

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

The background of the page features a large, faint watermark of the University of Cape Coast crest. The crest is a shield divided into three horizontal sections. The top section is red and contains a yellow eagle with its wings spread. The middle section is white with blue wavy lines and a central yellow circle containing a red stylized figure. The bottom section is red and contains a white banner with the Latin motto 'NOBIS'. Two red banners curve around the sides of the shield, with the words 'VERITAS' on the left and 'LUMEN' on the right.

TOWARDS AN ENHANCED SETTLING-IN-SYSTEM FOR FRESH
STUDENTS IN C. K. TEDAM UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND
APPLIED SCIENCES (CKT-UTAS)

BY
ALEXANDER AKUMBUNO

Thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration,
University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
award of a Master of Philosophy degree in Administration in Higher
Education

APRIL 2023

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

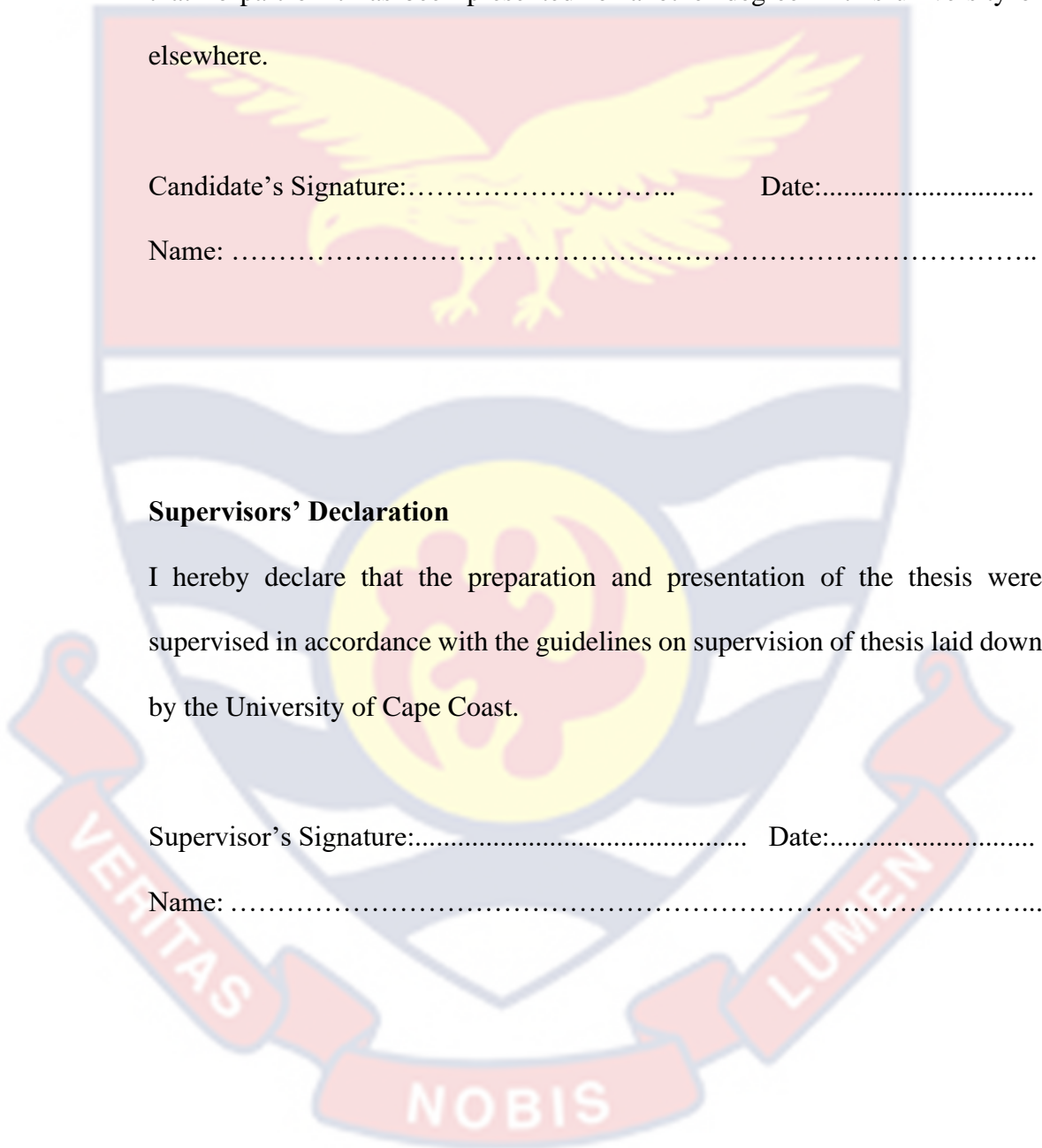
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Supervisors' Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to draw attention to the settling-in-system and respond to observed settling-in challenges among the First-Year Students in Ghana-based universities taking particular interest in C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS). Informed by Tinto's (1987) Student Adjustment and Retention Theory, the study was underpinned by the positivist paradigm. A descriptive survey design was employed to understudy the settling-in-system. A self-developed validated questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from a sample size of 140 respondents from five (5) Schools in CKT-UTAS whereas supplementary information was gathered from the Dean of Student Affairs and the University Counsellor on the settling-in experiences of first-year students. For the cultural, social and academic experiences of first-year students, it was revealed that students had difficulty in interacting with community members where the university was located due to some language barrier. Also, it was revealed that some places were designated for some religious denominations to practice their faith while others struggled for places to worship. The study further revealed that the services of academic advisers were least patronized by students. In addition, it was revealed that socialization processes that shaped the cultural, social and academic experiences of students was for them to strike a balance concerning their attitudes towards their colleagues due to their different cultural backgrounds. In addition, first-year students understanding of some university jargons posed a challenge to them as well as making meaning out of their lecture timetables. The lecture method employed by lecturers in the university also posed a challenge to some of the students. Furthermore, it came to light that, student employed both negative and positive coping strategies to enhance their settling-in experiences in the university. While some interacted with their friends/family/roommates and engaged in some extracurricular activities such as listening to music/watching TV, walking/jogging others abused alcohol, illicit drugs and involved in inappropriate sexual behaviors as coping strategies. The study further revealed that orientation, counselling and the services of academic advisers were some of the supportive systems put in place to assist students. It is therefore concluded that the University's Management develops a policy to annually and officially engage community members in the catchment areas where the university is located about the admission of new students and the likelihood of these students staying in hostels in their communities. The study further concluded that Lecturers have to vary their teaching methods to stimulate the interests of their students. It is therefore recommended that there should be a policy guide for university-wide orientation as well as School/Department orientation programmes for all fresh students periodically. It is also recommended that the Counselling Unit should be at the forefront in the organization of seminars, workshops on topics such as study skills, time management, healthy relationships, and how to prepare for examinations for these students. In addition, it is recommended that higher education institutions should vote resources to stock their libraries with up to date reading resources and electronic services to facilitate research work of students. Lastly, students are encouraged to seek information from the right source in their new learning environment to enhance their settling-in experiences.

KEY WORDS

Academic Experience

Cultural Experience

First-Year Undergraduate Student

Settling-in-System for Fresh Students

Social Experience

Socialization



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To my mother, wife and children, I thank you for the sacrifices made during the period of this research work.

DEDICATION

To the memory of my late father, Mr. J. S. A. Akumbuno, my mother,
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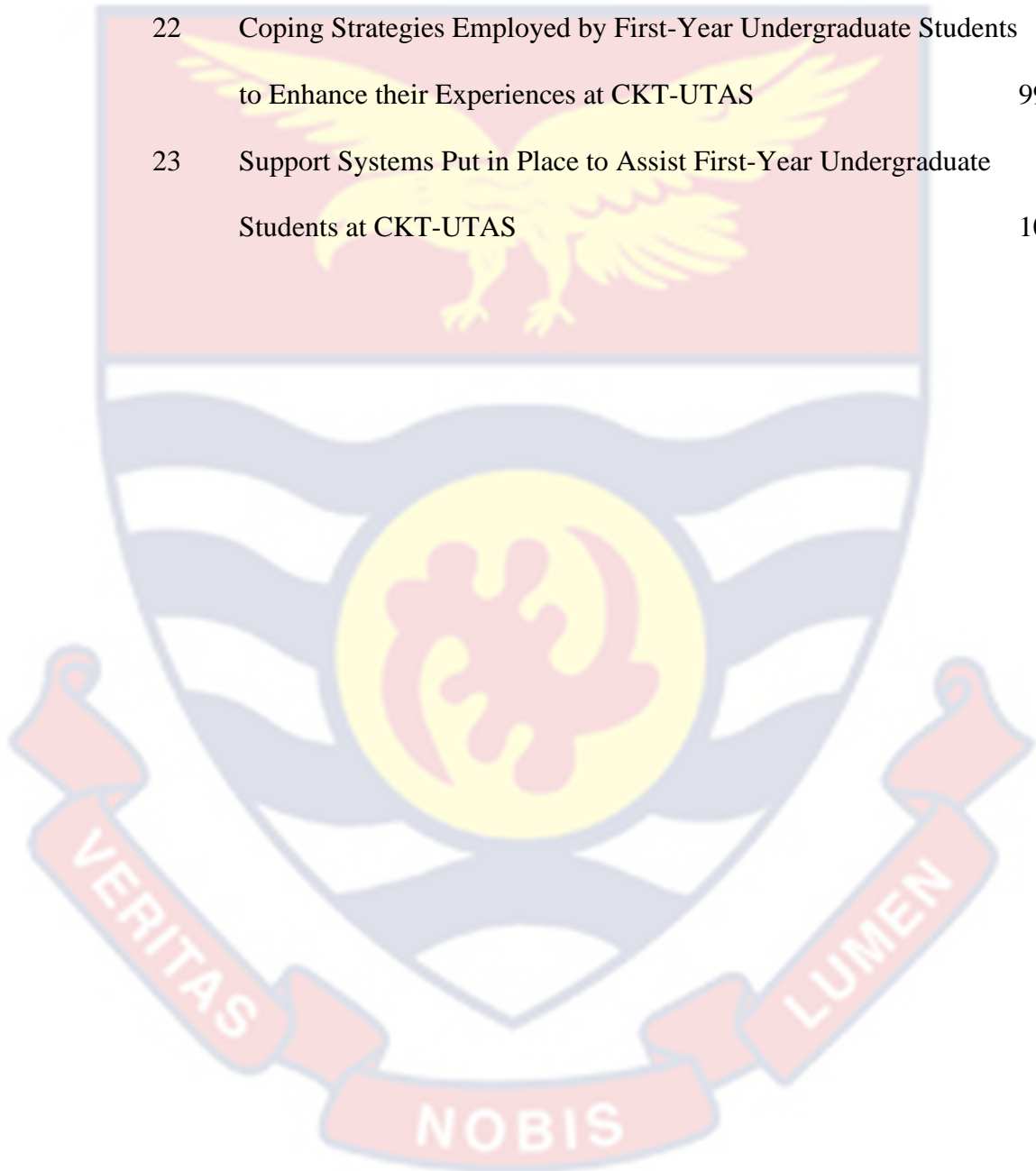
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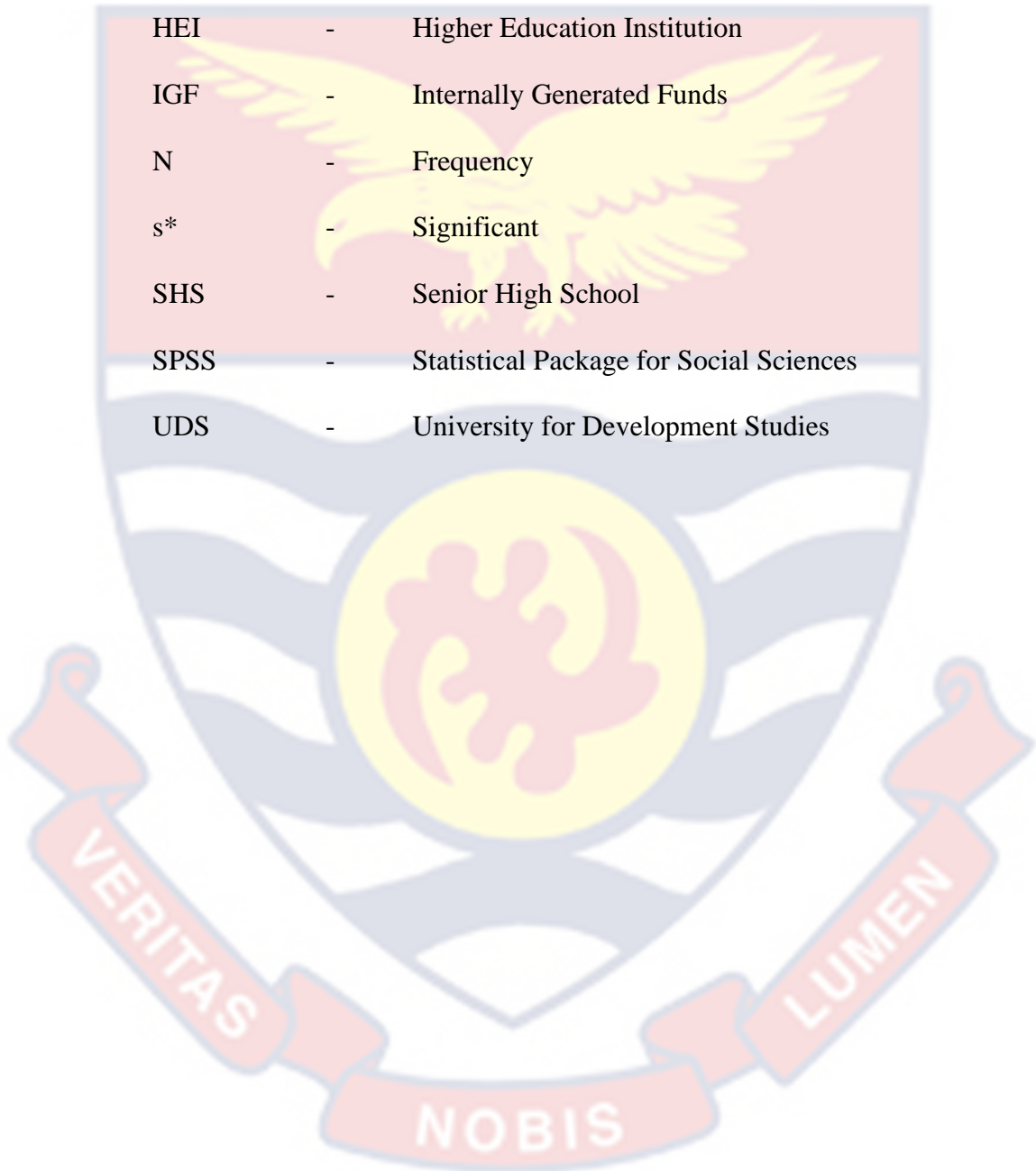
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CKT-UTAS	-	C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences
Df*	-	Degrees of freedom
HEI	-	Higher Education Institution
IGF	-	Internally Generated Funds
N	-	Frequency
s*	-	Significant
SHS	-	Senior High School
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UDS	-	University for Development Studies



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The development of appropriate and strategic human resources in organizations is, among other considerations, critical to the success of education delivery across the globe. For yet another reason, the contribution of education to the political, social, and economic atmosphere is not in doubt (Mushabe, Abreh, & Mills, 2022) but is also affected by the environment within which it exists. To continue to exert this influence of contribution to nation building, universities which are places of higher learning, have over the years, gone through stages of cultural, social, academic, administrative, and infrastructural restructuring to stay relevant. Also, they employ qualified personnel, and harness the maximum use of other resources at their disposal to enable them to execute their various mandates smoothly, and enhance the development of human resources that access their services (Abnory, 2017).

Students are major stakeholders in all educational institutions, especially in a university environment. Their experiences and how they transition successfully in these institutions should be of importance to the management of the institutions to which they belong. A number of fresh students come to the university without a proper orientation and mindset to settle-in, this in the long run directly affect their academic and future career aspirations as university students (Adediran, & Olufemi, 2015). This requires the need to examine the state of settling-in situation with the view to enhancing how fresh students experience university education to make them thrive in their university education journey.

The holistic training, they receive leading to a successful completion of their academic work has a direct link to the socio-economic development of any country since they eventually become the manpower that gets employed in all aspects of the economy of a country (Ali, Jusoff, Ali, Moktar & Salamat, 2009).

Employers consider good academic credentials when employing, especially fresh graduates (Adediran, & Olufemi, 2015). Inferring from Adediran et al. (2015) comments in their study, the education system has shaped national development in all spheres by attracting people who have specialized in various areas and have contributed or are still contributing to national development to make the world a better place for all. It is in light of this that, a successful integration of fresh students especially, first-year undergraduate students into an academic institution, their experiences concerning cultural, social and academic aspects should be of importance to the management of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) such as universities.

Some studies have been conducted to explore the experiences of students at the university that influence their stay there. Some of these studies discovered the unintended negative effects on the physical and emotional health of students as they undergo their academic training (Eva, Islam, Mosaddek, Rahman, Rozario, Iftekhar, Ahmed, Jahan, Abubakar, Razzaque, Habib & Haque, 2015). Eva et al. (2015) concluded in their study that most medical students in Bangladeshi suffer some level of academic stress.

Education managers should provide a friendly learning environment for students. Pather, Norodien-Fataar, Cupido and Nkonto (2017), in their study on experiences of student access and engagement in the university, revealed that student academic and social life were affected by some factors. These factors

were financial status, students' immediate family encouragement and support for higher education, and students' status as first-generation student. Studies have further proven that, transitions can be stressful and, in most cases, a daunting task for first-year students in the university (Ang, Lee, & Dipolog-Ubanan, 2019).

The social and cultural environment from which students come from also contributes to their academic integration in the university because there is a widespread belief that, obtaining a university degree is the gateway to job opportunities, salary earning, and social standing in society (Leppink et al., 2016). This, as a result, put a lot of stress on students, especially first-year undergraduate students, regarding their academic and other experiences in the university. Therefore, there is a need for the management of HEI such as the universities to put in place measures to enable first-year undergraduate students' transition smoothly and settle-in into the university setting, which in the long run, will have a positive effect on their cultural, social and academic life.

The C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS), located in Navrongo until its elevation to full-fledged University status, was the Navrongo Campus of the University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale. There have been some changes in leadership style since the campus became an autonomous university such as adopting a semester system rather than a trimester system that was previously in place; grading students at 70% continuous assessment and 30% examination scores and restructuring and aligning academic departments and programmes to schools and faculties.

In addition, the peculiar weather conditions and the environment in which the university is located, and how first-year undergraduate students who

are not familiar with these environmental patterns adapt to, could be a contributory factor to their general life experiences at the university. Some first-year undergraduate students may find it difficult to navigate campus, making their way to offices, lecture halls, and even making meaning out of their timetables; thus, good time management is a contributory factor to their success in the university. Students could survive all these experiences if there is the right coping system to solve the problems they encounter, employ good time management for their academic and other social activities, and access other support systems available to them in the university (Feldmon, 2008).

The above comments and observations may have an impact on their settling-in experiences on campus, and no research, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, has been conducted to explore these experiences of first-year undergraduate students at the C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences. It is in this context that, this study aims to explore the experiences of first-year undergraduate students at the C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS), Navrongo.

Statement of the Problem

Education systems seek among other things to shape the national, regional and global identities of learners for development through its training and human capacity development efforts (Adedrian et al., 2015, Ali et al., 2009). Specifically, the contribution of higher education institutions (HEIs) especially universities in human resource development cannot be underestimated. The fact is, education at the pre-tertiary level is not directly linked to the workforce, and thus the observational and more often the experiential engagements of the by-products of education come in handy with the HEIs experiences and provisions.

The first year in HEIs frequently defines the experiences learners have at this level of education provision (Adedrian et al., 2015). As a result, several research and development activities have been undertaken to identify the opportunities and deficits situations that first-year students in HEIs face.

Bradley (2017), for example, conducted a study on the experiences of first-generation college students in the American setting and came up with two major revelations: the need for resource support from guardians in areas such as financial aid, career advice, and writing assistance on the one hand, and the inability of guardians to appreciate the challenges first-year candidates ought to contend with on the other hand. In the Sub-Saharan African backyard, Mudhovozi (2012) investigated the social and academic experiences of first-year students in a university face. Broadly, it became evident that (1) first-year students resorted to social networks and other opinions to deal with the varied academic and social challenges they faced, and (2) exposing these students to varied resource strategies would help them transition smoothly into the university environment.

In the Ghanaian context, some research have been done (Akamba, Torgbor & Agalga, 2016, Amponsah, Adasi, Mohammed, Ampadu & Okrah, 2020, Anatsui, 2020, Arku, 2015, Azilla-Gbetteor, Atasi, Danku & Soglo 2015, Edjah, Domey & Ankomah, 2019, Hackman, 2016, Kwaah & Essilfie, 2017, Kwafoa, Anhwere & Manu, 2018, Sarkodie, Asare & Asare, 2020) at all levels of the education sector especially at the tertiary level regarding the different experiences of students. Uniquely, five (5) studies are reflected upon in this section namely, Amponsah et al., (2020), Arku, (2015), Azilla-Gbetteor et al., (2015), Edjah et al., (2019) and Sarkodie et al. (2020).

Indeed, the work done in Ghana has looked at things around the experiences of first-year students settling-in from three (3) main dimensions. These dimensions around which these research studies build their arguments and present their findings and conclusions are (1) from the cultural experience point of view of students, (2) from the social experience point of view and (3) academic experience point of view. One unique trend that builds across these studies is that the cultural, social and academic experiences towards a settling-in for fresh students in our universities are not deeply explored. For instance, Azilla-Gbettey, et al., (2015) in their study at the Ho Polytechnic (now Ho Technical University) on the experiences of students, assessed three thematic areas which became evident that, (1) students identified getting good grades, studying for examinations and access to reading materials a challenge and contributed to their academic stress in the university, (2) the study also revealed that the use of technology such as computers and the internet facilities or its unavailability posed a challenge to first-year students at the university which affected their settling-in experience and (3) the study further indicated that inadequate infrastructure within a learning environment could also pose an academic and social challenge to students.

Meanwhile, a major revelation in Sarkodie et al., (2020) study concentrated on a conducive learning atmosphere as a factor that contributes to the settling-in of fresh students. The study revealed that good academic and social facilities such as well-equipped lecture halls, religious grounds and sporting facilities enhanced the settling-in experience of students especially first-year undergraduate students.

In addition, the study by Arku (2015) laid emphasis on the importance of student support services such as guidance and counselling services and its accessibility by students to enhance their social settling-in experiences. The study also revealed that the tenets of guidance and counselling can only be achieved through its accessibility and attitudinal change by students. Also, for first-year undergraduate students to enhance their settling-in experiences, the use of coping strategies is unavoidable (Amponsah et al., 2020). Amponsah et al., (2020) study further revealed that while some students used negative coping strategies such as the abuse of alcohol and smoking to enhance their settling-in experiences, others used positive coping strategies such as involving in extra-curricular activities with student club activities as well sporting activities.

However, the study of Edjah et al., (2020) acknowledged that before students entered the university as first-year undergraduate students, they had their own background cultural, social and academic experiences. The study also revealed that their new learning environment also had its own set of cultural, social and academic norms that students needed to fit in, to enable them have a good settling-in experience. Edjah et al., (2020) study in my view did not deeply explore how these students had to blend their own experiences (cultural, social and academic) and that of their new learning environment to gain a positive settling-in.

From the review done so far, it seems some works have been done in the area of first-year student experiences in the educational sector especially in the universities. However, the lists of study done in Ghana seem not to have adequately addressed the concern of settling-in experiences of first-year undergraduate students in the Universities. Thus, this present study seeks to fill

the gap created by the literature gap and unavailability of research evidence to connect first-year undergraduate students' experiences as against their potential to settle-in in CKT-UTAS which is gaining popularity in science and technology in HEIs training space since its inception.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. The specific objectives of the study are delineated as follows.

1. To examine the cultural, social and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS.
2. To examine how cultural, social and academic experiences shape first-year undergraduate students' socialization in their new learning environment.
3. To identify coping strategies used by first-year undergraduate students to enhance their experiences at CKT-UTAS.
4. To find out the support systems put in place to assist first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS.

Research Questions

To address the objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What are the cultural, social and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students at the CKT-UTAS?
2. How do the cultural, social and academic experiences shape first-year undergraduate students' socialization in their new learning environment?

3. What coping strategies are used by first-year undergraduate students to enhance their experiences at CKT-UTAS?
4. What support systems are put in place to assist first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS?

Assumptions of the Study

The study was conducted based on the following assumptions:

1. First-year undergraduate students are exposed to similar cultural, academic and social lifestyle experiences on campus.
2. First-year undergraduate students are aware of social support services on campus.
3. First-year undergraduate students are assumed to possess similar levels of competence or understanding of the basic concepts of life that make them capable to live on their own.
4. First-year undergraduate students have similar age groupings.
5. First-year undergraduate students are assumed to possess similar high school experiences that make them capable to live on their own at CKT-UTAS.
6. There is time allocated for first-year undergraduate students' activities (lectures, quizzes, assignments, and presentations) that expose them to similar stress level on campus.

Significance of the Study

The findings from the study are expected to inform the various stakeholders in CKT-UTAS regarding experiences encountered by first-year undergraduate students as they adjust culturally, academically and socially to the university environment. The outcome of this study will also provide a better

insight into the background of first-year undergraduate students and their pre-tertiary experiences, their peculiar needs to effectively manage and support them in their university experiences.

