



## From university to host city: A critical literature review of drivers of graduate retention in campus cities

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### ABSTRACT

Graduate retention practices have garnered the attention of scholars and policymakers as a key factor in the economic success of university cities in both developed and developing countries. This study was guided by human capital theory, regional development theory and social capital theory. The study synthesises a critical literature review of drivers of graduates' retention in host cities. The study utilised several academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and AJOL, to encompass perspectives from both developed and developing countries. The inclusion criteria comprised empirical studies examining graduate retention or migration in both developed and developing contexts; research exploring push–pull factors, labour market integration, or regional disparities; studies employing quantitative, mixed-methods approaches, or qualitative methods; and reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and reputable working papers. Additionally, the exclusion criteria included studies that solely focus on articles lacking empirical data or theoretical analyses relevant to graduate retention, primary or secondary education, and non-English publications. The study findings found graduates' retention practices differ between developed and developing countries. Drivers for graduates in developed countries to stay in host cities, such as employment opportunities, regional economic disparities, policy and institutional drivers and urban concentration and metropolitan pull, vary with those in developing countries, such as structural economic conditions, labour market opportunities and urban “pull” factors and regional inequalities and social networks context. Therefore, developing countries' universities should utilise social and economic opportunities, as well as the political environment, to enable youth to remain in host cities and capitalise on these opportunities. Additionally, governments should enhance and support infrastructure, such as technology parks, industrial hubs, and entrepreneurial programs in rural areas to reduce regional disparities in human capital and promote more stable economic growth.

**Keywords:** Graduate Retention, Higher Education, Host Cities, Urban Settlement

### I. INTRODUCTION

Graduate retention practices have attracted the attention of scholars and policymakers because they are closely linked to both higher education outcomes and regional development strategies, as well as a key to the economic success of university cities in both developed and developing countries. Graduates often face the choice of staying in the familiar place where they studied, returning home, or pursuing the much less specific prospect of moving to a new location for work (Brophy, 2022). Research shows that retention is generally higher in metropolitan centres with strong labour markets offering diverse job opportunities, while graduates are more likely to leave when their place of study is peripheral or less economically dynamic (Imeraj et al., 2018; Rokita-Poskart, 2021; Sangmen, 2024). To address these challenges, universities in developed countries have used combined approaches that combine career services, academic support, and entrepreneurship incubation to encourage graduates to remain in their host cities (Soth, 2025). Strategic initiatives such as post-graduation training schemes, skill-focused pathways, and work-study programs for international graduates provide employment opportunities while aligning graduate skills with labour market needs. These institutional practices are reinforced by data-driven decision-making and regional partnerships that link higher education institutions with employers and innovation hubs, thereby embedding graduate retention within broader strategies of economic competitiveness and urban development (Ruffalo Noel Levitz [RNL], 2023).

Retention practices are more constrained by systemic challenges but are evolving through targeted reforms in developing countries. Institutions in South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya have begun implementing rural pipeline programs, community-based learning initiatives, and curriculum reforms to enhance graduate employability (Atobatele et al., 2024). These practices often include partnerships with entrepreneurship training, soft skills development and local industries to prepare graduates for regional labour markets. However, funding gaps, policy fragmentation and limited



infrastructure continue to hinder the sustainability and scalability of these efforts (Blakcori, 2019). In Tanzania, graduate retention practices are still developing, with universities facing challenges related to industry engagement, curriculum relevance, and regional development. Tanzanian universities need to regularly review curricula, strengthen university-industry linkages, and align academic programmes with national development priorities (Mgaiwa, 2021).

Retaining graduates in their host cities is essential for both regional development and higher education, as it transforms educational investment into local and long-term advantages. Graduates are key sources of human capital and knowledge that support the formation of firms, innovation and productivity; cities that successfully enable their graduates to remain in cities, enjoy knowledge spillovers and stronger innovation outcomes (Pasquinelli, 2018). When graduates remain in host cities, it aligns educational effects with meeting employer needs, fosters place-based strategies and inclusive growth, and stimulates broader participation in high-quality jobs (OECD, 2025; OECD, 2023). Therefore, the main question is: what are the drivers for graduates staying or leaving host cities, and how do these factors differ between developed and developing countries?

