant that pay the tuition fee for international PhD students. To carry out a phenomenological study, an important criterion used by the researcher in the selection of participants for the study should be individuals who have personally experienced the phenomenon. This implies that the selection of these PhD students should be individuals who have experienced work-life balance in the context of being an international PhD student. In this study, all participants selected for the study were international PhD students who had family responsibilities as well as academic demands and other aspects of their personal lives thereby meeting up with the selection criteria for the study. This selection was because individuals who have experienced this phenomenon as international PhD students should be able to give responses that answer the research questions, thereby filling up the research gap. In the process of data collection, the researcher being an international PhD student had relationships with other PhD students in the institution.

However, access to these international PhD students obtained through personal contacts and emails sent out to other PhD students explaining the nature of the research. This email stated the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study. The students who fall into the criteria of international PhD students will self-identify and respond to the email. The next process involved sending out the participant information sheet and a consent form to the students who responded to the email and confirmed that they were international PhD students. Therefore, the research participants were selected through purposive sampling to gather the information that will answer the research questions. Using purposive sampling for the study helps the

researcher to have access to cases that have rich information with the sole aim of gaining insight and understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Furthermore, the researcher also employed the use of snowball sampling by identifying research participants who were willing to volunteer to be a part of the study as recommended by other participants who had participated in the study. Snowball sampling depends on referrals from research participants who were interviewed, and these individuals are believed to have interest in the subject matter been explored and also willing to ask other people whom they feel fall into the inclusion criteria to participate in the study. Therefore, data was collected using interviews and conducted in locations chosen by the participants within the university environment. These interviews lasted for 45-60 minutes.

4.7 Sampling Techniques

Purposive and snowball sampling

In a qualitative study, sample selection is conducted in an organised manner (Tolley, Ulin, Mack, Robinson & Succop, 2016). The research questions guide the sample selection in a flexible yet systematic manner. One notable difference in sampling when conducting research is the issue of probability in quantitative research where each individual selected has a chance of being part of the sample size. However, in qualitative research, the sample size is smaller; it solely depends on non-probability sampling. A non-probability sampling involves the researcher using their judgement to choose the sample, and this is based on the participant meeting up with the eligibility criteria. The qualitative design usually explores in-depth, which counts for the reason why participants are carefully selected to give a comprehensive account of the subject. Therefore, Cassell (2015) argued that in conducting research, speaking with the right participants is essential in answering the research questions.

Additionally, Creswell & Poth (2018) stated that this group of people give the researcher information about the research problem. Hence, to determine the participants who will provide more details on the subject, sampling has to be done on purpose, which brings us to purposive sampling. To engage in purposive sampling implies that the researcher is strategic about the choices made in terms of selecting research participants and the research been conducted (Palys, 2012). In this regard, Schmidt & Brown (2019) suggested that researchers intentionally choose purposive sampling, but it also involves participants who are keen to tell their individual story and share their experiences. Purposive sampling aids to study different

experiences while making meaning out of the process. The sampling strategy used by the researcher must have a connection to the research objectives of the study. The use of purposive sampling in this research is to provide information-rich cases that focus on the purpose of research. There is no guideline for deciding on the sample size in non-probability sampling as the size depends on the idea of saturation. Therefore saturation occurs when there is no new theme or information in the process of data collection.

In research to get more participants, a snowball strategy is applied. This process is to help reduce one of the limitations in qualitative research where previous studies have cited the sample size as a limitation. Morgan (2012) argued that snowball sampling utilizes a small number of initial research participants to nominate other participants. As a sampling strategy, snowball sampling encourages the increase in sample size as it involves a research participant recommending another individual that fits into the eligibility criteria (Cassell, 2015 p.35). Initially, the participant who makes the recommendation is one who has rich information about the subject been explored and know people who know other people who can also provide rich information of the issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.159). This sampling strategy is a productive way of meeting up with the criteria of purposive sampling by using the influence of initial research participants to identify other participants who meet up with the eligibility criteria. This process of getting new participants might go several rounds. The first phase of the data collection for this study commenced with conducting twenty-six semi-structured interviews which explored the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students.

4.8 Access

The issue of gaining access when conducting qualitative research is significant and linked to the results obtained from doing the research. Therefore, business research entails getting the required permission from the gatekeeper as this person has the authority to either give or deny access. The gatekeeper decides the conditions upon which the research will be conducted. In gaining access, the responsibility of the researcher is to assure the gatekeeper and participants on how the data will be safeguarded. When this information is given to the participants, they can make an informed decision to take part in the study or not. It is at this point that participants give written consent, and the researcher follows all ethical consideration. However, this study did not require going through a gatekeeper as the

researcher had access to the participants through personal contacts. An email was sent out explaining the nature of the research and stating the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The students who fell into the inclusion criteria, self-identified and responded to the email confirming to be international PhD students and were also willing to take part in the research.

4.8 Ethical considerations

It is important to note that it is the responsibility of a researcher to ensure that the research participants are protected from any potential harm while taking part in the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Hence, Creswell (2013) suggested that in any research involving human subjects, ethical issues are fundamental. These issues arise in the course of the study at different stages. However, research institutions have boards where the members review the research proposal and ethical approval given before the commencement of data collection. Therefore, to safeguard the rights of the participants, ethical approval was obtained from the Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) ethics committee before the collection of data. The data collection process started with semi-structured interviews. The research participants were given participant information sheets to have a general overview of what the entire study was all about. In conducting this research, it is vital to follow all ethical steps and considerations. This process involves giving out consent forms to the participants with the objectives of the research clearly stated. O'Keeffe et al. (2016) argued that it is essential to make it clear to the participants that they are not under any obligation to take part if they do not wish to continue. The participant has to be assured that every information given out in the course of the interview will be treated with strict confidentiality and destroyed after the study is completed. It is also important to let participants know they are free to expand on an issue if they feel the need to do so.

These consent forms were signed before the commencement of the interviews. In these forms, they were made to understand they are being recorded and as well as note-taking. Therefore, there might be verbatim quotes in the interpretation of data, but the participants would not be identified from the quotations used. It is essential to consider the ethical issues involved when carrying out a study that includes the colleagues of the researcher, issues that had to do with the confidentiality, anonymity and ownership of data should be carefully handled. Thus, the researcher has to ensure that the research participants understand clearly the consenting as the implications of signing a consent form. However, the participants could

withdraw from the study at any time if they do not feel comfortable to continue with the study. The researcher ensured to maintain ethicality by using pseudonyms for each participant as this is to protect the privacy of the individual. Additionally, every data collected were secured in password-protected computers at the University. The researcher also carried out the transcribing of the transcripts from the interviews. The interview was strictly conducted based on the conditions outlined in the participant information sheet and consent form.

4.9 Data collection

The method employed in the collection of data solely depends on the nature of the research and the ability to give answers to the research questions. However, this will determine if the researcher will use one method to collect data or combine several techniques. Qualitative researchers are particular about validity that gives credence to the research. Thus, there are various methods used in collecting data in qualitative research; however, in this study, interviews have been used in the data collection process. This method will aid to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject matter.

4.9.1 Interviews

In qualitative research, the use of interviews serves as a means of collecting primary data which can extract valuable information directly from the research participants. Brinkmann (2012) described interviewing as a social interaction amongst people which happens through a conversation. Qualitative researchers in the course of conducting an interview tend to generate some form of speech in which they ask the participants open-ended questions (Hatch, 2002). This encourages the participants to elaborate their perspective, which is unique, and while listening to the researcher, get other clues which disclose how to understand their world. To extract directly from the research participant valuable rich information, conducting an interview clarifies many assumptions. It gives room to the researcher to probe for more information that will be useful for the study.

Similarly, Juniper, Walsh, Richardson & Morley (2012) in their research on evaluating the well-being of PhD students agreed with other scholars. Juniper et al. agreed with scholars who suggested that the best way to determine the well-being of an individual is to ask such individuals directly rather than assuming based on observing the individual. Since this study has to do with the lived experiences of international PhD students, an in-depth interview will avail the researcher the opportunity to record accurately from an individual perspective on

their work-life balance experiences. The essence of conducting an interview is to understand the research topic from a different perspective and understand how and why the research participants came to that conclusion.

Thus, the in-depth interviews help to capture perceptions, feelings, and passion of the research participant. These interviews can be unstructured, structured, semi-structured interviews. This study used the semi-structured interview as it focused on exploring the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students.

4.9.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured method of conducting in-depth interviews is a popular method of data collection used in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Hence, (Ayres (2012) described a semi-structured interview as a qualitative data collection strategy whereby the researcher asks the participants some set of open-ended questions which has no fixed range of responses. Furthermore, in a semi-structured interview, the researcher comes with an interview guide based on the defined research purpose, to answer the research questions of the study. This entails that the interviewer may follow the guide or move back and forth based on the response of the participant, and the interview being participant-led (Roulston and Choi, 2018). This interview guide is to ensure that the researcher has a working structure which ensures that all areas of interest are covered.

This type of interview usually commences with the interviewer asking initial questions that act as a guide and gets a lead from the response of the participant and other areas which may require further probing in the course of the interview. The researcher does not ask any form of leading questions or provide any information which might influence the participant's further response. Those initial questions act as a guide, developed in line with the research purpose and the literature review, which covers that aspect of research. These types of interviews are less rigid when compared to the use of questionnaires as the researcher has questions and can digress a bit and get more information from the respondent (Mackey and Gass, 2015). Due to the in-depth nature of a semi-structured interview, the researcher has some form of control in the path the conversation takes as well as the content. It does not restrict the response of the participants as long as the direction taken is related to the phenomena (Cook, 2012).

Therefore, in conducting a semi-structured interview which is usually an interactive session, the researcher can extract further data if the previous response was unclear or incomplete. There are cases whereby the participants feel more comfortable to speak about the opinions that enable them to provide comprehensive answers, with their consent and the data protection act in place. Therefore, Rubin and Rubin (2012) argued that it is essential to develop excellent interpersonal skills when conducting a semi-structured interview to build a good rapport and trust with the research participant to yield a positive outcome since the study is a focus on their personal experiences. The researcher set aside every initial assumption and preconceptions about the subject to reduce bias while capturing every issue the participant brought up in the interview. In doing this, the researcher tries to 'bracket' him/herself from the entire research interview.

The interview sessions lasted between 45-60 minutes with audio recording and note-taking. Twenty-six interviews occurred at the University environment of the participants. It took place in quiet rooms within the university environment chosen by the participants to limit any form of the noise of disruption in the course of the interview. Upon commencement of the interview, demographic questions such as age range, gender, marital status, year of study, discipline and nationality were asked in line with the literature review, the research aims and objectives. The participants were given an overview of the research and encouraged to ask further questions if the need arises. Even though the participants had a participant information sheet and the consent form, their consent was sought to record the interview and asked to sign the consent form. The questions in the interview guide were asked and other follow-up questions based on the responses of the participants.

4.9.1.2 Limitations of semi-structured interviews

Even though a semi-structured interview has become one of the commonly used methods of data collection in qualitative because of its flexibility and adaptability, it still has its limitations. Adams (2015) argued that conducting a semi-structured interview requires the expertise of the researcher to come into play, and therefore it can be time-consuming and labour-intensive too. Additionally, the rigour of preparing for the interviews, conducting and analysing the data is not a quick process and calls for having adequate time to ensure the process go through the right procedures. Therefore, the researcher should be knowledgeable

about the process of interviewing. Additionally, the interviewer may not be capable of conducting candid interviews, which makes this process prone to possible bias.

4.10 Data Analysis (Thematic Analysis)

In the preparation of the data for analysis, the recording of the interviews was transcribed verbatim. While transcribing, the immersion of the researcher into the data takes place in preparation to analyse the data. Thematic analysis will be used in analysing the data for this study. This method of data analysis fits this research in that a thematic analysis involves looking for familiar reoccurring themes and patterns within a data. It provides insight into the phenomenon been studied (Hawkins, 2018). While identifying, analysing and reporting reoccurring themes and patterns, a thematic analysis minimally organizes and describes the data set in detail (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.79). In this regards, King & Brooks (2019) argued that as a form of qualitative data analysis that focuses primarily on organising and making interpretation of the themes into textual data, the themes identified characterise particular experiences of the participants which the researcher finds relevant to answer the research question.

Uncovering recurring themes within the data indicates areas linked to the phenomenon. After the completion of the interviews, significant themes from the data collected analytically represented the expressions of these international PhD students. While trying to analyse the findings and identifying reoccurring themes, transparency will be ensured while focusing on the work-life balance experiences of these international PhD students, which is the purpose of this study. However, identifying these themes occurred at different times in the course of the interview. Before the transcription, initial consideration of findings commenced in the interaction during the interview and a reflective process at the end of each interview (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). It is therefore essential to be completely transparent as a researcher and avoid picking themes to suit any biased opinion about the phenomenon. In this regard, the findings were systematically analysed to identify significant themes. Following the phases described by Braun & Clarke (2006) in doing a thematic analysis and supporting each phase with my research, the different phases have been outlined below:

Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data

The collection of this data underwent an interactive session which implied a prior knowledge of data before the analysis commenced. Therefore, through repeated reading of the data, there was a familiarisation of the data. The note-taking process in the course of the interview served as reflective notes after the data collection. This phase was made possible by immersing oneself in the data and repeated listening of what these international PhD students reported in the course of the interview of their work-life experiences.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

This phase involves coming up with an initial list of ideas and organising them into meaningful groups. In generating initial codes, the language used brings meaning to the phenomenon. Within this research, the work-life balance experiences of these international PhD students came in different aspects and was disclosed in the course of the interview. Therefore, notes were made on the texts which had potentials.

Phase 3: Searching the theme

After the initial coding and a list of different codes has been identified across the data set, then the sorting of the themes occurred. The process involves bringing together of similar codes to form the central theme. In this study, this phase involved linking the similar codes that were combined to form the main theme and connecting it with the research objective of the study.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

At this point of doing a thematic analysis, most of the codes that formed a theme might not be a theme as a result of inadequate data to support them. Most of the different themes might need to be put together to form a theme and others separated into different themes. While reviewing the themes, the researcher goes through the transcripts in search of new themes. Due to the flexibility of this study, participants priorities were considered, making room for new areas revealed by the participants during the interview. This openness was needed because of the unpredicted findings that emerged in the course of the study.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

This aspect of a thematic analysis begins with the defining and refining of the themes that will be analysed. It is at this point that the essence of each theme is determined and what

aspect of data it captures. Each related theme connects to the research objectives of the study. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the themes are clear without covering too much. In this study, the data have been analysed and came up with several themes, used to develop a working title.

Phase 6: Producing the report

Upon coming up with fully worked out themes, then the analysis and final write up of the study commence. This final stage entails using the data collected to tell a story to convince the reader of the validity of the report. This process should be concise and coherent, with data extracts, to tell a story within and across the themes. Therefore while including the data, it should go beyond a narrative and make an argument while linking it to your research question. In the discussion chapter (chapter six) of this study, findings of this study, and quotes from these international PhD students have been put out to illustrate how they can balance their academic demands and personal life.

4.10.1 Limitations of Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis as a method of analysis like any other method of analysis has some limitations. Because of the limited studies on thematic analysis, new researchers have that feeling of uncertainty to conduct rigorous research (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Therefore, Hawkins (2018) argued that in the development of themes, most researchers provide themes that lack depth. The use of the language content of the interview protocol as themes fails to give a proper thematic analysis of the themes across the data. Furthermore, another limitation associated with the use of thematic analysis is failing to come up with an analytic point to contribute to the research question instead the researcher sticks to just presentation of the information provided by the participants. While thematic analysis has is a flexible method of data analysis used in different ways, it is not restricted to any form of a theoretical framework.

4.11 Evaluating Quality in the research process

Validity and Reliability

Following the appropriate methods for this study and the data analysis methods, it is essential to identify steps and approaches taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, its

credibility and reliability. Creswell (2014), suggested that validation of findings occur in the entire phase of the research. In qualitative research, the validity of the research is one of the strengths of doing qualitative research used to check if the results or findings are correct judging from the perspective of the researcher, the participant as well as the one who will read the account. To ensure the validity of a study, the findings of the research are checked for accuracy using other procedures. On the other hand, the reliability of the study occurs when the researcher's approach is consistent through other research. Therefore there are various strategies the researcher could employ to check for validity in research. Creswell and Creswell (2018), suggested that the multiple validity procedures should be used to aid the researcher's ability to ensure the accuracy of the findings as well as the reader of the findings. These authors came up with some strategies to check the accuracy of findings which are: triangulation, member checking, rich thick description, reflexivity, negative information, prolonged time in the field, peer briefing, external auditor.

While checking if the approaches used in research are reliable, some procedures should be employed, such as: reviewing the transcripts, wrong definition of codes, cross-checking of codes. Although several processes have been listed that can be used to ensure validity and reliability in research, this study will be employing the use of member checking to ensure the validity of the study. For the reliability of the study, transcripts will be checked to rule out any mistake during data transcription. Also, the reliability of the study was ensured by continuously linking the data and the codes while making notes. While reliability is the extent to which the findings made in research can be replicated, it is essential to know if the process will yield the same result if repeated.

Member Checking

In ensuring quality in the research process, the researcher can ask for the participants' views on the interpreted data. This process involves taking the data collected, analysis, the interpretation and the conclusions back to the participants to get their opinions on the accuracy and the credibility of the account. Lincoln & Guba (1985) argued that the process of member checking is the most critical technique for ensuring and establishing credibility. Therefore it is essential to ask participants to go through a rough draft of the researcher's work and if necessary, provide alternative language or interpretations. For this study, the researcher ensured to check with the participants on the main themes that emerged from the data which described their work-life balance experiences. Although different words may have

been used, the participants were able to recognise their experience in the interpretation of data.

Conclusion

The concept of using semi-structured interviews to collect the data for this study was to capture the personal experiences of these individuals. This was followed by transcribing and analysing the data which commenced by using thematic analysis to classify the themes and sub-themes. Therefore the themes generated were: motivation as a major driving force, quality of education contributed to their choice to come to the UK, Financial constraint, family support has been helpful, organisational support, coping strategies and conflict. The latter stage of the analysis involved using the findings from the semi-structured interview, which have been grouped into themes and subthemes and linking them to the transcripts to create a channel of communication. In doing this, the themes and findings create a clearer picture of the phenomenon discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This interpretive phenomenological study aims to understand the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students. The study will explore the coping strategies these students have adopted to maintain a balance between their academic demands and their personal lives, what support and initiatives are in place to enable them to complete their PhD programme and become the future of academia. In the previous chapter, the methodological approaches of this study have been outlined, the data collection process was the semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings in response to the research questions of the study. In this chapter, the findings from the interviews will be explored, as well as information gathered from documents. While exploring the quotes from the participants in the course of the interview, some facts from the existing literature will be discussed briefly.

