**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for joining us for this interview. I will start the questions now after getting your permission to record. There are 6 sections. [uh] I will start with section one.

Section one is about demographic information. Under this section, I have 5 questions. I will start the first one - Can you share your age, gender and country of origin?

**Participant 4:** Okay, thank you. Like, I am 55 years old, a female. And I'm from Osun State in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Oh, thank you. Yes, that's all we need for that question. Question 2. What is your highest level of education and what country did you obtain your degree from.

**Participant 4:** I had my BSc and MSc degrees in Oyo State, the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and I’m pursuing my PhD in Public Health in the Morgan University, U.S.A. Maryland.

**Interviewer:** Morgan State University in Maryland here?

**Participant 4:** Morgan State University, Baltimore in Maryland.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Question 3. How long have you lived in the United States specifically, in Maryland?

**Participant 4: [**Hmm]I've been in Maryland for almost 3 years now. I got to Baltimore in 2022 till date. That's three years.

**Interviewer:** Okay, did you live in any other; Is that the only place you've lived in the US?

**Participant 4:** Yes, that’s the only place I have lived.

**Participant 4:** Yes, that’s the only place.

**Interviewer:** So, you've been in the Us since 2022. Okay, thank you. What is your current profession or job title?

**Participant 4:** As I've told you, I'm pursuing my PhD in public health.

**Interviewer:** Okay, do you do any work to support yourself? Or maybe, like..

**Participant 4:** You know as a student ….

**Interviewer:** TeachingAssistant?

**Participant 4:** They don't allow us to do work outside except on campus but because we are many, they cannot afford to give everybody work so I'm not working.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. You are a full-time PhD student. Question 5. What was your profession in Nigeria before migrating?

**Participant 4:** Can I say I was? I was a lecturer in one of these polytechnics. Federal Polytechnic Auchi, in Edo State. Okay. I was a lecturer there before coming here.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. We'll quickly move to section 2. Section 2, we look at push and pull factors, factors that influence why people migrate from their country of origin.

So, the first question there is: -What motivated your decision to migrate to the US?

**Participant 4:** [Hmm**]** You know, as a lecturer, you like to move forward, you like to upgrade yourself. After finishing my MSc degree for a long time, I have been aspiring to move forward but because of the financial hardship in Nigeria, I could not but [uh]when the opportunity now came through the [uh] TETFUND (Tertiary Education Trust Fund-A Nigerian public agency that provides funding and support for higher education), I had the opportunity to come to the US for my PhD in Public Health.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Question two: -Were there specific factors in Nigeria that pushed you to leave e.g. economic, social, or political challenges?

**Participant 4:** As I have told you,I said you know [Laughs] if you want to continue (erm) in Nigeria for your maybe PhD or any other higher institution (inaudible), you need money and how much am I earning? It's not up to… don't let me just mention it. At that time, I could not continue after finishing my MSc, so I have to wait until maybe gather some money to continue my PhD in Nigeria but before that time God just opened this door and I came to USA.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. The next question - What attracted you to the United States and Maryland in particular?

**Participant 4:** As I've told you, I've told you that [uh] I wanted to continue my career though I'm a food technologist but when they sent the message to us that anybody that is interested in continuing your career, I checked the manual that they sent to us that time I could not see my course as a food technologist but I looked at the one related to food technology that's why I just picked[uh] Public Health because you are what you eat. (Interviewer: Yes).

So, food and health, I think they are related.

**Interviewer:** Yes, very well.

**Participant 4:** That is what motivated me to choose Public Health.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay, thank you. I have a follow up question based on that. I wanted to know why you chose Maryland not New York or Boston, or another state. Is there any reason or you just found a school in Maryland?

**Participant 4:** There are many schools in Maryland, but I think Nigeria and Morgan, they are connected in one way or the other. So, I came through TETFUND as I’ve told you.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay.

**Participant 4:** Not that I just chose any university, so, that’s why I came to Morgan.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay, so it seems like…

**Participant 4:** Left for me, assuming I came by myself maybe I wouldn’t have taken Morgan. Maybe I would have taken another university.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, in other words, it seems like there is an existing relationship between the people that fund your program and the school you went to? Okay. Thank you. [uh] Question 4, the last question under this section: Are there any challenges you have encountered during the migration process?

**Participant 4:** Yes. The first challenge I faced when I came, you know, as I've told you that I'm a food technologist then going to another field of public health. I'm not a medical, I don't have a medical background, so I find it difficult to adjust to that line initially.

Then another one is the language barrier. You know here if you are not, I don’t know, if you are not careful, you may not understand what your lecturer is teaching because of the accent. Though they always say our own language is strong likewise to us their own language is strong. Do you understand?