Building on this context, the review focuses on synthesising empirical and theoretical evidence on graduate retention and mobility, with a focus on both developed countries and African contexts. Therefore, the review is guided by two primary objectives: identifying and synthesising patterns in graduate retention across developed and developing countries; and examining the structural, social, and individual drivers influencing graduates' decisions to remain in or leave host cities. This study is important because it guides regional economic growth, improve human capital development, and strengthen the role of higher education institutions in local labour markets. It fills key gaps in existing research, such as the underexplored nature of push-pull factors, the limited empirical evidence from developing countries especially in Africa, and the lack of integrated research approaches such as longitudinal studies and mixed-methods. The critical review offers a more detailed understanding of graduate retention. It also provides clear directions for future research to better understand what influences graduate decisions on staying or leaving in cities where they studied, especially in African settings. Importantly, the study contributes to higher education professionals, policymakers, and researchers to create evidence-based strategies that reduce regional inequalities, promote graduate retention, and maximise the contribution of skilled graduates to national and local development. By connecting theoretical ideas with empirical data, the study adds to both practical solutions and academic knowledge that support inclusive, improve human capital, and sustainable regional growth.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1.1 Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory was originated from the work of Adam Smith in 1776, in his work it was emphasized that all wealth creation results from human efforts. This important insight was later advanced by scholars such as Mincer (1958, 1962), Schultz (1963) and Becker (1975), who formalised the theory by emphasising the importance of education in improving individual productivity (Peterson et al., 2009). Human capital theory assumes that education determines the marginal productivity of labour and this determines earnings (Marginson, 2019). Investing in education through acquiring knowledge and skills leads to higher economic output. However, these investments incur costs, including lost earnings, psychological pressures and tuition fees, related to academic demands. Individuals are therefore seen as rational actors who evaluate these costs against expected future benefits, seeking to maximise their lifetime returns (Rees, 1965; Becker, 1975; Peterson et al., 2009). The theory is important for this study as it explains why graduates may opt to leave or stay in host cities. For example, graduates with expectations of better jobs, career development, and employment opportunities are more likely to stay in host cities than return home, especially when it is a rural area with fewer opportunities. While human capital theory effectively captures the economic motivations behind such choices, it tends to overlook non-economic factors, such as cultural identity, emotional attachment to place, or family ties, which also influence graduate mobility and settlement patterns.

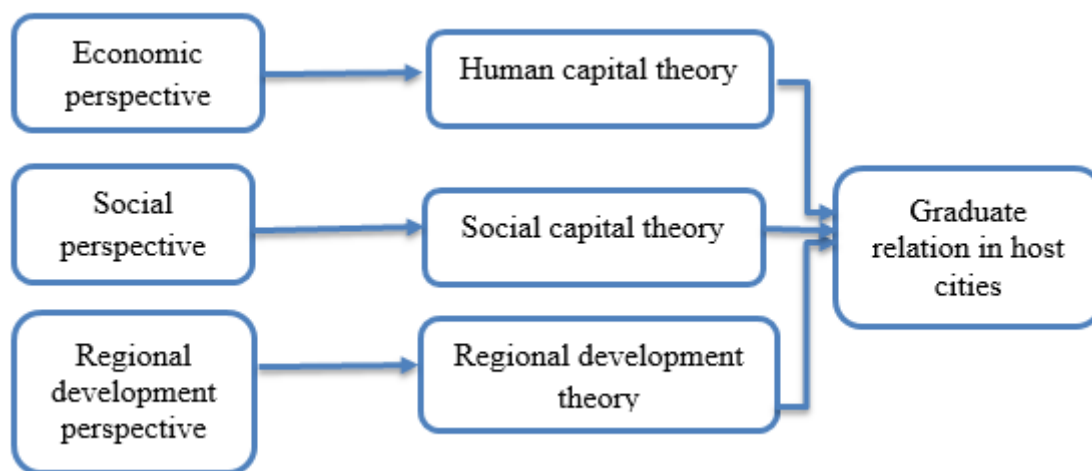
#### 2.1.2 Regional Development Theory

Regional development theory seeks to understand why some regions are prosperous and others are not, and what less-prosperous regions can do to improve (Eversole, 2017). The theory offers a conceptual framework for understanding the uneven distribution of economic growth and social progress across different regions. It investigates how spatial dynamics, institutional capacity, and targeted policy measures influence development outcomes (Dawkins, 2003). Host cities with academic institutions tend to be focal points for nurturing and attracting highly skilled graduates who contribute to local economies through entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer and employment (Corcoran & Faggian, 2015). The retention of graduates is not merely a demographic outcome but a strategic asset for regional competitiveness, particularly in knowledge-based economies. Universities play a crucial role in supporting entrepreneurial ecosystems, providing career services, and promoting industry links (Kitagawa et al., 2022). Additionally, retention is affected by

