A DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA: MOTIVATIONS, CHALLENGES, COPING STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS.

By

Jonathan Worae

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIOLOGY AND CRIMINOLOGY

Department of Sociology and Criminology

University of Manitoba

Copyright© 2021 by Jonathan Worae

ABSTRACT

Every year a growing number of international students move to other countries, specifically western countries, to pursue university education. They are motivated by various factors existing at home and in the prospective host countries and universities. These factors are known as the push-pull factors, forcing out and attracting international students to pursue university education in other countries. However, upon arrival, international students encounter a myriad of challenges as part of their university education experience.

A substantial amount of research has been documented on international students experiences in western countries (their motivations for studies and challenges), but few exist on their experiences in Canada during university education. The current study endeavors to expand the literature by focusing on international students' motivations for coming and their experiences (challenges, coping strategies and support systems) upon arrival in a particular Canadian university, the University of Manitoba.

This study used an online survey method with a convenience sampling of 712 international students currently enrolled at the University of Manitoba. The results show that international students are influenced by various push-pull factors, although the pull factors appeared to be dominant. Challenges were mainly categorized into language, financial, academic, environmental and cultural, personal and social. The majority of the international students reported financial, personal and social challenges. Covid-19 presented additional challenges for most international students. A number of coping strategies and support systems were reported by respondents, ranging from personal supports (e.g. staying in touch with family) to institutional mechanisms (e.g. international students centre). Giddens' (1984) Agency and

Structuration theory was used to understand both enabling and constraining structural factors that may affect international students experiences both before (motives to study here) and during (challenges and supports) their studies in Canada and at University of Manitoba. Study limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed. Finally, following the suggestions of participating international students, a number of recommendations are made regarding how to improve the life of the international student body in Canada, and at the University of Manitoba.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely express a heartfelt gratitude to God for His grace, protection, and mercies. I offer a profound sense of appreciation to a mentor and my advisor, Dr. Jason Edgerton for his invaluable advice, encouragements, patience, funding opportunities and constructive criticisms throughout this study. It was a great pleasure to work with him and willing to continue to work with him in future studies.

My thesis committee members, I say thank you so much for your support during this study. Dr. Susan Prentice is thanked for her timely suggestions and valuable input. Dr. Michael Baffoe, many thanks to you for serving as my external advisor and reviewing my thesis.

It was such a great opportunity to work with Dr. Lori Wilkinson for some months on my thesis. I say many thanks and you are really missed. Your comments and suggestions were so great that I was dumbfounded.

Jeffery Biegun and Kim Mitchell, you have been very supportive during this research. Jeffery, I say thank you for helping me to prepare my survey questions using the Qualtrics software. Kim, thank you for getting me in touch with the Vice-Provost office for my survey.

To my fellow international students at University of Manitoba, I say thanks so much. The year 2020 has been very hectic and unpleasant but you did your best to help me complete my thesis. Thanks for your overwhelming responses. I finally appreciate the support of the Sociology and Criminology department, the Ghanaian community, friends, my family back home, colleagues, and my girlfriend, Donna, for their indirect and direct support during this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... **i**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **iii**
TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... **iv**
LIST OF TABLES ..... **vi**
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION **1**
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY **6**
Internationalization of higher education-the attraction of students. **6**
The human capital perspective on higher education **9**
Overview of international students in higher education **10**
Increasing international student mobility **10**
International students in Canada **11**
Research on international students' perceptions and experiences **13**
Students' motivations for studying abroad **13**
Challenges international students encounter studying abroad **14**
Strategies for success **23**
Theoretical framework **25**
Structuration and Agency theory **25**
Criticisms of structuration and agency theory **30**
Application of Agency and Structuration theory in the proposed study **31**
Research Questions **32**
CHAPTER 3: METHODS **33**
Type of study **33**
Data collection procedure and sample **33**
Data analysis **36**
Ethical considerations **36**
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS **38**
Selected demographic profile of respondents **38**
Motivation to study in Canada, and at University of Manitoba. **42**
Challenges international students encounter **46**

Strategies and institutional mechanisms for adjusting 56
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 60
Motives 60
Challenges 62
COVID-19 restrictions 67
Supports and strategies 67
Agency and structuration 68
Study limitations 70
Conclusions and Recommendations 72
REFERENCES 75
APPENDIX A : SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE 83
APPENDIX B : RECRUITMENT EMAIL 94
APPENDIX C : INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT 95
APPENDIX D : TABLE 2.1 (COUNTRY OF BIRTH OF RESPONDENTS) 98
ENDNOTES 99

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. 1 Demographic data of respondents 38

Table 4. 1 Decision to pursue education at University of Manitoba 45

Table 5. 1 Language challenges 46

Table 5. 2 Academic challenges 47

Table 5. 3 Personal and social level challenges..... 49

Table 5. 4 Environmental and cultural challenges 50

Table 5. 5 Financial challenges 51

Table 5. 6 Discrimination challenges..... 52

Table 5. 7 Covid-19 related challenges..... 54

Table 5. 8 Strategies and institutional mechanisms for adjusting..... 56

Table 5. 9 Institutional supports..... 57

Table 5. 10 Other information 59

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Given the well-documented association between education and quality of life (Edgerton et al. 2012), many students aspire to attain post-secondary education from universities, polytechnics, colleges, technical institutions and other government-authorized institutions and training programs (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2000). A growing number of students move abroad to pursue university education credentials. Globally the demand for higher education has risen rapidly in recent decades (Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012) and is expected to continue even in the midst of current global economic slowdown (Lee, 2014). According to UNESCO (2019), there are over 5.3 million students worldwide pursuing university education abroad.

There are many benefits associated with international higher education including social, cultural, intellectual and economic development. These include benefits for the student, the receiving country, the host post-secondary institution, and the source country as returning students contribute significantly to the country's economic growth and development (Wadhwa, 2018). The anticipation of such benefits has led to increased competition among countries and higher education institutions striving to attract international students. International students enrollment in higher educational institutions serves as a critical marker of institutional and national prestige (Lee, 2014). These students serve as source of skilled labour to the destination country when they engage in paid work while schooling or when they decide to settle upon graduation. They pay exorbitant fees to the education institution. This consequently contributes towards the development of the destination country. International higher education is one of the largest service export industries among the topmost receiving countries in the world (Stallman & Khawaja, 2011).

Numerous studies have examined the factors that influence students' decision to pursue higher education outside their home country. These are often categorized into 'push' or 'pull' factors. Push factors are those present in the home country that force students to pursue higher education in a different country, while pull factors are present in the destination country and attract students from other countries (Barber & Morgan, 1987; Chen & Barnett, 2000; Chirkov et al., 2007; Harman, 2003). Some documented push-pull factors include barriers of entry into post-secondary education in the home country, limited employment opportunities in the home country, the high quality of post-secondary education in the destination country, immigration and settlement policies, the reputation of post-secondary education institutions in the destination country, availability of financial support, a variety of courses, costs/fees, opinions of significant others, as well as other social factors. (Barber & Morgan, 1987; Chen & Barnett, 2000; Chirkov et al., 2007; Harman, 2003, Kochaniewicz & Das, 2015, Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

International students enter foreign countries specifically western countries to pursue university education with high hopes and great expectations—informed variously by the media, migrants, peers or family members. These students migrate from different socio- cultural and economic backgrounds. Upon arrival, they face a variety of challenges within the host institution and with settling in the destination country. Expectations and great hopes turn into difficulties and disappointments. These challenges include personal, cultural, economic, environmental and political factors such as language barriers, discrimination, financial difficulty, adjusting to the new educational system, among others. Despite studies on the benefits derived by international students and from international education, issues regarding the challenges they face in a foreign country continue to emerge. Just as the host country and the institution strive to attract

international students, they should also provide support systems policies, frameworks and the like to retain foreign students, to help them pursue their studies, and to integrate well.

While there is some research on the challenges international students encounter during their studies in a foreign country, most of these have been carried out in the USA, UK and Australia, few are Canadian (Calder et al, 2016). The current study seeks to expand the literature and bring up recommendations to improve the life of the international student body in Canada. The main research objective of this study is to explore the challenges encountered by international students during the pursuit of university education in Canada. It seeks to investigate the challenges encountered in the host institution and outside the host institution, such as integrating into the host country. Additionally, it explores the factors that motivate international students to move to Canada and university of Manitoba for university education, and the strategies and coping mechanisms available to them to overcome and manage their challenging experiences. Survey methodology is employed in this study to explore the challenges experienced by international students pursuing university education in the host institution and country-university of Manitoba and Canada respectively.

In this study, international university students in Canada are those who are neither Canadian citizens nor permanent residents. They migrate to study in Canada upon student permit authorization from the government to pursue university education in a specific institution (Citizenship and Immigration, 2009). They will be referred to as foreign / international students throughout the study.

The study is conducted at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. The University of Manitoba annually welcomes thousands of students from different parts of the world. The university is located in Winnipeg, the capital city of the province of Manitoba.

According to Citizenship and Canada Immigration (2007), over 80 percent of international students who migrate to Manitoba live in Winnipeg, making the city the logical geographical area for this study. As of 2020, there were about (6,345) international students enrolled at University of Manitoba (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2020).

The reputation and resources of Canadian universities, Canada's reputation for safety, the affordability of university education, and the reputedly low level of discrimination of the country are cited as some of the major factors that influence international students to pursue university education in Canada (CBIE, 2018**).** Other related factors include the availability of specific programs, the immigration and settlement policies, scholarship opportunities, job opportunities, and good settlement programs (Chen, 2007).

The Advisory Panel on Canada International Education Strategy (Advisory Panel, 2012) has predicted an increase in international student enrollment in the next decade (Mogale et al, 2016). According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2018), Canadian universities and other stakeholders including the government seek to increase the size of the international student base. They expect more than 450,000 international students by 2022. As at 2019, there were about 498,735 international students enrolled in universities in Canada (CBIE, 2019) . This shows that the expectation of Canadian universities and other stakeholders regarding international students enrollment have been met. However, given the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of international students enrollment in Canadian universities might decrease in the future as prospective international students are more likely to stay home (Doreleyers, Choi, & Frenette, 2020).

The findings of this study may help Canadian universities and governments to both attract international students and more effectively support them in their studies and integration

once they are here. University educational institutions should not only be concerned with promoting the benefits of international education but also with how to foster the academic experience and general quality of life of the international students they attract. Arguably, if a host country and institution fail to recognize and respond to the varied challenges of international students during studies, they risk reduced student enrollments.

This thesis is organized in five chapters. Chapter two reviews existing research on international student experiences in Canada and elsewhere. It then summarizes Giddens' (1984) agency and structuration theory, to show how this theoretical approach will be employed, before laying out the research questions. The main research questions are to explore and describe; international students' motivations for moving to Canada, and University of Manitoba to pursue university education, the challenges international students encounter during the pursuit of their studies in Canada, and at the University of Manitoba, and finally the strategies and institutional supports international students rely on to overcome some of the challenges they encounter.

The third chapter focuses on the methodology and describes the procedures and techniques that were employed to conduct this study. The results/findings (shown in tables) are presented in the fourth chapter, while the discussion and interpretations, along with the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study, are found in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This chapter provides an overview of the research literature on internationalization of higher education, international student enrollment trends, research on the challenges international students encounter, the support strategies available to international students, and the factors that influence them to pursue university education abroad. It includes empirical findings from related studies in Canada. In the second half, the theoretical framework is laid out. This project relies on Giddens' (1984) agency and structuration theory to understand the experiences of international students.

Internationalization of higher education-the attraction of students.

Higher education is highly valued in almost every society and is generally viewed as key to the development and management of human resource skills (Shabir, Safdar & Muhammad, 2014). In accordance with this view, governments, including the developed and developing countries have designed and have being creating higher educational policies that aim to promote higher education (Heller, 2011), investing billions in its expansion and promotion (Shabir, Safdar, & Muhammad, 2014).

It is widely held that a strong higher educational system is integral to a country's international competitiveness, including its economic strength, social well-being and position as a world leader (JICA, 2000). Contributions from the higher education sector may include the production, circulation and transfer of the knowledge to benefit individuals and society. Also, billions in revenue (in the form of taxes) obtained by the government from higher level of education institutions can also be invested in other parts of the society (Mirowski & Ross 2003). These benefits among others have led to an increasing internationalization and competition among

countries and tertiary institutions - specifically among universities seeking to improve the quality of their education and to attract more students from other countries.

Internationalization of higher education is a rapidly increasing phenomenon (Gur, Ozoglu & Coskun, 2015). For the past 30 years, internationalization of higher education has experienced a major growth globally, and some of the countries with such history include the traditional topmost destinations such as China, USA, UK, Australia, Canada, and Japan (Bodycott, 2009). Internationalization of education has changed over the years from reactive to proactive strategic domain and its focus, scope and content have also changed significantly (De Wit, 2011) because it serves as a major source of academic and economic benefits (Gur, Ozoglu & Coskun, 2015). In academia, researchers who are interested in internationalization of higher education have focused on the improvement in educational partnerships and quality, the economic benefits through differential tuition fees and recruitment of astute scholars, the social and cultural objective of enhancing cross-cultural understanding, and the political motivation for the promotion of public diplomacy and foreign policy (Knight & De Wit, 1999).

Countries and higher educational institutions are adapting novel policies and procedures to attract increasing numbers of international students from both developed and developing countries (Knight & De Wit, 1999). The internationalization of higher education has grown in line with the globalization of economies (Mahsa, 2014) and educational institutions that fail to adapt to the globalized era risk extinction (Gardner, 2004).

Internationalization of higher education as a concept can be defined as the specific activities, programs and policies of individual higher educational institutions, systems or countries that promote global trends in university education (Mahsa, 2014). Such policies and programs serve the function of promoting the recruitment of foreign students, collaboration with academic

institutions or systems in different countries, establishing international curricula, promotion of student mobility, and the growing of global competency (Atbach, 2002).

Internationalization of higher education has hence become a major priority to both the educational institutions and the governments in several developed countries for the purposes of increasing global competitiveness, growing revenue sources, and ensuring a high capacity for scientific and technological studies (Gates, 2004). With regards to this study, internationalization of higher education involves the policies and programs of universities and countries to attract international students from various parts of the world. These include scholarship programs, lower tuition fees, academic resources, immigration and settlement policies etc.

The desire of students from various countries (developed or developing), thus their personal decision to gain access to universities in other countries, mainly based on the attractive options in the prospective host country and university has been well-documented (Shinkle & Embleton, 2014). This comes with benefits to both the individual and their country of origin as well as the receiving country and tertiary institution. Students experience different cultures and improve their knowledge base (Mipinganjira, 2009) allowing them to contribute significantly upon their return home. International students have become a greater source of economic gain for the host countries and the educational institutions via tuition fees and other costs (Lang & Shuao, 2017; Paltridge, Mayson & Schapper, 2012).

In 2010, provision of direct education services to international students contributed about $4.2 billion to Canada's gross domestic product and about seven percent to the country's education sector (Danko, et al 2016). The movement of students to other countries for higher education also helps in the promotion of national, institutional and personal ties that make it easier to have business in or establish business partnerships with other institutions and countries (Danko, et al

2016). International students also serve as source of labour to the government and other private companies which helps improve the economy of the host countries. (Danko, et al 2016).

The human capital perspective on higher education

Human capital can be regarded as the acquired skills, capacities, abilities and knowledge of an individual. The concept describes the fact that humans invest in themselves through education, training, or any other activity which help impact and improve skills, capacities, abilities, knowledge and consequently improves their earnings. (Woodhall, 1987). The concept has dominated the economics of education and has had a great influence on the analysis of labour markets, determination of wages, and other elements of economics- for instance, economic growth, investment in health care and the study of migration (Woodhall, 1987).

Economists' analysis of 'investment' and 'capital' usually concerns physical capital, such as machineries, equipments and buildings that will accrue future income through the creation of a productive capacity (Woodhall, 1987). Other economists, such as Adam Smith have indicated the relevance of human capital (skills, productive capacity, abilities and knowledge) which can be continuously improved through education in the same way that new machinery can improve productivity. Hence, through the acquisition of university education, individuals obtain and improve on skills, capacities and knowledge (human capital) which makes them useful to the society and increases their chances of gaining opportunities such as jobs. Also, international students in western universities do not only improve their human capital but they may form relevant networks, settle permanently, and even the prestige attached to the degree is very significant in the job market when they return home.

The concept of human capital has been widely used and proven significant in migration and economics research. However, it has a limitation. Critics from the field of migration have

argued that the perspective fails to provide understanding into the processes in which education and labour market experiences become higher wages in the labour market (Bari, 2018). It has failed to account for the reasons some people suffer wage and occupational penalties as compared to some people with similar educational qualifications in a foreign country. Most international students find it difficult to access employment opportunities as they compete with the domestic students. This becomes an unexpected situation or cost for foreign students in some western countries. The human capital perspective fails to account for such discrimination and cost associated with the pursuance of education in a foreign country.

