

Understanding the influence of community support on  
academic readiness and academic success of undergraduate  
students at a selected university in the Western Cape

BY

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of Master of Public Administration in Industrial Psychology  
at the University of the Western Cape

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building with columns and a pediment, with the text "UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE" below it.

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Date: November 2022

## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

There are several complex changes and challenges that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) worldwide face, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students faced challenges and obstacles, worked under pressure, and failed to achieve academic success, as they strived to meet the curriculum demands. When support is limited, students are likely to suffer stress, academic failure and some even dropout. As their studies, progress, and academic demands impact on their lives, the level of community support and other resources had to increase to meet these growing demands. Community support could assist in achieving positive academic results. Students who receive community support and make the necessary effort to ensure their academic readiness, experience positive outcomes.

This qualitative study aimed at understanding undergraduate students' perceptions regarding their unique academic challenges, personal needs, as well as the community support, they had. In this regard, ten third year, undergraduate students at the university were selected, via the snowball sampling method. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews, accessed via social media platforms, google meets. The transcribed data was analysed through the thematic analysis to identify themes.

It was envisaged that the study would benefit students, student bodies and academic support programs, as it would clarify the vital role community support plays in students' academic lives.

**KEY WORDS:**

ACADEMIC READINESS

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

FAMILY

STUDENT

STUDIES

PEER SUPPORT

RETENTION

UNIVERSITY

UNDERGRADUATE



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**WORD OF THANKS**

**Colossians 3 V17**

**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

**DEDICATED TO**

**GARY and ALICIA**

*I wanna call the stars down from the sky  
I wanna live a day that never dies  
I wanna change the world only for you  
All the impossible I wanna do*

*I wanna hold you close under the rain  
I wanna kiss your smile and feel the pain  
I know what's beautiful looking at you  
In a world of lies you are the truth*

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(Diana Ross)  
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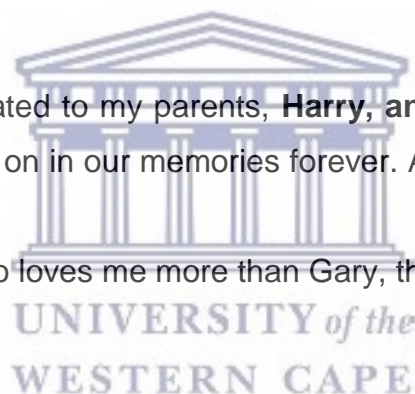
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**Auntie Sarah Volkwjn**, who loves me more than Gary, this is dedicated to you.



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

Global shifts affecting universities today call for direction and compromise on defining administrative and academic functions in face-to-face and virtual teaching environments. The teaching fraternity needs the corresponding competencies that are required to deliver quality teaching to improve the academic success and graduation rates of the previously disadvantaged population groups within South Africa (Alvarez, Guasch, & Espasa, 2009; Guasch, Alvarez, & Espasa, 2010). What was presented and contrasted during these experiences shed light on the process of planning and designing teacher training proposals to meet the current needs in higher education in terms of the development of competencies for teaching and learning in virtual environments (Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017; Guasch, Alvarez, & Espasa 2010).

In South Africa, the core business of a university is defined as the subject of continuous debate and negotiation, as well as the question of what constitutes the purpose of a university in South Africa. There are multiple conflicting but co-existing accounts about what universities should do in South African society. Swartz, Ivancheva, Czerniewicz, Morris and Neil (2019) states that universities should produce excellent research; prepare the future labour force; address societal inequalities and expose the persisting tension surrounding the purpose of a public university (Swartz, et al., 2019).

In a world where the pandemic, COVID-19, is raging and there are uncertainties about the preferred methods of teaching going forward, with overwhelming odds stacked against education worldwide (Pinter, 2021), one needs to raise the following question: *“Do the ‘old norms’ in education standards fit the ‘new normal’?”* Against these overwhelming odds, undergraduate students would have had to attain academic success despite these odds (Ramlo, 2021). Students are, in other words, expected to complete their studies regardless of the aforementioned. Irrespective, there are other determinants for successful studies, which these students faced prior to the pandemic, such as non-academic and academic determinants that played a critical role in completing undergraduate students' courses (Rayle et al., 2006). Thus, this study will

attempt to understand the influence of community support on academic readiness and undergraduate academic success at a selected university in the Western Cape.

## 1.2 Background of the study

In the pre-COVID-19 education environment, South African universities were not immune to global changes in higher education. In the past, many have pursued to rise in the international ranking systems to improve the prestige of their establishments and attract top-quality researchers, as well as local and international students (Nolte, Garrett, Louie, McCarthy, Sayari, Mallow, Siyaji, Germscheid, Cheung, Neva, El-Sharkawi, Valacco, Sciubba, Chutkan, An & Samartzis (2020); Pinter 2021; Ramlo 2021). Administrators at universities and Higher education institutions (HEIs) should fully understand that there is no longer a one-size-fits-all approach to the instructional and mental health needs of faculty and students, especially in a pandemic, such as COVID-19 (Ramlo, 2021). Ramlo (2021) postulates that the best learning conditions for students do not have a one-size-fits-all approach and that there are discipline and academic issues to consider when moving from face-to-face courses to online lectures that are not simply fixed with modern technology. During the worldwide pandemic, all universities were affected by setbacks and delays in teaching, especially those courses scheduled to take place face-to-face within their educational settings. Most universities were expected to teach the content traditionally taught in face-to-face classes as part of an online education plan. The shift from a face-to-face to a completely online environment has not been easy (Waddington, 2020).

**Institutional support:** Scull, Phillips, Sharma, and Garnier (2020) found in their study on Australian education students that although students were monitored and advised to participate, revise, and complete online classes and assignments, many students exhibited elevated levels of concern, which included family responsibilities; the potential loss of employment, or the possible risk of Covid-19 infection due to work obligations. Additionally, they found that staff attitudes and perceptions played a significant role in how faculty approached online teaching goals, tasks, and challenges. Similarly, Shea (2019) in the United States of America (USA) found that as the online teaching experience increased, the staff members' confidence to teach online effectively also increased (Ramlo 2021). Shea (2019) explained that teaching

and research formed the primary business for universities and colleges and the danger that these could be postponed in the face of limited funding, especially where the need to compete for research and other forms of external funding exist. The lack of funding and grants are probable barriers to future studies in institutional settings, the technologies used, faculty demographics, the university policies, and incentive systems for research (Swartz et al., 2019).

On the other hand, it appears that making social connections, despite the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic, was a significant strength of all units that were rated highly by the students. Staff involvement in these engaging units contributed to making these meaningful social connections with the students. Staff members reported that various approaches to building social connections and personalising the teaching were the main objective of keeping the universities afloat (Swartz et al., 2019).

Virtual teaching and learning requirements are not limited to knowledge and experience of face-to-face teaching. Online teaching and learning come with challenges, such as restricted data for lecturers and students' lack of tech-savvy equipment linked to online interaction and teaching. Thus, if the student and the lecturer do not have the skills or equipment, virtual teaching and learning cannot take place and will have a detrimental effect on the results of the undergraduate students (Guasch, Álvarez, & Espasa, 2010). Even sharing the notion that teacher functions in virtual environments are, in principle, an extension and a transfer of the roles required to teach in a face-to-face context, it seems evident that a change in the nature of the environment calls for new competencies to move from face-to-face (F2F) instruction to online, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Alvarez et al., 2009). It is also an adaptation to online teaching for the lecturers, as they formed close relationships with their students, most of whom acknowledged that they learn better face-to-face (Ramlo, 2021).

**Peer Support:** College integration involves college friends, faculty, and staff synergies. Rayle, Robinson Kurpius and Arredondo's (2006) research has shown that female college students report greater friend-social support than males. Social support comprises what is referred to as college integration and support (Tinto, 1975). Peer



support is vital because friend support and mentoring on campus have been found to influence college students' persistence in building supportive peer groups, meeting new people and making friends during the undergraduate years of university study. It is an essential aspect of student life that aids the social integration of students and the move between school and university (McGhie, 2017). Personal interviews with college students also indicated that contact with faculty as mentors and teachers, inside and outside the classroom, is critical for their academic support, happiness, and persistence (Rayle et al., 2006). The students' perception of whether someone on campus had encouraged them; taken them under their wing; was a mentor; cared about their education and was a role model to them; is essential for their integration, thus, also important for their academic success (Ramlo, 2021).

**Family support:** The second dimension of social support is family support. Compared to men, women typically report receiving less parental support for higher education. Family support is often associated with financial and emotional support (Camarero-Figuerola et al., 2020; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019). Mthimunye (2018) agreed that universities should encourage family support and involvement, as insufficient family support and encouragement could negatively influence students' academic performance and success. According to Mthimunye (2018), students need support in various aspects, including financial support, English language support, family support and theoretical and clinical support. Mthimunye (2018) also found that familial support and engagement in school reduce the negative influence on academic performance. In addition, family support included practical social support, such as support in academic tasks and providing transportation. Camarero-Figuerola et al. (2020) mentioned two distinct forms of family support related to educational outcomes, which are emotional and financial support. Other aspects contributed to offering a complete understanding of family support, for example, students' grades, credit accumulation, and persistence on the part of the students.

Whilst socioeconomically advantaged parents are often actively engaged in the college decision-making process, less advantaged parents tend to leave most of the decision-making to the students. For example, Roksa and Kinsley (2019) reported that encouragement from family and friends was related to students' academic integration. Kinsley (2014) also found that emotional assistance from parents during the first year

of college was positively linked to social integration among low-income students. Mthimunye (2018), in their research on academic performance, success, and retention among nursing students, stated that their family members should be involved as much as possible in school activities, including inviting them to open days. Family should allow students time to engage with his/her academic responsibilities. This gap can be breached by inviting parents and family members to open days; programme orientations to share the programme's challenges and what role they can play in ensuring satisfactory progress and success in academic performance among undergraduate nursing students (Mthimunye, 2018).

**Encourage family support and involvement.** The family should provide a conducive home learning environment, which includes consideration and allowing the students time and space to focus on their studies (Mthimunye, 2018), Family support is vital for academic success. Although family and parent involvement are needed while a student is in school, one must consider that every student and family's needs and dynamics are different. Some families can provide support, whilst others are not in a position to do so (Mthimunye, 2018). Other factors, such as social networking, would come into play here. Several factors affect academic performance in various aspects of family support. DeFauw, Levering, Tendai and Abraham (2018) found that these factors also played a role in identifying students' academic performance, effort, parents' education, environment; family income, self-motivation; parental involvement; and class attendance.

Students rely on their families to be involved in their spiritual, social, financial, and emotional needs. Thus, family support is vital for successful educational outcomes for students. Although some students indicated that their parents retreated to give them room to grow and be self-supporting, they did not view this as a neglect in their support. On the contrary, they were still connected but kept a distance. Participants indicated that family engagement is a requirement for educational success (DeFauw et al., 2018).

### **1.3 The aim of the study**

The primary aim of the present study was to understand the influence of community support on the academic readiness and academic success of undergraduate students

currently studying towards their degree at a university in the Western Cape Province and their perception of how successfully these needs are met through the university's initiatives. The secondary aim was to make recommendations to the student community and university, to develop or increase their aid by preparing students for university life by increasing their academic readiness programs at the entry level.

#### **1.4 Research objectives**

The objective of this study was to understand the influence of community support on academic readiness and undergraduate academic success at a selected university in the Western Cape; and whether it is meeting the student's needs. The study aimed to uncover personal views of students' academic and personal needs and perceptions of the community support given by the university and the student's families and peers. One may argue that despite the importance of community support and academic readiness on academic success, few studies have been conducted on students who manage to navigate their undergraduate years until their final year successfully and whether community support and academic readiness and the extent of the influence it had on the undergraduate's academic success?

The sub-research questions for this study include:

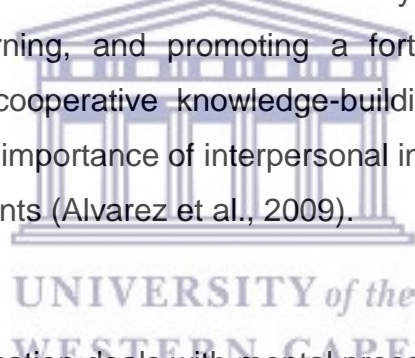
- What are the barriers students may be experiencing which may hamper academic success?
- How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of community support on academic readiness?
- How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of academic readiness on their academic success?
- What other factors contributed to the student's successful completion of their undergraduate studies?

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

Successful student learning could increase Black students' chances of academic success and improve the pass rate, retention, and completion rates nationally (McGhie 2017). One strategy for increasing student persistence and achievement outcomes is student support services (Cooper, 2010). Student support services on campuses are increasingly being urged to provide a range of support to students that could serve the

purpose of social redresses, such as the #FeesmustFall protest of 2015, which disrupted classes as well as academic and administrative activities but brought change to the funding of the undergraduate programs at universities and colleges. Speaking in the context of widespread protests and questions regarding the accessibility of institutions for poor and Black students, interviewees reflected on social redress and accessibility as core functions of the university as well, often articulating these roles concerning broader global missions (Swartz et al., 2019), which are the right to free education and basic human rights.

According to Guasch et al. (2010), there is an expectancy that educational support should build cooperative learning and collaborative functioning, relationships and communication as the assessment system should consider feedback and a variety of methods to promote self-regulation and monitoring of the collaborative learning process. Educational support also spans actions to promote communication with the students and among the students themselves, in line with the learning goals and content of the course. This social role includes university lecturers' competencies to intervene positively in learning, and promoting a forthcoming atmosphere that encourages dialogue and cooperative knowledge-building (Alvarez et al., 2009). Support should promote the importance of interpersonal interactions and cooperation between teachers and students (Alvarez et al., 2009).



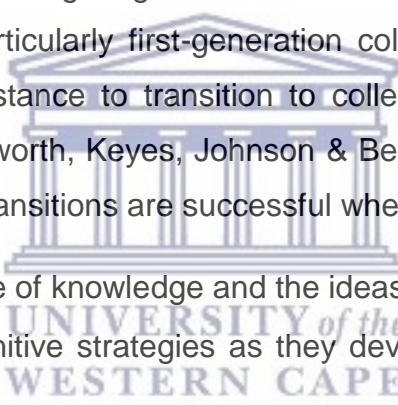
The cognitive aspect of education deals with mental processes regarding perception, education, knowledge storage, memory, thinking and problem-solving. Thus, cognitive aspects involve the role of mental processes of learning, information storage and thinking and shift to more profound cognitive complexity. Tasks include receiving guidance and evaluation and factors that influence interaction on the web; tutoring in a distance learning environment over the internet; validation of knowledge acquired by web-assisted learning; providing in-practice strategies about driving a virtual classroom means communication with the students in a virtual classroom (Alvarez et al., 2009).

With COVID-19's prevalence, the university faculties focused on creating the best teaching and learning experience possible for their students. The general sense is that

these faculties felt frustrated with their ability to best support their students within the new normal online teaching method (Ramlo, 2021).

Despite the ongoing pandemic, faculties were concentrated on doing the best job possible instructing their students. Feeling connected to students was often more challenging for the faculties due to the distancing within the online environment. Lecturing staff and administrators also needed mental health support within this unique situation (Ramlo, 2021) to enable them to cope with the stress of teaching from home, having little contact with students and facing their mortality and ways of getting infected with COVID-19.

Cooper (2010) suggests that student support services also have a role in promoting successful college student results. These types of services are a standard feature and are offered at most higher education institutions. Early intervention is critical to reducing emotional and behavioural issues, aiding a successful transition between school and college, and improving long-term outcomes. (Lynch, Dickerson, Pears, & Fisher, 2017). Students, particularly first-generation college students, may require various resources and assistance to transition to college successfully. (Nagaoka, Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Keyes, Johnson & Beechum, 2013). According to Visser and van Zyl (2016), transitions are successful when students:

- 
- understand a structure of knowledge and the ideas of core academic subjects,
  - develop a set of cognitive strategies as they develop their understanding of crucial content,
  - possess the academic behaviours necessary to manage and engage with a college workload successfully, and
  - possess a contextual understanding of the navigational and cultural elements of gaining admission and succeeding in college.

The results of this study will be useful for the specific university student bodies and academic support systems and programs in providing clarity on how vital community support plays in the students' academic readiness and success. A qualitative approach will be implemented to understand how community support and academic readiness can influence the academic success of undergraduate students. The results of this study will benefit the university with awareness of how to meet the demands of undergraduate students; for example, the statement in a University in the Western

Cape's in-house brochures exemplified that: *"Part of being at university is asking for help when you need it. The University offers many services, from tutoring to career advice to emotional support. No problem is too small to ask for help."* Further, it described the orientation programs, learning activities, computer-aided classes, and successful learning strategies at the university. Library services, counselling services, and electronic-learning support services are vital variables that significantly impact nursing students' academic performance, success, and retention (Jeffreys, 2015).

Although the study will be conducted at a single institution, it is envisaged that the recommendation of the present study will also apply to other universities and TVET colleges. Further studies could use a quantitative method to quantify the specific student's community support and readiness needs. This research could inform the creation or adaptation of student community support and academic support systems and spark initiatives that could cater to this need and lead to greater academic success and fewer dropouts.

#### **1.6. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is comprised of five chapters.

**Chapter one** is the introduction, which includes the research problem, objectives, the significance of the study and the structure of the thesis.

**Chapter two** covers the literature review, which provides a theory base and a survey of published works about community support, academic readiness, and undergraduate academic success.

**Chapter three** explains how the research problem is addressed by presenting the study's methodology. The methodology includes the research design, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, qualitative data analysis techniques. The chapter also includes the ethical principles taken into consideration during data collection.

**Chapter four** presents the findings of the study proceeding from the data collected.

**Chapter five** presents a detailed discussion of the results, theoretical and practical implications, the study's limitations, and the direction for future studies.

## 1.7 Summary of the chapter

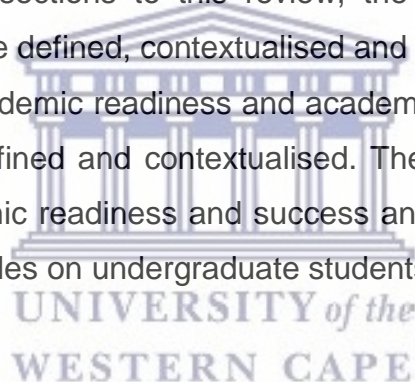
In this chapter, the problem statement of understanding the influence of community support on academic readiness and undergraduate academic success at a selected university in the western was discussed. The global shifts affecting universities today call for direction and compromise on defining administrative and academic functions in face-to-face and virtual teaching environments. It seems evident that a change in the nature of the environment calls for new competencies to move from face-to-face instruction to online due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Alvarez, Guasch, & Espasa 2009). It is also an adaptation to online teaching for the lecturers, as they formed close relationships with their students, most of whom acknowledged that they learn better face-to-face (Ramlo, 2021). Through peer support, the student's perception of whether someone on campus had encouraged them; taken them under their wing; was a mentor; cared about their education and was a role model to them; is essential for their integration, thus also important for their academic success (Ramlo, 2021). Family should allow students time to engage with their academic responsibilities and acquaint themselves with their role as a student. It is the institution's responsibility to help breach the gap between students and family members by inviting parents and family members to open days; programme orientations to share the programme's challenges and explain to them the importance of the role they can play in ensuring satisfactory and success in academic performance, among undergraduate nursing students (Mthimunye, 2018). Students rely on their families to be involved in their spiritual, social, financial, and emotional needs. Thus, family support is vital for successful educational outcomes for students. The significance as well as the objectives of the study were discussed. Furthermore, key definitions and an overview of each chapter were highlighted.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This section will introduce what the literature has to say about community support, academic readiness, and the academic success of undergraduate students. Using a theoretical framework to describe the connections between these variables, this chapter will explain the definitions of academic preparation, academic achievement, and community support to understand better how these variables affect undergraduate students' academic performance. Understanding how community support affects undergraduate students' academic achievement requires understanding the definitions of academic preparation, academic success, and community support and the relationship between these variables. Different resources, literature, and theories will be discussed, giving insight into community support, academic readiness, and academic success and how these variables play a role in the results of undergraduate students. There are three sections to this review, the first of which focuses on community support - it will be defined, contextualised and a theoretical framework will be proposed. Secondly, academic readiness and academic success and the models for each concept will be defined and contextualised. The third section summarises community support, academic readiness and success and seeks an explanation for the influence of these variables on undergraduate students' results.



#### 2.2 Defining community support

To describe community support, one would need to define what a “*community*” is and what “*support*” is separately. According to Webster Meriam, a community means a group of people living together in one place, especially one practising common ownership, e.g. “*a community of nuns*,” and synonyms for the word community are a brotherhood, sisterhood, fraternity, confraternity, sorority, colony, institution, order, body, circle association, society, or league (Definition of Community, 2021). Support means to assist, help, support, aid, and serve, primarily financially, and function or act (Definition of support, 2021). One would also need to define “*Habitus*.” In sociology, *habitus* is defined as how people understand the social world around them and react to it. People usually share these dispositions with similar social class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, education, and profession (Habitus | Definition of Habitus by



Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com also meaning of Habitus, 2021). Community support is refers to support received from a group of people who are united by shared social class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, education, and profession and who form a brotherhood, sisterhood, fraternity, confraternity, sorority, colony, institution, order, body, circle association, society, or league. These individuals must be helped financially and act in their best interests.

### **2.2.1 Contextualising community support**

The undergraduate student body presents an applicable context for the aim of this study due to outdated and insufficient literature on the influence of community support on the positive outcomes for undergraduate students (Wilson-Strydom, 2010a).

**Historical and regional context:** There are different aspects of community support identifiable via the literature, but for the purposes of this study focus is on institutional support, peer support and family support. As far back as 2001, while researching HIV, AIDS, and public health systems, MacQueen, McLellan, Metzger, Kegeles, Strauss, Scotti, Blanchard and Trotter (2001) from the United States of America found that community meant family to their participants, as well as a regional community, and those chosen and who may legitimately represent the community. Through the experiences and empirical data twenty years ago, the researchers found that an essential element for the success of community programs was to ensure that representatives were actively connected to the diverse people in their local communities and empowered to function in a meaningful way to assist them. Despite some differences in community experiences, their study suggested that people largely agree on what community is or means to them (MacQueen et al., 2001). On the other hand, from an Asian context, it seemed that South Africa was not the only country struggling with outdated literature and research on community support in the lives of undergraduate students. The Asian development bank found that there were adolescent obstacles and youth disenchantment with their outdated education systems to deal with the course curricula as it was not updated after project completion (ADB 2008). In a South African context, Kloos, Hill, Thomas, Wandersman, Elias, Dalton and James (2007) found that belonging to the previously disadvantaged community groups could bring the student new information and resources, as well as

exposure to a varied set of roles, sub-cultures, thereby providing alternative sources of influence and support.

**Institutional support context:** Community support could consistently be linked to the psychological well-being of students (Herrero & Gracia, 2010). The researchers found in their study that the students valued the informal community support sources and their importance to their mental health (Herrero & Gracia, 2010). Magerman's (2011) studies on academic factors affecting learning at a nursing college found that researchers lacked the understanding of why failures, terminations due to pregnancies or terminations due to incorrect career choices were prepared but not interpreted. Also, according to Mthimunye (2018), there were inadequate training and preparation of nursing mentors which aggravated the circumstances of insufficient nursing student support. Students in Mthimunye's (2018) research reported that the information they received from their clinical supervisors was sometimes contradictory and inconsistent. Hess and Hatalsky (2018) said that just calling for more research that follows students from high school through college completion would not do because the type of work, although informative, would be outdated by the time it is available or useful. Hess and Hatalsky (2018) said this delay was a limitation imposed by the laws of space and time, which education researchers would not likely change any time soon. Statistics at the institutions being examined were outdated, e.g., specific statistics were not kept as to why the attrition rate had declined or increased. Mthimunye (2018) found several challenges related to inadequate teaching and learning support as students often had to take accountability for their own learning by putting in extra time for consulting with nursing educators, the amount of study hours and attending extra classes.

**Peer support context:** Du Preez, Steenkamp and Baard's (2013) study confirmed that the promotion of active interaction amongst students, faculty, staff, advisors, peers, and administrators would further be enhanced by introducing mentoring programmes that can positively impact student retention. Jeffrey's (2015) study added to the literature by finding that students felt academically supported by peers, and the significance of these perceptions of students added to the perceptions of their academic self-efficacy. Masehela and Mabika (2017) found that the nursing faculty advisement and helpfulness were enriched by encouraging students to attend professional events, join memberships in professional organisations through the

encouragement by friends in class, peer mentoring and tutoring, as well as enrichment programs (EP). Furthermore, peer mentoring and tutoring in-person and distance education could make a positive difference by increasing professional integration and eliminating social isolation (Masehela & Mabika, 2017). Altermatt (2019) presented a study on how students established and sustained satisfying relationships and synergies with peers that played an essential role in predicting college students' academic performance and persistence. Jeffreys (2020) on the other hand, advised that the researcher found there were insufficient in-class opportunities, as well as out-of-class opportunities, for students to enhance their studies. The research found that most of these in-class and out-of-class activities would enhance the (nursing) study programs and the (nursing) student resource centre and encourage partnerships inside and outside class. The study added to the literature by focusing on how students felt academically supported by peers and the importance of these perceptions for students' academic self-efficacy. It also presented an offset point for thinking about the critical role that peers play in determining student outcomes through their responses to students' daily academic challenges and everyday academic successes.

