Reverse Culture Shock: the Challenges of Fitting back into your own Culture

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the readjustment challenges faced by international students from Nigeria who has finished their studies abroad and have returned back to their home culture. Twenty international students from South Eastern Nigeria who returned home from the Western countries were interviewed due to the perceived difficulties they faced while trying to readjust to their own home culture environment. The study was purely qualitative and it was designed as a narrative inquiry. Narrative interviews were conducted among the returnees in the five states of South Eastern Nigeria. Results from the narrative analysis revealed that students who returned to Nigeria after about four years of studying abroad were having problems settling back to their home culture. It was also discovered that the perceived differences between their home culture and the culture that hosted them abroad, led them to experience cognitive schema disequilibrium. The findings also revealed that the returnees were faced with psychological problems due to the alteration in their lifestyle, values and identities by their experiences of the abroad culture. Major among the psychological problems they faced from experiencing structural imbalance were; feeling rejected, perception of behaving abnormal, frustration, identify confusion and being victims of reverse ethnocentrism. The study concluded that the international students who returned back to Nigeria after experiencing the Western cultures were faced with the confusion of reconciling their home cultural values with those of their previous hosts abroad. We recommend and encourage international students abroad to develop a bicultural identity when they are abroad to help them cope with the effect of readjustment and re-adaptation when they return to their home cultures.
Keywords: Reverse, Culture, Shock, South-Eastern Nigeria

INTRODUCTION
The recent centuries have seen an exponential growth in the number of international students travelling from less developed countries to the developed Western countries in pursuit of quality education. While majority of these international students have their acculturation and reacculturation experience documented in the research literature, there are no information on how students from Nigeria cope with readjustment challenges neither are there research on their experiences of reverse culture shock when they return home after studying abroad to the best of our knowledge. However, it is worthy to point out that Nigerian international students are major drivers of the United Kingdom and other Western economies with regards to revenue generation from international students.

When international students travel from their home cultures to other new cultures, they experience changes in their lives and personal conditioning. Montgomery (2010) noted that encountering diversity can be threatening and unsettling and can pose a threat to international students' sense of whom they are. This is referred to as culture shock, because such students are faced with the challenges of learning to use a new currency, obeying new laws, adapting to new weather, meeting people with different orientation and beliefs, eating new food, often learning a new language to be able to communicate, among other peculiar changes (Ward, Bochner and Furham, 2001) which may trigger some high levels of discomfort that may affect the students' studies and sojourn goals.

Returning back from abroad after experiencing culture shock, the students are further faced with the experience of reverse culture shock. These conditions are sometimes underplayed when it actually can be very disturbing for the returnees owing to a shift in their adaptive processes and consciousness. Reverse culture shock is characterized by reassimilation, reacculturation and readjustment to a culture that one belongs to when they return from a different culture they have experienced for a significant period of time (Gaw, 2000). Reverse culture shock as Huff (2001) noted, occur when people experience psychological and psychosomatic effect of readjusting to the primary culture. The alteration in the cultural conditioning of international students from Nigeria who travel overseas to study affects their various levels of functioning. Their social, emotional, psychological and religious functioning are all affected which sometimes makes their home counterparts perceive them as functioning abnormally in relation to the mainstream behavior. Reintegration and reacculturation may become difficult because the sojourners' experience of reverse culture shock may follow the same pattern of adjustment they had while experiencing culture shock in the host culture.

As Gaw (2000) observed, the available empirical literature has not clearly indicated how severe the experience of culture can be a problem neither has there been clarity on whom this problems exist for. Drawing from this, it suggests that reverse culture shock may be affecting the returnees themselves and or also the people in the home culture who interact with these individuals. Either of these is an indication that experiencing culture shock and reverse culture shock has implications for obstructing the wellbeing of some individuals.

The reason why the experience of reverse culture shock can be problematic is because the sojourners sometimes do not expect that reverse culture shock will happen to them as they may be fascinated with the euphoria of going back home. Although Wang (1997) has a view that reverse culture shock experience last only a few months, some sojourners may experience the effect even longer owing to their uniqueness, cultural and personality differences. It is important to note that the disruptions in psychological, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of the returnees may affect their future adaptive experiences. This is because mental and physical wellbeing are partly determined by psychological adjustment.

There are also relational issues that returnees may encounter either with parents, siblings, and friends or romantic relationships they established before they sojourned abroad to study as things have changed due to time and separation from their social bonds. Their relatives and friends may experience invasion shock. Invasion shock as Furnham (2012) wrote occur when visitors in this case the returnee sojourners who have acquired new cultural values from their foreign hosts invade and become invaders by retaining cultural morals they have acquired abroad which frustrates their home cultural individuals making them to experience culture shock even without travelling to any culture. This is the reason why reverse culture shock as pointed out earlier affect both the returnees and the people they meet at home owing to conflict in cultural values that each of them have been exposed to through personal and group contacts.