Overview of international students in higher education

Increasing international student mobility

The number of students who seek to pursue higher education abroad has being increasing dramatically (Lang and Zhang, 2017). Such growth reflects the globalization of economies and societies, as well as the expansion of tertiary institutions and systems (technology and innovation). In 2006, 2.9 million students were studying abroad compared to 1.3 million in 1995 and 0.6 million in 1975 (OECD, 2008). By 2017, this number increased to over 4 million (UNESCO, 2019) and is projected to exceed 25 million by 2025 (OECD, 2013). Similarly, the number of foreign students who moved to other countries for university education increased from 2.1 million in 2000 to 4.5 million in 2012 (OECD, 2013), and over 5.3 million in 2017 (CBIE, 2018). It has been projected that, with the continuous increase in the world population coupled with the rise in general income levels, engagement in international higher education will grow at a very fast rate.

Traditionally, the main source countries of foreign students have been China, India, Germany, South Korea, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia (CBIE, 2018). Other countries include Brazil, Vietnam, South Korea etc. Traditionally, top destination countries for foreign students have

included the USA, United Kingdom, France, Australia and Germany (Hussain & Ahmad, 2017). China has been increasingly hosting international students and was ranked the third destination country for foreign students in 2017 (CBIE, 2018). Japan and Spain have recently entered the top ten countries receiving international students in 2017, sitting at 9th and 10th respectively. Canada was ranked fourth among the top five destination countries for international students in 2017 (CBIE, 2018).

However, in contrast to many other predictions, ICEF (2018) reports that the number of students studying abroad will actually decrease in coming years. The report projects that, due to the current world population and forecasted rate of economic growth, the annual pace of outbound student mobility may drop by 1.7% every year through to 2027.

Similarly, its been postulated that due to the rise of Covid-19 cases and resulting changes such as border lockdowns and methods of teaching (focus on virtual classes),the enrollment of students in university education in other countries will decrease in coming years. (Doreleyers, Choi, & Frenette, 2020). Students will prefer to stay at home than to invest in university education abroad. (Doreleyers, Choi, & Frenette, 2020). This implies loss of human capital and income to both developing and developed countries. International students migrate with varied skills and they contribute to the economy when they get employed and pay tuition fees. In Canada, it is reported that universities could lose between $377 million and $ 3.4 billion this 2020/2021 academic year. (Statistics Canada, 2020).

International students in Canada

Over the last decade, the number of students entering Canada with student visas rose rapidly (Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, 2011). Canada continues to be recognized as stable and welcoming, offering an affordable and quality university education that makes it

attractive to international students (CBIE, 2018). According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2018), the higher cost of university education in the traditional top receiving countries, and lack of access to quality education in the home country have greatly influenced foreign students to choose Canada as a place of study. In 2006, 61,703 students moved to Canada for university education, accounting for almost one quarter of all temporary migrants in Canada (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2007).

Canada's share of foreign students has outpaced the average growth predicted by OECD between 1999-2000, 2007-2008 (AUCC, 2011). According to the AUCC (2011), the rate of growth of foreign student's movement in Canadian universities matches the enrollment trends in other countries like Japan, Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Between 1992 and 2008, the total number of international students in Canadian universities doubled. (Danko et al., 2016).

In 2010, about 90,000 international students enrolled in Canadian tertiary institutions and according to the estimate of Statistics Canada, the number of foreign students (at all educational levels) in Canada has risen from 150,000 in 1999 to 200,000 in 2013 (Kim and Kwak, 2019). Canada was among the top seven countries that received the largest share of students from Asia in 2013 (Kim and Kwak, 2019). This demonstrates the continued attractiveness of Canada as a study destination. Between 1995 and 2015, the total number increased to 460,000 (Kim and Kwak, 2019). This number has increased from 460,000 to 572,415 at December 2018 (CBIE, 2018).

According to CBIE (2018), around 75 percent (representing 370,710 students) of foreign students moved to Canada for post- secondary education in 2017. Over half (57 percent) of them, a full 211,795 were enrolled in university programs, 41 percent (151,380) were engaged in studies in a college program and 2 percent (6,415) in Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP) in Quebec. In 2017, Chinese students (74,260) constituted the largest portion of the

international student population in Canada, followed by India (25,575), France (16,115), United States (10,590) and Nigeria (7, 585) (CBIE, 2018).

While 84% of international students in Canada study in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, Manitoba has increasingly hosted international students pursuing university education (CBIE, 2018). Ontario has been the leading host for international students in Canada for the past 10 years (IRCC, 2019). Although all provinces in Canada have recorded growth in the number of international students they have been hosting, Manitoba and Ontario have shown the most year-over-year growth in Canada (CBIE, 2018). Ontario has been witnessing a larger increase in the growth as compared to Manitoba, placing Manitoba very behind Ontario.

Research on international students' perceptions and experiences

Students' motivations for studying abroad

Scholars have documented numerous factors that influence students' decision to study abroad, including the quality of international education, the availability of educational resources, financial support, the reputation of post-secondary education, national immigration policies, and employment opportunities (Mandal, 2009; Agarwal & Winkler, 1985).

Other reasons include personal growth, learning about other cultures, developing international social networks, preparing themselves for the international job market, and the opportunity to live independently (Bamber, 2014; Miller, 2012; Oliveira & Soares, 2016). Reasons for choosing Canada in particular include attraction to specific programs, and positive perceptions of its affordability and safeness (Chen, 2007). Arguably, significant others (parents, lecturers, peers, friends) in the source country and even in the potential host country play a role in foreign students' movement to pursue university education in other countries. (Kochaniewicz & Das, 2015). In the same vein, lack of employment opportunities and socio-cultural tensions in the source

country also influence student's decision to move to other countries for university education (Kochaniewicz & Das, 2015).

Other factors such as the reputation of the institution and country, geographical and historical closeness also contribute towards students' movement to other countries for university education (Kochaniewicz & Das, 2015; Srikantanyoo and Gnoth, 2002). Furthermore, some international students end up in some universities for very practical reasons—because they were admitted to only that university.

Challenges international students encounter studying abroad

International education has varied positive effects for international students – including socio-cultural, acquisition of skills, and economic benefits among others (Kasravi, 2009). While some foreign students may be familiar with the socio-cultural and economic contexts of the host country, others learn and are exposed to different cultures and economic systems, including the procurement of food, clothing, and other consumer transactions. Students interact with different people - they meet through acquaintances and are introduced to additional opportunities. International students gain valuable experiences and benefits that were not available in their home country. This makes a western international education, an attractive life opportunity for international students.

However, despite the benefits of international education, foreign students experience a host of challenges—including integration into a different socio-cultural context, and different academic and economic systems, among others. Students from developing countries are particularly vulnerable to integration problems and challenges. Some of these include difficulties interacting with domestic students, academic challenges, discrimination, racism, accommodation challenges, status renewal challenges, and language barriers among others (Yao, 2016; Calder et

al., 2016, Scott et al., 2015, CBIE, 2018). Other challenges include loneliness, social isolation, depression, and homesickness**,** moving to a new environment, climatic and living conditions; discrimination and stereotyping.

Language and communication problems. Research finds that these are significant challenges experienced by non-native English speaking international students pursuing higher education in the western world (Andrade, 2006; Townsend & Poh, 2008). Language proficiency is a major determinant of academic success for international students, and difficulty in this area makes studies and integration difficult for international students (Luzio-Lockett, 1998).

According to Xu Liu (2015), when students apply to pursue university education in a different country (English speaking) they should be aware of what to expect and also find ways to avoid becoming isolated due to problems with acquiring conversational English. In terms of academic setting, difficulty in understanding and fluently speaking the English language makes it difficult for some foreign students to effectively understand lectures, contribute to class discussions, engage in required readings, or complete assignments (Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015).

Most English-speaking universities require foreign students to write language tests to prove their level of mastery in reading, writing, listening and speaking the English language. Even when international students pass these minimum competency tests, many continue to have a challenge with understanding lectures, expressing ideas and completing reports (Liu, 2015). Rose and McClafferty (2001) have showed that many foreign students consistently display grammatical and linguistic errors in their speaking and writing.

This has diverse negative consequences on academic performance, as well as the personal, social and cultural lives of students and may lead to academic failure when students cannot access

the necessary assistance (Butcher & McGrath, 2004). In terms of personal, social and cultural consequences, students may encounter social isolation, loneliness, depression, among other psychological issues (Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015). Difficulty in language articulation can make it difficult for international students to become well-integrated into the host country (Evivie, 2009).

Academic challenges. For international students, English-language competency and academic skills are closely related. These can include difficulty in learning and understanding a foreign language, lack of familiarity with the host institution or country educational system, faculty-student interaction, inability to meet lecturers' expectations, difficulty in articulating ideas in writing and oral presentations, and limited level of interaction with fellow students during class discussions (Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015; Townsend & Poh, 2008; Evivie, 2009).

In one study of a Canadian university, Cheng, Myles and Curtis (2008) found that most graduate international students reported writing and speaking tasks as most difficult aspects of their academic program. According to Majid and Wey (2009), some international students in English speaking countries disengage themselves from class discussions and readings, due to fear that the instructors, domestic students and even other international students might laugh at them or find them difficult to understand. In a similar vein, some international students also pretend to understand class discussions when in actuality they do not (Terui, 2011). This negatively affects students' academic performance due to poor comprehension and involvement in class discussions.

Students are confronted with numerous readings, assignments, and research projects to be completed within a short time period. This may be different from the educational approach in the home country, and hence adjusting to such a system might be difficult for some international students (Liu, 2015). In a study of international doctoral students, Myburgh and colleagues (2006) found students reported difficulties in adjusting to academic requirements and expectations of the

host country which feature teaching and learning methods that differ from their home country. Two of the specific challenges were lengthy lectures without any visual aids or handouts and independent learning. The students reported feeling overwhelmed and depressed.

In addition to such issues, Mclachlan and Justice (2009) have argued that foreign students are under severe pressure to succeed academically, and failure can have severe consequences that further compound any other stress and/or psychological problems. For example, some international students receive funding either from their home country, the host country or the institution, and this financial support may be at risk if their academic performance is not satisfactory (Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015). Likewise, those who are studying abroad at their own expense or their parents' might have to pay more tuition to extend studies due to poor academic performance (Mclachlan & Justice, 2009).

Similar to language difficulty effects, academic challenges also lead to anxiety, loneliness, depression, feelings of isolation etc. However, evidence indicates that international students who share common cultural features (language, norms, demographics etc.) with the destination country are less likely to face such academic problems (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004).

Financial difficulties. Most studies have shown that financial difficult**ies** pose as one of the greatest challenges to international students (Li & Kaye, 1998; Sherry et al., 2010). According to MacLachlan and Justice, (2009), financial difficulties are more prominent during the early years of study. Tuition fees and their increments, lack or loss of funding, accommodation costs among others in most western host countries and institutions can place substantial burden on international students (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). While some students fail to attain scholarships, other forms of government and private aids have been cut off, reduced or sometimes delayed leading to a financial difficulty.

Such financial challenges may worsen feelings of alienation, isolation, homesickness, poor academic performance and other mental health problems (Evivie, 2008). International students can only retain their status in a foreign country and complete their studies if they pay all necessary academic bills, and while some countries allow foreign students to work, others prohibit them from engaging in paid employment (Li & Yi, 1997). The limited number of hours international students are allowed to work constrains their ability to meet some academic and non-academic financial costs. If students are paid based on the hours of work, limiting the hours might lead to financial difficulty.

In Canada, international students are permitted to work 20 hours per week off campus and unlimited hours on campus (IRCC, 2020). The 20 hours per week restriction holds when classes are in session but not during scheduled academic breaks (such as summer and mid-semester breaks) (IRCC, 2020). Full-time or part time international students admitted at a recognized tertiary institution in Canada and enrolled in a post-secondary academic, professional or training program that is at least six months long are eligible to work while schooling (IRCC, 2020).

However, there are some international students who are not permitted to work. This includes those who pursue only general programs, are enrolled in only English or French as a second language program, are taking courses only to attain a full-time student's status, and when they do not meet other requirements such as those mentioned above (IRCC, 2020). Failure to comply with these work requirements leads to termination of student's status, refusal of post-graduate work permit or permanent residence applications (IRCC, 2020). While foreign students strive to meet these requirements and continue to pursue studies in the midst of financial difficulty, others drop out, return home or even defer their course to work and acquire some amount of money. This leads to disappointments and socio-psychological problems.

Moving to a new environment. Relocating to a new place with different social cultural norms and rules can present challenges to international students (Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015). Some international students may experience culture shock as they try to bridge the socio-cultural differences between their home country and the host country (Zhou et al., 2008).

Kalervo Oberg, a renowned anthropologist first introduced the term *Culture Shock* in the 1954 to explain the challenges encountered by individuals found in a specific culture where most of the familiar cultural elements are non-existent or different. According to him, culture shock can be seen in terms of cultural adjustment difficulties in an unfamiliar social environment and hence defines it as "anxiety that emanates from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (Oberg, 1960 , p. 177).

Oberg posits that individuals experiencing culture shock experience to four stages: fascination with novelty, hostility, the beginning of adjustment, and acceptance (acculturation) of the customs of the destination country. It is possible for foreign students to experience more than one stage at a time or only a single stage during the pursuit of university education in the new country. The greater the degree of cultural difference between the student's country of origin and the host country, the more stressing and challenging it is them to adjust (Kegel, 2009).

Similarly, differences in culture can result in misinterpretations and misunderstandings that can hamper students' psych-social adjustment, integration and formation of friendships (Sherry et al., 2010). A 2018 survey by the Canadian Bureau for International Education showed some cultural misinterpretation barriers to formation of relationships among Canadian students and international students. (CBIE, 2018). According to the survey, most international students showed a fear or shyness to have Canadian students as friends, due to cultural differences. They worried about being misinterpreted and preferred to mix with those who shared their own culture. The

survey showed that the majority of students from USA and Europe were more willing to have friendships with Canadians than they were with students from Africa, South Asia, East Asia, Middle East and Northern Africa – showing that international students' concerns have a basis in reality/are justified.

Symptoms of culture shock induced stress or anxiety include sadness, homesickness, depression, dependence on others, being easily irritated and unable to sleep, being hostile towards others, and excessive drinking, among others. (Oberg, 1960). Other documented cultural challenges of international students include; lack of proper accommodation, non-familiar living environment in university students' residences, complicated health care system and safety issues (Ozturgut & Murphy, 2009; Sidhu et al., 2011). However, host countries, institutions, local community organisations and student unions may organize programs and provide other forms of support to help international students integrate well in a new socio-cultural environment and form new relationships. This is to enable foreign students to overcome the challenge of cultural integration and other accompanying challenges.

Loneliness, social isolation, depression, and homesickness. These are additional psycho-social adjustment problems that international students may face while studying abroad (Kegel, 2009). These socio-psychological problems are normally related to the challenges international students encounter in their social and academic lives (Ozoglu, Gur & Coskun, 2015).

For instance, foreign students who have difficulty socializing effectively or who do not establish strong relational ties as a result of language and communication barriers are more likely to experience loneliness and homesickness (Sawir et al., 2007). The experience of discrimination and negative stereotypes may also lead to mental health issues such as depression and intense

homesickness (Poyrazh & Lopez, 2007). Academic challenges and pressure may also exacerbate students feelings of isolation and loneliness (Mclachlan & Justice, 2009).

Due to the separation from families, peers and other strong networks back home, most students tend to experience a profound loss of identity and this exacerbates socio-psychological problems such as loneliness, loss of confidence, reduced time for leisure, confusion on how to engage in fun in the new environment etc. (Garreis, 2000; Hayes & Lin, 1994).

The climatic and living conditions in the host country are also a challenge to international students. While some international students decide to pursue university education in a country with similar weather conditions, others make decisions regardless of the weather conditions. Pursuing higher education in a country with weather and living conditions different from the home country is a challenge to some international students. Either for foreign students moving from quite warmer regions to very cold regions or students moving from very cold regions to warmer regions. (Evivie, 2009). They need to adjust to such weather conditions and survive by wearing the appropriate clothes and shoes. Winnipeg, the study location for this study is known to be a coldest city in Manitoba, and in Canada. Arguably, most international students may face feelings of disorientation, confusion and even spiritual displacement during such period of adjusting to the sun rising, setting, cold conditions, and the like (Evivie, 2009).

Similarly, they are also exposed to different foods and diets and while some are able to adjust others find it more difficult to do without (or with reduced access to) their culturally preferred foods. Some international students have cultural dietary practices—such as food specific taboos and hence will have to either break them or source their food elsewhere. (Constantine et al., 2005).

Discrimination and stereotyping. These are well noted challenges encountered by international students during their studies. Non-western and non-European foreign students are at increased risk of experiencing discrimination and racism in western countries (Evivie, 2009; Rice & Lee, 2007). Also, due to the different normative behaviors and attitudes foreign students have relative to westerners, these students may experience greater feelings of alienation (Schram & Lauver, 1988).