In addition, studying the experiences of university first-year undergraduate students will inform policy direction by Management of Universities such as orientation and induction programmes for this group of students. Finally, the study will contribute to and expand the body of knowledge on the cultural, academic, and social life experiences of first-year undergraduate students in universities and serve as a reference document for future studies.

Delimitations of the Study

The focus of the study was to investigate the life experiences of first-year undergraduate students at the CKT-UTAS. The main variables that were understudy were the cultural, social and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students. The study covered one hundred and forty (140) first-year undergraduate students within four schools in CKT-UTAS. To provide in-depth analyses of the issues at hand, the study used a quantitative approach with a descriptive survey design to gain a thorough understanding of the study.

The participants were selected with no recourse to their ethnic, cultural or socio-economic backgrounds. Without a doubt, the selected participants were not a representation of the whole CKT-UTAS first-year undergraduate students' population in Navrongo, but it can be presumed that they shared common challenges, experiences, and barriers with the rest of the first-year undergraduate students.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are conditions or difficulties that prevent the researcher from completing the studies on time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kusi, 2012). The first limitation was the researcher's use of a descriptive survey design. This design allowed the researcher to collect and analyse data. Given the wide range of quantitative studies, generalizing the results to the public may not be difficult, but survey respondents may not be completely honest or may not provide socially acceptable responses, for instance, respondents' unwillingness to divulge information, caused a delay in the data collection procedure. The researcher's goal in conducting this study was to better understand the cultural, social and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students towards a settling-in at CKT-UTAS.

The study focused on the cultural, social and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. This means that the experiences and views of levels 200, 300, and 400 students were not recorded or did not form part of the study which could have enhanced the results of this study. Given these constraints, the researcher may conclude that the descriptive survey design was ideal for the study.

Operational Definition of Terms

Some words within the study were given operational definitions as used in the context and scope of the research. They include the following:

Academic Experience: Relates to work done by students in schools such as universities which involves studying and reasoning.

First-year Undergraduate Student: A student who has completed high school and transitioned to the first year in a university to pursue either

a certificate, diploma or degree programme and has not acquired the recommended total credits to gain promotion to second year.

Settling-in-System: The availability of resources, a set of practices and norms that are acceptable and tend to shape the attitudes of students to make them comfortable and fit-in in their new learning environment.

Social Experience: Other direct extracurricular activities and external factors experienced by students that are not directly academic.

Socialization: Is the process of interaction through which a person learns and acquire norms and attitudes of a social group he/she belong to.

Cultural Experience: A set of shared practices, norms and attitudes that identifies an Organisation, institution or a group of people.

Organisation of the Study

The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter One consists of the background to the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. The chapter also includes the delimitation of the study, the limitation of the study, the definition of terms, as well as the Organisation of the study.

Chapter Two reviews relevant literature. This includes a theoretical review, conceptual framework, and empirical perspective. The empirical review was broken down into subheadings that reflected the themes, such as: 1) Cultural, social, and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students; 2) How cultural, social, and academic experiences shape the socialization process of first-year undergraduate students in tertiary institutions; 3) Coping strategies used by students to improve their experiences at university and 4) support systems put in place to assist first-year undergraduate students.

Chapter Three explains the methodology that was employed for the study. This chapter captures the philosophical foundation of the study, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, trustworthiness of the study, pretesting of the instrument for data collection, as well as the procedure for data processing and analysis.

Chapter Four of the study focuses on the presentation of results and discussion. The chapter includes the background characteristics of respondents. The analyses were done in relation to the research questions. Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. Areas for further research were also suggested in this chapter.

Summary of Chapter One

This chapter is an introduction to the study. It has provided insight into the study by outlining the background to the study, statement of the problem and significance of the study, its delimitation, limitation, the operational definition of key terminologies, and an outline of chapter divisions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Literature was reviewed in this section. The researcher was cognizant of the studies carried out by various researchers on experiences of first-year students' encounter in school. A review of Literature could be explained as a particular issue or a study arena that holds discussion on published information (Hart, 2018). An operational form that includes description and thesis synthesis is typical for a literature review. As a result, the major informational source for the study's conclusions was literature. It has been made obvious that it aids the study and is a crucial component of scientific inquiry (Ridley, 2012).

Ridley (2012) defined a literature review as “the organized procedures used in a research area to find academic publications. However, a literature review is defined as a critical examination of assembled scholarly works. It also serves as a guide for analyzing research data and presenting study conclusions, in essence summarizing the whole analytic process” (Hart, 2018). The literature review provides comprehensive references to relevant studies in the subject of study as part of a thesis, allowing comparisons to be drawn between various connected studies (Ridley, 2012).

The internet, journals, book abstracts, theses, and other printed sources were used to compile the literature supporting this study. In accordance with three (3) different themes, the literature review was organized. The theory supporting the investigation is covered in the first part. The review of empirical research that relates to the research topics is covered in the second part. The summary of Chapter Two (2) is given in the final section.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical review, according to Grant and Osanloo (2015), is a methodical observation or justification of the phenomena under examination. DeVos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport (2011) assert that the theory explored in research guides the approach to research questions and the application of empirical methodologies. The choice of theory is typically based on the study's objectives, hypotheses, or research questions. Additionally, Mackey and Jacobson (2011) define theory as a concept that clarifies the reasons behind the research problem being studied. "Student Adjustment and Retention Theory" by Tinto (1987) was used as the basis for this study's review of the theory.

There have been a lot of theories and models on student adjustment and retention that concern their academic and social integration. The most widely cited model is the one that was propounded by Tinto (1987), which involved student retention and persistence. Tinto held the view that, for students admitted to the university to complete their programmes of study and enhance their social network in their new learning environment, they must successfully integrate both academically and socially. This theory was based on behavioral psychological assumptions that rejected the assumptions made by cognitivists' psychologists.

Tinto also stated that students admitted to tertiary institutions come from diverse backgrounds and may have different social and academic adjustment among them. Students therefore need to be guided to help them adapt to their new learning environment. It is worth noting that, students who feel some sense of belongingness in their new environment are likely to integrate better and

successfully complete their programmes of study, and also enhance their social and cultural life.

In his study, Braxton (2000) cited Van Gennepe's (1909) concept of "rites of passage" in which integration to being a new member of a community occurs in three stages: separation, transition, and incorporation and confirmed that Tinto's work was inspired by Van Gennepe's work. These phases of integration are further explained by Tinto (1987) study.

According to the Tinto's (1987) Model, the first stage of integration for first-year students at the university is separation. He defined this as a deliberate attempt by these students to separate from the values, beliefs, and other socialization experiences that are part of the communities they come from, in order to fit into the university community. This is because the university has its own culture, norms, rules, and regulations that may be distinct from the community in which it exists. First-year undergraduate students may have to let go of certain norms of their communities they come from and imbibe the acceptable culture of the university so they can fit in. Students who can let go of the norms of their previous associations and adapt to their new found environment will integrate and settle-in successfully.

In addition, the second phase of integration is transition. According to Tinto (1987), this is a process where students acquire new skills, norms, interact with individuals and build new relationships in their new learning environment. There are always anxieties when students take steps to link their old norms to the new norms acquired which may result in adjustment problems. The management of universities should help students in their transition processes by organizing orientation programmes and counselling sessions for them. This will

enable students to know what is expected of them and also understand what the university has to offer to enhance their transition processes.

The third stage of Tinto's model, according to Braxton (2000), is incorporation. This is when students start to follow the rules and act in new ways that fit their new environment. They do well in school by doing things like going for lectures, submitting assignments, and taking tests. This stage also enables them to integrate socially as well as culturally as they develop expected behavioral patterns towards their fellow students and staff and also involve themselves in extracurricular activities. According to Tinto's model, students' integration will be successful only if they are able to manage and strike a balance between their previous norms and acquired norms that are acceptable in their new found learning environment. The university must create an enabling and conducive environment for the students to successfully integrate and settle-in positively.

In conclusion, inferring from Tinto's view point, students acquire a lot of experiences in the University during their integration process and may employ some coping strategies either negative or positive to enhance or mitigate them. Those who use negative (denial or disengagement) as a strategy are likely not to be successful. Those who employ positive strategies such as patronizing counselling services, library services and orientation services are more likely to be successful in their integration process which could enhance their experiences. Universities should therefore make sure student support services are readily available for students to access in order to enhance their positive experiences.

Empirical Review

In this section, the researcher offers a conceptualization of the experiences first-year undergraduate students encounter in school. The research objectives for this study, which are listed in chapter one (1), are aligned with how the empirical review is organized. To supplement the researcher's empirical review, curricular, educational, and instructional literature that has undergone peer review was employed. Both paper copies and electronic versions of these were offered. The opposite was true for the analysis of citations from individual studies, theses, and dissertations.

Cultural, Social and Academic Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students

Cultural Experiences

The ultimate goal in education has a multifaceted outcome that has diverse impact in the lives of the student and the people and or place he/she comes into contact with. This ultimate priority can only be realized when there is effective and holistic collaboration among Educational Institutions, guardians, communities, or the environment.

It must be noted that, language continue to be the tool of communication and permeates all aspects of learning. As Wierzbicka (1991, p. 453) notes, language serves as "a tool of human interaction" since it allows us to relate to one another in addition to communicating our ideas, emotions, and intentions. Most educational institutions utilize English as the primary mode of communication, which has been found to affect students' self-esteem and learning, particularly for those from diverse backgrounds who may struggle with the language as a second language in both everyday academic and subject-

specific contexts (Hirsch, 2007; Sovic, 2008). Therefore, it is widely acknowledged that students who possess a strong command of the English language tend to perform better academically. Invariably, possessing a high level of proficiency in English will enhance their academic performance, enabling them to better understand and communicate their ideas and thoughts effectively.

According to Ramburuth and Birkett's research in Australia in 2000, poor language and communication skills were identified as a significant issue in group assignments, with local students considering it an obstacle to their learning. However, students from diverse backgrounds perceived it as a missed opportunity for improving their language skills and learning.

The study also revealed that students found it difficult to make local friends because of the language barrier, while others were interested in associating themselves with friends with similar cultural backgrounds, some of the students were interested in talking to their local friends directly to help them learn from them. In their 2000 study, Ramburuth and Birkett found that many students from diverse backgrounds expressed a desire to interact and learn from local students. However, they also discovered that these students often felt more at ease with individuals from their own cultural group who shared similar values and beliefs.

Another study conducted by Al Subia, S. A. (2008), on the academic, social and cultural experiences by Saudi Arabian students pursuing their studies in a university in the United States of America emphasized on the importance of language and its influence on students' experiences. The study revealed that students had a difficulty in communicating in the English Language with their

lecturers and in most cases their peers. As a result, their classroom participation was not encouraging due to the expectations and differences in pronunciation and understanding of words between them, their lecturers and peers. The study agrees with Wierzbicka (1991), Hirsch (2007) and Ramburuth et al. (2000) studies which concluded that, institutions of learning who enroll international students should have support systems for them to help them improve on their language skills.

Reviewing the works of Wierzbicka (1991), Hirsch (2007) and Ramburuth et al. (2000), Al Subia, S. A. (2008), indicates that for effective communication, it is important for the giver of the information to make sure the receiver of same understands what is being communicated taking into consideration the receiver's ability to process what he/she is being communicated to. I therefore project that, if students have limited English language skills in any academic setting, it will undoubtedly lead to a decrease in their academic performance. They may struggle to understand and communicate effectively, which could ultimately result in lower grades and a reduced capacity to learn and absorb new information.

Therefore, it is essential for students to focus on improving their English language skills if they want to excel academically and achieve their full potential. This could involve practicing reading, writing, and speaking English, as well as seeking additional support and guidance from teachers or tutors.

Other research studies have proven that cultural diversity cannot be avoided in every human space and for that matter places of higher learning are not exceptions. Availability and choice of food could either enhance the security or insecurity of it which may affect student wellbeing in school. A study

conducted by Raskind, Haardörfer, and Berg (2018), indicated that food insecurity affected academic performance among College and University students. It is important to note that if students have a challenge in the choice of food they want, then it could affect their life experiences and their academic performance. Therefore, what is available for them to eat should be a matter of choice and not because is available for them to eat. Raskind et al. (2018) study is supported by Mechler, Coakley, Walsh-Dilley, and Cargas, (2021) study on the relationship between food insecurity and academic performance. The study revealed that, food-insecure students were more likely to perform poorly in their academic work and had higher risk of dropping out of school. The study further concluded that access to food is a human right and institutions of learning had some level of responsibility concerning student access and choice of food.

In addition, Smart, Volet, and Ang (2000, p. 28) noted that certain lifestyle aspects, such as the prevalent drinking and partying culture among some students, can impede socio-cultural interactions. Conversely, the reluctance of students from diverse cultural backgrounds to engage in such social activities has resulted in unfavorable stereotypes. The study for instance indicated that, attitude of Australian students was to include their Asian counterparts in some social activities but received negative responses. Most of these Asian students were not interested in these life styles and their motive was solely to acquire a degree and go back home. According to Volet and Ang's research in 1998, they found evidence to support Smart et al. (2000) earlier claim that cultural diversity on university campuses can provide an excellent opportunity for intercultural learning. However, their study also highlighted a

concerning issue, which is the lack of interaction between local students and international students from Asian backgrounds in higher education.

Research has demonstrated that students from diverse backgrounds who attend higher education institutions often expect to have opportunities to engage in cultural exchange with local students. This exchange can involve exposure to the local culture, classroom and social interactions, and learning about similarities and differences between different cultural backgrounds. Scholars and practitioners, including Smart et al. (2000) and Twigg (2005), view cultural exchange as one of the most beneficial outcomes of the globalization of higher education. This can create opportunities for developing new networks, making new friendships, and practicing communication skills, especially in English.

However, studies have also shown that students from diverse backgrounds can struggle to bridge the "cultural divide" between themselves and local students, as highlighted by Kingston and Forland (2008). Smart et al. (2000) also identified this struggle in their study, with some students expressing frustration at their inability to interact with local people and make new friends. Others indicated a willingness to interact with locals, but they lacked the opportunity to do so.

These challenges can hinder intercultural interactions on campuses by preventing the acknowledgment of cultural differences, overlooking lifestyle differences, and perpetuating negative stereotyping and ethnocentrism.

It must be noted that the reviewed literature in my opinion has little to talk about the impact of culture when it comes to intranational and international students on tertiary students. It is rather important for institutions of higher learning to appreciate the benefits of exchange programmes and encourage their

students to take part in such programmes. This will result in them appreciating the differences and similarities in their various and how they would strike the balance. This research therefore seeks to ascertain the impact of cultural diversity on students' life experiences in a university setting such as CKT-UTAS.

Social Experiences

A university is a place of learning where faculties are trained, characters and attitudes are formed. This is done in order to make graduates ready for the job market and prepare them morally and psychological, so that they can contribute to the development of their societies and countries at large (Pather & Dorasamy, 2018). Students enroll in a university of their choice not to only acquire academic knowledge but also to enhance their social experiences after the classroom work. One of such social life experiences is the continuing avenue to develop their spiritual life and partake in religious activities.

For instance, Sarkodie, Asare and Asare (2020), in their study concluded that, students would always consider a conducive learning environment as a better choice for studies. Factors such as well-equipped classrooms and laboratories, good lighting system, and other social infrastructure like sporting facilities, grounds for religious activities have an influence when students consider the choice of a tertiary institution for further studies. Religion is one source that shape values, people's beliefs and even way of life as well as bonding connections with fellow human beings and moral opinions of people.

The environment and experiences of people especially students in their new learning environment can influence their beliefs and for that matter their religious activities (Lee, 2021). It is therefore important for Management of

HEIs to provide designated places or liaise with communities around their catchment areas to provide places for religious activities for students. Lee, (2021) study also revealed that higher education environment exposes students to a wide range of religious beliefs and faith which may be contrary to theirs and could cause them to abandon theirs if there is no continuity or an avenue to practice their own faith.

The study further revealed that even though students were exposed to numerous religious beliefs, more students grew stronger in their faith than those who fell off due to either places designated to practice their faith or none existed. The study further recommended that since religious activities contribute to the social well-being of students; students should part-take more in their acclaimed religious activities to grow stronger.

Secondly, activities of student clubs promote the development of the soft skills of students and broaden their horizon of life after school. This is because the activities students engage in these clubs teach them lessons in life as well as make them ready for the job market. According to a report by the Asian School of Business (2021), student club activities afford them to observe their colleagues on how they respond and react to situations and use the opportunity to learn different cultural backgrounds of their peers. The report also indicated that student club activities offer them the platform for team work, building of connections and relationships for life and also help them to develop their leadership skills. The report however, indicated that student clubs face varied challenges such as lack of student participation and commitment in club activities as well as lack of guidance. The report recommended that, Management of HEIs should create awareness of the various student club

activities in their institutions to enable students decide which club they should join or will be best fit for them.

In addition, another study conducted by Kuzu, (2021) on student clubs at universities: a content analysis on the diversity in Turkey revealed that student clubs in most Turkish Universities were social in nature and created awareness about their activities which in the long run contributed to the development of the social environment of the University. Kuzu, (2021) study supports the Asian School of Business report (2021) when it revealed that student club activities enhanced their social interaction in the university and society. The study further concluded that universities should make activities of student clubs available to enable interested students join. The social activities of student clubs in the universities cannot be over emphasized; it is therefore the responsibility of Management of Universities to guide the activities of these student clubs for the social good of their participants or members.

University campuses that have cultural diversity offer great opportunities for intercultural learning. However, one of the most concerning aspects of higher education internationalization is the lack of interaction between local students and international students from Asian backgrounds, as identified by Volet and Ang in 1998. Research has indicated that students from diverse backgrounds come to higher education institutions with the expectation of engaging in various activities that expose them to the local culture. These include classroom and social interactions with local students and opportunities to improve their communication skills in English.

According to Smart et al. (2000) and Twigg (2005), cultural exchange is seen by researchers and practitioners as one of the most advantageous results

of the globalization of higher education. It provides opportunities for students to develop new connections, make new friends, and communicate with native speakers of English. However, studies involving diverse backgrounds, such as the one conducted by Kingston and Forland in 2008, indicate that students face significant challenges in bridging the "cultural divide" between local and international students. Smart et al.'s (2000) comprehensive study of tertiary campuses identified the difficulties experienced by students.

While some of the students expressed the challenges, they faced in making friends in their new learning environment; others expressed having minimal communication with their peers and the local people. Some of the students also indicated that, they made efforts to have healthy interaction with their peers and the local communities, opportunities for such interactions were minimal. Additionally, they identified several factors that hinder intercultural interactions on campuses. These include disparities in culture and lifestyle, as well as negative stereotypes and ethnocentrism. These experiences endured by students help them to find balance to coexist with their peers and the local people where their new learning environment is located.

Moreover, the importance of the availability and usage of recreational activities enhances the social well-being of students. This is evident in a study conducted by Carlton, Kanters, Bocarro, Floyd, Edwards, and Suau (2017) when they indicated the growing demand for places for recreational activities in schools and communities and the dedication of funds to maintain these facilities in a state in the United States of America. The idea behind the provision and maintenance of these facilities is to enhance the social life of their students and also create a platform for students to interact with each other which results in

them getting to know their peers much better. The study concluded that, for a better social life and integration with local communities, authorities of schools should once in a while allow community people to use their recreational facilities which could result in interaction between students and community members.

A study conducted by Kampf, Haines, and Gambino (2018), on the impact of new or renovated collegiate recreational centres on recruitment and retention supports the study of Carlton et al. (2017). Kampf et al. (2018) study posits that, recreational facilities concluded that, serve as a platform for socialization and other wellness benefits. Their study on recreational facilities had a positive relationship with retention rate among students and interestingly social activities organized by student leaders also had a positive influence on students stay on campus. Another study conducted by Buckley, and Lee, (2021) on the impact of extra-curricular activity on the student experience supports the study of Kampf et al. (2018). Buckley et al. (2021) revealed in their study that respondents of the study indicated that participating in extra-curricular activities resulted in them developing strong social ties. The study further posited that respondents associated improved physical health, and positive contribution to the university and its local community. The study concluded that students needed to find a balance between their extra-curriculum activities and academic work to avoid adverse effects.

Inferring from the literature reviewed concerning the social experiences of first-year undergraduate students in my opinion, students should be able to strike a balance between their instructional activities and any extra-curricular activity knowing the importance of such activities.

Academic Experiences

The main mandate of universities all over the world is teaching, research and community service and universities in Ghana are not exceptions. A timetable is generated to maximize the use of time because of its limits in any human institution. In educational institutions, timetable can be grouped into two that is for lectures and examinations. Padmini and Athre (2010), in their study on efficient design of university timetable indicated that timetabling should satisfy both the physical and emotional needs of students and lecturers. The study further indicated that in some instances some schools' timetables had students to attend two or more classes at the same time as well as teachers having overlap of courses to be taught at the same time. Instances like these made it difficult for students especially first-year students to make meaning out of the timetable. The study recommended that, universities should strive to find solutions to improve their timetabling to help both faculty and students to make meaning out of them and reduce stress associated with timetable reading and looking for venues to attend lectures.

The classroom size in every educational institution plays a major role in both teaching and learning. Classroom size is of importance to researchers due to the diverse backgrounds and previous classroom experience students may have experienced. Some research works have revealed that smaller class sizes positively influence the learning achievement of students. Whitehurst and Chingos (2011) in their research on class size in Texas, in the United States of America, revealed that there was a positive learning achievement for students when class sizes are small. The study further revealed that large class sizes affected the instructional effectiveness of researchers and negatively affected

the learning achievement of students and their concentration in class. The study recommended that stakeholders such as policy makers should provide vibrant assessment criteria to guide teachers in classroom management such as instruction as well as investment in the use of technology to enhance their method of delivery depending on the class size. The study further concluded that class size (small/large) had both positive and negative impact at various stages and levels on the educational ladder and policy makers should come up with strategies to enhance both the learning achievement of students and effective instructional activities by teachers.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Vandenberg (2012), on class size and academic achievement agreed with some of the conclusions with Whitehurst et al. (2011) study. Vandenberg's study revealed that smaller class size had a positive impact on student learning achievement, the reason being that, teachers had the chance to pay more attention to individual student needs and had effective classroom management. The study further revealed that teachers used more time to manage tasks in larger class sizes than instruction which affected students learning achievement and teachers felt they could be more effective if they handled smaller class sizes.

The study concluded that it was not the number of students in a classroom that affected their learning achievement but rather the effective learning instruction and interaction between teachers and students. Inferring from the research works of Whitehurst et al. (2011) and Vandenberg (2012), on class size, it is important for policy makers to provide the necessary infrastructure and equipment as well as the needed technology to enhance the instruction delivery by teachers which would result in positive learning

achievement by students irrespective of the size of the class in schools especially at the tertiary level.

In addition, the greatest academic experience of students is being graded through quizzes, assignments and examinations. Generally, the grading system is the process by which lecturers or educators evaluate the performance of students in examinations. The evaluation also indicates to students that their academic performance in school is critical for their future opportunities in society, and they may perceive their grades as an indication of their success or failure after graduation (Banks & Smyth 2015; Låftman, Almquist & Östberg 2013). Consequently, it is understandable that students often regard grades and other types of assessments as one of the most prominent sources of stress in the school setting (Låftman, Almquist & Östberg 2013).

Låftman et al. (2013) discovered that students, especially girls, consider their high standards to be a source of stress. Their aspiration to achieve high marks is driven by their own personal identity as well as external expectations from parents and teachers. Students generally perceive their parents' expectations to be supportive and reasonable. However, they often compare themselves with high-performing siblings to meet indirect parental expectations. Formal grades are a significant factor in shaping students' perceptions of their performance relative to their peers. Research shows that formal grades are more strongly correlated with academic self-concept and self-esteem than cognitive ability tests (Vogl, Schmidt & Preckel 2018). This may be because grades make the relative performance of students more explicit, intensifying social comparison and competition. In contrast to informal or formative evaluations, grades offer greater possibilities for students to fail in a formal setting, which can harm their self-

confidence. It is therefore understandable that students frequently consider grades and other forms of assessment to be one of the most significant sources of stress in the school environment.

Some research works have further proven further that grading system in schools especially at the tertiary level cause a lot of anxiety among students. For instance, Whitney and Candelaria (2017) study on the effects of no child left behind on children's socioemotional outcomes revealed that, high-stake testing related to school accountability showed evidence of moderate effects of anxiety among students. However, Låftman et al. (2013) in their study revealed that students ranked grades and other form of assessment as one of the most stressors on campus. It is therefore the responsibility of school authorities as well as teachers to know the capabilities of their students and find an effective balance between assessment of students and their level of understanding and capabilities.

Good teaching method is determined by the learning that has taken place by students since the understanding levels of students are not the same, therefore the mode or method of teaching can stimulate the interest of students for a particular cause of study or otherwise (Al-Rawi, 2013). At the tertiary level in Ghana and especially in the Universities, the commonly used method for teaching is through lecturing. It is therefore important for lecturers in the Universities to deploy appropriate teaching methods to stimulate students' interest and achieve positive learning.

Al-Rawi (2013), study suggested some methods of teaching such as lecture, discussion and dialogue, practical demonstration among others. For the purpose of this study, the strength and weakness of the lecture method posited by Al-Rawi (2013) study was reviewed. The strength of the lecture method as

suggested by his study included that, the lecturer had control of time and teaching resources, it stimulates the thinking of students which creates room for discussion, economical for a large group of students and also exhibit experiences that inspire the students.

