**Interviewer:** Good morning, and thank you for joining me in this interview.

**Participant 23:** Good morning. Thank you for having me.

**Interviewer:** Before we start, I want to let you know that we have six sections in this interview. Under each section, we have certain number of questions, some five, some four, some six. So we'll just go straight to section one. Section one is about demographic information.

**Participant 23:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Under this section. I have five questions, so I will start with question one now. Can you please share your age, your gender and your country of origin?

**Participant 23:** Okay. So I'm a female in my late twenties. And I'm from Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. What is your highest level of education, and what country did you obtain your degree from?

**Participant 23:** Okay. So my highest level of education is master's degree in computer science. And I attained my master's degree in United States and my bachelor's degree was in my country of origin, Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Question three, how long have you lived in the US, specifically in Maryland?

**Participant 23:** So I've been in the US for a little over 3 years, but Maryland, a year, over a year…a year and few months.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. What is your current profession or job title?

**Participant 23:** Okay, so my current position is a cyber-coordinator. And emmm, yes, basically, that's my current job title.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you're into cyber security.

**Participant 23:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Last question under this demographic information is, what was your profession in Nigeria before you migrated to the US?

**Participant 23:** So before I migrated to US, I was a sales manager of a gas station, so that was what I was doing when I was in Nigeria. Then I moved here to continue my career in my degree of study.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Let's move to section 2. Section 2, we will talk about push and pull factors.

**Participant 23:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Push and pull factors are the reasons or the motivation why people move from their country of origin to other countries, or why people move from one country to the other. I'll go to the first question here. So the question is, what motivated your decision to migrate to the United States? Were there specific factors in Nigeria that made you to leave, e.g., economic, social, or political challenges?

**Participant 23:** I would say a lot of things motivated me. Firstly, the economy. No, firstly, I would say, I've always wanted to have my master's degree. So that was like my first reason, then, secondly, the economy. I know with me, having a degree in computer science, I have better opportunities here than I would in Nigeria. So that was like a very big part of me moving down here. So it was like one of the reasons that motivated me. Just opportunities out here, like United States, is a tech hub. So having a degree in IT, and being in America is a great opportunity to like work in different advanced companies that I wouldn't have opportunities of being close to in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you for sharing that. We'll go to the next question. I think you've answered a little part of the next question. You said…because that question is what attracted you to the US, and Maryland in particular. You already said Maryland…oh you already said the United States, because you believe in better opportunities here, and because the US is more like the tech hub of the world, you believe that since you had a background in computer science, you’ll have better opportunities here. So let me ask the other part of the question, why Maryland in particular, and I think you also mentioned that you were somewhere before you moved over to Maryland. So why did you come to Maryland?

**Participant 23:** So, me moving to Maryland wasn't something planned or maybe I would say maybe there was something particular about Maryland. To be honest, no. So the only reason I moved to Maryland was because I got a job here in Maryland, and so that was like the moving factor for me, like having a job here. I'm like, okay, I mean, where I was, I didn't have a job. I recently graduated and I was looking for a job, then I got a job opportunity in Maryland, then I moved. I just moved where the opportunity was.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. The last question under this section is, what challenges have you encountered during the migration process?

**Participant 23:** Emmm, so migration process, do you mean from…coming to Maryland from where I was?

**Interviewer:** Migration challenges could be while you were leaving, in the process of coming over and even when you landed in the US.