Some international students are religiously discriminated against, and this is a specially risk for Muslim women who wear veils, as well as students whose dress is very different (for example, female international students who wear saris). According to Constantine, Okazaki and Ussey (2005), Asian and African students are at risk for discrimination and alienation. This was also confirmed by Sato and Hodge (2015) who found that Asian foreign students feel marginalized and discriminated.

The racial discrimination and stereotyping encountered by many international students makes it difficult for them to stay and integrate into a western country. Racial discrimination and neo-racism (based on culture, language and religion) constitute some of the negative stereotypes that confront some international students (Lee & Rice, 2007). Some individuals of the destination country possess some negative perceptions about the culture, way of life, the marginal position of non-western international students' home countries, and this influence how they react and treat international students from these countries. According to Charles-Toussaint and Crowson (2010) some domestic white students feel that international students are threats to their educational opportunities, job opportunities and other socio-cultural values.

In a study by Beoku-Betts (2004), the White faculty in a selected UK university institution disproportionately criticized and questioned the academic abilities of African students. The faculty argued that African students should be placed in remedial class and this made the students feel

discriminated against and isolated. Fox (1994) showed that foreign students' non-western way of thinking has led some instructors to perceive their writing as very deficient, causing students to lose self-confidence.

International students engage in part-time and full-time jobs to meet academic and non-academic bills. The discriminatory nature of some of the jobs leads to sidelining international students and especially those with non-western educational and employment credentials (Evivie, 2009). Discrimination could also be evident in the interaction between international students studying in English speaking countries and the native speakers. Wei Yeoh and Yarry (2013) found that diverse cultural backgrounds may lead to miscommunication between international students and native speakers (university staff, supervisors, peers among other individuals). Bamber (2014) has argued that due to the perceived climate of discrimination that pervades some English speaking and even some non-English speaking countries, more international students are considering other alternate countries to pursue university education. This includes both developed and developing countries.

These are some of the well-noted challenges encountered by international students during the pursuance of university education in a different country. Other related challenges include safety issues in the destination country, medical insurance, etc.

Strategies for success

There is some research on some of the coping mechanisms or strategies used by international students to overcome challenges. These resources range from personal motivation, institutional (university) support, peers, family, and community groups. It has been reported that most international students are able to overcome challenges through self-determination and

motivation—thus the determination to work hard and complete school despite the challenges (Evivie, 2009).

International students engage in paid work and attempt to do well in academics to attract awards and scholarships that will enable them to meet some academic and non-academic bills. University support may include relief funds, bursaries, international student centres, the use of writing tutors and writing groups, academic learning centres, counselling centres, and the like (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015).

Support may come from families back home, peers, and community groups in the destination countries. These groups assist international students with financial support, language support, psychological support etc. (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015). International students are able to overcome feelings of loneliness and insecurity in a foreign country as they reach out to family members back home, peers and community members in the destination countries (Myburgh et al., 2006). Foreign students participate in activities organized by community groups and learn how to integrate in the destination country, access some opportunities among others to effectively complete their studies. According to Tung (2011), some international students also do use mental health services to overcome cultural stigma and other psychological issues.

Theoretical framework

Structuration and Agency theory

This section outlines the theory of structuration and agency developed by Giddens, the analytic foundation of the current study. Several social theories have been employed in the social sciences to describe the nature and constitution of society. These theories are usually categorized into two groups—voluntaristic and structural theories (Wolfel, 2005).

Voluntaristic theories emphasize individuals as the primary agents for social change, constitution and reconstitution of society (Wolfel, 2005). Structural theories, in contrast, describe how societal units or elements such as relationships, policies, frameworks, institutions and the like influence social change, the constitution and reconstitution of the society (Wolfel, 2005). Voluntaristic theories tend to underestimate how societal factors and structures affect change and wholly focus on the individual as the source of change in the society. Structural theories on the other hand focus wholly on how institutions, policies, and frameworks can influence the constitution and reconstitution of the society, and ignores the social change power of individuals. In effect, both perspectives are limited, as both structures and individuals are significant to the constitution of society (Wolfel, 2005).

Anthony Giddens (1984) has attempted to correct this deficiency in the social sciences with his theory of agency and structuration (Whittington, 2010). His approach is concerned with the relationship between individuals and the social structures/elements in which they are implicated (Wolfel, 2005). It should be noted that Giddens does not attempt to 'marry' structuralism and individualistic theories, but rather proposes that both agents and structure are significant and interact to bring about social change .

Giddens first proposed his synthetic approach in *New Rules of Sociological Method* in 1976. He continued to develop his analysis through the *Central Problems of Social Theory* (1979), generating his extended and systematic theory of structuration in *The Constitution of Society* in 1984 (Whittington, 2010).

Giddens' agency and structuration theory has gained prominence in migration studies (Randell, 2016). According to Tammaru and Sjoberg (1999), migration studies should employ an agency and structuralist approach. Most migration studies employ structure and agency to describe the decision of people to move to other countries, the economic impact of migration and the relatedness of networks in migration (Randell, 2016). In the work of Todaro (1976), most migrants make decisions based on the income gains they believe they might accrue in the host country. The work of Stark and colleagues (Stark & Bloom,1985; Stark & Lucas, 1988) focused on the desire of individuals to diversify household incomes by sending migrant members to new labor markets. Others have also focused on how immigration policies, human capital and migrant networks influence the decision to migrate (Randell, 2016, p4).

Gidden's theory offers two key concepts that have been emphasized in migration research—individual agency and structural factors (Whittington, 2010). Understanding individual free will is very important according to Giddens and should be the focus of social analysis (Whittington, 2010). Individual free will actions are defined in terms of agency, defined by Giddens as the power of people to freely make choices and engage in activities that influence the course of their lives. Humans are independent and they make varied decisions based on experiences and available information.

The theory situates humans in the centre of all societal activities—they engage in the production and modification of societal elements (Whittington, 2015). However, the theory

recognizes the importance of external factors that might shape or constrain the choices and decision making of individuals. This is *structure* in Giddens' perspective. Structure is the system of rules and resources that influence the extent at which people make decisions and choices (Giddens, 1984). Rules can include policies, frameworks, relationships, laws, social norms and the like, where resources include wealth, social capital and skills (Giddens, 1984). Hence, humans have the power to decide for themselves but the extent of such decisions can be influenced or conditioned by external factors—political, environmental, demographic, economic, family, health and so on.

Giddens agency and structuration theory is composed of six key tenets. These are briefly described below:

Agency

In his structuration and agency theory, the individual plays a very important role. According to Giddens, the agent is "a knowledgeable and a capable subject'' (Cloke et al., 1991, p. 97). The agent has a free will and choice to do whatever he/she wishes to do for whatever reason he/she chooses. According to Giddens, all actions are "intentional or purposeful" (Giddens, 1979, p56). Giddens emphasizes that individuals are knowledgeable and engage in deliberate, calculated actions. In his theory, individuals engage in a cost-benefit analysis during decision making. If they realize the benefits outweigh the costs, the decision will be undertaken but if they realize the costs outweigh the benefits the decision will be withdrawn (Wolfel, 2005).

Structure

Giddens defines structure as "the rules and resources that are recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems" (Giddens, 1984, p 377). In other words, structure consists of rules that govern the society. The use of the term "recursive" in Giddens' thought is key to understanding the role of structure. Recursiveness means that "structure should not be conceptualized as a

hindrance to social action, but importantly involved in its production" (Giddens, 1979). Thus structures do not only influence society or social change but are also influenced or created by social change and society. This was echoed in Gregory's (1994, p.112) observation that "structures are outcomes of the social practices that constitute social systems." Societies are composed of rules and resources that affect society and social change. These rules and resources can also be influenced by social change. Hence, structure is recursive.

Duality of structure

This element constitutes one of the fundamental cornerstones of Giddens' theory (Wolfel, 2005). He proposes there is a dialectic relationship between structure and agency, where structure and agency interact to shape change in the society (Wolfel, 2005). In Giddens' idea, the theory of structuration involves "the duality of structure, which relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency" (Giddens, 1979, p 69).

Sewell (1992), argued that just as structure may encourage or inhibit individual actions, it is also reproduced by individual actions. Thus, human actions are influenced by structural elements based on the existing rules and resources, and structures are also formed, reproduced, and challenged due to human action. Social structures are not independent of agency, nor is agency independent of structure. This explains Gidden's tenet of the dialectic relationship between agency and structure: each affects, and is affected, by the other.

Dialectic of control

Giddens incorporates the concept of power in his agency and structuration theory. He explains the power relationships between agents in a dialectic control (Wolfel, 2005). Giddens holds that "all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms

which oppress them" (Giddens, 1984, p 72). According to Giddens, all individuals have some amount of power to influence change in the society, and if a person has no power, then the person is no longer an agent (Giddens,1984). He argued that to understand the influencing and change power of agents it is necessary to have knowledge about the material and social resources available to them (Wolfel, 2005). Such resources are unequally distributed in society, as are the associated advantages (power) available to agents in the society to exercise their freewill and/or influence change in the society (Wolfel, 2005).

Institutions

The fifth element is the institution, which shapes the structuration of social systems (Wolfel, 2005). Giddens identifies four types of institutions and each of them is influenced by signification, domination and legitimation (Giddens, 1984). The institutions are: Symbolic orders/models of discourse, political institutions, economic institutions and laws/models of sanctions. Individuals use some of these institutions to affect change in the society (Wolfel, 2005). Institutions are different from resources such that they are more highly ingrained in a society than are resources. Some of the specific institutions noted to influence change in the society are discrimination, social capital (relationships), and geopolitics (Wolfel, 2005).

Time/Space relations

The last element is time/space relations. Giddens emphasizes how history and place affect change in the society, and argues that ignorance of time is one of the main flaws of social theories (Wolfel, 2005). He proposes that the constitution and reconstitution of the society is not only influenced by the people and structures but by the historical and geographical processes (Giddens, 1984). He

argued that the history and geographical factors of a specific society are relevant to understanding social change as they shape the range of actions available to agents (Giddens, 1984).

Criticisms of structuration and agency theory

Despite its usefulness, Gidden's structuration and agency theory has met some criticisms. The theory deals with social phenomena at a high level of abstraction, rather than their occurrence in a particular context (Jones & Karsten, 2008). According to Gregson (1989), the theory is too generalized to provide research guidance in some specific empirical settings. He describes the theory as a "second order theory'' that does not focus on "theorizing the unique" in order to explain specific events or phenomena but, rather is concerned with the conceptualization and description of general components of the society. Others have argued that it should be seen as a meta-theory and a way of thinking about the world rather than as empirically verifiable description of social behavior (Weaver & Gioia, 1994).

Some critics have argued that Gidden's theory conflates structure and agency. Conflation involves the reduction of structure to action and vice versa (Barley & Tolber, 1997). Archer (1996) argues that the goal of explaining the constitution of society and why things happen would be better served by maintaining the analytical distinction between the structures of society and the individual members. He holds that both parts have a different level of endurance in the society (human actions over a short period of time, whereas structures endure) and hence should be analysed separately. Archer (1996) also argues that Gidden's basic tenet of duality is very loose and abstract, such that it does little to solve the dualism of action and structure.

Further, Archer (1996) charges that Giddens pays little attention to how structures might be pre-constituted and relatively autonomous. Similarly, Bakewll (2010) suggests that the theory is confusing in its attempt to explain how structures and individuals intersect to influence change.

Bakewell (2010) argued that the theory appears to put more emphasis on agency over structure. Furthermore, according to Thompson (1989) Giddens simplistically explains rules and resources and the explanation is not clear nor consistent. Giddens is also somewhat vague about what is involved when structures are developed by individuals because he ignores the wider institutional and organizational mechanisms that might influence the development of a structure (Thompson, 1989). Some feminists have also argued that by rejecting the importance of gender in his theory, Giddens has addressed only a limited part of the deficiency of voluntaristic and structural theories in explaining the constitution of the society (Murgatroyd, 1989).

Application of Agency and Structuration theory in the proposed study

Agency and structuration theory is used in this study to explain the challenges international students encounter during the pursuit of university education in Canada. The theory has not been well-studied in terms of its potential usefulness for understanding the arrival challenges encountered by international students and the current study seeks to extend its usage and application in this area.

International students decide to move from their home country to pursue university education in Canada. They are rational beings who engage in cost-benefit analysis before they migrate to Canada. Some of the factors that may influence their decision may include: social networks, funding opportunities, immigration policies and so on. These constitute the rules and resources in Giddens theory. However, upon arrival they encounter varied challenges related to the socio-cultural, policies and institutional contexts. These may include; discrimination, policies about working hours, cultural differences, different educational contexts and the like. These are inherent structural and institutional barriers confronting international students in a foreign country.

They influence individual actions in the area of academics, social relationships and settling in the country.

For example, if foreign students perceive discrimination from domestic students, this may affect how they relate with them. Canada limits the employment of international students off-campus. This is a challenge, because it affects the financial capacity of students and constrains their actions, as foreign students have to comply in order to successfully complete their studies. Financial aid policies, academic fees, and health care policies are each structural factors that might be a challenge for international students and influence their actions.

Research Questions

The current study seeks to address the following research questions

1. What are international students' motivations for moving to Canada, and University of Manitoba to pursue university education?
2. What are the challenges international students encounter during the pursuit of their studies in Canada, and at the University of Manitoba?
3. What are the strategies and institutional supports international students rely on to overcome some of the challenges they encounter?

CHAPTER 3
METHODS

This section outlines the procedures and techniques that were used in this research. It presents the type of study, sampling technique, sample size, data collection technique, data source, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Type of study

This study utilized a descriptive survey approach. The approach enabled the identification and description of the motivating factors that influence international students to move to Canada to pursue university education, the challenges they encounter and the coping strategies and support mechanisms that have helped them overcome the challenges they encounter during studies at University of Manitoba, Canada.

Data collection procedure and sample

Primary data was mainly used in this research and the international student body at University of Manitoba, Canada constituted the source of the data. A questionnaire (in appendix) was designed to explore the challenges international students encounter during studies at University of Manitoba, Canada, their motivations for studying in Canada (in general) and at University of Manitoba (in specific), and the support and coping mechanisms available to help them overcome their difficulties.

For the purposes of this study, the target population was international students at University of Manitoba who are currently in Winnipeg, and those who had been living in Winnipeg but due to COVID-19 restrictions were not currently in Canada. Hence, international students who are not in Canada or have never been to Canada,or have not begun or had any in-person studies at University of Manitoba were excluded from the sample. This was established in

the initial recruitment email sent by the Vice-Provost office to student university addresses at University of Manitoba.

The questionnaire asks: demographic characteristics of respondents, motivating factors that influence them to pursue university education at Canada, and at University of Manitoba, challenges they have encountered during their studies, and the support strategies they have used to overcome challenges. Questions on the effects of COVID-19 in the lives of international students at University of Manitoba were added to importantly inform the society and the academic environment on the impact of the pandemic in the lives of international students.

A small pilot study was conducted with four current international students (from Sociology, City Planning, Mathematics and Disability Studies) at University of Manitoba. This is an agreed number between the researcher and the advisor. These are students who have initial contacts with the researcher as friends. Before the commencement of the pilot study, an email was sent to the volunteer international students, explaining the purpose of the pilot study for their consent and they agreed to partake. Minor changes were made in the original questionnaire based on the suggestions and comments of the international students who volunteered in the pilot study.

The questionnaire was earlier prepared using Word and later designed using Qualtrics software, thus all questions were transferred onto the Qualtrics website for the purpose of the current study. An online survey of University of Manitoba international students was carried out. The online questionnaire was compatible with smart phones and personal computers, so that international students had have the chance to respond at any time and at any place.

This study has been approved by the Psychology and Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB) at University of Manitoba. Further university requirements stipulate that any survey

that uses University of Manitoba members (staff and students) should seek for approval from the Survey Review committee, and this study was approved by the committee.

Regarding the recruitment of international students at University of Manitoba for this study, the assistance of the Vice-Provost office was needed. The researcher had earlier emailed the Vice-Provost office about assistance in emailing international students to recruit participants for this study and the office agreed to distribute the email conditional upon ethics approval. After gaining institutional (PSREB and Survey Review committees) approval for the study, an email that contains the initial recruitment information with a link to the survey was sent to the Vice-Provost office to be forwarded to all students at University of Manitoba. Because the office is not able to send the recruitment information to international students only, a filter question was set up in the Qualtrics software to ensure that only qualifying international students filled out the survey.

The initial recruitment email for international students introduces the purpose of the study and those students who are interested in participating will then click on a link at the bottom of the email which takes them to another page. This page provides further information to allow them to make an informed decision about participation. Those who agree to participate click on another link to provide their informed consent, and this link takes them to the actual survey questions. After answering the questions they wanted to respond to, they then click on the submit button to have their responses recorded in the Qualtrics system for analysis purposes. The initial recruitment email was sent by the Vice-Provost office in the last week of September (2020) and a reminder email was sent 10 days later. Thus, data was collected on two consecutive different times. The survey was open for three weeks from late September to early October, 2020. In short, the sample for this study was a convenience sample of international students at the

University of Manitoba. In total, 712 international students at University of Manitoba completed the survey.