**Family support context:** There are many characteristics by which one could describe families in relation to community support. One of these characteristics would be the family structure, which includes single-parent households and blended and extended families (Donovan, 2003). Pickel (2005) described the characteristics or components of the family habitus, especially the specific authority structure within the family, as society's emphasis. Children become adolescents and are standard parts of the individualisation process on which this modern culture is accentuated. The term "*family*" in contemporary literature is often unrealistic, as it lacks diversification across family units among today's college undergraduate population. Studies in various countries illustrate that social and family background greatly influence school performance. (Harper, Zhu, & Marquez, 2020). In Brecko's (2016) study they could not establish a significant correlation between social / family background and students' school performance. They found that there were no previous studies of this kind and therefore had no basis for comparison to what had been done in other studies (Harper et al., 2019). Ruberry, Klein, Kiff, Thompson and Lengua (2018) mentioned that

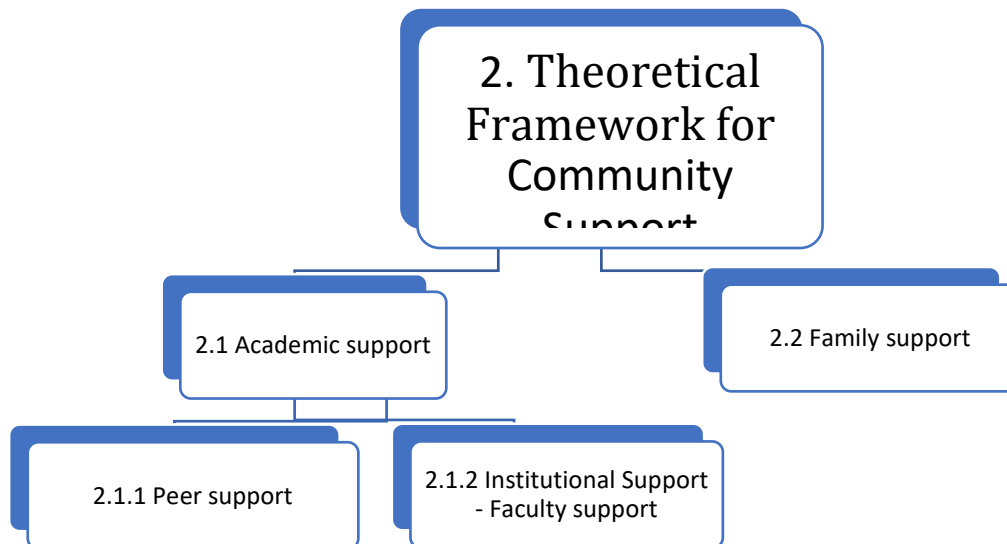
parenting behaviours operated differently across different levels within the family, but they had to consider them within the family's broader context.

Harper, Kiyama, Ramos, and Aguayo (2019) found that the literature at the time had failed to capture a descriptive understanding or an investigation of inclusivity in orientation programs for parents and families. Orientation programs were fundamentally information sessions that informed students about their study programs, including expenses, duration, and programmatic content. O'Shea (2016) found that first-generation students, or the first-in-family groups, were disadvantaged in academic readiness, knowledge about higher education, financial support, and general expectations about university life. A second theme brought to light by O'Shea's (2016) study was that the transition between schools and tertiary institutions tended to be more problematic for first-generation students, whilst the researcher's third theme found that there were higher attrition rates and disparities in postgraduation outcomes for the first-in-family group (O'Shea 2016). Not only are the three themes identified by O'Shea (2016) true for the first-generation, but that family income directly or indirectly impacts children's academic outcomes (Egalite, 2016).

Lastly, according to Harper, Zhu, Marquez and Kiyama (2020), knowledge and strategies could be expanded to foster and support what parents are already doing well. Knowledge and strategies could address gaps in resources, support, and information and find these factors at the centre of the model for parents and institutions (Casandra Elena Harper et al., 2020).

### **2.3 Theoretical framework for community support:**

After consulting the literature, the following visual presentation of the framework for community support has been suggested. After this presentation, it will be discussed how academic readiness could increase academic success and decrease undergraduate students' intentions to discontinue their studies. The study outline will look at the constructs of community support, which is made up of many constructs or facets, but for this study, we will only concentrate on academic support, including peer support, Institutional-Faculty support, and the multifaceted construct of family support.



*Fig 2.1 Visual representation of Community Support*

### **2.3.1 Contextualising community support: Academic support**

Community support plays a vital role in the academic life of a first-year student, and those students who connect and cultivate strong social networks with other students are more likely to succeed than those who do not. Since many students encounter ongoing challenges throughout their academic careers related to academic, social, and financial needs, it is imperative to offer students connected and sustained services in all university areas (Cooper, 2010). There are many definitions for academic support but simplified, it is typically the informal and formal strategies that build, empower, and improve students' mastery of subject matter and skills development through organised activities, structures, policies, and expectations (Savitz-Romer et al., 2009). In interviews with female students, it was indicated that contact with faculty as mentors and teachers, inside and outside the classroom, is an essential component of their academic support, happiness, and persistence (Rayle et al., 2006). Moolla and Lazarus (2014) substantiated this by finding that support and reassurance from family members, teachers, and friends should be maintained within the first year of study. Valuable support services have an integrated network of academic, social, and financial advantages. These initiatives have increased student achievement when executed in a coordinated, targeted, and complete structure (Cooper, 2010).

Social support build the connectedness, networks, and motivation that underpin students' willingness and capacity to take advantage of academics (Savitz-Romer et

al., 2009). They mentioned strategies such as tutoring, learning communities, and other helpful policies and practices. In other words, Savitz-Romer et al. (2009) found that social support provided the basis for which students are likely to benefit from academic support strategies. In other words, social support provides the foundation for students most likely to benefit from academic support strategies. It is revealed in this study that younger students were less willing to seek academic support, which put them at risk regarding their performance and, ultimately, their possible withdrawal. Social support would build the channels, connectedness, and motivation which would underpin students' eagerness and capability to take advantage of academics (Jeffreys, 2015). Strategies, such as learning communities, tutoring, and other helpful methods and practices assist in this. In other words, social support affords the foundation for students to benefit from academic support strategies (Magerman, 2011).

There is no time more significant than the present to research the involvement in learning activities, academic support, and learning research would produce. Support and research are critical to success in and out of the classroom, in the first year of college or university, when student success is still in question and can still be transformed by the institution (Tinto, 2012). Academic support typically relates to the formal and informal strategies that develop, grow, and promote students' mastery of subject matter and skill development through organised activities, structures, policies, and expectations (Savitz-Romer et al., 2009). Academic support programmes improve the academic performance of the increased number of admitted students by introducing language and writing, supplemental instruction, and tutoring programmes. The Council on Higher Education (2014) clearly stated that academic support programmes were introduced in South Africa in order to assist underprepared students at universities to benefit from lectures and tutorials (Tanga & Maphosa, 2018).

Altermatt (2019) found that perceived academic support related to college students' general perceptions that their peers care about their education and value educational success. On the contrary, received academic support would include the individual responses friends provide when students share their everyday individual academic challenges and successes. Altermatt (2019) said it was unclear to what extent perceived academic support would predict positive academic outcomes. This research

needs to look at perceived as students place high importance on academic support to get through their undergraduate years.

### **2.3.2 Contextualising academic support: Peer support**

Academic failure, the leading attribute of university dropout, can be accounted for by a lack of motivation to engage academically and socially (Unrau, Font, & Rawls, 2012). Students with low family support, average coping skills, poor academic performance and a lack of peer support, also risk dropping out of college (Roksa & Kinsley, 2019).

Researchers Colvin and Ashman (2010) commented that there was a shortage of clarity on the constructs of peer support, peer mentoring, and peer tutoring. The lack of clarity also increased by how researchers explained peer-assisted learning. Peer tutoring, mentoring, and informal tutoring were synonyms used within the academic context (Clark et al., 2013). As in module mentoring, peer mentoring within the educational context is described as a process whereby equal status and reciprocity endure. Du Preez, Steenkamp, and Baard (2013) found that peer mentoring happens when the mentor and the mentee interchange support, ideas, knowledge, and interests to both parties' advantage.

A small but expanding literature shows that academic support from peers positively influences school improvement (Altermatt, 2017). Ngalo-Morrison (2017) said that peer support and motivational factors were vital indicators for positively influencing student academic development. Masehela and Mabika (2017) observed that all higher education institutions should offer accessible academic, personal, and social support services to improve undergraduate retention. Ngalo-Morrison (2017) also found that students from low-income backgrounds benefited highly from joining in in-class activities, faculty interaction and collaborative activities. Mntuyedwa (2019) mentioned that there were advantages and disadvantages of peer pressure and factors that influenced peer groups and their formation, however, forming a peer affiliation is a human tendency. The researcher also stated that peer groups provided young people a forum to construct and reconstruct their identities. Disadvantages of these peer groups however, included difficulty embracing diversity, negative forms of peer pressure, and failure to balance time. Nonetheless, the advantages included

assistance in academic excellence and receiving different kinds of peer support (Mntuyedwa, 2019).

### **2.3.3 Contextualising academic support: Faculty support**

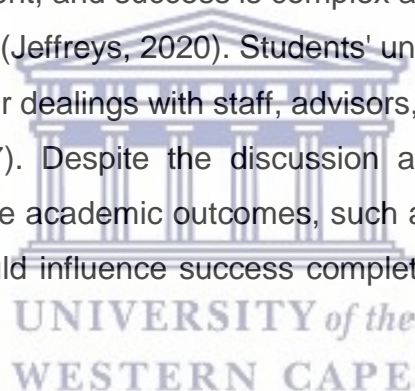
Once the institutional transformation agenda became a reality, access, redress and equity issues were achieved (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). Faculties at the university in the Western Cape had an associated history as an apartheid institution. The students at this university are predominantly Coloured, Black and Indian (Brijlal, 2013). However, internal faculty selection processes gave students higher educational achievements and endorsements (Brijlal, 2013). Across all racial groups, the most critical factor influencing graduate participants' choice of the institution was, firstly, the high reputation or status of the institution and, secondly, the reputation of the faculty or department in which they wished to study (Letseka et al., 2010). Although students found the faculty and the university program they wanted to study, participation in faculty programs was affected when students had not met university or faculty-specific entrance requirements, even though they may have attained the minimum entrance requirements specific to faculties (Wilson-Strydom, 2010b). The entrance requirements create a conundrum of finding a study program and not being able to participate in their chosen program and settling for a second choice. Population data in 2010 suggested that the student pool would continue to be more diverse, and therefore a retention programme had to be developed/adapted to include faculty and staff development to adapt to these everchanging cultural and other issues (Magerman, 2011).

The provision of mentoring programmes, especially at the first-year level, assisted students and peer mentorship, which is faculty-based, was highly recommended. Essack (2010) suggested developing and implementing a peer-mentoring model that could transform student assistance into equal access and enhance undergraduate programs. Faculty members could also serve as mentors and counsellors to assist students in addressing personal anxieties. Student-faculty communications were often more casual than professional counselling services (Cooper, 2010). Colvin and Ashman (2010) found that students had better academic outcomes when faculty members and mentors met weekly and held training sessions continually during the semester.



### 2.3.3.1 Retention

There is an established nexus between institutional factors relating to college retention, which includes how colleges structure students' interactions with faculty, expenditures on instruction, and student academic support (Arum et al., 2011). Thus, student retention was positively impacted on by the continued enhancement of the mentoring programs and the promotion of active exchange amongst students, faculty, staff, advisors, and administrators (Du Preez et al., 2013). The faculties selected the best candidates for their programs and endeavoured to represent the previously disadvantaged communities and students from foreign countries. However, despite the aforementioned, it was not possible to ensure that the best candidates from the pool filled the seats for which they applied annually. Faculty knowledge, buy-in, caring, accountability, and teamwork concerning student retention and success were essential to optimising outcomes. Classical and contemporary scholars agree that student retention, achievement, and success is complex and multi-dimensional; there is no one "*quick fix*" solution (Jeffreys, 2020). Students' undergraduate retention rates were directly affected by their dealings with staff, advisors, faculty, and administrators (Masehela & Mabika, 2017). Despite the discussion above, outside surrounding factors (OSF) could influence academic outcomes, such as how student persistence and retention measures could influence success completion positively or negatively (Jeffreys, 2020).



### 2.3.3.2 Mentorship

A variety of support initiatives are offered in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. These include hot seats, individual learning programmes, practical classes, tutor and mentoring programmes, summer and winter schools, Blackboard and Moodle support, and early assessment. However, continued efforts are needed to enhance and sustain student success (Du Preez et al., 2013). According to Mthimunye (2018) shared themes highlight that staff mentorship, coaching, and social and peer support should be included in the faculty support to students and staff. The student's required activities that improved the following:

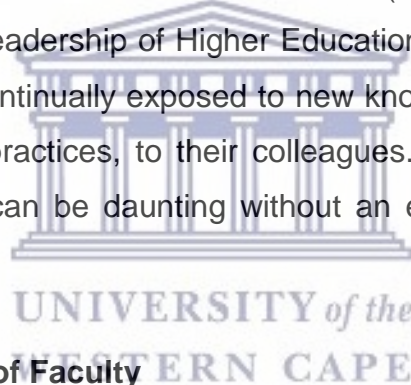
- study habits,
- test-taking skills,
- time management,

- building reading,
- writing,
- mathematics,
- communication, and
- stress management skills.

Faculty should also get staff to use various teaching strategies, including peer tutoring.

### **2.3.3.3 Leadership**

A "*platooning*" approach must be in place for administrators and faculty to preserve a beneficial arrangement of indispensable decision-makers and leaders (Schwartz, Wilson, Boden, Moore, Bradbury, and Fletcher (2020). The faculty leader or head of Departments could facilitate case conferences and interactive engagement with staff and faculty and encourage interactive questions, lectures, presentations or question-and-answer sessions to benefit students and staff alike (Swartz et al., 2019). Jasson (2020) mentioned that the leadership of Higher Education Institutions should ensure that faculty members are continually exposed to new knowledge by distributing their output, findings, and best practices, to their colleagues. The Faculty's vital role in making a positive change can be daunting without an easily malleable organising framework (Jeffreys, 2020).



### **2.3.3.4 The Practical Role of Faculty**

Colvin and Ashman (2010) found that analysing learning and instruction in the faculty encouraged learning practices and teaching and provided academic support for students. Fredericksen (2017) endorsed that the faculty played an essential role based on specialised bureaucracy. Hess and Hatalsky (2018) learned that if students regularly encountered faculty and staff who understood students' subjective experiences, they felt supported. They were also more likely to reach their goals at the institution and had positive interactions with faculty, activating student motives and affecting student success. DeLaRosby (2017) observed that when students interacted with faculty outside of the classroom, their satisfaction was connected to their academic satisfaction. When faculty helped students, it lessened some of their frustrations since they were acting more like instructors than academic advisors. The focus of the faculty should be on short-term advising techniques. An example could

be “what classes should a student enrol in next term?” It should also focus on the smaller strategies to assist students as much on the holistic issues, such as preparing theses or providing career counselling (DeLaRosby, 2017).

Arinto (2013) found that when faculty members received feedback on their course layout practices from students and staff and analysed what the faculty's perspectives were of their course design practices, they were able to change their courses based on the issues and challenges found arising from these interactions with students. Pregowska, Masztalerz, Garlińska and Osial (2021) said there was still a place for the "old" didactic teaching method, where the teacher instructs the students, and the students are primarily passive listeners. It is a teacher-centred style of education and is content-oriented. Neither the expertise of the teacher nor the content is questioned. Jeffreys (2020) advocated for a teaching training model based on collaborative learning among professionals. The teacher should be the expert in the subject matter and qualified in the teaching functions, whereas the tutor guides the student during their university course, and the administration staff would be there to deal with administrative, technological and other phases (Jeffreys, 2020).

#### **2.3.3.5 Negatives**

With those mentioned above, there are negatives attached to the faculty and how processes and students are assisted. One of these was the high levels of individual autonomy afforded to academics which meant that turnaround times for assessing tests and assignments sometimes could not be managed. The unmanaged assessment periods affected assessment standards and meant that lecturers had limited time for marking and could be rushed, which could affect assessment standards (Çetinkaya & Tilfarlioglu, 2020).

#### **2.3.3.6 Results**

More significant academic interaction and involvement from faculty and fellow students, improved the time, psychological and physical energy students dedicated to the educational experience (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Ngalo-Morrison (2017) found that the improved conditions included the climate set by faculty administrators' staff and the types of support given to students, feedback on assignments and performances that involved students as well as valued members of the academic community.

Students prefer a more welcoming and inclusive climate if it is instituted by faculty and administrative staff (Ngalo-Morrison, 2017). Therefore, inclusivity needs a more coordinated institutional strategy to ensure that access strategies are flourishing.

Students should be satisfied by the academic advisory services, which should include overall satisfaction, the amount of contact with faculty, a fulfilment of the quality of interactions with faculty, and satisfaction with faculty sensitivity to the needs of diverse students (DeLaRosby, 2017). Student relationships with faculty were more significant indicators of academic advising satisfaction than student characteristics or collegiate environments (DeLaRosby, 2017). Jeffreys (2020) found that faculty could anticipate stressors and introduce stress management techniques and college resources proactively when needed if they had the proper early warning signs available.

#### **2.3.3.7 The Future of faculty**

Practitioners and faculty members should develop skills in teaching efficiently with technology within the Open Distance e-Learning (ODEL) competencies (Arinto, 2013). Faculty's tolerance of online teaching is critical for future growth to meet this demand and guarantee quality outputs and results (Shea, 2019). Faculty are the key initiators and advocates of professional integration. They can promote and facilitate actively, as well as coordinate participation and inclusion within academic and professional settings (Jeffreys, 2020). The conceptual model for Roksa and Kinsley (2019) is below, which depicts the psycho-social adjustment, and a sense of belonging plays a huge role in academic outcomes. It also depicts how family support plays a huge role in student engagement, psycho-social adjustment, and, ultimately, academic outcomes.

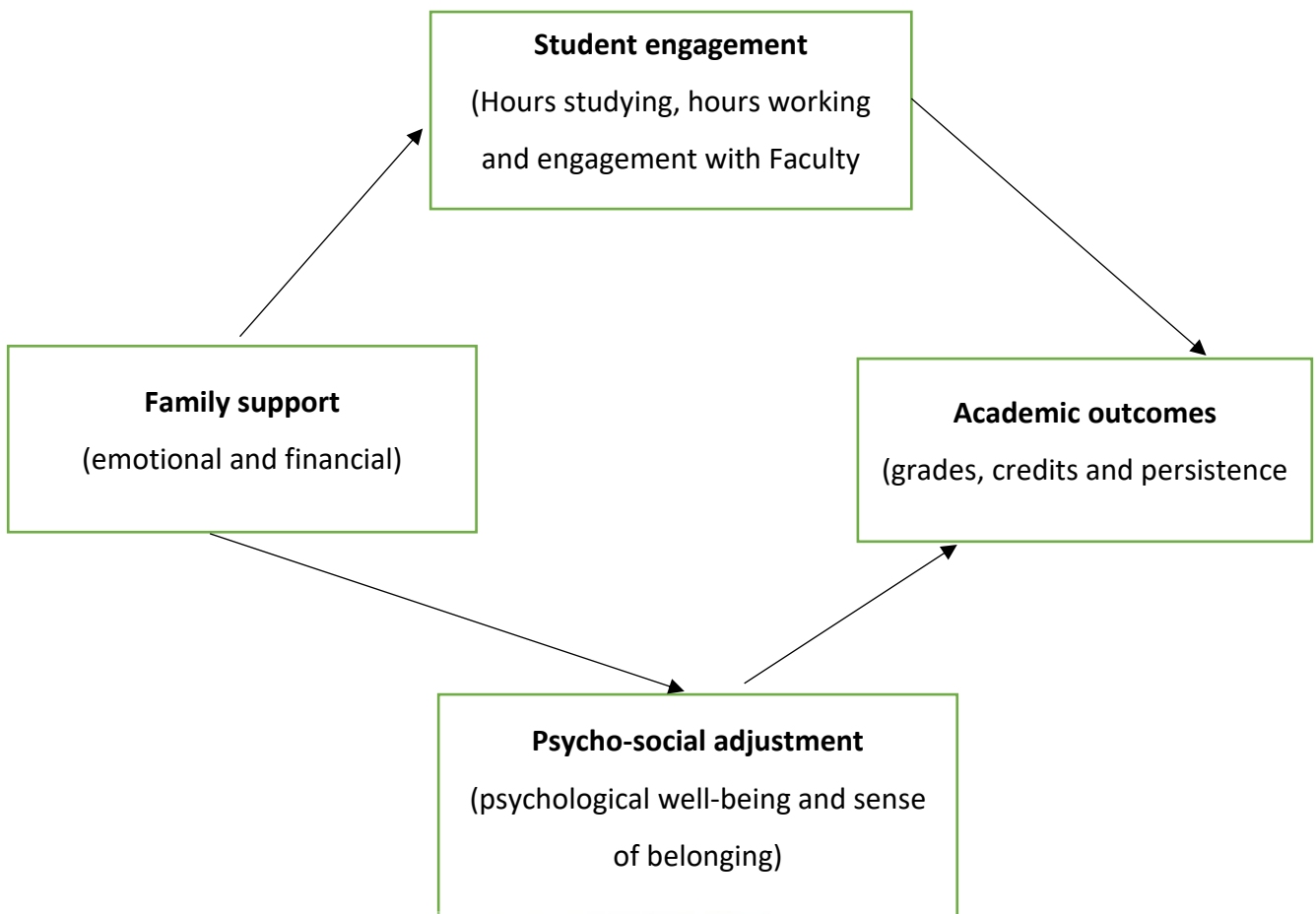
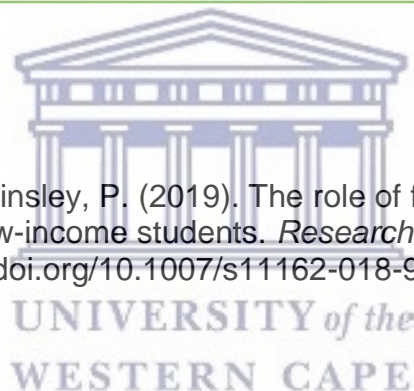


Fig. 2.2 Conceptual Model

Adapted from Roksa, J., & Kinsley, P. (2019). The role of family support in facilitating academic success of low-income students. *Research in Higher Education*, 60(4), 415–436. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-018-9517-z>



## 2.4 Contextualising community support: Family support

Families and parents play a crucial role in students' lives. However, the essence of that relationship would change during the transition to college, with students emerging into adulthood (Lowe & Dotterer, 2018). Bradley and Corwyn's (2002) research have shown that parents' cultural resources and emotional support influence the relationship between their children's socio-economic status and learning burnout. Moolla and Lazarus (2014) further stated that the school played an essential role in educating the parents and the community so that they could see the benefit of their children attending university. According to Harper, Zhu and Kiyama (2020), the following factors play a significant role in family support for college students:

- Family characteristics include family configurations (e.g., single-parent or two-parent home), the role of siblings and cultural background.
- Social networks, such as community groups or religious institution membership.
- Self-efficacy includes the strategies used to navigate educational systems.
- Educational ambitions, how and when were these ambitions identified and developed?
- Involvement and engagement include standardising engagement, such as campus visits and more culturally informed engagement, including emotional support.
- Dimensions of support include the resources, networks, and others drawn on for support.

Moola and Lazarus (2014) as well as Luo et al. (2016) found that there were three variables namely, family income, educational level, and occupation of father and mother, that could be used as a measure for the student's socio-economic status. Letseka et al. (2010) observed a high correlation between success in tertiary studies and family income, parental education levels, and academic preparedness. Similarly, Önder and Uyar (2017) also found a direct link between the student's academic success and the family's socio-economic status, indicated by parents' educational status and family income are the long-term determinants of academic success.



#### **2.4.1 Family income**

Masehela and Mabika (2017) stated that academic achievement was closely tied to socio-economic standing and that being reared in a low-income household often meant not having educational support. Parental levels of education were usually lower for the first-generation group than for the graduate group, as was their family income (Letseka et al., 2010). Students in countries with equal income distribution are more successful than those with unstable income distribution (Önder & Uyar, 2017). Grass, Strobel, and Strobel (2017) observed that studies which analysed family socio-economic status and the relationship between students' academic success indicated that family income and parents' educational status are the long-term determinants of academic success. Grass et al. (2017) also observed that high family income

increased the likelihood of making more investments in students' education. This factor allowed parents to organise their children's educational environments and give them different probabilities. Chlup et al. (2018) observed that college and attainment of college degrees show lasting inequalities based on income, race, ethnicity, and class in the Latino first-generation students in America. Likewise, DeFauw et al. (2018) recognised that family income, parent's education, parental involvement, student's effort, the environment, self-motivation, and class participation had a crucial effect on the student's academic performance in various environments.

#### **2.4.2 Family Educational level**

Daniel-Oghenetega (2020) recognised that linguistic competence, acquired from the cultural socialisation of individuals, especially from their well-educated parents, facilitated students' educational success. Their family members' educational background, home language, sibling influence inside the family setting, cultural beliefs, values, and practices also improved their chances of educational success (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2020). Grass et al. (2017) stated that although family income was closely related to academic success, the family's education level was the most critical factor. Higher-educated families could better assist their children's success financially, academically, and socially. Önder and Uyar (2017), in their study, identified that the most crucial parental characteristic for a student's end-year achievement grade was confirmed to be the father's educational status.

In American literature, these educational levels included attendance at college, whereas other studies refer to Britain's family income levels and class affiliation (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013). Such differentials made comparing first-in-family student numbers exceedingly difficult across countries (O'Shea, 2016).

#### **2.4.3 Occupation of father and mother**

Soland (2017) found significant correlations between socioeconomic status, family income and the parent's educational achievements. Although fathers' and mothers'

education levels were already too established to influence this, the employment level of the mother or father and the family's monthly income, also influenced the students' end-year success grades, whether they were going to training centres or attending courses (Önder & Uyar, 2017). Family income implies that if the parents' profession was based on unskilled labour or yields a low income, this reduced the students' possibility of gaining academic success. Therefore, even if the parents were employed but had an insufficient monthly income, it would have prevented them from organising qualified educational environments for their children. It could then be concluded that parents' employment was a poor indicator of students' success or attaining higher grades in comparison to the income from their parents' salaries or wages. Daniel-Oghenetega (2020) found that family factors were important. However, in the African sense, that family is perceived as going beyond the core of parents and siblings. The socio-economic status (SES) and profession of family members provided more of a habitus of motivation looking forward and backward than relevant cultural capital (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2020).

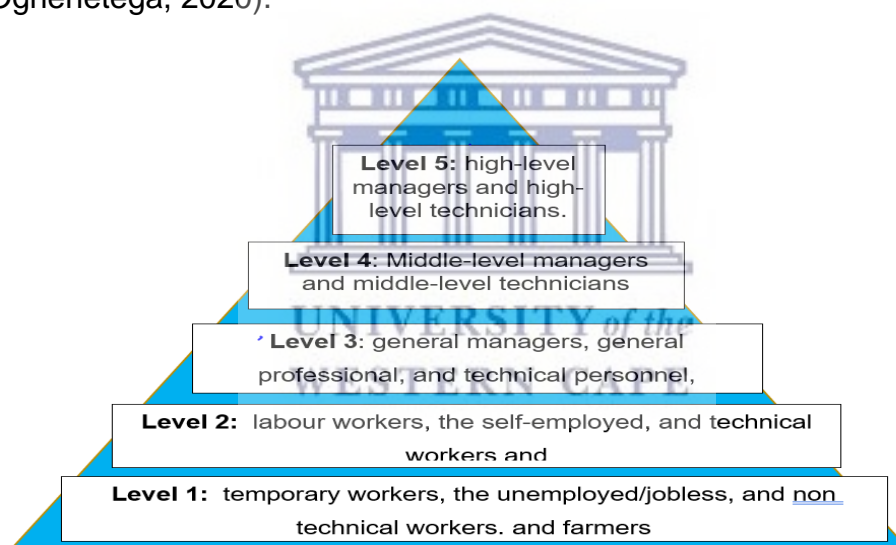


Figure 2.3

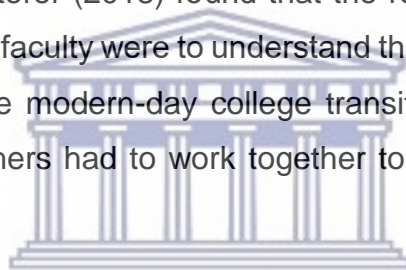
*A visual presentation of five occupational levels employed.* Adapted from Luo, Y., Wang, Z., Zhang, H., & Chen, A. (2016). The Influence of Family Socio-economic Status on Learning Burnout in Adolescents : Mediating and Moderating Effects. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 25(7), 2111–2119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0400-2>

According to Luo et al. (2016), family support was regarded as essential, and a means to gain better opportunities in life. They reported that four enabling factors impacted



students' decisions positively to pursue and continue their university studies. These factors were: (1) the support, (2) the encouragement from family members, (3) peers, and (4) teachers. Moolla and Lazarus (2014) found that learners regarded their families as a significant influence. They aimed to improve their families and their lives, especially when they came from poor financial backgrounds. Van Der Merwe et al. (2017) revealed that students regarded their poor financial circumstances as a motivating factor which drove learners to pursue further studies.

