**Interviewer:** So, thank you for joining us [um] in this interview session. I will start with the first interview question. [Erm] Can you please share your age, gender and country of origin?

**Participant 1**: I am 35 years, and I am male by gender and I am from Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Question number 2. What is your highest level of education and what country did you obtain your degree from?

**Participant1**: My highest level of education is Master's degree and I got that from Nigeria.

**Interviewer**: Okay. How long have you lived in the United States, specifically in Maryland?

**Participant 1**: I've lived [um] two years plus, I'll be three years in May and all my life in the United States I've been in Maryland.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay, thank you. {um} Can you share with us your current profession or job title?

**Participant 1**: Presently I'm a personal care assistant. That’s home health care and also [um] medical billing and administrator.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. What was your profession in Nigeria before migrating to the United States?

**Participant 1**: In Nigeria, I was a special educational needs coordinator.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Can you tell us what motivated your decision to migrate to the United States?

**Participant 1**: I saw United States as a home of opportunity, a home to advance my career and that was my motivation.

**Interviewer**: Okay, thank you. Were there specific factors in Nigeria that pushed you to leave{um} e. g. economic, social, or political challenges?

**Participant 1**: So, in Nigeria everything looked uncertain. It was a mixture of where you have political leaders {um} have no plan and we could see the effects on the economy and also the security of the people in the nation.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. So why did you move to the United States? What actually attracted you to Maryland in particular?

**Participant 1**: So, I see Maryland as a home with Institutions of higher learning [um]schools like John Hopkins who are very good at research, University of Maryland College Park. So, you see that [um] economic and educational drive of Maryland. So all those things were motivating factors for me.

**Interviewer**: For you to choose Maryland?

**Participant 1:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** The next question. What challenges have you encountered during the migration process?

**Participant 1:** So, the challenges have been settling down, [Um] having to start all over again as if one has never been in college and then coming here to a minimum wage job and then [um] trying to be at par with people who or that have never been to college. Although there are also cultural barriers, different culture and all of that but the main challenge has been that the expectation before coming is quite[um]; the difference is so wide, so huge from what is on ground, from the reality.

**Interviewer:** okay, thank you for explaining that. So, the next set of questions I'm going to ask you are based on professional experiences and you may have touched [um] a little on that line but I just want you to be able to give us a little [ um] deeper information or experiences that you have specifically along your professional career.

So, are you able to tell us about your career trajectory in Nigeria before relocating to the United States? You said you were a special need education specialist back in Nigeria.

**Participant 1**: Yes. So, I was a Special educational needs coordinator.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 1:** And I was looking forward to [um] specializing in Physical Therapy Pediatrics. That is dealing with children that have cerebral palsy, children with autism, down syndrome and all of that. So with schools like John Hopkins {um} who have affiliation with Kennedy Kruger, I was looking forward to developing myself to become well-grounded through research and then but all of a sudden coming here due to the economic difference and then trying to find stability it was like starting all over again for the career.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, you mean the level of experience you had acquired back in Nigeria, [um]by the time you came to the United States you didn’t think those years of experience put you at the same level that you were in Nigeria by the time you got to united states eventually?

**Participant 1**: Yeah, the difference was just too much, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. How would you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 1:** [Hmm] So, it is like I am starting all over. Presently my goal is to become a Doctor of physical therapy and one of the requirements is that you have to get some pre-requisites done in community colleges and those prerequisites are just like year one and year two courses and this must be done either in the United States or in Canada. So, if you are, even if you have done it back in wherever you are coming from, as long as it is not in United States or Canada, you have to do them all over again and it takes time. Those courses will take you two years to be able to finish then you start the program itself. So currently I have admission for Doctor of Physical Therapy program and [ um] I have two prerequisites left which I am doing this semester.

Once I am done next semester at fall, I should start my DPT program proper.

**Interviewer:** Okay Thank you. The next question is a little similar to that but [ erm] the question says that how well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role?

**Participant 1:** [Um] Well, [erm] I can’t [hisses] but let me just say may be 20 percent of my skills and 10 percent of my qualification because what I do someone from high school will be able to do it except [um] when it comes to the administrative part of what I do, like the medical billing and coding then accounts reconciliation. I think that is where I can say may be 40 to 50 percent of my skills are being utilized. But comparing those skills with the pay, I do not think it is worth it.

**Interviewer**: Thank you for sharing that. [Um] The next question is kind of more specific and you probably touched on some of them. The question says that what barriers have you faced in the professional landscape such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications, or even workplace discrimination?