Data analysis

In this study, the Qualtrics software provided the survey raw data in an SPSS .sav file for analysis, hence there was no need to enter the data into the SPPS software. A preliminary data cleaning was carried out to prepare the data ready for analysis. Questions on motivational factors, challenges, support mechanisms and COVID-19 were in statements that had to be rated by the respondents, and in addition there was an open-ended section to allow participating international students to communicate information that was not covered in the various fixed response items. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages and means were generated to describe the data.

Ethical considerations

Ethical concerns are very important in all forms of research, especially those involving human beings. Informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were important considerations in this study. Prior to responding to the survey questions, respondents were given information about the study; the intended objectives, and reassured about the privacy of data and their personal information. All phases of the survey were conducted in English only. Potential participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and they may withdraw anytime and skip any questions they did not want to answer. No significant risks to participants were anticipated, and no respondent was remunerated in any way. No deception was involved.

The names and other potentially identifying characteristics of respondents were not asked in the survey questions. The survey data is anonymous and will not be shared with any other party but will be used for academic purposes only, including this thesis and possibly a future

journal publication. A copy of this data will also be shared with the Vice-Provost office. The data is stored on a password protected computer and accessible only to myself and my advisor. After the completion of the entire thesis, the raw data will be permanently deleted as per the approval conditions of the Psychology and Sociology Research Ethics Board at University of Manitoba.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This section of the study describes the data gathered from the survey respondents. The data are presented in tables and interpreted for better appreciation. It begins with the demographic data (Table 1 and Table 2 (in appendix) and then moves on to the data pertinent to the three research questions (1) motivations of international students for studying in Canada, and at the University of Manitoba, (2) the challenges encountered by international students during studies, and (3) the coping strategies they have used and the support mechanisms they have accessed at University of Manitoba.

Selected demographic profile of Respondents

Table 1. 1 Demographic data of respondents

Gender	**Responses (N)**	**Percent (%)**
Male	260	36.5
Female	441	61.9
Non-binary	11	1.3
Total	712	100.0
Age (Mean 24.11, SD 5.94)	**Responses (N)**	**Percent (%)**
17-25	494	71.8
26-34	148	21.5
35-44	40	5.8
45+	6	0.9
Total	688	100.0
Missing	24	
Total	712	
Current location	**Responses (N)**	**Percent (%)**
Winnipeg	641	90.3
Elsewhere in Canada	14	1.3
Out of Country	55	8.4
Total	710	100.0
Missing	2	
Total	712	
Location in Winnipeg	**Responses (N)**	**Percent (%)**
Off-Campus	607	94.7
On-Campus	34	5.3
Total	641	100.0

Missing	71	
Total	712	
Type of program	**Responses (N)**	**Percent (%)**
Diploma program	26	3.7
Bachelor's program	474	67.6
Pre-master's program	3	.4
Professional degree program	17	2.4
Master's program	100	14.3
Doctorate program	81	11.6
Total	701	100.0
Missing	11	
Total	712	
Faculty	**Responses (N)**	**Percent (%)**
Asper School of Business	70	9.9
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences	50	7.1
Faculty of Architecture	9	1.3
Faculty of Arts	162	23.0
Faculty of Education	11	1.6
Faculty of Engineering	61	8.7
Faculty of Environment, Earth and Resources	30	4.3
Faculty of Graduate studies	38	5.4
Faculty of Health Sciences	41	5.8
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management	2	.3
Faculty of Law	1	.1
Faculty of Science	174	24.7
Faculty of Social Work	1	.1
University 1	29	4.1
School of Arts	6	.9
Extended education	19	2.7
Total	704	100.0
Missing	8	
Total	712	
GPA at University of Manitoba	**Responses (N)**	**Percent (%)**
4.0 to 4.5	158	24.8
3.5 to 3.9	181	28.5
3.0 to 3.4	136	21.4
2.5 to 2.9	106	16.7
2.0 to 2.4	48	7.5
1.0 to 1.9	7	1.1
Total	636	100.0
Don't know	76	10.7
Total	712	
Relationship status	**Responses (N)**	**Percent (%)**
Single	427	60.1

In a relationship	163	22.9
Common-law or married	114	16.0
Divorced, separated, or recently broken up	6	.8
Other	1	.1
Total	711	100.0
Missing	1	
Total	712	

Living arrangements	Responses (N)	Percent (%)
Live alone	111	15.6
Live with roommates	332	46.7
Live with parents or older relatives	110	15.5
Live with partner/spouse	95	13.4
Live with children	5	.7
Live with partner/spouse and children	36	5.1
Live with siblings	14	2.0
Other	8	1.1
Total	711	100.0
Missing	1	
Total	712	

Year of arrival for studies	Responses (N)	Percent (%)
1 year or less	236	33.6
2-3 years	311	44.3
4-5 years	107	15.3
6+ years	48	6.8
Total	702	100.0
Missing	10	
Total	712	

Out of the (712) respondents who participated in the study, 62 did not provide a valid response or had no response for one or more of the demographic questions.

Beginning with gender, females constituted majority of the sample in the study, 61.9 percent of the sample were females, 36.5 percent were males and 1.3 percent were in the non-binary category (those who do not identify as either male or female). Comparing this research data with the total number of female and male students at University of Manitoba, it confirms data at the University of Manitoba which shows more females than males as at 2019 (Office of Institutional

Analysis, 2019), with females representing about 17.0 percent and males representing about 14.0 percent. The university demographic archives only contain information for the general student body and not specifically for international students. As at 2019, none of the students identified themselves to be in the non-binary group (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2019)

The most common country of origin was Nigeria (14.7 percent), followed by India (14.3 percent) and China (11.5 percent) (See Table 2 in Appendix D for all countries). This confirms the data projected by the CBIE (2018) regarding international students' mobility and in Canada for university education. Globally, Nigeria, India and China are among the top source countries of international students who pursue university education in other countries whereas in Canada, most of the foreign students who migrated to pursue university education in Canada between 2017 and 2018 were from Nigeria, China and India. Additionally, this data corroborates international students' enrollment at University of Manitoba in 2020, Fall term (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2020). The University of Manitoba reports a majority of international students came from China representing 21.6 percent followed by Nigeria (16.3 percent) and then India (14.5 percent)

The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 56. The mean age of the respondents is approximately 24. The majority of respondents (80.0 percent) were between the ages of 17 and 30 whereas the remaining 20.0 percent were between the ages of 31 and 56.

Related to this is the number of years the respondents have spent in Canada. This was determined using the year of their arrival to Canada for their studies. At the time of the survey (October 2020) a third (33.6 percent) of respondents had been here a year or less, 44.3 percent had been in Canada for between 2 and 3 years, 15.3 percent had been here between 4 and 5 years, while 6.8 percent had spent six (6) or more years in Canada.

Nine in ten respondents (90.3 percent) were living in Winnipeg at the time of the survey, and most of them (94.7 percent) lived off-campus and only a small share (5.3 percent) lived on-campus.

Regarding the program of study, the majority are in a Bachelor's program (67.6 percent), followed by Master's program (14.3 percent) and then Doctorate program (11.6 percent). Seventeen faculties at University of Manitoba were coded in this study using the University of Manitoba's website and the open-ended responses of the participants. Out of these faculties, the largest portion of respondents (24.7 percent) were enrolled in the Faculty of Science, followed by the Faculty of Arts (23.0 percent).

Of the 636 respondents (out of 712) who reported their GPA, three fourths (74.7 percent) reported a GPA of 3.0 or better, while a quarter (25.5 percent) reported a GPA between 1.0 and 2.9. 76 respondents or (10.7 percent) of the total sample, reported not knowing their GPA.

The majority (60.1 percent) reported being single. In terms of living arrangements 46.7 percent of respondents reported living with roommates, 36.7 percent with their family, and 15.6 percent lived alone.

Motivation to study in Canada, and at University of Manitoba.

One of the aims of this study is to identify the factors that influence /motivate international students to choose to pursue university education in Canada, and at University of Manitoba in particular. Participants were asked to indicate on a four-point scale the importance of selected factors shown in Table 3.1. Means and standard deviations were derived for each of the factors.

Table 3. 1 Decision to move to Canada for university education

Item	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	Mean (SD)
Availability of employment opportunities after graduation	9 (1.3%)	35 (4.9%)	150 (21.1%)	517 (72.7%)	3.65 (.634)
Canada is a safe country	6 (.8%)	22 (3.1%)	220 (31.0%)	461 (65.0%)	3.60 (.594)
Immigration and settlement policies for international students.	9 (1.3%)	56 (7.9%)	181 (25.5%)	465 (65.4%)	3.55 (.694)
A first step towards an international career.	17 (2.4%)	69 (9.7%)	221 (31.1%)	403 (56.8%)	3.42 (.763)
There is less discrimination in Canada	11 (1.5%)	75 (10.5%)	259 (36.4%)	366 (51.5%)	3.38 (.735)
The opportunity to learn new culture and gain new experiences	14 (2.0%)	68 (9.6%)	301 (42.5%)	326 (46.0%)	3.32 (.728)
Establish international friendship relationships.	17 (2.4%)	105 (14.8%)	308 (43.5%)	278 (39.3%)	3.20 (.774)
Parents', lecturers' and peers' encouragement.	34 (4.8%)	107 (15.1%)	282 (39.7%)	287 (40.4%)	3.16 (.850)
The prestige attached to studying in Canada	37 (5.2%)	161 (22.6%)	278 (39.1%)	235 (33.1%)	3.00 (.875)
Canada has a good health care policy for international students	49 (6.9%)	147 (20.7%)	279 (39.3%)	235 (33.1%)	2.99 (.903)
To escape conflicts and wars in my home country	230 (32.5%)	209 (29.5%)	142 (20.1%)	127 (17.9%)	2.23 (1.091)

As shown in Table 3.1, the majority of the respondents indicated that the following perceptions about Canada were important or very important in their decision to move to Canada for university education: Canada is a safe country which was indicated by 96.0 percent of the sample, availability of employment opportunities after graduation which was reported by 93.8 percent of respondents, amenable immigration and settlement policies (90.9 percent), the opportunity to learn new culture and gain new experiences (88.5 percent), a first step towards an international career (87.9 percent), less discrimination in Canada (87.9 percent), to establish

international friendship relationships (82.8 percent), parents', lecturers' and peers' encouragement (80.1 percent). For nearly three-quarters (72.4 percent), the expectation of good health care policy for international students motivated them to migrate to Canada for their university education, along with the prestige attached to studying in Canada (72.2 percent). The least important factor was to escape conflicts and wars in my home country (38.0 percent), even though more than one in three students selected this response.

Regarding the open-ended option for this question, some respondents identified additional influencing factors such as; ability of international students to work off/on campus, to be able to speak and write fluently in English, the opportunity to gain international higher education experience, to become independent, and to join family/spouse in Canada.

International students have varied reasons for the selection of a particular university for their academic pursuits. In the present sample (see table 4.1) the most important factors that influenced the respondents to choose to study at University of Manitoba was the perception that there were funding opportunities for international students and this was reported by (81.3 percent) of the sample, followed by, University of Manitoba has relevant academic resources (80.1 percent), comparatively low fees at University of Manitoba (79.8 percent), University of Manitoba's reputation (72.9 percent), no discrimination at University of Manitoba (67.0 percent), availability of programs that do not exist in my home country (62.7 percent), and encouragement from parents and lecturers back home (62.4 percent).

The least important factors included: I applied to a lot of schools but only University of Manitoba gave me admission which was reported by (22.0 percent) of the sample, availability of programs that are not available in other universities in Canada (45.7 percent),and encouragement

from relatives and friends currently enrolled at or completed a degree from the University of Manitoba (47.1 percent).

Table 4. 1 Decision to pursue education at University of Manitoba

Item	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	Mean(SD)
Availability of funding opportunities.	23 (3.2%)	109 (15.4%)	217 (30.6%)	359 (50.7%)	3.29 (.842)
The fees at University of Manitoba are low as compared to other universities.	44 (6.2%)	99 (14.0%)	254 (35.9%)	311 (43.9%)	3.18 (.893)
University of Manitoba has relevant academic resources	28 (4.0%)	113 (16.0%)	332 (47.0%)	234 (33.1%)	3.09 (.801)
University of Manitoba's reputation	44 (6.2%)	148 (20.9%)	327 (46.3%)	188 (26.6%)	2.93 (.849)
Availability of programs that do not exist in my home country.	69 (9.7%)	195 (27.5%)	181 (25.6%)	263 (37.1%)	2.90 (1.014)
No discrimination at University of Manitoba	88 (12.5%)	143 (20.3%)	255 (36.2%)	218 (31.0%)	2.86 (.997)
Encouragement from parents and lecturers back home.	94 (13.4%)	171 (24.3%)	259 (36.8%)	180 (25.6%)	2.75 (.985)
Availability of programs that are not available in other universities in Canada	96 (13.6%)	287 (40.7%)	193 (27.3%)	130 (18.4%)	2.51 (.944)
Encouragement from relatives and friends currently enrolled at or completed a degree from the University of Manitoba	193 (27.3%)	181 (25.6%)	206 (29.1%)	127 (18.0%)	2.38 (1.069)
I applied to a lot of schools but only University of Manitoba gave me admission.	316 (44.4%)	235 (33.3%)	91 (12.9%)	64 (9.1%)	1.86 (.960)

Additional important perceptions identified in response to open-ended questions included: opportunity to learn new cultures at University of Manitoba, support resources for

international students, good provincial settlement programs for international students and low cost of living in Manitoba as compared to other provinces, University of Manitoba does not require higher English tests (e.g. TOEFL-Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores and also some international students are exempted from the English tests (e.g. TOEFL).

Challenges international students encounter

This study also seeks to explore and describe the challenges encountered by international students during their studies at University of Manitoba. This includes their personal, environmental, socio-cultural, financial, discriminatory, language and academic difficulties experienced both on-campus and off-campus. In the same vein, it attempts to uncover the extent to which COVID-19 has affected international students at University of Manitoba.

Table 5. 1 Language challenges

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean (SD)
I am not able to present orally in English in class due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes.	386 (54.4%)	183 (25.8%)	99 (14.0%)	41 (5.8%)	1.71 (.913)
I am not able to verbally communicate confidently with others in English.	415 (58.4%)	203 (28.6%)	74 (10.4%)	19 (2.7%)	1.57 (.784)
I am not able to write assignments and research projects in English.	462 (64.9%)	205 (28.8%)	37 (5.2%)	8 (1.1%)	1.43 (.645)
I am not able to read and understand academic materials in English.	504 (70.8%)	170 (23.9%)	32 (4.5%)	6 (.8%)	1.35 (.608)

The vast majority of the participants indicated that they did not experience language challenges (see Table 5.1) . Over 90 percent of respondents indicated that neither reading and understanding

academic materials in English (94.7 percent), nor writing assignments and research projects in English (93.7 percent) were a problem. Similarly (87.0 percent) reported no challenges verbally communicating confidently with others in English, and (80.2 percent) reported no difficulty in presenting orally in English in class. Thus according to their own self reports, the vast majority of international students sampled did not identify problems with writing, reading, understanding and speaking English.

Despite the majority of the participants not reporting difficulty with most of the language challenge items, a notable minority of respondents indicated experiencing some challenges, for example, 15.8 percent expressed difficulty in presenting orally in class due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes, and 13.1 percent indicated difficulty in verbally communicating with others confidently in English.

Some of the participants who responded to the open-ended option revealed other language challenges they encounter, including writing challenges due to dyslexia, difficulty in understanding some lecturers because professors speak fast, and stereotyping/mockery due to poor English communication.

Related to language challenges are academic challenges faced by foreign students who pursue university education in other countries. As shown in Table 5.2 below, nine in ten respondents reported no problems working in groups with students from other countries (91.9 percent), working in groups with students from their home country (91.6 percent), or completing all required assignments and projects (87.4 percent). Similarly, the vast majority of respondents reported no problems working in groups with Canadian students (85.8 percent), or adjusting to the teaching methods used in Canada (77.0 percent).Three quarters of respondents (73.6 percent) indicate no problems with how their lecturers responded to their academic concerns, while just

over two thirds (69.4 percent) indicate no problems actively engaging in class presentations and discussions.