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes.

**Participant 4:** So, the language barrier. Then my background as a food technologist to pursue public health, I found it very difficult initially but with time I was able to overcome.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for, thank you for sharing that those 2 basic challenges, communication then, and change of career, more like a change of career. Okay, okay, thank you.

We'll go to Section 3 - Professional Experiences. Please tell us about your career trajectory in Nigeria before relocating to the United States.

**Participant 4: [**uh] My career in Nigeria [uh] I was a food technologist, a lecturer there, teaching the students how to become a food processor or food technologist. In Nigeria we do many practicals producing many products from raw material to finished product. Like my own line, I like processing food. So, there are many areas that we have processed different kinds of food. So, I like processing, then any other thing, any other question under that one?

**Interviewer:** Erm, yeah, I have follow up questions like how many years?

**Participant 4:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Like how many years, were you in that profession?

**Participant 4:** In Nigeria?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant 4:** Like 10 years.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So was that the only career you had in Nigeria, or were you in another career before you moved to teaching, lecturing?

**Participant 4:** No. No.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. That's what I wanted to know about that. So, you were a lecture in higher institution of learning for 10 years before you..

**Participant 4:** 10 years.

**Interviewer:** Migrated to the US. Okay, thank you.

The next question, I think you've answered this question but I will still ask in case you have anything in addition to add.

How would you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 4:** How will I do what?

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

**Participant 4:** Can you explain that one?

**Interviewer: Erm,** what I mean is - How would you, how well will you say your career is going in the right direction in the US now because you were a lecturer in Nigeria. Now you're in the US and you're pursuing a PhD degree [uh] yeah that seems like you are trying to advance in the same direction, the same career direction because some other people, maybe they were lecturer in Nigeria or they were medical doctors in Nigeria but when they come over here, due to the dimension that are peculiar to the US and the State where they live, they are not able to continue their career profession in that line. So, they go and seek other careers. That's what I mean by how will you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 4:** [uh] I think the food safety, food regulation, nutrition knowledge, they are applicable, and they are useful in public health so they are related, food technology and [uh] public health they are very related.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 4:** There is no difference.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Question 3. How well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role?

**Participant 4:** In what?

**Interviewer:** How well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role?

**Participant 4:** [Hmm] They are being utilized very well because [uh] I don’t understand that one oh very well.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So, what I mean is since you were a lecturer back in Nigeria you were teaching students for…

**Participant 4:** Yes

**Interviewer:** A period of 10 years. Do you think now that as a Phd student, are you utilizing any of those skills? Do you think you're utilizing any of those skills that you were using in Nigeria? Are you teaching anyone now? Or you're only just being a student?

**Participant 4:** For now, I'm not teaching. I'm not taking any students now.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 4:** Because you know in US you cannot just do anything anyhow. They have their own protocol, they follow protocol. If you want to do something you have to take permission or you write to do this, unlike in Nigeria, you can just go to any school or any university and apply and they take you like that but, in this place, they will just check; like I have a friend that was a let me say a lecturer in Nigeria in one of these college of education. She came here and she now looked for Job outside, teaching job but when she went there to collect the appointment letter or something like that to come to Morgan and show them that [Oh], I found a job which is related to my field so can you give me go ahead to continue? Before you know it, they say an F-1 student cannot do that or something like that. So, this place, you cannot just do anything anyhow here. They follow many policies I don’t know. [laughs]

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes, thank you. That's understandable because since you are a full-time student, so your role is you have to be a student for now maybe except until you finish your degree program. Okay.

We'll move to the next question. Question 4- What barriers have you faced in the professional landscape, such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications, or workplace, discrimination?

**Participant 4: [**Hmm] I think that one is common here. Just like a medical doctor that comes here to further his education here. I don't think they recognize that certificate here you have to start, or you have to like somebody [uh]that has done residency something in Nigeria coming here, they will ask you to add another residency. You know, something like that can just discourage somebody. They don't recognize our own certificates, especially Nigeria they don't recognize it here, you understand?

Just like me now as maybe healthcare professional, I have to upgrade myself before I can find any job here, I have to upgrade myself to their own standard here. I cannot bring my own certificate from Nigeria and say I want to just start work here. No, you have to add many things, do many exams so foreign qualifications are not so recognized here.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. The last question under this section.

What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

**Participant 4: [** Hmm] like I'll continue to do what do they call it? professional development courses, maybe writing exams, [uh] attending conferences, attending workshops, seminars, and so on to update myself. Those are the things I can easily do, or I'm doing to upgrade myself.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yes, thank you. We will move to section 4.