The phenomenology commences with interviewing the participants where they shared their lived experiences of being an international PhD student. Since the purpose of the research is to also understand the initiatives in place to support their study, a document analysis will be conducted to corroborate evidence and give credibility to the study. This chapter will focus on answering the research questions while a detailed link to existing literature will be further elaborated in the discussion chapter. For this study, 26 international PhD students (12 males and 14 females) were interviewed in the target institution. The age range of the participants was between 20 and 55. At the time of the study, eleven participants were married, fifteen were single. Amongst these 26 participants, 10 had children, 16 had no child. According to their year of study, 6 of the participants were in their 1st year of study, 6 of them were in their 2nd year of study, 3 of them were in their 3rd year, 9 of them in their 4th year and 2 in their 5th year.

These participants were from different countries, geographically and culturally diverse and from different disciplines within the institution. This demography is clearly shown in the table below, which summarises the demographic information of the participants. The other

tables also points out to the different dimensions which had an impact on the work-life balance experiences of these international PhD students.

Table 4.1: A table illustrating the gender, number of children and marital status of these international students.

Participant	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Number of Children
P1	35-40	Male	Married	Yes
P2	30-35	Female	Single	No
P3	35-40	Female	Single	No
P4	30-35	Female	Married	No
P5	30-35	Female	Married	Yes
P6	40-45	Male	Married	Yes
P7	30-35	Female	Married	Yes
P8	50-55	Male	Married	Yes
P9	30-35	Male	Married	Yes
P10	25-30	Male	Single	No
P11	30-35	Female	Single	No
P12	20-25	Female	Single	No
P13	30-35	Male	Single	No
P14	30-35	Female	Single	No
P15	30-35	Female	Married	Yes
P16	30-35	Male	Married	Yes
P17	30-35	Male	Single	No
P18	30-35	Male	Single	No
P19	30-35	Male	Single	No
P20	35-40	Female	Married	Yes
P21	35-40	Male	Single	No
P22	40-45	Female	Married	Yes
P23	25-30	Female	Single	No
P24	35-40	Female	Single	No
P25	25-30	Male	Single	No
P26	25-30	Female	Single	No

Table 4.2: A table illustrating the nationality and the type of funding for these international PhD students.

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Sponsorship
P1	35-40	Male	African	Self-funded
P2	30-35	Female	African	Self-funded
P3	35-40	Female	Asian	Sponsored
P4	30-35	Female	Asian	Self-funded
P5	30-35	Female	African	Sponsored
P6	40-45	Male	African	Sponsored
P7	30-35	Female	African	Sponsored
P8	50-55	Male	African	Sponsored
P9	30-35	Male	African	Self-funded
P10	25-30	Male	African	Part-sponsored
P11	30-35	Female	Asian	Sponsored
P12	20-25	Female	Asian	Sponsored
P13	30-35	Male	Asian	Sponsored
P14	30-35	Female	African	Self-funded
P15	30-35	Female	African	Self-funded
P16	30-35	Male	African	Self-funded
P17	30-35	Male	Asian	Self-funded
P18	30-35	Male	Asian	Self-funded
P19	30-35	Male	African	Self-funded
P20	35-40	Female	Asian	Sponsored
P21	35-40	Male	Asian	Sponsored
P22	40-45	Female	Asian	Sponsored
P23	25-30	Female	Asian	Self-funded
P24	35-40	Female	Asian	Sponsored
P25	25-30	Male	African	Sponsored
P26	25-30	Female	African	Part-sponsored

Table 4.3: A table illustrating the course of study, funding and year of study

Participant	Age	Gender	Department	Sponsorship	Year of study
P1	35-40	Male	Business Management	Self-funded	1st
P2	30-35	Female	Business Management	Self-funded	3rd
P3	35-40	Female	Business Management	Sponsored	4th
P4	30-35	Female	Business Management	Self-funded	1st
P5	30-35	Female	Linguistics	Sponsored	4th
P6	40-45	Male	Computer Science	Sponsored	3rd
P7	30-35	Female	Linguistics	Sponsored	5th
P8	50-55	Male	Business Management	Sponsored	1st
P9	30-35	Male	Marine Engineering	Self-funded	4th
P10	25-30	Male	Computer Science	Part-sponsored	4th
P11	30-35	Female	Computer Science	Sponsored	2nd
P12	20-25	Female	Mathematics	Sponsored	4th
P13	30-35	Male	Information Systems and Management Studies	Sponsored	2nd
P14	30-35	Female	Business Management	Self-funded	4th
P15	30-35	Female	Business Management	Self-funded	3rd
P16	30-35	Male	Engineering	Self-funded	1st
P17	30-35	Male	Business Management	Self-funded	2nd
P18	30-35	Male	Marketing	Self-funded	1st
P19	30-35	Male	Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences	Self-funded	1st
P20	35-40	Female	Chemistry	Sponsored	2nd
P21	35-40	Male	Toxicology	Sponsored	2nd
P22	40-45	Female	Business Management	Sponsored	5th
P23	25-30	Female	Human Resource Development	Self-funded	2nd
P24	35-40	Female	Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences	Sponsored	4th
P25	25-30	Male	Electrical Engineering	Sponsored	4th
P26	25-30	Female	Clinical Research	Part-sponsored	4th

After transcribing the interview transcripts, themes and sub-themes were generated which emerged from the responses of the participants: The themes generated in response to the research questions were: Financial constraint a major concern, language barrier, family support has been helpful, organisational support, coping strategies have been developed, perceptions to support available. However other themes emerged from this study, and they were: motivation as a major driving force, quality of education contributed to their choice to come to the UK. In table 3 below, is a presentation of the summary of the themes and the subthemes. Each subtheme is explained by including quotes from the participants to illustrate what each subtheme meant to the individuals.

In response to the first research question on the challenges international PhD students experience in maintaining a work-life balance, the following themes were developed:

'Financial constraints' emerged as one of the significant factors that have an impact on the work-life balance of international PhD students. Due to the demands that come with doing a PhD in terms of financial obligations, other sub-themes emerged from this theme, and they are: Self-funding, PhD is finance intensive hence part-time work outside the university is a distraction, lack of teaching assistantship roles.

'Language barrier' was the second theme that emerged from the data collected as a significant challenge faced when the international PhD students tried to balance their academic demands and personal life. Inability to communicate properly and the impact this challenge had on their research output.

Research question two, which is concerned with how the international PhD students maintain a balance between academic demands (work) and personal life was answered with the theme coping strategy.

Therefore, 'coping strategy' emerged as the third theme, which explores how the participants pull through their studies despite the challenges. The table above clearly indicated that most of these participants were at different levels of their studies. The sub-themes that emerged from this theme are: Planning and working with a schedule, meditation (Yoga sessions), prioritising, study daily and weekends for personal life (gym and outing), holidays and sightseeing.

The third research question which explored the existing institutional and societal support available to international PhD students was answered with the themes below:

'Organisational support' emerged as the fourth theme, which explored what the institution has put in place to support the work-life balance of these participants. The sub-themes that emerged are supportive supervisors, workshops and seminars, colleagues (mentors).

'Family support' is the fifth theme to emerge from this study as the participants attributed the progress they had made in the course of their research to the support they get from their various families. The sub-themes are: bonding with children is therapeutic, moral and financial support, supportive spouse and family.

The final research question which had to with the extent to which the institutional initiatives and societal support influenced the work-life balance of International PhD students, had the following themes below:

'Perceptions towards the available support' emerged as the sixth theme explaining their personal views to the support made available to them. Sub-themes that emerged from this theme are: unable to maintain a balance (conflict), contemplated dropping out, lack of experience for the intellectual community (teaching experience) and fear of the unknown, non-person centred workshops.

Besides the themes that emerged from the responses of the participants that address the research questions, other themes emerged and have been included as they are essential to the experiences of these international PhD students. The themes were motivation and UK as a choice place of study.

'Motivation' reflected that the participants were motivated and passionate about their area of research. The sub-themes are bright future and career prospect, impact in the area of research, the to attain the highest level in education, personal and career development, career progression, novelty, a career in academics, opportunity to travel.

'The UK as a choice place of study' was another theme that emerged which explained why the participants chose to study in the UK. The sub-themes that emerged from this theme are: high standard of learning, English speaking country, recognised degree worldwide, short duration of the study, quality of research.

Table 4.4: A table showing the themes and subthemes

Themes	Sub-themes
Financial constraints	Self-funded Teaching roles in the university to help cover expenses Part-time work outside the university is a distraction
Language barrier	Inability to communicate Impact on research output
Coping strategies	Set out a plan and work with a schedule Meditation (Yoga sessions) Prioritising Study daily and weekends for my personal life(gym and outing) Holidays and sightseeing.
Family support has been very helpful	Bonding with children is therapeutic Moral and financial support from siblings Supportive spouse and family
Organisational support	Supportive supervisors Workshops and seminars Colleagues
Perception to support available	Unable to maintain a balance (conflict) Struggled with balancing and contemplated dropping out Struggled with balancing and contemplated dropping out Lack of experience for the intellectual community (teaching experience) Non-person centred workshops

Motivation and Passion	Bright future and career prospect
	Make an impact in the area of research
	Achieve the highest level of education
	Personal and career development
	Career progression
	Dream and Aspiration
	Start a career in academia
	Study abroad and the opportunity to travel
The UK as a choice place of study	Standard of learning
	English speaking country
	Recognised degree worldwide
	Duration of study is short
	Quality of research

Amongst the participants, motivation was consistent between all of them and account for the main reason why they stayed on the PhD programme irrespective of their work-life balance experiences. The motivation they had to do a PhD and the passion for what they were doing reflected other themes that emerged in the course of the data collection.

In response to the questions about the challenges international PhD students experience in maintaining the right work-life balance between their academic demands and their personal lives. Most of these students had expressed their lack of resources and provided descriptions that could be interpreted as financial constraints. This lack of funds was shown in other sub-themes which will be described below

5.2 Theme 1-Financial constraints

As international PhD students, they all agreed that funding is vital in doing a PhD. While most of these students got some form of financing for their PhD studies, others had to bear the cost of funding the programme. The issue of financial constraint was common amongst the participant who did not have any form of funding towards their PhD. This group of participants earlier stated that completion of PhD came with better career prospects, hence the

desire to push through the financial demands of the programme irrespective of the difficulty that entails. Other sub-themes emerged from this theme and would be described below.

Self-funding

The data collected from this study indicated that of all the participants, 11 out of the 26 were self-funded, 2 of them were partly sponsored, 13 were sponsored as illustrated in table 4.2 and 4.3 respectively. However, the participants who were self-funded expressed their concerns. In expressing his views on being self-funded, P1 asserted:

'As an international student, if you are not under the sponsorship of a government or an organisation, it can be quite demanding and overwhelming for your programme. ....Of course, we know its mandatory to pay your fees. So it's my wish that one gets sponsorship along the line also because of the time limit that is related to international students in terms of their visa and also the number of hours to work and earn money to support yourself'.

This case seems to be a dominant case for all the self-funded international PhD student, and this could be seen from their expressions. P2 expressed her opinion and experience of being a self-funded international PhD student. She said:

'.......a full-time international PhD student, that is self-funded struggles financially because there might be emergencies that could really have an impact on your income and there isn't any form of support....... my Dad was very sick and a close relative of mine. A lot of funds had to go towards medical bills upkeep for the person and paralysis was also involved...... I got sanctioned by the university. This experiences can be draining both mentally and psychologically and affected my balance in meeting up with my academic demands and personal life.

Still emphasizing on the impact of finances on the work-life balance of International PhD students P4 expressed her views.

'Another pressing issue is tuition; the fee is too much for international students. I think it should be reduced by 30%. It's not nice that the university does not grant any funding. It is also not nice that home students are paying very little, and international students are paying so much.

P15, in describing her experiences, had this to say.

'My greatest challenge I will say is finances. As a self-funded student, I pay so much. The part-time job I do has got no relevance with my career or adding any value to it,

but that is what I can lay my hands on to do at the moment yet it cannot meet up with paying the bills.

P17 also expressed his thoughts and attributed his most significant challenge to financial constraints.

'………to maintain financial stability is a challenge. I think being a self-funded PhD student is one of the biggest financial challenges that I came across to research in the UK context.

P19 also emphasized how financial constraints have impacted on him.

'Having to pay for everything sustaining me and limited time/ hour allocated to international students to work and earn some money to assist in the financial demands of the programme.

Part-time work outside the university is a distraction

Most of the participants yet to start a career in academia explained the importance of gaining teaching experience in the course of their PhD studies. Various benefits come with this, which include taking advantage of the opportunity which serves as a training ground and speaks well of the individual's experience in teaching. Therefore, in addition to obtaining a doctoral degree as an essential requirement for a great start in a career in academia, the teaching experience gained in the process of doing a PhD makes the entire process a lot easier. Besides the teaching experience gained, it also entails earning some funds and been around the same location where you can work on your research. To a great extent, these roles can be of tremendous help to the self-funded students and generally to every other international PhD student looking forward to a new start in their academic career. Most of the participants expressed their desire to get a job role within the university to enable them to be in the school environment and talk more to people who will give relevant information about their research. This P4 expressed when she said:

'I would like to do some teaching but am waiting for the training programme …….. but right now I work in the hotel as a receptionist and do that on weekends... It is not in any way

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affecting my academic responsibilities………….. But the downside of it is the inability to gain that teaching experience and earn something better.

These participants expressed their opinion that their roles outside the university have in no way affected their work-life balance. Still, the primary concern is the advantage the students gets when employed within the institution both financially and gaining relevant work experience. P2 explained when she said:

'Well, I will say the area of paid work I do is a minimum of 20 hours; that way, it is not difficult to cope with or to combine it with study. The thing is that it gives some kind of funding and a little bit of support and its not that demanding. I think the most challenge is not having an opportunity to work in the institution to help ease the financial pressure because it's quite expensive to study for a PhD and a major downside of studying.

Similarly, P8 commented and said

'....the institution should encourage part-time teaching, and the students paid stipends to support them financially. With financial stability, it helps to balance your mind and your level of concentration.

5.3 Theme 2- Language barrier

Most of the research participants from non-speaking English countries attributed their choice to study in the UK for some benefits such as language proficiency. In so doing, they emphasized the fact that studying in the UK allowed them to improve upon their English language skills. This aspect was a significant source of concern and posed as a challenge to these individuals as they felt restricted in their communication and this reflected in their research output. Some of these participants expressed the pain they felt as they could barely come up with a publication because of this restriction. The following remark was made by the participants and how this factor affected them personally. P3 explained her personal experience, where she stated:

'The only challenge I would say I have faced in doing this PhD is the language barrier. I know what I want to say but can barely express myself. I had to resort to using the google translation after which I write in my local dialect, and it translates. It has not been an easy process. This challenge also discouraged me in relating to people from other nationalities as

it meant speaking to them in English. I had to devise a means of meeting with people from my country to associate with them.

On the other hand, another participant P20 expressed her concerns concerning the language barrier, and she had this to say:

'*It is so challenging when one can barely communicate properly, and this has reflected in my writing. I have attended several language skills workshop, but its impact is not a lot as there is no follow up to our progress. I cannot say if this workshop helped me in dealing with this challenge, and this has affected my confidence and emotional wellbeing as a PhD student.*

From another angle, the challenge encountered with the language barrier, P25 explained how this affected her work and progress in the PhD program.

'*For me, I think my communication with my supervisor has been challenging. Many times the discussion is very fuzzy, which I will say should be linked with language barrier. Despite being able to speak, the ability to understand and put it in writing has been a major source of concern. Looking back, I think I should have pressed a little more to clarify fuzzy information probably I won't be struggling the way I am right now.*

From the findings above concerning language barrier and the emotional wellbeing of these international PhD students (Andrade, 2006) suggested that international students who study in English-speaking countries make valuable contributions in the economy and the educational sector. These institutions need to be conversant with the challenges the students face, such as English language proficiency. The institutions can also provide the necessary support they need to help them have a good learning experience which in the long run will also guarantee their wellbeing.

5.4 Theme 3-Coping strategies

In response to the question of how international PhD students maintain a balance between academic demands (work) and personal life, these participants reiterated how they developed an approach that worked for them. Despite the challenges faced by these participants to complete their studies, they agreed that they have been able to develop coping strategies to maintain a balance between their work (study) and personal life. They expressed how they have been able to find out what works for them and has put this into practice. These coping

strategies developed by the participants were in response to the research question on how international PhD students maintain a balance between academic demands (work) and personal life. However, four sub-themes emerged under this theme and described below.

Set out a plan and work with a schedule

Obtaining a doctoral degree is not an easy process else the educational value will be diminished (Byers et al., 2014). With the emphasis on the demands that come with doing a PhD, most of these participants explained that their desire to complete their PhD led them to develop coping strategies to maintain a balance between the academic demands and personal life. This coping strategy was expressed by P2, who described how she has been able to set out a plan to meet the demands:

'*On a typical day, I look into researching on my work, browsing online searching for journals, articles, relevant literature that would help me get a better understanding of my research and a piece of work that is acceptable to my supervisors. I do that throughout the day and then have a bit of rest, eat, do a bit of shopping and have some time to visit friends.*

When asked if she was able to carry out all the demands of the PhD programme, she further responded:

'*.........I have to plan. I need to have a target for each day, what I want to accomplish, which I end up achieving.*

Another participant P9 also stated how he sets out a plan to meet up with the demands:

'*I drew up a plan like on specific days such as weekends I know what to do. My weekends have been dedicated to work. Monday and Tuesdays I look after my baby and my partner go to work.*

From the transcripts, it was apparent that most of these participants consciously devised a means to work around their busy schedule and meet up with the demands of the program and their personal life. According to P10 he had a more specific and more detailed plan which he designed for himself and judiciously followed through. He asserted:

'*...... it depends on my schedule, so I plan for a week.*
He further explained:

'*......we have 168 hours a week, that is why I decided to do a weekly plan. Most times, a specific activity may happen. If they don't happen every week, they happen every two weeks*

or once a month. So I prefer to plan weekly. As an international PhD student, I can only work 20 hours a week. If I know, I am given 30 hours at least of my time to be in church, and I have to work 20 hours of my time. Which in total is 50 hours, I still have over 100 hours left to plan.