**Participant 23:** Okay. Emmm…migration process, I would say as a student, you're very restricted. So I came in as a student, if I didn't mention that earlier. And so if you're on F1 visa in America, you're only restricted to working on campus while your education is going on. And so you are kind of like, restricted to getting opportunities, not like opportunities, I mean having like the American experience, except maybe during your internship hours. And so that was kind of like, I would say a restriction for me. And maybe I would say the culture shock too, because I mean, obviously the way things were in Nigeria, and here are like totally different. So moving here on your own and you're in school, you're trying to understand the educational system of how professors teach here compared to where you're coming from, and still having to navigate relating to the people in the country, because it's different from where you're coming from and just understanding how to answer questions, like the assignments. You know how here, we're big on plagiarism and things like that. I mean Nigeria to we were but so it was just a lot, understanding the first…let me say, the first semester, understanding the people, understanding the educational system. It was a bit, because in Nigeria, for example, the course I did…so in Nigeria, I would say the educational system was, I wouldn’t say harder, but it was more…the techniques to use was kind of like harder, I would say, unlike here. So when I moved here, I was trying to like be more, you know, use the same understanding of how I related with my professors and lecturers down in Nigeria here, and I realized it wasn't working, because I tried to like look at things in a more complex way, which wasn't even how it was. So just understanding, to cut the long story short, understanding the academic technique people use here was like tough and the immigration aspect, the cultural shock, and I mean having to…not being able to work outside school campus. So it was like, it was a lot.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah, thank you for sharing that perspective. We can go to section three, professional experiences. Under this section, we’ll talk about professional experiences, skills that you had before you moved over. You…it looks like you were in oil and gas sector in Nigeria, more like you were in the upstream section of the oil and gas business. You said you were a sales manager. The question is, can you tell us about your career trajectory in Nigeria, before relocating to the United States?

**Participant 23:** I would say before moving to United States…because I came here for a totally different course. So I was just, I was managing business. Obviously, that is not IT part. But I mean I was involved in a bit of like CRM systems, for like our sales and all that. But it wasn't core tech so there, I was more like, I would say, just trying to get the business done and do my thing, just having a different… It was like my trajectory there was more like being in business, I wasn't using my degree. I was like, okay, this is making money. I'm getting money from this, and not so much, but I mean enough. But I knew that wasn't what I wanted. Personally, I wanted to be in technology, not sales. Sales wasn't my passion, my passion, was IT, So I mean, I quickly realized that, okay, I can't be here for a long time, even though the experience I have is like good and…but I quickly realized, okay, I'm trying to upskill and get my degree here and do something that I'm actually passionate about. So that is how like my career trajectory went, like me being a sales manager, having people I was monitoring, to come in here and starting like over, looking for a job and going to school and working in school campus, something totally different, and afterwards me looking for a job in a total different field. It was just…I mean, it was different, like what I had in Nigeria was different from here, but it was what I wanted. So that is what I can say.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Thank you for sharing that. So my understanding is, what you did in Nigeria is you are managing a business. You are managing the business processes, you're managing people, you’re coordinating all those parts of the business to ensure that everything went well, in meeting your business goals. Emmm, before we move to the next question, I wanted to know your total number of years of experience in Nigeria, like, how many years did you work in Nigeria.

**Participant 23:** So in Nigeria I had emmm about four years of experience, yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Okay, thank you for sharing that.

**Participant 23:** Mmmm, yes.

**Interviewer:** So, and that experience was in oil and gas. Now, oil and gas business management.

**Participant 23:** Yes, business management

**Interviewer:** But now you are in emmm…so you already told me that you came in for graduate degree, and now you're into cyber security. How would you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 23:** In the United States, I would say, different aspects actually. From the aspect of being an international student and trying to go to cyber security, it wasn't easy, I would say, because a lot of jobs require you to probably have your green card or be a citizen before you can have access to people's data. Because I mean security, we are dealing with a lot of information. So like, I had a lot of restriction while trying to…after my graduate school trying to apply to cyber security jobs. It wasn't easy, like a lot of people wanted to get a clearance, like security clearance. And security clearance requires you to be an American for certain years, and also have at least green card. Even some security clearance requires you to be a United States citizen. So that was really hard. So it was like really hard going through my pathway and having opportunities because I got a lot of opportunities but I couldn't follow through because of the restriction. And so I would say, my career trajectory has not been the best so far, because of that, because of restriction with either being a green card holder or being an American citizen, so I wouldn't say it would have been the best. And so, yeah, that is it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that, too. You…one of your last statements in that question is quite relevant to the next question which I wanted to know about. How well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role now?