The hopes of entering university and obtaining university education provided the opportunity to eventually gain access to an excellent job with a competitive salary, thereby improving their family's household income and, consequently, their living conditions (Mcghie, 2017). Moolla and Lazarus (2014) stated that by engaging learners in their community, universities would allow family and community members to gain insight into the information regarding universities and the opportunities they offer. Lastly, Lowe and Dotterer (2018) found that the requirements for success for today's college students and faculty were to understand that parents were an essential element of the richly diverse modern-day college transition and that policymakers, administrators, and researchers had to work together to serve the college students better.



## **2.5 Contextualising academic readiness**

Academic readiness is a term often used and referred to as the degree to which a student or students are prepared to accept new learning (Bonquin et al., 2017). Researchers would define academic readiness' importance as being fully equipped in all facets of the student's academic pursuit. It would normally start with the student and their understanding of their weaknesses and strengths and how they could improve in those areas of opportunity.

Nagaoka et al. (2013) found that academic readiness was based on the student's specific knowledge of learning areas and general academic knowledge. Academic readiness was identified as only one component of academic success, and further research is required to understand better the complexity of the influence of academic readiness on academic success.

Cliff (2014) found that the generic assessment of academic literacy offers essential parallel understandings of academic readiness in conjunction with other forms of assessments, such as school-leaving examination results. It relates to the concept of academic literacy discussed here as fundamental reading, writing and mathematical skills at a process level. They do become evident across a wide range of disciplinary discussions and contexts. According to Wilson-Strydom (2010), there was an increased concern about coping mechanisms with students and their growing acceptance of mediocrity or failure caused by the difficulties they faced in achieving the facets of academic behaviours and what one considers “*university knowledge*”.

Conley's (2007) Facets of College Readiness figure 2.4 was adapted by Wilson-Strydom in (2010) figure 2.5 to the Multidimensional college/university readiness model. According to Conley (2008), college readiness can be defined as the level of training a student needs to enrol and succeed without remediation at a post-secondary institution. Registration must be in a credit-bearing customary education course and achieving accreditation to earn a baccalaureate degree. The definition of “succeed” is to complete an entry-level course with proficiency and a level of understanding that makes it viable for the student to contemplate taking the next course in the sequence or the next level of study in the subject area. This design uses its reference point “best practices” entry-level courses instead of the stereotypical freshman or first year-course. The college-ready or academically ready student projected by this description can understand what is required in a college course, cope with the content knowledge presented, and develop critical intellectual systemic thinking by enrolling in this course.

### **2.5.1 Theoretical framework for academic readiness**

**Key Cognitive Strategies:** Readiness develops students’ mental and metacognitive capabilities. When mental and metacognitive capabilities are developed, this awareness helps students achieve awareness of what they think and recognise themselves as problem-solvers. They can choose suitable strategies for thinking and problem-solving, match relevant study strategies for given tests and assignments, and more carefully evaluate the extent of their understanding and the effectiveness of their education. These include precision, interpretation, analysis, accuracy, problem-solving, and reasoning. Student facilities which offer these strategies have been

consistently and emphatically identified by those who teach entry-level college courses as centrally crucial to academic success (Conley, 2007).



Figure 2.4. *Facets of college academic success*. Adapted from Conley, D. T. (2007). *Redefining College Readiness*. 36. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0972-2327.29204>

**Key Content Knowledge:** The importance is understanding particular types of content knowledge. Several types of research have led to college readiness measures that specify required content knowledge linked with college success. Academic writing skills have been largely identified as the single academic skill intimately connected with college success, but each content area's “big ideas” are also crucial building blocks (Conley, 2007).

**Academic Behaviours:** The student's success is a set of intellectual, self-management practices. Among these is the capacity to utilise study groups, awareness of one's actual performance, time management, persistence, and strategic

study skills. All expect students to exhibit intentionality, high degrees of self-awareness and self-control (Conley, 2007).

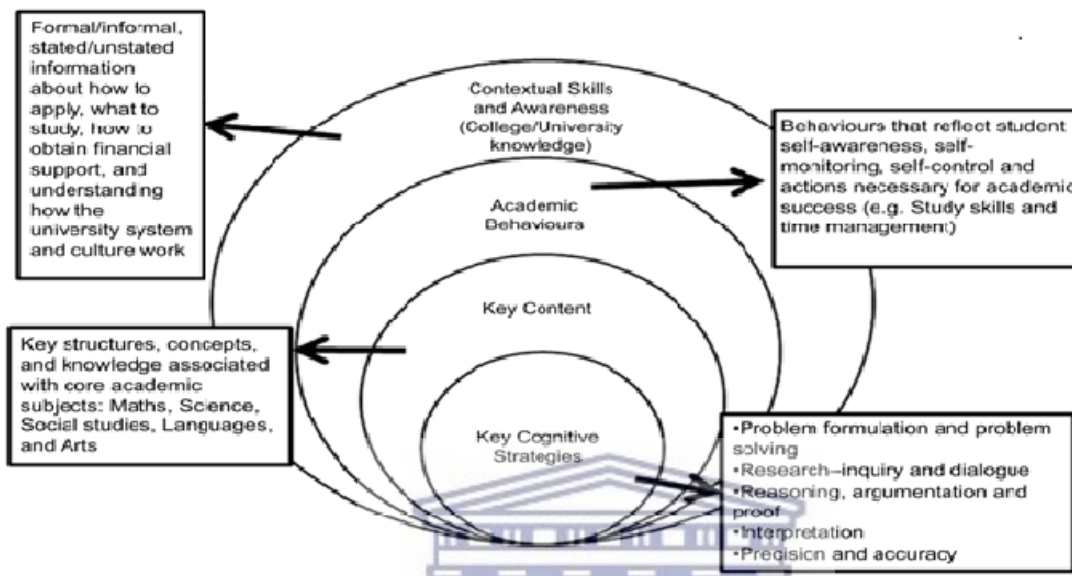


Figure 2.5. The multi-dimensional model of college/university readiness. Adapted from Wilson-Strydom, M. (2010b). *Traversing the chasm from school to university in South Africa: A student perspective. Tertiary Education and Management, 16(4), 313–325.* <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2010.532565>

**Contextual Skills and Knowledge:** Studies have highlighted that the complexity of contextual knowledge was connected with acculturation to college and application. The application process has much technical information, while the first-year college experience has a vital cultural element. First-generation students that have applied to and are attending college, are uniquely at a loss to deal with problems of this nature. It is an important factor that the Senior Secondary School program needs to develop and improve for students to be well-equipped with these skills and talents before entering college (Bonquin et al., 2017b).

## 2.6 Contextualising academic success

There is an ambiguity associated with the definition of academic success, partially attributed to its inherent perspective in how one looks at it. Faculty members may argue that academic success refers to acquiring specific knowledge and abilities exhibited through the completion of courses. In turn, administrators may argue that academic success refers to the experience graduates obtain and advance in occupations within, or related to, their degree fields. Both arguments are valid, and varying elements observe success, and thereby academic success differently.

Academic success refers specifically to acquiring specific knowledge and skills demonstrated through the completion of courses (York et al., 2015). Most of the existing literature on peer academic support has focused on the informational and emotional support that friends and classmates might offer when learners or students encounter academic challenges. Less attention is paid to peer academic support in the context of academic successes. This lack of attention to peer academic support is unexpected because academic successes are a more common part of students' and learners' everyday school experiences than academic challenges (Altermatt, 2015). Likewise, Du Preez, Steenkamp and Baard's (2013) study also confirmed that the promotion of active interaction amongst students, faculty, staff, advisors, peers, and administrators, further enhanced through mentoring programmes, could positively impact student retention. According to Altermatt (2015), peer support predicts students' academic success and positive school adjustment.

Research on the determinants of student success typically focused on student and family background (e.g., race and parent education) and pre-college academic success (e.g., standardised test scores and high school grades). Regarding pre-college academic success, it has been demonstrated that high school grades are a better predictor of college success than ACT or SAT scores (Farruggia, Bottoms, Leighton, Wellman, & Moss, 2018).

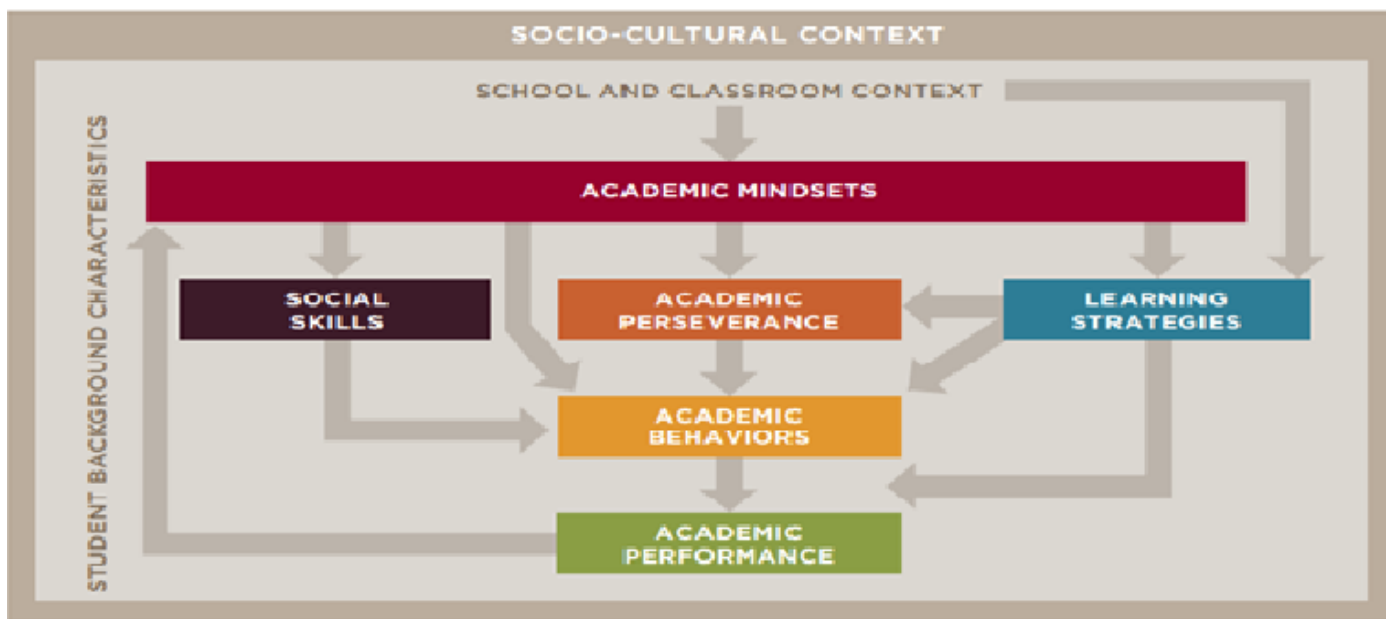


Figure 2.6. Hypothesized model of how Five Noncognitive factors affect Academic Performance within a Classroom/School and larger Socio-Cultural context.

Adapted from Farrington, C. A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Seneca Keyes, T., Johnson, D. W., & O., B. N. (2012). Teaching Adolescents To Become Learners The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance : A Critical Literature Review Socio-Cultural Context Academic Mindsets Social Skills Perseverance Learning Strategies Academic Behaviors Academic Perfo. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88(June), 428–445. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED542543.pdf>

To conceptualise how these various factors are related to student success, Farrington and colleagues at the Consortium on School Research developed a model contending that academic mindset, perseverance, learning strategies, social skills, and behaviours affect academic success within a broader school and socio-cultural context (Farrington et al., 2012, p. 12). Please see Figure 2.6. These include:

- i. academic mindset, e.g., sense of belonging, self-efficacy,
- ii. academic perseverance, e.g., grit, delayed gratification,
- iii. learning strategies, e.g., time management, self-regulated learning,
- iv. social skills, e.g., interpersonal skills, empathy and
- v. academic behaviours, e.g., going to class and doing homework.

They developed this model based on their critical literature review on socio-emotional factors shaping academic performance. They conceptualised how non-cognitive factors are associated with academic performance, specifically grades and each other. A correlation was drawn between college success and academic mindsets, perseverance, and learning strategies, tested in this study. The academic mindset was operationalised as academic self-efficacy, academic motivation, and a sense of belonging. Academic self-efficacy refers to a particular type of perceived self-efficacy (Lenes, McClelland, Dieuwer & Størksen, 2020), for example, the ability to succeed academically. Students' belief in their ability to be successful in school has been associated with academic performance in college, such as retention and grades earned in the first year (York et al., 2015). Altermatt (2017) found that positive self-concept was more strongly associated with academic achievement in college for African American students than for Caucasian students. Finally, learning strategies were operationalised as time management, consistently associated with academic success. For instance, time management is positively associated with both grades earned in the first year of college (Wintre, Dilouya, Pancer, Pratt, Birnie-Lefcovitch, Polivy & Adams, 2011) and throughout college for part-time students (Maccann, Fogarty, & Roberts 2012), as well as high achievements by students (Lee & Lee, 2012). Of particular importance is that many first-year college students do not have adequate time-management skills to be ready for college (Wintre et al., 2011).

Two indicators of academic success, identified by Farrington et al. (2012) are academic performance and first-to-second-year retention. First-term achievements and grades assessed academic performance in language writing courses and credits earned in other modules during their first year. The primary purpose of their study was to examine the structural relationships between non-cognitive factors and academic success. Before conducting these studies, several preliminary studies using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Mplus statistical model packages, were run to ensure that the measures met the mandatory assumption for the planned statistical tests, which were:

- to test measurement invariance across ethnic groups,
- to test for mean differences among critical constructs and
- to test for primary associations among critical variables.

The indications for this intervention were to limit poor academic performance and a lack of retention. It would pick up vulnerable students who required assistance (Unrau et al., 2012), who were referred to advisors (Roksa & Kinsley, 2019), who had information about the students' challenges and strengths and referred students for targeted interventions (Lourens & Bleazard, 2016). They would also provide the students with custom-made information at the commencement of the academic year which could assist them with the potential challenges identified and which they could potentially face. (Moodley & Singh, 2015). Farrington's study confirmed that universities and colleges were obliged to continue to increase the use of non-cognitive aspects in their admissions criteria and scholarships decision-making procedures, as well as their plans to support all students' academic success in the first year of college (Soland, 2017).

## **2.7 The influence community support has on academic readiness and academic success of undergraduate students**

Up-to-date research on non-cognitive factors has identified the importance of student academic performance, and it has also been used to explain that advances in developing these non-cognitive factors would yield high payoffs in improved educational results (Farrington et al., 2012). Farrington et al. (2012) stated that students who were academically ready for college, would persist in working hard at good grades even after receiving disappointing test results. These students would persist in finding new techniques to understand detailed information and not quit or postpone their studies. Additionally, academically ready students would be more likely to achieve longer-term academic objectives (Harkavy et al., 2021), such as receiving regular high grades over time, matriculating from high school with good grades, meeting the criteria for and being admitted to their preferred university, and graduating with a college degree. Statistics South Africa (2017) indicated that social skills, e.g., interpersonal skills and empathy, are how students, peers, and faculty were observed to allow a limited group of people to retain and nurture their effort despite facing these challenges.

Recent reviews conducted by DeFauw et al. (2018) concluded that the educational backgrounds of parents and students, support systems, and institutions they choose



to study directly impact the outcome of their studies. Should there be targeted actions towards developing these non-cognitive factors (Mahembe, 2014), it could have transformative outcomes on the student's experience of academic success (Amadi, 2021). Students' test scores could improve their academic outcomes years later (Respondek, Seufert, Stupnisky, Nett, 2017). Academic readiness can also be indicated through students' efficient learning strategies contributing to their performance and successful academic behaviours (Damo & Padagas, 2020). A decline in a student's academic success could further their intentions to leave their studies. Students who do not complete assignments and projects and those who do not know how to manage their revision are less likely to prepare for tests if they do not have study plans (Wintre et al., 2011) that help them review efficiently (Lee & Lee, 2012). Not finishing homework and not learning affect students' grades negatively. A reduction in the students' academic success (Arends & Visser, 2019) are indicated by weak grades and will lead to demoralised students (Altermatt, 2019).

## **2.8. Conclusion**

Reflecting on the literature reviewed, the researcher found that the field of community support during Covid-19 is still in its infant stages, especially in South Africa as parents, peers and institutions had to scramble to give quality service to their students. The author also discovered that only a few studies had been done in South Africa surrounding the effects of Covid-19 on the South African education system, thus also on the academic readiness and success of students currently studying at universities. However, research carried out in Australia and Europe has shed some light on the outcomes of students and staff during these times.

Research literature indicates that the institution sponsors university programs, and students may take these programs for granted and expect to be spoon-fed. By examining the impact of their absence, each component of this form of support may be quantified. The literature review looked at the student's motivation, learning style, and the factors affecting their academic readiness and success. It also delved into the outcomes and what effect peer, family, and institutional support has on their academic readiness and success. Integrating the different authors' works and recommendations can be considered when designing future academic support programs to ensure the

successful completion of the student's studies and academic results. Most studies were done in Australia, the States and European countries, thus, this study will focus on exploring what students in South African universities see as motivational factors and barriers to their academic readiness and, ultimately, their academic success. Based on the latter, the following chapter explains the methodology employed to reach the objectives of this study.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the methods that were used to study the research problem. This chapter describes and analyses the qualitative methodological approach that led this investigation. The chapter provides a full account of the research methodology that was followed, including the following aspects: the various data collection methods, the selected sample, data analysis, and the validity of the study. This chapter finishes with a discussion of the ethical concerns that guided the execution of this study.

#### 3.2 Research philosophy- Interpretivism

The interpretivist paradigm holds the belief that reality is multi-faceted and intricate, and that a single event is capable of having several meanings ascribed to it. When a phenomenon is examined, the researcher employs research methods that will assist them in better understanding how individuals interpret and engage with the social context in which they find themselves. The *“interpretivist paradigm are naturalistic since they apply to real-world situations as they unfold naturally, more specifically, they tend to be non-manipulative, unobtrusive, and non- controlling (Tuli, 2010, p. 100). Thus, in the realm of epistemology, positivism is considered to be the epistemological stance that exemplifies excellence, while interpretivism exemplifies its opposite (All, 2010). From an epistemological perspective, interpretivism is the result of qualitative research, which analyses the understanding and interpretation of people’s attitude towards their social world (Graue, 2015). This indicated that the majority of researchers, if not all researchers, would choose a method on the grounds of some implicit or explicit commitment; however, a reconstruction of that method may reveal that the method must rest on other philosophical assumptions. Thus, the method is normally associated with the type of research and is generally connected with either interpretivist or constructivist claims in qualitative research, although Zahle (2021) maintains that it ought to be interpreted in a naturalistic manner.*

### **3.3 Qualitative research approach**

The study employed a qualitative research design and a qualitative methodological framework. The qualitative approaches often give rich reports necessary for qualitative methods and are usually sustained by interpretivism. Qualitative research entails the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as audio, text, or video, in order to comprehend concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be utilised to acquire in-depth insights into a topic or produce fresh ideas for research. Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative research does not gather and analyse numerical data for statistical purposes. In the humanities and social sciences, qualitative research is commonly employed in disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, education, health sciences, and history. Therefore, the researcher utilised a qualitative methodology to compile the data. In addition to this, the researcher was able to study the issue from the perspective of the participant (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013; Struwig & Stead, 2013). The reliance of the qualitative method on linguistics or words, as opposed to facts in the form of numbers, is an important and distinguishing feature of this method. Meaning-based analysis, rather than statistical data analysis, is used as the basis for such an approach (Bless et al., 2013). The qualitative research methodology is defined by Berg (2007) where qualitative research rightly seeks solutions to issues by exploring various social situations and the individuals who occupy these environments.

### **3.4 Research design – case study**

A case study is a research method and empirical investigation that investigates a phenomenon in its natural surroundings. Case studies investigate the fundamental causes of a topic by conducting an in-depth examination of a specific person, institution, or event. Case studies are descriptive and exploratory investigations of a person, community, or occurrence (Carey, 2019).

A case study is an in-depth analysis or description of a singular event, individual, or organisation. Case studies are used to get an in-depth understanding of one phenomenon by focusing on a single aspect. Advantages of this approach is it deepens the comprehension of the issue or individual. These case studies assist in generating huge amounts of information regarding the case under investigation. The more data collected, the richer the data. A disadvantage would be that case studies

are ineffective for generalisation, with the exception of cumulative case studies. Sweeping generalisations are the capacity to transmit the findings of one population subset to a different population. It focuses on a limited number of cases and is hence limited in scope. Another disadvantage would be that the in-depth examination of a single example may restrict the topic's breadth and ignore useful, contemporary information (C. Allen-Ille, personal communication, February 26, 2018).

### **3.5 Population**

All components that meet a study's parameters are its population (Burns & Grove, 2010). Only one university's students will be used for the current research study. Furthermore, the participants for this study would be students currently enrolled in their final year of study towards completing their degree in the Economic and Management Science faculty. The population of registered students in the EMS faculty is approximately 7000 students.

### **3.6 Sample selection, size, unit, and sampling procedure**

This study was confined to a selection of final-year students enrolled in 2022. Due to the size of the student population, it would be virtually impossible for the researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews with every one of them. The researcher used a method termed '*snowball sampling*' (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), as the student population in the EMS Faculty at a certain University in the Western Cape is too large. The sampling method was dependent on the type of research that is being conducted. As this was a qualitative study, the non-probability sampling method was used. To obtain the details of the sample group, initial contact was made with the Administration of the University using convenience sampling to collect the email addresses of the final-year students within the EMS Faculty for 2021. Should this method not yield results, the researcher would follow the process of snowball sampling, where interviewees would be requested to refer other students that met the criteria for inclusion in this study by word of mouth.

The interviewees were selected based on the following characteristics:

- The sample unit was full-time students in their third year of study.
- The total number of interviewees in this study was (10) ten interviewees, regardless of gender, race, creed, or age.

- The researcher had intended to have face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with the sample group. However, other electronic methods or virtual platforms would had to be utilised, i.e., as zoom, google hangouts, telephonic, WhatsApp calls, due to the COVID-19 outbreak in South Africa.

### **3.7 Data collection method: Semi-structured interviews**

This research study used a qualitative method, namely, semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured questionnaire is a type of interview in which the researcher asks only a few predefined questions. However, leeway would be granted for unplanned questions to elicit the sample groups' personal experiences, and challenges faced. This method features structured and unstructured interviews; therefore, the researcher would use closed and open-ended questions. To be consistent with all interviewees, the interviewer would have a set of pre-planned core questions for guidance to cover the same aspects with each interviewee. The open-ended or unstructured questions would allow the interviewee to elaborate and provide more information on personal experiences if he/she chooses to do so. The researcher interviewed each interviewee using a semi-structured interview approach to appraise the pedagogical design of the model (Babbie, 2016).

The researcher could gain a better understanding by asking follow-up questions, exploring an idea, or asking for the interviewees to respond in more detail. The researcher made use of an interview guide with relevant questions which were developed with the assistance of the assigned supervisors. Some advantages of using semi-structured interviews are that the interviewees could express their opinions and ask questions to the interviewer during the interview, which would encourage them to give more useful information to the qualitative research. They could more easily give the reasons for their answers during the interviews, and the structured part of semi-structured interviews gives the interviewer comparable and reliable qualitative data (Babbie, 2016).

According to Babbie (2016), the disadvantages identified are as follows.

- The interviewer need to prepare and do some research before starting the interview.
- The researcher would need to ensure that the results are reliable by interviewing an adequate number of people.

- Semi-structured interviews would allow interviewees to freely express their thoughts, which means that the interviewers need to carefully plan the questions to ensure that they obtain the responses required, which also requires good communication and interviewing skills.

### **3.8 Data collection procedure**

Once ethical clearance was obtained from the Human and Social Sciences Ethics Committee, in respect of the relevant recruitment of the interviewees, the study commenced. The researcher decided that the initial contact would be made via an email to determine the interviewees' interest in being interviewed. Interviewees were requested to indicate their availability, after which an appointment was made on how the interviews will be conducted. Unfortunately, due to the global pandemic, COVID-19 and the intermittent lockdown levels as announced by the South African Government, the researcher, together with the interviewees, would arrange for interviews to be conducted online via a platform preferred by the interviewees.

The interviews were video recorded with the express written consent from the interviewees and was transcribed by the researcher. The “Transkriptor” gave the researcher a workable transcription of the recorded audio in the interviews. The word documents were scrutinised, and grammatical errors were corrected, and all of these transcriptions were double checked by the researcher and supervisor for clarity of speech. The researcher kept comprehensive written notes during the interviews to confirm the interviewees’ answers and any other observations made by the researcher which might be relevant to the interviewing process.

### **3.9 Data analysis**

The researcher obtained data through direct interaction with the interviewees and followed a thematic analysis approach. In the qualitative data analysis, the researcher aimed to discover patterns, concepts, themes, and meanings by “*working with the data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesising them, and searching for patterns*” (Yin, 2009). During this process, the researcher concentrated on the data, then analysed it and reconstructed it more implicitly.