Section 4 is about cultural assimilation and social integration. I have 5 questions here too. Question one- How would you describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland?

**Participant 4: [**Hmm] Cultural assimilation? What is that cultural assimilation, I don’t understand that one..

**Interviewer:** So cultural assimilation will be - how do you find the culture in this new place that you are now: the food, the people, the language, …

**Participant 4:** Okay

**Interviewer:** The weather, the dressing and anything that. Yeah, the environment generally.

**Participant 4:** [oh] Okay. Let me just share one experience I had when I just came. When I came, you know, as I landed, the weather just changed, everywhere was cold because I came during winter. I was like wow! What is this one? So, a week later, myself and my friend, you know, went out and saw many of them putting their hands in their pockets. I said why are these people so proud like this; every one of them putting their hands in their pocket not knowing its weather. Nobody told me, and before you know it, I started putting my hands inside my pocket [both laughs] because of the weather. It was so cold that time, I said [oh] here's the reason why everybody puts their hand in their pocket.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant 4:** You cannot just leave your hand outside like that. There was even a time my hands were so stiff and as I entered the house, I had to put my hands in hot water. My cousin said It is not good as it’s very dangerous so the only thing I can do is to buy hand gloves or get something like balm to rub my hands. So, the weather number one. Then their dressing code, if you dress the way we are dressing here in Nigeria, I believe they will stone you people because the dressing here is nonsense.

Then the communication style. If you do not listen very well, you will not understand what they are saying, you won’t understand them. Then the cultural misunderstanding too.

There was a day we were talking and we had just resumed and I saw one of my classmates or colleagues and I said [ah] this person is so fat but thank God the person did not hear as my friends that surrounded me cautioned me not to say that again. I asked why and they “don't say fat, just say they put on weight”. So, I said [oh] thank you for telling me because if you say they are fat, that means you are abusing them. I said [oh]

I didn’t know [both laughs]. So, there are many things there; The dress code, the language[uh] communication styles, then the employment challenges. You cannot just go anywhere and work as a student, they said it's 20 hours per week or so outside the campus, so you can't just go outside and be working though many people are doing so. These are my challenges when I came; language barriers, dress code, employment challenges, and so on.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you.

**Participant 4:** You ‘re welcome.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, the second question and the third questions are related, you may have addressed some of the main issues when you answered question one. I'll still go ahead and read questions 2 and 3. Question 2 says - Have you experienced any cultural and social challenges since migrating? I think those are the things you've listed, that you've explained and the 3rd question says - How have you navigated cultural differences in your personal and professional life. Navigating means how have you managed these differences? How have you navigated cultural differences?

**Participant 4:** Okay even before that, I would like to add this: unequal opportunities. You know at times they will bring out some [uh] what would I call it now…. opportunities that you can apply to somewhere like this, like that. There was one that really pained me; one time I almost finished the application, before you know it at the end, they now said, for only citizens and am like “why did they now bring this one? So, I had to cancel it. So unequal opportunities are there. So, any job that come like this before you know it, they would say, it is only for them it’s not for international students. It’s like that here. So, going to your next question, which says what?

**Interviewer:** How have you navigated cultural differences in your personal and professional life?

**Participant 4: [**Hmm] As I’ve said, I said continued learning.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 4:** I keep updating myself every day more, maybe new research; new research, especially in the area of health and food. So, I continue to research.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you. But before I move to question 4, I want to take you back a little bit about what you just talked about unequal opportunity. I want to be sure that I understand what you're trying to say and this is what I understood you said about unequal opportunities because you said sometimes they do bring some opportunities which I believe you are referring to either scholarships and employment opportunities to you, PhD students; they bring it to PhD students…

**Participant 4:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And what you're saying is that because everybody in that class or in that environment, they are having access to that information because everybody, the common thing about all of you in that place is that you are all PhD students,

**Participant 4:** Phd students.

**Interviewer:** But you now realized at the end of the day that even though all of you are the same PhD students, but you don't have the same opportunity in the sense that because you are not a citizen, you cannot apply for those opportunities?

**Participant 4:** Yeah. Yes. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I just want us to clarify that. Thank you.

**Participant 4:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for clarifying that for me. Let's go to question 4.

Question 4- Are there specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration since you came to the US.

**Participant 4:** [Hmm] As I came, I joined [uh] APHA that is, American Public Health Association. Then I joined the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists which are under public health too.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 4:** So, these have been helpful because we do write papers, they organize workshops, seminars, conferences like that which can help us to grow in our area of program.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. I think you've mentioned some of the answers to question 5.

