**Participant 5**: Okay I just..

**Interviewer:** So, yes, after giving me consent and permission to record, I will start the interview right now. So, before I start, there are 6 sections in this interview. So, there are sets of questions under each section. So, I will start with the first section, which is demographic information.

So, the first question under this section I have 5 questions, so I'll start with the first one.

But the 1st question says- Can you please share your age, gender and country of origin?

**Participant 5**: Okay. So, my age I’m 34 years old. Country of origin: I was actually born here but I didn't grow up here . I actually, grew up most of my life in Nigeria before coming back.

**Interviewer:** That makes you a proper Nigerian.

**Participant 5:** [ Bothlaughs] why do you say that.

**Interviewer:** Yes

**Participant 5**: Right. So, my age, country of origin, did I cover everything?

**Interviewer 5:** And gender?

**Participant 5**: And gender, am a female

**Interviewe**r: Okay, thank you. [Uh] Question two, what's your highest level of education and what country did you obtain your degree from.

**Participant 5**: So, I got a bachelor in Medical rehabilitation, that’s my highest qualification from Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria.

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

**Participant 5**: [Uh] I've lived in Maryland for 8 years.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Next question is [uh]- What's your current profession or job title?

**Participant 5**: My current profession is Physical Therapist in the United States in Maryland.

**Interviewer**: Okay. What was your profession back in Nigeria before you moved back to the US?

**Participant 5**: I was a physiotherapist similar as physical therapist.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you. We will move to section two. Section two I have four questions, and it's about push and pull factors. Factors that influence why people migrate.

So, I will start with the first question under that section - What motivated your decision to migrate to the United States?

**Participant 5: [uh]**So, one of the motivating factors for me to move to the United States was one my family. Secondly, for greener pasture.

You know, with the way things were going in Nigeria it wasn't palatable, the economy was nose-diving, and it just seemed like it was not, you know, getting better. [Uh]even as a professional in Nigeria, you know, you couldn't really stand that at par with your colleague in other parts of the world. So, [uh]things are not doing too well back home. So, I would say family was one of the most motivating factors, and secondly, was economic situation to find a greener pasture, you know, for my life.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. You actually answered question two already. Question two says – What, were there specific factors in Nigeria that pushed you to leave economic, social, and political challenges. I think you already answered that question, except you have one or two factors to add other than that we can move to question. 3.

**Participant 5:** [Uh**]** Basically, I said the economy, political, Infrastructure. You know, I remember back in those days we always have to improvise everything that we do, yes infrastructure.

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

Okay-. What attracted you to the United States and Maryland in particular? I think this question is about Maryland now.

**Participant 5:** [Uh] So what attracted me to Maryland was when I was doing my licensing and credentialing, Maryland happens to be one of the friendly states to immigrants; migrants in terms of you know, credentialing, your documentation and settling them professionally into the country they were very friendly you know, in that aspect it was easier for migrants to settle professionally in the country.

So, it was majorly my credentialing process, you know it was much easier, and the requirements in Maryland compared to some other states.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. I'll ask the last question under this section. Question four –

What challenges have you encountered during the migration process?

**Participant 5:** [Erm ] It really; my journey is like very (inaudible) [laughs] (inaudible)… was present for me throughout the whole journey, I mean the whole process is time bound and a cumbersome process but everything kind of pretty much moved you know (inaudible) for me when I was ready to pursue it, It took me about a year and a half to settle in professionally when I came into this country as a physical therapist so it wasn't really too bad. (Inaudible) is passing the professional exam after I've been recommended for the board exam, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. [Uh]we move to Section 3 - Professional Experiences.

Under this section. I also have five questions. I'll start with the first one - Please tell us about your career trajectory in Nigeria before relocating to the United States. You said you were a physiotherapist back in Nigeria?

**Participant 5:** Yes, correct. Trajectory in what sense?

**Interviewer**: Uh trajectory in the sense that uh how did you grow in terms of career, or maybe the places you work or [uh]…

**Participant 5**: Oh, okay, yeah. I mean there were opportunities for growth in Nigeria as well. You know, you could either go clinical or you could be an academician, you know.

[uh] I was more into the clinical aspects back home and in the clinical aspects, you know, you come in as a junior physical therapist and move on to senior physical therapist, chief physical therapist, principal therapist or HOD of a department, uh you know they were cadre like that.

So, there are two trajectories in my profession back home in Nigeria. It would either be the academician pathway or clinician pathway [uh]few occasions we have a few people that will combine both together like doing the academics and clinical especially like our professors you know, they had double or dual appointment working in the federal institutions, you know most of the federal universities so, they work as the consultant and as a lecturer .