**Participant 23:** Hmm! So my current role, my skills… emm, my academic skills, will I say it is fully utilized, yes and no at the same time, because yes, in the aspect that I'm in charge of the cyber security structure of the organization that I'm right now, and I'm helping with the emmm…because I work present…okay, yeah, right, so I was trying not to mention where I work. But anyways, so I would say, it's not being fully utilized because there are a lot of things that I did that I can't really do because of, like I said, because of the restriction of my role.

**Interviewer:** Because of those restrictions.

**Participant 23:** Yes, so I would say, it's not fully utilized.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 23:** (inaudible)

**Interviewer:** Okay, these questions are kind of related in different ways. The next question I wanted to ask, your specific experience about how you're navigating that professional landscape. You've mentioned some of these things but let me just read the question to you in case you have something to add to what you already said. What barriers have you faced in the professional landscape, such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications, or work-based discrimination? And what strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

**Participant 23:** Hmm! So I would say with the licensing barrier, like I said, maybe if I have like from different country. So my master's degree was from United States, so I didn't really have a restriction with that. Like, people look here, I mean, they look at your highest level of education which is from United States so they probably didn’t even check my bachelor's if it was in Nigeria but they knew, okay, I went to school here. So I wasn't really…I didn't have any restriction on that. And with the organization, I would say, sometimes when you…maybe the first time, you have to prove yourself, because I mean you have the accents, you're an African, you have the African accent, so you have to be like extra, to prove that, “oh, I'm intelligent, I know what I'm doing, I just have a different accent than you all.” So I would say, that is something, and what else, again?

**Interviewer:** I wanted to know about workplace discrimination.

**Participant 23:** Okay, workplace discrimination. So workplace discrimination, I wouldn't say there's any form…for me personally, I haven't had something so significant that I would say I will hold on to. I haven't ever had any form of discrimination at work. The only discrimination that I would say is, probably, it's not even discrimination, I would just say me being different.

**Interviewer:** Hmm

**Participant 23:** Yes, so, and it's just…I feel it's a personal thing. So I haven’t faced any form of discrimination.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for expressing those perspectives. I appreciate that. We can go to Section four. You mentioned the cultural shock when you came in first time as a student, then.

**Participant 23:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Earlier in the interview.

**Participant 23:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, this section will talk about cultural assimilation and social integration. There are a few questions that we’ll roll into one. I will start with the first question; how would you describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland? Have you experienced any cultural or social challenges since you migrated? How have you navigated these cultural differences in both your personal and professional life?

**Participant 23:** Hmmm, personally, I would say, Maryland is like a city, Maryland has diverse people here, unlike where I'm coming from, like where I did my master's degree, where I was for like for two years before moving down here. So it's like Maryland is more diverse, there are a lot of people from different culture, different background, different countries. So I would say, here wasn't, I already experienced a culture shock from where I was coming from, so it's easier to like navigate more. But the only thing is like the corporate America, like I don’t know, people there, there's something they say, corporate America, you have to do something this way, you have to do something that way. That was kind of like shocking to me at first, I didn't really understand how, okay you have to do this a certain way, you have to dress a certain way, you have to talk a certain way in a meeting in corporate America. There are different things…doing things in corporate America was totally different. You have to be certain way with your boss like. It was just like a structure that you have to follow to be successful in corporate America like… So that was like kind of shocking to me since I haven't worked like in any organization before, okay, apart from where I was, which is like, I mean different from Maryland. It was more, I was in the South, so it was like totally different from Maryland setting so moving here, that was something I had to learn to be able to adapt quickly, just understanding how corporate America works. And this…

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. When people migrate to other countries, they face some challenges in settling down which you have also highlighted some of these challenges you faced and people look for support from different places. Some of those support people get it from maybe families, if they are lucky to have families that moved here earlier, or if they had friends that already lived in the state or in the city they settled. Some people don't have those kind of opportunities whereby they have friends or families they can rely on. They look for organizations where they can maybe get information, or, you know, ask for direction, or one kind of support or the other. In your own case, were there any specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration since you moved over? And how well have these organizations supported your career advancement?