In the same vein, another participant, P13, expressed his idea of setting out a plan and working with a schedule. He emphasised this by saying

'......I have a daily routine. I go to school every day, and I do not study during the weekend. I am sponsored, so it's not necessary to work. During the weekdays, I study from 9 am to 4 pm. I feel organised.

P15 stated how she was able to manage her responsibilities, which she ended up by saying the entire process has not been easy.

'Despite the challenge of managing home responsibilities and my personal life, I still work around the little time I have. For my family, I try to plan like bulk shopping of one month worth of grocery shopping; prepare meals that can last for at least two weeks and store them up in the fridge. I practically manage to spend some time with my family, which has rather been haphazard, and I am not happy about it. All these I have tried to maintain a balance, but I do not think there is a balance.

Meditation (Yoga sessions)

The second theme linked with the coping strategies which a few of the participants developed to maintain a balance was the use of meditation and yoga sessions. This method, they stated, has not only helped in coordinating their thoughts but also have some sort of therapeutic effect on them. P3 recalled that:

'..... one way I have used to coordinate myself and cope with the huge demands of doing a PhD is meditation……..I make it a habit to spend some quality time to meditate at the end of each day. Sometimes I take a step further to attend the yoga sessions organised by the institution as yoga also involves some form of meditation. I have maintained this habit daily, and I tell you it works for me. I will say it is my best coping strategy.

P4 who mentioned the challenge she has with her health even before the commencement of the programme stated:

'Growing up back home in my country, I have been taught on the importance of meditation. It is like a way of life, and I have also started practising it here while I study. It is a good thing to realise that the university also offers free yoga sessions.

Prioritising

Setting out priorities entails giving maximum attention to more pressing issues than others. It was evident from the responses of the participants that they had to devise means of meeting up the demands. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that setting out priorities by the participants have been a robust coping strategy they have developed to enable them to maintain a balance. However, P2 expressed her thoughts on the subject of prioritising:

'...Otherwise, the way I balance this is a well thought out plan, but then I know the times I work and then I know the targets I have...... I bear in mind that it's a full-time study and it is vital to have that time to make sure that something is done and that way I can achieve my target at the end of the week.

P3, who believed that prioritising should not just be on the amount of work done on her thesis, but also on the time she gives in maintaining good health, expressed this when she recalled:

'I have been able to cope with the demands of this PhD by setting out my priorities. I come to the University every day from Monday to Friday to study and work on my thesis and meet up with set targets..... Afterwards, I proceed to the gym to do some workouts. On Friday evening I always go out with my friends from my country and sometimes we go partying. Saturdays and Sundays I use for my shopping and engage in other fun activities.

Still, on various ways these participants prioritise while coping with the demands they are faced with, P6 mentioned how he puts in more effort into the very little things which he knows will yield the most result.

'.....I have to find a way of meeting all commitments. So prioritising is crucial; some things have to be low on the list, e.g. social commitments. Applying the 80/20 rule, i.e. focusing on the 20% of things that produce 80% of the results. One of such is ensuring I am fully available and actively participating with the process. Being detached from the environment or process can be counterproductive'.

It is important to note that despite being able to prioritise, most of these participants still had some mixed feelings about the entire process. This aspect of mixed feelings is shown in the expression of P9:

'*I drew up a plan like a particular day I know what to do. My weekends have been dedicated to work. Mondays and Tuesdays I look after my son and my partner go to work. I drew up a plan to manage my time. Despite working this out in order of priorities to help me balance the demands of my academics and personal life, I still have mixed feelings about it. The greatest challenge is just time as it is not just enough. I'm always short of time, when am meant to be resting am thinking of work during the weekends. I'm always busy, that is my greatest challenge.*

Holidays and sightseeing

When developing coping strategies, each participant had what worked for them. While some had some things in common with other participants, others had some plans peculiar to them. P24 recalled that:

'*....I ensure I do as much work as possible every month after which I take a trip even if it is just one hour away or ten hours away from my location…….I go hiking when I have the time. I have a monthly target of what I must attain in terms of my thesis, and I get rewarded by travelling just for fun. It has worked for me because I have fixed a reward at the end, so it deals with the subject of imbalance for me. Holidaying and sightseeing as a prize has been my routine, and it works for me.*

5.5 Theme 4-Organisational support

In response to the research question on the existing institutional support available to international PhD students, another theme that emerged amongst the participants was the organisational support they got from the institution. For some of the participants, this support meant so much to them while others would not partake of it as they believed it was not relevant to them. This theme will be looking at the various forms of support from the institution that has helped the participants maintain a balance. Three subthemes emerged from this theme, and they will be discussed below.

Supportive supervisors

As a form of organisational support, the participants explained how their supervisors played an essential role in their studies. The decision and input of the supervisor to the work of any doctoral student are vital and a determinant to the success of each participant's doctoral journey. These participants emphasised on how the relationship they have with their supervisors has encouraged their development and helped them maintain a good work-life balance. As P3 put it:

'*My supervisor played a significant role for me when I started this programme. I could barely communicate because my English was weak, and my self-confidence was low. She encouraged me to go out and look for other people from my country and have some fun after studying in the week. Emphasising that there has to be a balance between my studies and personal life. She also supported me in my work by giving timely feedback on whatever part of my work I sent to her.*

Another dimension of support from supervisors emerged when a participant attributed the progress made so far to her supervisory team. P5 recalled:

'*I have mentioned some barriers above, and my supervisory team in the university have made it possible to continue. My supervisory team played a significant role in helping me overcome the barriers, and this has impacted on my motivation positively, and the will power to continue.*

In the course of these interviews, it was observed that these participants had different ways in which they viewed the form of support they had from their supervisors. P9 explained how the support he got encouraged him to do a publication which other students struggled with in the course of doing a PhD. P9 explained:

'*……that motivated me. I also have an article to my name that is because my supervisors motivated me to publish a journal article and that it was going to be good for my profile. Despite all the challenges in doing this programme, their support always came in handy, and I could pull out a publication from my thesis.*

Workshops and seminars

To help the students maintain the right work-life balance, the institution has a department that oversees the affairs of the students in terms of managing their academic demands as well as

their personal life. This department organises workshops and seminars in various capacities. Another department also has responsibility for providing support for these students' which includes money and funding advice, study skills, counselling and setting up support groups. The institution has also made provisions for the students to have access to free gym subscription throughout their period of study, yoga sessions and art classes. Besides the student wellbeing department, the faculties and departments also had workshops lined up to support these students in their PhD study. Therefore most of the participants pointed out ways some of the initiatives assisted them and helped them in different ways. P1 elaborated this point as follows:

'I have been attending training and seminars and a series of workshop that has supported my PhD studies. For example, Research cafe, and other training and development…….….the gym is also an avenue for us to make friends and maintain a good well being.

P2 also confirmed getting support in terms of attending workshops and conferences that have helped in her research:

'Besides attending workshops, at conferences I have had the opportunity to meet fellow researchers from other universities, it is also an excellent opportunity to meet top editors for journals and articles for insights for what they look out for to get papers published.

In the same vein, P4 recounted:
'Yes, I have attended some workshops and research cafe, and they helped me a lot. I participated in the Nvivo training workshop and literature review workshop, which has helped me a lot.

Colleagues

The participants also acknowledged the support they got from their colleagues which assisted them in their studies. These colleagues not only served as support but a means by which they were able to overcome the feeling of isolation and loneliness. The institution on its part created a mentor-mentee scheme which encouraged new PhD students been attached to their older colleagues to provide some form of guidance as well as pointing them to the right authorities on issues beyond them. While these mentors played the role of helping the new

students know the university better, they also help them understand the process and experience of doing a PhD. To handle the challenge of isolation, they help the mentees connect with various social groups and networks in the university.

Most of the participants admitted to the usefulness of this scheme and the support it gave them. When talking about this scheme, P17 said

'Yes, mentor-mentee training presentation skills training, NVIVO. The mentor-mentee scheme really helped when I started as my mentor assisted me in settling in when I first started. In my second year, I also passed on the same support to my mentee'.

Besides this scheme, some other participants attested to the support they got from other colleagues, as P5 explained:

'....and some colleagues at the university have made it possible to continue.

In the same vein, P7 confirmed this aspect of support:

'We have other colleagues in the research room where we study, and we get to experience from others who are ahead of us who came across these issues we need to know about'.

5.6 Theme 5-Family support is beneficial

One thing that was constant from the responses of all the participants was the considerable support they got from family members. They continuously mentioned how they got different forms of support from their family network that assisted in the course of their programme. The participants agreed that without help from their family, the zeal to go on with the PhD programme would have long dwindled. The demands that came with doing a PhD and handling other family responsibilities can be quite overwhelming, and it will take having an understanding and supportive family to scale through the challenges and complete the degree. This situation was the case for every participant, irrespective of their marital status and family responsibilities. The following statement from P4 shows how appreciative she was to her husband and the part his unflinching support played in her pursuit of her PhD:

'……Challenges are there, difficulties are there, but I can't forget my husband's support all the time. He is a very supportive person'.

The account of the participants on the support they received from their family and the data collected, three subthemes have been derived.

Supportive spouse

Responses from the participants who were either married or into any form of civil partnership showed they got consistent support from their spouses and partners. Some participants recalled almost giving up on their programme. They were encouraged by their spouses and who assumed roles like giving childcare which the participants ought to be doing at some point. P4, who had explained her health challenges even before the commencement of doing a PhD, recalled how supportive her spouse is, particularly when she is not feeling motivated to go on with the PhD:

'……My husband is very understanding, and he tries to take care of me as much as he can. Whenever the urge to give up sets in as a reason of been overwhelmed he makes sure he stands by me and encourages me and even takes care of the home just to ensure that he relives me of whatever burden or challenge I might be facing at the moment.

P15, who is at the end of her third year of study despite all the challenges experienced which she made clear she contemplated dropping out severally recounted:

'……have been possible because of the support I get from my husband. Besides working round the clock to make the financial provisions, he keeps speaking encouraging words to me while reminding me that I am almost there. He also helps out with responsibilities I should sometimes handle when I am not able to meet up.

In some cases, most spouses showed support to their partners in terms of roles that may have been culturally viewed as the sole responsibility of a particular gender. These participants happily expressed how the help of their spouses came in handy in situations like childcare. P9 explained:

'…..The good thing is the support from my partner. She used to work full-time but had to reduce her hours to help out with childcare and enable me to attend to my studies from Wednesday to Friday and then go to work over the weekend.

Similarly, P15, who had kids, had this to say about her husband:

'……He also helps out with the responsibilities I should handle when I am not able to meet up. For example, on his free days off work, he takes care of the kids, does the grocery and fixes the meals.

Bonding with children is therapeutic

Some participants, despite the struggle, to balance their academic demands and personal life, which in some cases included their family responsibilities still attested to the fact that bonding with their kids helped maintain an excellent work-life balance. They expressed the fact whenever they undergo any form of pressure and feel overwhelmed, all they desire was to be with their family, especially their kids. This was the case with P1:

'…….Most of the times, I am tensed up as I feel like seeing family and talking to them. I love my kids. Their presence goes a long way to settle that balance for me because I will now be a happy man again…….and face my academic work.

Moral and financial support from siblings

Many participants believed that the support they had gotten from their family played the ultimate role in helping them maintain the right balance and the ability to stay focused and complete their PhD studies. The support they got from their siblings and other family members came in terms of moral support and financial assistance in various capacities. P1 also mentioned that:

'….. it's my family back home in Nigeria that is carrying the financial responsibility for me and part of my savings. They have been supportive else I might have dropped out of this programme when my savings could not carry the financial burdens again.

P19 also acknowledged how he got support from his family:

'…..My family has supported me in terms of helping out financially and continuously encouraging me to stay focused on the goal. I always look forward to hearing from them as that gives me unusual morale.

It is important to note that some participants who had the financial aspect of their PhD programme sorted still mentioned the importance of moral support in the course of their programme. In this light P2 recounted how her siblings supported her in the course of the programme:

'……..another thing has been the support from my siblings, the encouragement, phone calls, the face-to-face conversation has been beneficial. Mostly when I feel tired and can't do this anymore……..These are the key things that have kept me going in the programme.

However, P11 emphasised the importance she attaches to moral support from her family.
'….family support is essential as well in doing a PhD. I tend to speak with my family daily; this act has kept me sane ever since I commenced this PhD programme. As a sponsored student all I need is that moral support, that my family has ensured I have unlimited access to it and I cherish them for that.

5.7 Theme 6-Perceptions to support available

Another theme that emerged from the responses gathered from the participants was the impact the support available had on their work-life balance and the perceptions of these individuals. It was apparent they individually had their opinions to the initiatives the institution had to offer as well as the support they got from the society. Most of these international doctoral students felt they did not have a balance because of the various roles they played. Some were particular about the inadequate training they got and the impact it will have on their future career pursuit, and this factor affected their work-life balance. Based on the responses of these participants, this theme had four sub-themes that represents the different perceptions of these participants.

Unable to maintain a balance (conflict)

Almost all the participants, either single, married, had kids or no kids, still had roles and responsibilities that required some form of balance with their academic demands. These participants were attending to their roles as parents, couples, son or daughter, brother or sister. Despite playing these roles, they had to do their research, teaching (in some cases) and jobs outside the university. All these responsibilities required time to be completed. Sometimes, most of the participants had to devise a means to attend to these roles, but they

always end up with the sense of guilt of not meeting up with the demands of a particular role. P7 recalled

'*I won't say there is a balance between my responsibilities at home and my research. I am not happy with the responsibilities I have at home because I feel I could do better. I think that the research takes a lot of my time. I feel that my children should be in karate class, swimming sessions every week. My children sometimes want some things, and they can't have them because I am always busy. I try the maximum I can to help them take them out every weekend for fun but still I feel I can do much more than this.*

Another participant P5 who had similar roles to play as a wife, mother and a PhD student as well had this to say:

'*As a mum, it is hard to maintain a balance between family duty and studying. I try to divide the time, yet I do not think there is a balance. It is, to some extent, challenging. I have to wake up early to get my son ready for school. I have to prepare breakfast, feed the kids and then drop my son at school and go to university, after collecting my son from school, I go home to make lunch and do the tidy up and washing. In the evening, I teach my son, and then I have to put the kids' sleep.*

Similar challenges were reported by another participant who stated that there is no balance for her. P15 commented:

'*I can't keep up with the demands. I practically manage to spend some time with my family, which has rather been haphazard, and I am not happy about it. However, I am trying to work on it. I have tried to maintain a balance, but I do not think there is a balance, and my academic work is still suffering.*

From the participants' responses, it was apparent that the struggle to maintain a balance was not just restricted to individuals who played the roles of either a father, mother or who were in any form of civil partnership. Participants who were unmarried and had no kids still expressed their feelings on the struggles and challenges they went through in trying to maintain a balance. P2, single at the time of this study, had no kids explained how she had to

take care of her sick, disabled father and sister too, and her balance was affected in the process. She explained:

> '.....my Dad fell very sick and as a very close relative of mine that was very difficult for me. I struggled because I was saddled with the responsibility of taking turns to take care of him and my elder sister, who also have a health challenge as we speak. A lot of funds had to go towards that medical bills ...and paralysis was also involved......... How can there be a proper balance with all of these and my academic demands?

Struggled with balancing and contemplated dropping out

In the literature review of this study, it has been noted that the higher drop-out rate of PhD students results in a financial loss to higher education institutions and the economy in the long run. During this study, most of the participants expressed how they struggled to balance the demands of their academics and personal life, also noted that at some point, they contemplated dropping out of the programme.

P2 explained the situation she was in when she thought of dropping out.

> '....I did, and I was emotionally stressed out.........I even contemplated dropping out at that point because I felt pressured, and it was intense for me. I struggled, emotionally facing the problem of very close family members who were sick; on the other hand, too, it impacted my finances.

Another participant commented on her experiences, and when she contemplated dropping out of the programme. P7 described:

> 'This is the 5th year of my programme about to finish. I'm submitting soon, but I will say in terms of balance I did struggle a lot and every time I get that feeling "I need to stop now, I don't want to go ahead with this programme".......At the moment, I had to get an extension because I could not meet up with the demands and rounding off my programme in the 4th year.

It was apparent that some of these participants contemplated dropping out of the programme but decided against it afterwards. However, it only resulted in completing their degree after an extended period. As stated by P15:

'I must tell you the past three years has been a consistent feeling of been overwhelmed, and sometimes I feel like giving up and withdrawing from the programme. I cannot afford to because I will lose everything I have worked for over the years'.

Lack of experience for the intellectual community (teaching experience)

In expressing their views on the extent to which the institutional initiatives and societal support have influenced their work-life balance, the participants had their perceptions. Doing a PhD meant the beginning of a better career prospect or a means of career progression for those already in academia. From the responses, most participants who chose to do a PhD to start a career expressed a lack of support in pursuit of their career after the PhD. This P7 expressed when she stated:

'...I would encourage that students have this teaching opportunities at least a few hours per week. Without a teaching experience, it is tough after students finish their studies to get a job...... I hope that these things are provided even workshops, seminars not necessarily teaching but encouraging PhD students to engage in the act of teaching...........if they offer more opportunities for teaching it will provide work opportunities in the university.

Another participant P15 who also explained that her reason for doing a PhD was to have a good career prospect had this to say:

'........teaching opportunities that will allow me to earn something better, be within the university and as well build up my portfolio and give me a better career prospect. Thinking about all that not happening can be mentally draining and affects one psychologically.......Therefore no one needs any other psychological challenges while doing a PhD.

Non-person centred workshops

While expressing their perceptions towards the support provided for them by the institution, some of the participants who had every other aspect of their academics and personal life sorted, had challenges with the workshops organised to support their study. The workshop had less impact as it was more of a general workshop which was not meeting the needs of participants involved. P12 explained,

'I feel that the difference in the background of the discipline made the information communicated in the course of the workshop irrelevant to me. These workshops need to be tailored to meet the needs of those involved.

This similar feeling had affected another participant when she expressed that the social event, which was part of the workshop organised by the institution, did not meet her needs in terms of balance as a PhD student. Therefore P11 confirmed this:

'Yes, any social event specific to PhD students will help to achieve a balance. But the events that are run by my university are not specific to PhD students, and I do not find them interesting. That is my point, as I do not intend to join up at any time with people who are younger than I am'.