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah. Thank you. Question 2- How would you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 5**: [Erm] For the United States, I mean seriously [Laughs] I'm not so much about, you know the height of the profession. We have professional body [APTA], I’m not a member quite yet. I'm just a regular physical therapist and it's just more of you know working my job and getting multiple jobs [laughs] to meet your needs and your demand.

**Interviewer: [**Laughs]

**Participant 5:** And over here I think it’s more like your specialty, you know. You can either be geriatrics, sports therapist, out-patients setting. It's mostly like the setting that you work that will determine your trajectory. I, personally I work in the outpatient and the geriatric setting.

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

**Participant 5**: It's maximally utilized. I’m an evaluating physiotherapist, supervising physiotherapist, I supervise my patients, I supervise the physical therapist assistant. It's maximally utilized, you know. I determine like I said, the kind of care for my patient in the clinic that I work at and my other PRN job ( per diem job-often flexible and as needed jobs) as well so maximally utilized, I would say.

**Interviewer**: Okay, yeah, thank you for sharing that. We go to the next question. Question four. Question 4 is about barriers and the question goes thus. - What barriers have you faced in the professional landscape, such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications or workplace discrimination? I know you talked about licensing a few minutes ago.

**Participant 5: Yeah.**  So, licenses, certification; It’s not that bad but things are evolving and changing everywhere in the world and in the US. Right now, the entry level for our profession is doctorate.

So, if you're coming from another country without a doctorate degree in physical therapy, it's difficult to integrate into the system but there are bridging courses that you can do.

At this point, you have to have at least a master’s from outside of the country in order for you to be fully fit into the work landscape in the United States. [ Uh] so, for my licensure, of course you have to be recommended for the license, you have to do your credentialing.

In doing your credentialing, they match up your courses and see what you're lacking, and they recommend makeup courses. You can either do the make up courses here in the United States, or I think there's some other countries outside of the United States like the Philippines that you can actually still get your credit.

So, once you fulfill the requirements you get your licensure. It's a tedious process and every time they have to communicate back to you or they have to, you know, identify an admission, you have to wait, you know, time based before they can re-examine your papers.

So, [uh]the best is that, you know what you're going for, sometimes you could have done the credentialing and then, I’m sorry the makeup process, and then go for your credentialing so that way they don't have any deficiency in your course and then they can recommend you for the exam.

Of course, doing the board exam, the way we do our exam back home is quite different in the way they set the question so it's always going to be a lot of re-training to prepare for the exam in order for you to be able to have a passing score in order for you to have a license from a jurisdiction of a state.

[uhm] Racial discrimination; I mean [laughs] I work a lot in the black community. There's some, I'm not big on racial discrimination. Does it exist? Yes, it does exist but when you know what you're doing, know your worth, they see that you know what you're doing, they eventually accept you in.

And you know, of course, language, cultural barrier is one push back. But [ah] we are, every day[laughs] we're trying to get better in order to integrate into the system but of course there are those challenges in the work environment but yeah, you can; you can always overcome them.

Just make sure you know what you're doing, you know your worth, and you do the best in everything that you do.

**Interviewer**: Okay

**Participant 5:** [laughs] hope I’ve not returned to the other [laughs]

**Interviewer**: Yeah, yeah, you kind of touched a little on the next question. Question five. But before we get to question five, I wanted to clarify something that you talked about in question four when I was asking, the one you were just talking about now, these barriers that people face in the professional landscape.

You spoke extensively about licensing requirements and the follow up question I have about licensing requirement is that [uh] , this question is coming based on my conversation with people in other careers where people say, you know, I'm coming from Nigeria, I'm coming from Africa, and there are people coming from other countries ,maybe more advanced countries that tend to have some certain waivers ,professional waivers for credentialing but because I'm coming from Africa or Nigeria, those waivers are not applicable to people like me.

Do you have similar challenges in your own line of physical….?

**Participant 5:** [Uh] None in physical therapy.

Interviewer: Physical therapy, yes.

**Participant 5**: [uh] I don't really believe so. I don't believe so because they do credentialing. So, what they do is that you submit your credentials, your transcript directly from your school to their credentialing office, we use the FCCPT, there are other ones from other state but the most common one is the FCCPT. You transfer the same directly to them, you transfer all the diplomas, all the degrees that you have gotten in your in the, that is relevant to the profession, you submit it to them, and they go to the credentialing. So, they have a standard, it doesn't matter where you're coming from, they have a standard.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 5**: …And they have their own curriculum. So, they want to make sure that you know what is in your curriculum matches what is in their curriculum. So, when you have it, they check the box, you don’t have to do it.