However, the study also revealed some weakness of the lecture method such as it does not consider the different capabilities of students being taught, students are most at times passive and communication is mostly one sided done by the lecturer. The study further revealed that the lecture method in most cases were boring. Inferring from the study conducted by Al-Rawi, (2013), it is important for educators at the tertiary level of the education ladder to deploy advanced communication and information technology to enhance their instruction methods to achieve a positive learning outcome. It is also important for educators to make their introduction, contents and summaries during lectures concise and as much as possible engage students with examples such as simulations and discussions during lectures to stimulate their interest.

Another study conducted by Agyepong (2011), on competency-based teaching using simulation exercises in the University of Cape Coast revealed that it was important educators linked their methods of teaching students in their various programmes of study relevant to the outside working environment or world. The study also revealed that, methods of teaching should stimulate students' interest and understanding of concepts being taught which will stimulate their creativity and innovative ideas. There is the need for HEIs to review their programme structure and methods of teaching and fuse academia with industry. The study further revealed that teachers in tertiary universities

especially public tertiary universities due to large class sizes do not deploy enough teaching methods that are innovative and competence-based.

The study concluded that the competence-based approach and simulation exercise sustains the attention of students and stimulates their interest in their course of study. This supports the view of Al-Rawi (2013) when he posited in his study that lecturers in the Universities should deploy appropriate teaching methods to stimulate students' interest and achieve positive learning. It is therefore important for teachers at the tertiary level to stimulate the interest of their students during instructional periods by incorporating practical work and link their delivery with industry.

The role of academic advisers/mentors in an educational institution such as the university is one of the most important service students need to access to make their academic life in the University more fruitful. Academic advisers/mentors are mostly faculty members who guide students, work with them and assist them throughout their academic life in the University. Some of this assistance comes in the form of skills support from admission process to learning skills and other academic choices. Due to the important role they play, students are assigned to them based on their area of specialisations in line with the student's programme of study.

Hackman (2016) in her study on academic advising in the College of Education Studies in the University of Cape Coast revealed that, Academic Advisers offer support such as making information available to students on curriculum and academic matters, giving the needed guidance on student career goals. They also refer matters brought to them by students to other faculty

members and units in the university when they do not have appropriate solutions to them.

The responsibilities of these academic advisers/mentors are enormous and for them to be effective as academic advisers/mentors they should have the competencies which as well will depend on the number of students assigned to them to mentor. The importance of staff-to-student ratio in effective teaching and learning in any academic institution cannot be underestimated. The number of students to an Academic Adviser should be manageable enough for a positive academic impact on the student. This is evident in a study conducted by Li and Carroll (2017) on needs of students and resource distribution. One of the conclusions of the study revealed that, the ratio of staff to students was discovered to influence the satisfaction of students, whereas other resources such as the overall expenditure at the university level had a smaller effect on their satisfaction.

It is a known fact that, the main reason why student enrol for university education is to pursue higher academic work and achievement. It is up to these universities to provide the platform and access for Academic Advisers to interact with students especially first-year undergraduate students. This is to help the student achieve their academic goals and graduate successfully since this access present a platform for students to have continues interaction with their academic advisers/mentors. Also, they receive study skills assistance and overcome other experiences be it positive or negative that may confront them.

Some research works have also established that the location of an educational facility plays a major role when students consider where to pursue higher education. Titan, Ardelean, Manea, Boboc and Andreea, (2015)

conducted a study in Romania that demonstrated clear evidence of certain factors influencing the decision-making process of students when it comes to choosing a path in tertiary education. In their study, majority of the respondents (56%) indicated their intention to acquire tertiary education in another city other than where they lived. 2.4% of the respondents indicated they will acquire tertiary education outside the country while 41.7% of the respondents indicated they would access tertiary education in the cities they lived.

This study confirms the research outcome of Nor (2018) which revealed that students preferred to access tertiary education outside their vicinity. This was evident when 67.7% of the respondents in his study indicated that the location of their university was not closer to their vicinity. A study also in South Africa by de Jager and du Plooy (2017) posited that the location of a study centre is an important factor for students in South Africa. The surroundings and location of a tertiary institution are factors that also influence student choice (Veloutsou, Lewis & Paton, 2015). It is a known fact that cost of living in acquiring tertiary education is one of the factors considered by parents and the students themselves.

Cultural, Social and Academic Experiences that Shape First-Year Undergraduate Students Socialization in their New Learning Environment

Cultural Experiences

Some studies have discovered that first-year undergraduate students have diverse needs and wants due to the different backgrounds they come from. These include their cultural backgrounds, learning ability, age and past experiences (Naong, Zwane, Mogashoa & Fleischmann, 2009). Although personal commitment and interest of the first-year university student is very

instrumental in meeting academic challenges and overcoming undesired challenges, it is important to consider some factors such as their cultural experiences that will position the student into the right frame of mind.

In the view of Mahlangu et al (2017), dispositional factors such as the student's "needs, wishes, emotions, abilities, intentions and one's willingness to work" (p. 109) are all necessary to help the student advance. It is to be noticed from Mahlangu et al (2017) that no matter how first-year undergraduate students in a university are prepared to learn, and no matter how brilliant they are, if their needs (cultural, social and academic), are not provided by both the abstract and concrete environment of learning, and if they are not emotionally stable, their targets for education would be very difficult to attain. Mahlangu et al. (2017) view point supports Tinto's view which he exposed in his study that, students admitted to the university, for them to complete their programmes of study and enhance their social network in their new learning environment; they must successfully integrate both academically, culturally and socially.

The university environment is unique and varied and is up to the first-year undergraduate student to be able to adopt and adapt to successfully integrate to have a good experience. These students should be able to adjust to the new way of teaching and learning, live independently as possible, relate to colleagues and community members positively, manage resources as well as time effectively to succeed in their academic work in the university. The student must also master the art of articulating their views clearly while taking into consideration the differences and similarities of the cultural backgrounds of their new found environment. Tinto (1987) Model explains this further in the first stage of integration for first-year students at the university which is

separation. He defined this as a deliberate attempt by these students to separate from the values, beliefs, and other socialization that are part of the communities from which they come, in order to fit into the university community. This is because; the university has its own culture, norms, rules, and regulations that may be distinct from the community in which it exists. It is also a known fact that, the weather conditions in the Upper East Region are different from most part of the country and most times not friendly between the months of November to May every year.

It is acknowledged that, the CKT-UTAS has students coming from all over Ghana and even some African countries and their ability to adjust to the weather patterns and the various cultural beliefs of the local people and their fellow colleagues such as their way of dressing, food and the diverse ways they perceive life where the University is located could be a contributory factor in their successful adjustment in the university environment. Nel, Govender and Tom, (2016), sum this view point in their study which indicated that “the high dropout and low graduation rates of disadvantaged students are among the many problems associated with poor adjustment to university life” (p.384). Since the university has its own subculture on the way activities are carried out, first-year undergraduate students need to understand these subcultures and imbibe them as quickly as possible to have a smooth experience.

It can further be argued that it is only at very few instances that there are issues of cultural integration of first year indigenous students within their local universities (Chaisanit, 2018). Grayson (2011), claims that “domestic students would be the least likely to confront problems of adjustment to a new culture and a disjunction between their culture and the culture of the university” (p.

610). This argument is flawed in many ways since all over the world and in Ghana particular; there are diverse ethnic groups with different cultural and linguistic differences. These students would meet at the university with each carrying their cultural identity. This notwithstanding, every university, apart from being a place of learning has its cultural environments that is unique and peculiar to that university. One is only able to know the culture of the environment once they get into it. The culture of the people of Navrongo may not necessarily be the same with the culture of the school community of CKT-UTAS but the external factors influencing student behaviours and experiences may have an influence in their university experience.

The cultural environment of the school is what first-year undergraduate students encounter or experience as soon as they arrive at any university. According to Kathryn, Saraswathie, and Reyagalaletsa (2016), academic adjustment for students entails attaining contentment with their academic progress, establishing meaningful relationships with peers and lecturers, and developing a positive attitude towards the academic environment as a whole. This involves experiences that facilitate academic and cognitive growth and meaningful enhancement of academic motivation. (pg. 384). The motivations and cognitive developments ‘in a meaningful way’ can best be seen through the student conduct and class performances. All these attainments are best achieved through a very conducive and welcoming cultural environment.

Steenkamp, Baard, and Frick (2009) stated that several Academy initiatives aimed at first-year students include training student counselors as collaborators in academic and university life matters, providing effective assistance for emotional and academic difficulties, introducing monitoring and

feedback mechanisms to track students' progress, and conducting research to explore and identify factors that impact the success of first-year students throughout the institution. (pg.115). If the cultural environment of the institution that the first-year undergraduate students find themselves is very hostile and extremely at par with their home backgrounds or their second cycle school's background, they will definitely be found wanting. In this case, even a well-organized orientation to usher in the students would be insufficient in meeting the needs of the students.

In addition, the assertion to cultural environment of the student and its role in shaping and influencing first-year undergraduate students conduct and performances is shared by Wangeri, Kimani and Mutweleli (2012), who in their study posits that “depending on their home environment and setting, the physical and social environment of the university is new, overwhelming and intimidating to some students” (p.41). The intimidation of the first-year undergraduate student should not only simply mean physical hostility of the cultural environment, but ‘clash’ of cultures and experiences that have serious emotional and traumatic experience on the student especially the fear of getting undesired grades and failure in examinations. What most of the first-year undergraduate students do is to personally negotiate their ways around by deciding to mingle and stay in circles with those who share the same cultural and linguistic affinity with them (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015), while those who wish to learn new cultural experiences will often opt to associate with other students whose culture is not at variance with theirs.

It is due to these troubling encounters that Baik, Naylor, Arkoudis and Dabrowski (2019), explained that, “First-year students face

unique stresses in adapting to a new academic, social and cultural environment at university, and for many school leavers, first year is also a time of developing new independent identities and uncertainty” (p. 527).

Social Experiences

At the tertiary level(s) such as the University, new students are catapulted into a new learning environment where academic expectations are high. They must strive to meet all academic obligations in order to graduate successfully. In this new environment, the experiences of first-year undergraduate students are ‘multi-layered’, interdependent, and involve an ‘immersion’ or inclusion into the social life of the school and its entire environs. This is to ensure that they can easily transition and integrate into the whole community (Edjah, Domey, & Ankomah, 2019; Nel, Govender, & Tom, 2016).

The greatest transition experience for most first-year undergraduate students is balancing instructional activities with personal activities in their new found environment. Even though it is right to agree with Mahlangu and Fraser (2017) that, “self-discipline, self-motivation, interest in the course, self-confidence, academic preparedness, effort, and the beliefs students had about themselves” (p. 109). To ensure that the students successfully integrate into the academic institutions as first year students, there are other factors that can militate against a first-year undergraduate student in any institution of higher learning such as the university, how the student is effective and deliberate on balancing time schedules for activities enumerated by Mahlangu et al. (2017) will transition successfully.

In addition, most first-year undergraduate students find this act difficult to grasp. These factors and experiences could have a heavy burden on the

student. The difficulty in transitioning could have dire effects which may include but not limited to poor relationship with peers and friends, poor communication interaction with the local people and religious challenges (Leibowitz, Van der Merwe & Van Schalkwyk, 2012; Motsabi, Diale, & Van Zyl, 2020). Lekena et al. (2018) posits that to enhance the social integration of first-year students, student club activities as well as sporting facilities and its associated activities should be made known to students and they should be encouraged to participate. It could be an entirely shocking experience for example for an ardent sport student to report to a university that do not have any sporting amenities to nurture his/her talents.

It is very important to mention that while in secondary school, students are under the wings of their parents, and are simply regarded as 'children' even though some of them may have attained the age of eighteen (18) years and above. When they enter universities as first-year undergraduate students, they are seen as mature adults even if their ages say otherwise. For the very fact that they have transitioned from Senior High Schools, it is assumed they have been formed enough to act and carry themselves independently without harming others. It is then from these environments that this new independence is formed. They choose who to associate with, befriend, which study group to belong, and which academic society or union to associate with. Preparations towards all these activities contribute to their social experiences in the University and could result in various stresses to most first-year undergraduate students.

Academic Experiences

The academic environment in the University is very demanding and Management of universities expect first-year undergraduate students to fall in line since they are considered being mature. Hitherto, they had Senior House Masters who took their roll and ensured that they were in class on time. This would no longer be the case since the student then becomes their own keepers in the University. One who is unable to coach themselves in order to meet the academic demands of the University would struggle to meet their academic obligations which will contribute to school stress students are to deal with.

Furthermore, first-year undergraduate students are likely to face effective communication challenges in the University. A first-year undergraduate student who is able to communicate to others effectively, and in turn understand what is being communicated to him/her within the university's environment will have a very positive experience. First and foremost, effective communication ensures that daily tasks are accomplished in the bid to satisfy the needs of students as asserted by Uleanya and Uleanya (2021), "communication is the most important because it influences every part of human activities" (p. 370). Communication goes beyond uttering mutually intelligible words to each other. What is communicated and the context of the communication is very instrumental. To communicate to the students requires a great deal of understanding which include the state of mind of the student their needs as well as the cultural and academic context within which the communications go on. Uleanya and Uleanya (2021), put it quite clearly when they stated in their study that, if lecturers cannot communicate effectively and deliver accurate information to students, they are not fulfilling their

responsibilities. On the other hand, if they do not provide appropriate guidance to students in obtaining accurate information, they are also not fulfilling their responsibilities. Uleanya et al. (2021) study is supported by Fashiku (2017), who argues that, In the school system, many students may fail not because of their lack of academic ability or readiness to learn, but due to ineffective communication by some teachers in the classroom. This may be compounded by the fact that the language of instruction is often secondary or foreign to the students.” (pg. 172).

Ineffective communication in most Ghanaian learning institutions does not only result in slow pace integration but stalls student academic growth in the classroom. According to Anatsui (2020), three separate studies carried out in Ghana, two at a public university and one at a private university, found that despite English being the primary language of instruction, domestic students and faculty members frequently use local dialects in the classroom, which results in international students missing out on crucial information. (pg. 78-79)

The use of local dialects will obviously not only deprive the international students as Malete, Glass, Scarboro and Marinoni (2015) have suggested but some indigenous students as well. This is because at instances where a widely spoken language like Akan is used intermittently in the classroom to advance intellectual discourses not all local students will benefit. It is important to even stress that the country Ghana have about fifty local languages and a lecturer choosing one to teach at some point during lectures will deprive a lot of students.

Also, Stoffelsma and Spooren (2019) revealed in their study that, “A recent study amongst 496 first-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students in

Ghana showed that 52% of the students had a reading ability that was not sufficiently adequate for reading academic expository texts” (p.909). This is further argued by Bojuwoye (2002) in his study when respondents stated that they had difficult experiences sometimes when the English Language was used as a medium of instruction. One can be deprived from social and academic life if they are not able to read. This is rightly so because, most communications in the University are done through publications and online notices which require reading skills to decode messages and make meaning out of them.

Moreover, the main aim of students seeking university education is to acquire knowledge to help them contribute positively to nation building. How this knowledge acquisition is tested while they are in school is through class assignments, quizzes, and other examinations. First-year undergraduate students may desire for higher scores but academic stress if not managed well, may result in lower grades and failure which may not be what they expected (Bojuwoye, 2002).

For instance, the study of Floyd (1997) has shown that the high academic achievement of pupils results from the dedication of family and the warm home environment. McDonald (2013) pointed out that, Student-staff ratio (SSR) in higher education have a significant impact on teaching and learning and critical financial implications for organizations. Chikoko (2015) in his article on “Learning from Lecturer’s experiences of Teaching large undergraduate classes in as South African University revealed that, big class size impact on student’s performance do not surface up directly depending on the methodology and learning equipment available to the lecturer, hence, deep class learning is difficult but not impossible in large classes.

Little has been done in the research field with regard to ascertaining the impact of Class Size in a Tertiary institution on students' academic performances. This research work seeks not only to add knowledge to literature but adequately provide an evidential impact on Lecturer to Class size ratio on students' academic excellence or performance using CKT-UTAS.

Coping Strategies First-Year Undergraduate Students use to Enhance Experiences Encountered

First-year undergraduate students are faced with a lot of experiences as they transition from Senior High Schools to the University such as academic work, financial challenges, smooth social life and even interaction with their peers and educators in their new environment. These experiences may result in challenges that these students have to overcome to excel in their academic work as well as enhance their social and cultural life experiences in the University. According to Amponsah, Adasi, Mohammed, Ampadu, and Okrah (2020), researchers have shown a keen interest in the academic experiences of college students during the transition from high school. The study confirmed that students who gain admission into tertiary institutions face new stressors and require suitable coping strategies to successfully manage their academic work and have a fulfilling social and cultural life.

Coping strategies are results oriented actions such as effective time management, counselling and consultation, exercising among others that could help a person especially students to successfully adjust to their new found learning environment (Amponsah et al., 2020). In other words, coping is the ability of an individual to continuously adjust and re-adjust their effort to conform to situational demands (Mwale-Mkandawire, 2020).

Some studies have further revealed that the experiences first-year students acquire may be negative or positive and the coping strategies first-they employ to mitigate these experiences they face which can either have a positive or negative impact on their academic work as well as their social and cultural life. This is evident in a study conduct by Tom (2015) when she indicated that, first year students employed both positive and negative strategies to enhance their experiences on campus. Some of the students in her study indicated that they kept in touch with family members, friends and their roommates and sought their advice from time to time whiles in school and also made sure they managed their time properly to meet deadlines of all school activities.

The study also indicated that, students accessed support systems available to them whiles in school such as consulting their academic advisers on issues regarding their academic work as well as guidance and counselling services. The participants also indicated that they engaged in leisure activities such as listening to music, exercising, and reading books other than their academic work. This was evident in the study when participants indicated that, they listened to music to aid them to sleep whiles others invited their friends to play basketball. Some students also indicated that they involved themselves in religious activities such as attending prayer meetings and conventions.

Tom (2015) study also confirmed that some students used negative coping strategies to deal with their experiences as first-year undergraduate students. This is evident in her study when some of the participants indicated that they used illegal drugs such as marijuana and abused alcohol, whiles others also indicated that they indulged in inappropriate sexual behaviours which they believed gave them a sense of belongingness and acceptance by their peers. A

few of them also indicated that they isolated themselves and tried to deal with their experiences on their own which in the long run affected their academic work, social and cultural life on campus.

Another study conducted by Adasi, Amponsah, Mohammed, Yeboah, and Mintah (2020) to establish the various coping strategies used by female and male education students in the University of Ghana revealed that, some of the respondent used positive coping strategies to enhance the experiences that confronted them as students. This was evident when some of the respondents indicated that they engaged in activities that positively influenced their experiences such as watching television, listening to music and shopping. Others also indicated that they engaged in religious activities such as praying and meditating as a strategy to enhance their experiences in school.

In addition, a significant number of the respondents indicated that they relied on emotional support from family and friends and words of encouragement from their academic advisers and mentors. Some respondents also used humor as a strategy by making fun of their experiences that confronted them to feel better. Adasi et al. (2020) in their study further posited that some respondents used negative coping strategies to confront their experiences as students in the University. Some of the respondents indicated that they resorted to the abuse of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs to feel better while others used the denial approach. They refused to agree that they were confronted with challenges and therefore did nothing about it.

A further study conducted by Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) on stress and coping strategies among distance education students in the University of Cape Coast posited that students also used some positive coping strategies to confront

their experiences as students. In their study, they posited that in the Ghanaian context people believe in prayers to solve their social problems and this was evident when some respondents indicated that they prayed and meditated as a coping strategy. Some respondents also indicated that they used self-distraction such as watching television, listening to music as well as soliciting for emotional support to deal with the various experiences they encountered as students. The study also revealed that students also used the denial process by trying to leave with the experiences either positive or negative as if they were not facing any. Kwaah et al. (2017) also revealed that a minimal significant of students used negative coping strategies such as the use of alcohol and other drugs to feel better.

Support Systems Put in Place to Assist First-Year Undergraduate

Students

It is a general perception that, transitioning from the Senior High School (SHS) to the University as a first-year undergraduate student can be a great experience for a lot of students. The process of integrating to a new learning environment as well as adjusting to academic, social and cultural expectations can be a daunting task for these students. Management of higher learning institutions such as the universities recognising the diverse backgrounds that these students come from, try as much as possible to provide some support services to help them adapt positively to their new-found learning environment. This is to enable these students adopt and adapt to their new learning environment to have a good academic, social and cultural life experiences.

Counselling is one of the critical support services education institutions employ to help fresh students settle in their new-found learning environment.

Counselling helps individuals in their personal development for them to be more effective, productive, satisfied and relevant to the environment they belong (Arku, 2015). Arku (2015) further posits in his study that, counselling is assisting an individual or groups of people in solving problems which arise in various aspects of their lives. One principle of counselling is goal establishment which could only be achieved after a session when there is a change in attitude.

For University Management to mitigate some of the diverse cultural, religious and emotional backgrounds first-year undergraduate students bring from home or will encounter in their new learning environment there is the provision of Guidance and Counselling Units, which are often equipped with both human and in some cases artificial logistics to help the students. Some of the students often feel reluctant to visit these units for assistance because of issues of anonymity and confidentiality. For this reason and other reasons such as the most recent COVID-19 pandemic, online portals are often created for students and counsellors to have easy interactions but these online services may have their own deficiencies.

According to Amos, Bedu-Addo and Antwi (2020), counsellors and, “Other experts are also reluctant to its use because of lack of knowledge in ICT as well as apprehension about change” (p. 2). It is important to mention that in developing countries, most universities are yet to have these online portals to assist students. Quite apart from this, studies conducted into counselling patronage revealed that some students most especially the international students see counselling as a mere interactive session where the counsellor keeps them company. According to Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015), a study confirmed that although counseling services were provided by university authorities, they were

not commonly utilized by international students. Many international students viewed counseling as a substitute for family and friends, and only turned to it if they had no social support (pg. 3). To reduce student unpleasant experiences, it is important for schools to put in mechanisms that will suit the needs of the incoming students not forgetting international students as well.

It is based on this that Pather and Dorasamy (2018), states that, “Universities need to be more assertive in gaining a full understanding of their incoming students’ university expectations and experiences, specifically focusing on indicators relating to social and cultural engagement, academic engagement and seeking academic support. Gaining such knowledge could increase student success and retention, particularly in the first year of study. Additionally, such knowledge can inform effective and appropriate first-year support” (p. 50). This suggestion laudable as it may be is not easily attainable in most universities where qualified personnel and technical logistics is a challenge. The importance of counselling cannot be over emphasized since its main aim is to develop the capacity of students to face their new experiences with options to solve them. It is also to help students in their period of uncertainty and confusion as well as identify students in need of special help. Universities should strive to make this critical support service available to all students especially first-year undergraduate students to access.

In addition, the new learning environment for first-year undergraduate students in the university poses a lot of experiences to them than what they may have envisaged. To help them navigate through these experiences successfully and maximise their academic, social and cultural life experiences, institutions of higher learning such as the University must develop and initiate orientation

programmes geared towards student expectations, knowing their learning environment and other resources that exist for their benefit (Davis, 2013). Davis (2013) further posits that, orientation is engaging students as well as assisting them to be more familiar with their new academic, social and cultural environment. His study further revealed that, orientation is a platform used by University Management to convey critical and useful information about other support services, the vision, mission and mandate of the institution, what is expected of students. This is to feed students with the requisite information, knowledge and skills to access the right resources for a successful academic, social and cultural life whiles they are in school.

Furthermore, Arku (2015) also conducted a study which further indicates that orientation helps students' especially new students to adjust to their new learning environment. This is to help reduce the level of anxiety fresh students express in their new-found learning environment. Orientation programmes are used to transmit critical as well as vital information on the onset to students to know the shared responsibilities between them and their new learning environment. The study also revealed that, for institutions to become more responsive to the needs of students, orientation programmes should be a shared process of learning on the part of students to positively affect the growth of their new learning environment. This statement confirms one of the research findings in a study conducted by Lkena and Bayaga (2018), when they posit that, 1604 (48.5%) of their respondent would welcome a repeated orientation for them in the course of the academic year after some of their colleagues missed the earlier one. The importance of orientation programmes in our educational

institutions cannot be underrated since it provides that platform to help students adjust during their transitional stages into the university.

Moreover, the wellbeing of students especially first-year undergraduate students in their new-found learning environment is paramount to Management of such institutions such as the University. This is evident as it is a common knowledge that, before students are fully admitted into any university in Ghana to pursue their various programmes of study, they must be declared medically fit by a qualified medical person to make their admissions valid, but in most instances, student face some challenges when conducting these medical tests to validate their admissions. This is evident in a study conducted by Nsafoh (2013) on some factors that influenced the utilisation of the University of Cape Coast hospital by undergraduate students. The study indicated that, there were some barriers that impeded the access to medical care by students who patronised health facilities. This he indicated included cost, attitude of health workers and length of time spent at the hospital. The study further revealed that some students preferred to self-medicate while others consulted their friends who were pursuing health related academic disciplines or even further consulted pharmacies closer to them. It is suggested that, the importance of health care to students cannot be overrated and such a service could be well patronised by students if access to health care delivery is improved, health workers portray positive attitudes towards patients. Students could also access this service if they are assured of confidentiality concerning their health status (Nsafoh, 2013).