In addition to meeting the needs of the students and supporting them to have an excellent work-life balance P13 asserted that:

'I would like the university to integrate research conference to have workshops with experts from different fields from different institutions. Workshops with students to get more experience from them, this I believe is more important to the PhD and meet with our needs. The idea of just putting out workshops to support the students should play its role'.

In line with having the institutional support in place to help maintain a balance P15 recounted

'.....the institutional support in place has not helped me achieve a good work-life balance because most of these initiatives are not relevant to me, or should I say they should be more person-centred'.

In the course of the interview for this study, other essential themes emerged despite not been linked to the research questions. These themes were motivation and passion, the UK as a choice of destination.

5.8 Theme 7-Motivation and passion

The participants expressed their passion and desire to make an impact in their area of research accounted for the motivation they had and chose to do a PhD. Irrespective of the background they came from as most of the participants were from non-English speaking countries. They had this belief that their passion for their field of research, the impact it will make and the career prospects afterwards kept their motivation going. The sub-themes that emerged from this theme will be discussed below.

Bright future and career prospects

The participants expressed their motivation behind doing a PhD was backed up by the innate passion they had for their areas of research and the career prospects that come with doing a PhD afterwards.

On the other hand, other participants attributed they were motivated to do a PhD for better career prospects. P2 expressed this in her words where she emphasised what her motivation was

 '*to achieve the highest level of education and also to be able to attain a job within that level.*

P4 also had this say in line with what P2 had said

' *my motivation to do a PhD was driven by the desire to have a bright future and better career prospect'.*

 Similarly, P6, in a like manner, expressed his desire to do a PhD was *'for personal & career development purposes'.*

 P15 gave an elaborate explanation in line with career *prospects*

 'I needed to build an outstanding career as I have never had any sense of fulfilment in what I was doing and I realised doing a PhD would give me a proper head start in my chase for a proper career'.

 The response given by P19 sounded like a further explanation of P15's motivation for doing a PhD. He had this to say

'to enhance my knowledge in my area of expertise, increase the chance of getting a better job than I was doing'.

Therefore, irrespective of the experiences of the participants their passion kept them motivated in pursuing their PhD programme.

However, P12 said

'..... when I started studying for my degree, I knew I had to go for speciality subject. It's hard to find a job if you are doing specialisation in one subject. In my 2nd and 3rd year during my undergraduate days, I knew I was going to go for my masters and then PhD. Else I would have changed my course of study along the line like do an MBA or something. I knew to have just a 1st degree in mathematics was not enough and for job opportunities, therefore doing a PhD will stand me out as an expert in that field'.

In all of these quotations, these participants have acknowledged that the bright career prospect that comes with doing a PhD was one of the strong points they held on to and chose to remain motivated. Most of these participants emphasised that doing a PhD felt like being offered a second chance to improve their chances of a better career prospect. For example, P15 emphasised on this factor when she stated :

'I needed to build an outstanding career as I have never had any sense of fulfilment in what I was doing and I realised doing a PhD would give me a proper head start in my chase for a proper career'.

The statement above sounded more like a golden opportunity to make amends over mistakes made in career over the past years. The point raised by P2, the choice to stay through till 3rd year when this study was conducted despite all the challenges shows the motivation to do a PhD.

'……to achieve the highest level of education and also to be able to attain a job within that level'.

The PhD has been known to be the start of an academic career. P2 emphasised the desire to get the highest level of education as well as getting a job befitting for that level of study can

only be achieved by doing a PhD hence her motivation to stay on the programme despite the challenges in maintaining a good work-life balance. This point demonstrates the argument of Jairam and Kahl (2012), which emphasises that the doctoral degree is the peak of education. Despite being the peak of education, this study identifies a gap which was evident as to why most of these participants were uncertain about their future in their academic career. They accounted for this when they pointed to the inadequate teaching assistantship roles which should prepare them for the academic world and give them the needed experience to excel in their career. Despite the challenges, they continued their study with the anticipation to break through that barrier and have a good head start in their career.

These participants attributed to the resilience they put up in their PhD as what gave them the hope that they will excel in their academic career. Abel (2016) and Tilford (2017) believe that despite the challenges individuals encounter, resilience springs up as a change which fosters continuation on the part of the individual. These motivating factors have built up the resilience needed by the participants to make progress from the beginning of their PhD studies until their final year. During this study, most participants were in their last year, before the conclusion of this study, some participants had graduated. These participants identified several sources that were responsible for their motivation which included what they stand to benefit at the end of their PhD study as well as the career prospect which is the start of their academic career.

Impact in area of research

As earlier stated in the literature review of this study, doing PhD involved bringing about something new to knowledge (Levecque et al., 2017). These participants expressed their desire to make contributions to knowledge and bring about impact in their area of research as an aspect that motivates them to keep working despite the challenges they go through in the entire process. These participants expressed how they have seen beyond the obstacles they might encounter in the course of doing a PhD as an international student. These participants came to do a PhD with different intentions, and the thought of bringing about some changes in their country of residence through their research kept their motivation in a high state and encouraged them to pull through the difficulties in doing the PhD. Therefore P1 expressed this when he commented:

> '......I feel the area of my research is new and demanding in my society. If I am successful in this field, I will be able to impact much knowledge to people in my country'.

This response reflected the passion the participant had about bringing about changes in his country which in turn might be a considerable revolution in the country. Despite all the difficulties this participant listed that has influenced his work-life balance, he emphasised how much staying motivated to achieve such a great feat meant to him. As he indicated that

'I am from a country blessed with many resources that should sustain generations, despite that the country still wallows in poverty. Particularly my state of origin and other states in the same region which serve as the major food suppliers for the entire country do not have basic amenities and infrastructures. My research is to discover the reason for the unaccountability of the resources in the state. Now you understand why I earlier stated that my research would impart knowledge to the people in my country'.

The impact the participants were willing to make also pointed to the fact that doing a PhD meant building an individual profile for these participants. This accounted for the zeal and desire to bring in something new or add to the already existing literature. According to P10:

'My motivation in doing a PhD emanated from the fact that I want "to discover something new and do something novelty". As a computer science PhD student, my field is not all about theories like other fields. I am more concerned about building programmes that should help with risk management. My greatest motivation will be to have my name attached to a discovery'.

In an elaborate response also related to making an impact in research, P14 described her experience and her motivation to research her topic while doing a PhD. She responded by saying:

'I wanted to investigate my research topic because I wanted my knowledge to expand, having worked with several people in that field. Some policies required a significant change. I could get inquisitive when it comes to knowledge. So it was just a natural thing for me to do a PhD. This passion kept me motivated as I knew my area had limited research on it'.

Similarly, another participant emphasised on the motivation to do a PhD came from the desire to make an impact in the area of research. The sustained motivation as the passion to push kept her going. Therefore, P15 said:

'I wanted to investigate further on my research topic, which I had started in my MBA dissertation. It is a topic that is of enormous interest to me personally as an individual and the society at large. I figured out that going further to do a PhD will give me more exposure on this topic and a voice in this field of research.

One thing that was common in this sub-theme of making an impact in research was the fact that most of the participants had identified a challenge and was willing to put in their effort to bring about a change in their little way. Hence P16 stated:

'My motivation came from the fact that I knew doing a PhD in this field of engineering will address an issue; hence my desire to contribute more to knowledge'.

Almost all participants emphasised on how the passion for what they were doing sustained their motivation. This factor can be seen as indicated by P24 with his response:

'I am passionate about my subject and want to use the research time to make important discoveries within this field. As a Pharmacist by profession, all we see daily is most illnesses becoming resistant to medications used on them. The thought of ill people's lives at the mercy of the right medication keeps me going. Several times I had felt like giving up on this PhD because I feel I do not have a balance, but then I keep going'.

In the same vein without overemphasizing on this sub-theme but capturing the individuals' meanings, P25 commented:

'I wanted to be involved in research and make discoveries that will be beneficial to society at large'.

Achieve the highest level of education

Jairam and Kahl (2012) argued that doing a PhD to obtain a doctoral degree is the peak of education, and this fact was attested to by the participants. Most of the participants attributed

to the fact that they wanted to get to the height of their studies, others who have been in the academic field before doing a PhD also emphasised on the fact that obtaining a doctorate meant placing them in a competitive advantage in their career. In support of this, P2 commented

'I wanted to do a PhD by working to achieve the highest level of education and the recognition that comes with it at the end of my programme. To me, doing this PhD and completing it feels like an open door for me. All of these are enough to help me stay focused despite the challenges I might have gone through in the course of doing this PhD.

Furthermore, another participant emphasised that the thought of achieving the highest level of education in a country known for quality education means a lot to me. P4 had this to say about the sub-theme:

'When I first came to the UK for my undergraduate degree, I could barely communicate in proper English language. At this point, I feel so motivated that I am in a country known for its high standard of learning, and its degree is recognised globally. The challenges that I might have encountered in the course of this programme or still facing will not deter me from achieving my aim.

Personal and career development

Personal and career development by adding to the body of knowledge was a strong driving force that motivated the participants. Almost all the participants attributed the fact that doing a PhD meant personal and career development which had an impact on their career prospects in the future. Obtaining a doctorate by doing a PhD meant improving on individual skills, as P7 noted:

'The reason why I decided to do a PhD was to develop personal skill, communication and career skill. This PhD has made me more analytical, and my sense of reasoning has been triggered. I feel happy and motivated that going back to my job, I have undergone personal development with all the experiences I have gathered.

Another aspect in which the participants stated triggered their motivation to do a PhD and sustained it was the fact that they were in a programme that will enhance their personal and career development. P6 whose profile before he commenced his PhD programme clearly stated that he had managed significant roles in the industry emphasised that:

'I am doing a PhD for personal and career development purposes; this has been my motivation. I have been in management positions before enrolling on this programme. Therefore, placing my job on hold to do a PhD indicates that there must be something to benefit from it. Being a married man with a child means maintaining a balance amongst all these demands can be challenging. The benefits from the entire process at the end, which is my personal and career development is my greatest motivation'.

Another participant with a career in the academic field, P8 stated he had been a lecturer for some years in his home country before deciding to do a PhD. While he shared his experience, he said:

'For me, as an academician, it is part of my requirements for human capacity building'. We all know that as a lecturer without a doctoral degree in this present day. Considering my age which might be a discouraging factor, it is very demanding to do a PhD. My motivation is that this development guarantees my promotion in my job. In summary, I will say this development from this PhD makes life easier for me when I go back to my job and also makes my retirement an interesting one.

In this regard also P17 explained in detail about his desire to undergo personal and career development. Although, he is yet to start a career in the academic field compared to P6 and P8 who had lecturing roles in his home country. According to P17:

'I wanted to develop my career both in academia and practice- that involves critical analysis, knowledge transfer and research orientation. To be able to achieve that extent of expertise and, the context-specific knowledge in the management field. I believe to achieve a PhD degree will make a real difference in my career, therefore, my motivation to stay focus and refuse to give up boils down to the fact that the development at the end is what matters'.

Career progression

Most of the participants who had an academic background (lecturers before commencing a PhD) directly attributed that in fulfilment of the requirements to make progress in their academic career, doing a PhD was a necessity. This passion kept them motivated as it meant going back to an elevated position in their lecturing roles in their home country. The response

from the class of these international PhD students who were lecturers before the commencement of their PhD was spelt out that obtaining a doctoral degree at the end of the programme meant an automatic elevation in their previous job roles. Therefore P8 stated:

'I am in my 50s and anyone my age would not like to go through the rigours of doing a PhD, but as an academician, it is part of my requirements… and the PhD will allow me to progress in my career'.

In the same vein, other participants with the same notion of what kept them motivated had this to say. P11 stated:

'....well am a lecturer in my home country having a PhD degree is very important for my future and progress in academia. Having a masters degree is not enough in academia hence am going through the rigours of a PhD and having my doctorate before returning to my job. This programme means well for me and my progress. I love my job and excelling in it means a lot to me hence my motivation'.

However, most participants attributed the fact that they were already lecturing in their home country and got scholarships to do a PhD; this was aimed at assisting in their career progression as lecturers. Therefore it is noteworthy to take advantage of such a golden opportunity. The concept of being sponsored by institutions where these people had job roles of lecturers was a pointer to the fact that these institutions also wanted career progression for their staff. Most of these participants with such opportunities expressed their appreciation and also linked that to the motivation.

In this regard, P3 said :
'....I am a lecturer in a university in my country, and I got a scholarship to study, what other motivation do I need to pursue something that I am so passionate about'. Upon completion of my studies, I go back to my job and get promoted too.

Another participant also indicated that she got sponsorship from the university in her home country, where she worked as a lecturer. Therefore P5 said:
'I was nominated by the university where I am working as a lecturer to obtain PhD; hence I was given a scholarship to any English speaking country of my choice. Happily, I

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decided to come to the UK because it is a country known for its high quality of education and adding that to my portfolio in my pursuit for progression in my career keeps me motivated at all times.

P8, who has been lecturing for several years in his home country, emphasised on the motivation he got from doing a PhD having being sponsored by the university in his home country. P8 said

'...the PhD will allow me to progress in my career. It is important to note that the university I teach in back home is sponsoring my PhD. This sponsorship means I am being encouraged to study fully funded, and when I am through with my PhD programme, I get promoted, which means career progression. This form of support is more than enough motivation for me to pursue my passion".

During this study, participants in the academic field showed much excitement. One thing was common in that they were all sponsored by their institution where they worked in their home country or their government. They all have an external source of motivation which helped in keeping them self-motivated throughout their studies. Therefore, P13, who is in the same category as those who experience some form of external motivation, said:

'I used to teach in my home country after I had my masters degree. If you teach, there is always this feeling that you need to go higher, so that motivated me to do a PhD".

Dream and aspiration

Coleman (2016) in choosing a research topic, argued that before the commencement of research, the researcher should ensure that the area of research should be an area of interest and passion. The PhD process could be a long and tiring one, but the dreams and aspirations of anyone are enough to push into undertaking the task despite it being considered as difficult. In the course of this study, most of the participants emphasised that their dream and aspiration to get a doctorate was a strong motivating factor. Most of which emanated from the fact that they had family or friends who had achieved such a great feat. In this vein, P13 refers to himself as a doctoral student who wanted to follow after his father's footsteps which he explained thus:

'... it was my dream and goal to acquire a PhD. My Dad is a Professor, so he built this in my mind. I always wanted to follow in his footstep hence my decision to do a PhD…….I also desired this and chose a career in academia, but my focus is to become a renowned Professor like my father. I get inspired seeing the achievement of my father, this triggered my desire, and that motivation keeps me going'.

P4 explained another instance of getting motivated by the achievement of others. This participant had friends who were doing a PhD and most of whom were in their finishing stage. She stated that:

'...I was already studying in the UK, got married and started a family. After my Master's degree, I decided to continue my education as I got inspired by my friends who were doing a PhD. I had that initial pressure to drop out of the programme but spoke to my friends who were in their third and final year. I got inspired to keep moving and getting the task done……. I will say speaking with them have kept me motivated to pursue my dream and aspiration of becoming an academic doctor in future'.

Start a career in academia

The PhD is the start of an academic career. Hence some of the participants decided to have a head start in their pursuit for an academic career. While most of these participants had begun their career in academia and enrolled on a PhD to enhance their career progression, others saw it as a good entry point at the start of their career in academia. In addition to the passion for their area of research, they were passionate about building a career in academia. P9 expressed his desire for starting a career in academia not only through verbal expression but also in his body language when he explained why he chose to do a PhD and remained focused and motivated. In his words;

'...after my Master's Degree here in the UK, I was thinking of taking my studies further so that I can also become a lecturer………I love doing my research in my field of study and excited about becoming a lecturer when I am done. This factor has kept me focused despite being an international PhD student without any form of funding.

Just like P9, some participants wanted to start a career as an academic. These participants expressed their desires and attributed it to the fact that it kept them motivated while studying for a PhD. Below is an excerpt of some quotes of what their motivation has been in doing a PhD. P18 explained how he has always had job roles in the marketing field but decided to take a step further to do PhD because of the love he has for teaching and imparting knowledge. In his expression of what has kept him motivated he explained

'…I want to start my career as an academic, and this motivated me to do a PhD. Even as we speak whatever difficulty I face presently in the course of the study, I choose to stay motivated, knowing fully that I am paying the price to start a career I so desire. Because my area of research is in the marketing field, I feel I have had many experiences working in the marketing industry and would love to impact some knowledge in the marketing field'.

P23, who was doing a PhD because of her desire to start an academic career, had this to say.

'....... Having a doctoral degree in search of an opportunity to work in the academic field serves as an ice breaker compared to having just a master's degree. I am aware of this condition in my home country; hence I chose to do a PhD to give me that competitive edge and this has encouraged me and kept me focused on the process.

In agreement to what other participants had said earlier, P26 describes:

'...doing a PhD is a prerequisite for a career in research; my desire to pursue a career fully in research keeps me motivated on the PhD programme'.

Study abroad and the opportunity to travel

The last subtheme associated with theme motivation and passion is the desire to study overseas and the chance to travel. P23 made it clear that her motivation came from the idea that she wanted to explore studying abroad. She said;

'I want to study abroad longer to feel the different cultures, costumes, and have time to travel in the course of my study. This I can achieve by attending conferences and other academic and scholarly related meetings. Strange as it may sound, this happens to be one of my strongest motivating factors after the desire to start a career in the academic field.

5.9 Theme 8-Chose the UK as a study destination

The final theme that emerged in the analysis of the data collected is, the standard of education made the UK a choice destination. This theme explained the reason behind the influx of these international PhD students in the UK. Therefore, it will be elaborated further as most of the participants were from non-English speaking countries such as China, Thailand, Bangladesh, Iraq. And this explains their response to the question on the choice of UK as a destination for study. From the account of the participants on the standard of education, the data generated other subthemes explained below.

Standard of learning

The UK has been renowned as one of the hubs for quality education. This factor is the reason why most of these participants could afford to leave their countries of residence to the UK to acquire quality education because of the standard of learning. This point will add to the body of knowledge, serve as a strong driving force for an increase in the number of international students in the UK. Amongst this number, proportions (over 40%) of this population are PhD students are international students.

P1 said

'...I could have done my PhD in the US, but I chose the UK because of the standard of education, and I feel it is a place where I can adequately equip myself in this area of study. This is not to say the US is not renowned for quality education, but I will choose the UK standard anytime'.