But here there are some gray areas. So, depending on how your school prepares your transcript, not transcript, there is course description, that's what they call it.

**Interviewer:** Okay

**Participant 5:** So, it depends on how detailed your school prepares your course description, because the course description is what helps them to understand you know, the content of all the courses that you took in the university or in the school that you took it from so they ask for the transcript and course description.

So, for me, you know, when I was doing mine, I had to do like some back work with my lecturer, work closely with my lecturers back home to write a detailed course description so which would help them to understand your course content, what you have done and to see if it matches with what they are doing here. So, when you have that, you check the box and you don't have to do it. [uh] I don't see any discrimination in the profession so long as you do your work, and your school does their work in giving them a detailed course description that will help them translate your course into the American standard. Yeah.

And when you are deficient, that is, you haven't met a requirement. They ask you to go meet the requirement.

**Interviewer**: Okay, yes, thank you. [uh] I don't know if you still have anything to say about the last question under this section which is question. 5- What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

And you know you talked about being a person of excellence at your job..

**Participant 5:** Yeah, being the best, excellence, know your work, know your content, know your thing, be willing to learn. It's a learning curve, you know, [Laughs] coming to this country [uh] It shook me a little bit because you have to learn. Not like you don't know those things, but the ways and manners are really things, your approach, you know, slightly different.

So, you have to learn that curve, so be open to learning the curve. don't be adamant, don't be too resistant, [ah]you might have some pushback like, don't get it so personal. [Uh]Just try to embrace the culture without of course not diluting your own personality but you have to embrace their culture, know their ways of life and apply to them. So, [uh] if you do that, I want to feel like you're going to be good.

Of course, there's always a learning process. I remember it took me about a year to actually settle down, it’s not that bad into my profession to learn the gray areas of the profession, you know relating with the system and in the workplace, etiquette and all. So, give yourself, you know, chance permission to learn that and you will be fine.

It also depends on where you work; some people are more accommodating than others, you know. The thing is that my profession is in high demand so, if you have all your documentation, your credentials, there's plenty of job for you to do, if they are not so welcoming in that place of work, you can always, you know, look for something different.

Of course, the setting you also start with also matters. You know there's some settings that have more support system than the other settings. So, I think getting the right settings would help you so that you're not by yourself, because there are settings that will just put you aloof like close in the water, and you're like one day, what are you doing? There are some settings that will give you the support you have, you work with other therapists, you know, you work with your managers, you see them every day, and you know. So, it just depends on what settings that you work in, so choosing the right settings at the beginning, you know, those matters and helps you settle down.

I**nterviewer**: Okay, thank you for sharing that. [uh] We quickly move to Section 4, cultural assimilation and social integration. I also have five questions. I will start with the first one.

The 1st question is - How would you describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland?

**Participant 5**: [uh] So, the cultural assimilation, of course It’s a lot of cultural difference and integrating, assimilating the culture, it’s one big thing that I had to learn. You know, the way, the norms of the environment, you know, assimilating into it.

[Uh]There was a course I was made to as a deficiency from my, you know, all the courses I did back on multicultural competence you know, understanding the culture where you work in, understanding what's acceptable, what's not acceptable, how to embrace the multi-culture that we have in Maryland.

So, [uh]yeah, it was a learning curve for me…(inaudible)

**Interviewer:** Okay. Sorry for bothering you about cultural [uh] and cultural assimilation[laughs]. This second question is a little bit about it. Maybe it's a little bit more specific, it said.

The question says that- Have you experienced any cultural or social challenges since you migrated?

**Participant 5**: Yeah, of course I have. You know, the cultural challenges. I remember going to a particular because I work; I've covered quite a few places, you know, studying in Maryland and practicing. Depending on you know the predominant culture of the setting that I work in, you know kind of set the tone of things.

I've been to a place that I wasn't you know, readily accepted, this doesn't happen oftentimes.

Of course you know, the accent is one thing and that we have to kind of modify it to be accepted into the culture but some people just because of you know ,your status you kind of get pushed back from, like you don't know what you're doing or your coming from this country they try to put you at the bottom of the ladder just because you know of your accent, of your color [Ah] but like I said, I don't allow that to really get on me.

I you know, give them time to see my works and my competence, and eventually most of them warm up, other people will just not, you know you can't help it and I don't really force myself with people. I'm here to help you, hey? If you want my help. If you don't want my help, I try to convince you as much as I can, but if still push back, you know. I just let it go. I don't force myself so much on you.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay, thank you. The next question is a[Laughs] little bit related to that – Have you navigated cultural differences in your personal and professional life. I think you've answered that question except you have something to add to it.