**Participant I:** So, [um] as regards licensing requirements, well I just have to go for training, pass the exams. Then recognition of foreign qualifications I think for schools, once you do your conversion with WES or any body that evaluates foreign credentials, schools accept it for workplace seems not to recognize your qualifications that you are coming with from other countries they believe probably it is inferior, so you have to work like two times or like five times much more than whoever schooled here just to prove that you also have the skills, capacity, and your qualification is valid.

**Interviewer:** Okay. I have one follow up question to that. Do you think those kinds of sentiments affects [um] the level of opportunity even with qualifications from Africa, Nigeria get in the workplace? Do you think they get passed by because there is a general belief that the qualifications you bring from your country is not as good as if you had gone school here in the United States?

**Participant 1:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. So, my next question is more like personal strategy. So what strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

**Participant 1:** Hmm, so the strategies I have used include or, making sure I belong to communities; church community is one of it. [Um]the things that can make you have interactions with people that can recommend you when they know your ability. So….Social network, just making sure I give my best when there is an opportunity to volunteer and volunteer through your skills, showcase your skills then be respectful as well. Be respectful, be calm no matter the situation, learn to be patient. So, I think those are the strategies I have used so far.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. We move to the next set of questions cultural assimilation and social integration. You mentioned [um]some things related to that just now but let me still ask the questions. How would you describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland?

**Participant 1:** Well, for me I will just say [ um] cultures are different and since I have decided to be here, I just need to learn the culture [um] but learning the culture, I also need to discern and know which one is good and which one is not good [um] in terms of values and moral. I still have some cultural belief that though it’s not good but as far as it does not really affect life, I might not completely as like take it up for myself, but I have learnt to know what is good and what is not really good in terms of the culture that I met here.

**Interviewer**: Okay, thank you. I know you talked about the culture [um]being different and learning how to navigate and assimilate and take the one that you think is good and manage the one that you do not really feel comfortable with. Well, my next question, I wanted to, I wanted to know if you have experienced any cultural or social challenges since migrating? Maybe it can be a little specific because some people the challenge they have maybe communication, some people the challenge they have is [um]may be food, maybe if you can be more specific.

**Participant 1**: [Erm] in terms of communication if you are talking to the whites [um]you hear them clearly but there are some accents of the black that you might need to listen, you might need to pay more attention to be able to get what they are saying and I feel I communicate well and they hear me when I talk in class and everybody understands so..then in terms of food, there is African store so I can get my food when I need to.

**Interviewer**: Okay, [um] the next question is about cultural differences. [Umm] so, this one is asking how have you navigated cultural differences in your personal, professional life? The questions are similar but the professional life, the cultural differences at professional level, have you had any experience that you feel is challenging and how did you overcome it? How did you navigate it?

**Participant 1:** Hmm okay, so for personal I think I have mentioned that.

**Interviewer:** Yes, you mentioned personal.

**Participant 1:** Yeah, I know what I stand for as long as I am not doing the wrong thing and I want people to know me for a who I am.

And then for professional life, [erm]back in Nigeria I was in a professional community and the need to respect one another, the need be courteous, the need to be inclusive in thinking of other people; I learnt that before coming here so it was not really [um]too difficult for me. So, the culture here you have different people, different cultures, it is a very diverse community so the ability to respect the other person’s beliefs and all of that, as long as it is not enforced on you. So, for the cultural difference in professional life, I do not think there is, it’s just workplace ethics. I think they are almost the same back there.

**Interviewer**: Okay, thank you. [Erm]Are there any specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration? And if so, how well have this organization supported your career advancement?

**Participant 1:** [Um] okay .So, [um] I belong to [um] Deeper Life Bible Church and we have the Deeper Life Young Adults; so, they really supported me for my career cause when I came in, I was thinking of becoming a physical therapist assistant so that I could, once I start working with that, I could raise money to go for my Doctor of physical therapy but I met people that are in the profession and they told me no you don’t’need to go through that route, that way .You can do this, you can do that, and just go on directly to your Doctor of physical therapy. So, there were people that gave me guides and there were people that, you know, wisdom and thank God I also listened and it’s been good so far.

**Interviewer:** Okay, Thank you so much. Yeah, we are getting close to the end of the interview. We have just two more sections. The next section is about dual cultural and economic challenges. You’ve talked about cultural but let us dip a little into economic challenges and the first question there is…Do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States? How do you navigate this?

**Participant 1**: So, back in Nigeria, there are some things that you just know that this is evil, this is this, it is just a no no but in United States, you have to respect other people's opinion because they have their rights. So, I think that is where [um] the being torn comes in.