P4 expressed her opinion with much excitement.

'The UK is a country known for its quality education. I do not need to be convinced as I have experienced it first hand. Initially, I could barely speak English nor communicate with anyone except those speaking the Punjabi language (Laughter). I attended some foundation classes when I came to do my first degree. Today I am enrolled to do a PhD within a couple of years. I would say the standard of learning in the UK is top-notch'.

It was evident from the responses of the participants the quality of education in the UK was an important reason for choosing to study in the UK. P8 expressed his opinion when he stated:

'…….UK universities are some of the best in the world". If you look through the ranking of world best universities, you will see UK universities like Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial college amongst the list. This sends a signal to anyone one searching for a university to study in the UK as other universities would endeavour to meet up with the standard of these top universities. It was after making my findings that I chose the UK because of this standard of learning'.

P13, however, agreed to the UK having a good quality of education as he stressed the fact he is an American/Jordanian and should be able to say a bit of what is obtainable in the US.

'...I am an American citizen and have studied and lived in the US. I will attest to the fact that they have different methods in which knowledge is disseminated. It is more of taught courses in the US, but in the UK it is more of self-experiment while doing a PhD. I have made good progress self-experimenting and have great feedback from my supervisors. I am happy I made my choice to come to the UK, and the research in the UK is different from the American system of learning and education'.

In another dimension on the choice of studying in the UK because of its quality education, P15 had this to say

'I figured out that studying here in a UK university I will be allowing myself to study and do my research in an institution that is located where there are hunger and thirst for a high standard of learning'... So far, the standard of learning has been high, and I am assured of being able to stand out when I am done with my PhD.

Several participants expressed their opinion in choosing the UK to study. They all point towards the direction of the high standard of learning.
Therefore, P17 stated that

'The UK has a reputation in academia and, the standard of education is widely appreciated'.

Many more participants still had the same thing to say about the quality of education in the UK. P19 buttressed this point by saying

'My decision to come to the UK emanated from the quality of its educational system.

An elaborate response from P25, where he gave his reason for choosing the UK as his destination for study. He believed that:

'The UK is known to have a good number of world-leading universities which engage in cutting edge research in different aspects of human endeavour. Also, before starting the PhD, I had obtained a master's degree from a top UK university which made it easier to progress to begin a PhD here. My previous experience in master's degree agrees with the idea of the quality of education obtained in UK universities.

English speaking country

The focus on international PhD students for this study points to the fact that most of these participants came from non-English countries. The participants were from Pakistan, India, Libya, Thailand, China, Palestine, Jordan/America (dual citizenship), Nigeria, Gambia, Bangladesh, Iraq and Malaysia. Of all these countries, English language is the accepted first language in Nigeria (British colonisation) as well as the United States of America and English is widely spoken in most cities in Jordan even though Arabic is the official language. This issue of language means every other country represented in the sample size have different styles as their first language. However, participants had their opinions concerning this.

P2, despite being from a country where English is the first language and used to culturally and universally unite the country. She attributed this factor to her choice to study in the UK

'......when I researched on education in the UK, first of all, it is an English speaking country, and I knew language would not be a barrier. Even though it is not my mother

tongue, but it is my first language. I will not choose any other country like Germany, France or Spain because I know I might struggle to study in such places. In a nutshell, I am happy with the choice I made'.

Another participant P7 whose area of speciality on linguistics had this to say:

'I am a student in Applied Linguistics which is related to studying in English as a foreign language, and I had to choose a country that speaks English. The UK has a good level of studying English here so I couldn't go to any other country. And I needed a place where PhD is advanced. So far, this country has met with all these specifications'.

In an expression of the main reason for choosing to study in the UK, another participant P11 mentioned:

'As a Palestinian, our first language is Palestinian Arabic; therefore, this made me crave to study in the UK as an English speaking country. Studying here means, I will be able to communicate properly with other people all over the world. As one who is aspiring to be a renowned scholar as an academic, I can comfortably pursue my career anywhere in the world because of the exposure I have gained doing my PhD in the UK. What this means to me is that every form of barrier in the pursuit of my career is taken off'.

Additionally, P21 clearly stated:

'My choice of coming to the UK for my PhD is to learn English with native speakers. I have mentioned earlier that in my country, we rarely communicate in English even in writing we do that in our native language and translate to English with the help of the internet. After my PhD, I would like to explore the world in pursuit of a career in research'.

P24 made it clear that she came from Iraq to the UK to learn English language and gain new knowledge.

'Before this time, I could only communicate effectively with other people who spoke and understood the Arabic language and was a huge challenge for me. I had many ideas which I could not share with anyone except if the person could communicate in the Arabic language.

The past four years, I have been in the UK has helped my self-esteem and ability to communicate effectively.

Recognised degree worldwide

Among the many reasons the participants referred to in terms of the standard of quality education obtainable in the UK, they made it evident that the doctoral degree obtained after doing a PhD in UK university is globally recognised and of high reputation.

P4 who had mentioned how she was able to communicate in proper English with other people after her foundational courses in the UK before the commencement of her first degree further expressed the joy of having a globally recognised degree. She expressed her view when she said:

'*……..not only am I excited about my ability to communicate properly in a universal language other than my Punjabi language, I feel good knowing that after my PhD programme I will have a degree that is recognised worldwide*'.

P15, on the other hand, stated that:

'*UK degree is recognised worldwide and highly respected. Imagine, I came from my country with countless experiences and educational qualifications. I tell you the first shocker I got when I came to study was that most of the things I had done in my country might not count for me. I am very convinced that a UK experience and degree will not be treated that way anywhere in the world. That brings us back to my first point, where I said the UK degree is recognised worldwide and highly respected*'.

Additionally, P18 said it means a whole lot for me coming from Bangladesh to do my PhD in the UK.

'*Honestly, it feels lonely, isolated and an entirely different culture from what I know. On the contrary, I guess it is worth the sacrifice for a degree that is recognised worldwide, and I am determined to give it all takes. Hence my choice of the UK as my destination of study*'.

Duration of studying is short

Another sub-theme that emerged which some of the participants attributed their choice of doing a PhD in the UK is the short duration of study. They mentioned that the timing from

when they did their master's degree and proceeded to do a PhD is shorter compared to other countries. P9 explained his own experience from the time he came to the UK to do a master's degree:

'*Well, I came to the UK first to do my Masters degree because the programme is concise, which is about one year. In the US, it is more than a year programme that motivated me to come to the UK. Presently, my PhD is three years, and I am happy with that so that I won't feel like I am spending my entire life to get a doctorate*'.

The response from P26 comes in a familiar tone with P9. She stated

'*...I chose to do my PhD in the UK because their Master's programme was quicker compared to other countries and I got accepted into the UK school I applied. I stayed on for a PhD because I had an offer, saw what I thought was a great opportunity, and the environment had become familiar. The next thing that comes to mind will be to take advantage of the situation and make the most out of it. I must tell I am glad I made this decision in the prime of my life.*

In the same vein, P16 said

'*I quickly grabbed the opportunity I got to do a PhD in the UK because the time allocated for PhD in the UK is shorter than in other countries. I am not getting any younger, and my kids are growing and would need more of my time as they get older. Therefore, it is best to maximise the opportunity of getting my doctorate in three years and move on with my career and personal life.*

Quality of research

The quality of research from any country makes an impact on the country and its economy. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is used to measure the quality of academic work of any university this, in turn, will determine the funding such institution will receive in the next couple of years. This funding body collective policy is to ensure that the assessment conducted encourages furtherance of vibrant, outstanding and accessible research across the full UK higher education academic spectrum. The quality of research emerged in regards to the choice of the UK. P1 expressed this in his response where he said

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'....the quality of research in UK universities stands out all over the world, and I can adequately equip myself in my area of study'.

P13, who has been a lecturer after the completion of his master's degree outside the UK said:

'........ I also did a bit of research on my own and read about the research in the UK; it's different from what is obtainable in the US. It is more of taught courses in the US, but in the UK it is more self-experimental. It's my PhD, and I should own it at the end of the day and deserve to be called a Doctor (laughter). The beautiful thing about this is the fact that my research at the end of the day should match the quality of research that comes from UK higher education.

Another participant P14 said

'...the years I have come to live in the UK for studies I got to discover that my area of research is more developed here in the UK because of the quality of research that is obtainable here. There are policies in the UK that guides my area of research and its contribution to the economy. So if I wanted to use other developing economies, it would have been a bit challenging, but the UK is a good example that fits best into my research. That is the reason why I chose the UK'.

Furthermore, another participant shared his opinion in terms of the quality of research obtainable in UK universities. P17 had this to say:

'...I wanted to develop my career both in academia and practice that involves critical analysis, knowledge transfer and research orientation. I believe to obtain a PhD degree will make a real difference in my career. I can achieve the factors above because of the quality and standard of research attributed to researchers in UK universities.

P15 described that her choice of study in the UK was influenced by the discoveries attributed to UK universities.

'I chose the UK because I have read about universities here that have made remarkable discoveries, so I figured out that studying here in a UK university I will be allowing myself to explore and be guided on how to conduct quality research.

Additionally, P25 responded, saying:

'The UK is known to have a good number of world-leading universities which engage in cutting edge research in different aspects of human endeavour.

Summary of results

Balancing the demands of being an international PhD student and personal life can be very demanding. While there are some of these international students who were happy with their work-life balance, a higher percentage of the entire participants either had mixed feelings about their work-life balance or felt they had no balance at all. The whole essence of doing a PhD is to get to degree completion to either become an academic or an expert in other fields of research or industry. Howbeit these students' have been able to elaborate on the challenges they are faced with, which included financial demands, language barrier, culture shock, inadequate institutional support, visa restrictions and fear of dropping out. Bearing in mind that obtaining a PhD degree is a daunting task, and as such, not everyone is built to go in for it. These international students have explained how they have developed coping strategies to help them go through the process and complete their studies. The experiences of these 26 participants indicated that they all had some struggles, some more intense than the others. In all of this, they all had their minds made up on persisting till the end of the PhD programme despite the increase in the dropout rate of PhD students. It is important to note that the support these participants got from their institution of study, the society and most importantly, their family built up an internal zeal to persist through the challenges. Therefore to maintain a balance in the course of their programme and get to degree completion, these participants had to develop individual coping strategies which saw them through the demands of doing a PhD to completion.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students. To understand the strategies, they apply for work-life balance, outcomes, as well as explore the support in place to help them achieve a balance to develop recommendations for improving the well-being of this group of students. Seven (7) themes have been identified in the course of the data collection. Based on the findings, international PhD student's work-life balance experiences can be described in terms of the challenges they faced such as financial constraint and language barrier, the support they got from their family and institution, coping strategies developed to maintain a balance and their individual perceptions to the support made available to them by the institution. Other themes like the motivation and passion and choosing the UK as their destination of study because of the high standard of education emerged. The last two themes were also considered very vital to the work-life balance experiences of these international PhD students. The findings from the data collected will be discussed below while relating it to the current literature.

6.2 Summary of Findings

The first research question asked was, "What are the challenges the international PhD students experience in maintaining work-life balance?" It will be recalled that in the presentation of findings in Chapter Five, it was recorded that these international PhD students admitted to the various challenges they faced in the course of their doctoral degree programme. These challenges were financial constraints which most self-funded students' experienced, as well as language barrier because most of these students were from non-English speaking countries. Some of these students admitted to the fact that they were self-funded hence the financial challenges. On the other hand, those who looked forward to getting teaching roles in the university to ease off the pressure on their finances as well sounded disappointed as they were yet to get such opportunities. Similarly, financial constraints led most of these students to pick up part-time roles outside the university

environment. These roles were a significant distraction to run their doctorate programme effectively and played no role in adding to their experience of becoming an academic after the completion of their doctoral degree programme.

Additionally, the challenge some of the participants experienced in terms of language barrier affected them in terms of communication and research output, these challenges reflected in their responses. Out of the entire 26 participants interviewed, 11 of the self-funded participants were not happy about their work-life balance because of the pressure of being financially constrained. The other 15 participants had 2 participants who were partly sponsored and the other 13 fully sponsored. The participants who were either partially sponsored or fully sponsored had just 3 participants who admitted to having a good work-life balance. The other participants were not happy about their work-life balance like the other self-funded students because of different reasons besides financial constraints. Despite these challenges, they also admitted to have persisted through the years and looked forward to completing their studies.

The next research question that guided this study was "How do international PhD students maintain a balance between academic demands (work) and personal life?" students. Despite the challenges they faced in the course of this study, these doctoral admitted to developing coping strategies and the desire to persist to degree completion. Most of these coping strategies devised by these students were setting out a plan and working with a schedule, meditation (yoga sessions). Other strategies include prioritising, study daily and used their weekends for personal life (going to the gym and outing) as well as going for holidays and sightseeing after a rigorous time of working on their research. They stated that these strategies served as a vital decision they took if they must overcome the challenges associated with obtaining a doctoral degree. These strategies have been of great help to these students as they admitted they had employed this method from their first year of study because at the time of this study most of the students were in their first, second, third and final year of study.

Asides from understanding the challenges of these students and the coping strategies they had developed to enable them to maintain a balance between the demands of their studies and their personal lives, this study also sought to understand what support is in place for these students. Hence, another research question that guided this research was to identify "the existing institutional and societal support available to International PhD students?" The

students recognised that one of the ways the institution has made available a support system in the place of having supportive supervisors which have fostered a healthy relationship for the students and the supervisor. They have also attended some workshops and seminars which was helpful and as well having colleagues whom the institution have assigned to them as mentors.

The account of the participants has shown the challenges, coping strategies and the support in place to help them through their studies. It is essential to understand their perceptions to support from the institution and the society at large. Hence the research question "To what extent have these institutional initiatives and societal support influenced the work-life balance of international PhD students?" While a few about 11.5 % of the entire participants admitted to having a balance, the remaining students about 88.4% of the whole participants identified that despite the efforts they have put in by developing coping strategies they are still unable to maintain a balance. At some point, most of them that faced this imbalance contemplated dropping out. While most of these students struggled with their work-life balance, some of them expressed their disappointment at the lack of experience in the intellectual community which they expected should have been part of the institutional support in terms of gaining teaching experience. In the first instance, most of these international doctoral students have attributed their decision to do a PhD was to increase their chances of better career prospects, hence their disappointment at the lack of teaching experience. On the other hand, while some admitted to having benefitted from the workshops and seminars organised by the institution, others had an issue with these workshops not being person-centred and hence was not useful to them.

6.3 Discussion

A doctoral programme is challenging intellectually irrespective of the discipline and also time-consuming (Brewer, 2018). As a result, the students are likely to face challenges such as balancing their academic work and their personal life (Byers et al., 2014). Despite the significant impact of this challenge faced by doctoral students, there is limited literature about international PhD students in UK higher education and how they maintain a balance. There have been studies on doctoral students work-life balance (Martinez et al., 2013). It is necessary to continually understand what major challenge they are facing, which might be a hindrance to completing their studies and degree completion, which is the most important thing to consider when doing a doctoral degree. Previous studies on the work-life balance of

PhD students cannot be generalised for the entire doctoral students in the present day which accounts for the reason why this study decided to use qualitative research as the perceptions of individuals' changes over time. Therefore, Liu et al., (2019) had suggested that work-life balance is a crucial factor connected to the mental health of postgraduate students. The wellbeing of these students' has to be constantly in check else there will be a continuous rise in the mental health issues of doctoral students and as such dropout rate cannot be avoided.

While this study sought to explore the work-life balance experiences of these international PhD students, it has identified seven themes from the accounts of the participants. According to this finding, these international PhD students' work-life balance experiences could be described in terms of the challenges they faced, such as financial constraints and language barrier. The students developed coping strategies they developed to maintain a balance, the support in place from the institution and society, their perceptions to the support available. The last two themes that emerged from their responses which were not part of the research question were their motivation and passion for doing a PhD as well as choosing the UK as their place of study. Each major finding of this study will be discussed below while relating it to the present literature. The results of this study contribute to literature by extending the theorising of work-life balance to international PhD students while understanding the coping strategies employed to maintain a balance between their academic demands and their personal lives. Irrespective of the challenges these international PhD students encountered, they remained in the programme. The fundamental reasons for which they decided to do a PhD in the first instance which were for purposes of improving their career on teaching, research, the value of a UK doctoral degree kept them focused and persistent through their doctoral studies. Some participants chose to persist because of the emotional impact of dropping out of a doctoral degree, high cost of quitting after all the time and financial commitments involved in doing a PhD.

6.3.1 Financial constraint a major challenge for international PhD students

The first theme that emerged from the findings is financial constraints. As one of the problems they encounter when trying to maintain a balance between their academic demands and their personal life (El-Ghoroury et al., 2012) which affirms previous research linking the availability of financial resources to time to degree completion (Wao and Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The participants mentioned the impact of financial constraint on their work-life

balance severally and as such were a major concern to them. Also, these students, before the commencement of their studies, expected to get some form of support in that aspect. The various ways these students can assess finances to support their doctoral studies can be in the form of scholarships, grants, loans (which invariably is a form of debt for the students) (Ali & Kohun, 2006), research and teaching assistantships within their institution of study. Out of the entire participants, some of the self-funded students attested to the fact that they had to get loans from private companies to assist in funding their studies and increase their chances of degree completion. These participants reported that they would have been more comfortable if they had some form of scholarship from the university rather than getting into debt before the end of their studies. The idea of having some sort of scholarship is in agreement with the literature by (Gururaj et al., 2010) which suggested that access to scholarship and research grants have an essential impact on doctoral students persistence and degree completion.

Akanwa (2015) emphasized that international students are particular about support services, one of which is the availability of funds which is expected to make the learning experience successful. Hence this factor of funding influenced the decision of these students as well as their choice of university. Contrarily, most of the international PhD students interviewed were self-funded and as such were not eligible for any kind of funding. The idea of the country of study might have contributed to what affected the access the international PhD students had in terms of funding. The current mobility of international students has experienced an increase in countries such as the US, UK, Australia and Canada. The US has recorded receiving the most of international students hence the focus of that study was more of the students in the US (Akanwa, 2015: p274) which explains the difference in what is obtainable in the UK. Therefore, some of these self-funded students in this study, stated that this was a significant challenge they encountered which invariably affected them in maintaining a balance between their academic demands, family and personal life.