**Participant 5**: [Uhm] So, navigating it.

**Interviewer:** Yes, managing it.

**Participant 5**: [uhm] Managing it you know, I try to be open to other culture, open to their way of thinking, you know, chime in my own culture too, the fact that I'm here I don't want to trash my culture just because I'm assimilating and blending into your culture. I mean, some of them would want to know about your culture so its shared experience thing.

I sometimes, I'm very observant, you know, I don't, I'm not too forward when I meet people, I just, you know, try to, someone said laid back but you know, give them the rope and just watch and also chime in, you know, as needed, not like am shy [uh] I chime in as needed, you know. I take my time to understand the culture and system where I am at every point in time you know, I learn, I try to learn the whole way of life you know, of whatever situation that I have, even where I live it's multicultural. I have people from Russia, American, black you know, [uh] living around just being for there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay, thank you so much. The next question, - Are there specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration?

**Participant 5:** [Uhm] yeah of course, my community supported my integration, you know they helped me get resources that ordinarily I might not be able to attain from other culture.

[Uh] so my community, some other community, my place of work, you know, my place of work [ uh] we try to make it fair for all, no racial discrimination, no social discrimination just trying to bridge the gap, you know, our virtue, ethics and my profession because it's people from all over. So, [uh] those communities have helped you know, integrate me into the system.

**Interviewer**: Okay, thank you [uh] those communities, [I] So, my next question, I'll come back to that. So, my next question is-

How well have these organizations supported your career advancement? I wanted to see if there is a way we can put those communities in different classification. [Ah] are they, those communities you mentioned are they are work based communities? Any professional? or any like religious or maybe cultural, because why I’m asking is [uh] some people have mentioned churches; I know people are different and [uh]the dimension is different for different people.

Well, some have mentioned churches, alumni groups, professional organizations.

Do you have anything to add to that? I just wanted to be sure we are not… (inaudible).

**Participant 5:** No. Oh, yeah. So, in integrating into the system. Like I'm a faith person like I said so definitely my faith community has helped me greatly in integrating.

Recently[uh] we started something called ‘Challenge’ So, challenge, is like helping us to really integrate into this system and helping us, you know, find our feet in the system. How we can maximize the system, how we can move up in our profession, entrepreneurship, and they connect us with mentors, people of like minds, put us together in a court system, you know, like the mentors, encourage us, give us resources on how to, you know better integrate into the system.

Of course, [uh] my alumni body, we belong to my professional alumni you know, I meet people that have been in the country longer than I have, people that came the same time I've been and those who are coming, you know, right after me giving us, you know, resources, ideas, you know.

We have conferences bi- annually two conferences. The year that we come together we may share ideas, they give talks. They give you know, to help integrate, integrate into the system.

[uh]My family members, too you know we’re in similar profession, also share resources and share, you know useful materials and ideas to be able to integrate into the system.

**Interviewer:** [Erm] Thank you for talking about that extensively. We move on to section five, dual cultural and economic challenges. I have just 3 questions here. The first question is-

Do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States? If so, how do you navigate this?

**Participant 5**: Do I feel? Can you say the question one more time, please?

**Interviewer:** Do you feel tone between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and that of the United States? How do you navigate this?

**Participant 5:** [uh] So, the cultural expectation between Nigeria and the United States is different. You know we have more communal support in Nigeria and over here is more independent support.

So, the communal support, they come with their own advantage and disadvantage especially for people that are up in the cadre so as much as we support you in doing something you also have to fall back on them and over here, its yourself.

So, you have a lot of things that you have to handle all by yourself so navigating is like being in the right community and just try to do the best that you can do. Try to cut your coat according to your size. And of course, you know because we cannot say we're in this country and then forget everything about home; I'm pro you know trying and giving back to the community that has raised us.

So, reaching out you know to people that need help back to school, that you know made us a product of what we have ; our achieving our dream at this point and give back to the community that raised us. So, it's just like a give and take situation.

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

**Participant 5**: [ uhm] I mean, I'm a very, you know straight forward person. I'm not going to give anybody hope or expectation, and I'm not going to allow you to over pressurize me. I love to give back, you know, which also is a little bit demanding on me because that means I have to make accommodation for how much I help you know, back home but I don't do more than I can do, I do what I can at every point in time. I do my best at every point in time, I try not to allow myself to be over pressurized, you know, I reach out to people, you know, and also encourage them; kind of give them ideas of how to also be self-sufficient so that way you don't keep coming back and back.

Yeah, I just [laughs] I don’t know if I answered the question?

**Interviewer:** Yes, you did, and I think you already did because you answered the last question in that section which was about strategies that you use to balance these dual responsibilities.