Table 5. 2 Academic challenges

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean(SD)
I do not actively engage in class presentations and discussions	219 (30.8%)	275 (38.6%)	177 (24.9%)	41 (5.8%)	2.06 (.886)
Some of my lecturers do not respond well to my academic concerns	192 (27.0%)	332 (46.6%)	140 (19.7%)	48 (6.7%)	2.06 (.856)
I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada	235 (33.0%)	313 (44.0%)	123 (17.3%)	41 (5.8%)	1.96 (.856)
I am not comfortable working in groups with Canadian students	315 (44.4%)	294 (41.4%)	77 (10.8%)	24 (3.4%)	1.73 (785)
I am not able to complete all required assignments and projects	302 (42.5%)	319 (44.9%)	79 (11.1%)	11 (1.5%)	1.72 (.720)
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from other countries	365 (51.3%)	289 (40.6%)	47 (6.6%)	10 (1.4%)	1.58 (.679)
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from my home country	400 (56.3%)	251 (35.3%)	41 (5.8%)	19 (2.7%)	1.55 (.724)

Although the majority of students reported little or no problems, there was a sizable minority of students reporting problems in the following areas: I do not actively engage in class presentations and discussions (30.7 percent), some of my lecturers do not respond well to my academic concerns (26.4 percent), and I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada (23.1 percent)

There were also other academic challenges noted in open-ended response questions, including: few study spaces for students, not comfortable speaking with lecturers on anything

related to academics, difficulty in studies because some lecturers are not good with technologies, and confusing assignments instructions by lecturers.

Table 5. 3 Personal and social level challenges

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean(SD)
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off-campus	81 (11.4%)	171 (24.0%)	311 (43.7%)	149 (20.9%)	2.74 (.916)
I feel stressed because I am away from my family and loved ones back home	104 (14.6%)	201 (28.2%)	243 (34.1%)	164 (23.0%)	2.66 (.990)
I find it difficult to make friends with Canadian students	102 (14.3%)	212 (29.8%)	233 (32.8%)	164 (23.1%)	2.65 (.989)
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face on campus	99 (13.9%)	240 (33.8%)	239 (33.6%)	133 (18.7%)	2.57 (.948)
I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries	175 (24.6%)	342 (48.0%)	141 (19.8%)	54 (7.6%)	2.10 (.859)
I find it difficult to make friends with students from my home country	325 (45.7%)	283 (39.8%)	72 (10.1%)	31 (4.4%)	1.73 (.813)

The study sought to identify the personal and social challenges experienced by international students during their studies at University of Manitoba. According to the data reported in Table 5.3, the four most important personal and social level problems reported by the participated international students were: I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off-campus, and this was indicated by 64.6 percent of the sample whereas 57.0 percent revealed that they feel stressed because they are away from their family and loved ones back home. Over half of the respondents (55.9 percent) stated that making friends with the Canadian students is difficult for them, and (52.3 percent) indicated that they feel stressed because of the challenges they face on-campus. The two least problematic areas were: I find it difficult to make friends

with students from my home country (14.5 percent) of the sample, and I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries (27.4 percent).

The open-ended question for this section revealed the following additional personal and social level challenges encountered by the participated international students: difficulty in having Canadian friends due to their perception of poor English communication skills of international students, feel stressed due to payment of fees, stressed due to academic challenges, feel stressed and lonely due to COVID-19.

Table 5. 4 Environmental and cultural challenges

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean (SD)
I find it difficult to access my traditional foods and ingredients.	141 (19.8%)	266 (37.4%)	199 (28.0%)	105 (14.8%)	2.38 (.963)
I have not adapted to the weather conditions	154 (21.7%)	311 (43.7%)	166 (23.3%)	80 (11.3%)	2.24 (.918)
It is difficult to acquire accommodation off-campus	147 (20.7%)	307 (43.3%)	203 (28.6%)	52 (7.3%)	2.23 (.859)
It is difficult to acquire accommodation on campus	135 (19.3%)	338 (48.3%)	162 (23.1%)	65 (9.3%)	2.22 (.864)
I have not adapted to the local social norms and behavior	205 (28.9%)	372 (52.4%)	104 (14.6%)	29 (4.1%)	1.94 (.772)
I am not familiar with the local bus system	261 (36.7%)	332 (46.7%)	84 (11.8%)	34 (4.8%)	1.85 (.809)
I have not adapted to the rules and regulations at University of Manitoba	306 (43.0%)	356 (50.1%)	38 (5.3%)	11 (1.5%)	1.65 (.653)

Because most international students are exposed to a very new environment with a different culture, they sometimes find it difficult to adjust and hence become a challenge to them (Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015). However, the current data shows (see Table 5.4) that the majority of international students report no adjustment difficulties with the environment and culture in Canada, and at University of Manitoba.

According to the data, 83.4 percent of respondents reported that they were familiar with the local bus system in Winnipeg, 81.3 percent reported that they did not have adjustment problems with the local social norms and behavior, 73.1 percent indicated that adapting to the rules and regulations at University of Manitoba has not been a problem for them. About two-thirds of the respondents (67.6 percent) reported having little or no difficulty in the acquisition of accommodation off-campus, 64.0 percent also indicated no challenge with the acquisition of accommodation on-campus, 60.0 percent reported that they have no issues adapting to the weather conditions in Canada, and 57.2 percent reported that they have no difficulty in accessing their traditional foods and ingredients. Despite most international students reporting little or no problems, a sizable number did indicate experiencing difficulties in the following areas: accessing traditional foodstuffs (42.8 percent), adapting to local weather conditions (34.6 percent), and acquiring accommodations (32-36 percent).

There were also several other environmental and cultural challenges reported in open ended questions including: unreliable and non-rapid transit system, poor administration at University of Manitoba, difficulty living in the basement due to the coldness in such spaces, and unable to cook some traditional foods due to allergies of roommates.

Study respondents reported a number of financial challenges (see Table 5.5), with insufficient scholarship opportunities as compared to Canadian peers (74.9 percent) being the most common. The other two most-noted financial challenges were the 20 hours per week part time work limit for international students and this was reported by (61.5 percent) of the sample, and difficulty in paying tuition fees (57.9 percent). The least reported difficulties were needing to borrow money from friends and relatives to be able to survive (35.7 percent) and paying rent (47.4 percent).

Table 5. 5 **Financial challenges**

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean(SD)
I do not have sufficient scholarship opportunities compared to my Canadian peers	42 (5.9%)	135 (19.1%)	229 (32.4%)	300 (42.5%)	3.11 (.918)
The 20 hours part time work for international students is a challenge to my finances	69 (9.7%)	204 (28.8%)	220 (31.0%)	216 (30.5%)	2.82 (.975)
I find it difficult to pay my tuition fees	62 (8.7%)	238 (33.4%)	252 (35.4%)	160 (22.5)	2.72 (.910)
I find it difficult to pay my rent	75 (10.5%)	299 (42.0%)	231 (32.4%)	107 (15.0%)	2.52 (.873)
I borrow money from friends and relatives to be able to survive	166 (23.4%)	291 (41.0%)	161 (22.7%)	92 (13.0%)	2.25 (.957)

Other financial challenges reported by respondents in open-ended questions were: international students are not eligible for some jobs due to the restricted work hours, higher tuition fees for international students, first years are not qualified to access some bursaries, international students are not eligible for the Canada Emergency student benefit, (CESB) and low amount of some funding opportunities.

Discrimination is another area of potential concern. In the current sample (as shown in Table 5.6) 89.1 percent of the respondents indicated not feeling discriminated against due to their religious affiliation, 87.7 percent reported not feeling discriminated against by other international students, 84.7 percent reported no sense of discrimination by other university staff, 83.5 percent reported not feeling discriminated against by their professors, 80.0 percent reported not feeling discrimination due to their place of birth, 77.5 percent also reported no sense of discrimination

because of their ethnic group and 73.8 percent indicated that they felt no sense of discrimination from the Canadian students.

Table 5. 6 Discrimination challenges

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean (SD)
I feel I have been discriminated against by Canadian students.	224 (31.5%)	301 (42.3%)	135 (19.0%)	51 (7.2%)	2.02 (.890)
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my ethnic group	255 (36.0%)	294 (41.5%)	111 (15.7%)	49 (6.9%)	1.94 (.889)
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my place of birth	245 (34.5%)	323 (45.5%)	100 (14.1%)	42 (5.9%)	1.91 (.846)
I feel I have been discriminated against by my professors	271 (38.1%)	323 (45.4%)	83 (11.7%)	34 (4.8%)	1.83 (.813)
I feel I have been discriminated against by other university staff	271 (38.2%)	330 (46.5%)	74 (10.4%)	35 (4.9%)	1.82 (.807)
I feel I have been discriminated against by other international students	274 (38.6%)	348 (49.1)	65 (9.2%)	22 (3.1%)	1.77 (.741)
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my religious affiliation	310 (43.5%)	325 (45.6%)	49 (6.9%)	28 (3.9%)	1.71 (.761)

Although, most students reported little or no discrimination, a not-insignificant minority reported feeling discriminated against in one way or another, for example a quarter of respondents (26.2 percent) reported having felt discriminated against by Canadian students, whereas others felt discriminated aganst on the basis of their ethnicty (22.6 percent) or place of birth (20 percent).

Discrimination challenges reported in open-ended questions included discrimination due to inability to express oneself well in English, on appearance and during job hiring-perception of more focus on domestic students compared to international students. In terms of academics, some students reported the following discriminatory challenges; ineligibility of international

students to pursue some academic programs and high GPA requirement for international students compared to domestic students (e.g. Engineering).

Table 5. 7 Covid-19 related challenges

Item	Not at all	Not really	Somewhat	Very Much	Mean(SD)
Ability to study and concentrate	59 (8.3%)	103 (14.5%)	279 (39.4%)	268 (37.8%)	3.07 (.924)
Plans to return to my home country	116 (16.4%)	120 (17.0%)	133 (18.8%)	338 (47.8%)	2.98 (1.493)
Understanding lectures and readings	106 (14.9%)	142 (20.0%)	294 (41.4%)	168 (23.7%)	2.74 (.983)
Social gatherings (i.e. churches, parties, student's union meetings)	116 (16.4%)	128 (18.1%)	205 (29.0%)	259 (36.6%)	2.86 (1.088)
Ability to earn money	97 (13.7%)	155 (21.9%)	207 (29.3%)	248 (35.1%)	2.86 (1.049)
Keeping up with course assignments	87 (12.3%)	144 (20.3%)	263 (37.1%)	214 (30.2%)	2.85 (.988)
Ability to locate suitable space to study independently	104 (14.7%)	141 (19.9%)	217 (30.6%)	246 (34.7)	2.85 (1.056)
Writing papers and/or theses	88 (12.4%)	178 (25.1%)	281 (39.6%)	162 (22.8%)	2.73 (.951)
Accessing healthcare services	103 (14.6%)	187 (26.5%)	252 (35.7%)	164 (23.2%)	2.68 (.988)
Ability to pay rent on time	111 (15.7%)	198 (28.0%)	214 (30.3%)	184 (26.0%)	2.67 (1.029)
Ability to pay bills on time	115 (16.2%)	203 (28.7%)	207 (29.2%)	183 (25.8%)	2.65 (1.035)
Ability to buy healthy foods	122 (17.3%)	185 (26.2%)	226 (32.0%)	174 (24.6%)	2.64 (1.034)
Arranging meeting times with my professor or supervisor	112 (15.8%)	193 (27.3%)	238 (33.6%)	165 (23.3%)	2.64 (1.007)
Ability to return to Canada to resume my studies in person	188 (26.9%)	146 (20.9%)	140 (20.0%)	225 (32.2%)	2.58 (1.195)

The emergence of COVID-19 has affected the systems of countries including primary, secondary and post-secondary education. This study also aims to ascertain the social, academic and financial challenges caused by COVID-19 in the lives of international university students at the University of Manitoba (see Table 5.7).

Beginning with academics, three-quarters (77.2 percent) of respondents reported that the pandemic (thus COVID-19) had made it difficult for them to study and concentrate. Two thirds of respondents say that the pandemic restrictions had made it more difficult to keep up with course assignments (67.3 percent), to locate suitable study space (65.3 percent), and to understand lectures and read effectively (65.1 percent). Over half reported increased difficulty writing and completing thesis/research papers on time (58.5 percent), arranging meeting times with their advisor/supervisor (56.9 percent), and returning to Canada to resume their studies in person (52.2 percent).

Financially, just under two thirds of respondents (64.4 percent) showed that the pandemic had affected their ability to make money. Just over half of the respondents indicated that the pandemic had affected their ability to purchase healthy foods (56.6 percent), to pay rent on time (56.3 percent), and to pay bills on time (55.0 percent).

In terms of the effects of the pandemic on the social lives of international students at the University of Manitoba, two-thirds of respondents reported that the pandemic had disrupted their plans to return to their home country (66.6 percent) and their ability to attend social gatherings such as churches, parties, student's union meetings due to the pandemic (65.6 percent). Other pandemic related challenges that were reported by respondents in open-ended questions include delays in student permit extension applications, limited research assistant positions, difficulty in accessing jobs, medical consultation on phone as rather than in person at the university hospital, delays in university academic activities (ethics approval, defence meetings), and higher tuition fees during COVID-19 season.

Table 5.7.1 shows whether respondents felt that pandemic had had an effect on their academic performance (specifically the GPA). Half of the respondents (48.3 percent) reported

that the pandemic had not had any affected on their GPA, 40.4 percent indicated that they felt their GPA decreased, whereas only 11.2 percent felt their GPA had increased, 24.9 percent of respondents did not know whether their GPA had been affected.

Table 5.7. 1 Effects of Covid-19 on GPA

Item	Responses (N)	Percent (%)
No	258	48.3
Yes, it has increased	60	11.2
Yes, it has decreased	216	40.4
Total	534	100.0
Missing	1	
Don't know	177	24.9
Total	178	25.0
Total	712	100.0

Strategies and institutional mechanisms for adjusting

Table 5. 8 Strategies and institutional mechanisms for adjusting

Item	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	Mean(SD)
Staying in touch with family and friends back home	15 (2.1%)	25 (3.5%)	213 (30.2%)	453 (64.2%)	3.56 (.667)
Seeking additional funding opportunities	19 (2.7%)	52 (7.4%)	165 (23.4%)	469 (66.5%)	3.54 (.747)
I am personally motivated to succeed at all costs.	6 (.8%)	48 (6.8%)	263 (37.3%)	389 (55.1%)	3.47 (.661)
Staying in touch with local friends	11 (1.6%)	47 (6.7%)	279 (39.6%)	367 (52.1%)	3.42 (.687)
Engaging in recreational activities (e.g. movies, games, sight seeing etc.	17 (2.4%)	79 (11.2%)	280 (39.7%)	330 (46.7%)	3.31 (.763)
Seeking personal counselling (for stress, depression etc.)	36 (5.1%)	99 (14.0%)	229 (32.4%)	343 (48.5%)	3.24 (.878)
Seeking academic guidance (writing groups, academic workshops, writing tutor etc.)	31 (4.4%)	100 (14.1%)	265 (37.5%)	311 (44.0%)	3.21 (.845)
Interaction/engagement with specific student group or association	31 (4.4%)	155 (22.0%)	299 (42.4%)	220 (31.2%)	3.00 (.842)
Partaking in community events(e.g. festivals, student union organisations, parties etc.)	41 (5.8%)	158 (22.4%)	271 (38.4%)	236 (33.4%)	2.99 (.890)

Another main question underlying this study is find out the strategies or measures employed by international students at the University of Manitoba to overcome the challenges they encounter. As presented in Table 5.8, the four most popular strategies were; staying in touch with family and friends back home (94.4 percent), being personally motivated to succeed at all cost (92.4 percent),staying in touch with local friends (91.7 percent) and seeking additional funding opportunities (89.9 percent).

Other important strategies included; engaging in recreational activities (86.4 percent), seeking academic guidance (81.5 percent), seeking personal counselling (80.9 percent), interaction/engagement with specific student group or association (73.6 percent), and partaking in community events (71.8 percent). Additional coping strategies reported in open-ended questions were: taking vacation and voluntary assistance of other students to access jobs.

Table 5. 9 Institutional supports

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean(SD)
The International Centre has been supporting international students by organizing career related workshops	54 (7.7%)	145 (20.7%)	384 (54.9%)	117 (16.7%)	2.81 (.804)
University of Manitoba has been supporting international students to overcome difficulties in their academics	66 (9.4%)	173 (24.6%)	353 (50.1%)	112 (15.9%)	2.73 (.840)
University of Manitoba has been supporting international students to integrate into the Canadian society after arrival.	66 (9.4%)	189 (26.9%)	354 (50.4%)	93 (13.2%)	2.68 (.821)
The International Centre has been providing international students with adequate information on immigration and settlement policies.	75 (10.7%)	186 (26.6%)	334 (47.8%)	104 (14.9%)	2.67 (.857)
University of Manitoba has been supporting international students financially during the COVID-19 pandemic	215 (30.8%)	214 (30.7%)	195 (28.0%)	73 (10.5%)	2.18 (.988)

In addition to the coping strategies used by international students at University of Manitoba to adjust and overcome their challenges while studying, a question was asked to determine perceptions of how supportive the University of Manitoba had been to international students as they navigate through their socio-cultural, academics and financial lives. Responses were somewhat mixed (see Table 5.9). In terms of academics, most of the international students' respondents indicated that University of Manitoba has supported them in overcoming their academic challenges (66.0 percent), and had helped them to integrate well into the Canadian society since their arrival (63.6 percent). However, when it came to financial support due to COVID-19, less than half (38.5 percent) felt that the university had been helpful.