factors such as social integration, quality of life, and perceived career opportunities, which align with endogenous development principles that emphasise institutional networks and local capacity (Haşar, 2020).

### 2.1.3 Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory was developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and James Coleman (1988), and it emphasises the role of trust, networks, and social ties in shaping individual opportunities. Unlike human capital, which focuses on individual skills and education, social capital emphasises the relational assets that individuals accumulate through interactions within institutions, communities, and professional networks (Putnam, 2000; Häuberer, 2011). Graduates are more likely to stay in host cities after their studies, where they have developed strong social ties such as mentorships, friendships, and professional connections that provide job referrals, emotional support, and a sense of belonging (Glaeser & Redlick, 2008). These networks reduce the perceived risks of urban living and enhance access to career opportunities, thereby increasing the likelihood of retention. Empirical studies show that relational and structural social capital significantly influence graduates' intentions to stay, particularly when host cities offer inclusive environments and opportunities for civic engagement (Wut et al., 2022). According to this perspective, graduates who develop strong professional or personal networks in their host cities are more likely to get employment opportunities and thus remain there after completing their studies. Conversely, graduates who maintain stronger ties to their rural communities may be encouraged to return home.



**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual Model of Theories Explaining Graduate Retention in Host Cities*

### 2.2 Empirical Review

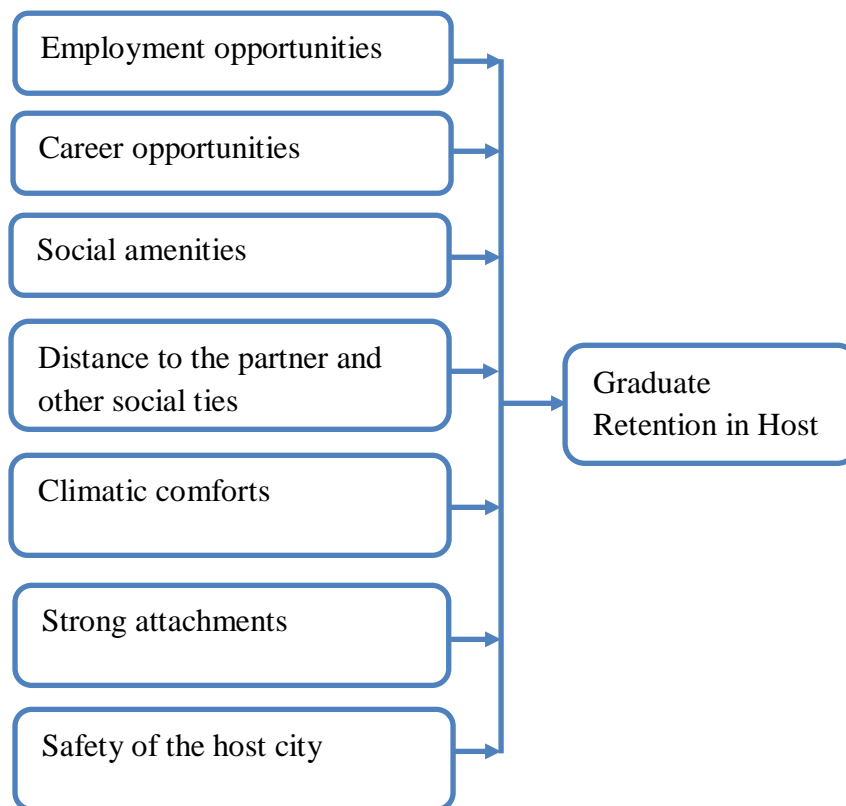
Imeraj et al. (2018) in their studies document that when graduates find jobs that match their profiles, they are more likely to stay in the host cities after their studies; however, when they find no opportunities, they are more likely to leave the host cities. Yu et al. (2025) emphasise that determinants of the migration of university graduates include factors such as personal attributes and city attractiveness. The University City, hometown, and large cities play important roles, as graduates often have strong attachments to these locations or are drawn by employment opportunities. Nikou and Luukkonen (2024) reveal that attitudes towards staying not only have a direct impact on the intention to stay but also enhance the relationship between various pulling factors and students' intention to remain in the host country. Furthermore, challenges and barriers such as difficulties in finding employment, language barriers, and difficulties in integrating into the community or making friends negatively influence the decision to stay in the host country.