Question 5 is- How well have these organizations supported your career advancement? You already said you do seminars, and you write papers which help you advance your career.

**Participant 4:** [Uhm Uhm] yes

**Interviewer**: Is there any other thing to add to that?

**Participant 4:** [uh] That’s all -conferences, workshops, seminars, internship, and so on like that. These will keep me to, update myself in my area. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Because while talking to other people, I also hear that some people, people are different; some people talk about Nigerian organizations maybe, like churches or cultural groups that they attend, that also give them information and support in one way or the other. Do you have anything like that, too?

**Participant 4:** Anything like[uh]

**Interviewer:** Yeah, like maybe a cultural organization or an African organization, or a Nigerian organization; maybe like a church or a professional, or may be like an alumni group or something.

**Participant 4:** No, I don’t have.

**Interviewer: [**Oh] Okay, okay, thank you. I just want to be sure that we're not missing that part. Okay, thank you for sharing that. Section 5. Section 5 is about [uh]- Dual cultural and economic challenges. The first question this is- Do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States? If so, how do you navigate this?

**Participant 4:** Do I do what?

**Interviewer:** Do you feel torn? do you feel like at times it's confusing, the cultural expectation of Nigeria or the United States. How do you navigate this?

**Participant 4:** [uh] I don't know if I'm correct like the communication style; the way they communicate here…

**Interviewer:** Yeah, that can be part of it.

**Participant 4:** …is not the same thing like in Nigeria especially in Yoruba land {One of the tribes in Nigeria} when you are talking to an elderly person, you don't look straight into the eye of that elderly person but here maybe 2 year old or 3 year old child talking to an elderly person, you will see the boy or girl looking at straight to the eye of that person which is not our culture.

When you are talking to an elderly person in Nigeria you don't look straight to the eye, but here they do because they believe that when you look straight to the eyes, there is nothing that person can do to you [laughs]

Interviewer: Yes, that’s true.

**Participant 4:** But in Nigeria they will say you are too proud if you look straight to the eye of that person. So, I think that's it.

Then another one is caring. I look at the life of these people here, once the children are up to 18 years they are free to do anything, they are free to leave the family, they are free to go and rent their own house leaving their parents. Even when they grow old, there’s nobody to take care of them and that's why many of them just die inside the house and they don’t even know because you are lonely and nobody to look after them.

Unlike Nigeria, until the parents die, the children will still be coming, taking care of them, looking after them, providing for them but here once they are 18 years they believe that carry your cross and go that’s it. I believe I answered your questions?

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes, yes, thank you for sharing that. Question 2-

Have you encountered economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members in Nigeria?

**Participant 4:** [Haa] Very well. Families back in Nigeria believe that once you are in US, money is just falling on the road and you are just packing the money. You don't even need to work, as you are walking, you are seeing money on the ground, which is not.

So, in Nigeria, they don't want to know whether you are suffering here, you are in the cold or not so far, the money is sent to them.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, question 3. What strategies do you use to balance these dual responsibilities? How do you manage this pressure of need to send money home and affording to send the money home, and also being able to take care of your responsibilities here?

**Participant 4:** [ha-ha] You have to let them know what you are passing through here; discuss with them and let them know that I'm a student here. That’s number one.

Number 2, There is no work like that here that am doing to be sending enough money to you, so the little I send you have to manage it because I'm still a student and they don't allow us to work unlike those who are not student. So, I have to explain to them- to my children, to my husband, to all my family, those who are very, very close to me that I send money to.

Let me just give you an example, like one of my cousins though I don't think that one knows anything and she's a student. As I'm a student here, I tried sending money to them during Christmas in December and before you know it by first week in February, she sent a message to me again that I should send another one. I had to open up to her and tell her “do you know that I'm a student here? She said she doesn't know. I said, yes, you have to know today I'm a student, I'm not working here so whatever I send to you is just forced out of what I have. So now, if you don't know, know it today that I'm a student; anything I have I can easily give you but you don't need to be forcing anything on me to bring money every time. “Was not 2 months ago I sent money to you and you are actually asking for another one. No, stop it then she apologized and I said, “Okay better.”

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thanks.

**Participant 4:** So, they need to be explained to what you are passing through here.

so that they will not know ….

**Interviewer:** So that the expectation will not be too high

**Participant 4:** [uh uh] so they have to know.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Yeah. We are coming to the end of the interview. We are in Section 6 now.

**Participant 4:** Ahh!

**Interviewer**: Section 6 is questions are about recommendations. I have 4 questions. So, I’ll go to the first one really quick.

What changes or support systems would you suggest helping highly educated Nigerian immigrants succeed in their career in the US?