Participant 23: Okay, I won't say any organization but moving to Maryland, Maryland has a huge Nigerian community. I'm from Nigeria like I said, so Maryland has a huge Nigerian community, and I remember my first job, I had like two Nigerians, and they kind of like helped me navigate the workplace better, and made me understand things easier. So they, being in the organization, helped me, and I started attending a Nigerian church which had like a big Nigerian community so that was like very helpful to me, too, in Maryland, as compared to where I was coming from. So having like a big Nigerian community in Maryland, was more helpful.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Yes, many people mentioned churches as a very good place of support and exploring resources. Thank you for sharing that. We can move to section five. Section five is about dual cultural and economic challenges. I have just three questions under this section.

**Participant 23:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** So the first question is, do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and that of the United States? How do you navigate this?

**Participant 23:** Hmm, so okay, cultural expectations in what aspects, can you shed more light on that?

**Interviewer:** So I think you mentioned something close to that in the beginning, when you said as a student, the way you interacted with your professors back in Nigeria, is quite different from the way you interacted with your professors in the US here. Or maybe, for example, in a workplace in a Nigerian setting, if somebody is an older or a senior colleague, you tend to address them as Sir, Ma which here…

**Participant 23:** Oh, yes (laughs)

**Interviewer:** You call people by their first name. (laughs) Those are just a few examples.

**Participant 23:** Few examples.

**Interviewer:** It could also be something that has to do with norms and values, maybe lifestyle that, you know, yeah, it could also be something like that.

**Participant 23:** Okay. So cultural expectations in Nigeria for me was like, you have to like,

maybe family wise, you have to like be extra, like you have to make money quick, you have to like, do something really fast. Unlike here, I mean, just do your own thing at your pace. A lot of people live on credits unlike where I'm coming from so the expectation is not as high.

And what you said to about like the boss being, you know, a certain way in Nigeria and here. Here you refer to your bosses as their first name. At first it was kind of hard for me like talking to my boss like the, you know, maybe the chief information officer, and you know, talking to them, addressing them with their first name and talking to them as friends. So it was kind of like hard to me like this person is old, I can't, you know. In Nigeria you can't do that, like you have to use a mister and address them in a very boss to employee relationship. So that was like a culture shock for me, too, when I just came in, and the expectation is, and I mean here… In Nigeria, it was more like people expect you to like, the bosses expect you to do certain thing, and you can't really voice your…because before I started working in the oil and gas, I worked like in a school, I think I didn't mention that, immediately after my education, bachelor's degree right? So bosses, they kind of like…you have to do certain things, you can't really voice your emotions unlike here that you can say, okay, this is this, this is what I'm feeling, and this is…like, you can easily voice your emotion, you have a right as an employee. Basically.

**Interviewer:** Hmmm, thank you for sharing those examples. You mentioned something that is quite related to the next question I want to ask. You were talking about finances as a Nigerian, from that cultural background you have to be able to make money so that the money you make is not just for you, it's for other people, too.

**Participant 23:** (laughs) Yes.

**Interviewer:** (laughs) So the next question and the last question under this section is related to finance and remittances. So the question is, have you faced economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members back in Nigeria? What strategies do you use to balance these dual responsibilities?

**Participant 23:** Hmmm, that's a good question (laughs). Okay. So you know, as an immigrant here, I mean Nigerian immigrants and even other immigrants like you. You been here compared to like the currency rates, probably, let me say naira rate, is like it’s higher and so people just assume the money you're making if you convert it to like the rates of currency in Nigeria, it’s like high, so people expect so much from you like they expect you to like, send okay, $100 is just this. People don't understand that here, even though $100 sounds small, it could cover a lot of things, it could cover your grocery for the week, it could cover your grocery for 2 weeks, it could cover a lot of things. So, but people assume that okay, because of the rates of currency is different, and so you are obligated or not even obligated, you're constantly being taxed to do…to send money, or probably help family back home. And how have I been doing that? I would say, I do what I can, and if I can't send anything because I would…will I say, I've been trying to add a budget of what I send back home to what I gain, no, I haven't been doing that because I mean, I just started working so it's not something… But in the future, what I plan to do is add, like, send in anything back home, put it in a budget so I don't get over overwhelmed. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that perspective. We are now in the last section, section six, recommendations and emmm, as someone who has lived in this country for the past 4 years, and someone who has also experienced some kind of limitations in terms of restrictions in, I mean, what you can do and want you can’t do. And as someone who has high level of academic qualifications, you had a bachelor's degree in Nigeria, then you have a Master's degree here. You’re in information technology, cyber security. You've worked in business, you've done oil and gas upstream in Nigeria before you moved over here and you said you also worked in a school too. And as immigrant, based on all these things you've shared with me, I believe you are someone who really understand the challenges immigrants with high level of education, professional skills and worth of knowledge and experience from Africa face when they come over to the US. The question I want to ask is, in this environment in Maryland here, and the US in general, do you think there are policies or practices or programs that kind of help highly educated African immigrants to succeed well in their career here, and, on the other hand, do you also think there are policies and programs that kind of limit or hinder their career growth in the US, from your own perspective?