**Interviewer**: Okay, thank you for sharing that. Next question - Have you encountered economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members in Nigeria?

**Participant 1:** A lot, so the expectations of people in Nigeria is [um] probably when you get here, you just, the dollar will just start rolling in and all of that. So even though I am the kind of person that help people, I still let them know that I am doing this because you need help. It is not like I have [um] maybe a stack of money in my [um] account or all of that. So, when people need help, I do the little I can do but when you are now asking as if it is a right, I just tell you, you are getting it wrong. So, and sometimes you look at how much you collected as wages and trying to put everything together and you feel like, how did I spend all of this money? Then you see that a chunk of it is going to remittances in supporting family members. So, sometimes it could really affect one economically.

**Interviewer**: Yes, because here you have responsibilities, you have bills to pay and you also have people that are asking for support back home in Africa, back home in Nigeria.

**Participant 1:** Hmm

**Interviewer:** The next question is- What strategies do you use to balance these dual responsibilities? You mentioned one in the last question that you try to explain to them.

**Participant 1**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** Is that the only way? Is that the only one strategy that you have been using or are there other strategies you use to balance these things? Like [um] getting maybe multiple jobs or [Laughs, inaudible]

**Participant 1:** Of course, I’m doing multiple jobs, I do all that, I do other things just to meet up with some of the bills, I do multiple jobs.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 1:** And sometimes when the responsibility is so much, I have a budget and once that budget is met, I will not want to exceed it and it has to do with remittances. I will just tell you, think of another time, not this time. That’s it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Now we are on the last section. In the last section, we ask questions about recommendations. What you feel like are things that can be done to ease some of these challenges African immigrants face in the United States? We are talking highly educated African Nigerian immigrants that live in United States, particularly Maryland. So, the first question on the recommendations is that, what changes or support systems would you suggest in helping highly educated Nigerian immigrants succeed in their careers in the US?

**Participant 1:** Hmm,the first thing is going back to school. Make sure you get a degree from here and from there you will be able to build a network. So, I think the gap is obvious in the sense that back in Nigeria, when you graduate, you have a set that you graduate together and it's like you guys share opportunities with one another then coming here is like being a lone ranger.

So, going back to college or going back to finish a particular degree will now make you have a network here again that you can also share opportunities with like you can share opportunities between you and them. That's the best support system.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much. [Um] The next question- they are about policies and programs. Are there policies or programs you feel help or create barriers for highly educated Nigerian and African immigrants in Maryland, in the US generally? Based on your own experience.

**Participant 1:** Um have not, [inaudible] I don't know much about the policies.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 1:** But I know programs like career fairs and all of that are being done in colleges and you see [um] organizations, companies they come for career fair, educate [um] students. So, I think one just has to network.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah thank you. Let me go to the next question. Are there any policies or programs that you think should be implemented to address barriers faced by Nigerian African immigrants in the US and Maryland?

**Participant 1**: I feel if there are policies that would, that could suggest like a bank, a bank of people, like a bank of information about people that are educated because it's also an asset for the economy. So, if there’s an information bank where people who are highly educated can just go to submit their educational qualifications either evaluated or non-evaluated, at least to show that they are capable of doing this and then you give them a chance to also prove themselves. I think those things will help people to settle because by the time they settle in and they are adding value to the economy, they also pay taxes, they also help the economy. So, I feel there should be like an information bank where people can say, oh, I am educated in this, I can do this, I can do that, and then you give them the opportunity to showcase their skills and their talent. I think that will help.

**Interviewer**: Thank you so much [um] for that recommendation. [Um]The last question is [um] - Do you have any additional comments or insights you would like to share? Maybe the thoughts just flashed through your mind during the interview. Or maybe a question that you feel like you should have asked that we didn't ask?

**Participant 1:** Hmm, what I would just, the comment I would just make is this, like the Latinos now, they help one another but even African Americans feel that African immigrants are coming to pick up their, maybe their jobs or they are coming and becoming more successful than they are. So, there is this back and forth about the African immigrants and the African American. But that should not be because every individual have their values, have what they contribute to the economy to be what it is. So, nothing should hinder an African immigrant, especially the educated ones, from being able to contribute and add value to the economy. I think that would be my comment.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. I want to thank you for your time and the valuable input you shared during this interview. If you would like to receive a summary of the study findings once the research is completed, please let me know and I will provide a copy via email.

**Participant 1:** Okay, I would like to have one.

**Interviewer**: Okay, we will make a copy available to you when the research is completed. **Participant** 1: Okay, sir

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for your time tonight.

**Participant 1**: You are welcome.