The international students' centre is one of the supports at the University of Manitoba designed to assist international students deal with issues such as academics, work and immigration. Concerning work/career related issues, the majority of respondents (71.6 percent) reported that the centre has been of assistance by organizing workshops for international students. When it came to immigration related questions and issues, 62.7 percent felt that the centre has been helpful by providing adequate information on immigration and settlement issues. The above data also shows that although the majority of international students participants reported being relatively satisfied with institutional supports, a sizable minority were not.

Another area of support reported in open-ended questions by participants was health. The University of Manitoba, through the Blue Cross has a universal health coverage for international students, and so international students are able to access free healthcare just as any Manitoba resident with Manitoba Health Card. [i]

Table 5. 8 Other information

Item	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely
Based on my general experiences, how likely is it that I will encourage my friends and relatives to move to Canada to pursue university education	27 (3.8%)	59 (8.3%)	332 (46.8%)	292 (41.1%)
Based on my general experiences, how likely is it that I will recommend University of Manitoba to my friends and relatives	58 (8.2%)	114 (16.1%)	333 (46.9%)	205 (28.9%)

In addition to its main objectives, this study also sought to discover from the respondents whether or not they would recommend Canada and University of Manitoba to others for their university education. It appears that most of the respondents are likely to recommend Canada to others for their university education (87.9 percent), as well as University of Manitoba (76.8 percent) in particular. This shows that most of the international students participants are comfortable with, and like their experiences living in Canada and studying at University of Manitoba.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This study sought to explore and describe:

(1) The factors that motivate international students to pursue University education in Canada and at University of Manitoba, and

(2) the challenges faced by international students at University of Manitoba, Canada.

(3) the supports and strategies used by international students to overcome and/or cope with the challenges they encounter at the University of Manitoba

Motives

Motivational factors underlying the pursuit of university education in other countries have been well-documented. Participant responses revealed a number of reasons and beliefs that influenced the participating international students to pursue university education in Canada, and at University of Manitoba. With regards to the decision to study in Canada, the most important reasons and/or beliefs were; the availability of employment opportunities after graduation, the safety of Canada as a country, immigration and settlement policies for international students, a first step towards an international career, there is less discrimination in Canada, the opportunity to learn a new culture and gain new experiences, establishing international friendship relationships, parents', lecturers' and peers' encouragement, the prestige attached to studying in Canada, Canada has a good health care policy for international students.

Regarding the decision of international students to study at University of Manitoba, the most significant reasons and/or beliefs reported by respondents were; availability of funding opportunities for students, the fees at University of Manitoba are low as compared to other universities, University of Manitoba has relevant academic resources, University of Manitoba's

reputation, availability of programs that do not exist in students' home countries, no discrimination at University of Manitoba, encouragement from parents and lecturers back home.

These reasons for wanting to study in Canada (and at University of Manitoba) are largely consistent with previous research on the main motivations of international students for pursuing university education abroad (Mandal, 2009; Chen, 2007, Bamber, 2014; Miller, 2012; Oliveira & Soares, 2016). Previous studies conducted in Canada (Mandal, 2009; Chen, 2007) showed that majority of international students who migrated to pursue university education in Canada came as a result of; available financial opportunities, safe environment, quality of education , tuition fees, availability of programs, employment opportunities, economic stability and immigration and settlement policies.

Research conducted in UK, USA and Portugal respectively on international students migration indicated that; a step towards international career, reputation of international education, availability of employment opportunities, establish international relationships, institutional reputation and quality of education were the major relevant factors that influenced the participated international students to move to these countries for university education (Bamber, 2014; Miller, 2012; Oliveira & Soares, 2016).

Some of the less important motivational factors affecting the choice of pursuing university education in Canada and at University of Manitoba included; to escape conflicts and wars in my home country, encouragement from relatives and friends currently enrolled at or graduated from the University of Manitoba, availability of programs that are not available in other universities in Canada, and University of Manitoba being the only university to offer them admission. This finding is somewhat inconsistent with the findings of Kochaniewicz and Das (2015) in Poland, who concluded that social tensions/conflicts in the home country, as well as

encouragement from peers/relatives are significant influences on international students decision to pursue university education in other countries.

Challenges

The challenges international students report facing during their university education in Canada and at University of Manitoba were originally categorized into six categories: language challenges, academic challenges, personal and social level challenges, environmental and cultural challenges, financial challenges and discrimination challenges. These areas had specific statements that were rated using the four-point likert scale of (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) and also there was an open- ended option to find out other challenges of participating international students. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, an additional category pertaining to pandemic-related challenges was added.

The findings of this study show that most common difficulties for sampled international students are in the personal and social, and financial domains. The data corroborates existing research that shows that international students experience personal, social, and financial challenges. (CBIE, 2018; Ozoglu, Gur & Coskun, 2015; Sawir et al., 2007; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Li & Yi, 1997; Mclachlan & Justice, 2009)

In terms of personal and social domain, they reported substantial difficulty with the following issues; stress because of challenges encountered on-campus and off-campus, stress due to being away from family and loved ones back home, difficulty in making friends with the Canadian students (making friends with students from their home country or from other countries were less difficult).

The findings that most international students report more difficulty making friends with Canadian students compared to making friends with students from their home country and other countries is consistent with the findings of a survey conducted by CBIE in 2018. The survey revealed that, most international students show a fear or shyness to have Canadian, American and European students as friends due to cultural differences, misinterpretation, stereotyping, and they are willing to be friends with students from their home country and other non-western countries.

Separation from families, peers and other strong networks back home make most students experience a profound loss of identity shared within these networks, leading to stress and other personal challenges (Garreis, 2000; Hayes & Lin, 1994), and this was indicated by many international students at the University of Manitoba.

The current study also showed that international students at the University of Manitoba felt stressed due to difficulties they encounter both on-campus and off-campus (academic, financial, etc). This is consistent with other studies indicating that foreign students in university education continue to encounter personal problems such as stress due to some challenges they encounter in their relationships, finances, academics, etc. (Ozoglu, Gur & Coskun, 2015; Sawir et al., 2007). Academic challenges and pressure may also exacerbate students' feelings of stress (Mclachlan & Justice, 2009).

Financially, sampled international students indicated the following challenges as most common (reported by between half to three-quarters of those sampled); limited funding opportunities for international students as compared to Canadian students, difficulty in payment of tuition fees and rent, and earning constraints due to the 20 hours part-time work policy for international students in Canada.

Financial difficulties pose one of the greatest challenges to international students (Li & Kaye, 1998; Sherry et al., 2010). Some noted financial difficulties include; tuition fees and increments, lack or loss of funding opportunities, and accommodation costs (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Li & Yi, 1997). These were mainly identified using the four-point likert scale as tuition fees payments, limited hours of work for international students and lack of funding opportunities for international students in the current study.

Restrictions on international students' study permits in Canada prevent them working more than 20 hours during school session, but they are allowed 20 hours during scheduled breaks (IRCC, 2020). Failure to comply with these requirements leads to termination of student's status, refusal of post-graduate work permit or permanent residence applications (IRCC, 2020). The majority of the international students indicated that this policy is a challenge to them. They are not able to work more hours if they need to, and because almost all jobs in Canada pay hourly, few hours mean limited income. Consequently, they face difficulty in paying for their fees, bills, etc.

In this study, the majority of the respondents did not indicate challenges with language, academics, the environment and culture, or discrimination. Although, these findings do not extensively support previous research that have revealed that most international students have been facing language, academics, environmental and cultural, and discrimination challenges during university education in other countries (Andrade, 2006; Townsend & Poh, 2008; Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015; Townsend & Poh, 2008; Evivie, 2009; Constantine et al., 2005; Lee, 2007) there was a minority of students who indicated problems in some areas (using the four-point likert scale of (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree and the open-ended option). The finding that some international students reported such difficulties supports previous research (Andrade, 2006; Townsend & Poh, 2008; Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015; Townsend & Poh, 2008;

Evivie, 2009; Constantine et al., 2005; Lee, 2007) that shows that some international students continuously face problems related to language, academics, the environment and culture, or discrimination.

Some of the participants using the open-ended option to report other challenges they have been facing with (language, academics, the environment and culture or discrimination) reveals that there were some specific individual challenges in these areas that were not captured in the likert-scale items in the survey. Although, this is an anonymous study but participants may feel not comfortable indicating a difficulty. One of the volunteers for the pilot study mentioned about feeling uncomfortable to indicate a challenge in certain areas and this can result in a participant skipping questions or reporting no challenge. These may explain why majority of the respondents did not show challenges with (language, academics, the environment and culture or discrimination).

Regarding challenges with languages, about a third reported difficulty presenting orally in class due to the fear of making of making grammatical mistakes, and not being able to verbally communicate with others confidently in English. This data supports existing research that shows that international students face English communication challenges (Ozoglu, Gur, & Ipek, 2015; Rose & McClafferty, 2001).

In terms of academics, about a quarter of international students indicated the following difficulties—not actively engaging in class presentations and discussions, having lecturers that do not respond well to their academic concerns, and not being accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada. These findings are consistent with the existing literature. Some international students due to fear of shyness among others do not really engage in collegial discussions and presentations (Majid & Wey, 2009) and also some may find it difficult adjusting

to the new methods of teaching which are very different from what they are used to (Myburgh et al., 2016)

The main environmental and cultural challenges identified were, in order of frequency, difficulty in accessing traditional foodstuffs, difficulty obtaining accommodations, and difficulty adapting to local weather conditions. According to Evivie (2009) and Constantine et al. (2005) most international students find it difficult to adjust to the weather conditions in the host country (either from warm to cold, or from cold to warm) and others find it problematic to access their traditional dishes. Constantine and colleagues (2005) further noted that some international students have cultural dietary practices—such as food specific taboos and hence may have to break them and adjust when they are not able to source them anywhere.

Finally, most international students did not report feeling discriminated. Although, this data seems to be less supportive of previous related studies that have shown that foreign students, especially non-western and non-European students are at increased risk to experience discrimination in western countries (Evivie, 2009; Rice & Lee, 2007), there were a minority of international students, about 1 in 5, who did report the experience of discrimination against by Canadian students, or discrimination because of their ethnic group or their place of birth. Although, the frequency may be less than in some countries, the results suggest that discrimination against international students is still an issue in Canada and at the University of Manitoba. Many foreign students continue to face some degree of discrimination and stereotyping due to their place of birth, ethnic group and mostly from the western students or domestic students (Evivie, 2009; Rice & Lee, 2007; Constantine, et al., 2005; Sato & Hodge 2015; Beoku-Betts, 2004).

COVID-19 restrictions

Due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak and its associated challenges for everyone, the current research also explored the social, financial and academic difficulties that international students have being experiencing as a result of the pandemic. This was necessary to make the academic community and the society become aware of the impact of the outbreak in the lives of international students and importantly develop measures to help them overcome/manage such difficulties. As evident in this study, and using the four-point likert scale of (not at all, not really, somewhat and very much), the majority of the international students indicated that the pandemic has had a serious negative effect in their social, academic and financial lives.

Academically, majority of the international students who reported that the pandemic has affected their GPA, reported a decrease in their GPA due the emergence of COVID-19. Some of the identified academic challenges in order of frequency are— difficulty studying and concentrating, understanding lectures and assignment, keeping up with assignments, difficulty in finding study space, trouble arranging a suitable time to meet with academic supervisors etc.

Social difficulties included inability to attend social events such as parties, churches etc., and to return home. Financially, the respondents stated that the pandemic has negatively affected their ability to make money, to pay rent and bills on time, and also to buy healthy food for themselves. Accessing health care was also an issue for some as was the inability to return to Canada to resume studies.

Supports and strategies

Finally, the current study also delved into the coping strategies and supports used by international students. A number of strategies were regarded as important or very important. These were staying in touch with family and friends back home, seeking additional funding

opportunities, being personally motivated to succeed at all cost, staying in touch with local friends, engaging in recreational activities (e.g. movies, games, sight-seeing, etc.), seeking personal counselling (e.g. for stress or depression), seeking academic guidance (writing groups, academic workshops, writing tutor. etc.), interaction/engagement with specific student group or association, and partaking in community events (e.g. festivals, student union organisations, parties). These results are generally consistent with previous research (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015; Myburgh et al., 2006; Evivie, 2009) on the strategies employed by international students.

In terms of institutional supports for international students at the University of Manitoba, the results showed that the majority respondents felt that the university had supported them in their academics, in their integration into Canadian society, in providing them career-related information, and information about immigration and settlement policies. Contrary to this, the majority felt that the university had not been helping them financially during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Agency and Structuration

This study uses Giddens agency and structuration theory to explain the student motives for pursuing university education in Canada at the University of Manitoba, the challenges they encounter as well as the social, personal and institutional factors that affect their university experiences. As applied in this research, structuration theory considers how individual freewill (agency) is both enabled and constrained by social structures and how this relates to understanding migration decisions and experiences. Agency is an important concept in Giddens theory and is defined as the ability of individuals to freely make choices and engage in activities that influence the course of their lives (Giddens, 1984). Some of the reported actions taken by respondents to cope with various challenges included; staying in touch with local friends,

engaging in recreational activities such as (sight-seeing, movies, games, etc.), partaking in community events, seeking counselling and/or academic guidance, and a strong personal commitment to succeed despite the costs.

The theory further recognizes the importance of external systems and/or social forces that might shape or constrain the choices and decision making of individuals. This is known as structure(s) in Giddens perspective. It refers to how systems of rules and resources influence people's capacity to make decisions and choices (Giddens, 1984). Rules may include policies, frameworks, relationships, laws, social norms and the like in the society, where resources include wealth, social capital and skills (Giddens, 1984).

Hence, using this theory to help us understand the current findings with regards to migration decisions and challenges, the participating international students currently studying in Canada, and at the University of Manitoba decided to move from their home country to pursue university education in Canada. The study assumes that these students are rational agents who engaged in some degree of cost-benefit analysis before they migrated to Canada and the University of Manitoba. A number of the perceived benefits to attending university in Canada appear to be structural advantages, relative to studying at home or elsewhere. For example, the perception of available employment opportunities for international students after graduation, of how safe it is to study in Canada, of the friendly immigration and settlement policies, of good health care policy for international students, of available funding opportunities, of University of Manitoba's educational resources. Once students arrive, some of the enabling structures they report included support from the international students' centre on migration and career related issues, as well as local community supports and the like.

Some constraining/challenging structures that were reported by respondents include; higher tuition fees, rules on hours of work for international students (inability to work more than 20 hours during school session), lack or low amount of scholarship opportunities for international students (contrary to perceptions when choosing to come study in Canada at the University of Manitoba), perception of discrimination and cultural misinterpretations from the domestic students (contrary to perceptions before coming here, although it should be noted that a large majority felt this had in fact not been an issue), challenges in obtaining accommodation.

In addition there were a number of structural challenges due to the COVID 19 pandemic such as the border lockdown which prevented international students from going home and/or returning to Canada to continue their studies, restrictions on social gatherings, and additional financial hardships including the ineligibility of international students to access the Canada Emergency student benefit (CESB).

Study limitations

This thesis is not a comprehensive or exhaustive study of international student experiences and accordingly has a number of limitations. The research used a convenience sample drawn from a single university in Canada. Future related studies may focus on more than one university.

Also, this study used a survey methodology to collect data. Although there were open-ended questions provided, it is likely that additional, potentially important, motives, challenges and adjustment strategies were not identified. Qualitative data collection techniques such as interviews or focus groups should be employed in subsequent studies to allow for the possibility of unexpected and novel responses that are not elicited by survey questions. A longitudinal study can also be conducted to acquire detailed information on the experiences (motivations,

challenges and supports) of international students during their studies, for example, interviewing them annually from their first year through final years of study.

Also, although the personal and social level challenge items in this study mentioned stress experienced by international students due to various challenges, no mental health questions were asked. Future research may focus on specific measures of dimensions of mental health such as well-being, depression, anxiety etc.

This study is purely descriptive. It mainly aimed to describe data gathered from international students at University of Manitoba regarding the challenges they encounter while studying. In addition to their challenges, it also sought to discover and describe the factors that influenced their decision to move to Canada for university education, and the University of Manitoba in particular. Furthermore, it sought to identify the coping strategies and mechanisms international students use to manage their challenging situations.

Due to these main objectives, the current research did not conduct bivariate or multivariate analyses and hence variations in responses of international students experiences relative to racialized status, level of study, year of arrival, current GPA at University of Manitoba, level of studies, place of stay among others were not examined. The study did look for substantial gender variations in responses of the participants, but there was little gender difference evident in responses to items; almost no gender difference exceeded 5%.

Future studies in this area could pursue further intersectional analyses and find out if there will be any significant differences among international students experiences in terms of key demographic variables in addition to gender such as, level of study, length of time in host country, country of origin, marital status, religious status, and age. Additionally, future research

could consider specific response options in terms of challenges and discrimination due to racialization as reported in other research indicating non-European and non-western international students experience more discrimination related challenges (Evivie, 2009; Rice & Lee, 2007).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has presented the challenging situations experienced by international students during studies in Canada, and at University of Manitoba. In addition, it has revealed their motivations to decide to pursue university education in Canada and at University of Manitoba, and the personal, social and institutional support mechanisms available to them to overcome the varied challenges they encounter.