Additionally, Li et al. (2019) also observed that the decision to stay or leave results from the combined influence of several driving forces, such as the correct location, social amenities, climatic comforts, and lifestyle. Most people choose to stay, while a small number seek opportunities to leave. Kim and Cocks (2021) indicated that students were more likely to stay after graduation if they had already been in China for an extended period, were female, enrolled in a master's degree programme, had promising prospects in the Chinese job market, and were satisfied with the safety of the area. Aside from safety, these important factors were linked to individual experiences and assessments, such as past personal experiences, stages of life (or study), and personal evaluations of job prospects, rather than attributes of the surrounding urban environment. Similarly, Hooijen et al. (2017) found that graduates' mobility intentions are shaped by students' perceptions of openness, quality of life, and career opportunities in the European region. Additionally, distance to the partner and other social ties, such as friends and family, influence migration intentions. However, Rokita-Poskart

(2021) suggested that the inflow of students to towns and cities may have a substantial demographic impact on urban areas, as some graduates remain in university towns and cities after completing their studies.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 displays the conceptual framework based on the reviewed studies, illustrating the independent and dependent variables. In this context, independent variables include employment opportunities, career prospects, social amenities, distance to the partner and other social ties, climatic comforts, strong attachments, and safety of the host city. These variables influence whether graduates decide to stay or leave their host city after graduation.



**Figure 2**  
*Conceptual Framework Explaining Drivers to Graduate Retention in Host Cities*

## III. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Literature Search Strategy

A literature review was conducted to identify reports, empirical studies, and reviews on whether graduate students stay or leave host cities and the factors influencing these decisions. Several academic databases were used, including Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and African Journals Online (AJOL), to encompass perspectives from both developed and developing countries. Keywords and search strings were created using combinations of terms such as: graduate retention, host cities, brain drain, graduate movement, regional development, post-graduation employment, developed countries, developing countries, human capital, and social capital. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine searches, and citation chaining was used to identify additional relevant studies. Only studies published in the English language and within the last 10–15 years were considered to ensure the review reflects current trends and policy contexts.

### 3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To maintain focus and relevance, the inclusion criteria comprised empirical studies examining graduate retention or migration in both developed and developing contexts; research exploring push–pull factors, labour market integration, or regional disparities; studies employing quantitative, mixed-methods approaches, or qualitative methods; and reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and reputable working papers. Additionally, the exclusion criteria included



studies that solely focus on articles lacking empirical data or theoretical analyses relevant to graduate retention, primary or secondary education, and non-English publications.

### 3.2 Synthesis Approach

A comparative narrative synthesis approach was employed to integrate findings across contexts. Studies were first organized by region (developed vs. African countries) and then analyzed thematically to identify key patterns, push-pull factors, methodological approaches, and gaps in the literature. Themes emerging from the analysis included labor market influences, policy and institutional factors, socio-cultural considerations, and temporal aspects of graduate retention. The synthesis highlighted similarities and divergences across contexts and emphasized contextual factors that shape graduate mobility, providing a basis for evidence-informed recommendations for policy, higher education practice, and future research.

Manual proofreading and automated language consistency checks, such as Grammarly, were carried out to ensure the final document's accuracy and readability. This process reduced grammatical errors and enhanced clarity without altering the substantive content of the study.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Graduate Retention in Host Cities of Developed Countries

Recent studies have shown that different practices regarding graduate retention exist in various developed countries. For example, in the United Kingdom, the Graduate Route was introduced in 2021, granting graduates from various countries two to three years of work rights after their studies. Evidence shows that more than 50% of graduates remain in the country after they study under this pathway, implying a significant success in transforming education into long-term settlement (Ahmed & Davies, 2025). Comparative studies from Germany, Australia, and Canada also find that while post-study work rights policies are widely adopted as retention tools (Joshi & Zigurua, 2024). The following are drivers for graduate stay in host cities of developed countries after their studies;-

#### *Employment Opportunities*

Graduate students' decision to remain in host cities has been significantly influenced by the availability of employment opportunities in those cities.