It is also a well-known fact that recreational facilities promote healthy living among students when they patronise them. This support service timely attends to the health and well-being needs of students to make them healthier to

be more focused on their studies. The importance of social amenities in creating a healthy mind of the students should not be discounted. Wu, Garza and Guzman (2015), while referring to the importance of these to students in general, explicate that, “service centers provide them a space to release stress, to find a support group, and to gain strategies to deal with different problems” (p.7). Lekena et al. (2018) posits that to enhance the social integration of first-year students, student club activities as well as sporting facilities and its associated activities should be made known to students and they should be encouraged to participate. It could be an entirely surprise experience for example for an ardent sport student to report to a university that do not have any sporting amenities.

Mobility of first-year undergraduate students in their new-found learning environment is key to their safety and security. The provision of an effective and efficient transport service by institutions of higher learning such as the University will attract more students to source for such services. Studies have shown that public transport plays a key role in sustaining transport services but such services should be efficient and of high quality to attract more patronage (Misiran, Sapiri, Yusof & Mahmuddin 2021). Misiran et al, (2021) further posits that, transport services on university campuses contribute to the support services student can access. The study indicated that a reliable and constant travel schedule will contribute to the satisfaction of students on campus. This is to avoid long wait period, discomfort and late arrival to lectures. The study concluded that, there should be proper facilities to complement the bus services for students such as well-trained staff, well equipped bus terminals. Misiran et al. (2021) recommended that an appraisal system should be instituted

to periodically evaluate the service for the purpose of improving it to endure satisfaction to students.

Another study conducted by Eboli and Mazulla (2011) in Italy supports the recommendations by Misiran et al. (2021). Their study indicated that some service quality indicators if followed in the transport service delivery could increase customer satisfaction. Some of these indicators revealed in their study were cost of the service, provision of bus terminals, condition of buses used for the service, route and service reliability as well as trained staff. This they posit in their study would enhance the satisfaction and benefits that will be derived from using such a service.

Moreover, Ojo, Amoako-Sakyi, and Agyeman (2015) in their study on students' satisfaction of campus shuttling bus services in the University of Cape Coast, revealed that, majority of the respondents (67.3%) used the campus shuttle everyday while 5.6% of the respondents used the service more than once a day. The study further indicated that 50.5% of the respondents used the shuttle service due to the lower transport fare. 83.7% used the campus shuttle service for educational tours while 1.4% used it because it was disability friendly to them. The study concluded that, "reliability" was the most influential variable to student as far as transportation services was concerned on campus. The role transportation services play in the university setting cannot be over emphasised, inferring from previous studies reviewed, it is important providers of such service in the university community consider cost and service efficiency as well as reliable route to meet the demands of students.

The core mandate of any university in the world is teaching, research and community service which universities in Ghana are not exceptions. These

mandates in some cases hinge on the library support service to drive the vision of these institutions. This service offer support to faculty and students to address the needs of instruction, scholarship and research (Mensah & Afful-Arthur, 2019). Mensah and Afful-Arthur (2019) further indicated that 99.63% of respondents in their study revealed that library services supported their various programmes of study while 90% of the respondents indicated that, they have never accessed the various services of the library such as library orientation, lending services and E-databases. The study concluded that, scope of accessibility of the library service was limited to the distance students due to lack of awareness of such services. It was suggested that, library services should be made more visible to enable students tap into it to help in their various programmes of study.

Another study conducted by Boohene, Afful-Arthur, and Barfi (2017) on university library utilisation by biological science students at the University of Cape Coast revealed that, majority of the respondents 153 (30.6) visited the library mainly to do research while 147 (29.4%) visited the library for personal studies. The study further revealed that 26 (5.2%) of the respondent visited the library to relax while 30 (6.0%) visited the library to borrow books. Inferring from Boohene et al. (2017) study, it is suggested that students know the usefulness of the library and benefits derived from its constant usage with regard to their programmes of study and research work. Therefore, institutions of higher learning should stock their libraries with the needed reading materials to help students and faculty in their research work.

A further study on the use of electronic resources by postgraduate students in the University of Cape Coast revealed that most students accessed these resources hosted in the library with devices such as desktop computers, laptops in most cases when they were on campus (Kwafoa, Anhwere & Manu, 2018). The study further revealed that, students accessed these electronic resources to complete their assignments and their research work. The study also revealed that, the awareness level of students on these electronic resources was high. This awareness level and usage confirms the study by Boohene et al. (2017) and Mensah and Afful-Arthur (2019) when respondents indicated that they had various reasons for using the library. Kwafoa et al. (2018) in their study further indicated that, the awareness of respondents on the usage of library services was high but this contradicts one of the conclusions of Mensah et al (2019) when 90% of respondents in their study indicated that, they have never accessed the various services of the library such as library orientation, lending services and E-databases.

Kwafoa et al. (2018) also indicated that, majority of their respondents revealed that authorities in the library organised training for them on the use of electronic resources. This was evident when 320 (80%) confirmed when they answered the question *“What level of training is provided by the library for postgraduate students on the use of electronic resources?”* The study concluded that, there should be a reliable Information Communication Technology infrastructure to drive all library support services especially an efficient use of electronic resources.

The core mandate of every university is research, teaching and community service but some have ventured into other support services

including catering service (Mukucha, Manyika, Madhuju & Cahri, 2020). Mukucha et al. (2020) further revealed in their study on effects of business process outsourcing on the quality of catering services in tertiary education industry in Zimbabwe justified that, tertiary institutions should concentrate on their core mandates and outsource other services including catering service to private entities to undertake. This, they justified could lead to quality of food, service and ambience. Eating a balanced diet is a sure way of strength and a healthier way student stay strong to perform their academic activities. It is therefore important for universities to create the enabling environment for this service to thrive by providing cafeterias and snack bars at vantage places on campus for easy access by all. The study concluded that for an excellent catering service in tertiary institutions, it should be outsourced. This will lead to quality food, service and ambience quality (Mukucha et al., 2020). The study further suggested that other services that are not core mandates of tertiary institutions should be outsourced for efficient and quality service delivery.

Moreover, another study conducted by Mbasera (2010) on sustainable outsourcing of students catering services at institutions of higher learning in Harare during the hyperinflation period (2003-2008) was to establish the perception of students and other stakeholders on the outsourcing of catering services. The study revealed that stakeholders especially students (100%) were not happy with outsourcing of catering services. It also revealed that 89% of the respondents preferred food prepared by other vendors near the school than the one outsourced. This meant that students had problem with the quality of food served them. This perception conflict with the argument advanced by (Mukucha et al., 2020) when they revealed in their study that, for an excellent catering

service in tertiary institutions, it should be outsourced. Mbasera (2010) study also revealed that 67% of the respondents had a challenge with the customer service of the outsourced vendor and would only patronise it service when there was an improvement. The study concluded that, the outsourced vendor should embrace the issues pertaining to organizational cultural differences to make it service acceptable. The study recommended that there should be in place a proper legal binding document before services such as catering service is outsourced.

The University environment is made up of different categories of staff and students including persons who are physically challenged. The physically challenged due to their nature need special support service in learning environment such as the University to thrive. A regulation such as the Disability Act 2021 of the United States of America prohibits discrimination against people with disability including employment, public accommodation as well as access to state and local government services and programmes. In Ghana, the Persons with Disability Act, Act 2006 (Act 715) talks about special service extended to physically challenged people. Act 2006 (Act 715) enjoins owners of properties to which the public has access should provide appropriate facilities that would make persons with disabilities access them. The same Act makes it possible for the Minister of Education to designate some education institutions in each region of Ghana to provide the necessary facilities and equipment that will enable persons with disabilities to fully benefit from such institutions. It is therefore important for institutions of higher learning to make their structures accessible and user friendly to physically challenged students.

Murray and Flannery (2008) examined the attitudes of university staff towards students with learning disability and suggested that, staff had positive attitudes towards students with learning disability. The study further revealed that staff extended support service such as spending extra time with this category of students and rescheduling their missed appointments. The study also revealed that some of the staff did not have sufficient knowledge about disability laws while others did not have any idea on how to make room to accommodate physically challenged students. Murray et al (2008) suggested that there should be orientation and training for staff to appreciate the challenges of physically challenged students so as to adequately put measures for them.

Summary of Literature Review

The chapter commenced with a brief introduction that defined literature and explained the purpose of conducting a literature review. The literature review was divided into two main sections. The first section focused on the theoretical framework, which was centered on Tinto's adjustment theory (1987). The second section involved an evaluation of the empirical literature based on the study's research questions.

This review of literature section started with the cultural, social and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. The review highlighted on how students adapt culturally, socially and academically to their new learning environment through interaction with their peers and faculty as well as the community people where the University is located. It also highlighted the appreciation of students of their individual cultural similarities and differences from others. The first phase further highlighted the academic experiences student acquire by way of teaching by lecturers, size of lecture halls

and the role Academic Advisers/Mentors play in their academic life in the University. The subsequent phase of the empirical review focused on the socialization process through the experiences acquired by first-year undergraduate students' encounter at CKT-UTAS. The study revealed that balancing instructional activity with personal activities, earning lower grade in assignment, quiz than what was desired, and inability to attend extra-curricular activities and time management were some of the experiences student had to deal with.

In addition, literature was reviewed on the coping strategies employed by first-year undergraduate students to enhance their experiences in the University. At this stage, the literature reviewed showed that talking with friends/family/roommate, playing sport/exercise, listening to music/watching TV and controlling personal contracts were the coping strategies used by students. The last review of literature focused on support systems put in place to assist first-year undergraduate students. The support systems explained in the study were based on orientation, counselling, services of academic advisers and library support services. Finally, the researcher concluded the chapter with summary of the literature review.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The systematic scientific processes and procedures used to collect and evaluate data to arrive at findings, test research objectives, and/or answer research questions are referred to as research methodology (Patten & Newhart, 2017). This means methodology refers to the way in which the researcher arrives at or collects the study's data. Plonsky (2017), on the other hand, defines research method as the procedure followed throughout data collection and analysis in answering a research problem. This chapter delves into the methodology used by the researcher in the study. The chapter covers the philosophical stance, approach, design, population, sampling, data collection, and data analysis of the study.

Table 1: Methodological Outline of the Study

S/N	SECTIONS	DISCUSSIONS
1.	Introduction	The general outline for the research processes was presented in this section.
2.	Paradigm	The study's philosophical foundation was discussed in this section. The research aligned itself with the positivist philosophical paradigm.
3.	Approach	A quantitative study approach was used.
4.	Design	A descriptive survey was used for the study.
5.	Sample and Sampling Techniques	To obtain the sample size, the researcher adapted Gay and Deihl (1992) way of ascertaining sample while the census sampling technique was adopted to select all

	first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS
6. Instrumentation	The instrument used was questionnaire and interview guide
Ethical consideration	All ethical considerations in research were discussed prior to the data collection.
Data collection process	This section of the study discussed the data collection process and the researcher used one month for the data collection. The data was collected in November, 2022 through online portals of students.
7. Pilot testing	Before data collection, the researcher ensured that the data gathering instrument was pilot tested. This section discussed how the pilot test was conducted.
8. Reliability and Validity	This section discussed the processes for ensuring the reliability and validity of the research process.
9. Data analysis and processing procedures	Procedures for analysing quantitative data and support by interview data interpretation were discussed.
10. Summary of chapter three	This section discussed all sub-topic presented in chapter three.

Research Paradigm

Research paradigms are "philosophical frameworks that specify assumptions about reality, knowledge, ethics, and systematic inquiry," according to Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2013). Examples of paradigms include our "worldview, the conceptual frameworks through which we attempt to explain the world, an epistemological position, and shared ideas" (Freshwater & Cahill, 2013). As a result, paradigms do not emphasize the researcher's

philosophical knowledge or capacity to consider a specific philosophical option, but rather aid in the researcher's ability to more persuasively defend the position taken considering various potential alternatives. In the social sciences, there are three paradigms in use. These three theories are critical realist, interpretivist, and positivist (Mingers, Mutch, & Willocks, 2013). To investigate the experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS, the positivist paradigm was chosen.

Positivists contend that causes (probably) lead to effects or outcomes (Ryan, 2018). Thus, positivists' problem-solving reflects the need to isolate and weigh the many variables at play in experimental settings. Additionally, these concepts are to be reduced to a manageable, testable set, like the components of research questions and hypotheses. The knowledge that emerges through a positivist lens is carefully observed and measured to an objective reality that exists "out there" in the world (Creswell and Clark, 2017). As a result, a positivist views the creation of numerical measurements of observations and the study of human behaviour as essential. The objective of the positivist is to provide some generalizations regarding the results of the population being studied (De Luca, Falcone, Stillitano, Iofrida, Strano, & Gulisano, 2018).

The positivist research paradigm holds that, objective reality can be seen and understood rationally. This paradigm states that the subject of the study and the researcher must be handled as separate entities. Since the researcher is assumed to be separate from the research topic, it is assumed that the positivist researcher is neither impacted by the problem being investigated nor does he have an impact on the topic being studied (Parry, Johnson, & Stewart, 2013). As a result, facts are established using this approach. The positivist premise is

based on the real world's existence outside of human cognition as well as the pursuit of objective knowledge about reality (Brown & Weber, 2012). Researchers in the social sciences that adhere to the positivist paradigm place a strong emphasis on quantifiable, measurable variables, hypothesis testing using data from actual samples drawn from the population under investigation, and the assertion of formal evidence. In the construction of this work, a positivist position was taken.

Research Approach

The positivist philosophical position is in line with the quantitative approach. Quantitative approach relies on quantifying research findings and commonly measure factors with numbers (Apuke, 2017; Ndlovu, 2016). To investigate the experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS, it would be appropriate to use quantitative approach.

The quantitative approach represents the positivist philosophical worldview underpinning the entire research process. To reflect the realities found on the ground, data analysis was done numerically. However, the quantitative data gives the study problem's early outlook. The objective of the quantitative phase was to offer a quantitative description that could be applied to generalize the results to the targeted population.

Quantitative data is essential because it can be used to generalize the current situation regarding the experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. Employing quantitative results was appropriate for the study because of its nature and the goals of the researcher and the study in general. Providing a quantitative description that could be used to deduce the results to the intended population was the goal of this study to generalize the current

situation regarding the experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS.

Research Design

According to Henn and Foard, (2014), research design refers to the plan or strategy for forming the research. “This could involve the full research process, from conceptualizing the issue to formulating research questions through data collection, analysis, and report writing” (Henn & Foard, 2014). Descriptive survey studies, in the opinion of Oluwatayo (2012), are intended to gather data on the current state of phenomena. To gather data that can be analyzed and interpreted to provide a report of the present status of the subject or phenomenon under research.

A descriptive survey, according to Nardi (2018), is a study of an existing condition, common opinions, attitudes, ongoing procedures, and emerging trends. This design was deemed appropriate because it offers a thorough account of the phenomena in their current context and is economical in gathering data from a sizable sample with a high data turnover (Chang, Kauffman & Kwon, 2014). Descriptive surveys identify and document the current state of the situation (Sheikh, Edun, Feldman, Gay, Johnson, Joseph, Esterlitz & Mendoza-Puccini, 2019). The main objective of a survey research, according to Sheikh et al. (2019), is to collect responses from a sizable population to several carefully constructed and delivered questions. To achieve in-depth understanding of the various experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS, the use of the descriptive survey research design was most appropriate.

Population

Research populations include all persons who, because of shared features, meet the inclusion criteria of a study (Creswell et al., 2017). A population is a group of individuals chosen from the larger population. The population of the study comprised all first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS. For this research, the population was selected using first-year undergraduate students' admission registered in the study area. Table 2 represents the targeted population of the study.

Table 2: Distribution of Population of the Study

Variables	Estimated Population
School of Computing and Information Sciences	322
School of Mathematical Sciences	120
School of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education	82
School of Chemical and Biochemical Sciences	56
School of Environment and Life Sciences	48
Total	628

Source: Academic Section of CKT-UTAS (2022)

The targeted population was made up of registered first-year undergraduate students in CKT-UTAS. Specifically, the target population included (322) School of Computing and Information Sciences, (120) School of Mathematical Sciences, (82) School of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education, (56) School of Chemical and Biochemical Sciences and (48) School of Environment and Life Sciences.

The researcher used students in the various Schools in CKT-UTAS campus because they shared a similar academic, social and cultural life

experiences. The targeted population was heterogeneous because it included first-year undergraduate students with different age groups, ethnic group, programme of study, gender, type of senior high school attended, highest qualifications of parents and siblings as well as religious denomination. With this, the researcher investigated the academic, social and cultural life experiences of first-year undergraduate students in the study context.

Sample Size and Sampling

This section explains how the study determined the sample size and how the researcher selected respondents for the study. A sample, according to Rahi, Alnaser, and Abd Ghani (2019), is an element that a researcher selects from a population. Boddy (2016), contends that the choice of the sample size is context-specific and dependent on the scientific paradigm that is being applied to the investigation. Boddy, (2016) contends that in selecting the quantitative sample, it will be appropriate to select a large sample size to assist the researchers for the purpose of generalization.

Table 3: Sample Size of the Study

Variables	Estimated Population
School Computing and Information Sciences	64
School of Mathematical Sciences	40
School of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education	16
School of Chemical and Biochemical Sciences	11
School of Environment and Life Sciences	9
Total	140

Source: Field Data, (2022)

The total sample size was one hundred forty (140) first-year undergraduate students. The data was specifically collected from the School of Computing and Information Sciences (64), School of Mathematical Sciences (40), School of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education (16), School of Chemical and Biochemical Sciences (11) and School of Environment and Life Sciences (9) in CKT-UTAS. The participants sampled were a representative of the population. This ensured that the data was gathered from a large sample so that the findings can be easily generalised.

The researcher used students in the various schools in CKT-UTAS campus because they shared a similar academic, social and cultural life experiences. The targeted population was heterogeneous because it included first-year undergraduate students with different age groups, ethnic group, programme of study, gender, type of senior high school attended, highest qualifications of parents and siblings as well as religious denomination. With this, the researcher wanted to investigate the academic, social and cultural life experiences of first- year undergraduate students in the study context.

In my opinion, sampling is the process of choosing participants for a research study on the assumption that they will be able to offer data that is pertinent to the study. This section outlines the various stages used to specify the sample size and the sampling strategies that were used to choose the respondents in the study because it is not feasible to get information from every subject in the target group.

For the purpose of making in-depth assessment into the experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS, the researcher used Gay and Diehl's (1992) method of proportionate sampling for the study. Gay and Diehl

(1992) indicated that, if a population is more than 600, a researcher can sample 20% and if less than 600 then 10% should be sampled. The researcher selected 20% from the targeted population and made room for additional 2.3% to cater for the return rate of the questionnaire, hence the sample size of 140; this was to ensure equitable representation of the population for statistical generalization (Kusi, 2012).

However, to carry out the random sampling, YES or NO was blindered on a check list box which was readable only when it was clicked on by the respondents. To ensure impartiality in the selection procedure, respondents were instructed to click on the box which either appeared “YES or NO”. Simple random sampling reduces sampling mistakes by allowing the researcher to eliminate the unbalanced selection of participants or items and come to objectively correct conclusions about the sample (Ofori & Dampson, 2012). In addition, purposive sampling was used to sample the views of the Dean of students Affairs and the University Counsellor.

Data Collection Instrument

The tool used to collect data is described in this section. For investigations involving the quantitative method, researchers must display the instrument used for collecting the data. However, the self-developed questionnaire schedule and supplementary interview was used for the study.

A questionnaire, according to Patten and Newhart (2017), is a research instrument that consists of questions for data collection. However, (Nardi, 2018) asserted that questionnaires are instruments used to gather information from respondents in a short period and at a low cost. In research, a questionnaire is normally grouped into three (3) types. These are structured, unstructured, and

semi-structured questionnaires. The structured questionnaire provides researchers limited access for respondents to express themselves and the questions are normally closed-ended (Ofori & Dampson, 2012). However, the semi-structured questionnaire is also a structured form but gives the researcher room to probe or provide the respondents with an additional section to explain the points further (Creswell, 2014).

However, Creswell, (2014) concluded that questionnaire provides highly objective data which are easier to code and analyze. But Ofori and Dampson (2012) opined that data collection using a questionnaire is easily distributed and less expensive. However, Ofori and Dampson (2012) further stated that a questionnaire provides a high rate of anonymity and confidentiality to the respondents than the interview. Despite the advantages of the questionnaire, Creswell (2014) asserted that questionnaire fall short of access for respondents to probe beyond the given response provided. Plonsky (2017) confirms that, the researcher has no control over who filled or completed the questionnaire during their absence. However, (Kusi, 2012) asserts that, ability for researchers to make in-depth assessments of the case under study would be minimal because questionnaires lack the opportunity to explore.

The researcher chose a structured questionnaire for the study. However, the type of structured questionnaire was the Likert-type scale where registered statements were given to respondents to agree or disagree (Kusi, 2012). The Likert-type scale was grouped into four (4) which were scored as follows: “Strongly Agree” =4, “Agree” =3, “Disagree” =2, and “Strongly Disagree” = 1. The instrument was divided into five (5) main sections with sixty-two (62) items. Section A (1-12) elicited information on respondents' backgrounds.

These included their gender, age, region, number of persons in household, type of SHS, highest level of education etc.

However, section B (13-27) solicited information on cultural, social, and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students. Section C (28-42) elicited information on how the experiences of first-year student shaped them in their new learning environment. Section D (43-53) solicits information on coping strategies that first-year undergraduate students employ to enhance their experiences in school. Section E (54-62) examined support systems put in place by the University Management to assist students.

The researcher further selected the Dean of Student Affairs and the University Counselor to interview them to complement the quantitative data collected from the students. These key informants were interviewed to ascertain a valid judgment concerning the students' experiences and the support system put in place to help them. Kusi (2012) asserted that questionnaires do not provide enough information, so researchers use interviews to seek in-depth knowledge about a phenomenon. Creswell and Creswell (2017) believe that an interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer initiates the interview process to get information from the interviewees. The researcher believed that the interview helped to elicit specific information by probing and clarifying, pursuing, and building on interviewees' responses or comments. Through the interview, further clarification was sought from the Dean of Students Affairs and the University Counselor on what norms existed prior to the admission of the first-year students, the support system and coping strategies put in place to assist them.

Ethical Considerations

Before the questionnaires were given to the students, an introductory letter was sent to the UNESCO Category II Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of the University of Cape Coast to the Registrar of CKT-UTAS, before data collection. Respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the research period and that, their participation was entirely voluntary. Before beginning the data collection process, the following ethical considerations and how they related to the study were discussed: permission, anonymity, informed consent, and respondent confidentiality.

The researcher sought permission from the Registrar of CKT-UTAS before the data collection. Obtaining permission from relevant authorities determines how reliable the research is (Crook, 2015). Before gathering data, approval from the authorities in the study area would be required for the researcher to be free to conduct an in-depth analysis of the case. The Registrar was consulted for approval and Deans from each school were asked for their permission before data collection.

Before data collection could begin, respondents' permission had been obtained from the Registrar. However, informed consent was also sought from respondents before data collection. Magwa and Mugari (2017) asserted that informed consent enables people to participate or not after being made aware of the purpose of the study. The researcher followed all informed consent in this study, and participants were given the option of participating or not and could also pull out at any point in time during the data collection process. The respondent's duty to keep their identity and answers confidential was

emphasized by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). Respondents were given assurances by the researcher that their information would not be shared with other users but would be used for academic purposes only.

In addition, anonymity is defined by Chikutuma (2013) as the respondent's right to maintain anonymity during the investigation. The researcher made sure that group data were presented during the analysis rather than individual data to aid in keeping study respondents' identities anonymous.

Data Collection Procedure

This section describes how data was collected in the study. The quality of the data collected for the analysis depends on the fieldwork that was done to gather the information. The researcher was to employ two (2) field assistants to assist with data gathering techniques because the study's scope was so broad. But due to a delay in receiving the ethical clearance from the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board, the questionnaire was sent via online for students to complete. This happened because the duration for data collection coincided with students being on vacation and staff of Public Universities being on strike. Since the Field Assistants were trained initially to inform the students of the purpose of the study regarding their ethical responsibilities, the sampling process, and other guidelines, their contacts were made available to students to seek clarification throughout the period available to them to complete the questionnaire online. The researcher explained to the respondents throughout the online data collection process on secured informed permission, confidentiality, anonymity, prevent participant injury, privacy, and how other protocols should be followed.

The researcher administered the questionnaires to one hundred and sixty (160) respondents with support from a staff from the Directorate of ICT Services of CKT-UTAS. The online data collection lasted for two (2) weeks, that is, between November 6, 2022 to November 19, 2022. Some follow-up investigations were done to further clarify the support system and coping strategies put in place by the Dean of Student Affairs office and the University Counselor's outfit to help the students.

Pilot Testing of Instrument

The instrument was pilot tested among first year students at St. John Bosco's College of Education in Navrongo. Twenty (20) respondents were used for the pilot testing. The instrument was piloted to assess the instrument's consistency, accuracy, and usefulness. Test-retest was the method used to evaluate the quantitative instrument's reliability. To look for patterns, protocol respondents were given a questionnaire to complete and then given the same questionnaire to complete two (2) weeks later. The first pilot testing was done from September 7, 2022 to September 14, 2022.