Reverse culture shock may create intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts and relationship hick ups with severe negative implications. Although cultural intelligence has been linked to a reduction in the negative effects of culture shock and reverse culture shock among international students adaptation (Presbitero, 2016), such knowledge only help us to know how to reduce the effect when the shock has already occurred. Some international students may not be culturally intelligent and competent such that cultural intelligence and cultural sensitivity may be lacking among them. Likewise, the home culture dwellers

may not have the cultural intelligence and sensitivity which could be a major contributor to increased invasion shock and reverse culture shock dilemmas.

Reverse culture shock can be intense such that the sufferers experience severe psychological and social adaption difficulties. Allison, Devis-Berman and Berman (2012) has already identified a sense of isolation as among the negative effects of experiencing reverse culture shock which further lends voice to the importance of uncovering some of the salient challenges that Nigerian international students who return from the Western culture experience as they try to fit back into their original culture.

METHOD
Participants
A total of 20 participants were sampled from the five states that make up the Eastern Nigeria. Four participants were chosen from each of the five states (Ebonyi, Enugu, Anambra, Imo and Abia) through purposive and snowball sapling techniques.

Procedure
The study is a cross-sectional study that utilized the qualitative approach through narrative inquiry. The narrative inquiry approach is a qualitative method of research that is less structural and allows the participants to use stories to make sense of their own life experiences. Only international students who returned from Western countries, who have spent a minimum of 4 years abroad were included in the study. This is because they may have experienced culture shock in the host culture and may have adapted to the new host cultural values. Likewise, only sojourners who have spent less than one year in their home culture since they returned from the Western countries were included in the study. This is further so because they were still readjusting into their home culture and can recount their ongoing experiences of reverse culture shock in more depth.

The researchers made contact with the prospective participants and arranged narrative interview sessions with them in their various states. Oral consent was gotten from the participants and promises of anonymity are kept in this research. The researchers spent at least four days in each state while arranging and collecting the narratives from the narrators. Each narrator was interviewed separately and each narrative session lasted between 2-3 hours. The recorded stories were transcribed and recorded for analysis. The researchers transcribed each narrative interview immediately after the interview to avoid data loss and to familiarize themselves with the data.

Table.1 Participants' description

S/N	NAME	GENDER	AGE	COUNTRY OF STUDY	STATE
1	Gabriel	MALE	34	UK	EBONYI
2	John	MALE	32	UK	EBONYI
3	Grace	FEMALE	33	CANADA	EBONYI
4	Adaeze	FEMALE	28	UK	EBONYI
5	Uma	MALE	32	GERMANY	ABIA
6	Kalu	MALE	40	UK	ABIA
7	Uzoma	FEMALE	31	UK	ABIA
8	Uloaku	FEMALE	29	UK	ABIA
9	Ngozi	FEMALE	28	CANADA	ENUGU
10	Ebele	FEMALE	29	UK	ENUGU
11	Chinyere	FEMALE	33	USA	ENUGU
12	Ejiofor	MALE	30	SCOTLAND	ENUGU
13	Chibuike	MALE	34	UK	IMO
14	Amara	FEMALE	29	USA	IMO
15	Ejike	MALE	34	UK	IMO
16	Adaku	FEMALE	30	UK	IMO
17	Obiora	MALE	31	UK	ANAMBRA
18	Okeke	MALE	32	UKRAINE	ANAMBRA
19	Chinenye	FEMALE	30	FRANCE	ANAMBRA
20	Oluchi	FEMALE	32	FRANCE	ANAMBRA

Note: The names used above are pseudonyms and does not represent the real names of the respondents**.**

DATA ANALYSIS
Narrative data analysis sometimes are directed towards restoring the stories of the participants into a coherent account that evidences the depth of the information collected without altering their meaning to the participants. The narrative data in this study was analyzed firstly as the thematic analysis of the individual information that translated into the cross-thematic analysis of the group narratives from the 20 participants. The main themes that emerged from the analysis of these research texts included; feeling rejected, perception of behaving abnormal, frustration, identity confusion, (which culture should be maintained), and victims of reverse ethnocentrism,

Feeling Rejected: participants in this study storied having a feeling of being rejected by their home cultural individuals because of the values and lifestyle they learnt while living and studying in the Western cultures. This feeling weaved through the narratives of all the participants in the study. Their narratives suggests that their new ways of living which they have acquired while studying abroad conflicts with those of their home cultures and posed a challenge to them as they were readjusting to their home culture. Some of their responses to this are shown in the below vignettes from their stories:
"...I seriously feel that these people reject me because of the way I currently behave which was not me before now though" [Extract from Gabriel's story].