Although the study was conducted at a single university, the results are likely relevant to many universities in Canada. International students remain significant contributors to a host country's economy as workers (part-time employees) and consumers (tuition fees, rent and other expenditures). If universities and countries aim to recruit more international students as a source of economic growth, then they have to become aware of what factors and incentives to attract international students.

In addition to attracting students, universities and governments that host international students need to retain those students and consequently attract additional international students. The current findings suggest that a key to retaining international students is to help them overcome the challenges they encounter while here. There could be personal means that international students employ to overcome their challenges but the host university and government should also do their best to assist them. This will help them become successful in their studies and present the host country and university as a good study destination to the world.

Based on the suggestions of the participating international students in the current survey, the following recommendations are made for University of Manitoba, and can be utilized by other universities in Canada:

- The host university should offer regular workshops on adapting to the Canadian culture
- Make available more funding opportunities for international students
- Reduce tuition fees for international students
- Improve counselling services
- Increase events for only international students
- Improve workshops of the international students centre on immigration and settlement policies with an immigration official
- Stipends for research- based programs
- Increase Teaching Assistant pay
- Improve international students' ability to access loans
- Changes in the timing for exams/quizzes-due to different time zones (for students who are back home)
- Quiz/exam questions wording should be clear and easy to understand.
- Need of translating services during exams
- University staff to welcome and assist new international students to Canada/Winnipeg.
- More funding opportunities from University of Manitoba to overcome COVID-19 financial related challenges
- Access to national scholarship opportunities such as SSHRC
- Reduce charges on books
- Restoring the provincial Manitoba health insurance for international students.
- Reduce U-Pass fees

- Permit international students to work increased hours (>20 hours)
- International students ability to access some of the COVID-19 funding programs in Canada
- Policies and programs to effectively address racism

REFERENCES

Abdul Bari, A. K., (2019). Barriers to Foreign Credential Recognition, Access to Regulated Professions and Successful Integration into the Canadian Labour Market. University of Manitoba

Advisory Panel on Canada's International Education Strategy. (2012). *International* education: A key driver of Canada's future prosperity. Retrieved from http://www. international.gc.ca/education/assets/pdfs/ies_report_rapport_sei-eng.pdf

Altbach, P. (2002). Knowledge and education as international commodities. *International higher education*(28).

Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of studies in international education*, 290-305.

Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International education*, *5*(2), 131-154.

Archer, M. (1996). Social integration and system integration: developing the distinction. *Sociology*, *30*(4), 679-699.

Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, AUCC (2011): Trends in Education. Retrieved from: https://www.univcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/trends-vol1-enrollment-june-2011.pdf

Bakewell, O. (2010). Some reflections on structure and agency in migration theory. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *36*(10), 1689-1708.

Bamber, M. (2014). What motivates Chinese women to study in the UK and how do they perceive their experience?. *Higher Education*, *68*(1), 47-68.

Branco Oliveira, D., & Soares, A. M. (2016). Studying abroad: Developing a model for the decision process of international students. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *38*(2), 126-139.

Beoku-Betts, J. (2004). African women pursuing graduate studies in the sciences: Racism, gender bias, and third world marginality. *NWSA journal*, 116-135.

Brown, L., & Jones, I. (2013). Encounters with racism and the international student experience. *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(7), 1004-1019.

Calder, M. J., Richter, S., Mao, Y., Kovacs Burns, K., Mogale, R. S., & Danko, M. (2016). International Students Attending Canadian Universities: Their Experiences with Housing, Finances, and Other Issues. *Canadian Journal of higher education*, *46*(2), 92-110.

Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2018. International Students in Canada. Retrieved fromhttps://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/International-Students-in-Canada-ENG.pdf

Charles-Toussaint, G. C., & Crowson, H. M. (2010). Prejudice against international students: The role of threat perceptions and authoritarian dispositions in US students. *The Journal of psychology*, *144*(5), 413-428.

Cantwell, B., Luca, S. G., & Lee, J. J. (2009). Exploring the orientations of international students in Mexico: Differences by region of origin. *Higher Education*, *57*(3), 335-354.

Cheng, L., Myles, J., & Curtis, A. (2004). Targeting language support for non-native English-speaking graduate students at a Canadian University. *TESL Canada Journal*, 50-71.

Chen, T. M., & Barnett, G. A. (2000). Research on international student flows from a macro perspective: A network analysis of 1985, 1989 and 1995. *Higher education*, *39*(4), 435-453.

Chirkov, V., Vansteenkiste, M., Tao, R., & Lynch, M. (2000). The role of self-determined motivation and goals for study abroad in the adaptation of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *31*(2), 199-222.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2007) *Facts and Figures 2006: Immigration* Overview - Permanent and Temporary Residents, Minster of Public Works and Government Services: Ottawa.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2009) "Studying in Canada: Study

Permit" Accessed online at http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/study.asp, dated September 10, 2009

Collins, F. L., Sidhu, R., Lewis, N., & Yeoh, B. S. (2014). Mobility and desire: International students and Asian regionalism in aspirational Singapore. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, *35*(5), 661-676.

Cornuel, E. (2007). Challenges facing business schools in the future. *Journal of Management Development*, *26*(1), 87-92.

Constantine, M. G., Kindaichi, M., Okazaki, S., Gainor, K. A., & Baden, A. L. (2005). A qualitative investigation of the cultural adjustment experiences of Asian international college women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *11*(2), 162.

Das, S., & Kochaniewicz, A. (2015). Non-EU students' potential challenges in Poland: the case of the City of Poznan. *Trends Journal of Sciences Research*, *2*(4), 117-120.

David, P. J. C. C. P., Cloke, P. J., Philo, C., & Sadler, M. D. (1991). Approaching Human Geography: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Debates. SAGE

De Wit, H. (2011). Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. *Internationalisation of universities in the network society*, *8*(2).

Doreleyers A, Choi. Y, and Frenette . M. (2020). International Students Enrollment in Post-Secondary Education Prior to Covid-19. Statistics Canada. *Economic Insights*

Edgerton, J. D., Roberts, L.W., & von Below, S. (2012). "Education and quality of life." In Kenneth C. Land, Alex C. Michalos, & M. Joseph Sirgy (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research*, (pp.265-296). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Publishers.

Evivie, L. G. (2009). Challenges faced by African international students at a metropolitan research University: A phenomenological case study. .

Fox, H. (1994). *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana

Gardner, H. (2004). *Changing Minds.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press).

Gates, R. M. (2004). International Relations.

Gareis, E. (2000). Rhetoric and intercultural friendship formation. International and intercultural communication annual: Rhetoric in intercultural contexts, 22, 91-117.

Giddens, A. (1976), New Rules of Sociological Method. London: Hutchinson.

Giddens, A. (1979), Central Problems of Social Theory.London: Macmillan.

Giddens, A. (1984), The Constitution of Society. Cambridge: Polity. Greatbatch, D.

Gregory, D. (1994). *Geographical imaginations* (No. DEMO-BOOK-2018-004). Blackwell.

Gregson, N. (1989). On the Irrelevance of structuration theory to empirical research. *Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics*, 235-248.

Harman, G. (2003). International PhD students in Australian universities: Financial support, course experience and career plans. *International Journal of Educational Development, 23*(3), 339-351.

Hayes, R. L., & Lin, H. R. (1994). Coming to America: Developing social support systems for international students. *Journal of Multicultural counseling and Development*, *22*(1), 7-16.

Heller, D. E. (2011). The states and public higher education policy: Affordability, access, and accountability. United States of America: John Hopkins University Press.

Immigriation, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC (2020). Working on and off campus as an international student.

ICEF (2018): https://monitor.icef.com/2018/02/new-study-forecasts-slowing-growth-in-international-student-mobility/. Accessed on February 12, 2020

Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA (2000): Overview of Higher education. Retrieved from: https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/IFIC_and_JBICI Studies/english/.../higher_02.pdf

Jones, M. R., & Karsten, H. (2008). Giddens's structuration theory and information systems research. *MIS quarterly*, *32*(1), 127-157.

Jon, J. E., Lee, J. J., & Byun, K. (2014). The emergence of a regional hub: Comparing international student choices and experiences in South Korea. *Higher Education, 67*(5), 691-710.

Kasravi, J. (2009). Factors influencing the decision to study abroad for students of color: moving beyond the barriers.

Kegel K (2009) Homesickness in international college students

Khawaja, N. G., & Stallman, H. M. (2011). Understanding the coping strategies of international students: A qualitative approach. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, *21*(2), 203-224.

Kim, A., & Kwak, M. J. (2019). Outward and Upward Mobilities: International Students in Canada, Their Families, and Structuring Institutions. University of Toronto Press.

Kritz, M. M. (2015). International student mobility and tertiary education capacity in Africa. *International Migration*, *53*(1), 29-49.

Lee, J. J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher education*, *53*(3), 381-409.

Lee, J. J. (2010). International students' experiences and attitudes at a US host institution: Self-reports and future recommendations. *Journal of Research in International Education*, *9*(1), 66-84.

Li, R. Y., & Kaye, M. (1998). Understanding overseas students' concerns and problems. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *20*(1), 41-50.

Liu, X. (2015). The Challenges and Opportunities for Chinese Overseas Postgraduates in English Speaking Universities. *Higher Education Studies*, *5*(3), 45-57.

Lin, J. C. G., & Yi, J. K. (1997). Asian international students' adjustment: Issues and program suggestions. *College student journal*.

Luzio-Lockett, A. (1998). The squeezing effect: The cross-cultural experience of international students. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, *26*(2), 209-223.

Majid, S., & Wey, S. M. (2009). Perceptions and knowledge sharing practices of graduate students in Singapore. *International Journal of Knowledge Management (IJKM)*, *5*(2), 21-32.

Mandal, S. (2009). Settlement Intentions of Post-Secondary. University of Manitoba.

Mazzarol, T. (1998). Critical success factors for international education marketing. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *12*(4), 163-175.

Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. N. (2002). "Push-pull" factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *16*(2), 82-90.

Mazzarol, T., Norman Soutar, G., & Sim Yaw Seng, M. (2003). The third wave: Future trends in international education. *International Journal of Educational Management, 17*(3), 90-99.

Mclachlan, D. A., & Justice, J. (2009). A grounded theory of international student well-being. *Journal of Theory Construction & Testing*, *13*(1).

McMahon, M. E. (1992). Higher education in a world market. *Higher education, 24*(4), 465-482.

Miller, R. S. (2012). Understanding the motivation of Vietnamese international students and their higher education experiences in the United States. University of North Texas.

Milian, M., Birnbaum, M., Cardona, B., & Nicholson, B. (2015). Personal and professional challenges and benefits of studying abroad. *Journal of International Education and Leadership*, *5*(1)

Mpinganjira, M. (2009). Comparative analysis of factors influencing the decision to study abroad. *African Journal of Business Management, 3*(8), 358-365.

Murgatroyd, L. (1989). Only half the story: some blinkering effects of'malestream'sociology. *Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics*, 147-161.

Myburgh, C. P. H., Niehaus, L., & Poggenpoel, M. (2002). International Learners'experiences And Coping Mechanisms Within A Culturally Diverse Context. *Education, 123*(1).

Nyland, C., Forbes-Mewett, H., Marginson, S., Ramia, G., Sawir, E., & Smith, S. (2007). nternational Students-A Segregated and Vulnerable Workforce. *18th Annual Conference of ISANA: International Education Association, Adelaide.*

Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical anthropology*, (4), 177-182.

Office of Instiutional analysis (2019). Data and Information. Retrieved from https://umanitoba.ca/admin/oia/students/index.html

Office of Instiutional analysis (2020). Data and Information. Retrieved from https://umanitoba.ca/admin/oia/students/index.html

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development , OECD (2008). *Policy brief Cross-border higher education and development.* Paris: OECD .

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, (2013) *Education at a glance, 2012*. Paris, France: OECD.

Özoğlu, M., Gür, B. S., & Coşkun, İ. (2015). Factors influencing international students' choice to study in Turkey and challenges they experience in Turkey. *Research in Comparative and International Education, 10*(2), 223-237.

Özturgut, O., & Murphy, C. (2009). Literature vs. practice: challenges for international students in the US. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 22*(3), 374-385.

Paltridge, T., Mayson, S., & Schapper, J. (2012). Covering the gap: Social inclusion, international students and the role of local government. *Australian Universities' Review, 54*(2).

Popadiuk, N., & Arthur, N. (2004). Counseling international students in Canadian schools. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, *26*(2), 125-145.

Poyrazli, S., & Lopez, M. D. (2007). An exploratory study of perceived discrimination and homesickness: A comparison of international students and American students. *The Journal of psychology*, *141*(3), 263-280.

Randell, H. (2016). Structure and agency in development-induced forced migration: the case of Brazil's Belo Monte Dam. *Population and environment, 37*(3), 265-287.

Rose, M., & McClafferty, K. A. (2001). A call for the teaching of writing in graduate education. *Educational researcher*, *30*(2), 27-33.

Ross, C., & Mirowsky, J. (2003). Education, social status, and health (social institutions and social change).

Sato, T., & Hodge, S. R. (2015). Academic and social experiences of exchange students from Japan attending an American University. *College Student Journal*, *49*(1), 78-92.

Schram, J. L., & Lauver, P. J. (1988). Alienation in international students. *Journal of college student development*.

Scott, C., Safdar, S., Desai Trilokekar, R., & El Masri, A. (2015). International Students as 'Ideal Immigrants' in Canada: A disconnect between policy makers' assumptions and the lived experiences of international students. *Comparative and International Education/Éducation comparée et internationale*, *43*(3), 5.

Sewell Jr, W. H. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American journal of sociology*, *98*(1), 1-29.

Shabir, G., Safdar, G., & Imran, M. (2014). Higher Education and its Importance for Citizen: a Comparative Analysis of UK and USA. *Higher Education, 25*.

Sherry, M., Thomas, P., & Chui, W. H. (2010). International students: A vulnerable student population. *Higher education, 60*(1), 33-46.

Sjoberg, O., & Tammaru, T. (1999). Transitional statistics: Internal migration and urban growth in post-Soviet Estonia. *Europe-Asia Studies, 51*(5), 821-842.

Skinkle, R., & Embleton, S. (2014). Comparing international student and institutional objectives and institutional objectives: Implications for institutional strategy. *Higher Education Management and Policy, 24*(3), 37-55.

Smith, R. A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2011). A review of the acculturation experiences of international students. *International Journal of intercultural relations, 35*(6), 699-713.

Snoubar, Y., & Celik, G. (2013). Cultural differences of international students in Turkey and problems they experience. . *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 759-766.

Srikatanyoo, N., & Gnoth, J. (2002). Country image and international tertiary education. *Journal of Brand Management, 10*(2), 139-146.

Stark, O., & Lucas, R. E. (1988). Migration, remittances, and the family. *Economic development and cultural change, 36*(3), 465-481.

Statistics Canada. (2020). Canadian universities could lose millions due to Coronavirus. Retrieved from https://globalnews.ca/news/7392195/coronavirus-universities-statistics-canada/

Terui, S. (2012). Second language learners' coping strategy in conversations with native speakers. *Journal of International Students, 2*(2), 168-183.

Todaro, M. P. (1976). Urban job expansion, induced migration and rising unemployment: a formulation and simplified empirical test for LDCs. *Journal of Development Economics, 3*(3), 211-225.

Thompson, J. B. (Eds.). (1989). Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics. Cambridge University Press.

Townsend, P., & Jun Poh, H. (2008). An exploratory study of international students studying and living in a regional area. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 18*(2), 240-263.

Tung, W. C. (2011). Acculturative stress and help-seeking behaviors among international students. *Home Health Care Management & Practice, 23*(5), 383-385.

UNESCO, (2019): Outbound Internationally mobile students by host region.

Wadhwa, R. (2018). International Student Mobility: Theoretical Context and Empirical Evidence From Literature. In *International Student Mobility and Opportunities for Growth in the Global Marketplace* (pp. 15-30). IGI Global.

Weaver, G. R., & Gioia, D. A. (1994). Paradigms lost: incommensurability vs structurationist inquiry. *Organization Studies, 15*(4), 565-589.

Whittington, R. (2010). Giddens, structuration theory and strategy as practice. *Cambridge handbook of strategy as practice*, 109-126.

Wilkins, S., Stephens Balakrishnan, M., & Huisman, J. (2012). Student satisfaction and student perceptions of quality at international branch campuses in the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *34*(5), 543-556.

Wit, H. D., & Knight, J. A. . (1999). Quality and internationalisation in higher education. *Behavioral aspects of the decision to migrate. Papers in Regional.*

Wolfel, R. L. (2005). Migration in the new world order: structuration theory and its contribution to explanations of migration. *Geography online*, *5*(2), 2.