Also, the idea of PhD students having teaching roles to meet up with financial responsibilities has been known to affect the academic demands of the students (Brewer, 2018). This additional responsibility, which is taken up to meet up with the financial needs that come with doing a PhD programme (Cornwall et al., 2019), makes the students prioritise teaching over their academic demands thereby making it challenging to balance up the time for studying (Brewer, 2018. p135). This means most traditional students as described by

(Offerman, 2011) despite having those teaching roles which helps financially still struggle with bringing about a balance in their academic demands and personal life. As it stands, the institution needs to ensure that when the students assume this teaching role it does not in any way have a negative impact on their research making it important to bring about a balance in this aspect. This finding is also consistent with the previous literature on the financial constraint as one of the factors that can hinder their academic progress and negatively impact the experiences of doctoral students (Byers et al ., 2014; Martinez et al., 2013; Schmidt, and Hansson, 2018).

Also, student satisfaction and a reduction in attrition rate are possible with access to funding. If the students encounter a substantial financial burden, there is a tendency to contemplate dropping out of school (Joo, Durband and Grable, 2009). On the other hand, Castelló et al., (2017) referred to students' challenges in the form of lack of resources such as time and funding. Relating to the financing as having doctoral scholarships which will guarantee to have enough funds to run the programme and challenges linked with lack of time to meet up with deadlines. Considering the work-life balance of these international PhD students, these students should not face financial difficulties if they fall into the category that (Offerman, 2011) referred to as traditional PhD students. These students were those who had sponsorship and assistantship roles in their institution of study.

This study indicates that those who faced financial constraints in the course of study, which affected their work-life balance were mostly the self-funded students. Most of these students did not have any form of teaching assistant roles in their institution of study hence picking up part-time positions outside which could barely meet up with the financial obligations they had in the course of doing their programme. Apart from the inability to meet up with financial commitments with earnings from these part-time roles, the students also complained that these part-time roles had no relevance to their career in academia. Reports from the participants in this study implied that they would have preferred being offered a teaching role within the University for limited hours, to earn some funds, gain valuable experience and be within their learning environment. In this regards, Jogaratnam & Buchanan (2004) suggested that having employment outside the learning environment of a student can have a negative impact on their academics and they are likely to suffer from stress because these part-time jobs are done to cater for their educational expenses.

Additionally, the participants of this study reported that the consequence of financial constraint led them into facing sanctions from the institution, had no access to materials to work on their research as well as limited communication with their supervisors. Further explaining that while this had an impact on them mentally, emotionally and psychologically, it also affected their work-life balance and wellbeing. As a result of this, most of them contemplated dropping out of the programme. While this is consistent with various literature on the impact of financial constraint on the wellbeing of international PhD students, the findings from this study diverged from the literature at this point because after contemplating dropping out these students persisted. Most of these students were in their 3rd, 4th and final year of study. At this point, they felt going through the challenge to complete their study was important and as such, were ready to go through the challenge. Therefore, it is necessary for future studies by work-family researchers to examine how these institutions can put a structure that can support in some way the financial aspect of these international PhD students who had no means of funding at all. Also, further studies into the offer of teaching assistant roles to these students and its impact on supporting them financially as well as maintain a good work-life balance and complete their doctoral studies.

6.3.2 Language a major barrier

The impact of language was another factor highlighted to influence the work-life balance of these international PhD students. Although language has been a long known cause of challenge for international students, this study has proven that this challenge is yet to be addressed. Most of the students from the non-English speaking countries pointed to language barrier as a major challenge they face and has affected their work-life balance. This finding agrees with the literature that links the lack of language proficiency to a negative impact on the academic achievements of international students (Alharbi & Smith, 2018). Most of the research participants from the non-English speaking countries attributed their choice to study in the UK for some benefits such as language proficiency. In so doing, they emphasized the fact that studying in the UK allowed them to improve upon their English language skills. This response agrees with Beech (2015) line of argument that one of the reasons why students choose to study abroad is to improve their language skill as well as enhance their multicultural communication skills.

Therefore, Yang and Farley (2019) suggested that with the increase in the number of international students, issues relating to their learning while undertaking courses instructed in English is fundamental. In reporting this increase, (OECD, 2017) stated that in 2015 more than 50% of the 4.6 million international students were studying in courses by English speaking countries. International students are the largest service export industry in countries like the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Khawaja and Stallman, (2011) also suggested that the inflow of these students to study is not without its challenges as there is evidence of the adjustments these students experience that have an impact on their study and experience generally. Additionally, Khawaja and Stallman further suggested that university students experience a typically different range of stressors like academic demands.

However, international students tend to experience additional difficulties of which communication and language difficulty is one of them. Hence, these stressors which make it difficult for these international students to adjust can also have an impact on their learning and wellbeing as it has been earlier stated of the effect of English language fluency and acculturative stress. International students from non-English speaking countries, compared to domestic students, tend to have difficulties in comprehending the information been passed on during lectures given out in the course of workshops and seminars as well as being unable to interact with professors because of inadequate English proficiency (Martirosyan, Hwang and Wanjohi, 2015). In this regards, there is an assumption that it takes a longer time for international students to have the adequate skills required in communication, and this limitation might have an impact on their academic performance.

Based on the findings of this study, even though most of the participants were from non-English speaking countries, not every one of them had this challenge of language barrier. From their report, most of them despite being from non-English speaking countries had their foundational education in their home country and taught in English language. For those who could barely communicate in English language before coming to the UK for studies, they underwent English foundational education in the UK, which assisted in adjusting into their studies. Report from one of such individuals who participated in this foundational English language classes, helped her settled from her undergraduate days and proceeded to do a PhD. It was apparent that those who still had the challenge with English language proficiency and did not go through any of these foundational classes were those still struggling while doing a PhD.

In some cases, international students have been viewed generally by society to have a challenge in English language proficiency, hence the number of them who do not have such challenges were classified together with those who struggled with English language. In doing this, it becomes challenging when they all receive support which might not be necessary at the time it is given. Most of these participants pointed out to this as a limitation emphasising that they would prefer to have more person-centred support to meet with their immediate needs to enable them to maintain a good work-life balance.

6.3.3 Coping strategies developed to maintain a balance

The literature has revealed that with the changes in the workplace and the rise in jobs without boundaries across the work and family domains, individuals are expected to develop coping strategies to meet up with these new demands (Zheng, Kashi, Fan, Molineux and Ee, 2016). In respect to international students, staying away from home and family can impact on their psychological well-being negatively because of the demands that come with studying away from home and therefore would require developing coping strategies. This factor supports Barron et al. (2007) line of argument which suggests the loneliness international students face is not just as a result of the English language proficiency but also their cultural distance away from home. With the increase in the number of international students in the UK, a report from (British Council, 2004) made a forecast of increase in international students number around the world to get to 8million by 2020 and a possibility of the UK universities to host over 850,000. This increase calls for a need to respond to the expectations of these students. In response to this forecast by the British Council, (HESA, 2013) reported an increase from 231,000 in 2000 to 370,000 in 2009 and by 2016, about 442,375 (UKCISA 2019).

Hence, Smith, Smith and Jelley (2018) argued that an international student studying at a university away from home goes through different challenges. These challenges were ranging from finances, additional responsibilities, separation from close family members, making progress at the university as well as maintaining a balance between, academics, work and personal life. The above statement links the argument by (Sawir et al., 2018) which suggested that besides the social isolation, they are faced with a foreign language, finances, daily challenges as well as getting familiar with a new set of institutional rules. Therefore these challenges come with new demands which require specific strategies to overcome (Smith et al., 2018). Additionally, Alharbi and Smith (2018) showed that there are various stages in

studying away from home in a foreign country. These stages include undergoing a life transition, adjusting into the host country in terms of their culture and academic standard. Other stages include financial issues, constant communication with family in home country, building a new social network in their host country of study and returning home when they conclude their study. At some point through these stages, the students can encounter conflict between roles, and experience work overload. If these challenges are inadequately handled, it can lead to reduced well-being in the life of these students. In the course of the interview, the international PhD students emphasised on the various strategies they have identified and adopted, which works for them in the course of their study.

From the findings of this study, the coping strategies these PhD students have developed enabled them to maintain a balance between the demands of their academics and their personal lives. The coping strategies identified by these students were: Setting out a plan and work with a schedule, Meditation (Yoga sessions), Prioritising, Studying daily and using weekends for personal life (gym and outing), going on holidays and sightseeing. Therefore, it is essential to note that the participants were PhD students at different levels of study and different disciplines. These students had identified that they were able to navigate the challenges of their doctoral studies using different coping techniques. The students in their first year of study were still battling with the challenges of settling down and adjusting in their host country. The older students had been able to overcome that challenges and had to develop coping strategies to other challenges which helped them in persisting until most of them got to their third and fourth year when this study was conducted. This aspect of coping through challenges in the first year which could lead to dropping out in the early stage of a doctoral programme is consistent with previous literature on doctoral students leaving at the beginning of the programme (Jairam and Kahl, 2012). One of the challenges faced in this early stage of dropping out of the programme is linked to the difficulties these students experience upon commencing their studies and the inability to adapt to the demands of a doctoral study (Gardner and Holley, 2011; Holley and Gardner, 2012; Byers et al., 2014).

To overcome challenges at the early stage of their doctorate programme, these students had to devise a means to help them navigate through the process to complete their studies. Most of the students came up with the idea of setting out a plan for their studies and working with a schedule. To achieve this, these international students ensure to manage the limited time at their disposal and giving precedence to what matters, thereby agreeing with previous

literature by (Martinez et al., 2013). From this study, it was observed that this was a primary coping strategy utilised by almost all the international students. At the same time, they persisted and pushed through their studies.

In the literature of work-family balance theory, (Voydanoff, 2005) argued that there had been references made to specific strategies used to achieve work-life balance, but this has not been illustrated in a detailed manner. Nevertheless, this study has shown that these individuals have identified and reported in details the different coping strategies they have adopted to handle each challenge that attempts to tamper with any aspect of their doctoral studies. These international students were also particular about their wellbeing; hence they engaged in practices such as yoga, meditation and going to the gym and in some cases going on holidays and sightseeing. They believed taking charge of their wellbeing should have a positive impact on their work-life balance and assist in keeping their stress level down which is consistent with the literature by (Byers et al., 2014). Additionally, this study also affirms previous research, establishing that a lack of work-life balance can have a negative impact on an individual's wellbeing (Grzywacz & Carlson 2007). Despite adopting these coping strategies, some of these international still reported that they did not have a balance; however, they did not allow that affect their determination to persist until their degree completion.

6.3.4 Family Support

The support from family members has been ongoing in the lives of international PhD students. These students have this conviction that they can never be let down by their family members. Hence, they look forward to constant communication with their family, which has been made possible by the use of technology. Looking at the demographic variables of these international PhD students (Offerman, 2011), most of them were married and had kids. While the extended family might be in their home country, most of them had their immediate family move with them to their host country for studies. In this regards, most of these international PhD students had both their spouses and kids with them while they studied. The findings from this study showed that most of these students looked forward to the time they spend with their kids and the bonding it creates for them, stating that these bonding sessions were therapeutic.

They also reported getting financial assistance from their family members back home to support their studies and in some cases, those who had their spouses with them. While the PhD students studied, their spouses were working to also assist them financially in the course of their study. It was also evident from their report that they got enormous moral support from their spouses as well as other family members in their home country. The place of the support of the family to these international PhD students cannot be overemphasised as these students identified that in extreme cases when the thought of dropping out of the programme came up, it is the support from the family that kept them persisting in the programme. Therefore, this study is consistent with the literature that implies that having a support system in place acts as a cushion against stress and assists these international PhD students to be efficient (West et al., 2011). In doctoral studies, a construct called social support can offer the students a sense of relief by lessening the feelings of stress and social isolation in the course of their study (Jairam & Kahl, 2012). This form of support usually comes from people whom these students have social ties such as family and friends (Lakey & Orehek, 2011).

This network of people whom the students have social ties can influence the student's perception of their society. Therefore, it is essential to note that this support can be in the form of emotional, practical or professional support. While the emotional aspect aids to reduce the negative effect, the students receive mentoring and guidance through professional support as well as receive financial assistance or help in finishing some task through practical support. Therefore, it can be safe to say with some form of social support for these international PhD students' the issue of stress in their doctoral studies can be reduced. Stress has both physical and psychological negative impact on the health of the students and their academic performance. However, studies have shown that with social support in place, the effect of stress can be reduced. It is at this point that the types of social support these students' get matters. When these students get regular social support, the impact of stress is reduced and vice versa. For international PhD students', the place of social support cannot be overemphasised as existing research has identified social support as one of the vital resources for doctoral students (Jairam and Kahl, 2012). Reports from the participants of this study have shown that the support they got from their family has been of great help and the reason they persisted through their studies. This aspect of support also agreed with the findings of previous research that identified that students with more support reported less stress, health challenges and emotional issues(Lakey & Orehek, 2011).

Further research on the impact of social support for graduate students in different disciplines identified the place of gender differences. According to this previous research, Jairam and Kahl suggested that female graduate students tend to get less social support from their family and therefore experience more stress. In contrast to these findings, the report from the female participants of this present study attested to the fact that they received adequate support just as their male counterparts. Most of the female participants of this current study who were married reported their spouses were of great assistance to them mostly when they were at the verge of dropping out of the programme. This was the main reason why they persisted from the beginning of their study until they got to the third and final year when this study was conducted. For other female students who were not married, they also identified how other members of the family offered great support to them in the course of their study.

One of the female participants reported that her family played a vital role in supporting her financially through her PhD programme because at the time of this study and interviewing her she was at the end of her third year of study. The only concern which they identified increased their stress-level was as a result of their multiple roles which include but not limited to being a student, researcher, child, parent, sibling, employee, spouse, member of a social group. These numerous roles can be time-consuming and emotionally draining, which might lead to conflict. Having to meet up with these multiple roles, their ability to maintain a balance and positive well-being will be challenging. This finding of this study is consistent with the literature on the perception of female doctoral students' wellbeing (Haynes et al., 2012). In their study, they identified that the social support these female doctoral students got, formed an important part of their wellbeing, and this support was from family, friends, employers and peers. However, while dealing with the multiple roles, they also developed means to handle the demands they were faced with, such as talking with friends.

6.3.5 Organisational Support

In the course of undergoing a doctoral degree programme, Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) suggested that the expectations of the students about the programme and the institutional policies matter a lot to how they perceive the programme, maintain a balance and persist till degree completion. A situation of academic mismatch occurs when there is an incompatibility between the students' expectations and anticipation of the programme. Inadequate information available to the students means there is a possibility of the student

dropping out of the programme. The place of institutional support comes when this academic mismatch experienced by these students, which is prevented by giving a proper orientation upon commencement of studies, handbook and valuable mentoring and advice from the faculty. In the course of orientation, it is expected that the programme schedule, processes and expectations are introduced to the students to build up the required academic culture in them.

Overall, Deane and Peterson (2011) suggested that students' who got practical advice from their supervisors in the form of faculty support have reported this to be the reason for their persistence and success. This aspect of support is consistent with the finding of this study where the students reported to have gotten adequate support from supervisors as a part of support from the faculty. This finding support Ryan & Deci (2017) basic needs theory. This theory suggests that the three key psychological needs must be achieved to have that independent motivation which in turn produces a positive psychological outcome, behavioural outcomes like wellbeing and learning. Therefore, Ryan & Deci (2017) suggested that these basic needs are the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. The need for autonomy comes with the independence to make decisions. To experience this, providing support to be independent is vital.

In the context of doctoral education, the student is allowed to make personal choices and decisions as well as treating their opinion with respect. When a supervisor gives high-level support encouraging the student to be independent, then such supervisor is seen to be an opposite of the supervisor who controls their PhD students. Therefore studies have shown that the feeling of satisfaction, self-efficient and persistence in doctoral studies is linked to autonomy. At the same time, students view controlling behaviour to have a negative impact on them. In terms of competence, the need arises to feel successful in one's endeavour and mastery. The PhD supervisor can play the role by providing academic support as well as all research-related support to support this needs of competence. Besides providing academic support and acquiring academic skills such as academic writing and research techniques, the supervisors can also help in the students developmental skills like planning and management.

In this regards, studies have shown that timely degree completion and satisfaction is positively related to the academic support the students got and poor academic support led to longer completion times, dissatisfaction and dropping out in some cases. In the aspect of

relatedness, Ryan and Deci described it as the connection with other people, caring about the feelings of others and being cared for as well. In this case, PhD supervisors can play this role by providing personal support to the students. Providing this support is seen that the supervisor is not just concerned about the student's academic wellbeing but also the person of the student. However, various studies have proven this aspect of support whereby the supervisor is friendly, understands their challenges and support them if such a situation leads to stress, is linked with PhD student satisfaction. In a case where the supervisor is not concerned about their challenges, can affect the student's satisfaction and in some cases leads to the student dropping out of the programme.

The students interviewed in this study applauded this aspect of faculty support from their supervisors. Most of them reported how supportive their supervisors were and had encouraged them to keep pushing through the programme thereby aligning with the literature that emphasised on the significant role the supervisory team plays and its impact on the experience of the doctoral student(Devos et al., 2017; Bui, 2014; Fenge, 2012). Some of these students attested to the fact that their supervisors encouraged them academically, which have led them into having publications while they were still studying. The supervisors have also been supportive of those who encountered personal challenges while they were studying and have encouraged them to stay on and keep persisting through their doctoral studies. Contrarily, these international PhD students were not satisfied with other forms of faculty support such as the case of obtaining funding to attend external programmes like conferences which should act as a boost to support their doctoral studies while building them up into the academic culture. Mostly the self-funded international PhD students spoke on how they had to struggle to fund their studies as well as also sourcing for funds to attend conferences which are meant to be to part of their academic development. The above account from these international PhD students in respect to the institutional support received does not align with (Benjamin et al., 2017) argument which suggested that the support available to these students plays a vital role in achieving the right work-life balance.

 In this regard, Tenenbaum, Crosby and Gliner (2001) suggested that practical help had an impact on the productivity of the student. Further explaining that the students' achievements are also measured in terms of their publications, most of which they got instrumental help from their advisors (supervisors) and co-authored papers. Besides the instrumental help such as coaching, student productivity in terms presenting their work and publications, other forms

of faculty support include psychosocial help like counselling as well as helping the students in networking with other people in their field of research. The participants in this study further emphasised on the place of receiving funding to attend as many conferences alongside the help they got from their supervisors in publications. The place of receiving institutional support from the faculty should not be the sole responsibility of the supervisors alone. From the reports of this study, the participants have reported several forms of support which they got were mostly from their supervisors but have received very little support in other aspects from the faculty. In this case, the inadequate support from the faculty attempts to overshadow the role of the supervisors. Therefore, it is vital for future studies in terms of the institutional support for these international PhD students to separate the role of the supervisors, the faculty and other forms of support from the institution. This will make it easier for the institution to be able to ascertain which aspect is functional to encourage the influx of international PhD students. The institutions also determine areas to assist them in maintaining a balance between their academic demands and their personal life while improving on the less functional aspect of institutional support.