### 3.9.1 The ATLAS.Ti analysis platform

ATLAS.Ti provided the researcher with actionable intelligence through an easy and automated research tool driven by the most advanced artificial intelligence algorithms and best-in-class infrastructure. It was designed to meet every requirement, from basic analysis tasks to the most in-depth research projects. With ATLAS.Ti, one may improve productivity and identify qualitative research results faster, whether for one's dissertation or a commercial research project. It simplified the analysis experience of the student, supervisors, and provided a premier quality data analysis and mixed-methods platform. It is geared to assist with student projects, theses, or dissertations. ATLAS.Ti allowed the researcher to effortlessly uncover insights in the research data and confidently communicate the findings in this study. It allows one to import data from any source and manage all of those files in a single software package. Then using intelligent automation it begins by uncovering important insights to make better educated decisions in hours, not days. It manages, analyses, and visualises all of one's research data on a single, tried-and-true platform. ATLAS.Ti provided the researcher with everything they needed to produce exceptional results (Friese, 2022).

### 3.9.2 Thematic analysis steps

**Step 1. Familiarising oneself with the data:** The researcher, where possible, transcribed the data, read and re-read the data, and also took notes and original ideas. Through a package called "Transkriptor" the researcher managed to transcribe the video recordings to a word document.

**Step 2. Generating initial codes:** Braun and Clarke (2006) described coding as an interesting way to feature the collected data. It is also the process of labelling and organising the qualitative data to identify different themes and relationships. After reading through the transcriptions the researcher used the key words and concepts to set up the initial codes on ATLAS.Ti.

**Step 3. Searching for themes:** At this step, the collated codes were turned into possible themes by grouping all data connected with each potential theme. The researcher used ATLAS.Ti to determine and identify the smart codes which translates the "identifying the Themes".



**Step 4. Reviewing themes:** After the initial thematic groupings under the Smart codes the researcher read through the data produced by ATLAS.Ti. It was necessary to confirm once more that the appropriate themes were chosen and that those that belonged under the same codes were combined as a theme.

**Step 5. Defining and naming:** The researcher had striven to analyse the data continually to improve the specifics of each theme and the overall narrative of the themes. The ATLAS.Ti analysis provided information by naming and describing each theme in detail. The researcher produced reports in a word document format.

**Step 6. Producing the report:** The final analysis of the chosen extracts was based on the researcher's choice of vivid, persuading examples. The analysis was related to the research question and body of literature in order to generate an academic summary. The ATLAS.Ti program also assisted the researcher in drawing up visual representations of the results of the research (Friese, 2022).

### **3.10 Trustworthiness of data**

#### **3.10.1 Credibility:**

Credibility in research refers to the trust one may have in the data and is comparability to internal validity in quantitative research (Mntuyedwa, 2019). Credibility necessitates that the research results correspond to the perceptions of the individuals being investigated. In this research a rapport was built with the participants and this made it easier for participants to express their opinions during the data collection process (Eigege & Kennedy, 2021). The researcher also got to know the participants and the organisation that was the subject of the study. Additionally, frequent debriefing meetings with the researcher's supervisors were undertaken to make sure the study and its analysis were sound.

#### **3.10.2 Dependability:**

The notion of 'dependability' relates to the consistency of data through time (Magerman, 2011) and is linked to reliability in quantitative research. According to Volstad et al. (2020), a research study must be accurate and consistent to ensure trustworthiness of the research results. Using a reflective record and observational notes, the dependability of the data and results was maintained. Immediate notes were

taken following the semi-structured interviews. As a reminder of crucial conversational topics, brief phrases and words were jotted down and further expansion and contemplation followed. The researcher transcribed each interview, noting pauses, mishearings, errors, and speech dynamics (Kheswa et al., 2020). After each data contact and following the interviews, reflective notes were produced on ATLAS.Ti. It was followed by another literature review which enabled greater reflective comprehension. The supervisor verified the codes. As soon as the results matched the data, it was documented.

### **3.10.3 Confirmability:**

Confirmability refers to the absence of bias in data and focuses on the features of reliable data (Mntuyedwa, 2019). Confirmability is the qualitative investigator's equivalent to objectivity in terms of concern. The conclusions of a study should not be influenced by the researcher's beliefs and prejudices. According to Felkers (2019), themes and their interpretations can be traced in confirmability. In this study, the researcher made sure that the findings were supported by the data that was analysed. The audit trail includes a detailed account of the research process, including all of the procedures that were taken from the beginning of the study through producing and reporting the findings.

### **3.10.4 Transferability:**

Transferability indicates that the study's findings can be applied to similar settings or people (Felkers, 2019). In other words, the findings of this study could be applied to a similar setting. It would also allow comparable research to be undertaken in a different environment (Kheswa et al., 2020). The research will also be transferable due to the use of rich descriptions which according to Gonzalez et al. (2018), implies that the researcher will provide a thorough and meaningful description of the research methodology, setting and participants. The collected data will enable the readers to make their own conclusions regarding transferability.

### **3.11 Ethical considerations**

As this is a qualitative study, the researcher should interact on a deeper level with the interviewees, thus entering the interviewees' domains of values, weaknesses, individual opinions, and the like, to collect data. Silverman (2000) reminded

researchers that whilst they are doing research, they are entering the private spaces of the interviewees. Thus, it raises a few ethical issues that the researcher should address during and after the research. Researchers must respect the interviewees' rights, needs, values and desires (Creswell, 2014). Conducted ethically, research is a public trust. Research ethics are moral values guiding researchers to conduct and report research without dishonesty. Practising ethical guidelines while conducting research is crucial to confirm a study's validity (Parveen & Showkat, 2017).

The researcher needs to adhere to the following ethical considerations when carrying out the research:

- i.) **Institutional approval:** Institutional approval is required. Researchers must provide accurate information about the research proposal and obtain approval before conducting the research. The research was conducted as per the approved research protocol (American Psychological Association, 2017).
- ii.) **Informed consent:** The researcher is obliged to inform the interviewees of the purpose, nature, data collection methods, and extent of the research prior to commencement. Further, the researcher explained the role of the interviewer as a facilitator. The researcher obtained informed consent in writing after the interviewees were willing to participate. The interviewees were informed of any prospective research benefits, if there are any limits of confidentiality, and whom to contact for questions about the research and research interviewees' rights (American Psychological Association, 2017).
- iii.) **Harm and Risk:** The researcher ensured that no interviewees were placed in a situation that could cause potential harm due to their participation, be it physical or psychological. The interviewees were advised that they could decline to participate in the interview session at any time should they feel uncomfortable. If identified that the interviewees experienced any form of discomfort or agitation, or emotional outbursts during the study, those interviewees would be referred to a registered Industrial Psychologist who has the necessary skills to support them through the interview process. If further assistance was required, interviewees would be referred for intervention or assistance to prevent further increases in anxiety or stress about negative

emotions evoked during the interview process (Babbie & Mouton 2001). The researcher strictly adhered to all the ethical guidelines that serve as standards for the honesty and trustworthiness of the data collected and the accompanying data analysis (Babbie & Mouton 2001).

- iv.) **Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity:** The researcher ensured that the information always remains confidential and maintain privacy as required by the POPI Act. Participants were kept anonymous, no names were written instead pseudonyms were assigned to each of the participants.
  
- v.) **Confidential** and that the anonymity of the interviewees was protected throughout the process. The researcher removed any identifying characteristics that might have led to the identification of the participants. The researcher removed the participants' names and used pseudonyms when writing the findings. The information gathered will not be used for any purpose other than for research, nor will information be shared that could reveal their identity. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that no harm was caused by analysing and reporting the data. Thus, the interviewees' anonymity and confidentiality was of paramount importance (Jensen, 2013).
  
- vi.) **Voluntary participation** refers to a human research subject's choice to exercise free will or partake in research activity (American Psychological Association, 2017). The researcher explained to all the interviewees that the research data will only be used for academic purposes and that their participation will be voluntary. Interviewees were informed that they have the right to decline to participate or withdraw at any stage without any repercussions (American Psychological Association, 2017).

### 3.12 Conclusion

The present chapter examined data collection and analysis techniques. In addition, the chapter highlighted the ethical considerations adhered to by the researcher to assure the participants' safety during the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained from the analysis of data on the study to understand the influence of community support on academic readiness and undergraduate academic success at a selected university in the Western Cape. Data were collected using in-depth interviews with ten undergraduate university students in the Western Cape. The following research questions guided the analysis of data:

- ✓ What are the barriers students may be experiencing which may hamper academic success?
- ✓ How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of community support on academic readiness?
- ✓ How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of academic readiness on the academic success of undergraduate students?
- ✓ What other factors contributed to the student's successful completion of their undergraduate studies?

#### 4.2 Demographic Data

Table 4.1

*Demographic data*



Participant	Gender	Faculty	Programme	Year of Study
Participant 1	Female	Law	BA. Law	4 <sup>th</sup> year
Participant 2	Female	EMS	B.ADMIN	4 <sup>th</sup> year
Participant 3	Male	EMS	B.Comm Ext	4 <sup>th</sup> year
Participant 4	Female	EMS	B.Comm Acc	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
Participant 5	Female	EMS	B.Comm Law	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
Participant 6	Female	EMS	B.Comm Law	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
Participant 7	Female	EMS	B.Comm Gen	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
Participant 8	Female	EMS	B.Admin	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
Participant 9	Male	EMS	B.Comm	4 <sup>th</sup> Year
Participant 10	Male	EMS	B.Comm Acc	3 <sup>rd</sup> year

Even though the participant traits are not typically the focus of research, it is essential to include them because of their role in understanding an individual's behaviour or preferences towards adoption (Shaw & Constanzo, 1970). Any population under investigation could better understand the adoption-decision-making processes if such an analysis were performed (Lategan & van Niekerk, 2007). The table Figure. 4.1 contains all of the participants' biographical information that was reviewed for this study and can be found here. According to the findings, the sample was made up of seventy per cent female participants and thirty per cent male participants. Ninety per cent of the participants were from the EMS faculty, and ten per cent were from the Law faculty. All of the students were completing the third or final year of their studies for an undergraduate degree.

### **4.3 Research results addressing study research question 1.**

#### **4.3.1 Question 1: What are the barriers students may be experiencing which may hamper academic success?**

This section investigates the participants' perceptions and comprehension of the obstacles that students may face that impede their academic progress. These impediments are important to establish a solid foundational understanding of the topic under investigation based on participants' experiences. The following subthemes were found to be present: Academic overload, Autodidacticism - Self-teaching, Change in culture, Difficult Transition from high school to varsity, Drug and Substance abuse, Financial Barriers, Lack of Emotional support, Lack of Time management, Loadshedding, Mental Health, Peer pressure, Physical Barriers on campus, Separation from home and Unstable neighbourhoods.

##### **4.3.1.1 Academic Overload**

Overburdened college students had a harder time adapting to university-level work, according to Petersen et al. (2009). Overwhelmed students had a lower academic adjustment. Students often overestimate their academic ability and the time needed for reading, preparing for classes, and completing assignments. Thus, academic obligations and responsibilities often overwhelm students (Kamel, 2018). Students face academic overload if they have too many academic responsibilities as many university students struggle with academic duties. They also misjudge how difficult

their assignments are and confidence in their abilities affect how hard they need to work; they risk failing if they do not work hard. The inability to manage their studies affects college adaptation and academic success. Some psychological aspects, such as requesting help, academic motivation, self-esteem, perceived stress, and perceived academic overload, affect their academic success, thus, economically, and educationally disadvantaging themselves at the university level (Kamel, 2018). In short, educational, and emotional instability has penetrated the lives of millions of young people (Harkavy, Sjur, Gallagher, van't Land, & Hilligje, 2021). Academic overload was only mentioned by participants 4 and 10 in question 1.

Participant 10 explained the Question: “Overload meaning that your exam timetable was the days were very close together.” “Yeah, no. It was very hectic; I wrote four modules in five days. I wrote the Monday twice on I wrote back-to-back on a Wednesday. From 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 pm.” (Participant 10)

Participant 4 Supports this with regards to the Question: “So, I basically went into university thinking that it is going to be all OK, it is going to go according to plan, but then when I came to 1st year. It was just so hectic. I never thought that the jump from high school to university would be such a big gap basically. And when I got to the first year, it was the workload was just so much.” “The actual workload in university is very high, so that is the one of the barriers that you are experiencing.” (Participant 4)

Participant 4 echoed the same sentiments concerning the Question: “The first year of it, I actually found that it was too, too up in the air for me personally, like it was not structured enough, and so I think that one of the barriers is just students’ kind of misunderstanding what each degree requires from you” (Participant 4)

Participants 4 and 5 echoed the same sentiments about Academic overload as a barrier to academic success: Participant 4 echoed the same sentiments concerning the question, “So, I basically went into university thinking that it is going to be all OK, it is going to go according to plan, but then when I came to 1st year. It was just so hectic. I never thought that the jump from high school to university would be such a big gap basically. And when I got to first year, it was the workload was just so much. The actual workload in university is very high, so that is the one of the barriers that you are experiencing.” (Participant 4)

Participant 5 stated the following concerning the Question: “The first year of it, I actually found that it was too up in the air for me personally, like it was not structured enough, and so I think that one of the barriers is just students’ kind of misunderstanding what each degree requires from you.” (Participant 5)

#### **4.3.1.2 Change in culture**

Many college students have problems with their personal or cultural identity, families, schools, jobs, and communities, making it hard for them to do well. Limitations include a lack of information and motivation, the inappropriate use of strategies, acting without self-reflection, and how students are taught, among other things (Yuriev et al., 2017). The right strategy can strengthen a person's beliefs, motivation, skills, and habits and set them up for school and life success. Such interventions may also benefit low-income, minority, and first-generation students who often have trouble in varsity. In the end, this could help make education and society fairer. Therefore the participants gave the following comments:

Participant 3 explained, “Integration between with making friends and getting into a new community and the culture shock because Cape Town is a big city in comparison to, I am from a small city, but not really, so it is bigger. To the culture shock, culture change. So, I think that is one area that I have noticed” (Participant 3)

Participant 3 explained: I thought I was, and I was not ready at all. But it also living on my own. I have never lived on my own. So, like this is from a person who is not from Cape Town. I have never lived on my own. So, there was a lot of stress about that. I am I going to make friends? How am I going to cook? How am I take care of myself? “So, there was a lot of stress about that. I am I going to make friends? How am I going to cook? How am I take care of myself? So yeah, well, I was nervous a lot, and I did not want to disappoint my parents. But then I also do not want to disappoint myself because I know I am most important. I do not want to disappoint myself because I feel like I know I am capable of doing very well academically” (Participant 3)



Participant 10 explained: “And then at university itself, I would say there are a lot of distractions and a lot of things just happening as well. So, you need to; you need to know when to be serious and when you can muck about a bit. Umm. The use of modern technology. And being able to understand how certain things work. And like for instance like Google meets and recording zoom lectures and. Doing stuff like that, I would say that is a big barrier for them, but also, it is just with COVID, it was a bit difficult. But having a bit of a personal touch with students goes such a long way if you remember students' names or have a bit of a joke with them or just have a chat with them outside of academics. That would mean so much to a lot of students; I would think, because then it just shows them that you are. You are a person just like them and not this person who just sends you a bunch of emails every week. Then you need to study this and this. (Participant 10)

#### **4.3.1.3 Difficult Transition from high school to varsity**

Transitions can spur significant transformation and fresh learning or be upsetting, frustrating, and unproductive. Risk, challenge, and even difficulty may be essential in successful transitions for others. The shift from a 'pivotal moment of change' to a transitional period has focused scholars on how students enter higher education, rather than their experiences before entry. Student transition into higher education is the first-year experience and is not a single point. According to Hadad et al. (2020) student transition study, the first year is perhaps the most important and can determine a student's success in university settings. Understanding first-year experience is key to managing tertiary transitions (Hadad et al., 2020). Researchers generally describe the first year as a challenging period in a young student's life that is frequently stressful, especially for students from "diverse" backgrounds (Gale & Parker, 2014). Thus, this is what the participants mentioned:

Participant 1 explained the difficult transition from high school to varsity:

“OH. I think it is also ready in high school, so students are not equipped to, you know, come to university with like, just independence and just their own thinking. Um. Because I think a lot of that could be a big thing that I see a lot is that students come to, and this is what I saw like in tutoring. Students come to university thinking that it is high school, and it is not like it is not; it is a different environment. Things are done completely differently, not completely different, but just the way that

things play out or like the tutorials and like the tutorials is like this for like extra support, I would say". (Participant 1)

Participant 4 maintained: "The actual workload in university is very high, so that is the one of the barriers that you are experiencing. You are also thinking that the. Um, the level between high school and the university is there is a big gap. OK, and then you assume that whatever was being done, done at school for your academic readiness. Was going to make you ready for university, and that was not the case." (Participant 4)

Participant 6 explained, "Let us just say that I struggled from my transition from high school to university in my first year. So, in my first year, I really got caught up in the social aspect of the university. Then in my second year, I basically got involved with the wrong people." (Participant 6)

Participant 7 echoed the other participants concerning the Question: 'Not really. They did, but not fully equipped me because the high school environment is totally different from the university environment.'" "Because I feel like in high school, we were spoon-fed, we were a babied. And now the university you have to be to. You are on your own as much as you. The University provides you with support, but they do not like support you in a way that your teachers in high school were supporting you, like being there for you like. I do not know how to explain it, but yeah, I do not know if I am making sense."(Participant 7)

Participants 3, 4, 8 and 10 similarly agreed that a difficult transition from high school affects your academic readiness and, ultimately, your academic success. Participant 3 explained: "But I honestly do not think high school prepares us properly. The huge gap there is usually like the: intensity and expectations. From high school and university, I do not think I was prepared. I got really lost. I was here; I got really lost as well. But my community, I do not know my community, community helped me properly". (Participant 3)

Participant 4 maintained the following about the Question: "You are also thinking that the. Um, the level between high school and university is there is a big gap. OK, and then you assume that whatever was being done, done at school for your

academic readiness. Was going to make you ready for university and that was not the case.” (Participant 4)

Participant 8 explained: “There is always that one tough module and then the other one. Maybe you just do not like one of your modules, and you would not put much effort into that module because you really do not like it. For instance, during my first year, I had information systems, I was very bad at coding. We had one. We had one assessment where we had to create a game, and we had to do coding. I was very bad at that. Since that moment I was I, I started to dislike our information systems, and I redirected my focused. I did not focus more on the module; I started to focus on other modules. Thus, I did not really do well in that module during the first year.” (Participant 8)

Participant 10 emphasised that concerning the Question: “Coming from high school, it is a; it is a bit of a big shift because the work gets much more. And you obviously need to; you need to have a good fundamental basis. So, if you meet around in high school and you come to university, most of the time, you are going to fail one or two modules, I would think. If you are not serious and have a good work ethic.”

#### **4.3.1.4 Drug and substance abuse**

Research shows that low-income levels and high unemployment rates are linked to higher-than-average levels of debt problems, food insecurity, health and nutrition issues, mental illness, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, domestic violence, broken families, crime, and teen pregnancy (Zaman et al., 2015). Students often abuse drugs because they do not know enough about them or use them too much (Zaman et al., 2015). Peer pressure is the main reason students are more likely to use drugs than people who are not students. Stress from school was found to be a fundamental cause of drug use and shows how much pressure students feel to do well. The overly competitive environment or high expectations from teachers, family, and friends could also be another factor to consider (Green, DeFosset & Kuo, 2019). It is essential to try to ease this pressure as much as possible without making the students feel like they do not need to study as much. Students may feel different amounts and levels of stress depending on how their courses are set up and graded. People who come from

supportive families are less likely to use drugs than those who come from strict families (Khalid et al., 2014). Thus, the participants mentioned the following:

Participant 1 explained: “I think it starts off with high school where people become drug addicts, drop out from high school and then they are not able to, you know, pass matric and go to university and then maybe later on in life, they come back to the right path, and then there is a lost opportunity of gaining an education or gaining a tertiary education think that it does not necessarily start, you know, at university or it is a bad year where people go to university. I think it starts off with high school where people become drug addicts, drop out from high school and then they are not able to, you know, pass matric and go to university and then maybe later on in life, they come back to the right path, and then there is a lost opportunity of gaining an education or gaining a tertiary education.” (Participant 1)

Participant 8 maintained their statement concerning the question: “And alcohol like that. You want that party, that life of partying every week, and you even start neglecting your books, or you are doing your assessment on the last minute. It is like you living on the edge like when it comes to your schoolwork. So that is the most barrier. “Umm. The major thing, uh, it has to be friends. And alcohol like that. You want that party, that life of partying every week, and you even start neglecting your books, or you are doing your assessment on the last minute. It is like you living on the edge like when it comes to your schoolwork. So that is the most barriers.” (Participant 8)

Participant 10 explained: “Yes. It caused them to stop studying. But I, you know, you do not really see, I am not too sure if there is a big culture with that, but I do know at Stellenbosch University that quite a big substance abuse culture.” “OK, like drinking and smoking a bit too much dagga and stuff like that, which have caused them to now stop studying.” (Participant 10)

#### **4.3.1.5 Financial Barriers**

It makes sense to take parents' educational attainment and socioeconomic status into account as indicators of how well their children will perform in university because people who feel their parents give them enough support (Wintre et al., 2011) have probably figured out how to handle brand-new challenges. First-year student tuition costs and financial challenges appear to be rising. According to Onder and Uyar

(2017), children from wealthy families tend to do better in college than those in poor families. However, the link between a family's wealth and a student's academic success may become more complicated depending on the social policies of a country. They also found that students whose families had more money did better in school than those with less money.

Participant 1 explained: "So, I think I mentioned financial barriers. I think this is a big, big barrier in our society because you might want to, you know, go get an education, or you want to attend university, but you cannot afford to go to the university. So financial barriers are definitely a big thing, and social barriers such as, I think, I mentioned poverty, um, drugs like the influences of society? Ohm" "So, I think. Yeah, I think poverty and the financial barrier comes into play and also, like with the social dynamics of, let us say, community, so. They could be, how can I say, so basically just like: "Um, the lack of motivation and encouragement. Um, not having the necessary like resources, so like not having a laptop or Wi-Fi or? I know that some students struggle to complete tests and assignments. Because they do not have access to the needed resources. (Participant 1)"

Participant 2 emphasised: And so, what I am getting at is that I think there was a time when I felt so, like, despondent, and I felt so hopeless. And I felt like I could not achieve anything because I did not have the resources. And I, as much as my parents wanted to be supportive, I also did not want to put that burden on them to help me or to provide in that sense because I felt like, you know, they are really going through. Much. I am still wanting to put my burdens on them. And so that was one thing that hindered me. And I was kind of in a period where I was like, maybe I should just not do it. Maybe I should just, you know. Do something else. It is not so, you know, expensive or costly (Participant 2).

Participant 2 also mentioned: "A lot of students, I mean, we have over like 80 students in our group that I know of and probably all of them, I would say, are working and studying. At the moment, I am working full-time and studying full-time. And so. I think, yeah, that is a big, big barrier for a lot of young people that are trying to educate themselves and trying to get a degree so that they can, you know, grow further in the field of study, but then also having to choose or also not choose, but they forced to work because, I mean the bursaries that we get nowadays and

NSFAS literally only pays us a stipend of 1500 and for the month now if you are living. And that you can literally only buy groceries for the week you.” (Participant 2)

Participant 3 echoed the previous participants' sentiments: “Yeah, NSFAS, it is not enough. The allowance they get is not really enough. Given like how much you know, proceeds are for one individual, and some students have families to support at home, so R1500 from NSFAS is not really enough. So, they do struggle about OK. Is this really enough for food? Is this enough for transport? It is enough for that. So, there are other burdens other than their own academics. And these you do not find the time to build a community because of that.” “Coming to campus, it is a lot of admin for them to come here to study, to learn and everything for financial cost. I think everything is economic. I think that leads to students struggling a lot, and they do not really seek support because of that. Was it also the ego part that all people are afraid to go out? Or free to seek help”. (Participant3)

Participant 5 explained with regards to the Question: “those who are kind of in more poverty-stricken areas or those who cannot afford a generator, for example, that inequality might, kind of sort of provide a disservice to those who unable to afford the privileges that those who can afford a generator, for example.” (Participant 5)

Participant 7 explained: “And also, financial support because I receive my allowances, My monthly allowances from my parents.” “No, like I receive, I have a bursary, but they also give me money”. (Participant 7)

Participant 9 answered the Question: “Like in first year, he was an excellent student. Like he got B’s and stuff. But when COVID hit and then we went on online, but they did not have technologies, I would say technology at the moment. For him, it is a barrier for his academic success. But yeah.” “That is so like; he does not have his own space to study and stuff and. Like a laptop or function, a proper functioning laptop to attend the meetings online and stuff.” “Like the financial support, you can get to study because they just decided not in the study because they do not know.” (Participant 9)

Participant 10 explained about Question: “So, for instance, when I was tutoring this year. We had an option to bring in a few pupils for in-person lessons, and a lot of them could not attend because they could not afford a taxi fare to the university campus and back. So, I would say that would be financial, or students were asking me for my first-year notes of the module because they obviously cannot afford to buy themselves. So, I would say that would be the financial barriers or financial restraints which some students could experience. Yes, yeah, I think distance could be a big, big aspect of it as well. Because not everybody can afford accommodation, so if you come from Montague or Robertson. You cannot study at the University without living here. You definitely cannot travel every day. I gave my first-year notes of the module because they obviously cannot afford to buy themselves. So, I would say that would be the financial barriers or financial restraints which some students could experience. Yes. It caused them to stop studying. (Participant 10)

#### **4.3.1.6 Lack of Emotional support**

College-going expectations exemplify a crucial form of emotional connection with the college-going process. In addition, they found parental (family) emotional support to be a significant predictor of positive academic performance (Harper et al., 2020). Furthermore, mutual reciprocity, which is described as a connection in which persons accept each other's point of view and see one another as relative equals, is an essential aspect of the relationship between parents and their late adolescents (Wintre et al., 2011). However, the issue of financial constraint is corroborated by (Seabi, Seedat, Khoza-Shangase & Sullivan, 2014), who came to a similar conclusion, namely that first-year students encounter financial challenges or a lack of adequate financial support, which contributes to the stress of their situation. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds struggle to make friends with those from better socioeconomic backgrounds. It should not be overlooked that their socioeconomic situation influenced the educational chances they had during their school years. When they enter college, high socioeconomic status students continue to have advantages. Some of the interviewees indicated that first-year students from privileged backgrounds are more likely than their peers to have access to resources (Mntuyedwa, 2019). Thus, the participants mentioned the following:

Participant 1 explained: Emotional support. Yes. And like my mom, my mom used to take us to school, fetch us from school and take us to any extracurricula or any

tutoring that we needed. Or if we need to go and buy ink for the printer, she would take us. So, she has always prioritized our education first.” (Participant 1)

Participant 2 explained about emotional support: “And so that was a big hindrance for me in that time. So, despite the fact that I had their support, I did not have the resources so. So that mentally that was a lot, and so mentally, it was an emotionally, it was more challenge of like you know it to overcome that. That mindset of, you know, I can still do this despite not having the resources or despite lacking those resources. Well, like money, for example. You know so. So, she really was supportive in that way in terms of making it as comfortable as possible for me when I went when I started campus. Yeah.” (Participant 2)

Participant 2: “So, in terms of emotional support, they felt that they were always there and even though I did not always, they are actually the first people that I go to besides, well, first, (husband’s name) and then my parents like we.” “Yes, she was very encouraging, like supportive. At that time, she was, she was on campus, so she had already been on campus for a year, so she got into varsity. I think it was about a year before I got into varsity. So, she was now obviously the only one, like I did not really know anyone on campus team, so she was the only one that I knew. So, for the first, like, OK, I was only on campus for two months before COVID, but. She was basically, you know, the one that I would spend my time with, and she would show me around campus. So, in that way, she was really supportive because she kind of, you know, held my hand through was very overwhelming in the beginning, and I was never being to do a school university. And so, you know, I did not want to feel like the newbie on my own kind of.” (Participant 2)

Participant 3 explained: “Help? A lot of people want to seem strong. Last year's do want to seem strong that they have everything in hand. They understand everything, so they feel like me. Also, help means I cannot do something on my own. And I feel, and you feel weak, or you see me. So now people do not want to seem as they can handle their own problem. OK, so that is why they tend not to seek support from the areas of support. So, it was nice we were each other's main supports throughout everything, and you are on your own. I am on my own, but we will call each other. Me and him (my cousin), we really are like talking to each other on the phone all the time, and that helps me sometimes.” (Participant 3)



Participant 7 explained: "I feel like it is an emotional support, I think. Yeah, emotionally. And also, mentally." (Participant 7)

#### **4.3.1.7 Mental health issues:**

Higher education's significant increase has increased worries about students' mental health and well-being and about how well-equipped universities are to serve them. According to studies, most counselling centres and universities cannot handle the number of students who need treatment for mental health conditions. The shortage of counselling hours leads to a significant unmet need among students for mental health therapy (Eloff & Graham, 2020).