Table 4: Results from Pilot Testing of Instrument

Section	N	Alpha One Test	Alpha Two Test
Section B	20	0.79	0.80
Section C	20	0.81	0.82
Section D	20	0.78	0.79
Section E	20	0.82	0.81

Source: Field Data, (2022)

The result from Table 4 shows that there was a consistency in score recorded in the first and second test. For instance, the result from section B, C,

D and E all recorded a closer alpha score for the first and second test. The first test recorded an average alpha score of 0.80 while the second test recorded an alpha score of 0.81. To have the overall alpha score for the pilot tested instrument, an average was found between the first and second alpha score. The overall alpha score for the instrument was 0.81. This revealed that the instrument was reliable because Creswell (2014) asserted that any instrument that has reliability more than 70% alpha is appropriate to be used for research.

Procedure of Ensuring Reliability and Validity

Baker et al. (2015), defines reliability as the uniformity with which a study yields the same results when repeated in a different setting. Nonetheless, in contrast to Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2010) claim that reliability demonstrates research measurement consistency whereas Creswell and Creswell (2017) defined reliability as the degree to which a research tool produces the equal outcomes under the same conditions with the same respondents.

Using two criteria, outward consistency and internal consistency, the fundamental question of reliability was determined. Respondents must complete the same instrument more than once for research results to be generalized, according to Kusi (2012) and Morse (2015). Internal reliability is the plausibility of data that have been collected to measure the same idea (Silverman, 2015). The reliability of the instrument was ensured through pilot testing of the instrument where an alpha level of 0.81 was derived.

The validity, on the other hand, relates to the degree to which an instrument's wording accurately measures what it is intended to measure (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). Additionally, validity, according to Creswell and

Creswell (2017), is the extent to which research findings effectively gauge the social processes that are the subject of the study. There are fundamentally three ways to establish the validity of research tools. The three of them are content validity, construct validity, and criteria validity (Heale & Twycross, 2015).

Construct validity is a method of evaluating how well a research tool measures what it was designed to measure (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Kusi, 2012).

However, the degree to which a research tool reliably evaluates each component of a construct is how content validity was determined. The degree to which a research tool is comparable to other tools used to measure the same variables is known as its criterion validity (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Kusi, 2012). The researcher first gave the instrument to his supervisor to evaluate, and all his comments were incorporated before submission to the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast for ethical review and clearance. All recommendations by the Board were followed, and all necessary adjustments made.

Data Processing and Analysis

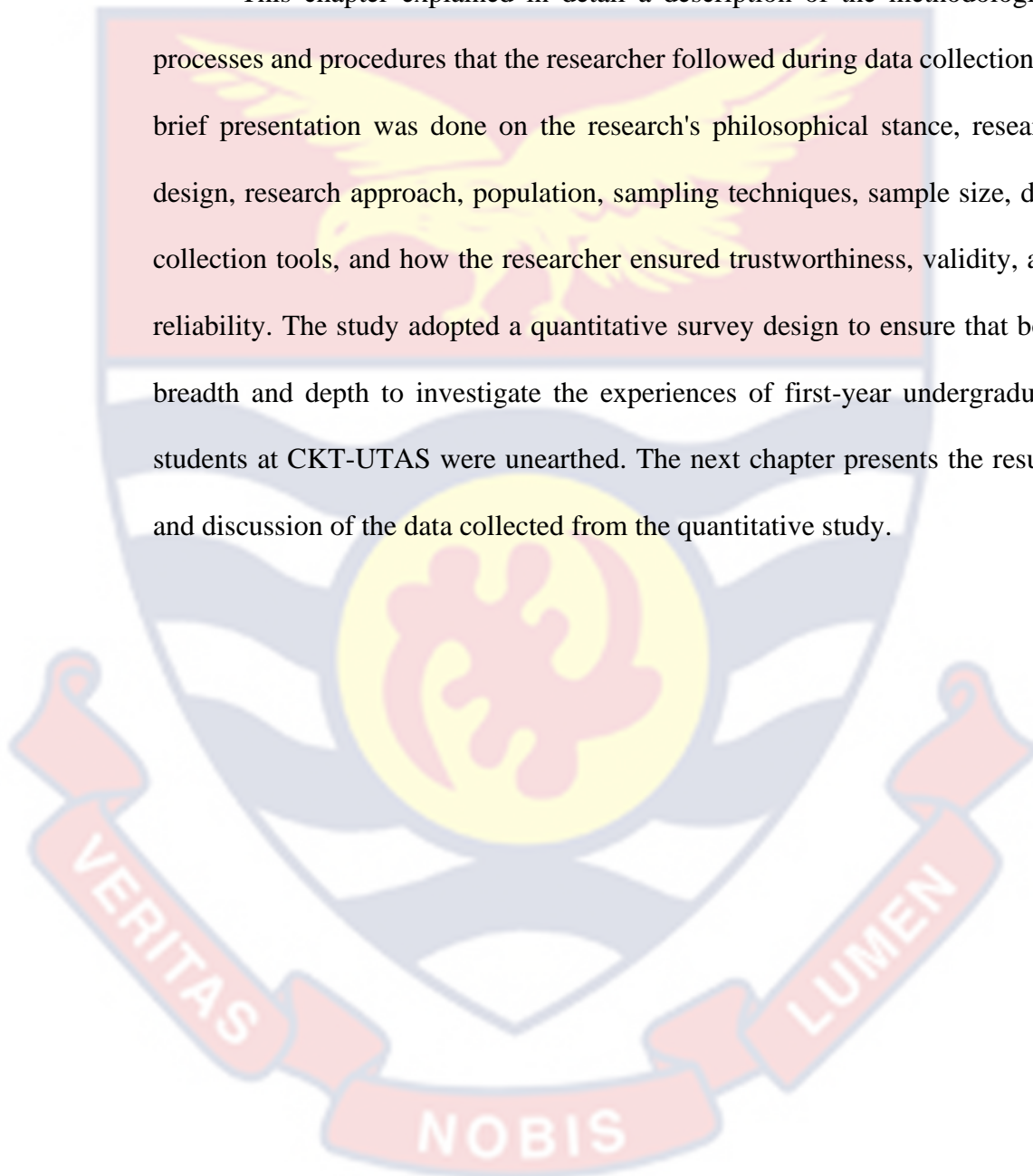
According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), data analysis illustrates how academics redefine study findings to elaborate on knowledge gained from the field during data collecting. To analyze the study's data, the researcher used quantitative methods due to the nature of the study and research methodology.

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data, and statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software was employed to facilitate the analysis process. The research questions were analysed using, mean and standard deviation while background data was analysed using frequency and

percentages. However, the interview data was analysed manually to complement the quantitative data.

Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter explained in detail a description of the methodological processes and procedures that the researcher followed during data collection. A brief presentation was done on the research's philosophical stance, research design, research approach, population, sampling techniques, sample size, data collection tools, and how the researcher ensured trustworthiness, validity, and reliability. The study adopted a quantitative survey design to ensure that both breadth and depth to investigate the experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS were unearthed. The next chapter presents the results and discussion of the data collected from the quantitative study.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents analysis of findings for the study. The analysis of data was grouped into three (3) sections. The first section presents statistical analysis of sociodemographic data while the second section presented data on the research questions. The last section provides summary or synthesis of the data.

Statistical Analysis of Respondents' Sociodemographic Profile

This section presents findings from participants' socio-demographic data of the study. Participants' socio-demographic data was collected at CKT-UTAS campus among one hundred and forty (140) first-year undergraduate students. The socio-demographic data of participants included gender, age, primary degree of focus, number of courses in a semester, number of credit hours and religious affiliation. The analysis was presented in Tables. Table 5 represents distribution of respondents by gender.

Table 5: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	112	80
Female	28	20
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 5 shows the gender distribution of respondents in the study. A total of one hundred and forty (140) respondents were present to answer the

instrument. Out of this, 112 (80%) were males while 28 (20%) were females. The result on Table 5 showed that males formed the majority of respondents used for the study on experiences of first-year undergraduate students in CKT-UTAS. The next Table presents distribution of respondents by their age grouping.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by their Age Grouping

Age	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
19-22	76	54.3
23-26	29	20.7
27-30	26	18.6
Below 19	9	6.4
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 6 shows that the majority of the respondents (76) constituting 54.3% formed the age grouped between 19-22 years while age group 23-26 years representing 29 (20.7%) were second. However, age group 27-30 years were 26(18.6%) of the sample size while age group below 19 recorded 9(6.4%) respectively. The next Table describes distribution of respondent's region they come from.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondent by Region

Region of Respondents	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Northern	25	17.8
Upper East	21	15
Upper West	17	12.1
Greater Accra	15	10.7
North East	13	9.3
Ahafo	10	7.1
Ashanti	9	6.4
Eastern	8	5.7
Bono East	6	4.3
Bono Ahafo	5	3.6
Savannah	4	2.9
Central	2	1.4
Oti	2	1.4
Western	1	0.7
Volta	1	0.7
Western North	1	0.7
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 7 shows that the majority of the respondents (25) constituting 17.8% come from the Northern Region of Ghana. Twenty-One (21) respondents constituting 15% come from the Upper East Region while Seventeen (17) representing 12.1% come from the Upper West Region. Table 7 also reveals that fifteen (15) respondents constituting 10.7%, thirteen (13) respondents representing 9.3%, ten (10) respondents representing 7.1% come from the Greater Accra Region, North East and the Ahafo Regions respectively. Nine

(9) respondents representing 6.4%, eight (8) respondents representing 5.7% as well six (6) respondents representing 4.3% come from the Ashanti, Eastern and Bono East Regions respectively.

Table 7 further shows that, five (5) respondents representing 3.6% come from the Bono Ahafo Region while four (4) respondents representing 2.9% come from the Savannah Region. Two (2) respondents each come from the Central and Oti Regions represented 1.4% each. However, the Western, Volta and Western North Regions had one (1) respondent each representing 0.7% each. The next Table describes distribution of respondents by number of children in household.

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents by Number of People in a Household

Number of Children	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
4-8	54	38.6
Others	41	29.3
9-13	26	18.6
Above-13	19	13.5
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 8 reveals that the majority of the respondents (54) constituting 38.6% had the number of people between 4-8 in their household while (41) respondents representing 29.3% had the number of people in their household undefined. These respondents did not provide an answer to the question. However, twenty-six (26) of the respondents constituting 18.6% had the number of people in their household between 9-13. Furthermore, nineteen (19) respondents representing 13.5% had the number people in their household

above 13. The next Table describes distribution of respondents by the type of Senior High Schools (SHS) they attended.

Table 9: Distribution of Respondents by Type of SHS Attended

Type of SHS	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Day	81	57.9
Boarding	59	42.1
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 9 indicates that majority of the respondents 81(57.9%) were day students when they were in SHS while the rest of the respondents 59(42.1%) were boarding students during their SHS education. The next table shows distribution of parents/guardian highest qualification of respondents.

Table 10: Distribution of Respondents by Parents/Guardian Highest Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Senior High School Certificate	53	37.8
Diploma	39	27.9
First Degree	21	15
Middle School Leaving Certificate	14	10
Masters	11	7.9
PhD	2	1.4
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 10 indicates that majority of the respondents of the study 53(37.8%) had their parents/guardian having Senior High School Certificate as

their highest academic qualification whereas 39(27.9%) had their parents/guardian having Diploma as their highest academic qualification. The table also shows that 21(15%) of the respondents' parents/guardian have First Degrees as their qualifications as well as 14(10%) of the respondents' parents/guardian having Middle School Leaving Certificate as their highest qualification. Table 10 further shows that 11(7.9%) of the respondents' parents had a Masters Degree as their highest academic qualification while a minimal number of respondents 2(1.4%) had their parents/guardian having a PhD as their highest academic qualification. Table 11 shows the distribution of respondent's sibling(s) highest academic qualification.

Table 11: Distribution of Respondents by Sibling(s) Highest Level of Education

Sibling Level of Education	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Senior High School Certificate	46	32.9
First Degree	41	29.3
Diploma	34	24.3
Masters	16	11.4
PhD	2	1.4
Middle School Leaving Certificate	1	0.7
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 11 indicates that majority of the respondents of the study 46(32.9%) had their sibling(s) having Senior High School Certificate as their highest academic qualification whereas 41(29.3%) had their sibling(s) having a First Degree as their highest academic qualification. However, the table also

shows that 34(24.3%) of the respondents' sibling(s) have Diploma as their qualifications whereas 16(11.4%) of the respondents' sibling(s) had Masters degree. One (1) of the respondents' sibling representing 0.7% had while 2(1.4%) of respondents' siblings had a terminal degree (PhD). Table 12 shows the distribution of respondents by their degree focus.

Table 12: Distribution of Respondents by their Degree Focus

Degree Focus	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
School of Computing and Information Sciences	64	45.7
School of Mathematical Sciences	40	28.5
School of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education	16	11.4
School of Chemical and Biochemical Sciences	11	7.9
School of Environment and Life Sciences	9	6.5
Total	140	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Table 12 shows that the majority of the respondents (64) constituting 45.7% were from the School of Computing and Information Sciences while School of Mathematical Sciences was second representing 40(28.5%). However, School of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education had 16(11.4%) while School of Chemical and Biochemical Sciences recorded 11(7.9%) respectively. Finally, School of Environment and Life Sciences had the least number of students represented in the study with frequency and percentage score of 9(6.5%). The next table section discusses respondents credit hours per semester.

Table 13: Distribution of Respondents by their Credit Hours per Semester

Credit Hours	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Above 18	76	54.3
15-17	64	45.7
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 13 shows that the credit hours per semester above 18 was in the majority with the respondent's rate of 76(54.3%) while credit hours per semester between 15-17 was second with 64(45.7%) respectively. The subsequent section explains the religious affiliation of the respondents.

Table 14: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

Religion	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Christianity	114	81.4
Muslim	26	18.6
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 14 shows that many of the respondents 114(81.4%) were Christians, 26(18.6%) were Muslims. The results showed that most respondents were affiliated to Christianity. The subsequent section presents the accommodation status of the respondents in the study.

Table 15: Distribution of Respondents by Accommodation Status

Accommodation	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Non-Residence	95	67.9
Residence	45	32.1
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 15 shows the distribution of respondents by accommodation status. The non-residence respondents 95(67.9%) were in the majority while residence respondents recorded 45(32.1%) which forms the minority. Table 15 shows that non-residence respondents formed the majority of first-year undergraduate students in CKT-UTAS compared to residence respondents.

Data Processing and Analysis of Research Questions

This section explains how data was processed and analysed by research questions. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 was used to analyse the descriptive survey data. The mean represents the average of a set of numbers computed using the SPSS (McMillan & Schumacker, 2010; Tredoux & Durrheim, 2013). To arrive at the mean score, the total sum of numbers was divided by the number of scores (McMillan & Schumacker, 2010; Ofori & Dampson, 2012; Tredoux & Durrheim 2013). Ofori and Dampson (2012) confirmed that standard deviation measures the variability of scores from a group.

The researcher adapted the scoring format posited by Creswell and Creswell (2018) when interpreting a four Point Likert-type scale. From the four Point Likert-type scale, the lowest a respondent could attain is 1.00 and the highest is 4.00. Creswell and Creswell (2018) proposed that researchers would interpret between 1.00 to 1.99 as low response range and 3.00 to 3.99 as a high response range. The moderate range was obtained by adding the range of scores from the four Point Likert-type scales that was strongly disagree (SD-1), disagree (D-2), agree (A-3) and strongly agree (SA-4). The moderate range was calculated by adding score allotted on the Likert scale ($4+3+2+1=10$) and divided by the number of scale ($10/4=2.5$). A moderate response range was 2.5.

Figure 1 represents the scoring range used by the researcher for the interpretation of data.

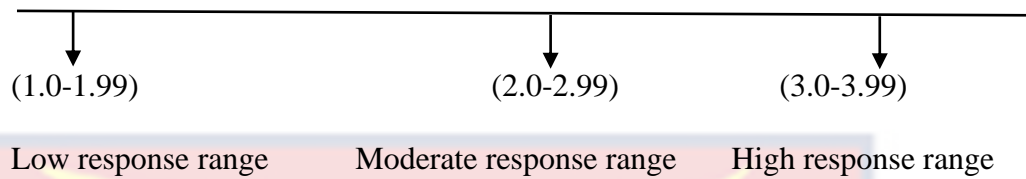


Figure 1: Scoring range for the study

This format was used to check respondents' response in the study. The findings from the research questions were explained with the help of Creswell and Creswell (2018) format for interpreting data. The next section presents analysis on the cultural, social and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS.

Cultural, Social and Academic Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

This section presents the analysis of research question one (1). To answer this question, two things were done. First, examining the world view experiences of the first-year students entering the university by reviewing literature and at the second level, exploring what cultural, social and academic experiences that exist in the institution prior to the fresh students' entry. Also, the experiences of first-year undergraduate students were explored and the findings presented in Tables 16, 17 and 18. Whereas Table 16 looked at their experiences from the cultural point of view, Table 17 viewed their experiences from the social aspect. Table 18, looked at their experiences from the academic point of view. For the purpose of this study, lists of statements were provided to the respondents to guide them to answer these questions. Also, information on the cultural, social and academic experiences that exist from the stand point

of the university prior to the entry of these fresh students was gathered from the office of the Dean of Students Affairs and interpreted.

Table 16: Cultural Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

S/n	Statement	N	M	SD
1.	Difficulty in interacting with community members where the University is located (language barrier).	140	3.81	0.15
2.	I have to adapt to the lifestyle expected in my new learning environment.	140	3.45	0.37
3.	It is often difficult to get the choice of food to buy.	140	3.33	0.39
4.	I have to make time to fit in the fashion atmosphere (fashion choice) of the University and the community where it is located.	140	3.19	0.37
5.	Spending time with friends from different cultural backgrounds inform me of the differences and similarities in our culture.	140	3.07	0.25
<i>Mean of Means</i>			3.37	0.31

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The overall mean of means score from Table 16 was (M=3.37, SD=0.31). This indicates that, new cultural experiences experienced by first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS were high. For instance, respondents' comments on the scale "Difficulty in interacting with community members where the University is located (language barrier) recorded (M=3.81, SD=0.15) which shows the highest response rate among cultural experiences encountered by first-year students of CKT-UTAS.

In addition, Table 16, indicate that the scale "I have to adapt to the lifestyle expected in my new learning environment" recorded (M=3.45, SD=0.37) which was the second most frequent cultural experience for first-year

undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. Respondents also indicated the challenge they faced with the choice of food available to them. This is evident when they responded to the scale “It is often difficult to get the choice of food to buy” which recorded (M=3.33, SD=0.39). The scales “I have to make time to fit in the fashion atmosphere (fashion choices) in the University and the community the University is located” and “Spending time with friends from different cultural backgrounds informs me of the differences and similarities in our culture” both recorded high scores with (M=3.19, SD=0.37) and (M=3.07, SD=0.25) respectively.

The analysis of the scales from Table 16 shows that first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS experienced new cultural attributes which they had to adapt to help them fit into their new learning environment.

Table 17: Social Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

S/n	Statement	N	M	SD
1.	Places are designated for me to practice my religion on campus or outside campus.	140	3.71	0.27
2.	I have developed a healthy relationship with new friends and peers.	140	3.42	0.23
3.	Facilities and amenities are available to enhance recreational activities.	140	3.11	0.18
4.	Student clubs are available for me to join and partake in their activities in addition to my academic work.	140	2.98	0.43
5.	I have developed some level of good community interaction with the local people where the University is located.	140	2.91	0.26
<i>Mean of Means</i>			3.23	0.27

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The overall mean of means score from Table 17 was ($M=3.23$, $SD=0.27$). This indicates that, new social experiences experienced by first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS were high. For instance, respondents' comments on the scale "Places are designated for me to practice my religion on campus or outside campus" recorded ($M=3.71$, $SD=0.27$) which shows the highest response rate among social experiences encountered by first-year students of CKT-UTAS.

In addition, Table 17, indicate that the scale "I developed a healthy relationship with new friends and peers" recorded ($M=3.42$, $SD=0.23$) which was the second most frequent social experience for first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. Respondents also indicated their interest in facilities and other social amenities to enhance their recreational activities. This is evident when they responded to the scale "Facilities and amenities are available to enhance recreational activities" which recorded ($M=3.11$, $SD=0.18$). However, there were some moderate responses from the respondents when they responded to the scales "Student clubs are available for me to join and partake in their activities in addition to my academic work" and "I have developed some level of good community interaction with the local people where the University is located" both recorded moderate scores with ($M=2.98$, $SD=0.43$) and ($M=2.91$, $SD=0.26$) respectively.

The analysis of the scales from Table 17 shows that first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS experienced new social attributes and behavior which they needed to help them fit into their new learning environment.

Table 18: Academic Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

S/n	Statement	N	M	SD
1.	Evaluation and grading system bring unwanted academic pressure to me as a student.	140	3.74	0.25
2.	Making meaning out of the timetable provided was challenging at the first instance.	140	3.65	0.22
3.	The mode of teaching by lecturers stimulate my interest to always attend lectures.	140	3.42	0.19
4.	My first lecture scared me because of the class size.	140	3.22	0.14
5.	I have access to Academic Advisors/Mentors to guide me in my academic progression in the University.	140	3.09	0.18
Mean of Means			3.42	0.19

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 18 overall mean of means score was $M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.19$. This indicates that new academic experiences among first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS were high. For example, respondents' comments on the scale "Evaluation and grading systems bring unwanted academic pressure to me as a student" were recorded ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.25$), indicating the highest response rate among CKT-UTAS first-year undergraduate students' academic experiences.

In addition, Table 18 indicates that the scale "Making meaning out of the timetable provided was challenging at the first instance" recorded ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.22$), which was the second most frequent academic experience for first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. Respondents also indicated their interest in attending lectures depended on how lecturers taught their courses in class. This is evident when they responded to the scale, "The mode of teaching by lecturers stimulates my interest to always attend lectures," which recorded ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.19$). Furthermore, respondents' responses to the scales "My first lecture scared me because of the class size" and "I have access to academic advisers or mentors to guide me in my academic progression in the university" both recorded high responses of ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.14$) and ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.18$) respectively. The analysis of the scales from Table 18 shows that first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS experienced new academic attributes, which they needed to help them fit into their new learning environment.

In addition, the Office of the Dean of Students was contacted to explore the cultural, social and academic experiences that exist in the institution prior to the fresh students entering. For the cultural experiences he indicated that, the university like any other institution has its set of norms and practices that make it distinct. In his own words he indicated that "*every university has its own institutional identity, corporate culture, ideas and norms and the quality of its development is expected to be based on the institutional identity*". He asserted that, this could be done considering the relationship between the internal and external requirements for quality education and its support from all participants in the educational process. He further indicated that regulations or code of

conduct for students are in place to let them conform to a particular behavior. For instance, the way they dress and appreciation of the similarities and differences in cultural beliefs and myths of colleagues and the university is key so far as their cultural experiences are concerned. He conceded that, the possibility of internal and external cultural conflict among students in their adjustment process could arise but measures such as periodic counselling, orientation are put in place to help them adjust smoothly. The Dean of Student Affairs further indicated that, to enhance the social experiences of students' especially fresh students, places for religious activities have been designated for them to continue to practice their religious beliefs. He also indicated that students are advised to join registered student clubs and associations and partake in their activities to enhance their bonding and deeper understanding of divergent views espoused by their colleagues. He said this platform broadens the horizon of students' thinking and lead them to discover or develop other talents of theirs other than their academic work.

Furthermore, the Dean of Student Affairs indicated that the university through the Sports Unit organize periodic games and other sporting activities as well as recreational activities to enhance the social experiences of students. He said, these games and recreational activities present a common platform for students to interact, explore and know each other more and better appreciate their views which result in a better coexistence. The Dean of Student Affairs also revealed that the university appreciates the academic dynamics of fresh students transitioning from SHS. Knowing the different teaching methods such as lecturing, presentations and discussion used often in the university than the spoon-fed teaching at the SHS level, students are assigned to academic advisers

to guide them in their academic journey. The Dean concluded by saying, since academic pursuit is the main reason why students come to the university, there are set of rules and regulations that they need to follow. They are expected to behave in a particular manner and guided to achieve their academic laurels.

Student are exposed to these rules and regulations in their various student portals and updated periodically during seminars.

Socialization Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

To answer this research question, the socialization experiences of first-year undergraduate students through their cultural, social and academic experiences were explored and the findings around it are presented in Tables 19, 20 and 21. Whereas Table 19 looked at their socialization experiences from the cultural point of view, Table 20 viewed their socialization experiences from the social point of view. Table 21, looked at their socialization experiences from the academic point of view. For the purpose of this study, lists of statements were provided to the respondents to guide them to answer this question.

Table 19: Cultural Socialisation Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

S/n	Statement	N	M	SD
1	I know my ethnic identity may affect my attitude towards my colleagues from different backgrounds	140	3.42	0.17
2	I appreciate the diversity in choice of food	140	3.28	0.21
3	I understand the language barrier due to cultural diversity	140	3.11	0.19
4	I appreciate the diversity in dressing to portray one's culture on campus	140	3.09	0.19
5	Adjusting to new physical environment	140	3.04	1.11
<i>Mean of Means</i>			3.19	0.37

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 19's overall mean of means score was ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.37$). This indicates that the cultural socialization experiences by the first-year students were a bit challenging to them as students at CKT-UTAS. Respondents' comments on the scale "I know my ethnic identity may affect my attitude towards my colleagues from different backgrounds" recorded ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.17$), which shows the highest response rate among experiences encountered by first-year students of CKT-UTAS.