Another aspect of institutional support that was identified from this study that encourages social integration for these students, which helps them feel connected to their academic community and deal with loneliness is the establishment of a relationship with their fellow students. The socialisation process is a vital factor when it comes to success in doctoral studies (Gardner, 2010). Hence support is necessary to undergo a doctoral degree programme to completion. Therefore socialisation in doctoral education has been identified as one of the forms of support which considered as peer support (Weidman & Stein, 2003). In this study, the international students have identified that the institution has set up peer mentoring programmes which form a large part of social integration into the university. This initiative aims at pairing students with other students who have passed through similar experiences and can assist the new student in finding a way through their own experiences. This is consistent with the previous literature which suggested that the idea of peer mentoring programmes helps to encourage the student to integrate and socialise with peers as well as deal with the challenges of isolation which is one of the known causes of acculturative stress for international students (Outhred & Chester, 2013). This aspect of students' integration cannot be overemphasised as it is essential for these international PhD students particularly at the dissertation phase which happens to be a lonely and an isolating period from one's social circle.

Various studies have acknowledged the role peer support has played in doctoral education and persistence until degree completion. In this regard, (Broers, 2005) suggested that beginner students get information from older students on how they have navigated through their studies and which group to join. As earlier stated, peer-mentoring groups are formally set up in institutions by pairing the beginners and advanced students to provide support, guidance from their personal experiences as well as emotional support. This peer mentoring group as a means of socialising support system acts as additional support to these students in the course of their doctoral studies when the feeling of isolation arises. It is also important to note that in some cases, these doctoral students informally establish peer mentoring where they can frequently express their fears and worries to other students who are undergoing or may have experienced such situations. At this level, the people these doctoral students have social ties with like family and friends may not understand. Based on this study, the students reported to have been paired to other students in the form of a mentor/mentee relationship. Only a few of these students in this study identified that they acknowledge the benefits of that relationship.

Despite acknowledging its benefits, it was barely used by these students. Most of the mentees admitted that they felt their mentors who were also fellow PhD students though were ahead of them in the programme also had their own personal challenges. As such they never contacted them for any help whatsoever. On the other hand, some of the students reported that they had to find other students whom they felt should be able to help them through this process of social integration. In some cases, they preferred to approach other students from the same ethnic background. This latter group of these students who have identified that they meet up with students they feel might be able to help them through their doctoral education falls into the category of the students who establish peer mentoring informally.

This finding is consistent with previous literature of peer mentoring also established informally by the students' asides the formal peer-mentoring groups initiated by the institutions (Bagaka's, Badillo, Bransteter & Rispinto, 2015). As a matter of fact, in the course of the study it was evident that despite the peer-mentoring programme being formally in place as initiated by the institution, most of these students do not necessarily make use of that initiative. It also found those who sought after any form of counsel from other students of their choice in other to socialise preferred to do so informally with other students whom they

felt comfortable. Conclusively, existing research has established the fact that peer-mentoring supports the feeling of inclusion for these students as well as handling the challenge of isolation which has affected completing the doctoral degree. It has also been said to be a foundation for the development of scholars amongst these students who end up becoming the future of academia. This brings back the argument of carrying out evaluative measures of this institutional initiative to encourage work-life balance for international PhD students. Without this evaluative measures in place, the effectiveness of this mentorship scheme which was aims at helping the student get integrated into the academic system cannot be achieved.

6.3.6. Perceptions to support

The place of support in the success and completion of doctoral studies cannot be overemphasised as it is one of the most discussed in previous literature. Therefore, it was necessary to understand the perceptions of these international PhD students to the support available to them in the course of the programme. This theme of perception to support in findings is associated with the positive and negative experiences these students had when they tried to maintain a balance using the support made available to them. The students recounted their experiences, and in the process, only a few reported that they had a balance between their academic demands and personal life. Amongst these participants who had a balance, they admitted that their coping strategies helped them to maintain a balance. This category of students only looked at the institutional support from their perspective and neglecting other forms of institutional support like the role supervisors played in the progress they made in their doctoral education. However, Martinsuo and Turkulainen (2011) suggested that the role of the relationship between the student and the supervisor have received adequate attention but minimal studies on the complementary effects of this relationship and the place of the student's commitment in their doctoral degree progress.

The student views the support as their relationship with the supervisor as well as the effectiveness of the supervision. Therefore the place of the support from the supervisors cannot be overemphasised as it is a crucial factor associated with doctoral degree progress as well as the doctoral student satisfaction. The supervisor takes a personal interest in the career of the students as well as offer counsel and gives words of advice. While considering the student's academic development as well as encouraging them in getting integrated into the academic community, the supervisor should also inspire them into becoming independent and

developing their researcher identity by setting the pace as a good scholar. The findings on the perceptions of these international PhD students has shown that few of the student who reported to have a balance attributed it to their commitment. Martinsuo and Turkulainen (2011) found in their study the place of personal responsibility and other types of support on the progress in doctoral studies. On personal commitment, they referred to it as the time, goal and plan commitment on the part of the student. Whereas support was evaluated considering the support from supervisor, their peers and their employer.

Therefore, research shows that it takes both the personal commitment from the student and every form of support to make progress in their doctoral studies contrary to the students' perceptions. The other students who were a more substantial part of the participants in this study reported that they were unable to maintain a balance. This amounts to the negative experiences these students encountered when they tried to maintain a balance between their academic demands and personal lives. It is important to note that at the doctoral level, most of the students try to balance their academic needs with personal and other family responsibilities which might be difficult because of fewer resources and the order of priorities of these demands (Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine & Hubbard, 2018). Several studies have found that the doctoral student experiences a high level of stress because of the demands that come with the doctoral degree programme (Levecque et al., 2017; Hunter & Devine, 2016).

Amongst the participants, the female students who were mothers reported that having to juggle so many roles such as being a student, spouse, mother, daughter, a sibling had a serious impact on their doctoral studies. However, Sverdlik et al., (2018) showed that the time the female doctoral student studies is determined by the domestic demands which made bringing about a balance in the needs at the homefront and academic demands a source of stress. In this regard, Brown and Watson (2010) stated that the role of this female students as wives and mothers also affected their attendance to conferences which are meant to be part of their academic development as many of them are unable to attend because of family demands. The inability to partake in academic activities with their peers brings about a feeling of disconnection (Khadjooi, Scott and Jones, 2012). These students, in this case, report feeling guilty. This feeling occurs when they are unable to meet up with expectations of being a good parent to their kids while meeting all other multiple roles (Haynes, Bulosan, Citty, Grant-Harris, Hudson and Koro-Ljungberg, 2012) which also include being a doctoral student. This finding is in line with previous literature that finds the multiple roles of female

doctoral students who are mothers having guilt feelings of not meeting up with parental responsibilities (Trepal, Stinchfield and Haiyasoso, 2014).

On this note, the academic life of the women does not suffer as a result of gender, but the multiple roles, they have to handle alongside doing their doctoral studies. In this present research, female doctoral students who were neither married nor had kids reported that despite the demands of their academics and personal life, they devised a way to work around it like setting out a plan and working with a schedule. Therefore, this research has found that having children in the process of doing a doctoral study had an impact on female doctoral students because of their caregiving responsibilities. Of all the 26 participants in this study, 14 were female, and 6 of them were married. 5 out of these 6 had more than one child. A familiar trend that was observed in the responses of these 5 female doctoral students with children was the fact that they attributed their inability to balance the demands of academics, personal and family lives as a result of having to meet up with the requirements of being mothers. Although, these students had successfully raised their kids until their 3rd, 4th and 5th years of study when this research was conducted. They acknowledged having children, had affected them in some ways which made them contemplating dropping out at some point but had to persist even if it took a long time to complete their studies.

While previous studies have found that the family demands shifts the student's focus from their academic requirements to family needs hence increasing their time of degree completion (Davis and Naumburg 2013). it also suggested that new motherhood may be the reason why some female doctoral students drop out at some point in their studies. In contrast, while the students in this study contemplated dropping out, they never did when compared to the suggestion made by Davis and Naumburg (2013). Therefore, Spalter-Roth, Kennelly and Erskine (2004, cited in Holm, Prosek and Godwin Weisberger (2015) suggested that there will be challenges in balancing motherhood and a career in academia. Hence the need to become a mother in graduate school during doctoral studies which is likely to increase the chance of attaining tenure subsequently. From this study, two (2) out of the five (5) married females with children were academics before coming to the UK for their doctoral studies. Therefore this suggestion by Spalter-Roth et al., (2004) may account for the reasons why these students persisted through their doctoral studies as it would mean better career prospect when they complete their doctoral degree. As for the male students who were married and had children, they also confirmed carrying out caregiving duties when their spouses were not

available. But in their case, they confirmed that it was not a regular occurrence as their spouses have always been supportive. This is so because of what society expects when it comes to motherhood, and this has been on the increase in the 21st century (Trepal et al., 2014). While it has been outlined on how female students who were mothers struggled to find a balance in their doctoral studies, the other female students without kids have attributed their inability to have a good work-life balance as a result of the academic demands.

The same report came from the male students who were both married and unmarried as well as with or without kids. One of the prevalent experiences amongst graduate students which includes the doctoral student is stress which contributes to a negative experience (Cornwall, Mayland, van der Meer, Spronken-Smith, Tustin, and Blyth, 2019). This is because the doctoral degree has been known to be challenging for most students (Salani, Albuja and Azaiza, 2016) with constant pressure, deadlines and high workloads (Schmidt and Hansson, 2018). While all that was mentioned above, such as the academic workload and deadlines can be potential stressors for doctoral students, it also poses a challenge in terms of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. The factors that affect the work-life balance of the students interviewed in this present study, irrespective of their marital status and their family responsibilities, aligns with the literature in a study conducted by (El-Ghoroury, Galper, Sawaqdeh and Bufka, 2012). A survey was carried out on a sample size of 387 psychology graduate students found that over 70% of these students reported that stressors like poor school/work-life balance, academic responsibilities as well as finances and debt affects their proper functioning as a doctoral student.

Another aspect of the perceptions of these students to the support available was the thought of contemplating dropping out when it looked like they struggled through their doctoral studies. This occurred and would have led to the students dropping out halfway through their programme. These international PhD students reported having been emotionally drained which was as a result of finances and running into situations (e.g. sickness, death) which was beyond their control and occurred in the course of their programme. When these doctoral students go through an unexpected situation such as sickness, death, divorce, their work-life balance is affected and has been a known cause for doctoral students dropping out. While these previous studies are in line with some of the individual experiences of participants in these study, the idea of dropping out was later disregarded when they got support from their family members and decided to continue their doctoral degree irrespective of the challenge

till completion. While these international PhD students are faced with stressors such as academic demands, family responsibilities, finances, they are also concerned about what the future in academia held for them. On this note, they expressed their fears in terms of securing permanent employment after their programme as they reported a lack of experience in terms of teaching which is meant to be a part of their academic development. Martinez et al., (2013) identified that the various roles of doctoral students include being a student, parent, researcher or an employee.

The purpose of being an employee in the form of serving as a teaching assistant was the primary concern of these students as majority expressed their desire to gain this experience while studying to secure academic positions upon graduation. On the contrary, these students reported that they were not given such opportunities. Based on these findings of this study, it seems these students are unable to get this teaching opportunity which should also be a learning period for them even though that is what is expected in the course of a doctoral study (Martinez et l., 2013). As at the time this study was conducted, only 5 out of the 26 participants had a teaching opportunity. Most of these students identified that they indicated interested in teaching, underwent the necessary teaching training, yet they have not been availed such opportunity. As a result, it builds up tension and uncertainty of their future, thereby affecting their work-life balance. This finding is consistent with the literature that confirmed that the scholarly community do not give ideal opportunities for these doctoral students to take part (Schmidt and Hansson, 2018).

Previous studies had found that when internal doctoral students are involved in teaching, they experience anxiety which could lead to stress and alter the time of completion of their studies. In comparison to the international PhD students in this present study, they were not even offered the opportunity in the first place. It is on this note that Zhou (2015), attributed that the teaching experience most of these doctoral students get can be fulfilling and motivate them to make progress in their programme until degree completion. Zhou also emphasised that most of these students were able to communicate fluently in English and had done some teaching because of their doctoral studies. Furthermore, amongst the initiatives set up by the institution to act as a support for these international PhD students are workshops and seminars. Although the institution has set up various initiatives to support the academic life of these doctoral students, it was apparent from the report of most students that some of these workshops and seminars were not beneficial because it was not person-centred. These

participants explained that these initiatives were more general for all types of students ranging from the undergraduate students, masters degree and doctoral degree students. On this note, they suggested having workshops that tailored to meet the needs of PhD students. In a similar case, another participant identified the place of ensuring facilitators of such workshops were from the same discipline as the PhD students. Hence, they make communication of its content a lot easier. Although these international PhD students may have some things in common such as studying full-time and came from developing countries, not all of them had the same funding sources hence their needs may differ. The same rationale also comes into play with the workshops and seminars organised by the institutions. While this is taken into consideration, it also calls for the needs to re-design these workshops and seminars to meet the needs of the different groups of students.

6.3.7 Motivation

The educational level notwithstanding, the concept of motivation has become necessary in understanding the level of academic persistence and achievement (Litalien, Guay and Morin, 2015). As a result of this, the place of the student's motivation in the course of their doctoral studies cannot be overemphasised. The motive of the doctoral student plays a vital role in the student's interest in their research, the contribution they make to knowledge and their ability to complete their doctoral degree (Lovitts, 2008). Additionally, the success in a doctoral degree programme relies on the motivation of the student and not only are these motivational factors essential for the commencement and persistence through their doctoral studies but also in the preparation of the defence of their doctoral dissertation (Lynch, Salikhova and Salikhova, 2018).

Previous studies have shown that in exploring the doctoral student's experience, their motivation in the course of the programme plays a vital role (Sakurai et al., 2017). In this regards, Zhou (2015) conducted a study to explore what motivates international students to persist regardless of their unsatisfying experience, which could affect their desire to continue. These international doctoral students are amongst the best in their various fields who had undergone rigorous screening processes and assessments to be accepted into the doctoral degree programme. Before the time they commenced this programme, these students came with a high sense of worth and pride and made decisions to leave their jobs and family in their home country to study in foreign countries and pursue their dream of obtaining a doctoral degree. Therefore, the motivation of these students is linked to avoiding the shame

that comes with dropping out of the programme. Thus, the fear of failing gives these students a significant push to fight against all the odds and persist through their programme. In this regards, Stubb, Pyhältö and Lonka (2011) have noted that when there is a lack of motivation in the doctoral students, their experience in the scholarly community turns negative when compared to their more motivated colleagues.

Hence the value and the expectation an individual places on a task influences the personal achievement motivation. Accordingly, Sverdlik and Hall (2019) suggested that motivation and the well-being of the doctoral students are vital factors that can be shaped by the experiences of the students in the course of their programme. On this note, doctoral students have attributed academic integration which was encouraged through academic match, type of programme and the structure of the programme. Also the support from faculty in terms of supervisors who are experts and knowledgeable in their field as factors that contribute to their persistence in the course of their doctoral studies (Spaulding, and Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). With all these factors in place, these students can complete their doctoral degree (Wao and Onwuegbuzie, 2011). In line with this argument by Sverdlik and Hall (2019), the participants of this study in their report stated different reasons why they stayed motivated in the course of their research despite their experiences. The different phases of their doctoral studies came with different demands, responsibilities and challenges.

At these different stages, their motivations came into play as a lack of motivation contributed to these PhD students dropping out of their programme. However, motivation has always been studied to understand the reason why individuals go for a doctoral degree, and the outcome of this finding just linked the student's experiences with internal motivating factors leaving out the external factors. Therefore, it is essential to understand that these students motivation is grouped into two: internal and external motivating factors. The internal factors have to do with the interest in the field, to gain research experience, intellectual development and to make some major life changes either in terms of career or to increase earnings. The external factors that have been identified to motivate doctoral students are the prestige that comes with having a doctoral degree as well as having better employment prospects. Additionally, studies have found that family support as an external social variable influences the student's motivation, same as socialization and the doctoral student's supervisor.

Various research has also identified that the way PhD programmes are structured has an impact on doctoral student motivation. The concept of the doctoral students having regular feedback at the early stage of their degree and then proceed to the following step which involves the collection of data, data analysis, and the writing up stages. This stage means that the students tend to feel isolated at this point and hence a negative impact on their motivation. Therefore at this point, self-motivation has been identified as an important requirement to become an independent scholar as well as one who creates an original idea or knowledge. The participants of this study have recognised, that they had developed some internal motivation before commencing their doctoral degree which led them also to improve the external motivating factors while in the programme hence their persistence through their studies. These internal variables have been identified to include developing intellectually (Leonard, Becker & Coate, 2005), gaining research experience (Stubb, Pyhältö and Lonka, 2012), their field of interest (Brailsford, 2010), to make a change in life. All of these variables align with the various reasons the participants of this study stayed motivated in the course of their programme.

Doctoral persistence by these international PhD students is connected with their passion for their area of research which kept them motivated in the course of their programme. Besides the internal and external factors of motivation possessed by these students, their motivation has also been linked to their psychological needs. According to the self-determination theory, the psychological needs and motivational resources support given by the faculty, supervisors, and colleagues determine the doctoral student's intention to drop out (Richard & Deci, 1985). However, Deci & Ryan (2012) suggest that if the social environment of an individual satisfies the psychological needs, the consequences are more favourable as people move in the direction of greater autonomy for healthy individual development. It is on this note that Deci and Ryan (2000) argued that people experience a better and higher autonomous motivation when their psychological needs are met compared to when they get controlled motivation.