Faggian and McCann (2009) found that the presence of knowledge-intensive industries and wage differentials influence graduate mobility in the United Kingdom. London, for example, functions as a significant hub for graduates remaining in cities due to its higher returns to education and employment opportunities. Similarly, in New Zealand, Grimes et al. (2023) observed that graduates are more likely to stay in host cities with diversified economies, where employment matches their qualifications. In South Korea, Woo and Kim (2020) reported that graduates from leading universities in Seoul are attracted to agglomeration economies and the city's professional networks, reinforcing urban concentration of talent.

#### *Regional Economic Disparities*

Systemic regional imbalances have a greater influence on whether graduates stay in host cities. In the United Kingdom, the average graduate retention 15 months after graduation is about 58.1%, but it varies widely from around 40% in the East Midlands to 88% in Northern Ireland (Kollydas & Green, 2022). Corcoran and Faggian (2015) showed that regions with few employment opportunities struggle to retain graduates after their studies, resulting in "brain drain" from peripheral areas to metropolitan centres. In Italy, Tosi et al. (2025) found that most graduates are concentrated in metropolitan regions like Rome and Milan, while southern regions experience persistent out-migration, highlighting regional disparities within the country.

#### *Policy and Institutional Drivers*

Integration mechanisms, support systems, and cultural or language factors also affect graduate retention. In Germany, Parey and Waldinger (2011) found that international graduates face labor market barriers and integration challenges. Although Germany's strong economy attracts many graduates, institutional and language constraints reduce long-term settlement rates compared to English-speaking countries.

#### *Urban Concentration and Metropolitan Pull*

Across developed nations, metropolitan areas consistently serve as magnets for graduates. Professional networks, high-skill job opportunities, and economic clustering attract graduates to urban centres, worsening regional inequalities. This trend is evident in various contexts, including Italy, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Korea,



and Canada, where non-metropolitan areas often experience shortages of highly educated workers (Corcoran & Faggian, 2017; Sangmen, 2024; Tosi et al., 2025).

#### **4.2 Graduate Retention in Host Cities of Developing Countries**

In developing countries, retention practices are less coordinated but still present. For instance, in Tanzania, policy reforms have encouraged innovation hubs linked to universities and graduate entrepreneurship schemes, offering incubation spaces and small grants as mechanisms to retain skilled graduates within urban economies (Kibona, 2024). In Ethiopia, partnerships between local industries and higher education institutions have been used as a strategy to strengthen labour market absorption of graduates after their studies, though retention outcomes remain unassertive due to structural employment challenges (Kuipers et al., 2017). Drivers influencing graduates to remain in host cities in developing nations include the following:-

##### ***Structural Economic Conditions***

The structural characteristics of regional and local economies strongly influence graduate retention in developing countries. In African countries, cities such as Dar es Salaam, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi serve as labour market magnets because they host concentrated employment opportunities in government institutions, non-governmental organisations and the private sector (Katundu & Gabagambi, 2014; Kuipers et al., 2017). South Africa's major urban cities attract significant numbers of graduates due to strong technology, financial, and services sectors. A study by Sabc-El-Rayess (2016) shows that graduates in South Africa are highly concentrated in metropolitan areas, with Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Pretoria being the main hubs. Retention here is stronger than in many other African cities, although inequality in access to opportunities remains. In Brazil and Mexico, educational and demographic transitions have led to a concentration of skilled labor in industrial hubs and capital cities, where formal-sector employment dominates, leaving rural regions with significant human capital deficits (Amaral et al., 2015). These structural disparities act as push factors, forcing graduates to move from rural areas with limited economic opportunities to urban centres.