Participant 3 said the following concerning mental health issues: "I think also. Mental health. I think most people are right. People are afraid to talk about the mental issues they do. We do get, we do get depressed, but a lot of people are willing to go seek the help for it. "It is making the time for the support, to go, for the free therapy session. Get something off my chest." "I think it is probably even most important." (Participant 3)

University students who do not get enough sleep or whose sleep is of poor quality are more likely to have problems with their physical and mental health. Lack of sleep, in particular, has been linked to lowered immune function, an increase in underlying psychological disorders (particularly anxiety and mood disorders), an increase in the risk of being involved in a car accident, and an increase in the likelihood of engaging in other risky behaviours like substance abuse and unsafe sexual behaviour.(Hartmann & Prichard, 2018).

Participant 6 confirmed the following about her hard times at varsity: "So, I would say it could be like personal issues, more internal issues such as like maybe a family is going through a divorce, or death of a family member can make the student like reluctant to work? And thus, hampering the students' academic success. And I really changed mentally, and like as a person, I changed as well. In my third year, I had an average of, I think, 73%; I just missed the 75% barrier. So yeah, now I work ten times as hard as I did before. So yeah." (Participant 6)

Participant 10 said: “And they could also be mental or mental health barriers.” “Yeah, so, uh, apparently there has been a lot of studies now with the COVID and everybody being inside and still having to do university work that the people's mental health and well beings have declined considerably before this period in time. Afterwards, I was fine, obviously, but I mean people who struggle with their mental health, like depression and bipolar disease. I mean, coming to class every day for them, having to be around people, people with anxiety. I mean, stuff like that must be terrible. So, I think that also contributes quite a lot.” (Participant 10)

Gray, Font, Unrau, and Dawson (2018) found that in the broader perspective and the implications of their study that mental health support and resiliency training in college student populations, resulting in improved academic outcomes and retention rates and possibly teaching lifelong skills to emerge adults who will be better prepared for life after college. As a result, mental health is just as crucial as physical health and can interfere with students' ability to succeed in school.

#### **4.3.1.8 Self-teaching and Covid 19**

When a teacher-controlled setting is replaced by one in which students choose the speed of their learning, the lecturer's function shifts to that of a facilitator, and they may need to conduct less scaffolding (Geng, Lui & Nui, 2019). Buabeng-Andoh (2015) stated that the most significant personnel in implementing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) integrated learning are teaching assistants, lecturers, and professors. They must have the right attitudes regarding ICT to use it effectively in their teaching. Ali (2020) established that students' ideas and aims must be considered because they directly impact their learning space and style. As a result of COVID-19, a previously unheard-of circumstance arose. According to Ali (2020), the pandemic made it difficult for staff, students, and administrators to adopt online learning, even if it was correctly set up and working.

Participant 5 commented about the “self-taught” feel of varsity during the Covid-19 pandemic: I am still learning, mainly online, so I do not really meet the lecturers; I do not really meet the other students, so the fact that my education is still known, I have got to teach myself, it is usually. So, I would say the quality of education, like if you are a lecturer, is kind of umm is not teaching uniform, and that sort of helps you yourself or how you learn personally. That might also hamper your

academic success. I feel like those people might get a more hands-on approach with teaching, able to kind of get a quicker response when they have questions or get more of a university experience with regards to studies and me, for example, who has only studied online. So sometimes, Ummm, for example, if I am doing, I am doing economics as a module which is quite maths-like based umm, and it is quite hard to teach yourself that. like, for example, the lecturer kind of teaches in a different way than you used to.” (Participant 5)

Switching to online learning on a large scale was a challenging and complicated task for education systems. The move also, on a large scale, raised serious concerns about fairness. The individuals who are most likely to make the most of online learning opportunities are those who are highly motivated and have already done some online learning. When going online for the first time, schools and parents should expect a short-term drop in students' grades (Suryaman, Cahyono, Muliansyah, Bustani, Suryani, Fahlevi, Pramono, Purwanto, Purba, Munthe, Ahiong & Harimurti, 2020). Organising digital educational content to fit with existing curricula can be a critical way for students and lecturers to ensure that the opportunities to learn to match the larger educational goals of an education system. It was critical to making content accessible on a wide range of mobile-friendly devices, and the key to good learning is supporting low bandwidth use, including offline solutions (Ali, 2020). The new ideas came with both promises and problems. According to Ngalo-Morrison, (2017), the best way to reach the potential promises and deal with and overcome the related challenges is to involve the key stakeholders. As a result, paying attention to the professor, the students, and the technology is crucial. They gave attention to what had been done through curricula and practices that bring lecturers and students together. Thus, switching from in-person to online learning disrupted students and staff, impacting their academic performance.

Participant 9 said, "I think my barrier was when online sessions just started. There was a bit of adjustment that I had to do. I slacked like in second year. That is all. Because of the online, I got too lazy." "And like you did not really get the feeling when you are studying online. Like first year I was so motivated because of the lectures and tutorials."

"Q: Do you like the face-to-face? PARTICIPANT 9 I prefer it better because they give you the, I feel like the lecturers teach better in person." "Lack of communication because they literally they left us on our own, basically. Because

I think they were also like adjusting to the online learning. So, they just uploaded videos, and they did not really have that. Face-to-face you could say.” (Participant 9)

Working in a well-designed technology-rich environment could result in various positive outcomes (Tieme & Luft, 2001): better ways of interacting with others, changes in teaching styles, better teaching, more motivated students (and maybe lecturers), and better learning for students. The challenge is to reach this potential, which requires the correct view of technology and how it fits together. After decades of adopting the conventional teaching style, accepting a more learner-centred approach posed the most significant barrier. This conclusion is essential since it was expected that the participants would be familiar with technology, yet transitioning from a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach still presented some difficulties (Hartman, Townsend & Jackson., 2019).

Participant 6 mentioned the following: “It would also make me reluctant to work because if the lecturer I did have a lecturer actually like that, and I am not going to point fingers, but I., so when I studied law of persons as an undergrad, the lecturer would give such little information. That it would be the last thing I study for the day, and I would be very reluctant to go to class as well.” (Participant 6)

#### **4.3.1.9 Lack of time management**

Before university, students had unrealistic expectations about the time they would spend on their studies and felt ready for more independent study, but university appeared different for them (van der Meer et al., 2010). Time-management-challenged students fall behind in school and other activities (Abraham et al., 2018). Goals, planning, and prioritisation are time management. Students must multitask, learn discipline-specific abilities, and participate in other academic activities and research. Van der Meer, Jansen and Torenbeek (2010) believed that students' time management issues are more related to a lack of awareness of organising their university studies than to high expectations or a lack of effort. They found that some university lecturers fail to recognise the necessity for first-year students to be adequately introduced to what is expected of them and how to organize their studies in a university setting. (van der Meer et al., 2010). As a result, students reportedly

struggled with scheduling time for constant revision before exams. Many students had never experienced so much unplanned time between classes. For example, they understood that a reading list did not mean they had to read everything and "know" everything. Planning for studying was a major issue. Others noted that first-year students struggled to understand the increased obligations, the level of independent study necessary, the seeming lack of support in their transition to university, and the study and time management requirements (van der Meer et al., 2010). According to (Qalehsari et al., 2017), academic motivation is a student's internal drive to learn. To succeed, students need academic motivation and time management skills.

Participants 4 and 8 echoed these sentiments and mentioned that:

Participant 4, regarding lack of time management: "I think time management, so it is. So basically, one thing that I have personally experienced when I was first year is that I basically realised that my time management skills were not that well; that is one thing that you really need to have, basically, to ensure your academic success, so the workload can get so much at times. And if you have no sense of being organized and planning your time, well, you might fall behind; once you fall behind, it is really difficult to even catch up." (Participant 4)

Participant 8 said, "OK, the first one is, is my time management. Like my strategy is about time. I know that when I work. When I work at night, I am always tired, tired I cannot really concentrate. So, what I normally do is that I wake up early in the hours, maybe around 5 am or 6 am and do my work so that I can sleep at night. And do whatever I want to do, go out with friends, but that is my first strategy, and the second one is working. I am really failing on this one, but I am trying to do my work, like my assignments, on time. I do not know; maybe I have been like demotivated, so I even like emailed the counselling thingy from school, and then they told me when I can join. Doing so, their work was really too much for me. But, I am trying. I have those two strategies do my work on time and always wake up. And it is about it is all about time for me." (Participant 8)

Time management may encourage students to maximize their time, which is related to how much they value their time. Maximising their time may pose a risk (Aeon & Aguinis, 2017). Aeon and Aguinis (2017) said that time management encourages systematic time accounting. Young people's academic time management may change in the university. Without considering time commitments like practice and training for

varsity sports, transitioning to a non-structured schedule is stressful. Thus, students need lifelong learning skills like time management to complete their courses and succeed academically.

#### **4.3.1.10 Peer pressure**

Both negative and positive peer pressure exists. Ngalo-Morrison, (2017) study found that participants had found that it helped their studies by picking friends with similar aims as they helped them stay focused and avoid negative peer pressure. They also found that degree and nature of one's interaction with the campus's primary socialisation agents determined the university's impact. Peers influence every area of the student's development (Guerin et al., 2015). Upon reflection on Ngalo-Morrison's (2017) study, it was found that the degree to which and the nature of one's interaction with the key agents of socialisation on campus will decide a significant portion of the impact that university has will have on one's life.

Participant 4 stated that: “So that is the one. And then I would say another one could be peer pressure. And so, I think that is a very important fact as well because. Um, that might mislead them. Basically, peer pressure might mislead or hamper your success because if you fall in with the wrong crowd, you have the wrong friends and. for example, when you are supposed to be in class, and they say, but OK, let us go somewhere else and do whatever, and these days the students or even anyone, any young person, you are so. You have this thing that you want to fit in with the crowd, so if you have the wrong friends, obviously, that might mislead you totally.” (Participant 4)

Participant 6 similarly stated that she fell in with the wrong crowd: “Then, in my second year, I basically got involved with the wrong people. I passed a few of my modules, but I ended up actually failing my second year, and this was in 2019 and in 2020

Participant 8 similarly mentioned a few instances of negative peer pressure and its effects of it: “Use peer pressure. You do have the support from home. They told you, my child, please go to for, for an instance, I am from the Eastern Cape originally. So, when you leave home, you do have that Community support system. Oh, please go. Make us proud. Secure the degree. And then when you get here,

it is a different situation. It is a different environment. You are meeting different people. Like there is no, we are not conditioned on how to. Think. Now you even get to learn more about your own self, but it can sometimes be negative and can also sometimes it be like a positive peer pressure. But the one that is a barrier is the negative peer pressure". (Participant 6)

Peers are the only powerful influence that can affect every facet of a person's development (Ngalo-Morrison, 2017). Therefore we found that students having to deal with their new environment also had entered some peer groups, leading to new behaviours (Mntuyedwa, 2019). Negative peer pressure led to poor time management and unquestionably impacted on academic progress.

#### **4.3.1.11 Distractions example: Jobs Part-time and Full-time**

Academic perseverance is a student's capacity to stay focused despite distractions, setbacks, and hurdles. Academic endurance is crucial when students face novel and challenging activities. It can also mean "grit" or perseverance toward a goal (Amadi, 2021). There are too many distractions in the home environments of some students, making it impossible for them to study effectively (Mthimunye, 2018; Schmidt, 2020)

Participant 3 explains how many distractions they encountered while trying to cope with the university workload "distraction, I guess. I think we get too distracted. Caught up by other stuff. But lead us not focus on our studies. For example, I know students that are having part-time jobs. Then they start focusing on the job way more than their studies." Yeah, for example, but I have seen some student-athletes. Even focus on the sport way more than the Academics. And I do not want to mention names; a lot of players tend not to feel like they cannot succeed academically because they just think they have everything they need but that is sports comes first, and then academics comes second. Yes, I do know you players have noticed that they put. As much as I play basketball, I enjoyed as well. I have school come first and at the end of the day. And they tend to put the basketball in first when they should not put it first in some instances." (Participant 3)

Participant 7 echoes participant 3's explanations on how many distractions they encountered while trying to cope with the university workload:

“Uh, a learning environment can be a barrier to students besides the inadequate community support. I think a learning environment can make or break the learning experience. Some environments are busy places with many distractions. And those distractions do not necessarily make the most for conducive environment to concentrate on student learning, which creates a barrier fully in expanding their schools. Question: So, can I just recap there? You are saying that learning environments can make and break a student? Yes, without this, with the distractions that are not conducive for learning.” (Participant 7)

#### **4.3.1.12 Lack of motivation**

Success in higher education depends on several interrelated elements, one of which is intrinsic motivation. One of the main reasons for high dropout rates in higher education is a lack of motivation, as demonstrated by the research of Schneider and Preckel (2017). In addition, Meens, Bakxa, Klimstrab and Denissenb (2019) argued that intrinsic drive is critical in determining whether or not a student will complete their degree. Students require motivation because it sparks their curiosity, ensures their success, and guides them toward their academic objectives (Yunus & Paimin, 2019). Therefore, students who lack intrinsic motivation have the worst learning practices and academic achievement. Participants 2 and 3 said they experienced a lack of motivation when changes were happening at the university due to unforeseen circumstances.

Participant 3 stated, "Um, the lack of motivation and encouragement. Um, not having the necessary like resources, so like not having a laptop or Wi-Fi or? I know that some students struggle to complete test and assignments. Because they do not have access to the needed resources." (Participant 3)

Participant 2 agreed with the following: “A lot of students, I mean, we have over like 80 students in our group that I know of and probably all of them, I would say, are working and studying. At the moment, I am working full-time and studying full-time. And so. I think, yeah, that is a big, big barrier for a lot of young people that are trying to educate themselves and trying to get a degree so that they can, you know, grow further in the field of study, but then also having to choose or also not choose, but they forced to work because I mean bursaries that we get nowadays and NSFAS literally only pays us a stipend of R1500 and for the month now if you



are living. And that you can literally only buy groceries for the week you.”  
(Participant 2)

#### **4.3.1.12 Scared of being a failure**

A significant amount of research has been conducted to investigate the relationship between the fear of failure and academic engagement and achievement, as well as techniques to diminish this fear to improve one's performance in learning (Choi, 2021). It has been claimed that procrastinators use their fear of failure to preserve their value from injury (Abdi Zarrin, Sohrab & Paixo et al., 2020). Other studies have also addressed the fear of failure as a possible motivation for procrastination. Self-esteem was the connecting factor between the fear of failure and procrastination. It would appear that those who have a low sense of self-esteem when they fail regard themselves to be destroyed in their totality, and because of this, they prefer to take no action because of a fear of failure (Abdi Zarrin et al., 2020).

Participant 3 said the following: “Initially before I came to university. I had the idea that. That is near impossible. That everyone just feels everyone. As much as you are ready, you will never be ready. I idea because I had a lot, and you have so many family members that have not finished their degrees or dropped out, so I think I am one of the few that still like in university. That is how they do. I am doing well for myself academically, so I was scared. I was, I was afraid to be a failure in the eyes of the family and stuff. Because I was in high school, I got a lot of pressure.” (Participant 3)

Participant 6 emphatically stated the following: “Failure is not an option.”  
(Participant 6)

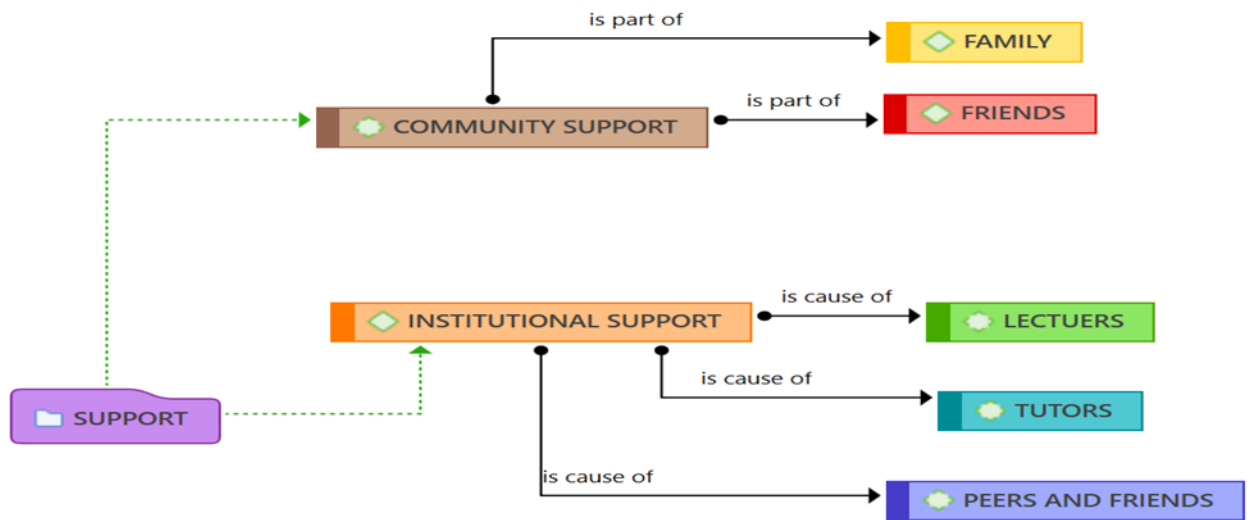


Fig. 4.4 ATLAS.Ti 2022: Support Structure for Students at university



#### **4.4 Research results addressing study research question 2:**

##### **How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of community support on academic readiness?**

##### **4.4.1 Academic support: Peer and fellow students**

Social support created the connectivity, networks, and motivation children needed to succeed academically (Savitz-Romer et al. 2009). They suggested tutoring, learning groups, and other methods. Savitz-Romer et al. (2009) discovered that students are most likely to benefit from academic support measures if they have social support. Now is the time to study academic support and learning. In the first year of college or university, when student achievement is uncertain and can be changed by the institution, support and research are crucial to success in and out of the classroom (Tinto 2012).

The following is what the participants said about their fellow students and peers support they received:

Participant 5 discussed how peer support had assisted her in building a connection, or more specifically, a network that inspires her and others when they are dealing with the same challenges. “Within my degree, so I would say majority of my community supporters with regards to academic readiness comes from my friends who are studying. So, they provide me with support and understanding when I am stressed and when I need to like vent about university struggles. They are my major sources of support, but again there are not any in my specific degree. So, then majority of my friends in the science faculty so they provide more of a listening ear and maybe an understanding ear.” (Participant 5)

Participant 6 indicated that they occasionally shared unpleasant experiences so that everyone may benefit from them: “So, I think all of that support. Umm. Contributed towards my academic readiness from my community as well as my friends as well. My friends would always tell me, “Do not beat yourself up about it. It is fine”. Like so long as you learn from your mistakes, it is fine.” (Participant 6)

Participant 7 said that he formed a study group with his pals to share knowledge and support one another, and he would consult them for guidance. “Umm, as I have said, like I have the most supportive parents, family and friends, and they always motivate me and also my friends are also like my study group members, like we have, like a group where we study together, and we exchange, like our like

we empower each other, and we exchange knowledge and ideas, so I feel like they are the most supportive people for academic as they are the most people who support me, my friends.” (Participant 7)

Participant 10 discovered he was a resource or motivational role model for others to learn from: “I would say it was. It was quite a good influence. Because most of the time people were asking me, what are you studying, what is your plans? And you know, oh, I know this guy, if you ever need any help with the module or. I have this module myself, and you know, I can always. To help you out or something like that. So, there was definitely a lot of support in terms of the academics and the stuff.” (Participant 10)

#### **4.4.2 Tutors and graduate assistants**

Academic assistance includes formal and informal tactics that build, improve, and encourage students' subject matter and skill mastery through organized activities, structures, policies, and expectations. Language, writing, and tutoring programs help the more significant number of admitted kids succeed academically. According to the Council on Higher Education (2014), South African universities launched academic assistance programs to help underprepared students benefit from lectures and tutorials (Tanga & Maphosa, 2018).

Participant 2 explained that her tutors were students like her, who spoke to her on a level she could understand and from whom she could learn: “When you join your modules, you have your tutors. Um, they make it very, um. Like, uh, what is the word? You know, they dial the students all the time to book consultations if they are struggling with anything.” (Participant 2)

Participants 4, 5, 7 and 10 claimed that they used the tutors very often, that they were instrumental, and that they helped them succeed academically. Participant 4 commented: “I think it definitely helped because it played a huge role in my success as a student, so. Even my tutor that I had during first year, they provided me with such great support throughout the year, even of the first year, not just the first year specifically. And then that is basically also mainly why I decided to tutor as well.” (Participant 4)

Participant 5 commented: “And like with me asking the tutors, yes, definitely they were very, very helpful. If they did not know themselves like an answer to one of my questions, they would then ask the lecturer because they would usually get a faster response than me and get back to me within the same day. So, they were super, super helpful. Whenever I needed them, they would be there to answer questions to give me advice. Or just seek advice themselves and then pass it on to me.” (Participant 5)

Participant 7 commented: “I think they do. Because they, uh. They even offer like academic support programs for each faculty, and also, here, there are tutors that are being offered for each course. They even have tutors for each module, and they have like consultation hours for. If you want to consult with the lecturer, they provide support whereby they allow lectures to open consultation time for these students to consult.” (Participant 7)

Participant 10 commented: “The lectures and tutors. Graduate assistants. Typing assistance. All of the above I have. I have used this and even fellow tutors. And so, supporting each other also.”(Participant 10)

#### **4.4.3 Academic support: Institutional support**

Academic assistance is often defined as informal and formal tactics that empower and improve students' subject matter and skill development through organized activities, procedures, policies, and expectations (Savitz-Romer, Jager-Hyman, & Coles, 2009). In discussions with students, faculty mentorship and teaching outside of the classroom is crucial to their academic success, satisfaction, and persistence (Rayle et al., 2006). Moolla and Lazarus (2014) found that family, teachers, and friends should provide support during the first year of study.

**Institutional support:** Altermatt (2019) claimed it was unclear if perceived, received, or both academic supports predicted positive academic success. Students value academic support to go through college, so this study must examine perceived and received support. Altermatt (2019) states that once students perceive academic support, was linked to college students' beliefs that their peers care about education and respect success. However, friends' answers to students' academic struggles and accomplishments are academic support.

**Directed support: financial, intellectual, social, and economical:** Valuable support services blend intellectual, social, and economic benefits. These interventions improve student accomplishment when organized, targeted, and complete (Cooper, 2010). Magerman (2011) study found that younger students were less likely to seek academic support, putting their performance and possible withdrawal at risk (Magerman, 2011). Social support would create the channels, connectedness, and motivation students need to succeed academically (Jeffreys, 2015). Learning groups, tutoring, and other techniques help. Social support provides the framework for academic support initiatives (Magerman, 2011). Participants about their lecturers made the following comments as part of Community support,

Participant 1 said she appreciated the extra care lecturers offered first-year students since it showed they cared: “that extra like concern that like lecturers sometimes they have for their students I think is important.” (Participant 1)

Participant 3 indicated that she relied on her lectures and valued them as excellent sources of knowledge: “I actually count lecturers and teachers as academic support, and I think of Lecturers and Tutors as aids.” “Lecturers and. Tutorials, tutorials, tutors, and tutorials. OK, it is a good thing” (Participant 3)

Participant 4 echoed participant 1 opinion: “So, with regards to tutors and lecturers, I think they really did, as they were also ready throughout and like I have realized that the lecture is really to go out of their way, basically to provide you with the necessary support that you need. So, like I mentioned, when I failed the one module, I could go to my accounting lecturer, and she actually sat down and gave me advice” (Participant 4)

Participant 6 found that when she was having trouble understanding concepts, she discovered that consultations with lecturers and researching the online library were helpful: “I never used like the support group systems on campus. When I was answering these questions, I realized I never made use of the support group system. I would always go home and vent at home. So, I made use of the online library, and I also consulted with lecturers if I needed clarification on something or I was unsure of something, or I was struggling with a specific umm task in the specific module.” (Participant 6)

Participant 9 felt that when they were teaching face-to-face, he would pay more attention to lectures: “Q: Do you like the face-to-face classes? Participant 9 I prefer it better because they give you the, I feel like the lecturers teach better in person.” (Participant 9)

#### **4.4.4 Family support**

Participant 1 said that given that her parents are very involved and that she previously attended home school, it was essential for her to have their support. “I definitely think they have played a major role in that. So, my education has always been a priority in like my parents’ eyes, so if we needed anything or. We have to do anything. And also, because I do not drive my mommy, literally. She takes us everywhere. She takes us to the university. If you need to come home, she will come with us. So just having that support, which I think is very important when being at university enrolled at university.” (Participant 1)

Participant 2 explains why she valued her family's support so highly: “So in terms of emotional support, they felt that they were always there and even though I did not always. Even though they might not have always been able to, they were still there to sort of, you know, support me, and say, you know, you can do it. And I always thought that I could go to them. They are actually the first people that I go to besides, well, first Sean and then my parents like we.” (Participant 2)

Participant 8 said the support of her family kept her motivated: “A family is my number one supporter. Having your mother call you and tell you I am really proud of you. Maybe when you send her your transcript, and you get that warm love from her or your friends or your sisters, that, ah, you are doing so well. Keep up the good work. So that motivates me to keep on like learning, to want to make them more proud of me and to make myself even more proud. OK, I hope I answered your question.” (Participant 8)

### **4.5 Research results addressing study research question 3:**

#### **4.5 How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of academic readiness on academic success of undergraduate students?**

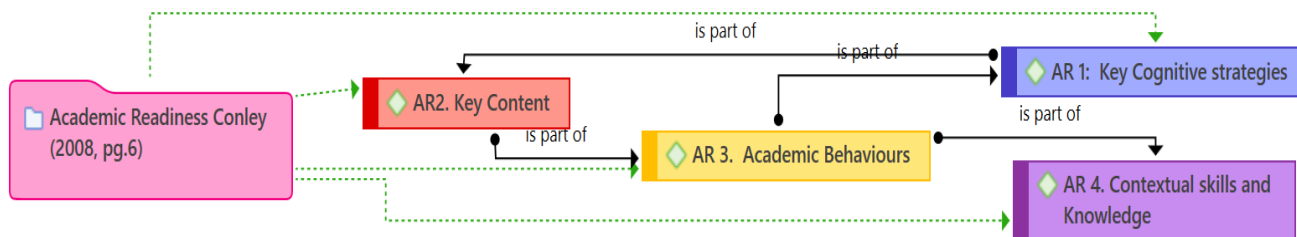


Fig. 4.5 ATLAS.TI representation of Conley's 2008: Academic readiness model

When questioning the participants about academic readiness, the following themes emerged from their answers. They explained their understanding of academic readiness and whether being academically ready had prepared them for university and their studies. About eighty per cent said they were not academically ready for university in their first year, the first semester. It was evident that they all needed help or assistance of some kind. When we looked at Academic readiness in the literature review, we found Conley's model of 2008 described it as themes or four legs: Key cognitive strategies, critical content knowledge, Academic habit or behaviours and contextual skills and knowledge. Here follows a short description of the themes and corresponding responses from the participants.