In addition, Table 19 indicates that the scale "I appreciate the diversity in choice of food" was recorded ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.21$), which was the second most frequent cultural socialization experience for first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. Respondents also indicated their understanding in language barrier due to the diversity of cultural backgrounds of their new learning environment. This is evident when they responded to the scale "I understand the language barrier due to cultural diversity" which recorded ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.19$). The scales "I appreciate the diversity in dressing to portray once culture on campus" and "Adjusting to New Environments (Weather)" both recorded high scores with $M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.19$, and $M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.11$, respectively. The analysis of scales from Table 19 shows that first-year students of CKT-UTAS were highly challenged with their cultural socialization experiences, even though some experiences may have been acquired during the process to help them settle-in in their new learning environment

Table 20: Social Socialization Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

S/n	Statement	N	M	SD
1	I have learnt to coexist with friends from different religious backgrounds	140	3.39	0.74
2	I have been able to adapt to the lifestyle of the university environment	140	3.22	0.86
3	Ability to attend extra-curricular activities	140	3.07	1.04
4	Difficulty in managing emotional challenges	140	2.89	1.07
5	Establishment of relationships	140	2.82	1.07
Mean of Means			3.08	0.96

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The overall mean of means score of Table 20 was ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.96$). This indicates that the social socialization experiences by the first-year students were high for students at CKT-UTAS. Respondents' comments on the scale "I have learnt to coexist with friends from different religious backgrounds" recorded ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.74$), which shows the highest response rate among experiences encountered by first-year students of CKT-UTAS.

In addition, Table 20 indicates that the scale "I have been able to adapt to the lifestyle of the university environment" was recorded ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.86$), which was the second most frequent social socialization experience for first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. Respondents also indicated their ability to attend extra-curricular activities to enhance their social life was evident when they answered the scale "Ability to attend extra-curricular activities" which recorded ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.04$). There were also some moderate responses recorded by the respondents in Table 20. The scales "Difficulty in managing emotional challenges" and "Establishment of relationships" both recorded moderate scores with $M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.07$, and M

= 2.82, SD = 1.07, respectively. The analysis of scales from Table 20 shows that first-year students of CKT-UTAS were guided by some social activities to enhance their settle-in experiences in their new learning environment.

Table 21: Academic Socialization Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

S/n	Statement	N	M	SD
1	Ability to understand the periods on lecture time tables	140	3.51	0.21
2	I know what my lecturers expect of me as a student	140	3.18	0.41
3	Ability to perform tasks through group work	140	2.89	1.09
4	I know how to request for support when my academic work demands it	140	2.75	1.25
5	Understanding specific languages shared in the university (abbreviations, jargons)	140	2.68	1.26
Mean of Means			3.00	0.84

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The overall mean of means score of Table 21 was (M = 3.00, SD = 0.84). This indicates that the academic socialization experiences by the first-year students were high for students at CKT-UTAS. Respondents' comments on the scale "Ability to understand the periods on lecture time tables" recorded (M = 3.51, SD = 0.21), which shows the highest response rate among experiences encountered by first-year students of CKT-UTAS. In addition, Table 21 indicates that the scale "I know what my lecturers expect of me as a student" was recorded (M = 3.18, SD = 0.41), which was the second most frequent

academic socialization experience for first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS.

Moreover, some moderate responses were recorded in Table 21. This was evident when respondents answered the scale “Ability to perform tasks through group work” which recorded ($M = 2.89, SD = 1.09$). The scales “I know how to request for support when my academic work demands it” and “Understanding specific languages shared in the university (abbreviations, jargons)” both recorded moderate scores with $M = 2.75, SD = 1.25$, and $M = 2.68, SD = 1.26$, respectively. The analysis of scales from Table 21 shows that first-year students of CKT-UTAS were guided by some academic social activities to enhance their settle-in experiences in their new learning environment.

Coping Strategies Employed by First-Year Undergraduate Students to Enhance their Experiences at CKT-UTAS

This section presents the analysis of research question three (3). In order to comprehensively approach this research question research data was generated from the standpoint of students who are first-year undergraduate students. A list of statements was provided to the respondents to guide them to reveal to the researcher some strategies they had employed to enhance their settle-in experiences. The researcher further had engagements with the Office of the Dean of Students and the Guidance and Counselling Centre for some of the official coping strategies available for students. These findings are presented in Table 22.

Table 22: Coping Strategies Employed by First-Year Undergraduate Students to Enhance their Experiences at CKT-UTAS

S/n	Statement	N	M	SD
1	Talking with friends/family/Roommate	140	3.66	0.47
2	Playing sport/exercise	140	3.39	0.75
3	Listening to music/ Watching TV	140	3.29	0.89
4	Controlling personal contracts	140	3.22	0.88
5	Walking/jogging	140	3.09	0.82
6	Reading books	140	2.91	0.98
7	Managing time effectively	140	2.75	1.09
8	Drinking alcohol	140	2.58	1.02
9	Going for counselling or consultation	140	2.44	1.18
<i>Mean of Means</i>			3.05	0.90

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The overall Mean of Means score from Table 22 was $M=3.05$, $SD=0.90$. This indicates that coping strategies employed by first-year undergraduate students to enhance their experiences were very high as they enrolled at CKT-UTAS. For instance, respondents' comments on the scale "Talking with friends, family, or roommate" recorded ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.47$), which shows the highest response rate among strategies employed by first-year students of CKT-UTAS.

In addition, Table 22 indicates that the scale "playing sport or exercising" recorded ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.75$), which was the second most frequent coping strategy used by first-year students to enhance their experiences encountered at CKT-UTAS, Respondents also indicated they either listened to music or watched television as a strategy to enhance their experiences as first-year undergraduate students, which also had a high response. This was evident

when they responded to the scale "Listening to music/Watching TV," which recorded ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.89$). The scales "controlling personal contracts" and "walking" both recorded high scores with $M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.88$, and $M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.82$, respectively.

There were also moderate responses recorded in Table 22. For instance, respondents responding to the scale "Reading books" recorded $M=2.91$, $SD=0.98$ to the scale "Reading books" recorded $M=2.91$, $SD=0.98$, and the scale "Managing time effectively" recorded $M=2.75$ and $SD=1.09$. In addition, respondents' responses to the scale "Drinking alcohol" were recorded ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.02$). Respondents' comments on the scale "going for counselling or consultation" are also recorded ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.18$). The analysis of scales from Table 22 shows that first-year students of CKT-UTAS used highly recognized strategies to enhance their experiences when they first enrolled in the university.

In addition, a follow-up investigation was done with some key staff from the Guidance and Counselling Centre and the Dean of Student Affairs office. The information highlighted was on coping strategies used by these offices to enhance students' stay on campus and help them acquaint themselves with the school environment. The follow-up investigation data collected was on three sub-themed areas: academic experience, social experience, and technology user experience.

Academic Experience

The data on academic experiences revealed that students struggled with frustration caused by the use of the notice boards, lecture attendance and cost, physical structure, and a disability-unfriendly learning environment. The

University Counsellor asserted that during orientation, his outfit help students familiarise themselves with the school environment to ensure their adjustments. The Dean of Students on his part added that "accessibility to the lecture halls by students has not been easy." He indicated that, formally, students needed to struggle for lecture halls, but with the help of staff in the Directorate of ICT Services and Examination Officers, timetables have been allocated correctly, preventing students from struggling for lecture rooms. Also, all lecture halls have been well labelled by the Estates Department of the university to make it easier for identification.

In addition, the University Counsellor indicated that, students were advised to manage their time effectively. He further asserted that students are counselled to apportion, organize, and schedule their time effectively to achieve academic success rather than being unproductive. Collaborating this, the Dean of Students emphasised that, first-year students are advised to manage their time to fulfil their academic life rather than spending more time attending social events. The Dean further asserted that, students are made aware of overindulging in social media and their related activity limits their attention in classroom activities and therefore could affect their academic output negatively. As a result, during orientation programmes, students receive time management advice from the Dean of Students that helps them to cope in the university.

Another coping strategy highlighted by the University Counsellor and the Dean of Students was students seeking counselling and consultation from Senior Members and other staff when they were in need of help. He stated that "as a university counsellor, I am most times in the office from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm., receiving students who have challenges with their academics or studies".

“Also, whenever first-year students come, I also do follow-up and visitation at the various hostels and halls to find out the academic needs of students who need special attention and help them adjust to their new environment”.

Social Experience

In view of some coping strategies used by the university for first-year students, the Dean of Students and the University Counsellor asserted the importance of social adjustment and experiences given to students. Because of the high cost of transportation, the Dean of Students stressed "*When students first arrive at school, my outfit usually rely on the university buses to pick them up from the Navrongo lorry station and transport them to their various hostels*".

In addition, SRC leaders and other students are assigned to fresh students to direct them to their destinations. Other social-related experiences that emerged had to do with the physical facilities on campus. On the physical access front, about nine (9) university buildings are accessible to physically challenged students and staff. This has made physically challenged students feel welcomed and some level of inclusion to participate in lectures and other social events.

The University Counsellor further stressed that in some cases, the lack of accessible routes to lecture halls and programme venues discourages students from accessing some services and facilities. The counsellor emphasised the importance of psychosocial adjustment for students by encouraging them to talk with their friends or roommates and to participate in campus sporting and other social activities. It also came to light talking to these officers that, places are designated for religious activities by students and where such places were not readily available, the office of the Dean of Student Affairs negotiate with

Management of the University to allow students use designated lecture halls for such activities only on Saturdays or Sundays.

Technology User Experience

Another coping strategy emphasised by the Counsellor and the Dean of Students was technological experience. This revealed the experiences students encountered in the use of technology. The University Counsellor cited students' experiences with ICT, the devices used, software and platforms, and library support. He further asserted how students are coached to use the internet to submit their assignments and examination documents.

In support, the Dean of Students also said:

“The ICT centre addresses students’ challenges with the support of the internet. Students' phones and laptops are connected to the internet service provided by the university, which helps with their technological adjustment. Also, personal institutional student emails are created for students, and other library support services, such as journal sites, are linked to students’ portals to aid in technological adjustment or coping”.

Support Systems put in place to assist First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

This section presents the analysis of research question four (4). In order to comprehensively approach this research question, two set of data were also generated. (1) From the standpoint of students who are first-year undergraduate students and (2) From the standpoint of the system which is the university, two offices were earmarked namely the Dean of Students Affairs and the Guidance and Counselling Centre. Although opinionated quantitative data was collected

from the students, in the case of the system level actors (Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and Guidance and Counselling Centre) qualitative data was collected from them. These findings are presented in Table 21.

Table 23: Support Systems Put in Place to Assist First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

S/n	Statement	N	M	SD
1	Orientation	140	3.93	0.27
2	Counselling	140	3.82	0.40
3	Library support services	140	3.16	1.31
4	Support for physically challenged students	140	3.15	1.22
5	Study skills assistant	140	2.95	1.12
6	Catering services	140	2.71	1.36
7	Health system and recreational activities	140	2.68	1.38
8	Transportation	140	2.63	1.42
9	Academic Advisers	140	2.51	1.36
<i>Mean of Means</i>			3.06	1.09

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 23 recorded some high responses from first-year undergraduate students in CKT-UTAS. This is evident when respondents responded to the scale "orientation," which recorded a (M=3.93, SD=0.27) as the highest mean. The scale "Counselling" also recorded a (M=3.82, SD=0.40). Also, the scales "Library support services" and "Support for students with physical disabilities" each had a mean of 3.16 and a standard deviation of (M=3.16, SD=1.31) and (M=3.15, SD=1.22) respectively.

Table 23 also recorded some moderate responses by respondents. For instance, respondents' response to the scale "Study Skills Assistant" recorded a

($M=2.95$, $SD=1.12$). The scale "Catering services" also recorded a ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.36$). In addition, the provision of health systems and recreational facilities by the university also recorded a moderate response. This is evident when respondents responded to the scale "Health System and Recreational Activities," which recorded a ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.38$). Furthermore, respondents' responses to the scale "Transportation" recorded a ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.42$). Finally, the mean of the means score from Table 23 was ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.99$). This indicates that the support systems put in place by the university and accessed by first-year undergraduate students to enhance their experiences when they enrolled at CKT-UTAS were high.

In addition, statements from the Dean of Student and University Counsellor revealed that mechanisms have been put in place to assist fresh students to adapt on campus. Some of the comments and quotes from the Dean of Student and University Counsellor are presented below.

The University Counsellor said:

"I team up with other staff from the Dean of Student Affairs office to make provisions and provide fresh students with the needed support for their new environment. Orientation services are provided to students to help them adjust to their new learning environment. The University Counsellor further added that after establishing this friendly atmosphere for students, other Deans from different schools are also invited to share the support service available to the students. Also, various Heads of Units/Sections share other support services that are available in the University for students to access".

The Dean of Student also affirmed what the Counsellor said, by saying that,

"The university laid emphasis on the importance of orientation programmes for students. We also have transportation support system we provide to the students coming from town to campus. Also, we educate them about our library support services and

other relevant support services such as their health care needs and keeping proper hygiene through the university's polyclinic to make their stay on campus a fulfilling one”.

It was reported that library support services were in place to assist students with their reading and searching for materials for their assignments and research (University Counsellor). However, the Dean of Students also confirmed that various offices that provide direct services to students are invited to share the services their departments or units provide. The Dean of Students further stated that, there is a medical facility that takes care of student health when they are sick. Also, other services like catering and ICT services are in place to assist students in their adjustment process. These are major support systems put in place to help first-year undergraduate students adjust to the school environment.

Discussions

In this section, the study's findings are discussed, and the authors draw on the work of Taylor-Powel and Renner (2003), Neuman (2011), and Hart (2018) to highlight the importance of interpreting research findings. Taylor-Powel and Renner (2003) argue that interpretation of findings helps researchers to establish connections and meaning in themes that have been identified in the study. Similarly, Neuman (2011) emphasizes that interpretation assists researchers in assigning meaning to key concepts and findings. According to Hart (2018), discussing findings separately can help readers understand how each theme reflects the interpretation made during data analysis.

The study aimed to investigate the academic, social, and cultural experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS, and the interpretation of the data was guided by the research questions and the socio-demographic profile of respondents presented in chapter one. The authors use the literature reviewed in

chapter two to support their discussion of the research questions in this section. The following section focused on the socio-demographic profile of the study's respondents.

Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents

The socio-demographic profile examined in the study was on respondents: gender, age, region of origin by respondents, number persons in their household, type of senior schools they attended, highest academic qualifications of parents and siblings' primary degree of focus, number of courses in a semester, number of credit hours and religious affiliation and accommodation status of respondents. The researcher utilized the socio-demographic profile of respondents to provide an understanding of the sample distribution in its social context, as stated by Nardi (2018) and Plonsky (2017). The gender distribution was one aspect examined in the study, which revealed that the majority of respondents were male. The research instrument was answered by 140 respondents, and out of this, 112 (80%) were male while 28 (20%) were female. This finding was supported by the school mapping report by the Ministry of Education (2018, 2019 & 2020), which indicated that more male students were admitted at the tertiary level than females. Moreover, enrollment statistics from the University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, Winneba confirmed that more male students were admitted to study at these universities than female students (University of Cape Coast, 2017, 2018, 2019; University of Education Winneba, 2017, 2018, 2019). The discussion of the socio-demographic profile of respondents helped the researcher and readers to comprehend the variables used in the study. In addition, records available at the Directorate of Academic Affairs of the CKT-

UTAS on the 2021/2022 admission list revealed that out of the 543 undergraduate students admitted, only 82 were females and the rest (461) were males (Admission statistics from the Academic Affairs Directorate, 2021/2022).

Regarding the age of respondents, the findings suggested that (76) constituting 54.3% formed the age grouped between 19-22 years were dominant among the first-year undergraduate students grouping in CKT-UTAS. Table 6 which presented age grouping of respondents showed that respondents between 23-26 years representing 29 (20.7%) were second whereas the age grouping 27-30 years had 26(18.6%) were the third dominant age group while respondent in the age group below 19 recorded 9(6.4%) respectively. In addition, Table 7 indicated the regions the respondents came from. The Northern Region had majority of students 25(17.8%) coming from there while Western, Volta and Western North Regions had a respondent each coming from their regions.

However, the analysis of respondents concerning the number of people in their households in Table 8 revealed that the majority of respondents (54, or 38.6%) had a household of 4–8 people. 19 (13.5%) were in the minority with the number of households above 14. Table 9 represents the type of senior high school attended by the respondents. Day students were in the majority as 81 (57.9%) of the respondents in the study attended day senior high schools while 59 (42.1%) attended boarding senior high schools. It was also revealed in the study that the majority of the respondents' parents or guardians had a senior high school certificate as their highest academic qualification. This is evident in Table 10 when 53 (37.8%) respondents revealed that their parents or guardians had a senior high school certificate as their highest academic qualification. 21 (15%) of the respondents indicated that their parents or guardians had a first

degree as their highest academic qualification. It is important to note that 11 (7.9%) and 2 (1.4%) of the respondents in Table 10 revealed that their parents or guardians had a Master's degree and a PhD degree as their highest academic qualifications, respectively.

Furthermore, Table 11 represents the distribution of respondents' siblings' highest academic qualification. 46 of the respondents, or 32.9%, said that their sibling(s) only had a Senior High School Certificate as their highest level of education. 41 (29.3%) and 34 (24.3%) of the respondents indicated that the highest academic qualifications of their sibling(s) were a first degree and a diploma, respectively. The analysis also revealed that 16 (11.4%) of the siblings had a master's degree as their highest academic qualification. It was also indicated in Table 11 that 2 (1.4%) and 1 (0.7%) of the respondents had their sibling(s) having a PhD degree and a middle school leaving certificate, respectively, as their highest academic qualifications. Another key analysis considered for this research work was the religious affiliations of the respondents.

The religious denomination showed that Christians formed the majority of the first-year undergraduate students, followed by Muslims. This is evident in Table 14, with 114 (81.4%) of the respondents being Christians and 26 (18.6%) of the respondents being Muslims. In support, the population and housing censuses in 2010 and 2021 show that Ghana's population is dominated by Christians. On the issue of housing on campus, the non-residence respondents (95, 67.9%) represented the majority, while the residence respondents (45, 32.1%) were in the minority. Per information from the office of the Dean of Student Affairs, CKT-UTAS has only two halls of residence for

students, where each hall cannot accommodate more than one hundred and fifty (150) students. This has compelled management of the university to partner with private hostel owners to accommodate students who are not in residence on campus.

Cultural, Social and Academic Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

Cultural Experiences

To reflect on the cultural, social, and academic experiences of first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS, the first study question was broken down into three components. Tables 16, 17, and 18 contain additional analysis, which supported the literature review in chapter two. The examination of first-year undergraduate students' cultural experiences in CKT-UTAS is shown in Table 16. The overall mean of the mean value demonstrated that CKT-UTAS first-year students had some cultural exposure. The investigation revealed that the most cultural feature encountered by first-year undergraduate CKT-UTAS students was the item "Difficulty in engaging with community members where the university is located (language barrier)". The study conducted by Alsubia, (2008) on the academic, interpersonal, and cultural experiences of some Saudi Arabian students studying in the United States of America gives credence to this. The survey made clear how difficult it was for these students to communicate in English language with others outside of the classroom, including their peers and teachers. This had a negative impact on their participation in class and reduced their self-confidence in public. The study emphasized the significance of language and how it affects students' experiences, and it recommended that higher education institutions that accept

students, particularly international students, should offer a system of support to help them learn new languages in their new learning environment so they can successfully integrate.

Wierzbicka (1991) provides additional evidence for the significance of language in his research. According to the study, language is a tool for communication that pervades human contact and allows people to express their thoughts, feelings, and intentions. This has an impact on learning, particularly for students from various backgrounds. The value of language and the role it plays in our cultural context and personal lives cannot be overstated, according to the literature. In order to help these students, develop their new language skills and aid in their integration, it is crucial for educational institutions, particularly those universities that draw students from other parts of the country and abroad, to implement a deliberate, strong support system through the Offices of the Dean of Student Affairs.

Another cultural experience first-year undergraduate students had to deal with was "I have to adapt to the lifestyle expected in my new learning environment" and "I have to find time to fit in the fashion ambience (fashion choice) of the university and the community where it is located." It is significant to note that while Ghana as a whole share certain cultural traits with all of its citizens, other aspects, including food, dress, social mores, marriage customs, and celebrations of festivals and funerals, to name a few, vary from one ethnic group to the next even within the same region. In most cases, the setting of the university reflects the cultural climate of the nation and the region in which it is situated.

It is also important to note that universities have their own subculture and membership base, particularly for students from different backgrounds who must fit in. This can occasionally lead to quiet internal conflicts among students and their peers, as well as between them and the community at large and university authorities. CKT-UTAS is not an exception to this rule. This claim is supported by Volet and Ang's (1998) research, which showed that while cultural variety on university campuses can produce the best social environments for intercultural learning, there is still a gap in interactions between local and foreign students.

Smart et al. (2000) and Volet et al. (1998) both acknowledged the appeal of universities on a worldwide scale. In their research at an Australian institution, they found that the majority of their Asian counterparts were uninterested in lifestyle elements like drinking and partying and were instead solely focused on finishing their studies. It is vital to remember that students from different cultural backgrounds will constantly struggle to fit in with the typical campus culture, which could lead to negative stereotypes. It is crucial for university administrators to inform students of the standards and general conduct expected of them and to allow them to conform in order to improve their university experience.

Additionally, respondents said that socializing with their coworkers made them consider the differences and parallels between the various cultural backgrounds they come from. This was demonstrated by the high response rate for the comment made by respondents that "Spending time with friends from diverse ethnic backgrounds informs me about the distinctions and similarities in our society." Students from diverse cultural backgrounds attend their top-

choice higher education institutions expecting to learn about the local culture and interact with their peers, who can help them, learn about the parallels and differences between their own diverse cultural backgrounds.

Cultural exchanges are one of the positive effects of higher education's globalization, according to studies by Smart et al. (2000) and Twigg (2005). They give students a chance to meet new people, build networks, and interact with the local population. The students can then make the necessary adjustments to improve their cultural experience while attending school. This offers them the chance to recognize the contrasts and similarities among the varied cultural backgrounds of their peers and native people. Studies, however, have also revealed that pupils from various cultural backgrounds find it challenging to understand or internalize the distinctions and similarities among the various cultural backgrounds they come across (Kingston & Forland, 2008). In order for students to understand the similarities and distinctions of their various cultural origins, it is crucial that higher education institutions foster an environment that encourages interaction between students and locals. Tinto (1987) model sums this up in his proclaimed "rites of passage" which he indicated that for students to fit well in their new learning environment, they have to adjust to new life styles, learn new values and cultural mores and build new relationships. This he referred to the stages of transition that is separation, transition and incorporation.

Social Experiences

Table 17 provides a thorough examination of the social situations that first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS experienced. According to the overall mean of the means, first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS had

some social interactions. The study's respondents had the highest social interaction on the item "Places are provided for me to practice religion on campus or off campus." According to some study, religion is one factor that influences people's moral convictions, social bonds with other people, and even their way of life. It also has a significant impact on people's values and views. People's environments and experiences, particularly those of students in a new learning setting, might affect their beliefs and, by extension, their participation in religious activities (Lee, 2021).

According to Lee (2021), if there is no opportunity for practice, the higher education environment exposes students to a wide range of religious beliefs, practices, and religions that may be in opposition to their own. He came to the conclusion that because religious activities improve students' social well-being, universities must give them a place to participate in socially acceptable religious activities. The claim made by Sarkodie et al. (2020) that students will feel better at ease attending universities that allow them to engage in their religious activities is understandable.

The study's participants also disclosed that they formed positive bonds with their classmates, peers, and the area where the university is located. This was demonstrated by the high response rates on the question on the item that read, "I have established healthy relationships with new friends and peers," as well as the moderate response rates on the scale that read, "I have established some degree of positive community interaction with the locals where the university is located". An Asian School of Business report backs up these items and the responses from respondents (2020). According to some portions of the report, student interactions give them the chance to learn from and watch how

their peers handle challenging circumstances. This teaches them how to establish positive relationships with their friends and peers so that they can live peacefully together.

A study on students' experiences on college campuses conducted by Smart et al. (2000) provides additional support for this. The study found that while some students talked about how difficult it was for them to make friends in their new classroom, others admitted to communicating with their peers and the local communities very little. However, they indicated that intercultural interaction, lifestyle differences, ethnocentrism, and negative stereotyping threatened healthy relationships among students on campus and the local people where their places of higher learning were located.

Additionally, it is beneficial for the wellbeing of students for them to participate in leisure activities while they are at school. Students' high scores on the question "Facilities and facilities are available to improve leisure activities" demonstrated this. To support this, Carlton et al. (2017) study in a state in the United States of America found an increasing need for spaces for recreational facilities and activities in schools and communities as well as allocated funds to maintain them.

The purpose was to improve the students' social lives and provide a forum for peer interaction so that they could get to know one another better. According to Carlton et al. (2017), school administrations should periodically permit the community to utilize their recreational facilities so that students and community members could interact positively for a higher quality of life and effective social integration with local communities. The research by Buckley et al. (2021) adds to the argument made by Carlton et al. that participation in

recreational activities fosters favorable interactions between students and community members (2017). In their research, students indicated that engaging in leisure activities helped them form close relationships with their friends. Kampf et al. (2018) summarizes it in their study by noting that recreational facilities create a platform for socialization and other wellness benefits, underscoring the significance of recreational facilities and the activities and benefits associated with them.