*'...most of my friends no longer come around me because they feel that l am now different from them as some of them keep saying that l have been westernized"[*Extract from Ngozi's story]

"…*they sometimes make me feel like l am not wanted because of my new ways of thinking* [Extract from Kalu's story]

"...when I talk they will say you are trying to be who you are not and before you know it they have started avoiding me"[Extract from Ejike's story]

"...they feel that l am ignoring them sometimes but actually that is not true and when they start having this feeling, they will stay away from me because of whatever they feel I am doing differently" [Extract from Oluchi's story]

Perception of behaving abnormal: the feeling of being perceived as abnormal in their own home culture was a main theme in the stories of the participants. Their narratives revealed that their behaviours were considered abnormal in the face of their home cultural behaviours. The narrators had encounters with their home cultural individuals (family, friends, relatives and others) that made them conclude they were being perceived as behaving abnormal. This feeling was common and the participants felt that it was inappropriate for people in their home culture to feel that way about them. As far they were concerned, their behaviours were normal. Some of the narrative vignettes from their stories that support these responses are shown below:

"*…it is not funny because sometimes for example if l am driving in the streets and l slow down for pedestrians to cross, the people behind me will he honking and looking at me as if l have committed a crime*"[Extract from John's story]

"...i feel shocked since I returned because things about me have changed and these guys don't want to get it. I can't behave like them obviously and that really hurts me because it has affected how I relate with people here. It is a pity we are different now maybe not the way they want it" [Extract from Uzoma's narrative]

"*…I feel sorry for them though, you know people here think I have gone abroad and have started behaving like I was not from here which for me is not ideal. They make you feel like you are not normal but they are*" [Extract from Ebere's narrative]

"*..mennn we are seen as strangers in our state my goodness! Just because I have left some things I feel are not good for me the people think the West has made me different*" [Extract from Amara's story]

"*…also my mother always tell me that I have changed, I cannot longer cope with the stress of the town like I did before I travelled, that I literarily have lost the content in our home values. Well she says that as a joke but I don't see it as such because friends and others outside have this feeling about me as well*" [Extract from Okeke's story]

Frustration: The narrators recounted being frustrated in their home culture since they returned from the Western culture. They had several encounters that made them feel like going back to their previous host culture. They could not have their way as obtainable in their formal host and it really affected their lives in negatives ways. The story of experiencing reverse culture shock as participants in this study narrated was occupied with feelings of being frustrated continuously as this weaved their entire story. See some vignettes below:

"*…this country is annoying, people do things the wrong way and if you try to correct them, they are either rude at you or they make you suffer without succeeding*" [Extract from Grace's story]

"*...there are things I cannot contain anymore, I work in a place where people take things for granted and they care less about how you feel about the whole thing. How can someone not come to work and ask another to write their names that they came? This is frustrating and I am finding it difficult to work here*" [Extract from Uzomma's narrative]

"*…bro, this country can frustrate you to get mad. I found it difficult to accept the way of life here as normal. Nobody cares about how the next person feels and I mean it is totally frustrating to say the least*" [Extract from Chinyere's narrative]

"*…it is crazy to be honest and there is no courtesy or emotional intelligence among our people. The want their way and if stand in their way they will crush you. What kind of behaviour is that? You can't do this is England, we are barbaric here I must tell you. It is difficult to live here I just can't stand this anymore. I am already making plans to go back to England*" [Extract from Ejike's narrative]

"*…what baffles me is that you still find people telling me that this way of life is normal in Nigeria. I cannot comprehend how what is not good should be celebrated. It makes me mad because each time I go to a shop or to fuel my car and shunting is allowed very easily, it shakes me. I have always shouted and then someone will whisper to me that this is Nigeria. I have been emotionally tormented severally because that is just not normal*" [Extract from Chinenye's story]

Identity confusion: while the narrators were encountering reverse culture shock in their home cultures, they had feelings that they don't understand themselves anymore. They had reasons to ask themselves if they were still the same persons. Their stories show that there is a common theme of identity confusions which has bedeviled them as they tried to readjust to their home cultural values. They sometimes doubted themselves when they engaged in some activities and it affected their thought processes. Evidence of this is shown in some of the vignettes below:

"*...it is so bad that sometimes I just ask myself if I really know what I am doing. Sometimes I feel that there is some confusion somewhere and I find myself thinking about it a lot*" [Extract from Adaeze's narrative]

"*...I worry for my people though because it may be that that it is survival or maybe just a way of life. I sometimes find myself doing the same thing they do that I condemn which is really sad but it is just like you behave in a way they think it is bad, you want to behave in the other way you feel bad as well*" [Extract from Uloaku's story]

"*...Adjusting to this place is really difficult because you don't know what to do most times to satisfy your own conscience without displeasing people around you. My experience since I retuned has been one of not wanting to be seen as being pompus and also not trying to be like the people I left for a better future*" [Extract from Ejiofor's story]