**4.5.1 Key cognitive strategies:** The growth of entering students' cognitive and metacognitive capacities is readiness. Students can become aware of their thoughts and recognize their problem-solving abilities when their mental and metacognitive abilities are strengthened. They can select appropriate thinking and problem-solving techniques, match proper study techniques to particular test and assignment formats, and more carefully assess the depth of their learning and the value of their education. Precision, interpretation, analysis, correctness, problem-solving, and reasoning are a few of these. Those who teach introductory college courses have often and categorically said that student facilities that offer these tactics are essential to academic success.

Participant 8 agreed that university systems and initiatives aided in her academic performance: "That is like basically to help us beat the procrastination that I mentioned earlier as a barrier. And then I also. Uh, I also applied to be one of next year's Peer facilitators and all I recently heard about the ... I do not know the FYOs like. Like the mentorship program that is made available to face the way like 30-



year ago, and postgrad students' mentor first-year students. I also recently discovered that, and I also applied for the STEP program. I think they had a function, and then I went to attend, but unfortunately, I made it to their control group, which means like when they have aggressive. Researchers they e-mail us to help them with those researchers." (Participant 8)

Participant 6 agreed that it was undoubtedly, in order to know where one is going, it is essential to assess one's progress: "It was, yeah. It was very informing and something I am it actually made me proud of myself speaking about my experience and helping somebody else." (Participant 6)

Participant 7 stated what their learning entailed: "oh, it is being equipped with it is skills that are required in the academic environment. I do not know. It means that students have, are fully equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge that are required in the academic content." (Participant 7)

Participant 8 stated the importance of their education and the depth of their learning to alter course: "I redirected my focus. I did not focus more on the module; I started to focus on other modules of importance." (Participant 8)

**4.5.2 Key content knowledge:** It is critical to comprehend specific categories of content knowledge. We must outline the measures of college preparedness that outline the necessary subject knowledge associated with college success results from various studies. The one academic talent most closely linked to college performance has been widely identified as academic writing skills, but each subject area's "major ideas" are also essential tenets.

Participant 4 commented that had she known the subject she failed would cause her so many problems, she would have concentrated more on that subject: "Basically, going that extra mile to ensure that students are aware of these things and. Um, how important it actually is to pass all your modules or yeah, I do not know what other faculties, what the rules or regulations are at. There are no electives for the accounting degree. So yeah, everything happened from your first year up until your final year. There are literally no electives. You have to do everything as is, and yeah, that is what you are stuck with." (Participant 4)

Participant 5 stated that if she had been given a breakdown of the prerequisite subject knowledge needed to take those topics in university, she would have been more regimented in her high school learning.: “Being told, listen, this is the type of degree. This is what you are going to be learning. This is what you can do with this degree. If I had been told that in like grade 11, which is where majority of people apply to universities, I would have been more structured and kinder of focused my attention on what to study because I always knew I was ready to study just as I said I was unsure of what to study. “I think if, if universities had kind of given a more in-depth breakdown as to what each degree consists of because when you think of a BA, you think of writing you think of oh I am good at English.” (Participant 5)

Participant 6 stated that the first year was a rerun of her Matric year of high school “Yes, basically. So, when it came to learning math or QSC is the module, I was very like, oh, why am I studying this? Like this is basically like in high school, you know, past learning experiences with math was not like the greatest.” (Participant 6)

Participant 7 explained how she was not academically prepared for varsity by breaking down the term "academic readiness, I think being ready, umm, let me just break the word ready like being ready means that you are prepared. It means that you are equipped with whatever you want to achieve. It means that you are ready to do something. Uhm, I would describe academic readiness it is being equipped with it is skills that are required in the academic environment. It means that students have, are fully equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge that are required in the academic content.” (Participant 7)

Participant 9 and Participant 6 concurred and said that his first-year experiences were an extension of high school: “The first year for the extended program for the B. Comm Accounting. It is mostly like you are doing your high school work, you could say.” (Participant 9)

Participant 10 wanted to learn more about the subject and have a more realistic feel to the tutorials: “I think that having like understanding something a bit more practical, so for example, just discussing something in a tutorial instead of having to write the tutorial every single week. And then having to study for other tests and stuff it could just because then you are also understanding the work if you are if

you are having a discussion with somebody and they can challenge your views and your opinions on this certain topic” (Participant 10)

#### **4.5.3 Academic habits/behaviours:**

The student's academic success is a collection of intelligent self-management techniques. These include using study groups, being aware of one's actual performance, managing one's time well, being persistent, and having smart study techniques. Everyone anticipates that students will demonstrate self-control, high self-awareness, and intentionality.

Participant 1 believed that her work ethic required her to put in more effort.: “I knew like I needed to work harder than I did in High School so. I really like gave the university my best effort. I am still giving it my best effort. And I just my work ethic has completely changed compared to high school, obviously. And. I am achieving what I am setting out for myself. Yeah.” (Participant 1)

Participant 5 stated that she arrived at university with the intention of settling down for the next five years and making the most of these opportunities academically: She still had a problem with her degree choices: “Um, I think I will describe this as when you yourself are able to settle down, and you yourself decide to dedicate the next plus-minus four years, always like kind of the average time of your life, towards an academic sphere or realm. So, when you no longer need to be pushed or motivated, but you yourself have an internal drive and dedication. That kind of determines whether you are ready to achieve academically or you are ready to put that time in to achieve academically. So, I was very ready to study, but I was not understanding what I was wanting to study fully. So, for me, like I changed degrees, so I went from BA to a B. Comm Law degree after my first year of study. So, I think. I was academically ready. I was just a bit academically unsure of what I was ready to study if that makes sense.” (Participant 5)

Participant 6 regarding how she handled helping other pupils who were having a hard time understanding concepts: “I would be part with the Community support group on at university, and the module I would undertake was maybe MAN 131 or Management 132, and if there is a student struggling with management 132, they can come to me, and I will show them, you know. Or they can talk to me about it or something” (Participant 6)

Participant 7 said this about setting goals and aiming for achievable grades:

“And I always set goals like before the semester starts. I always set goals in my journal then aim for grades that I want to achieve for each module, but it really helps me a lot because when I am working, when I am studying, I know that I am studying towards getting marks for each module and stuff. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 about the Learning environments: I think a learning environment can make or break the learning experience. Some environments are busy places with many distractions. And those distractions do not necessarily make the most for conducive environment to concentrate on student learning, which creates a barrier fully in expanding their, their schools.” (Participant 7)

Participant 10 said that if you do not put in the effort, you will probably struggle and fail: “And also say just being able to because I had to ask you, obviously you, you are learning things, but you are also being taught how to study. And how to prepare for a test and so on. So, if you are not taught that as well as other students, then you are definitely going to have a bit of a problem, and you are going to be on the back foot, to say the least.” (Participant 10)

Participant 10 If you put in the effort, you will be successful and advance in your academics: “And that you would need to study further a bit. So, then I started studying more seriously, and I also started to learn the work. Not just to pass a test but to be able to understand the work and also implement it further.” (Participant 10)

#### **4.5.4 Contextual skills and knowledge**

Studies have shown that cultural assimilation to college and application was linked with the complexity of the background knowledge. The admission process involves a lot of technical material, whereas the first year in college involves a crucial cultural component. First-generation college applicants and students are particularly ill-equipped to handle issues of this kind. For pupils to be prepared with these abilities before attending college, it is a crucial aspect that needs to be cultivated and strengthened by the senior secondary school program (Bonquin et al., 2017).

Participant 1 relates the significance of understanding what you want and using what you learned in high school: “OK. So, then encouragement of like completing

your high school career so that you can go to university and get a degree. Um, and that is it; I think having youth programs and community drives which offer bursaries to students.” (Participant 1)

Participant 1 on the importance of bursaries and scholarships and the potential contributions of the educational system: “What you had learnt on high school, yes, so I know that like in like. I know that, like our community, yeah. And our community like Sanzaf and Oasis, small businesses that offer like bursaries to students and then they have a graduate programme after you have like completed your studies, which I think is very encouraging for students knowing that the financial burden is ticked off. I feel like the responsibility lies with the education system that we have.” (Participant 1)

Participant 3, regarding how crucial it is to get the economics right so that students can focus on and engage with the subject matter: “I think it is probably even most important. You like financial support reports. Should be no more because you got everything. You have the financial support, the economics Umm. I think it is. Heavy, OK. Yeah, I would think of having everything you need. For you to succeed academically, but also accompanied by the mental aspect that you know what is expected of you to succeed in the university or academics.” (Participant 3)

Participant 7 gets an additional allowance from their parents and has supportive friends: “And also, financial support because I receive my allowances, my monthly allowances from my parents and friends, and they always motivate me and also my friends are also like my study group members, like. We have, like, a group where we study together, and we exchange, like us, like we empower each other, and we exchange knowledge and ideas, so I feel like they are the most supportive people for academics as they are the most people who support me, my friends.” (Participant 7)

Participant 9 regarding the uncertainties of college life and self-doubt regarding academic aptitude: “Because if for me, if you are not really to go study and you force yourself to study you, you are not going to enjoy what you are doing. So, if you do not enjoy what you are doing, you are going to; you are not. You are not going to do good enough for you. We like apply when they say they are going to apply for university and stuff most students does not do not know about. Like the

financial support, you can get to study because they just decided not in the study because they do not know.” (Participant 9)

Participant 10 said that a solid foundation and discipline got him through his studies up to this point: “I would say discipline. You need to be quite disciplined. Coming from high school, it is, it is a bit of a big shift because the work gets much more. And you obviously you need to have a good fundamental basis.” (Participant 10)

#### 4.6 Research results addressing study research question 4:

#### 4.6 What other factors contributed to the student’s successful completion of their undergraduate studies?

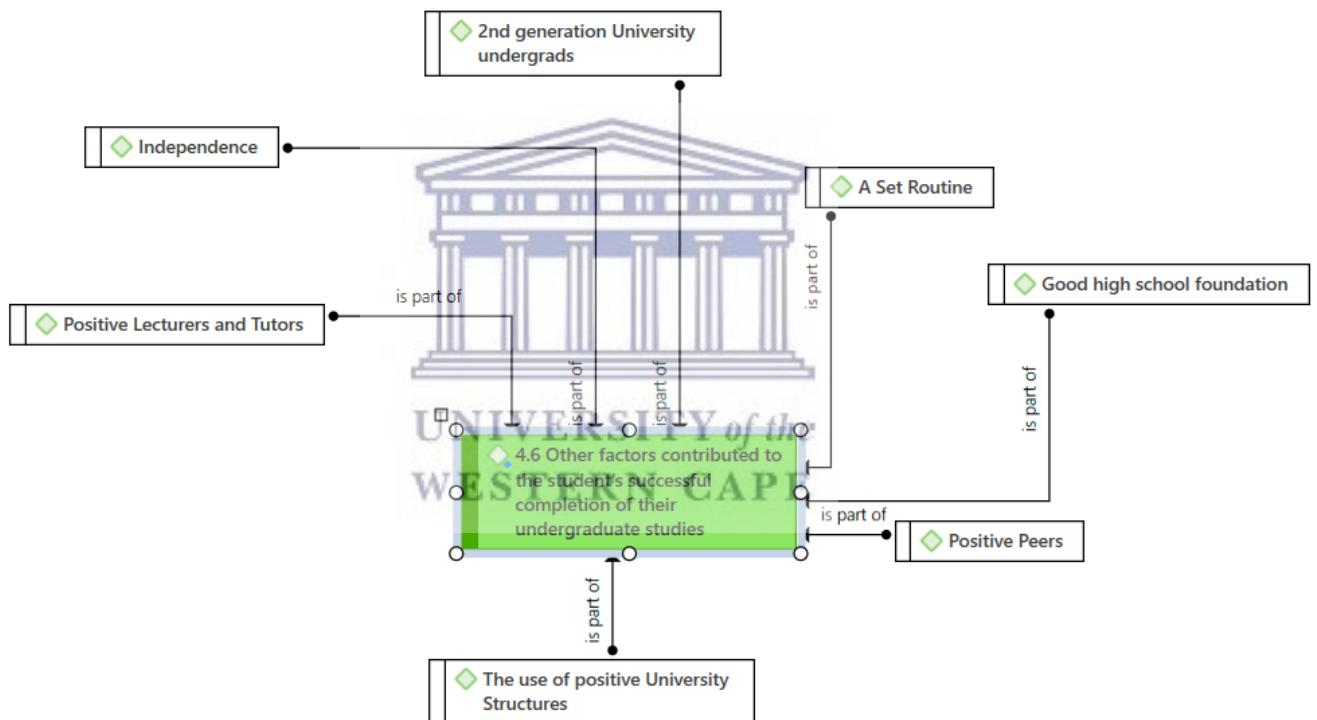


Fig. 4.6 ATLAS.Ti 2022 Other factors that contributed to the students’ successful completion of their undergraduate studies.

Besides hard work and dedication, these are the additional factors that contributed to the student's ability to finish their undergraduate degree. They mentioned that they were 2nd generation University undergrads and had a predetermined schedule. They had support on an emotional level and assistance from their families. They accredited their success to a solid academic grounding from high school, their positive peers,

positive Lecturers and Tutors and positive University Structures, and positive environments for Learning Independence.

#### **4.6.1 2nd generation university undergraduates.**

Participant 1 claimed that she saw this as her time to prove to her parents that she could do what they had done before her: “They always say that like you only have one chance at university. And my dad explained his experience of like he did not always go to lectures, and he was on the verge of like failing a module or failing this the year or something. And it was his final year. And so, before and like beforehand, I knew, like I needed to work harder than I did in High School so. I really like gave the university my best effort. I am still giving it my best effort. And I just my work ethic has completely changed compared to high school, obviously. And. I am achieving what I am setting out for myself. (Participant 1)

Participant 7 acknowledges being inspired by her mother, who is a teacher: My mom is a teacher, so I think she understands. He is very strict when it comes to umm. My mom is a teacher, so I feel like she is the most understanding person when it comes to academics and stuff because she knows how school is and yeah. (Participant 7)

#### **4.6.2. A set routine**

Participants said that sticking to a set routine had ensured their academic success: Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 10 had a set routine, calendar, and timetable.

Participant 1: “Yeah, so I have a set routine. And then also I have a diary where I write down all of my modules in the work that I need to complete for the week, and I tick it off. Um, and then I have. It is a to-do list. I have printed out like September printed out and like with different days and like the test and like yeah, calendar basically up on my wall. And then, I have a timetable of all my different modules as well. Um, and then I have my files all like with all of my work in a bookshelf, (Participant 1)

Participant 2 on attending classes: So, I always made sure I stayed in the classes. And I think I have only ever not submitted one, like one or two things. OK, so I always make sure I submit my work. I submit my thoughts. I do not always go over the course material, but I always watch the lectures like in the course material in terms of like before the time but. And then, obviously, I work on that timetable. I

take note of the course outline, and they normally give like a breakdown of how many hours you need, for the module, for example. And then I would sort of like. Break it up and apply like those hours, you know, to each. Like for instance, if it is an assignment, then they say, OK, you need to apply like, you know, three or four hours of study time to this, you know, then I am kind of like try and stick to that. (Participant 2)

Participant 3 on a daily schedule: I have made like a daily schedule, so I have a schedule for three days of the week, but I found it is finished here as I tried to update it. So, I always try to stick to the schedule as much as possible, but also give myself a few times as well. I have a schedule a weekly schedule. Today and on Monday, you know, we do this on Tuesday. So, let us say life happens. What you do, I change. This I tried to give myself more free time, I tried to move my time around, so I do, and so I am on top of everything. Because it is hard to be on top of everything, but I try to go on top of most things that I can be. (Participant 3)

Participant 5 has a calendar: Yeah, I am quite prepared to all like have a weekly calendar as well as a monthly calendar. Then my weekly calendar will kind of show me what I need to get done this week, and then it will help me. The monthly one will then help me set up for the following weeks and what I need to achieve and buy when to give myself enough time to do well in each. Each task with each activity that I am required. Um, so I am pretty prepared for what is to come and our plan strategies and how to achieve what I want. I think time management. Also, I plan my time quite well, and I ensure they have enough study time when it comes to testing exams and just learning content. (Participant 5)

Participant 7 has a study timetable: Study timetable and which helps me to organize my work and manage my time. And I always set goals like before the semester starts. I always set goals to on my journal then Aiming is like grades that I want to achieve for each module, but it really helps me a lot because when I am working, when I am studying, I know that I am studying towards getting these marks for each module and stuff. So, I set goals I, and I have like a study timetable which helped me organize my work and manage my time. (Participant 7)

Participant 8 basically summarises all of the other Participants' comments concerning a set routine: OK, the first one is, is my time management. Like my strategy is about time. I know that I when I work. When I work at night, I am always



tired; I cannot really concentrate. So, what I usually do is that I wake up early in the hours, maybe around 5 am or 6 am and do my work so that I can sleep at night. And do whatever I want to do, go out with friends, but that is my first strategy, and the second one is working. I am really failing on this one, but I am trying to do my work, like my assignments, on time. I do not know; maybe I have been like demotivated, so I even like emailed the counselling thingy from school, and then they told me when I can join. Doing so, their work was really too much for me. But yeah, I am trying. I have those two strategies do my work on time and always wake up. And it is about it is all about time for me. (Participant 8)

#### **4.6.3 A good high school foundation**

All participants agreed that having an excellent high school foundation assisted them in achieving academic success.

Participant 1 says that coming from previously disadvantaged schools plays a significant role in your academic success: “Uhm, so I was doing at a really good high school, and I was, I was surrounded by literally the smartest of people. Like, it was insane; I did not. I was not like. Obviously, in primary school, I was like really, I did really well in primary school, and you come to high school. It was a whole different environment. I will honestly say that high school was harder than university. Uh, yeah, it is a different environment. Even though I had the best time, I do adapt, coming from like it is a primary school that is like considered to be. Um, let us say a majority of Coloured people and then coming into a majority White environment that I think plays a role. Um, at, you know, at high school, it did play a role.” (Participant 1)

Participant 3 on how high schools do not prepare you for college and that is what he needed to overcome: “high school does not prepare you for university. The levels are far different, and there is a big gap. OK, and it causes dropouts. Or that causes people to extend their studies the year of studies?” (Participant 3)

Participant 4 had to overcome the big jump from high school to university: “Because academic readiness is a huge effect on whether a student is successful or not because, like I mentioned before, from school to university, it is a very big jump. And again, it immediately requires you to grow up.” (Participant 4)

#### 4.6.4 Positive peers

All of the participants reaffirmed that they and their fellow students needed a campus support system; connecting with others who are going through the same thing was helpful and encouraging.

Participant 1: “And also like my friends, like I really like my best friend, we always try to encourage each other and also associating yourself with friends who are work oriented. So, there is a balance between studies, social and academic work, so we will do like study dates together or like just trying to help each other out there.” (Participant 1)

Participant 2: “So in that way, she was really supportive because she kind of, you know, held my hand through it. It was very overwhelming in the beginning, and I was nervous being at school/university. And so, you know, I did not want to feel like the newbie on my own, kind of”. (Participant 2)

Participant 3: “You measure like yourself against them if they are not studying. If they are studying and you are not studying, you should ask yourself, why are not you studying? Why are not you putting the work in? I got a, yeah, a good community around me and I have friends that are training me to stay committed to my studies. I made good. I tried to make good friends.” (Participant 3)

Participant 4: “and then actually, one of the friends in our WhatsApp group that we had; she basically experienced the exact same thing. So, I had someone to talk to, someone that was in the same situation. So yeah, I think she specifically also provided that extra support as well. Yes, especially the WhatsApp group. The friends were the WhatsApp group that we had. So, whenever someone is even struggling with a specific module or whatever, you could just message in the WhatsApp group, and someone would be there to help you or to answer you. Um, yeah.” (Participant 4)

Participant 6: “I cannot forget my best friend at the time. She also motivated me. Sorry to bring this only in now. She also motivated me. She taught me that I cannot keep writing notes down like it does not work.” (Participant 6)

Participant 7: “Also, like my study group members, like we have, like a group where we study together, and we exchange, like our like we empower each other and we

exchange knowledge and ideas, so I feel like they are the most supportive people for academic as they are the most people who support me, my friends.” (Participant 7)

Participant 8: That is like basically to help us beat the procrastination that I mentioned earlier as a barrier. And then I also. Uh, I also applied to be one of next year's Peer facilitators and all I recently heard about the ... I do not know the FYOs like. Like the mentorship program that is made available to face postgrad students and mentor first-year students. I also recently discovered that, and I also applied for the STEP program.” (Participant 8)

#### **4.6.5 Positive lecturers and tutors**

All students named a lecturer or their tutors who had encouraged them, assisted them in making decisions, and positively impacted their academic performance.

Participant 1: “the lecturers, I feel like, ohm, like they are able to communicate better with the students. I failed one of my Eco tests. And I had to do like exceptionally well for the next test. And so, Doctor (name), I think he was the Eco Lecturer. He called all the Eco students in were like, going to fail or they were not going to pass the module, and he called them in what he called, like me specifically, and he emailed us. So just like that extra like concern that like lecturers sometimes they have for their students, I think it is important.” (Participant 1)

Participant 2: “Whenever we needed to consult with the lecturer, I would make you so that if I was struggling with anything in terms of the tutors, I have always had, like, really good tutors, and they have always been available, you know, via WhatsApp or face to face.”

Participant 3: “I actually count lecturers and teachers as academic support, and I think of Lecturers and Tutors as aids. Lectures and. Tutorials, tutorials, tutors, and tutorials. OK, it is a good thing.”

Participant 4: “I think it definitely helped because it played a huge role in my success as a student, so. Even my tutor that I had during first year, they provided me with such great support throughout the year, even of the first year, not just first

year specifically. And then that is basically also mainly why I decided to tutor as well. So, with regards to tutors and lecturers, I think they really did, as they were also ready throughout and like I have realized that the lecturer is really to go out of their way, basically to provide you with the necessary support that you need.” (Participant 4)

Participant 5: “but tutors definitely, umm, especially within my first year. I remember for most of my economics modules. I would make use of them quite often just to clarify certain points, and if I needed extra explanations, I would often message him on WhatsApp and just ask them in the consultation hours to clarify certain things. And like with me asking the tutors, yes, definitely they were very, very helpful. If they did not know themselves like an answer to one of my questions, they would then ask the lecturer because they would usually get a faster response than me and get back to me within the same day. So, they were super, super helpful.” (Participant 5)

Participant 6: “Yes, my finance tutor I did make use of. Yes, me and my friend we went to the EMS faculty and then there were tutor classrooms. And then I still remember she told us you have to sign here in order to show that you guys consulted. So yeah, we. Yeah, I did, yes. The lecturers definitely did meet my expectations in certain modules, whereas in modules like Economics. I would say that the lecturers could have done a little bit more in the sense where students, the failure rate was very high.” (Participant 6)

Participant 7: “I always communicate with my tutors. I feel like they are the most people who understand, and also, they are in the same age group, and it is easier to communicate with them. They always enlighten me whenever like I do not understand something, they are always ready to help me out when I when I do not understand something. I used to I when I do not understand something, I also consult with my lectures, and they always have the same as like my they enlighten me with whatever when I do not understand” (Participant 7)

Participant 8: “My IPS tutor, I have made use of her. She has been very helpful. We can text her via WhatsApp, we can attend her meetings, and we can ask questions. So, I had a problem with one of my group members who was not participative. The student was very inactive, so I joined the class, and I wrote a

message in the chat section, and she told me I was text if I failed to get hold of the group member” (Participant 8)

Participant 9: “It depends on the lecturers and the tutors. If some tutors are better, they explain better than the lecturers.” (Participant 9)

#### **4.6.6 The use of positive university structures**

Each student that was interviewed shared the same opinions about the institutional systems at the university:

##### **Participants 1 and 3 on the cafeteria and food:**

Participant 1: “I used to buy food from and mainly like A block and B block buying food and also the CSSS. What is it called? CCSS or something like that. I went to, but I do not think they offer this. Um, degree anymore, but the TIBB Chinese medicine like I once went to, like one of the buildings. And I, like, had acupuncture done as well, yeah.” (Participant 1)

Participant 3: “SPS Nutrition, so they gave like, yeah, they give us food every now and then. I am not particularly in the most need of it. But it does come in handy because everything is more expensive, not especially because all pricing and stuff, so everything got more expensive. So, getting those extra bits of groceries from the school that does come in. And it does not mean it makes you think less of, like, food and stuff like that.” (Participant 3)

##### **Participant 2 on the use of the library**

Participant 2: “Um, yes. Well, for the two months of campus, I would make use of the library. Umm. Especially in the beginning, like especially in first year, we did a lot of textbooks and so I could then make use of the library.” (Participant 2)

Participant 3: “Ohm, I use the library. I am almost at the library nearly out of the 6 to 7 days a week at the library, and I am always at the library. Also, I think this counts for my mental health because it helps me relax, and when I am relaxed, I study better.” (Participant 3)

Participant 6: “The library definitely did make meet my expectations as well. I remember I remember using a textbook on the law library, but I never took it out. I just used it on that on that specific day I used it, umm. I would say yes; they are

like I would always see my course outlines. Like they would always say, if the workload becomes too much or you cannot cope, you should email the lecturer.” (Participant 8)

Participant 7: I have used the study hub. There is also like a student hall where students study and yeah. I was not aware that the areas such as areas like libraries and also, I was studying at home. So, when I began like studying at the library and my grades became great. I think so. So, I think they did meet my expectations of getting good grades. (Participant 7)

Participant 8 “And did the uKwazi where you can search on the institution’s library and the discussion forums. We used that a lot during our first year, and the university outdid itself with and partnership with the financial schemes where they provided our students with a laptop that they provided students with data. And they even still give us data today. So yes, I feel like the institution is doing its best.” (Participant 8)

Participant 10: “The physical library, yes, frequently and also the online library was also quite useful in the deep COVID times. The lectures and tutors. Graduate assistance. Typing assistance. All of the above. I have used this and even fellow tutors. And so, supporting each other also. When I experienced it for the first time, I could not find anything wrong with it. It was perfect in a sense. Everything which I needed was there. So yes. I would also say a little bit, yeah, UWC has a 24-hour library now, which is which is great. So that students can study at the library, not in their dorms necessarily. (Participant 10)

#### **Participants 4 and 7 on the set programmes run by outside companies on campus:**

Participant 4: “the UHKUKULA program that I am a part of. Initially, I only I think it was only started. Um, during this year or last year, I think. So, I would actually say that that would be something great to have from first year and to provide it to all students so far. I am not sure if they. Have it for other faculties as well, but I am obviously only a way of. For the accounting department and, I think, for the B. Comm general students as well, also get more knowledge about the industry that you were possibly going into and having first-hand experience from that person from your Mentors journey as well. “(Participant 4)

Participant 7: “Uh, there is a Fasset program here in the EMS faculty. They provide us like with the academic support where we have like in mentorship, where we have like mentors. And also, when you need anything regarding academics, they provide you with textbooks and yeah.” (Participant 7)

#### 4.6.7 Independence

All participants found that they had to cope by themselves and learn a bit of independence.