In conclusion, the item “Student clubs are available for me to join and partake in their activities in addition to my academic work” received a moderate response from the respondents. Activities of student clubs contribute to the development of soft skills of students and broaden their perspectives of life after school. In support of this view point, a report by the Asian School of Business revealed that student club activities offer them the platform for team work and building of their leadership skills. Notwithstanding the benefits of activities of these student clubs, according to the report, challenges such as non-participation in club activities and in some cases lack of guidance in club activities are worrying issues that needed some attention by managers of HEIs. The report recommended that there should be awareness of activities of student clubs to whip the interest of students to participate in their activities. Kuzu (2021) study further supports the need for student club activities in our educational institutions. His study revealed the contributions of students’ club activities to the social development environment of a University in Turkey. The study also supports the awareness creation of student clubs and indicated that Management of HEIs should guide the activities of these student clubs for the social good of their members.

Academic Experiences

Table 18 reveals detailed analysis of academic experiences encountered by first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. The overall mean of means indicate that first-year undergraduate students had some academic experiences as students of CKT-UTAS. For instance, the item “Evaluation and grading system brings unwanted academic pressure to me as a student” scored a very high response from respondents to the study. This is not surprising since some research works have revealed that, the greatest academic experience of students is being graded through quizzes, assignments and examinations. Students are assessed to inform them about their performance which dictates who they might become in the future (Låftman et al. 2013 and Banks and Smyth, 2015). It is therefore not surprising that students frequently rank grades and other forms of assessment as one of the most significant stressors in the school environment. In support further, Vogl et al. (2018) revealed in their study that formal grades compared to tests of the cognitive ability are much more strongly correlated with academic self-concept and self-esteem. Some research works have further proved that, grading system in schools especially at the tertiary level cause a lot of anxiety among students. This is evident when Whitney and Candelaria (2017) study revealed that high-stake testing related to school accountability showed evidence of moderate effects of anxiety among students. Knowing the impact of grades and grading system in the academic life cycle of our students, is important for managers to manage the anxiety level of students to enable them appreciate the grades they get after each examination. It is for this reason that, CKT-UTAS finding its feet in the technology and applied sciences in the tertiary education space has instituted a new grading system of 70% for continuous

assessment and 30% end of semester examinations to emphasize on continual learning.

Another academic experience that first-year undergraduate students have to endure is making meaning out of the lecture time table at the first instance. This was evident when respondents answered the question “Making meaning out of the time table provided was challenging at the first instance”. In support of this mind set of students, the research work of Pamini and Athre (2010) revealed that timetabling should satisfy both the physical and emotional needs of students and lecturers. The study indicated or discovered that timetables in some schools overlapped which made making meaning out of them by students especially first-year students difficult. There were instances school timetables had students to attend two or more classes at the same time as well as teachers having overlap of courses to be taught at the same time. The study further concluded that universities should find solutions to enable them make timetable reading a stress-free process for both students and lecturers.

In addition, how teaching is done at the tertiary level especially in the Universities is different from SHS level. Whereas students at the SHS level are spoon-fed with information needed during teaching, tertiary students are guided by their teachers to seek for information by themselves. It is therefore important to note that, there should be a balance in the method of teaching especially for first-year undergraduate students due to their immediate background as past SHS leavers. The first year of every student is critical and could determine their interest in their various programmes of study as well as successes at the University. Teaching methods could either stimulate their interest or otherwise of their programmes of study. Respondents responding to the item “The mode

of teaching by lecturers stimulates my interest to always attend lectures” received a high response. In support, at the tertiary level, the commonly used method of teaching is the lecture method where the lecturer has greater classroom participation. Al-Rawi (2013) in his study revealed that, the understanding levels of students are not the same and good teaching method will determine the learning that has taken place. His research work suggested a variety of teaching methods that could be used by lecturers to stimulate and sustain student interest in class. These teaching methods include dialogue, practical demonstration, discussion and lecture methods to be used to achieve positive learning outcomes. Agyepong (2011) supports the view of Al-Rawi (2013) when in his study on competency-based teaching using simulation exercises in the University of Cape Coast. The study revealed that method of teaching should be linked to activities of industry which would impact on students’ interest. The study suggested that due to large class sizes in universities, lecturers in most cases do not deploy teaching methods that are innovative and competence-based. Aggyepong, (2011) further revealed in his study that competence-based approach and simulation exercise as a method of teaching sustains the attention of students in class and interest in their various programmes of study. Both Agyeponng (2011) and Al-Rawi (2013) agree in their research works that teacher need to employ different teaching methods to meet the different understanding levels of their students and there by stimulate their interest.

Furthermore, large class sizes are mostly associated with the Universities and especially among first-year students taking general courses. These large classes could make first-year undergraduate students uncomfortable

and even scare them which could affect their confidence in such classes. Respondents responding to the item on the scale “My first lecture scared me because of the class size” recorded high score. In support, classroom size in every educational institution plays a major role in both effective teaching and learning. A study conducted by Whitehurst et al. (2011) revealed a positive learning outcome associated with small class sizes. That same study posits that large class sizes affected the instructional effectiveness of teachers and negatively affected the learning achievements of students and their concentration levels in class. The study concluded that class size be it small or large have both negative and positive impact at various stages of the educational ladder and it is therefore important for all stakeholders to provide vibrant assessment criteria to guide teachers in classroom management as well as the use of appropriate audio visuals to enhance their method of delivery depending on the class size.

On the other hand, Vandenburg, (2012) study supports the study conducted by Whitehurst et al. (2011). Vandenburg (2012) study also revealed that a smaller class size has a positive impact on student learning achievement and teachers have the chance to pay more attention to individual student needs and have effective class room management. However, the same study revealed that teachers spent more time to manage tasks in larger class room sizes than instruction which affected students learning achievements. The two studies reviewed revealed that it was not the number of students in a class in its actual sense that affected their learning achievements but rather the effective learning instruction and quality interaction between teachers and students. It is therefore

important for universities to provide the needed and suitable audio visuals to help manage class sizes effectively.

Moreover, the role of Academic Advisers/Mentors in every student life in the University cannot be over emphasized. Respondents responding to the item on the scale “I have access to Academic Advisers/Mentors to guide me in my academic progression in the University” recorded high response. I support, Academic Advisers/Mentors are mostly Faculty Members who guide students, work with them throughout their academic life in the University. Hackman (2016) in her study in the University of Cape Coast revealed that, Academic Advisers/Mentors offer support such as making information available to students on curriculum as well as career guidance to students. The study revealed that for an effective mentoring process, the number of students attached to an adviser should be manageable as well as the area of expertise of mentor directly linked to the student’s area of study for a positive academic impact. Li et al. (2017) study supports an effective mentorship programme and summed up in their study that, a staff-to-student ratio have an impact on student mentorship than any other satisfaction they get as students in school. Universities should therefore intentionally come up with policies that will attach students to Academic Advisers/Mentors to help them have a positive academic experience.

Socialization Experiences of First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

The second research question examined the socialization experiences of first-year undergraduate students in CKT-UTAS. The findings are reflected in Tables 19, 20 and 21 and supported by literature. The overall mean of means

value of the tables revealed that first-year undergraduate students had diverse socialization experiences in CKT-UTAS. For instance, the analysis in Table 19 showed that, the item on the scale “I know my ethnic identity may affect my attitude towards my colleagues from different backgrounds” received the highest response. In support Edjah, Domey and Ankomah (2019) asserted that in a new environment like the University Community, the experiences of first-year undergraduate students are ‘multi-layered’, interdependent, and involve an ‘immersion’ or inclusion into the social life of the school and its entire environs. This is to ensure that they can easily transition and integrate into the whole community when they acknowledge the similarities and differences of their ethnic backgrounds and appreciate the culture of the university environment. Also, first-year undergraduate students indicated that they had some challenges in communication which affected their ability to interact well with their colleagues both in class and at the hostel. This, especially, also affected their interaction with the local people due to language barrier. It was also reported that adjusting to the new environment was a new experience to first-year undergraduate students who reported to CKT-UTAS. This was evident when they responded to the item on the scale “I have to adjust to the new physical environment” which received a least response in Table 19. The CKT-UTAS is located in the Upper East Region and during the time first-year undergraduate students report to school, that time of the year is normally in the dry season and the difficulty adjusting to the physical environment. It is acknowledged that, the CKT-UTAS have students coming from all over Ghana and even some African countries and their ability to adjust to the physical environment could be a contributory factor in their successful adjustment in the university

environment. Nel, Govender and Tom, (2016), sum this view point in their study which indicated that “the high dropout and low graduation rates of disadvantaged students are among the many problems associated with poor adjustment to university life” (p.384).

However, respondents in Table 20 asserted that learning to coexist with friends from different religious backgrounds and adapting to the university lifestyle was also another experience they had to endure to enhance their settle-in experiences. This reflects the experiences first-year undergraduate students go through to adjust to school condition. It is very important to mention that while in Senior High School (SHS), students are under the wings of their parents, and are simply regarded as ‘children’ even though some of them may have attained the age of eighteen (18) years and above. When they gain admission into universities as first-year undergraduate students, they are seen as mature adults even if their ages say otherwise. For the very fact that they have transitioned from SHS, it is assumed they have been formed enough to act and carry themselves independently without harming others and should be able to coexist with their colleagues and adapt to the lifestyle expected of them as university students. Since the university has its own subculture on the way activities are carried out, first-year undergraduate students need to understand these subcultures and imbibe them as quickly as possible to have a smooth experience.

Also, students have the ability to participate in extracurricular activities if they are able to imbibe the subculture of the university as quick as possible. As Baik, Naylor, Arkoudis and Dabrowski (2019) put it the porousness between the university lifestyle and other extra-curriculum activities cause most students

to fail during their first year of studies. This as a result limits students' indulgence in extra-curricular activities. On the contrary, Leibowitz, Van der Merwe and Van Schalkwyk (2012) and Motsabi, Diale and Van Zyl (2020) posited most first-year undergraduate students find this act difficult to grasp. These experiences could have a heavy burden on the student. The difficulty in transitioning could have dire effects which may include but not limited to poor academic performances, religious and social challenges. Other respondents revealed that it was an experience on how to manage their time effectively.

Furthermore, first-year undergraduate students indicated in Table 21 that the ability to understand the periods on lecture timetables was key to their academic socialization experiences. The main mandate of universities all over the world is teaching, research and community service and universities in Ghana are not exceptions. A timetable is generated to maximize the use of time because of it limits in any human institution. In educational institutions, timetable can be grouped into two that is for lectures and examinations. Padmini and Athre (2010), in their study on efficient design of university timetable indicated that timetabling should satisfy both the physical and emotional needs of students and lecturers. The study further indicated that in some instances some schools' timetables had students to attend two or more classes at the same time as well as teachers having overlap of courses to be taught at the same time. Instances like these made it difficult for students especially first-year students to make meaning out of the timetable. The study recommended that, universities should strive to find solutions to improve their timetabling to help both faculty and students to make meaning out of them and reduce stress associated with timetable reading and looking for venues to attend lectures. This, if well done

would enable students to make proper meaning out of timetables available to them to plan their university life more effectively.

The least moderate response in Table 21 was when respondents responded to the item on the scale “Understanding specific languages shared in the university (abbreviations, jargons). This may pose a challenge in communication which may affect their ability to interact well with their colleagues both in class and at the hostel. This, especially, also may affect their interaction with the local people due to language barrier. First and foremost, effective communication ensures that daily tasks are accomplished in the bid to satisfy the needs of students. Also, first-year undergraduate students are likely to face effective communication challenges in the university due to specific language terms (matriculation, congregation, lectures, Junior Member etc.) peculiar in the university. To communicate to the student requires a great deal of understanding which include the state of mind of the student, their needs as well as the cultural and academic context within which the communications happen.

Uleanya and Uleanya, (2021) have stated that lecturers fail in their duties when they cannot communicate accurately and effectively to students, as well as when they do not guide students to acquire accurate information. This finding is supported by Fashiku (2017), who has argued that many pupils fail in school not because they lack academic abilities or readiness to learn, but because of ineffective communication by some teachers, particularly when the language of instruction is foreign to the learners. Thus, effective communication plays a crucial role in the success of both students and lecturers.

To conclude, the first year of university presents unique challenges to first-year undergraduate students as they adapt to a new academic, social, and cultural environment. For many school leavers, it is also a time of exploring new independent identities and facing uncertainty.

Coping Strategies Employed by First-Year Undergraduate Students to Enhance their Experiences at CKT-UTAS

The third research question of the study analysed the strategies first-year undergraduate students employed to cope with their new experiences encountered at CKT-UTAS. The analysis of these coping strategies is found in Table 22 and supported by some follow-up with the office of the Dean of Students and the Counselling Centre to reveal some coping strategies offered by the University to students and literature reviewed in this study. The Mean of Means of the analysis showed that first-year undergraduate students employed some strategies to cope with the various experiences encountered at CKT-UTAS. These coping strategies are employed because of the stressors their new-found learning environment presents them with, as they transitioned from SHS to the University. Amponsah, Adasi, Mohammed, Ampadu and Okrah (2020) confirmed this in their study that student encountered some academic stress as they transitioned from SHS to the University and needed some coping strategies to successfully adjust to their learning environment. The study indicated that talking to friends/family and roommate was the most used coping strategy by first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. This supports the study of Adasi, Amponsah, Mohammed, Yeboah and Mintah (2020) when respondents revealed that they relied on emotional support from family and friends as well as words of encouragement from their academic advisers. This coping strategy

further supports the study conducted by Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) and Tom (2015). Tom (2015) indicated in her study that respondents kept touch with family members, friends and their roommates and sought their advice from time to time while Kwaah et al. (2017) posited that respondents solicited for emotional support for challenges they faced in school. On the contrary, the Dean of Students Affairs and the Counsellor indicated that students are rather encouraged to talk to scheduled officers and student leaders in the University on issues affecting their adjustment in their new found environment for solutions.

In addition, the study revealed that first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS employed some positive coping strategies to confront their experiences. This was evident when they answered the question on the scale “playing sport/exercise” and “listening to music/watching television”. This supports the study of Tom (2015) when respondents in her study revealed that they engaged in leisure activities such as listening to music, exercising and reading books other than their academic work and further engaged in religious activities. The results of the analysis further support the study conducted by Adasi et al. (2020). Their study revealed that some students watched television, listened to music and engaged in shopping as well as religious activities to mitigate the challenges they encountered. Kwaah et al. (2017) posited that students employed religious activities such as praying and meditating as well as self-distraction activities by watching television, listening to music as a coping strategy. This supports the view point of the University Counsellor and the Dean of Student Affairs. Even though the University encourages students to be involved in extracurricular activities by providing the platform and avenue for

it, students are encouraged not to spend so much time on such activities to the disadvantage of their academic work.

However, the analysis of the results also revealed that some students used negative strategies to confront their experiences encountered in school.

The literature reviewed supports this revelation as Tom (2015) revealed in portions of her study that students used illegal drugs such as marijuana and abused alcohol. It further stated that students indulged in inappropriate sexual behaviors as a coping strategy. Adasi et al. (2020) further supports this claim as they posited that students abused alcohol, tobacco and other drugs while others used the denial approach and pretended they had not acquired any new experience which at the long run affects their academic work. Kwaah et al. (2017) concluded that a minimal significant number of students abused alcohol and other drugs to feel better as they were confronted with new challenging experiences in school.

Support Systems Put in Place to Assist First-Year Undergraduate Students at CKT-UTAS

The fourth research question analysed the support systems put in place to assist first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. The analysis of these support systems is found in Table 23 and supported by some follow-up with the office of the Dean of Students and the Counselling Centre to reveal some support systems offered by the University to students and literature reviewed in this study. The Mean of Means of the analysis indicates that first-year undergraduate students are interested in some form of support services at CKT-UTAS. For students to fit well in their new found learning environment, an orientation or induction is required to enable them adapt to their new learning

environment. This was evident in the result analysis when majority of the respondents indicated that they required orientation ($M=3.93$, $SD=0.27$). Arku (2015) and Davis (2013) confirmed this in their study. They revealed in their various research works that orientation is engaging students as well as assisting them to be more familiar with their new found environment. It also helps students' especially new students to adjust to their new learning environment. The importance of orientation cannot be over emphasized which have been confirmed by Lekena et al (2018), when 1604 (48.5%) of respondents in their study indicated their desire to welcome a repeated orientation for them and for those who missed the initial one. The Dean of Student and the University Counsellor corroborated the importance of orientation for students when they were contacted. They emphasized that, apart from the university wide orientation for fresh students, school and department level orientations are organized for students to better familiarize with their new learning environment to enhance their adjustment process.

The analysis in Table 23 further indicated that the second most appreciated support service by students on campus is counselling service. Arku (2015) supports this statement when his study revealed that counselling helps individuals in their personal development for them to be effective, productive, satisfied and relevant to the environment they belong. The reviewed literature also revealed that some students' especially international students accessed counselling service as a replacement for their family and friends (Wu et al, 2015). Universities are therefore advised to be forceful in gaining understanding of their incoming students' university's expectations, social and academic engagement and support (Pather and Dorasamy, 2018). The University

Counsellor when contacted indicated that even though the importance of counselling cannot be overemphasized, some students felt reluctant to patronize his outfit's services. He further indicated he organizes periodic seminars to expose students to the various counselling services his centre provides.

The analysis of the result also revealed that students in general need mentors and some guidance in their various programmes of study. Hackman (2016) in her study confirmed that Academic Advisers offer support services to student such as career guidance, study skills assistance and study habits. For these Academic Advisers/Mentors to be more effective, there should be a critical look at the staff-to-student ratio since it has an impact on student satisfaction than expenditure at the university level (Li et al., 2017).

In addition, library support as well as support for physically challenged students is other services that students' access to be successful in their academic and social life, the analysis of these two scales confirms this. Student appreciate the role library services play in their study as Mensah et al (2019) confirmed in their study that 99.63% of respondents indicated the library services supported their programmes of study through research. Boohene et al. (2017) and Kwafoa et al. (2018) further confirms this when they revealed in their study that majority of their respondents visited the library mainly to do research and complete their assignment. The research works of Boohene et al. (2017); Mensah et al. (2019) and Kwafoa et al. (2018) generally agreed that the awareness level of library support services was high among students but one of the significant conclusions made by Mensah et al (2019) indicated that 90% of his respondents never accessed some aspect of library services such as library orientation, lending service and E-databases. The University library is one of the units that provide

support services to assist students with their reading and searching for materials for their assignments and research work. This was made known by both the Dean of Students and the Counsellor when they asserted that, various units in the university are given the opportunity to share the services they offer to students.

The University environment is made up of different category of staff and students including persons who are physically challenged. Those who are physically challenged need some special support services to help them thrive in their academic and social environment. The results of the analysis ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.22$) in Table 23 indicates that physically challenged students need some form of support in school and not to be discriminated against. The Disability Act 2021 of the United States of America confirms this as it prohibits discrimination of any kind against this category of people. Also, Persons with Disability Act, Act 2006 (Act 715) in Ghana enjoins owners of properties and those who provide services to make them accessible to physically challenged persons. It further mandates the Minister of Education to designate some educational facilities in each region so as to provide the needed facilities that would be beneficial to the physically challenged. For the physically challenged student to fit well in their new found environment, Murray and Flannery (2008) revealed in their study that, some university staff extended support service to physically challenged students and suggested more training for staff who did not have sufficient knowledge to help them. This, when done would make the academic and social experience of the physically challenged student a fulfilling one. On this issue, the Dean of student indicated that, some buildings in the university are disability friendly and all students are given the opportunity to

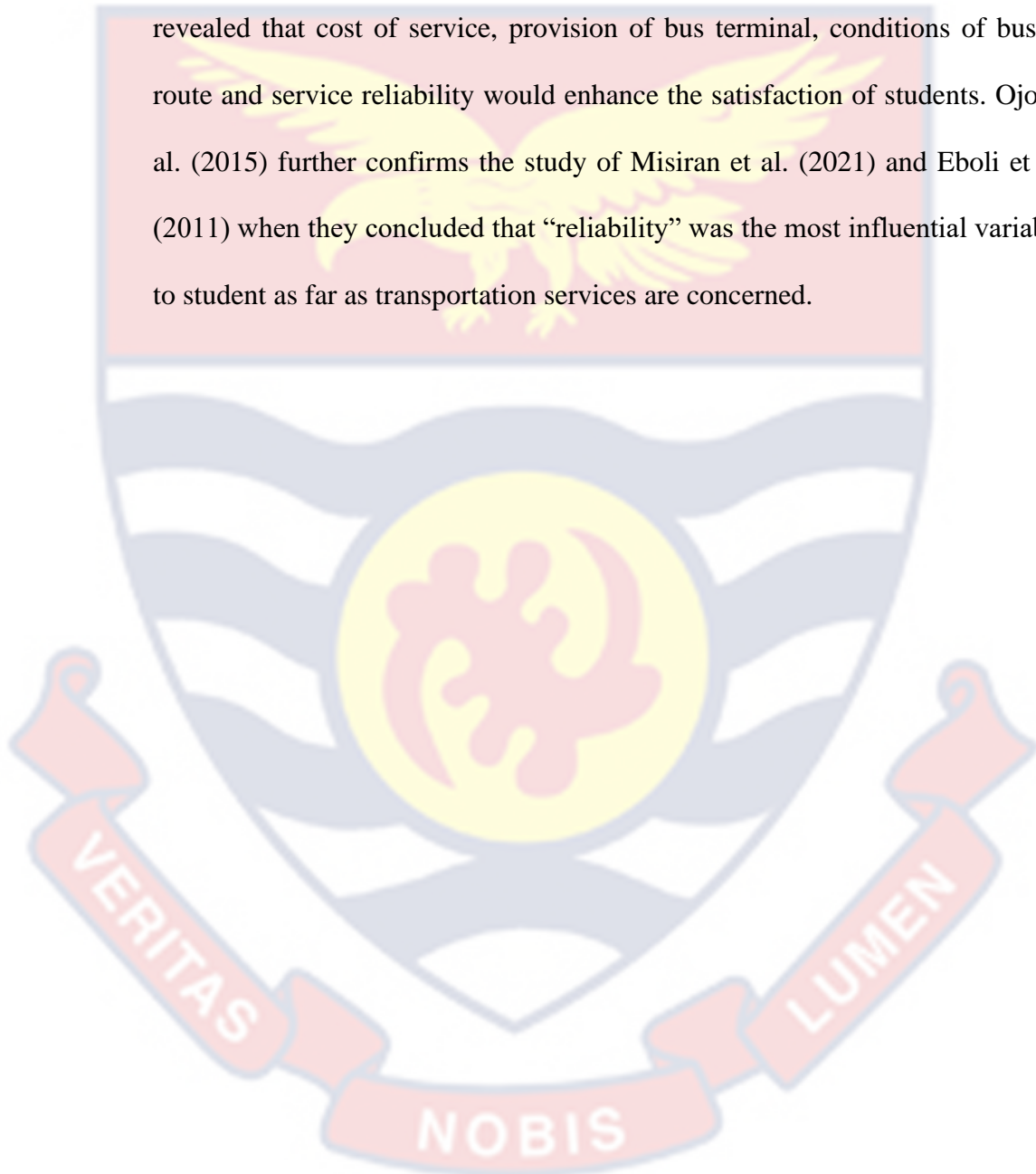
thrive in all aspects of their in the university. The Counsellor on his part indicated that, he was aware of a disability policy being developed for the university. The policy when adopted will give special attention to the needs of physically challenged students and staff.

Furthermore, the core mandate of universities is research, teaching and community service, but they venture into other services to enhance the social atmosphere of the University Community. Catering services is one of these ventures but Mukucha et al. (2020) revealed in their study that it was important for universities to concentrate on their core mandates and outsource other services to private entities. Mukucha et al. (2020) further revealed that for quality food and good ambience, catering services should be outsourced since it was the best way to ensure students had quality food to improve their health, grow stronger and perform well in their academic work. Contrary to the view point posited by Mbasera (2010) and Mukucha et al. (2020), in a study established that students were not happy about outsourcing of catering services and 89% of them preferred food prepared by other vendors near the school than the outsourced one. The importance of catering services in institutions of higher learning cannot be over emphasized, it is therefore important for a good enabling environment to be created for this service to thrive. The Dean of students indicated that the university has established a catering service unit under the Directorate of Physical Development and Estates Management (DPDEM) to provide services to both students and staff. He indicated that the location of the unit closer to the academic area (lecture halls) made it more accessible to students especially during lectures.

Moreover, the analysis on the item on the scales “health system and recreation activities”, “transportation” had moderate responses from students. This confirms a study conducted by Nsafah (2013). His study revealed that students encountered some level of discomfort accessing medical care which included cost of treatment, attitude of health workers and the long waiting period at the hospitals. Student rather preferred to visit nearby pharmacy shops and contacted friends who were offering health programmes for their medical care problems. He suggested that if there should be improved services at the various health facilities and students assured of confidentiality, then they will patronize services there. Also, Lekena et al. (2018) posit that, to enhance the social integration of students, club activities, sporting facilities with its associated functions should be made known to the students and they should be encouraged to participate. Currently, the CKT-UTAS Polyclinic is in operation with limited resources and patients including students are referred to bigger facilities for certain medical examination such as X-ray services. The sporting facilities for the University are not up to standard which makes it difficult for students to have some recreational activities. It is therefore vital for these facilities to be put in place to enhance the social life of students. The Dean of student when contacted indicated that the university was gradually developing its sports section by recruiting a professional to put structures in place to help students exhibit their sporting talents. He further indicated that the university polyclinic periodically collaborates with other health facilities to provide health care to both students and staff.