Additionally, controlled motivation has been linked with adverse outcomes, and the reverse was the case for autonomous motivation which had positive results. For a doctoral student with autonomous regulation, they exhibited signs of satisfaction with the university programmes and their studies, good performance, and had great postdoctoral intentions. While considering factors that influence the motivation of the doctoral student, it also

important to note the main survival strategies these doctoral students used to sustain their motivation throughout their doctoral studies. These strategies, just like the internal and external motivating factors (Geraniou, 2010) identified as internal and external survival strategies. The basics of internal survival strategies include self-reliance where the students' have the mind-set of the ability to overcome their challenges, their interest in their area of study, and the utmost desire to obtain the doctoral degree which is a great achievement.

On the other hand, these students also adopted some external survival strategies to maintain their motivation in the course of their study when they build up social support from interacting with their colleagues, the supervisors as well as other forms of support from the institution. Still, on external survival strategies, they also apply some literature to improve their performance in professional activities like teaching or making a presentation of their publication. Participants of this present study have identified how they have always been determined to complete their doctoral studies despite all their experiences as well as their interest which was the reason why most of them enrolled for the doctoral degree in the first place. This finding is consistent with the literature by Geraniou (2010), as stated above.

Most of the participants in the course of the study had identified that they had the intention to improve upon their career prospects hence their enrolment to do a doctoral degree. This finding was coming mostly from those who were already working in the non-academic field. Thus they considered doing a PhD as the solution to the challenge they faced, which motivated them and prompted them to do a PhD. While this finding is consistent with some part of the literature by (Sakurai et al., 2017), it is slightly different because the participants in this present study were highly motivated upon commencement of their doctoral degree programme with the assurance of a better career prospect after graduation. On the other hand, Sakurai et al., (2017) identified that the students in their study who had the intention of a better career prospect after graduation commenced their doctoral degree programme with low motivation and were less satisfied with their studies.

6.3.8 The UK as a destination for international students

Previous literature has established the UK as the second destination for international students from their home countries after the US (Pásztor, 2015). This study is consistent with literature which describes the UK as a study location for international students as most participants were from different countries. In this regards, the participants in this study revealed the various reasons why they decided to study in the UK. While most of the research participants

attributed their choice to study in the UK was to increase their career prospects, others wanted to study in a prestigious and renowned institution. Other reasons for choosing the UK as a destination for doctoral studies include the standard and quality of education, English language proficiency, globally recognised degree, proximity to home country, international exposure, uncomplicated admission and visa application, duration of the programme (Evans and Stevenson, 2011) and quality of research.

Similarly, Beech (2015), argued that international student mobility aimed at obtaining a superior degree and developing various social and cultural capital, which might not have been easily accessible in the home countries of these students. Consistent to the above literature by Beech (2015), the participants attested to the fact their decision to study in the UK was due to inadequate resources in their home country that should aid in their research investigation. Therefore, previous literature has outlined the push and pull factors why these international students chose the UK as a place of study. Considering the factors listed by the students that influenced their decision to study in the UK, they can be grouped into the push and pull factors. Maringe and Carter (2007), revealed the push factors to be economic factors, employment opportunities, political instability in home country and inadequate higher education capacity.

In the same vein, they described the pull factors as the quality of UK higher education, exceptional teaching, global recognition of UK higher education qualification and easy application process. From the findings of this study, the responses of the participants to the choice of the UK have shown that they were more influenced by the pull factors rather than the push factors. These are important reasons that cause the movement of these students from their home countries as most of these countries either do not have the resources to invest in their higher education institution for research and development. Similarly, most of the research participants for this study attested to the fact that they were from developing countries and in most cases resources required to carry out their research in the course of their PhD was not readily available. Although most of the participants left out the place of the push factor that had to do with the economic situation of their home country, the desire to do a PhD in the UK for better career prospect still had to do with better earning in the long run.

On this note, Maringe and Carter (2007) study on international students who were Africans suggested that because of the push factors such as political issues and economic challenges it

is vital for the institution to understand that the influx of these international students to the UK may need a different approach of support. As it stands, not all of them are in the UK just for language proficiency or meeting people with a new culture. Therefore, the universities can offer support in terms of finances such as offering fellowships, bursaries and scholarships. Contrary to this suggestion, the participants of this study only had access to scholarship from their workplaces in their home country or their government. In terms of scholarships, only 3 participants had sponsorships from their institution of study. Of all the 3 participants who had these scholarships, they were all from the STEM subjects, which meant that the other participants from the Arts and Humanities did not have any access to such funds.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students in UK universities. The study precisely studied PhD students who were studying in a university in North West England, but the results from the study can be applied in other universities. In this chapter, a summary of the research, as well as the key findings, will be presented. The contribution of the study to the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students will also be presented while outlining the limitations of the study. This chapter and the thesis will be concluded by suggesting areas of further research. The first phase of the data collection for this study commenced with conducting twenty-six semi-structured interviews which explored the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students. This means adding academic demands to their work and personal lives.

The participants for these study were both men and women and who described their experiences in terms of the demands from the family, financial constraints on funding their education, language barrier, and time pressure to complete their studies because of visa restrictions. These participants made it clear that the demands from the family have not affected their work-life balance as they anticipated. The time they spent bonding with their family either physically, or through any communication, media has been of great help to their work-life balance and emotional wellbeing. Most of these participants, particularly those who are self-funded, expressed the negative impact this had on their studies. This also impacted their work-life balance and the state of their emotion, which in turn affects their studies. Despite the challenges these individuals faced in the course of the programme, the motivation and passion they had for their area of research kept them focused on the PhD. The coping strategies they developed over time helped them handle the challenges that appear to affect their work-life balance.

7.2 Research Summary

The results from the study have shown that different factors can influence the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students. This implies that they individually experienced imbalance for various reasons. Most of the self-funded students reported the major challenge they faced to be lack of finances to fund their studies which led them to lose focus and get distracted in the course of studies. Other students explained that they experienced a challenge in terms of the language and that affected their progress in the course of studies in terms of communicating properly with their supervisors, their research output and inability to come up with publications. In terms of finances, the self-funded students attributed the fact that they did not get teaching assistant opportunities with their universities of study as part of the factors that impacted on their finances as they had to get other job opportunities outside the universities to meet up with their financial demands. Most of these jobs which they picked from outside the universities had no relevance to them in terms of pursuing a career in academia and was a distraction to their doctoral studies. Therefore on the part of the sponsored students, their primary concern in this aspect was in the inability to gain relevant experience and not necessarily the funding aspect. Besides the job roles within the university, the students also reported the place of inadequate funding in terms of attending conferences outside the university which was meant to be a part of their training and development process in the course of doing a PhD. This challenge was familiar with both the self-funded and sponsored international PhD students. As a result of the difficulty of funding, this led to conflicts between the attention they gave to their studies and their personal life. Therefore this study from the account of the students found a strong link between work-life imbalance and lack of funding and lack of experience for an academic career.

The place of language cannot be overemphasised when it has to do with international students studying in foreign countries. Most of these students experienced isolation which has been viewed as the initial culture shock they experienced upon arrival to their countries of study. Upon further exploration of this factor, most of these students reported that beyond the initial culture shock which they experienced, the language barrier affected their communication as well as their research output. While they struggled through this challenge, their work-life balance was also affected. This challenge prompted them into seeking for solutions to deal with isolation by interacting mostly with other international students from the same country. Despite the university initiatives to encourage interaction among all students by setting up a forum called the PhD monthly support group run by the Doctoral Academy for the PhD

students. This forum was to encourage interaction and deal with the challenge of isolation; most of the students confirmed that they did not partake in the forum. It is important to note that their resistance to such initiatives has also contributed to their work-life imbalance. In this case, it will be necessary for the university to run evaluative measures of their work-life balance initiatives in respect to the wellbeing of their students to ascertain if the initiatives are meeting up with the needs for which it was created in the first place. The same is applicable for the language skills workshops as the students reported that after attending the workshop, they expected a follow up as well as feedback to know if they are making progress.

This study suggests that work-life balance or work-life imbalance can be experienced based on the approach the PhD students experiencing the phenomena gives to the initiatives put in place by the institution to support their work-life balance and wellbeing. Jones, Burke & Westman (2006) suggested that the presence of work-life policies is not a guarantee that the individuals will use it. This is illustrated at the instance where the students declined utilising most of the initiatives set up by the institution. Therefore the institution needs to carry out evaluative measures on the initiatives as it will give a clearer picture where the institution's resources should be channelled to for maximum impact. Hence, there is a connection as both phenomena do not operate as a single entity but connected as a result of resources available to the individual experiencing the phenomena. On this note, these findings support the study by Hirschi, Shockley & Zacher (2019) which identify the link between achieving work-life balance by activating and allocating existing resources as well as changing resources or barriers.

7.3 Implications and Recommendations

There are practical implications from the findings of this study which will be reviewed, and recommendations suggested to advance the topic of work-life balance experiences for international PhD students. The study aims to offer a guide to present and future doctoral students who aspire to attain a doctoral degree in ways they can navigate the academic demands and personal lives. Additionally, this study will be utilised as a model to suggest questions doctoral students should ask as well as make clarifications on essential areas before the commencement of a doctoral degree with the sole aim of degree completion. Furthermore, the findings of this study may act as a guide for other PhD students to achieve a better balance in the course of their research and have a better opportunity to have success in

their doctoral education to degree completion. While this study may aid in improving the work-life balance experiences of these PhD students, it can also be beneficial to the doctoral student as well as their institution of study. It is made clear in the study from the experiences of the students the challenges they had to face in the course of the study.

7.3.1 Implications and Recommendations for International PhD students

The implications of this study for these students revolved around their ability to develop unique coping strategies and the support they got from their friends and family. Therefore, the implications and recommendations will focus on coping strategies and family support.

Coping Strategies. The main implication of this study pointed to the coping strategies these students developed in the course of their doctoral studies. For the 26 participants of this study, their unique coping strategy was the theme that they described that had enabled them to persist till the point when the research was conducted most of whom were almost in the finishing stage of the doctoral degree. With their coping strategies been the main reason why they persisted, the first recommendation will be for doctoral students upon commencement of their study to enquire and be aware of the demands of the programme and start discovering for themselves what works for them to focus on their studies and make the most out of it. This is because there is a limit to what the institution of study can offer them as it is expected that they work out a plan that works for them to meet up with the timelines set out by the institution. Reports from the students in this study have shown the challenges they will encounter in the course of their studies. In the work-family literature, ten Brummelhuis & Bakker (2012) suggested resources as factors that help people cope with work and personal lives demands. Therefore, these students will have to decide to utilise the resources available to them to meet up with the requirements of their academics and personal lives.

Family Support. The students in this study attested to the fact that the support they got from their family was one of the reasons why they persisted through the challenges of doctoral studies. It was at this point that they made decisions to go through the difficult situation and continue to graduation. The family support was from parents, siblings, spouses, extended relatives and even the children. At several times most of the participants contemplated dropping out, the support from the family encouraged them to decide to complete their studies irrespective of their circumstances. This desire to persist was made possible because

the students also possessed some internal motivation and desire to complete their doctoral degree. This motivation came as a significant boost alongside the support of their family members.

7.3.2 Implications and Recommendations for the Host Institution

Having an understanding of the work-life balance experiences of these international PhD students from their account has practical implications for higher education and human resource practitioners who implement work-life balance initiatives on behalf of the institutions. The insight into the students' experiences and implementing initiatives that support their work-life balance to an extent will increase the rate at which these students persist in their doctoral study as well as their mental health in the course of study. This concept can be utilised as a marketing tool when recruiting new doctoral students as one of the contributions of this study pointed to the importance of international PhD students and the money they come with them which contributes immensely to the financial status of the institution and the economy generally. Therefore it is recommended that the institution takes conscious steps in assisting in a way to ensure that the challenge these students have identified are addressed if not entirely but minimised to a certain extent.

The information gathered from the university website as regards the support offered to international students, stated the various initiatives put in place to ensure students wellbeing which invariably has an impact on the work-life balance of these international PhD students.

Amongst the initiatives implemented by the university are the support services from the student advice and wellbeing. These services include money and funding advice, study skills, academic advice, student opportunities, health, wellbeing and counselling, issues affecting international students. From the above-listed support services, these international PhD students reported having benefitted from some of the initiatives. However, they were not completely satisfied with the support services generally.

The money and funding advice had to do with counsel on how to spend their money on budget as well as funding advice on various scholarships that may be available to international students. These international PhD students indicated that most of the scholarship available was limited and in most cases for master's degree students and however was not relevant to their wellbeing, particularly the self-funded international PhD students. In terms of the study skills and academic advice, the students who admitted to making use of that initiative agreed that while it was helpful particularly to students from non-English speaking

countries, the only challenge was inadequate follow-up as to the progress made. They were worried about their development with English for academic purposes. As regards student opportunities, these international PhD students reported that they felt neglected in the course of their studies. They admitted that they hardly got opportunities to gain experience in teaching mostly for those who wanted to continue with a career in academia upon completion of their PhD. This issue was a major concern as these students were bothered about what the future held for them in academia without prior experience in teaching. Also, these students admitted to the limitations they faced in attending conferences which are also designed to aid in their training and development.

In terms of their health and wellbeing, these students attested to having access to free gym subscription, which have been helpful to their wellbeing. These students made use of this to improve their health and also found it as an avenue to socialise with people. As for the counselling sessions, they admitted not to have benefitted much from that service and could barely give a good reason why they had this perception about the counselling services.

The support services which these students have benefitted from have been identified; therefore, it is recommended for their host institution to evaluate the impact of these initiatives on these students. For the service they have benefitted from, the institution needs to devise a means to sustain these support services such as the free gym subscription and the study skills. To improve upon these support services, the institution should implement a feedback mechanism. Besides having the students utilising the gym facilities outside the University with a free subscription, the university can also set up a gym facility within the university environment. In so doing, these students can have their regular exercise after their academic activities within the university which also implies more access. It is not enough to carry out study skills for non-English speaking students but also to ascertain if they are making progress at it in the course of their PhD. The university could devise a vital assessment to determine if the improvement is satisfactory and would reflect on their academic progress in the course of their programme.

Considering the student opportunities, their host institution should make a provision for every PhD student to gain some teaching experience in the course of their PhD and also make it mandatory. In so doing, every PhD student gains a teaching experience irrespective of their future ambitions of pursuing a career in academia or industry. It is not enough to encourage these international PhD students to undergo the teaching workshops 3is as organised by the institution. This is because after the PhD securing a job in academia requires at least a teaching experience from these students. Therefore, adding the teaching experience into the

regulations which guides these PhD students will help them in acquiring this skill before completion of their programme.

Furthermore, considering the desires of these students in attending conferences for their training and development, the institution should be able to make adequate provisions for these students to attend. Although there is a provision for conference funding by the university, it is highly inadequate and barely covers the cost of the conference. These students are paying much money already to get this PhD done; therefore, the institution should also support them as much as they can. I had initially identified that one of the importance of these international PhD students also included their contribution financially to the higher education sector and the economy. Therefore, the institution should endeavour to retain these students and even recruit more prospective students if they must remain globally competitive. While the institutions have these initiatives in place and most of the students feel most of the initiatives is not useful to them, running a survey to evaluate the impact of these initiatives could save the institution many resources on initiatives that are not being used. At the same time, they implement other initiatives that will be useful for these students. After all, what is an initiative if it is not useful for the individuals it was implemented.

The institution should also ensure to use the wellbeing department in providing support in the form of counselling (which is already being implemented) and ensure proper follow up on the students through requesting constant feedback from the students and ensure an appropriate follow-up is done. It is also essential for the institution to ensure to implement any initiative that has been promised to the students either through the university brochure or other forms of face to face contact. As most of the self-funded students pointed out that they had several sessions and had training with the universities on having teaching opportunity roles severally and that has not been implemented which might impact on their ability to get an academic job from lack of teaching experience. With these students studying at different stages of their doctoral degree programme, the university must run a survey of the PhD students at various stages of their study and come up with some personalised form of support that can be of help to these students at each step of the study. The ability of the university to play its role in supporting these international PhD students from the time of recruitment until enrolment will help to increase their persistence rate and completion of a doctoral degree. This is because the lack of persistence leads to a drop-out rate of the students, which affect not only the revenue of the institution but also the degree completion rate of the institution.

7.3.3 Implications and recommendations for the higher education community

Based on the experiences of the international PhD students, the following recommendations are offered for the higher education community committed to supporting the work-life balance of these students to complete their doctoral degree. First, rather than institutions having workshops organised for study skills such as the English language for academic purposes, it can be implemented as a mandatory course that will be offered to all international students. It implies that offering the study skills as courses means everyone gets to partake of it and get assessed correctly in the course of the programme. Despite some financial support in some institutions, the higher education community can increase financial assistance rendered to these students in the form of graduate teaching assistants as well as grants to attend conferences. These students reported having gone through stress seeking for job opportunities outside their university environment to meet up with financial needs which also affects their work-life balance. Besides the financial gains from graduate teaching assistantships roles, it also allows these students to gain valuable experience, which will positively impact the academic career pursuit. Therefore, the higher education community needs to make it mandatory for all PhD students to be offered graduate teaching assistant roles in the course of the programme.

Additionally, some institutions operate crèche facilities to support work-life balance concerning childcare. The higher education community can also implement this as a means to support both staff and students who are parents and have childcare needs while they are in the university environment. In conclusion, it is not enough for the higher education community to implement initiatives to encourage the work-life balance of international PhD students; it is essential to go ahead and make them into policies similar to what applies to the staff of every higher education institution.

7.4 Limitations of study and suggestions for future research

 Although the present study has made some contributions to existing research on the work-life balance experiences of international PhD students, there are limitations to this study which future research can explore and find possible ways to cover up the limitations.

This study was conducted with international PhD students in one institution. It could represent the opinions and suggestions from the doctoral students in this institution as a result of what is available in the institution in terms of their programmes and services. Future research can fill up this gap by interviewing international PhD students from different

institutions to have a comprehensive view of international PhD students in different UK universities. The decision to interview international PhD students from different countries, cultures and tradition to reduce the challenge of limited generalisability of findings to just a particular population or discipline hence the decision to interview students from different departments, and different countries. Conducting future research in different institutions and interviewing students from different countries, departments, and different stages of study will aid to give a holistic view of these students' experience in the course of their doctoral studies. Another limitation of this study was the collection of data which was collected at a single point in time and followed the cross-sectional study design as a result of the time frame for this study. Future research could aim to use a longitudinal study design to cover a more significant number of international PhD students across different institutions and probably each student interviewed at various stages of their PhD study to have an overview of the challenges faced at different stages of their doctoral studies.

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