**Participant 23:** Okay. So from my perspective, I would say there are no like policies that help you feel or help you create…like that helps you, like for people that have like advanced…that are highly educated in United States, I don't think there are any policies that help with that. Because, having a degree in Nigeria and having a degree here, a lot of people feel is like totally different, like it's not as recognized as you having your degree here. But I feel things are just getting a little bit better, unlike before from my understanding, like now you can get like certifications to add to your degree, just to show that okay, this certification is from the United States. So maybe I would say, that is not even a policy, so I wouldn't say the policies help, it's just something that I know that’s helping people that are highly educated, just adding certifications to what they have. So that is not a policy. So I won't say there's any policy that helps people, because I already had my bachelor's degree before coming here, and I could not even walk with that. I had to like get my master's degree complete it before being able to like work in like United States, so I wouldn't see there’s any support system for that.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And emm, thank you. One more question now, what changes or support systems would you suggest if they are put in place they can help highly educated Nigerian immigrants to succeed in their careers in the US. It doesn't have to be a government policy, it could be initiatives on the part of the immigrants themselves, anything at all that you think, maybe if they were there, they can make people's life easier, or maybe that transition or navigating their career in the US easier and better for them.

**Participant 23:** Okay, I would say…so are you asking for immigrants in generally, or for...

**Interviewer:** No, I'm just asking about African and Nigerian immigrants.

**Participant 23:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** In US, in Maryland.

**Participant 23:** Okay. So for me, I would say, having like a mentorship and networking program where immigrants can connect with professionals in their field, like through…like a mentorship program, or probably like a professional organization, or maybe like a networking event for people that have been here. So people that are new immigrants meet up with people that have been here for a longer time, and already have experiences with different jobs in their fields that can put them, you know, mentor them through the whole process of, you know, getting a job here, and how things work better here. So having like a mentorship or a networking programs will be a good addition, and would be highly helpful, for, like new immigrants, and probably, let me say, having more community support groups. You know, community support groups is, you know, different from mentorship program. For where, like encouraging community driven initiative, where, like immigrants can like share their experiences, or maybe their resources with each other, or maybe, like job leads and things like that. And yes, that is what I think can be very helpful. Having like a mentorship and networking program, or like a career development training within our circle of Nigerian community.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much for your time.

**Participant 23:** You’re welcome

**Interviewer:** I appreciate your time. I know you could have used this time for, you know, for something else, early this Saturday morning. I appreciate your time, and the insights that you shared with me in the course of this interview.

**Participant 23:** You're welcome, sir.

**Interviewer:** I would like to ask you if you want me to send you a copy of this or maybe a summary of the study findings, once the research is completed, please let me know. I will…

**Participant 23**: Yes, I would appreciate that.

**Interviewer**: I will provide you a copy

**Participant 23**: I will like to see, yes.

**Interviewer**: Via email.

**Participant 23**: Yes, I will.

**Interviewer**: Thank you so much. I'm going to stop the recording now.

**Participant 23**: Okay.

**Interviewer**: Thank you.

**Participant 23**: Yeah, thank you, for, you know, taking out time to interview me as well. I was happy to like, share my own insight on things, and I hope you have a nice research, and your research is able to like help the Nigerian community.

**Interviewer**: Thank you.