Lastly, transportation is another service that student can access if made available to them. The contribution of public transport system is key in

sustaining transportation service but how efficient and of high service quality to attract more patronage (Misiran et al., 2021). The study further revealed that a reliable and constant travel schedule will contribute to the satisfaction of students. Eboli et al. (2011) agreed with Misiran et al. (2021) when their study revealed that cost of service, provision of bus terminal, conditions of buses, route and service reliability would enhance the satisfaction of students. Ojo et al. (2015) further confirms the study of Misiran et al. (2021) and Eboli et al. (2011) when they concluded that “reliability” was the most influential variable to student as far as transportation services are concerned.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This section of the book provides a summary of the research's findings, along with the study's conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further investigation. The first part concentrates on the study's chapters and discoveries, while the following section concentrates on the conclusions drawn from the research questions. The implications of the findings are relevant to both theory and policy. Additionally, recommendations and suggestions for future research are addressed.

Summary of the Study

In this section, a brief overview of the study is given, with the summary analysis categorized into two main parts: the research process and the findings. Following that, the subsequent section presents a summary of the research process.

The study was to investigate towards an enhanced settling-in system for fresh students in C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS): Experiences of first-year undergraduate students. The research was based on the positivist paradigm, which employed a descriptive survey approach to gather current information on the experiences of first-year undergraduate students. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the students' current circumstances. A supplementary data was collected from the Dean of Students Affairs and the University Counsellor to confirm the quantitative data picked from students specifically on Research Questions 1, 3, and 4.

The following sampling procedures were employed in selecting respondents in the study. First, the purposive sampling procedure was used to identify first-year undergraduate students in CKT-UTAS. Secondly, the proportionate sampling technique was used. The researcher was guided by Gay and Deihl (1992) way of determining sample size. This procedure helped the researcher to select 20% of respondents from various Schools in the University. The respondents selected were 140 first-year undergraduate students.

A four-point Likert-type scale questionnaire was the instrument used to gather data for the study. The data was analysed using the SPSS version 25.0. Analysis of the data was done on both descriptive (frequency and percentages) and inferential statistics (mean and standard deviation). In addition, two key offices (Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and the Counselling Centre in CKT-UTAS) were also contacted for further information.

To analyze the first research question, the respondent comments or answers were sorted in descending order. This revealed that the cultural, social, and academic experiences that CKT-UTAS first-year undergraduate students had to face were predominantly those with a high response rate. The summary in Table 16 showed that “difficulty in interacting with community members where the University is located (language barrier)” was the most frequent cultural experience for first-year undergraduate students in CKT-UTAS. In addition, it was observed that “spending time with friends from different cultural backgrounds informs me of the differences and similarities in our culture” was the least cultural experience by students in CKT-UTAS. However, respondents also endured some social experiences as students at CKT-UTAS. For example, the summary in Table 17 showed that “places are designated for

me to practice my religion on campus or outside campus” was the most social experience students endured. It was also revealed in Table 17 that “I have developed some level of good community interaction with the local people where the University is located” was the least social experience encountered by students in CKT-UTAS. Some other experiences by first-year undergraduate students in CKT-UTAS were academic experience. For instance, the summary in Table 18 showed that “evaluation and grading system brings unwanted academic pressure to me as a student” was the most frequent academic experience for students in CKT-UTAS. The same Table 18 revealed that “I have access to Academic Advisors/Mentors to guide me in my academic progression in the University” was the least patronized academic experience by first-year undergraduate students.

The next research question examined the socialization experiences first-year undergraduate students’ encounter at CKT-UTAS. The analysis of the research question was divided into fifteen (15) distinct text items. As shown in Table 19, individual text items on 1) I know my ethnic identity may affect my attitude towards my colleagues from different backgrounds recorded the highest response rate of mean among cultural socialization experiences encountered by first-year undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS. 2) Adjusting to new environment even though recorded a high response was the least among all the scales in Table 19. The other socialization experiences the respondents highlighted on in Table 20 were “I have learnt to coexist with friends from different religious backgrounds” and “Establishment of relationship”. In Table 21 “Ability to understand the periods on lecture timetables” recorded a high response while “Understanding specific languages shared in the university”

recorded a moderate response were some of the academic socialization experiences by these students.

The third research question was to investigate coping strategies employed by students to enhance the experiences they encounter in CKT-UTAS. The respondents asserted that talking with friends/family/roommate and engaging in sporting activities were most frequent strategies they used in to enhance their new experiences on campus. Other respondents also indicated they either listened to music or watched television and controlling personal contracts were also the strategies they used as first year-students. The findings showed that respondents commented on “walking/jogging”, “reading “managing time effectively” and “drinking alcohol” were all recognized as coping strategies used by first-years students in CKT-UTAS to enhance their experiences on campus.

The fourth research question examined support systems used to assist first-year undergraduate students at CKT-UTAS. The analysis of this research question was grouped into nine (9) individual text items. The data collected showed that “orientation” and “counselling” were frequent support system used by students. Furthermore, the individual text item from the research question showed that “library support services”, “support for physically challenged students” and “Health system and recreational activities” were support systems put in place by the University for first-year Undergraduate Students to augment their new experiences encountered in CKT-UTAS.

Conclusions

The conclusions for the study are presented as follows:

1. The study found that the most common cultural experience for CKT-UTAS students was having a difficulty getting along with people in the community where the University is located. On the other hand, the least common cultural experience was spending time with friends from different cultures to learn about their culture similarities and differences. Also, as first-year students at CKT-UTAS, the best social experience they had was finding a place on campus or somewhere else to practise their religion when they were away from home. The least social experience for students is getting to know the people in the community where the university is located. In addition, the part of school that gives students the most stress is the evaluation of their work and the grading system that is used to track their academic progress. The least was having access to academic advisers or mentors who could help them in all aspects of their academic progress. But it was also revealed that students had to adjust to the lifestyle at the university, which was an interesting cultural experience. Having access to facilities and amenities for leisure activities was also a social experience they couldn't miss. First-year students had to learn as quickly as possible how to make sense out of the timetables and adapt to the different ways of teaching at the university.
2. It is concluded that the age difference of the students has an impact on the challenges they experience in school. Since most of the students

were in their exploration stage, balancing instructional activities with personal activities became a challenge to them.

3. From the findings, the study concludes that friends and roommates assisted first-year undergraduate students to cope with their new experiences encountered on campus. It was also revealed that students liked to watch movies and play sports as a way to deal with their problems.
4. The study concludes that orientation, counselling, and library service are effective support systems instituted on the CKT-UTAS campus to assist students.

Recommendations

The following passage presents suggestions that are rooted in the study's results and are deemed crucial by the researcher. The recommendations given for each subsection are intended to improve practice and policy. Consequently, the following recommendations are proposed based on the study's findings and conclusions:

1. It is recommended that the university's administration develop a deliberate policy to annually and officially engage community members in the catchment areas where the university is located about the admission of new students and the likelihood of these students staying in hostels in their communities. This will aid in the smooth integration and settling-in of fresh students. Management, knowing the peculiar culture of the university environment, must inculcate into their orientation and induction programmes how the unique nature of the university operates and what the acceptable expected behaviors are from

students, especially freshmen. This will give room for students to conform.

2. It is recommended that, the University Management, knowing the important role of religious activities in the social development of mankind, should strive to create more access for students struggling to get places to practise their acceptable religious faith in school. Also, the various student clubs and their activities with its associate benefits should be made known to the students to encourage those interested to join. In doing so, there should also be a balance, by establishing rules and regulations to guide these religious and student activities so that students do not dedicate too much time to them to the disadvantage of their academic work.
3. It is recommended that lecturers should use different teaching methods such as discussions, demonstrations and simulations to sustain students' interest during instructional hours. It is further recommended that, steps should be taken to improve the infrastructure base of universities to help break classroom sizes into manageable sizes for a positive teaching and learning experience.
4. It is recommended that the counselling unit spearheads the organisation of seminars on topics like study skills, time management, healthy relationships, and how to prepare for examinations, among others. This would equip the students with the requisite knowledge to enhance a balanced academic and social life on campus.
5. It is recommended that channels of communication in the university be made clear to the students so they can get official information and

professional guidance from appropriate authorities/Persons. Also, front-line workers such as staff in the Dean of Student Affairs office, Hall Tutors, Hall Assistants, and Student Leaders should be trained to properly handle first-hand information from students.

6. It is recommended that after a university-wide orientation for all freshmen and women, there should be school or department-level orientations periodically for all students. It is further recommended that HEIs should employ qualified counsellors with well-equipped offices to create the right atmosphere to encourage students to patronise their services so that their challenges can be dealt with professionally. Libraries should be stocked with up-to-date reading resources which will facilitate the research work of students. Students should be made aware of the electronic services provided by school libraries and how they can be accessed.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The study looked at the enhanced settling-in system and experiences of CKT-UTAS with a focus on their cultural, social, and academic life and experiences on campus. It is suggested that further studies should be conducted using the qualitative research approach on the same topic to capture all levels of students at another university or other universities. This will broaden the body of knowledge on settle-in experiences of students in our tertiary institutions.

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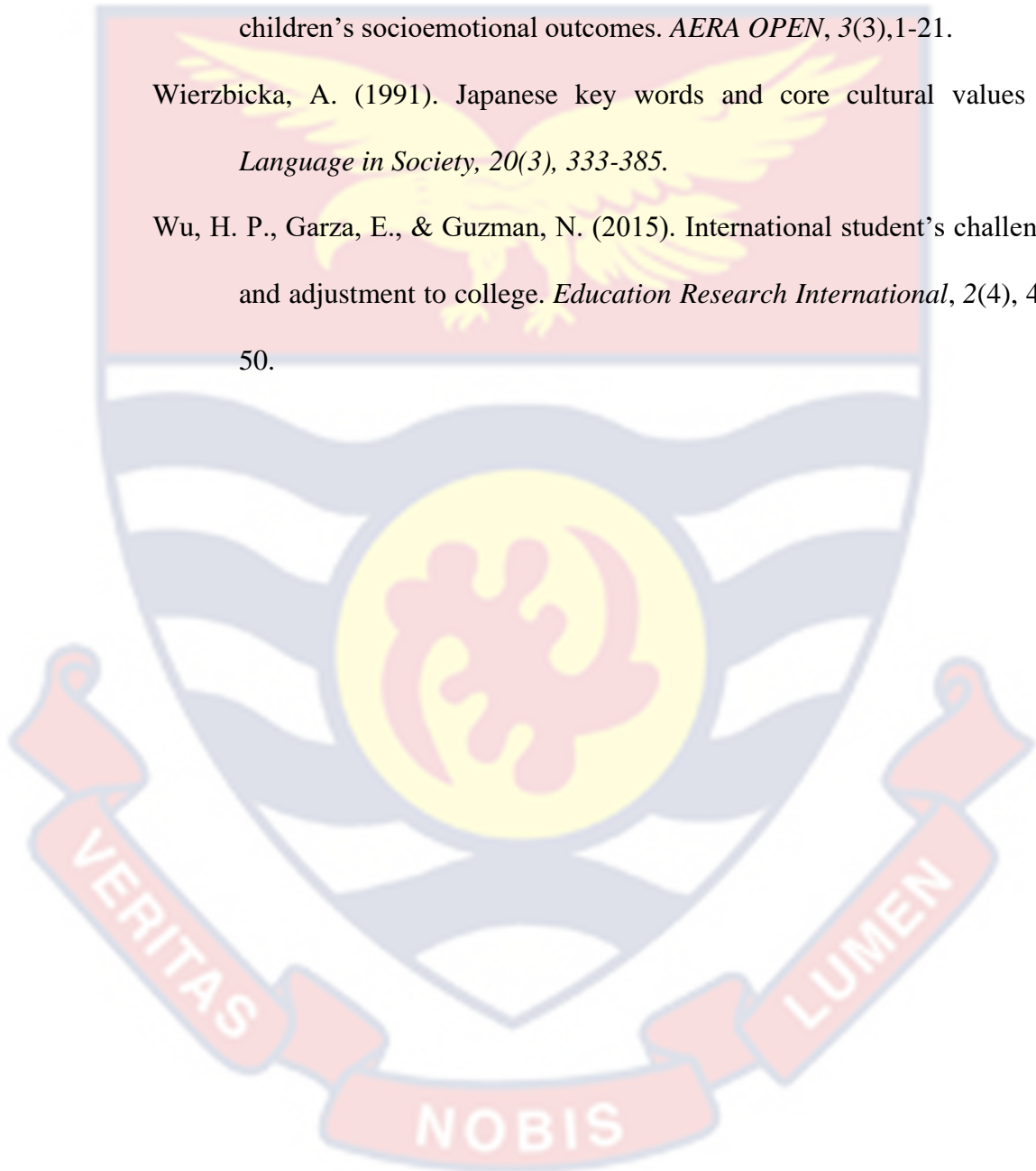
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APPENDICES

Appendix One: Ethical clearance from Institutional Review Board Secretariat

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SECRETARIAT

TEL: 0558093143 / 0508878309
 E-MAIL: irb@ucc.edu.gh
 OUR REF: UCC/IRB/A/2016/1623
 YOUR REF:
 OMB NO: 0990-0279
 IORG #: IORG0011497

31ST OCTOBER, 2022

Mr. Alexander Akumbuno
 Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
 University of Cape Coast

Dear Mr. Akumbuno,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CES/2022/97)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research **Towards an Enhanced Settling in System for Fresh Students in C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS): Experiences of First-Year Students**. This approval is valid from 31st October, 2022 to 30th October, 2023. You may apply for a renewal subject to submission of all the required documents that will be prescribed by the UCCIRB.

Please note that any modification to the project must be submitted to the UCCIRB for review and approval before its implementation. You are required to submit periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

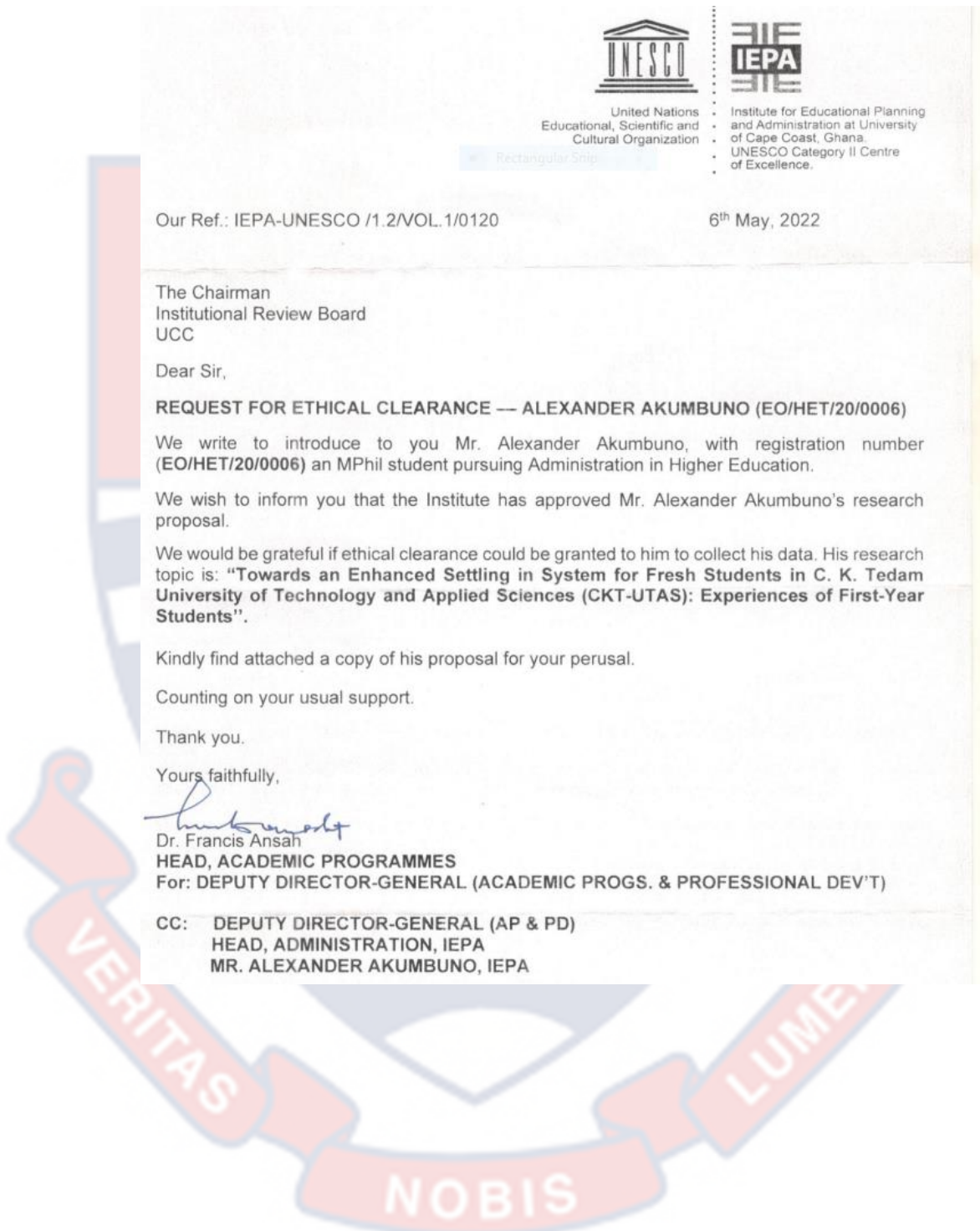
Kofi F. Amuquandoh

Ag. UCCIRB Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR
 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

NOBIS

Appendix Two: Request for Ethical Clearance



Appendix Three: Permission Letter from the Office of the Registrar, CKT-UTAS

C. K. TEDAM UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED SCIENCES (CKT-UTAS)

(OFFICE THE REGISTRAR)

Telephone: +233 (0)382097373

Website: <https://www.cktutas.edu.gh>

Our Ref: GEN/18/22

Your Ref:

P. O. Box 24
Navrongo
Upper East Region
GhanaE-mail: registrar@cktutas.edu.gh

Date: September 16, 2022

Mr. Alexander Akumbuno

c/o CKT-UTAS

P. O. Box 24

Navrongo

Dear Sir,

**RE: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND PERMISSION TO PICK DATA**

Following your request for information and permission to pick data on the research topic *"Towards an Enhanced Settling-in-System for Fresh Students in C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS): Experiences of First-Year Students"* among first year students of the University, I write to convey the approval of Management to you to carry out your research work when there is evidence of receipt of ethical clearance from the University of Cape Coast.

On behalf of the University Management, I wish you well in your endeavors.

Thank you.


Juliana Agalga

(Senior Assistant Registrar, General Administration)

For: Registrar

Appendix Four: Questionnaire for Students

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
UNESCO CATEGORY II INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire seeks your opinion on the topic: *Towards an enhanced settling-in-system for fresh students in C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS)*: Your response to the questions will be treated confidential. The study forms part of my academic work in school. In order for my study to be successful, your participation will be highly appreciated. Please do NOT discuss your answers with anyone else. Tick (✓) or supply an appropriate response where applicable.

SECTION A: Background Information

1). Gender: A). Male B). Female

2). Age: A). Below 19 B). 19-22

C). 23-26 D). 27-30

3). Region in Ghana you come from:

4). Number of Persons in your Household: A). 4-8 B). 9-13

C). Above 13 D). Others

5). Type of Senior High School Attended: A). Boarding B). Day

6). Highest Level of Education of Parents/Guardian:

A). Middle School Leaving Certificate B). Senior High School

Certificate

C). Diploma D). First Degree E). Masters F). PhD

7). Highest Level of Education of Siblings:

A). Middle School Leaving Certificate B). Senior High School Certificate

C). Diploma D). First Degree E). Masters F). PhD

8). Programme of Study in the University:

A). Education D). Mathematics

B). Science

C) Computing

9). Number of courses in a Semester

A). Below 6

B). 7-9

C) Above 9

10). Number of credit hours in a Semester: A). 15-18

B). Above 18

11). Religion: A). Christianity B). Muslim C). Others

12). Accommodation status on Campus: A). Residence B). Non-Residence

SECTION B: Cultural, Social and Academic Experiences of First-year Undergraduate students of CKT-UTAS

Indicate in one of the boxes a tick (✓) to show the extent to which you agree to the statements below using the following guide: Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Agree (A); Strongly Agree (SA).

S/N	STATEMENT	SD	D	A	SA
	To what extent does the following statements affect your cultural experiences in CKT-UTAS				
13.	Difficulty in interacting with community members where the University is located (language barrier).				
14.	It is often difficult to get the choice of food to buy				
15.	I have to make time to fit in the fashion atmosphere (fashion choice) of the University and the community where it is located				
16.	Spending time with friends from different cultural backgrounds informs me of the differences and similarities in our culture				
17.	I have to adapt to the lifestyle expected in my new learning environment				
	How does the following statements influence your social experiences in CKT-UTAS	SD	D	A	SA
18.	Places are designated for me to practice my religion on campus or outside campus				
19.	Student clubs are available for me to join and partake in their activities in addition to my academic work				
20.	I have developed a healthy relationship with new friends and peers				
21.	I have developed some level of good community interaction with the local people where the University is located				
22.	Facilities and amenities are available to enhance recreational activities				
	How does the following statements enhance your academic experience in CKT-UTAS	SD	D	A	SA
23.	Making meaning out of the time table provided was challenging at the first instance				
24.	My first lecture scared me because of the class size				
25.	Evaluation and grading system bring unwanted academic pressure to me as a student				
26.	The mode of teaching by lecturers stimulates my interest to always attend lectures				
27.	I have access to Academic Advisors/Mentors to guide me in my academic progression in the University				

Additional information:

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SECTION C: How do these Experiences shape First-year Undergraduate students Socialisation in their new Learning Environment?

Indicate in one of the boxes a tick (✓) to show the extent to which you agree to the statements below using the following guide: Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Agree (A); Strongly Agree (SA).

S/N	STATEMENT	SD	D	A	SA
	To what extent does the following statements affect your cultural socialisation experiences in CKT-UTAS				
28.	I know my ethnic identity may affect my attitude towards my colleagues from different backgrounds				
29.	I appreciate the diversity in choice of food				
30.	I understand the language barrier due to cultural diversity				
31.	I appreciate the diversity in dressing to portray once culture on campus				
32.	Adjusting to new physical environment				
	How does the following statements influence your social socialisation experiences in CKT-UTAS	SD	D	A	SA
33.	I have learnt to coexist with friends from different religious backgrounds				
34.	I have been able to adapt to the lifestyle of the university environment				
35.	Ability to attend extra-curricular activities				
36.	I have developed some level of good community interaction with the local people where the University is located				
37.	Establishment of relationships				
	How does the following statements enhance your academic socialisation experience in CKT-UTAS	SD	D	A	SA

38.	Ability to understand the periods on lecture time tables				
39.	I know what my lecturers expect of me as a student				
40.	Ability to perform tasks through group work				
41.	I know how to request for support when my academic work demands it				
42.	Understanding specific languages shared in the university (abbreviations, jargons)				

Additional information:

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SECTION D: Coping Strategies First-year Undergraduate students employ to enhance these experiences at CKT-UTAS

To what extent does the following statement influence your coping strategy to enhance your experiences in the University? Indicate in one of the boxes a tick (✓) to show the extent to which you agree to the statements below using the following guide: Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Agree (A); Strongly Agree (SA).

S/N	STATEMENT	SD	D	A	SA
43.	Playing sport/exercise				
44.	Going for counselling or consultation				
45.	Managing time effectively				
46.	Controlling personal contracts				
47.	Drinking alcohol				
48.	Walking				
49.	Listening to music/ Watching TV				
50.	Reading books				

51.	Talking with Friends				
52.	Talking with Room mate				
53.	Talking with Family Members				

Additional information:

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SECTION E: Support systems put in place by University Management to assist students at CKT-UTAS.

Indicate in one of the boxes a tick (✓) to show the extent to which you agree to the statements below using the following guide: Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Agree (A); Strongly Agree (SA).

S/N	STATEMENT	SD	D	A	SA
54.	Counselling				
55.	Orientation				
56.	Health system and recreational activities				
57.	Academic advisers				
58.	Transportation				
59.	Library support services				
60.	Study skills assistant				
61.	Catering services				
62.	Support for physically challenged students				

Additional information:

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Appendix Five: Interview Guide

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
UNESCO CATEGORY II INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE DEAN OF STUDENTS AFFAIRS AND
THE UNIVERSITY COUNSELLOR**

The interview guide seeks the opinion of the Dean of Student of Affairs and the University Counsellor on the topic: *Towards an enhanced settling-in-system for fresh students in C. K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences (CKT-UTAS).*

1. How long have you held the position as a Dean of Student Affairs/University Counsellor in this University?
2. What are some of the cultural experiences that exist in the University prior to the admission of first-year undergraduate students?
3. What are some of the coping strategies you have formally put in place to help the students settle-in positively?
4. Are there support systems put in place to help in the settling-in process of Students?
5. How do you inform students about these support systems and how do they access them?

Thank you.