##### ***Labour Market Opportunities and Urban “Pull” Drivers***

Urban centres provide established professional networks, higher-paying jobs, entrepreneurial ecosystems, and mentorship opportunities, collectively attracting and retaining graduates (Kuipers et al., 2017; Katundu & Gabagambi, 2014). Similarly, Amaral et al. (2015) in Latin America demonstrate that graduates migrate to cities where returns to education and career prospects are concentrated. These urban advantages function as pull drivers, encouraging retention in metropolitan areas while exacerbating regional inequalities.

##### ***Regional Inequalities and Social Networks***

Across developing nations, uneven distribution of opportunities creates persistent urban–rural disparities. Graduates remaining in cities benefit from mentorship, social networks, and access to high-skill sectors, while rural areas continue to face human capital shortages (Kuipers et al., 2017; Amaral et al., 2015). These dynamics highlight how both socio-cultural and economic determinants shape graduate retention outcomes.

#### **4.3 Comparative Analysis**

The literature reveals that graduate retention in host cities is shaped by a complex interplay of economic, social, and institutional factors, but the dynamics differ significantly between developed and developing countries. In both contexts, capital, commercial, and metropolitan cities consistently retain more graduates than smaller towns or rural areas. Examples include Milan, Seoul, London, and Auckland in developed countries (Faggian & McCann, 2009; Tosi et al., 2025; Woo & Kim, 2020; Grimes et al., 2023), and Dar es Salaam, Addis Ababa, Mexico City, Nairobi, and São Paulo in developing countries (Kuipers et al., 2017; Katundu & Gabagambi, 2014; Amaral et al., 2015). Economic incentives, such as higher wages, industry concentration, and employment opportunities, are key drivers of retention in both contexts, consistent with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1975). Furthermore, agglomeration effects, including dense knowledge spillovers, professional networks, and urban amenities, support graduate retention universally (Glaeser & Redlick, 2008).

Despite these similarities, several divergences exist. The degree of rural–urban disparity is more pronounced in developing countries where peripheral regions often cannot absorb graduates, creating strong push drivers due to limited social services, economic opportunities, and others. In contrast, smaller cities and rural areas in developed nations may still offer moderate opportunities for graduate employment and career growth (Corcoran & Faggian, 2017; Parey & Waldinger, 2011). Non-economic factors also play differing roles: in developed countries, cultural, social, and institutional factors, such as language proficiency, integration policies, social networks, and lifestyle preferences, strongly influence retention, particularly for international graduates. In developing countries, economic considerations dominate, although family obligations and professional networks also affect decisions.



Policy and institutional contexts further differentiate the two settings. Developed nations often have formal programs supporting the integration of graduates, including urban planning strategies and visa policies, whereas developing countries frequently lack structured mechanisms to distribute graduates beyond major cities, resulting in concentrated urban migration. Equity considerations also vary: gender, socioeconomic status, and access to social capital exert stronger influence in developing countries, where disparities are more pronounced. In developed countries, institutional support can moderate some of these inequalities, although challenges remain for integrating international and marginalised graduates.

Overall, the comparative analysis highlights that graduate retention is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by social, economic, and institutional factors. While the mechanisms are broadly similar across developing and developed countries, such as urban concentration of opportunities and agglomeration benefits, the relative importance of these factors and the structural constraints graduates face differ by context. In developing nations, the priority is reducing rural-urban disparities and enhancing local labor market capacity, whereas in developed countries, the focus is on integrating diverse graduate populations, including international students, and mitigating regional brain drain.

Despite a significant number of graduates remaining in urban areas across developing countries, they continue to face substantial unemployment challenges due to skill mismatches, limited job opportunities, and economic constraints. For example, in South Africa, the unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 24 was 7.2% in 2023, with urban areas which experience a 5.9% unemployment rate, an increase from 5.4% in 2023. Similarly, in Ghana, urban unemployment rates were nearly double those in rural areas during the second and third quarters of 2023. These statistics highlight the persistent challenges faced by graduates in urban areas, where job markets are often flooded, and economic growth does not keep pace with the increasing number of educated individuals seeking employment (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023; Ghana Statistical Service, 2023). Addressing these complications requires integrating social, economic, and institutional perspectives to fully understand the nuanced drivers of graduate retention globally.