Participants 1, 6, 8 commented on teaching other students' independence.

Participant 1: “I am just think that they should teach like students to like, try, and think independently and also. The way that they conduct tests, it is more of like you study, like they give you work, you study that, and then you need to regurgitate it. And I think that plays it all at university because sometimes they ask you for what is your opinion, and students do not have an opinion, and they struggle in like, not thinking for themselves on their own two feet.

So just like teaching students how to be independent, University teaches you to be, like, responsible for yourself or like for your own education.” (Participant 1)

Participant 6: the way I overcome things is more like I have to; I have to do this in order to pass because failure is not an option for me. Does that make sense? (Participant 6)

Participant 8 had to go back to Matric to finish her mathematics, and self-management worked for her: So, I had to spend another year after matric focusing on pure maths only, and then only then I was able to get in. And. Initially, I wanted to do law, but my marks for maths did not allow me. But I fell in love with industrial psychology because I was not aware of the existence of the course until I came to an open day here at the University of the Western Union. Yeah. Um, I stay alone. My parents are back in the Eastern Cape, so I relied on myself, and I relied on how hard I wanted to achieve my goals. So self-management strategies is what worked and still is working for me. Knowing what I want, knowing where I want to go. So self-management has really been working for me. (Participant 8)

#### **4.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the interpretation and results of research findings on the barriers experienced by students at a particular University in the Western Cape. The significant barriers were Academic Overload, change in culture, Difficult Transition from high school to varsity, Drug and substance abuse Financial Barriers, Lack of Emotional support, Mental health issues Self-teaching and Covid 19, Lack of time management, Negative Peer pressure, Lack of motivation and scared of being a failure. It also included information on how undergraduate students view the impact of community assistance on academic readiness. It also included information on how undergraduate students believe academic preparedness affects academics. Additionally, it provided a breakdown of additional factors that have assisted the students thus far in completing their undergraduate courses. The next chapter provides the summary and analysis of the results, the conclusions drawn from them, the implications for theory, the suggestions for additional research, and the recommendations.





## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The step in a research process where conclusions are derived from analysed data is the interpretation portion or discussion of findings. Kothari (2019) says that through a discussion of the findings, scholars look for more profound interpretations of the data.

This investigation's initial goal was to answer the following questions:

1. What are the barriers students may be experiencing which may hamper academic success?
2. How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of community support on academic readiness?
3. How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of academic readiness on their academic success of undergraduate students?
4. What other factors contributed to the student's successful completion of their undergraduate studies?

This chapter is separated into five subsections to reflect the literature's context better. The opening section examines specific findings concerning the participants' views on the obstacles students face while attending college. The second section discusses the students' perceptions of how community support influenced academic readiness. The findings on the perceived impact of academic readiness on academic success are covered in the third section. The fourth section explores the extra elements that undergraduate students believe helped them succeed academically. The final section covers the recommendations offered by the participants regarding what they felt is required to make their college experience successful.

#### **5.2 Discussion of findings**

##### **What are the perceived barriers to academic success?**

The first section of the findings will commence with the discussion on the perceived barriers to academic success. The discussion of the barriers will follow the order provided by the participants which is in terms of their strength. The barriers are Figure

5.1. These are the perceived barriers to academic success that were found in the study: Academic overload, Autodidacticism - Self-teaching, Change in culture, Difficult Transition from high school to varsity, Drug and Substance abuse, Financial Barriers, Lack of Emotional support, Lack of Time management, Mental Health, Negative Peer pressure, Distractions, i.e., Jobs, Sports other than Academics, scared of being a failure, and Lack of motivation.

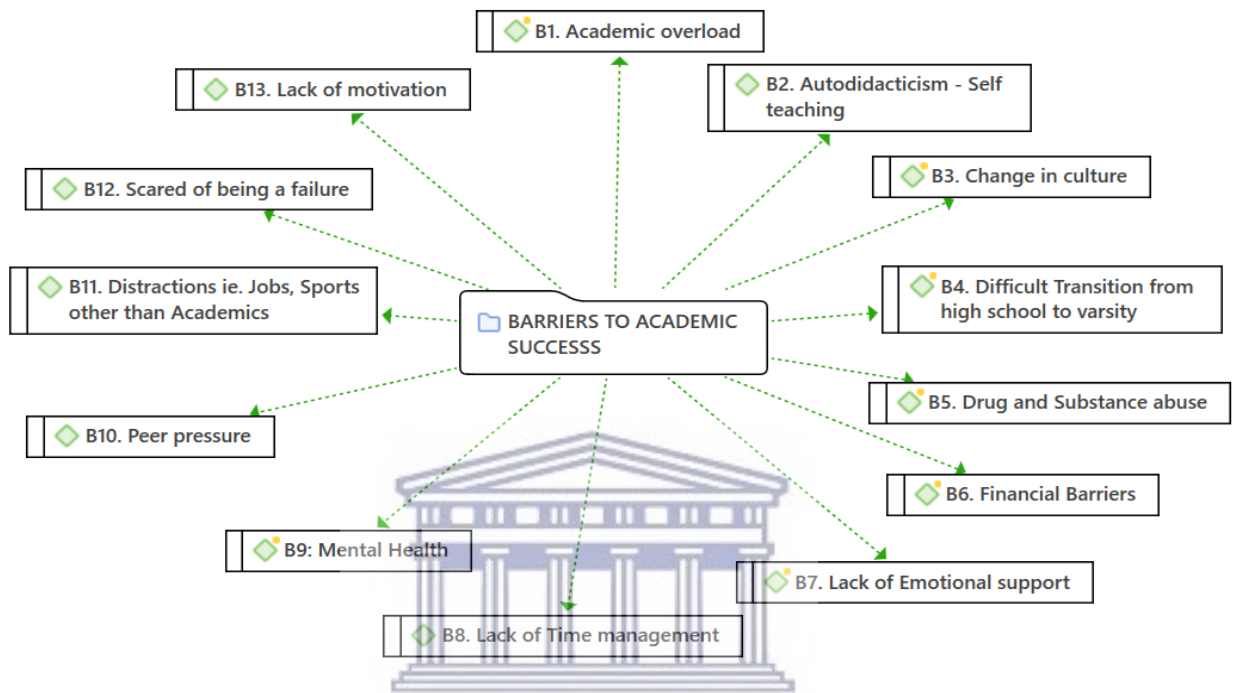


Fig. 5.1  
*ATLAS.Ti 2022: Perceived Barriers to Academic success.*

### 5.2.1 Academic overload

Academic overload is when college students feel overwhelmed by their coursework. Students with too much schoolwork may think they need more time to finish tests, research projects, essays, and oral presentations. Academic failure results from students' judgments of the academic assignments' demands, and their failure in varsity can be caused by how they think their assignments are challenging and how well they think they can do them. Kurata, Bano and Matias (2015) looked at how working students in an engineering program in Metro Manila, Philippines, did in school when they had much work. They suggested helping people's physical and mental health better deal with a high workload. This would improve work and school performance

and increase the number of graduates. According to Alipio (2020), academic overload and perceived stress will have unfavourable connections with academic achievement and expectation-value attitudes. These negative correlations suggest that students exhibiting high levels of academic overload and stress will exhibit lower expectancy-value beliefs and lower academic achievement. Lastly, according to Radovan and Makovec (2022) in their study found that what made students feel like they had too much schoolwork to do was how they felt about themselves and where they were learning. The degree of study, or the year of study, was another critical factor in how much academic work a student had to do. The higher the year of study, the more stressed out the students felt. This clearly shows how teachers teach and what they expect from their students. The results of the present study show that students perceived that academic overload led to higher stress levels which affected how they could academically prepare for tests, projects, and exams (Kamel, 2018). Thus, academic overload does affect the student's ability to deal with the pressures of academia.

### **5.2.2 Autodidacticism - Self teaching**

Participants in the study mentioned that the "self-teaching feel" that they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic had caused them to work harder, and some of them failed modules as well as repeating a year due to them having to cope on their own and that they missed the hands-on approach that face-to-face classes give. They felt isolated and on trying to cope on their own. This learning style suited other students, but they struggled initially to cope with the self-teach style approach. Students who passed their modules employed other known coping methods, which will be discussed later on as factors that contributed to the successful completion of their undergraduate studies.

There is a heated debate over the effectiveness of public education systems worldwide. Autodidacticism, a part of the shifting ecology of what it means to be educated in this era of digital technology, has significantly contributed to this discussion. The communities of practice methodology define actions that are entirely at odds with the self-learning and self-teaching autodidacticism. Community of practice stories often portray extended periods spent studying through apprenticeship, in contrast to the autodidact, who can study outside of the community of practice and

have access to knowledge and skills without having to fulfil traditional forms of apprenticeship. It is possible to achieve the emphasis on customised, self-motivated practice by engaging in various digital cultural activities. Whether they learn by imitation, repetition, or another method, the individual learning the craft actively participates in the learning process. Across the board, autodidacticism in all of its varied forms is true of this (Sefton-Green, 2019). According to Dagoc, Abhari, Roy and Nobis (2022), students must go through four experiences to master a new skill: temporal, social, cognitive, and behavioural experiences. In addition to coming up with innovation and the need to collaborate, these capabilities could aid students in goal setting, personalising their education and self-monitoring their progress. Therefore, autodidactic learning should have been helpful if delivered adequately to students during the pandemic, but the implementation of this teaching and delivery method did not suit all students.

### **5.2.3. Change in culture and Difficult Transition from high school to varsity combined as “Transitions to and within university life”.**

During the change or transition between high school and university, students are confronted with many obstacles, including financial difficulty, leaving the parental home, developing new social networks and supports, navigating the new postsecondary milieu, adjusting to higher academic demands and obligations, and adjusting to a new environment are among challenges that adolescents face when leaving home. The failure to manage stress during this transition can lead to adverse health behaviours and negatively impact the student's mental health status, thus, putting them at risk of dropping out of college (Volstad, Hughes, Jakubec, Flessati, Jackson & Martin-Misener, 2020). Students in the study by Scanlon, Jenkinson, Leahy, Powell, and Byrne generally had good opinions of college life, in part because their schools participate in access programs. Students discovered that the social aspects of attending college, such as greater independence, the ability to study a subject that interests them, a vibrant social life, and access to sports and leisure facilities, would be the draw for students to attend university. However, despite these positive impressions, these young people found it difficult to envision themselves attending college. According to the study participants, including teachers, community workers, parents, and young people, they lacked the confidence to move from high school (HS) to higher education (HE) facilities successfully. This move from HS to HE

remains a substantial impediment to growth (Scanlon et al., 2019). Mntuyedwa (2019) also noted that students participating in higher education might find academic culture especially confusing since they may lack the support and direction from having friends or relatives who have been through the university experience. In this research study, it was found that students had separated "a change in culture" and "a difficult transition from high school to varsity", but when looking at the literature these two factors are part of the difficulty transitioning to and within university life. Therefore, the culture change and difficult transition from high school to varsity have been identified as barriers to academic success.

#### **5.2.4 Drug and Substance abuse and Negative Peer pressure combined as “Negative influences leading to substance abuse”.**

The prevalence of alcohol, illegal drug, and tobacco usage is highest among young adults. Given the COVID-19-related life stressors, it was reasonable to predict that young adults faced an increased risk of substance abuse. However, little is known regarding the effect of the COVID-19 epidemic on substance use among college and university students with various socio-demographic factors (Kim, Moon, Yu, Um, Maleku, Kehinde & Pooler, 2022). Participants identified peer pressure as the impact they feel from a friend or peer group to do something they would not have considered doing otherwise, such as smoking and using drugs (Mntuyedwa, 2019). University students in the United States indicated a positive association between mood disorder symptoms and alcohol consumption. There also seemed to be a correlation between mental health symptoms and alcohol consumption among Australian youths over the age of eighteen during the initial months of the pandemic (Kim et al., 2022). Workers were asked how many of their co-workers were inebriated with alcohol and drugs and how frequently they were offered alcohol and drugs by friends (Karn et al., 2022). Harsh warnings deter students, on the other, but participants still utilise drugs and alcohol off campus, which their peers make available to them, according to Karn, Kandel, and Subedi (2022). Mntuyedwa (2019) found that negative peer pressure increased participants' interest in dating and substance use, including drugs and alcohol. They were faced with unpleasant emotions caused by daily and university life, and students employ a variety of coping mechanisms that favour investment or non-investment in their academic goals, and hence academic success or failure (Năstasă, Cocoradă, Vorovencii & Curtu 2022). In this research, students were not keen to admit

that they indulged in drug or substance abuse but brought up the fact that "others" were faced with this dilemma and were not coping with saying "no" to drug use. Thus, drug and substance abuse and negative peer pressure combined as negative influences could lead to substance abuse and directly influence academic performance; thus, it is a barrier to academic success.

#### **5.2.5. Financial barriers and concerns**

The socio-economic circumstances of disadvantaged students and the numerous obstacles preventing their admission to higher education are staggering. Similar socio-economic impediments to accessing postsecondary education are experienced by adults (Groener, 2019). The most significant obstacle to these students attending college was their families' lack of financial support (Manzano-Sanchez, Outley, & Matarrita-Cascante, 2019). Family members frequently encouraged students to follow their interests, while some students occasionally encountered unique obstacles in this area; for example, housing-related constraints made it difficult for them to engage in postsecondary education fully. Thus, their research initiatives to lessen higher education related stressors are crucial for fostering emerging adults' social, economic, health, and educational development (Silva, Kleinert, Sheppard, Cantrell, Freeman-Coppadge, Tsoy, Roberts & Pearrow, 2017). These studies collectively stress the significance of technical abilities, effective time management, and individual variations such as financial resources, and online self-efficacy as preparation components (Roddy, Amiet, Chung, Holt, Shaw, McKenzie, Garivaldis, Lodge, & Mundy, 2017). They developed and validated various measures to gauge students' readiness for online learning. Their review distinguishes between internal and external elements influencing young people's preparation for colleges, such as internalised feelings about aptitude, motivation, and academic and social readiness (Carey, 2019). Insufficient parental financial aid knowledge and support highlight two of the most significant and interrelated problems faced by racially and environmentally disenfranchised college students. Families encouraged their desire to attend college. However, they provided minimal assistance with the application for college financial help. Participants in their study were just in their junior year, so they still had one more year to advance academically and develop financial strategies that could potentially lessen certain hurdles (Carey, 2019). Students at college have voiced their frustrations with technology, academics, research, families, and life's social, emotional,

behavioural, and financial facets (Hagedorn, Wattick & Olfert, 2022). Although parents and family members encouraged their children to pursue higher education to advance their social and economic status, participants thought about how contradictory it was to take on enormous financial obligations in the present to achieve greater financial security in the future. Thus, (Hagedorn et al., 2022) found that 2.6% of students in their study said they would not be returning and would have to forego their degree because of financial constraints fully.

In this study, students felt very strongly about their government bursaries, and the living allowance amount of R1500.00 per month is meagre with the cost of food and essentials steadily rising at the inflation rate and their bursary not keeping up with the ever-increasing trend. They find themselves faced with either paying for food or transport. In the current climate where very few students are attending classes, it is not a choice, but next year it will become a realistic choice and might lead to drop-out or failure. Thus, financial concerns are a barrier to academic success.

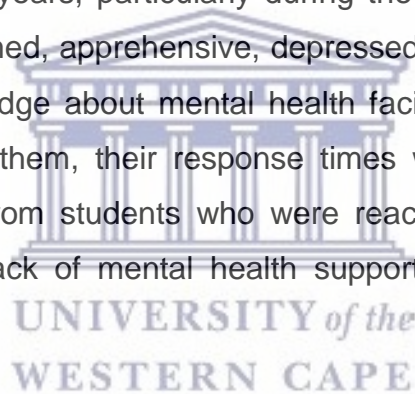
#### **5.2.6. Lack of Emotional support and Mental Health combined into “Lack of mental health support”.**

Social and environmental variables have a significant role in college and university students' substance use, and they are also at a greater risk for mental health issues (Kim et al., 2022). Several respondents reported experiencing physical and mental health difficulties during the transition (Volstad et al., 2020). Access to campus resources, such as losing campus jobs, attempting to handle online classes with poor internet, and not having a stable living situation, contributed to more significant anxiety among students during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, students felt they were "always working," which was described as "devastating my mental health" (Hagedorn et al., 2022, p. 1081). In addition, they remarked that several students who reported suffering from despair and anxiety at this time exhibited poor mental health. Some students believed that the university and faculty did not care about mental health, making them feel like "drowning." In their study, Soria et al. (2020) observed that graduate and professional students were more likely than undergraduates to report experiencing "other" obstacles to their ability to transition to online classes. These

obstacles included anxiety, poor mental health, elevated stress, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating (Soria et al., 2020).

Participants in focus groups disclosed to Mntuyedwa (2019) that they joined peer groups for sports and exercise to preserve their physical and mental health and cultivate their competitive and teamwork spirit. Alipio (2020) also advised initiatives to enhance physical and mental health to better cope with a high workload environment, which will result in improved work and academic performance and an increase in graduation rates (Mutschler, Bellamy, Davidson, Lichtenstein & Kidd, 2021). To address rising psychological distress, universities have made several steps to support students and promote positive mental health and well-being, according to Roddy et al. (2017)

The participants in the study described experiencing various types and levels of stress during their undergraduate years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and described feeling overwhelmed, apprehensive, depressed, and upset. They believed there was a lack of knowledge about mental health facilities and that when these facilities did aid or helped them, their response times were slow, and they were overloaded with requests from students who were reaching out for assistance or counselling. Therefore, a lack of mental health support is a barrier to academic success.



#### **5.2.7. Lack of Time management and Distractions, i.e., Jobs, Sports other than Academics combined into “Poor time management and distractions”.**

Noncognitive personal behaviours, like a student's view of time, are great predictors of academic success (Adams & Blair, 2019). This is because poor time management makes it hard for students to plan their work and makes them feel anxious as the end of a course approaches (Adams & Blair, 2019). Er (2022) found that time management was a vital self-control skill that could help students learn more and help them to do better in school. It was a skill that would always be needed for academic success, even when students were not taking classes online, and students who were better at managing their time could keep doing well throughout the semester. Adams and Blair (2019) found that students who were good at managing their time were more likely to use their time wisely, stick with their studies, and get better grades. According to their



study, students who were good at managing their time could better balance their efforts between different online courses during the epidemic. Radovan and Makovec (2022) found that, as an example, students saw the technical problems and the professors' tech problems during the COVID-19 pandemic as a waste of time and as things that got in the way of their studies. Roddy et al. (2017) said that identifying and dealing with these problems became important. If they did not, there would have been a greater chance that students would drop out.

In the same way, students were more likely to feel overwhelmed and stressed if they did not manage their time and put study deadlines in order of importance. They found it even more critical for students in the challenging online environment to understand important subjects and do well on assessment tasks (Er, 2022). Studies show how important it is to be prepared with technical skills, good time management, individual differences, mainly self-directed or self-regulated learning, financial resources, and online self-efficacy (Chukwu, Aroh, Ozor, Ugwoezuonu, & Ezema, 2022). Cavilla (2017) found that students were required to put their studies first, limit distractions, and finish schoolwork as quickly as possible before doing fun things.

It was found that students were taught a lot of facts, strategies, and procedures, but they were rarely given the time to let this information sink in or come together in a way that helps them understand how to apply it in other situations. They also do not have enough time to think about the questions and give meaningful answers. Thus, poor time management and distractions are barriers to academic success.

### **5.2.8 Lack of motivation and scared of being a failure**

A common demotivation for distance learning is that people do not want to do it (Soria et al., 2020). Mntuyedwa (2019) confirmed that how teachers and students interact towards each other could positively affect students' learning and motivation. They found that in the past few years, much research has been done on how university students feel like they belong. This sense of belonging is "a basic human need and a fundamental motivation that drives student behaviour and makes it easier for them to do well in school." The study's results show that all the participants agreed that motivation is a strong reason people join a peer group.

Cavilla (2017) said that many of their students in tier study were not motivated to finish their homework or did not believe in their academic skills. They suggested that students could improve their metacognitive skills and boost motivation and performance in school upon reflection. This claim is that reflection must be used as part of and encouraged in the classroom if students move from being motivated by others to being motivated by their interests. Amida, Algarn and Stupnisky (2020) said that intrinsic motivation was the best motivation for how successful graduate students thought they would be. Several circumstances could make it hard for students to get involved in online study, and it has been known for a long time that online study has higher drop-out rates than on-campus studies (Roddy et al., 2017). Many of these observations came from the unique challenges and chances of online learning environments, which had been discussed and included in these findings was a lack of motivation (Roddy et al., 2017). Hossinger et al. (2020) found that most academics were motivated by non-tangible extrinsic rewards like formal academic recognition, reputation, and promotion. Although this is true for academics, Amida et al. (2020) found that younger students had much higher extrinsic motivation than older ones. They also found that even though all three types of motivation were linked to how successful students thought they were, only intrinsic motivation was a strong predictor of how successful students thought they were. This significant finding suggests that graduate students of different ages may be motivated differently. Adams and Blair, (2019) looked at what made a student successful and found that extrinsic factors like pulling forces, group pressure, and approaches to learning have a general motivating effect, but that intrinsic factors like an individual's attitude and expectations have a more significant effect.

The participants in the study talked about their lack of motivation, fear of failure, and desire for motivational counsel. The older students spoke of the motivation from within, although it was externally connected to their studies. Therefore, a lack of motivation and fear of failure are barriers to academic success.

### **5.3. What are the student's perceptions of community support and the influence it has on academic readiness?**

#### **5.3.1 Community support**

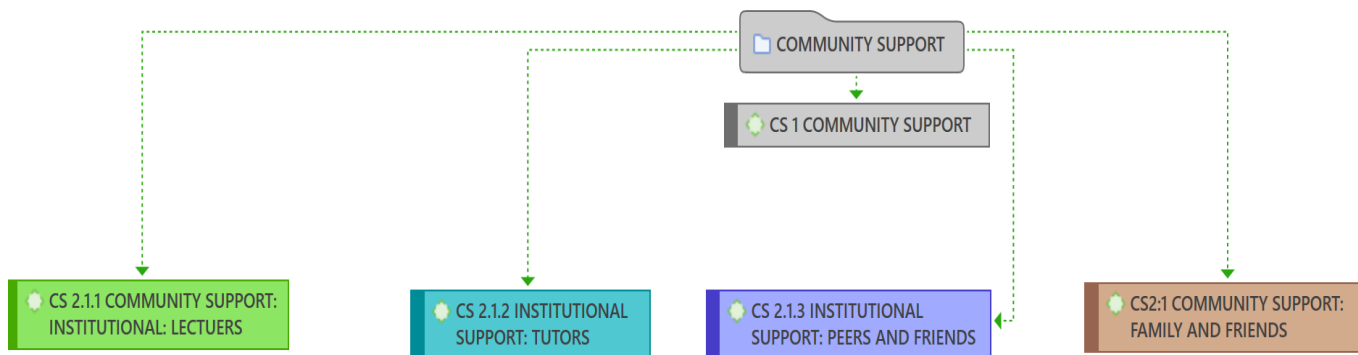


Figure 5.2

*ATLAS.Ti 2022: Perceived Influence of community support on academic readiness.*

The participants found that students perceived that it would be difficult to overcome the challenges experienced with their studies if they did not have direct support from their families, friends, and even other students in their university. When attending college or university, it is not possible to learn on one's own. Therefore, students admitted into undergraduate programs needed to demonstrate a higher level of academic preparedness (Mthimunye, 2018). The effects of inadequate schooling, poorly qualified education professionals, lack of coaching for the final school examination, and inadequate substance on the school curriculum are some reasons undergraduate students experience a low level of readiness. Other reasons include a lack of preparation, a lack of study methods and a lack of teaching for the final school examination. For students to succeed in their future academic endeavours, these concerns need to be handled as soon as possible (Van Der Merwe et al., 2017). Participants in this research confirmed that community support in high school, extra-curricular activities, self-help, and programs had played a major role in the academic readiness before and during their studies for them to achieve academic success.