**Participant 4:** Hmm! As I said earlier, number one is the Language barrier when I came. So, if there will be something like a language training program as immigrants are coming in; if there is a way they can organize training for them at least the basic small things they can just grab or to know before they meet with these people. So, let there be language training program for immigrants.

Then I think there there should be something like a cultural orientation workshop maybe by conducting workshop that introduces immigrant to the local culture, their social norms to reduce misunderstanding as I told you that time when I was referring to someone that put on weight and I said fat.

So, all these do's and don'ts if there's a way, they can just organize something like workshop...

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 4:** … for them so that they will know where they are going, so that the citizens will not be offended.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay thank you. Question 2 -Are there policies or programs you feel help or create barriers for highly educated Nigerian African immigrants in Maryland or the United States?

**Participant 4:** I believe I've answered that one.

**Interviewer:** [uh] This one is in two parts. Do you think there are policies or programs that are already on the ground that help people to settle down well when they come? Or do these programs and policies create barriers for people you know like, let me give you an example of what you've said when you said in a Phd class, you believe everybody in that Phd class should have equal opportunity , they shouldn't bring or they shouldn't announce scholarship opportunities for Phd students but you now realize that even though you're a Phd student, you qualify for the admission and you admitted into that program but you now realize that there's a limit on your capacity or your ability to be able to apply for that scholarship because you are not a US citizen.

Maybe that's one example of what we can say, maybe it is more like a barrier. It should be something that should encourage you but it's like a barrier. Or maybe if you can think of any other thing that is a barrier like that, or it could also be something that helps people to also do very well in their career when they come over here [long pause] and if you also cannot think of anything now, we can move to the next question.

**Participant 4:** Okay let’s move to the next question.

**Interviewer:** Let's move to the next question. We're almost done. [uh]Question 3. Are there any policies or programs that you think should be implemented to address barriers…

**Participant 4:** [interrupts] that’s the question you asked just now. It’s still the same thing.

**Interviewer:** [uh]They are different in the sense that the second question is asking if there are any policies and programs that is, practices that are already in place that encourage people or that create barrier for people.

This one now is “Is there anyone that you think in your own mind that should be implemented to address problems faced by Nigerian and African immigrants.” And I, you said something about language training program.

**Participant 4:** Yes, I've said that one.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, which I think is applicable to this question, too. But I just don't want to limit your answer to that in case you have additional things to add, if you don't have additional things to add, then we can move to the other.

**Participant 4:** There's none.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then, let's just move to the very last question and the very last question is just [uh], it's more like a blanket opportunity for you to say anything that you wish you want to add.

Question four is- Do you have any additional comments or insights you would like to share?

**Participant 4:** [long pause] What I just want to advise is that language barrier and employment. If they can do something about the language. There was a time I was going somewhere and this person, I think the person is Spanish or so. A woman going somewhere and does not know where to go and does not understand English. She had to write something on paper, and she showed me.

I wanted to help the woman as I asked “What is it, where are you going? She could not tell me anything, she showed the paper, she said they wrote it down. No English and I too, do not understand your language, we couldn’t communicate.

So, I just pitied the woman that day because there was nobody to help. Everyone there that time could help because we didn’t understand the language, so I had to leave because I don't understand Spanish and what was written was in Spanish and not English at least for somebody to help the woman. How many people can read Spanish?

So, language barrier, then the employment I don't know what they can do you know employment here if you are not careful. I don't want to say much about employment here.

**Interviewer:** I understand that, at least from your perspective, being somebody who's in a Phd program

**Participant 4:** Uhm

**Interviewer**: There are rules and regulations that guide what kind of employment you could have based on the kind of visa you have and I think that's..

**Participant 4:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** That's fair and reasonable but the takeaway for me is the the commonality of you being in the Phd Program and they saying that these scholarships are for Phd programs but you being limited even though you are qualified as a Phd student but you don't qualify as a citizen. I think that's a very big takeaway.

And the other thing you mentioned about language training for people , not even to be able to speak the language but to also kind of understand the culture and the ways and the peculiarities of people in a particular community. I think that's also very, very important.

I want to thank you for your time and the valuable input you shared during this…..

**Participant 4:** [interrupts] the question has finished?

**Interviewer**: Yeah, the question has finished. I just want to thank you for taking time out to you know, to sacrifice your time on a Sunday afternoon like this. I appreciate your time and….

**Participant 4:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** If you would like to receive a summary of the study findings after we complete the research. I will provide you with a copy via email if you let me know.

**Participant 4:** Oh, thank you so much. Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. I will stop the recording now.