"*...I have just seen within this few months I stayed here in Nigeria that there is a problem with our people. They are difficult to please and the trouble there is that if you don't please them you will become an enemy. I don't want to please them and do the wrong thing but I don't want to be their enemy either because they will frustrate you beyond thought. It's been a dilemmatic situation trying to settle back here*" [Extract from Adaku's story]

"*…coming back home has been good but the other side of the coin is just full of confusion. I know I can decide to let them have their way always but then I feel terrible when that happens. It's like the devil and the deep sea. Where do we go to? I am concerned because this people can make one forget who he is and where he has come from but I guess this is our home so let's try and do our best*" [Extract from Oluchi's story]

Victims of reverse ethnocentrism: Ethnocentrisms occur when people try to insinuate that their own home cultural values are more superior to those of the others. In this study, the participants storied what suggested that they had used the Western culture that hosted them abroad to compare their home culture

with the former being considered better than their own home cultural values. This theme was common among the narrators as they continually condemned their home culture in favor of the Western cultures where they have studied. One would expect the reverse to be the case rather their previous host cultural values were seen as the best way to live. This is what we related to reverse ethnocentrism. See some vignettes from their stories below:

"...so, Canada is far better than this place because our culture is so selfish and one is trying to adjust to it all over again" [Extract from Grace's narrative].

"…*I know that this is my original culture but they way things are done here I prefer to be in UK than here. I have seen it all this few months*" [Extract from Kalu's narrative]

"...ok tell me can I compare here with abroad? No because if I have my way I will just run back to where I am coming from honestly. People behave like animals here and it not obtainable over there" [Extract from Chinyere's narrative]

"...it has not been easy since I returned home, if I had known I would have stayed back. I am not finding it funny here especially the way people behave like they don't have conscience. There is a difference between abroad and Nigeria and I feel there is no way I can stay here for long" [Extract from Ejike's narrative]

"…*if you talk they will say you are a mere woman and should not talk when men are talking. It pains me because you can't try that nonsense in France. I have always said that our culture is too rigid and studying in France has even made it more open to me"* [Extract from Oluchi's narrative]

RESULT
The findings from the narrative analysis of the stories gathered in this study have shown that international students from South Eastern Nigeria who return home after studying abroad encounter difficulty of readjustment into their original home culture. This shows they were experiencing reverse culture shock. They encountered the following problems as experiences of reverse culture shock; feeling rejected, perceptions of being abnormal, feeling of frustration, identify confusion and being victims of reverse ethnocentrism. These experiences made their adjustment to their original home culture difficult. The difficulties they encountered while readjusting into their home culture was because of the manner they perceived people in their home culture and the way the people in their home culture perceived them. This clash in interest and cultural differences from their previous host and their home culture affected their relationship with people and their adjustment trajectories.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The purpose of this study is to explore if there are elements of reverse culture shock that are experienced by Nigerian International Students who returned from Western Countries after overseas studies and how their readjustment experiences affected their lives. Narrative interviews and narrative analysis exposed some salient difficulties the participants faced in their home culture as they experienced reverse culture shock. Their experience of overseas culture affected their perceptions of their original home culture which led to cycles of problems in their readjustment journey. There were mental imbalances due to previous knowledge of the host cultural environment which led them to experience cognitive schema disequilibrium of events.
Reverse culture shock experience is a malady that internationals students will have to surmount to be able to interact appropriately with their previous relationships and contacts. It comes with severe mental and psychical exhaustion as findings of this study have shown. Research by Gaw (2000) found in an American college students experience of reverse culture shock that those who experienced high reverse culture shock, more likely reported personal adjustment problems. Personal adjustment problem

characterized the life experiences of the participants in this study as they used personal life challenges in readjustment to make sense of their life experiences in their home culture.

CONCLUSION
The result has shown that there is evidence of reverse culture shock in the experiences of Nigerian international students who returned to their home culture after studying in Western cultural environment. We conclude that the devastating experiences of reverse culture shock were due to the perceived differences between their home culture and the Western culture that hosted them during their time of study abroad. The experience of reverse culture shock can expose individuals to witness reverse ethnocentrism. Thus, the significant difficulties faced by the participants as they readjusted to their home culture resulted in a change in attitude and behaviors of these individual leading them to perceive some of the cultural practices in their home culture as maladaptive. Both the returnees and the people they met at home were bedeviled with relational hick ups and interaction difficulties. Invasion shock and reverse culture shock were experienced simultaneously and they posed a severe challenge in the adaptation and readjustment experiences of these individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS
We encourage international students abroad to develop a bicultural identity when they are abroad such that when they return to their home cultures, it will mediate the effect of the challenges of reverse culture shock. Maintaining such bicultural identity will help to develop their personality towards preserving their own culture while acknowledging the host cultural values for personal harmony.

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