[Uh] I know you talked about [uh]

**Participant 5:** I have to work extra.

**Interviewer**: [laughs] taking extra job

**Participant 5:** I do. Yeah, I do actually do. You don’t want to know[laughs] how my week goes. I just have to like to cut down, you know, balancing everything here in this country It's a lot but I thank God for, I have you know, quite a good support, and I'm grateful to God for that. You know I have a good support that can enable me to do most of the things that I do. [uh yeah]

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you.

**Participant 5**: Do extra work to accommodate that [laughs]

**Interviewer:** Yeah, [laughs] many people do that. Thanks for sharing that. Yeah. We are getting to the end of the interview. We are on the last section, section six and section six is just about recommendations. I have four questions; I will go through the questions so that I can let you go.

The 1st question is- What changes or support system would you suggest to help [um] highly educated Nigerian immigrants succeed in their career in the US?

**Participant 5**: [Um]So, I know people don't have family support, and they're still able to do it.

Of course, it depends on your scenario[laughs], It's case by case. you don't do more than you can take and you don't live a life of impressing people around and then, you know you're biting more than you can actually chew, try to get the support as much as you can. Of course, in this country you also have to be careful. You cannot just leave your if you have children, just leave them alone to nannies or to caregiver. You also have to oversee things I don't believe you work and work and oversee what you need to oversee[laugh] so get the support that you, trusted support I would say that you can get.

Also, you can pay your way out of a few things you know, like cleaning the house, some food that you eat or Instacart, you know, like busy running between shows and grocery, shopping, and all of that, so you can source out some of your chores. We don't have run out, and get trusted support.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 5**: Yeah. [laughs] And also managing your time, you know. Managing your time well, time management.

**Interviewer**: Okay, thank you. Second question - Are there policies or programs you feel help or create barriers for highly educated Nigerian and African immigrants in the US?

Let me try to clarify this a little. So, what I mean is do you think there are policies or programs that are already in existence that influence how Nigerian and African immigrants succeed in the State and in the US at large.

**Participant 5**: [uh] To a large extent I believe American system is a system [uh]of you know, it’s a system of excellence and a system of it kind of rewards you for what you put into the system.

Fine, are there privileges? They are privileges but often at times they cannot always deny your content, your virtue, if you have it, you got it, if they know that you have it, they're going to do anything to get what you have.

[pause] Well, I'm talking about the health profession you know I'm not quite sure what is obtainable in other professions.

**Interviewer**: Okay.

**Participant 5:** Yeah, but I feel like it's a system that rewards excellence like if you have it, in the end they recognize that you have it. Yeah, it might be a painful way to give it to you, but they don’t have a choice. They will. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

I'm talking like this, because, you know, even the places that I've worked, and they are like, oh, they don't want an African person to come, when they desperately need your help, all those things…(inaudible) like they still call for your help. [laughs]

**Interviewer**: Okay, thank you for sharing that. Question three - Are there any policies or programs that you think should be implemented to address the barriers faced by Nigerian and African immigrants in the state?

**Participant 5**: [uh] So, one of these…I’m gonna take it back to our own days. [Uh] one of the things that affected us like the physical therapy from back home into integrating into the system is the level of our academic content (inaudible).

So, we need to always brace up from time to time and make sure that we are at par with the western world and the world at large.

But the good thing is physical therapy used to be at the level of 4-year degree, you know we talked about, but now, when I was in school in many years ago, it was a 4 year degree, but then they break it up to like a five-year degree.

Now, at this point they just, I think, about a couple weeks ago they have just awarded the program to be at a level of DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) which would commensurate with the American level. So, when that happens, it makes it easy for people to be able to integrate into the American system. So back home they should always make sure that our program is at par with the western world. So that way people can easily integrate into the different Western world.

Then, in this country we're not so much in control of what happens in the country but what programs can they you know, give? They can do more of like a scholarship, sponsorship program so that way people can have a pathway into integrating into the system, increase the quota for professional immigrants from Africa, you know, in the United States.

So that way you know, we can integrate better also into the system without worries about the proper documentation or what not.

**Interviewer**: Thank you so much. [uh] Yeah, just one more last question. - Do you have any additional comments or insight you would like to share? Maybe something you feel I should have asked, or something you feel is very important for me to know.

**Participant 5**: (Uh) I think we kind of touched on most of those things. I'm good.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time this Sunday evening. 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, I will provide a copy via email.

**Participant 5**: Okay, that's fine you can provide me a copy. I would like to know [uh]what you'll find out in the research

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you.

**Participant 5**: You’ re welcome.