#### 4.4 Gaps in the Literature

While the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into migration patterns, graduate retention, and the drivers influencing post-graduation decisions, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing studies is geographically concentrated, with developed nations such as the South Korea, United Kingdom, and Italy receiving greater analytical attention (Kitagawa et al., 2022; Woo & Kim, 2020; Tosi et al., 2025). In contrast, empirical studies from developing nations remain limited and often fragmented, with only a few examples from Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia (Kuipers et al., 2017; Kibona, 2024). This imbalance limits comprehensive cross-country comparisons and limits our understanding of contextual influences unique to developing countries.

Second, methodological approaches vary extensively, creating complications in synthesizing findings. Quantitative studies tend to concentrate on measurable outcomes such as employment statistics and retention rates, whereas qualitative studies explore personal and motivational factors. However, combined mixed-methods research remains limited, leaving an incomplete picture of how social, structural, and individual drivers interact in influencing graduate mobility.

Third, while push and pull drivers have been explored in different contexts, the studies lack thorough analyses of how these drivers operate differently across cultural and socio-economic environments. For instance, career opportunities, financial incentives, and family bonds may carry fluctuating weight in developing versus developed countries; yet, comparative studies addressing these disparities remain negligible. Likewise, studies rarely examine the relationship between regional development disparities, local policy frameworks, and personal aspirations in shaping retention outcomes.

Finally, temporal aspects of graduate retention are underexplored. Most studies measure retention within one to two years post-graduation, offering limited insights into long-term career trajectories, migration patterns, and evolving motivations. Longitudinal research is therefore needed to capture dynamic trends over time, particularly in developing countries undergoing rapid economic and educational transformation.

Therefore, these gaps propose the need for wider, methodologically combined, and context-sensitive research that not only contrasts developing and developed countries' experiences but also captures the complex, evolving drivers determining graduate retention and migration.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

Graduates' retention practices differ between developed and developing countries, driven by factors such as employment opportunities, regional economic disparities, policy and institutional factors and urban concentration and metropolitan pull, which varies with those in developing countries such as structural economic conditions, labour market opportunities and urban "pull" factors and regional inequalities and social



networks context. The difference is based on the level of economic development as well as policies across countries. Besides, governments in both developed and developing countries need to take economic, political, and social actions to ensure development in both urban and rural areas, to ensure regional balance and address challenges that may be caused by graduates remaining in host cities, such as limited opportunities to meet the needs of all remaining graduates.

In the methodological context, the critical review highlights the limited studies in the African context, which limit the understanding of practices for retaining graduates in host regions, specifically the drivers and their social and economic effects. Besides, the critical literature review contributes to policy, theory, and practice by providing a comparative perspective on graduate retention in both developed and developing countries. Theoretically, it reinforces the relevance of social capital theory, human development theory and regional development theory frameworks for explaining mobility practices. In respect to policy, it highlights the relevance of rural and urban development, investment in municipalities and rural areas, and equal access to social and economic opportunities and programmes for graduates. Lastly, practically, it enables universities to improve career support programmes, alumni connections and teaching methods as well as programmes that align with industrial needs.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The evidence on graduate retention offers important insights for developing countries, where disparities in labor markets, regional development, and higher education opportunities are pronounced. Based on the unemployment challenges in developing countries, developing countries universities should utilise social and economic opportunities, as well as the political environment, to enable youth to remain in host cities and capitalise on these opportunities. Specifically, universities need to collaborate with various sectors, both public and private, to ensure that their professional needs are embedded in the training of graduates. This is possible by aligning university curriculum with industrial or sector needs. Likewise, universities need to equip graduates with sufficient practical skills to meet industrial needs. Similarly, universities need to review and ensure their curriculum can enable graduates to secure employment in host cities based on existing opportunities. Universities in developing countries should enhance alumni networks, career guidance, and industry partnerships to enable graduates to transition into local labour markets, ensuring their skills and career development align with regional economic needs. Governments should improve and support infrastructures, technology parks, industrial hubs, and entrepreneurial programmes in rural areas to reduce regional differences in human capital and ensure more stable economic growth. Also, the government needs to support graduates who decide to stay in rural areas and employ themselves in various sectors found there, such as agriculture, fishing, and others, by ensuring access to finance. Lastly, further studies should be conducted in developing countries to identify long-term career paths for graduates and assess interventions aimed at ensuring retention.

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