Woodhall, M. (1987). Human capital concepts. In *Economics of education* (pp. 21-24). Pergamon.

Wu, H. P., Garza, E., & Guzman, N. (2015). International student's challenge and adjustment to college. *Education Research International*, *2015*.

Zhou, Y., Jindal-Snape, D., Topping, K., & Todman, J. (2008). Theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation in international students in higher education. *Studies in higher education*, *33*(1), 63-75.

APPENDIX A : SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Are you an international student
Yes
No
If yes, then the main survey appears

If no, then participants are taken to a page with a message;

Thank you for your time but this survey is only for international students at the U of M

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS

1. What is your gender identity?
Male ( )
Female ( )
Non-binary ( )
Other: _____ ( )

2. What year were you born? ……

3. What is your country of birth?……

4. What is your current relationship status?
Single ( )
In a relationship ( )
Common-law or married ( )
Divorced, separated, or recently broken up ( )
Other (please specify): _____

5. (a)Where do you currently live?
Winnipeg ( )
Other ( ) : _____(please specify)

(b) If you live in Winnipeg, do you live:
on campus ( )
off-campus ( )

6. Select the one option that best describes your current living arrangements.
Live alone ( )
Live with roommates ( )
Live with parents or older relatives ( )
Live with partner/spouse ( )

Live with children ( )
Live with partner/spouse and children ( )
Other (please specify): _____

7. In what year did you arrive in Canada for your studies? _____

8. What program are you in at University of Manitoba?

Diploma program ( )

Bachelor's program ( )

Pre-master's program ( )

Professional degree program ( )

Master's program ( )

Doctorate program ( )

Other (please specify)…….

9. Which faculty are you currently enrolled in?
Asper School of Business ( )
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences ( )
Faculty of Architecture ( )
Faculty of Arts ( )
Faculty of Education ( )
Faculty of Engineering ( )
Faculty of Environment, Earth and Resources
Faculty of Graduate studies ( )
Faculty of Health Sciences ( )
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
Faculty of Law ( )
Faculty of Music ( )
Faculty of Science ( )
Faculty of Social Work ( )Other (Please specify)……

10. What is your current GPA?

4.0 to 4.5 ( )

3.5 to 3.9 ( )

3.0 to 3.4 ( )

2.5 to 2.9 ( )

2.0 to 2.4 ( )

1.0 to 1.9 ( )

Don't know ( )

11. Has your GPA been impacted by COVID19?
No ( )
Yes, it has increased ( )
Yes, it has decreased ( )
Don't know ( )

REASONS FOR STUDYING IN CANADA.

Item	Please indicate how important each of the following statements were in your decision to study in Canada	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Very unimportant
1	Immigration and settlement policies for international students.				
2	Availability of employment opportunities after graduation				
3	Parents', lecturers' and peers' encouragement.				
4	Canada is a safe country				
5	There is less discrimination in Canada				
6	The prestige attached to studying in Canada				
7	The opportunity to learn new culture and gain new experiences				
8	Establish international friendship relationships.				
9	A first step towards an international career.				
10	To escape conflicts and wars in my home country				
11	Canada has a good health care policy for international students				

12	Other factor, please specify: _____				
13	Other factor, please specify: _____				

REASONS FOR STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA.

Item	**Please indicate how important each of the following statements were in your decision to study at the <u>University of Manitoba</u>**	**Very important**	**Important**	**Unimportant**	**Very unimportant**
1	Availability of funding opportunities.				
2	Availability of programs that do not exist in my home country.				
3	Availability of programs that are not available in other universities in Canada				
4	University of Manitoba's reputation				
5	University of Manitoba has relevant academic resources				
6	I applied to a lot of schools but only University of Manitoba gave me admission.				
7	The fees at University of Manitoba are low as compared to other universities.				
8	Encouragement from parents and lecturers back home.				
9	Encouragement from relatives and friends currently enrolled at or completed a degree from the University of Manitoba				
10	No discrimination at University of Manitoba				
11	Other factor, please specify: _____				
12	Other factor, please specify: _____				

CHALLENGES INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ENCOUNTER

Language Challenges

Item	Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your experience studying at the University of Manitoba	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
1	I am not able to verbally communicate confidently with others in English.				
2	I am not able to read and understand academic materials in English.				
3	I am not able to present orally in English in class due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes.				
4	I am not able to write assignments and research projects in English.				
5	Other challenge, please specify: _____				
6	Other challenge, please specify: _____				

Academic Challenges

Item	Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your experience studying at the University of Manitoba	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
1	I do not actively engage in class presentations and discussions				
2	Some of my lecturers do not respond well to my academic concerns				
3	I am not able to complete all required assignments and projects				
4	I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada				
5	I am not comfortable working in groups with Canadian students				
6	I am not comfortable working in groups with students from other countries				
7	I am not comfortable working in groups with students from my home country				

8	Other academic challenge, please specify: _____				
9	Other academic challenge, please specify: _____				

Personal and Social Level Challenges

Item	**Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your experiences while studying at the University of Manitoba**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**
1	I feel stressed because I am away from my family and loved ones back home				
2	I feel stressed because of some challenges I face on campus				
3	I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off-campus				
4	I find it difficult to make friends with Canadian students				
5	I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries				
6	I find it difficult to make friends with students from my home country				
7	Other personal/social challenge, please specify: _____				
8	Other personal/social challenge, please specify: _____				

Environmental and Cultural Challenges

Item	**Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your experiences while**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**

	studying at the University of Manitoba				
1	I find it difficult to access my traditional foods and ingredients.				
2	I have not adapted to the weather conditions				
3	I am not familiar with the local bus system				
4	It is difficult to acquire accommodation on campus				
5	It is difficult to acquire accommodation off-campus				
6	I have not adapted to the local social norms and behavior				
7	I have not adapted to the rules and regulations at University of Manitoba				
8	Other environmental and/or cultural challenge:_____				
9	Other environmental and/or cultural challenge:_____				

Financial Challenges

Item	**Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your experiences while studying at the University of Manitoba**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**
1	I find it difficult to pay my tuition fees				
2	I do not have sufficient scholarship opportunities compared to my Canadian peers				
3	I find it difficult to pay my rent				
4	I borrow money from friends and relatives to be able to survive				
5	The 20 hours part time work for international students is a challenge to my finances				
6	Other financial challenge, please specify:_____				

7	Other financial challenge, please specify:_____				

Discrimination Challenges

Item	**Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your experiences while studying at the University of Manitoba**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**
1	I feel I have been discriminated against by my professors				
2	I feel I have been discriminated against by other University staff				
3	I feel I have been discriminated against by Canadian students.				
4	I feel I have been discriminated against by other international students				
5	I feel I have been discriminated against due to my place of birth				
6	I feel I have been discriminated against due to my ethnic group				
7	I feel I have been discriminated against due to my religious affiliation				
8	I feel I have been discriminated against due to my gender				
9	I feel I have been discriminated against due to (other factor, please specify):_____				
10	I feel I have been discriminated against due to (other factor, please specify):_____				

CHALLENGES INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ENCOUNTER DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Item	**Please indicate to what degree you have experienced**	**Very Much**	**Somewhat**	**Not really**	**Not at all**

	challenge(s) in the following areas as a result of COVID19 related disruptions and restrictions				
1	Understanding lectures and readings				
2	Keeping up with course assignments				
3	Ability to study and concentrate				
4	Ability to locate suitable space to study independently				
5	Writing papers and/or theses				
6	Arranging meeting times with my professor or supervisor				
7	Ability to earn money				
8	Ability to pay rent on time				
9	Ability to pay bills on time				
10	Ability to buy healthy foods				
11	Plans to return to my home country				
12	Ability to return to Canada to resume my studies in person				
13	Social gatherings (i.e. churches, parties, student's union meetings)				
14	Accessing healthcare services				
15	Other COVID19-related challenge, please specify: _____				
16	Other COVID19-related challenge, please specify: _____				

STRATEGIES FOR ADJUSTING

Item	**Please indicate how important each of following are to you in overcoming the challenges you experience**	**Very important**	**Important**	**Unimportant**	**Very unimportant**

	while studying at University of Manitoba.				
1	Seeking academic guidance (writing groups, academic workshops, writing tutor etc.)				
2	Additional funding opportunities				
3	Seeking personal counselling (for stress, depression etc.)				
4	Staying in touch with family and friends back home				
5	Staying in touch with local friends				
6	Partaking in community events (e.g. festivals, student union organisations, parties etc.)				
7	Engaging in recreational activities (e.g. movies, games, sight seeing etc.				
8	Interaction/engagement with specific student group or association				
9	I am personally motivated to succeed at all cost.				
10	Other strategy, please specify: _____				
11	Other strategy, please specify: _____				

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS

Item	**Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your experiences while studying at the University of Manitoba**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**

1	University of Manitoba has been supporting international students to overcome difficulties in their academics				
2	University of Manitoba has been supporting international students to integrate into the Canadian society after arrival.				
3	The International Centre has been supporting international students by organizing career related workshops				
4	The International Centre has been providing international students with adequate information on immigration and settlement policies.				
5	University of Manitoba has been supporting international students financially during the COVID-19 pandemic				
6	Other institutional support, please specify:_____				
7	Other institutional support, please specify:_____				

Item	**Please indicate how likely is it that you will recommend Canada, and University of Manitoba to a friend and relative**	**Very Likely**	**Likely**	**Very unlikely**	**Unlikely**
1	Based on my general experiences, how likely is it that I will encourage my friends and				

	relatives to move to Canada to pursue University education?				
2	Based on my general experiences, how likely is it that I will recommend University of Manitoba to my friends and relatives				

8. What other supports do you feel would help international students in their studies at University of Manitoba?

_a)_____

_b)_____

_c)_____

9. Is there anything else you would like the researcher to know?.....

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN MY STUDY!

APPENDIX B : RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear International Student:

My name is Jonathan Worae and I am a Graduate student at the department of Sociology and Criminology. I am conducting an MA thesis on the topic; A Descriptive Survey Study of International Students' Experiences Studying at the University of Manitoba**:** Motivations, Challenges, Coping Strategies and Supports. In this study, international students are invited to participate in an online survey that seeks to find out the experiences of international students studying at the University of Manitoba. Your responses are very significant because they stand a chance to inform policies and frameworks on how to improve the well- being of international students in Canada, and at the University of Manitoba.

Only international students studying at the University of Manitoba who are currently residing in Winnipeg, or have resided in Winnipeg at some point during their studies at U of M, are asked to participate.

The survey is estimated to take 10-15 minutes to complete. It can be done on a laptop, tablet or smart phone. The survey is designed in such a way that your name will not be asked. Your responses will be anonymous and used only for study purposes, aggregated data will be used in my Master's thesis and possibly in academic journal articles. Also, an executive summary of the study will be prepared for the vice-provost office.

Your participation is voluntary and you can choose to withdraw at any time or skip any question you do not want to answer. As the data will be anonymous (your responses cannot be linked to your name) we will not be able to withdraw your data after it has been submitted.

Other information is available on the online survey. The study has been approved by PSREB (Psychology and Sociology Research Ethics Board) at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the **Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 204-474-7122** or at **humanethics@umanitoba.ca.**

The link to this survey if you choose to participate, can be found here:……

If you have questions about this study, kindly contact **Jonathan Worae (principal investigator) on 204-333-6728** or email at **woraej@myumanitoba.ca .** Should you choose to participate and would like to see a summary of the preliminary results of the study, you can also email me at the above address. I will email send out the summary report to those who requested it by the beginning of December, 2020.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Worae, MA candidate
Department of Sociology and Criminology
University of Manitoba

APPENDIX C : INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Project Title: A Descriptive Survey Study of International Students' Experiences Studying at the University of Manitoba**:** Motivations, Challenges, Coping Strategies and Supports.

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Worae, MA candidate

Advisor: Jason Edgerton, PhD.

This informed consent statement, which you should print (link) or save (link) for your records and reference is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. You may contact the

principal researcher by email at **woraej@myumanitoba.ca** or by phone on **204-333-6728.** Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the research

I invite you to fill out a survey that seeks to explore the challenges international students encounter during their University education in Canada. In addition, the study attempts to find out the factors that motivate international students to pursue University education in Canada and at the University of Manitoba, and the support mechanisms available to international students to overcome the challenges they encounter. This study includes only international students at the University of Manitoba.

What is expected of you?

I simply ask you to take part in this survey. It is estimated that the survey will take about 10-15 minutes to be completed. The survey questions can be answered on either a computer or a smart phone.

Anonymity and Potential Risk

All surveys are completely anonymous. I do not collect your name or your student number and cannot connect the survey answers to you. There are no known or anticipated risks to those participating in this research. However, should you experience distress or be in need of additional support services while answering the questions, consider contacting one of the following support units;

- Student Counselling Centre (SCC) at 204-474-8592 during daytime hours
- The 24 hours crisis line (serviced at Klinic Community Health Centre); simply call 786-8686 (toll free 1-888-322-3019).
- The Empower Me **24/7 helpline** at 1-844-741-6389 (counselling support available to U of M students)
- University of Manitoba Student's Union (UMSU) at 204-474-8678 or email them at umsu@umsu.ca
- The International Student's Centre at 204-474-8501 or email them at international@umanitoba.ca
- University of Manitoba International Students Organisation (UMISO) at umiso.org@gmail.com

Confidentiality

Your answers are confidential and will be stored in a secure database and used only for study purposes. The results of this study will be analyzed for academic purpose only-specifically for my thesis and future journal publications. Also, an executive summary of the study will be prepared for the vice-provost office.

Benefits

There are no known benefits directly to you—but it is hoped that the information you provide might help inform policies and frameworks on how to improve the well- being of international students in Canada, and at the University of Manitoba.

Clicking 'I accept' indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher and involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. The University of Manitoba may look at this project's research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the **researcher or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 204-474-7122** or at humanethics@umanitoba.ca. Please print [link] or save [link] a copy of this consent form for your records and reference.

Notice Regarding Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information by the University

Your personal information is being collected under the authority of *The University of Manitoba Act*. The information you provide will be used by the University for the purpose of this research project. Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA). If you have any questions about the collection of your personal information, contact the Access & Privacy Office (tel. 204-474-9462), 233 Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2.

I accept

APPENDIX D : TABLE 2.1 (COUNTRY OF BIRTH OF RESPONDENTS)

Country of birth	Responses (N)	Percent (%)
Albania	1	.1
Azerbaijan	1	.1
Bahamas	1	.1
Bahrain	3	.4
Bangladesh	33	4.7
Botswana	1	.1
Brazil	20	2.8
China	81	11.5
Colombia	6	.8
Côte d'Ivoire	4	.6
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1	.1
Dominica	1	.1
Ecuador	3	.4
Egypt	6	.8
France	1	.1
Gabon	1	.1
Gambia	1	.1
Germany	2	.3
Ghana	19	2.7
Grenada	1	.1
Guyana	1	.1
Hong Kong (S.A.R.)	14	2.0
India	101	14.3
Indonesia	8	1.1
Iran, Islamic Republic of...	23	3.3
Iraq	1	.1
Italy	1	.1
Jamaica	3	.4
Japan	2	.3
Jordan	3	.4
Kazakhstan	2	.3
Kenya	15	2.1
Kuwait	2	.3
Lebanon	2	.3
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1	.1
Malaysia	8	1.1
Mauritius	5	.7
Mexico	2	.3
Mongolia	3	.4
Myanmar	1	.1
Nepal	1	.1
Nigeria	104	14.7
Oman	2	.3
Pakistan	16	2.3
Philippines	5	.7

Poland	1	.1
Portugal	1	.1
Republic of Korea	4	.6
Russian Federation	6	.8
Rwanda	2	.3
Saudi Arabia	6	.8
Senegal	1	.1
Singapore	1	.1
South Africa	2	.3
South Korea	9	1.3
Spain	1	.1
Sri Lanka	10	1.4
Togo	1	.1
Tunisia	1	.1
Turkey	1	.1
Uganda	1	.1
Ukraine	10	1.4
United Arab Emirates	4	.6
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	4	.6
United Republic of Tanzania	10	1.4
United States of America	52	7.4
Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of...	1	.1
Viet Nam	49	6.9
Zambia	3	.4
Zimbabwe	12	1.7
Other	1	.1
Total	707	100.0
Missing	5	.7
Total	712	100.0

ENDNOTES

[i] Effective September, 2018, the Manitoba government cancelled the international student health coverage under the provincial Manitoba Health plan. (University of Manitoba, 2021). Due to this, the University of Manitoba has negotiated for an international student health plan with the Manitoba Blue cross and through this, all registered international students now have access to the same health coverage they had under the Manitoba Health plan. This coverage began since the 2018/2019 academic year. International students pay a small fee for the health plan in addition to

their tuition fees every academic year. (University of Manitoba, 2021). It is mandatory for all international students to get enrolled in the plan unless they have a comparable health coverage in Manitoba which could be from work, covered by the health plan of their spouse etc. (University of Manitoba, 2021).