### **5.3.2 Community support: family and friends: family support – parents and friends**

#### **5.3.2.1 Family support**

The participants valued family support the highest out of all the assistance they received. The encouragement from their families and friends' encouragement kept them inspired and motivated. The participants constantly spoke to their families on the

phone, and students at home were pampered and provided for while studying. The other major driving force is the believe that their parents, grandparents, and other family members anticipated that they would live comfortably and lead better lives after college graduation. The same issues and obstacles that previous generations of students have faced exist today, and according to the participants, there have not been many institutional changes that were student-specific or student-focused. Most of the adjustments made by universities and colleges in the last two years were in reaction to the limitations placed on staff and student movement during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, undergraduate students perceived that community support had a direct influence on their academic readiness and, ultimately, their academic success

### **5.3.2.1 Parents**

For participants to be academically ready to go on to college and university, parents play a vital role in the consistent pattern of limit-setting and structure among the more critical behaviours to increase or support parents raising children in the presence of environmental risk factors (Ruberry et al., 2018). Van Der Merwe et al. (2017) found that female African students at a university in South Africa with a family environment where the parents were the authority figures tended to be more successful. Furthermore, students who were less stressed coped better because they made problem-solving efforts (Van Der Merwe et al., 2017). The students' parents and siblings helped them set goals to finish college. Several students claimed that family was a source of advice and inspiration. The most important was that parents wanted a better life for their children was a consistent idea in the findings (Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2019). Thus, in this study participants confirmed that parental support played a major role in their academic readiness and progress at university.

### **5.3.1.2 Family and friends**

An early intervention program for college students who were at risk discovered that self-concept and other factors about academic challenges, such as anxiety and the support of family and friends, were significant predictors of retention and persistence (Tucker & McKnight, 2019). According to Mthimunya (2018), students who live off

campus with their families experience a decrease in learning, leading to a decrease in their academic performance and success. Thus, the participants confirmed that living at home with their parents was beneficial and that they could still have the support of their friends, old school friends and new varsity friends, which contributed to their academic readiness and performance.

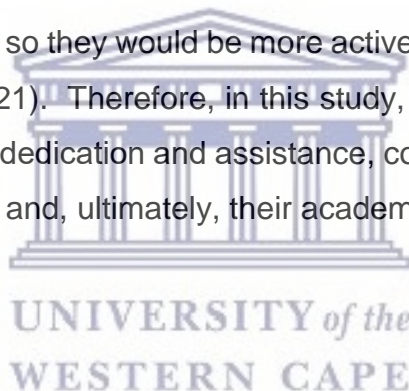
### **5.3.3 Community support: Institutional: lecturers, tutors, peers**

#### **5.3.3.1 Institutional support:**

Participants identified institutional support as critical: They came up with four areas where schools and postsecondary institutions need to develop policies and practices to help students get ready for school and do well in it: family and community engagement, a curriculum that prepares students for college and a career; academic and social supports that work together; and affordability, transparency, and financial literacy. These four areas are identified as follows: (Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2019). The institutions of higher learning or service providers of tertiary education have a responsibility to create a setting for students that is secure and conducive to learning. They have a responsibility to ensure the learning and development of the student based on the path that they have selected by delivering a high level of education, training, and assessments that are based on the real world, along with programs that can expand the student's abilities and potential (Bonquin et al., 2017a). The faculty members are the student's primary point of contact, and they play essential roles in shaping the students' experiences, which affect their ability to keep studying, finish their programs, and do well after college (Jeffreys, 2020). Institutional action suggests that institutions set up successful policies and programs that they can legally use to help their students stay in school. Tucker and McKnight (2019) indicated that students associated increasing information literacy abilities with receiving information from librarians, academics, and peers rather than using the internet and other search tactics (Magerman, 2011). The participants identified peripheral factors such as library services, food, lecture halls and many other physical resources that assisted with their academic readiness and that made their academic journey successful.

### **5.3.3.2 Lecturers and peers**

Even though there has been much research on online student readiness, online instructor readiness was starting to be seen as just as necessary (Roddy et al., 2017). Achievement of outcomes can help educators develop proactive, transitional, and ongoing strategies to capitalize on student strengths, prevent deficits, and improve weaknesses (Jeffreys, 2015). During the COVID-19 period, students were not entirely ready for live online learning, so teachers and lecturers had to use that time to help students communicate better with each other. These actions increased student motivation and communication self-efficacy, especially in male students so that they could learn from their peers. (Tang et al., 2021) The participants said that their friends and classmates encouraged them and that they were willing to help their friends reach their own academic goals. (Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2019). Even though there is little difference between the genders of students in terms of their readiness for live online learning, educators were advised to use the opportunity to improve student-to-student online contact. This increased student motivation and communication, self-efficacy, particularly in male students, so they would be more active in learning from their peers in the future (Tang et al., 2021). Therefore, in this study, participants were positively influenced by their lecturer's dedication and assistance, contributing to their academic readiness for online learning and, ultimately, their academic success.



### **5.3.3.3 Tutors**

Institutional assistance programs are provided for peer support and tutor support throughout the student's academic journey. Through these activities, they can converse with tutors, role models, and other students and cultivate relationships, community, and support networks (Mishra, 2020). Participants sought support in the form of expertise and knowledge from their knowledgeable friends, tutors, study groups, and online services to assist them in the learning process whenever they found that they were having difficulty comprehending a concept or issue (Chukwu et al., 2022). They also sought support by talking to varsity friends and tutors with college experience and, on occasion, to counsellors (Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2019). They found their tutors very knowledgeable, as they emphasised the importance of guidance and detailed their required roles. They were employed to be subject matter experts, keeping the discussion alive in tutorials, rarely explaining but assisting with a

reflection of the student's interaction with the course material and lectures, also intervening in discussions when necessary, and preventing students from wandering away from the topic at hand (Magerman, 2011). The tutors are employed to allay the concerns of the students, and also because most universities provide an abundance of counselling services and teaching assistants (Carey, 2019). Thus, the participants confirmed that their tutors played a vital role in their academic readiness and, thus, a massive part in their academic success.

#### **5.4 How do undergraduate students perceive the influence of academic readiness on their academic success of undergraduate students?**

The participants in this study as undergraduate students perceived the influence of academic readiness on their academic success in the following ways:

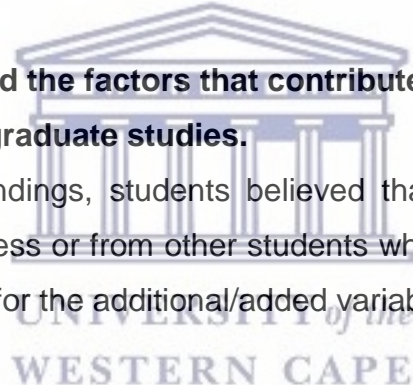
The student's internal environment, family environment, school environment, and social, economic, and policy background all played a role in how undergraduate students saw the importance of academic readiness for their academic success (Mthimunye, 2018). If students lacked these abilities, it would be difficult for them to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. According to the research findings, the students believed they learned how to be academically prepared either in high school or from classmates who had previous experience in university. It was therefore concluded that the students still needed the four concepts according to Conley (2008) namely: key cognition, key content, academic behaviours, and contextual skills.

Students are given the agency to develop the skills necessary for future studies and successful employment, and they are also given authority over how they are educated (Keane et al., 2022). However, high levels of academic performance only result in persistence and continuous enrolment when positive psychological outcomes support them. There are non-academic elements that may compensate for poor levels of academic success, and these factors include (Jeffreys, 2020). When students were given chances to do well at progressively more complex tasks, they became more confident of their skills. Peers' opinions about their self-efficacy were contagious, and students modelled their behaviour after that of their classmates, which either enhanced or diminished their confidence in their abilities (Cross et al., 2018).

Lastly but not least, they operationalized learning methods like time management because research have repeatedly demonstrated that these skills are related to academic performance (Farruggia et al., 2018). They also established ways to sustain themselves academically, particularly in the first year of college. They learned about the non-cognitive characteristics considered throughout the university's admissions and scholarship decision-making processes. To get started on the path to academic success, all participants agreed that these outcomes significantly affect students' academic self-confidence but that academic experiences gained before college are among the essential things that help college students do well in school (Carey, 2019). They had to understand themselves and others, control their emotions, attention, and actions, and positively interact with others. At the same time, they were younger students if they were going to have any chance of achieving academic success in the future (Grimm, 2016). Thus, the participants in this study confirmed that academic readiness directly impacted their academic success as undergraduate students.

### **5.5 How students perceived the factors that contributed to the successful completion of their undergraduate studies.**

According to the study's findings, students believed that good habits learnt from school/academic preparedness or from other students who shared their experiences with them were responsible for the additional/added variables that contributed to their success.





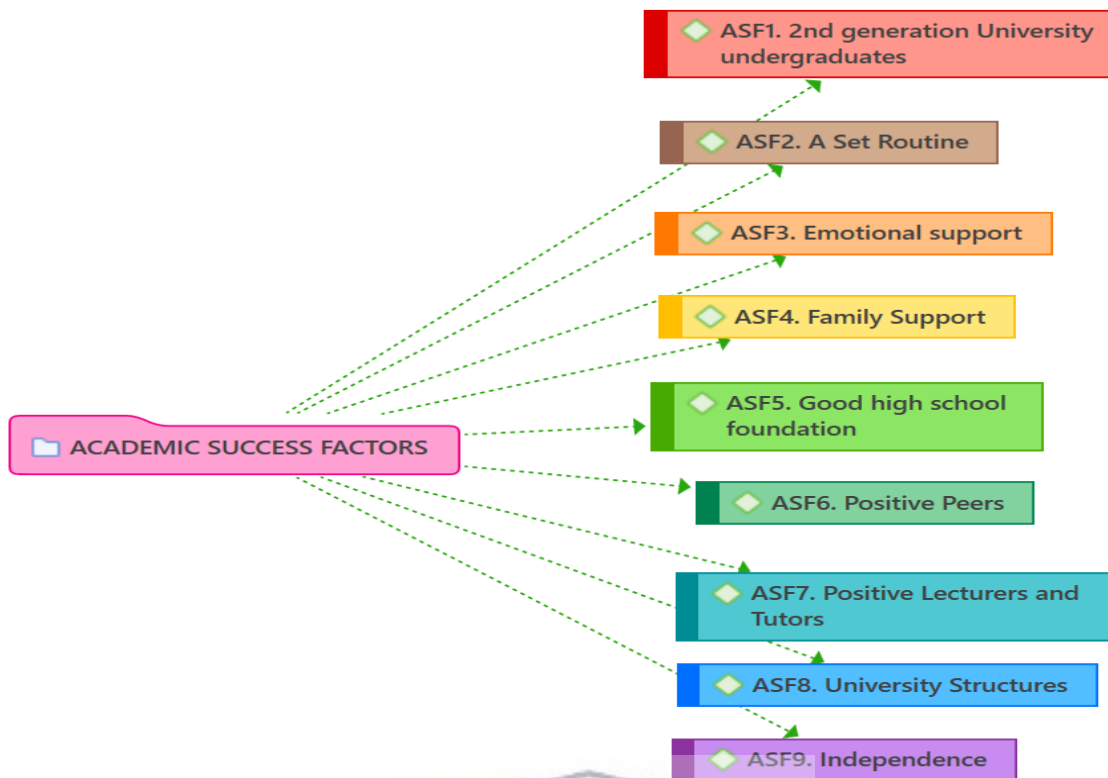


Figure 5.3

*ATLAS.Ti 2022: Perceived Academic success factors*

### 5.5.1. 2nd generation University undergraduates

Second-generation university students have at least one parent or guardian with a bachelor's degree to understand the current research and distinguish the target group (Kouyoumdjian, Guzmán, Garcia & Talavera-Bustillos., 2017). Second-generation college students are more likely to be academically prepared than their first-generation counterparts, according to research. The results of this study indicate that students perceive their family as both a challenge and a source of support, indicating that families are complex systems that both support and challenge their members (Mishra, 2020). It was also believed that the influence of classmates played a role in decision-making. Almost a fifth more second-generation students than first-generation students said that having peers who planned to attend college encouraged them. This was not determined to be a statistically significant difference. It was common for second-generation college students to express a desire to meet friends and have fun (Hunt, Collins, Wardrop, Hutchings, Pritchard, & Heaslip, 2018). Like their first-generation counterparts, second-generation Black emerging adult college students are more

likely to attend and complete college than third and later generations of Black Americans.

Additionally, in the United States of America, second-generation Black emerging adult college students' socialisation experiences are associated with particular cultural values and norms that produce stressful experiences in new contexts and inform alcohol use behaviours that differ from their third-generation counterparts (Pittman, Kim, Hunter & Obasi, 2017). Contrary to several studies, Mishra (2020) indicated that for second-generation students, the socio-economic level of their parents does not directly affect their academic achievement, but that their cultural capital and the attention paid to their children's scholastic problems do. According to Bozzetti (2018), second generations of students come with cultural capital that can be applied concretely to facilitate the integration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education. By focusing on the pre-university educational experience of the respondents, the significance of the inclusion paths becomes apparent. The findings in our group of participants only found the positive side to being a second-generation student within their families and extended families. They spoke about the advantages of following in their familial footsteps and how the knowledge they gained from parents and siblings was invaluable to their college progression and success. They also agreed with the above statement that their socio-economic background influenced their decision to study, but their encouragement and parents' investment in them ultimately paid off.

### **5.5.2 A Set Routine, Good high school foundation and Independence translated to “Transition to independence”**

With a solid high school background, most young people in Scanlon et al. (2019) study expressed an interest in pursuing higher education and had good perceptions of what college would entail. College life would include active social life, greater independence, and access to sports and recreation facilities, but they had to get there first. High school subjects and grades were crucial in assisting students with the transition from high school to higher education (Magerman, 2011). The transition from secondary school to university education, especially for second-generation students, was anything but linear: this pattern was evident in the majority of western nations (Bozzetti, 2018). The needs of first-year students had to be catered to by helping them

to engage and cultivate a sense of belonging to the student and university communities and by providing each student with the necessary support, information, and services to assist them with the transition to postsecondary education, with a focus on their mental health and well-being during COVID-19 (Kwan, Brown, MacKillop, Beaudette, Van Koughnett & Munn 2021)

Moreover, students had to adapt to a growth plan that developed online courses that were more complex than simply translating written materials to an online format; it required careful planning and maximisation of available online technologies to accommodate various individual differences. Firstly, they had to adapt their timetables, external commitments, and assessment modes, as per Roddy et al. (2017). This adaptation positively impacted their cognitive abilities, for, in the case of online courses, students were more likely to engage in collaborative learning (Mishra, 2020). Participants also noted how their families "served as a sounding board for plans/ideas. They assisted in figuring out what to do next or whom to go to for assistance on campus, and they also engaged in daily and monthly planning with them (Francis, Duke, Brigham & Demetro, 2018). Secondly, time management is the planning and intentional control of the amount of time spent on specific academic tasks to improve performance and achievement (Chukwu et al., 2022). Thirdly, after COVID-19, planning for the future was an emotional problem for many students. They reported feeling depressed because their "degree is less valuable than it once was" and because "the new normal is ambiguous, and as a result, my career trajectory will likely shift" (Hagedorn et al., 2022).

To achieve retention and success, academic factors such as personal study skills, class attendance, general academic services, study hours, and class schedule/timetable arrangements were crucial variables that substantially affected academic performance (Mthimunye, 2018).

Students had to become self-reliant and independent learners, from studying in a carefully supervised setting with a highly regulated timetable to learning to manage their own time and make more mature and accountable judgments (Mntuyedwa, 2019). They were thus thrust into an opportunity to learn how to communicate with others, have independence from adults, deal with difficulties, seek emotional support,

and build friendships are all benefits of peer relationships (Mntuyedwa, 2019). Parents that allow their children increased levels of independence throughout their development allow them to gain experience and skill in managing the obstacles and stressors they will inevitably confront (Ruberry, Klein, Kiff, Thompson & Lengua, 2018). Higher education institutions have traditionally been ambivalent about parental engagement, citing interference with social and academic integration and student autonomy and independence development. Ruberry et al. (2018) found that parental engagement increased students' autonomy, independence, and social and academic integration. Roksa and Kinsley (2019) said there are two types of independence; soft independence, a sense of emotional independence in which students are encouraged to explore their emotions and express their preferences as they evolve into distinct persons. In contrast, families in working-class communities prioritised hard independence as a survival-oriented concept of independence. In working-class areas with a limited or non-existent safety net, children were trained to be rugged people who respected hierarchy and followed regulations (Covarrubias et al., 2019).

In Francis et al. (2018) study, participants suggested that they achieve a sense of independence; universities should provide a voice to students and offer students self-advocacy, independence, tutoring programs, and social skills mentorship. Moreover, several students claimed that in their experience of their transition from high school to university, they were not sufficiently prepared for situations in the actual world, such as financial literacy and how to budget and draw up a curriculum vitae. They were exposed to open learning, where self-teaching and self-reliant independence can be adopted as a means of, if not replacing, circumventing established modes of education, and had to learn to cope with this stressful change, according to Francis, Duke, Brigham and Demetro (2018). Sefton-Green (2019) suggested that these individuals had learned how to care for themselves without assistance from others due to their independence. For some participants, independence resulted from living in college, whereas for others, independence was a continuation of life before college (DeFauw et al., 2018). According to Covarrubias, Valle, Laiduc and Azmitia (2019), students had to focus on survival-oriented self-reliance and transitions, which could be seen during COVID-19. The period after COVID-19 was a time of growth and achievement for those who circumvented all the stress that came with the situation. Students had to pull on resources they needed to navigate this process, such as

community connections, a stable family that could provide guidance and financial support, and access to their experiences that provided a foundation for learning and life skills (Mntuyedwa, 2019). Thus, the transition from high school to university is a highly anticipated era of life that has the potential to influence later life adjustment (Volstad et al., 2020).

The participants in this study spoke about practical things they implemented when they arrived at the university. The high schools they came from did not fully prepare them for university life, responsibilities, financial stress, accommodation, and many other factors they could not even think of unless their family spoke to them and guided them. The feeling of loneliness and being on your own (independence) can easily be confused. Independence came at the price of being open to new experiences, and loneliness came at a price of an adverse health situation. Thus, the student's transition to independence paves the way to academic success.

The following elements were mentioned as aspects that contributed to undergraduate students' academic success. They are Emotional support, Family support, Positive peers, positive lecturers and Tutors, and University structures.

### **5.6 Limitations of the study**

The work has accomplished its goals and aims, yet certain constraints exist. The interviews with the participants were designed to be face-to-face conversations at the campus at first, but due to the COVID-19 lockdown rules that were implemented across South Africa and the distances students had to travel to get to campus, it was decided to have the interviews conducted over the Google meets platform. The google meet interviews were a safer and less expensive option for both the interviewer and the interviewee. When there was load shedding, the planned interviews were rescheduled, and the participants were put under no additional pressure to make themselves available for the interviews at the specified times. The previously mentioned challenges could have adversely affected the accuracy of the recordings, the transcribing deadlines, and the overall task.

The Qualitative approach of research that was taken was another shortcoming of the study. The limitations of the qualitative research approach are numerous.

- ✓ **The size of the sample:** This study utilised the qualitative research approach, and in contrast to quantitative research, the sample size used in this study is insufficient to draw broad or generalised inferences on the
- ✓ **The relevance of the questions:** All questions and the data interpretation are open to personal interpretation. Consequently, the researcher was required to ask supplementary questions, such as how and why the respondent or respondents felt a particular way.
- ✓ **Bias:** Participants, instead of responding honestly, respondents may have felt pressured to make statements that please the interviewer. This pressure could also lead to bias. It is indeed possible that this will have an adverse effect on the findings.

## 5.7 Recommendations

Triangulation's benefit as a strategy is to increase learning opportunities by extending viewpoints on the studied issue. Triangulations typically take the form of the researcher employing one measurement methodology and contrasting the results with those from a different approach. Triangulations increase the reliability of the result if the results of the second approach support those of the first. If it fails, it will prove that relying on one technique or metric is not always dependable. The participants in this study were asked to recommend the changes they would propose to assist new undergraduate students in navigating their first two years of undergraduate degrees. They come up with the following recommendations:

### ACADEMIC READINESS

- 1st-year Support group,

### ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- Block week modules

### PEER SUPPORT

- A bridging course - period as an introduction to university.

### INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

- Awareness of mental health programs
- Food

- Financial literacy and Support: Access to more bursaries/ corporate internships
- Shuttle service: from non-Residence areas

### 5.7.1 Academic readiness

#### 5.7.1.1 1st year support group

The participants suggested a 1<sup>st</sup>-year support group:

Participant 2: *emotional readiness and what that entails because obviously when you as the university student, because obviously when you start, you know they are just like full on jump into the academics (participant 2)*

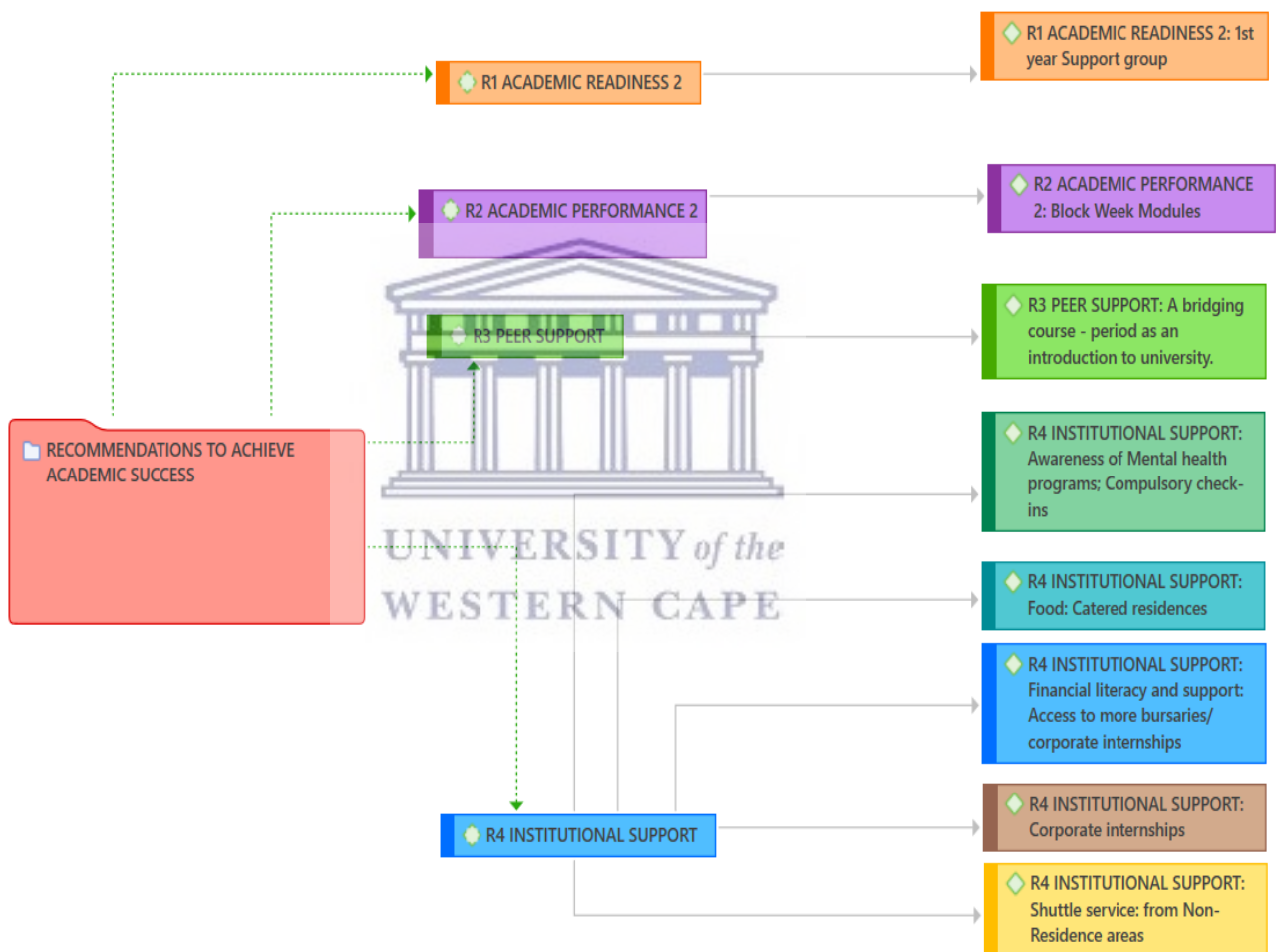


Figure 5.4.

ATLAS.Ti 2022: Participants' Recommendations to achieve Academic success.

Participant 4: they assign each person to; they assign a mentor basically to each person, and your mentor is basically someone that's currently doing their articles (Participant 4)

Participant 5: A Study buddy program, they have got those chatrooms for each module, so you can kind of chat there if you need advice from your peers and those group chats kind of form support groups in that sense that the university can kind of provide you for area specific help in a way. (Participant 5)

Participant 6: "it is sometimes online like you are studying by yourself you like; you are not getting a full university experience by many people on campus. But maybe those meetups might be able to let you know there is also fun in university that can be had. It is not just you and your laptop at your desk at home". (Participant 6)

Participant 7: "like a group where we study together, and we exchange, like our like we empower each other, and we exchange knowledge and ideas:" (Participant 7)

There is a need to build a culture of higher education where all high school teachers view all learners as college-bound and are provided with opportunities to prepare for postsecondary education (Bonquin et al., 2017b). Most of the study's participants spoke about time management aspects and that they as students appeared to have potential for development, but they sometimes do not appear to be aware of it. This demonstrates that instructors at universities and colleges are obligated to educate students about efficient time management abilities (Abraham, Velladath, Ezie Elman, Sobri, Bin Saha, Ghazali, Bin Abu Bakar, & Hussain, 2018). The findings have the potential to inform future efforts to support students and protect their mental health and well-being through the use of virtual and remote platforms and mechanisms that meet their increasingly diverse needs and circumstances. Even after this pandemic has ended, these findings can directly inform future treatments to assist first-year students with their transition. Future postsecondary institutions may be able to better engage and support diverse student populations by developing alternative virtual channels and platforms (Kwan et al., 2021). Therefore, it is of particular importance in light of students' increasing mental health concerns and the rising demand for hybrid learning opportunities.



### 5.7.2 Academic performance: Block week modules

A participant asked about the possibility of implementing Block week modules for first and second years:

Participant 2: “our department we must did that block mode for that, and that really worked well. Because you could focus on one module at a time, so you were like solely devoted to just that one module, and you would finish that and then you would move on to the next module. And that I think really actually thinking back now, that really helped because it was not so overwhelming,” (Participant 2)

Students collaborate with practitioners and educators throughout the university in intensive block week courses. These block courses are an integral and vital component of graduate professional programs. The faculty could pioneer a one-week block course, and once there is a difference, they could continue to offer a unique opportunity for intensive education (typically electives). The student needs to be mentally prepared to sit through multiple-hour lectures and complete the entire course in five days. The projects will likely have a lengthy due date, but one should not put them off until the last minute because one might have other coursework to complete or forget about them. Continuous Assessment marks (CAM) can be awarded for these courses, or examinations would most likely coincide with other final exams.

### 5.7.3 Peer support: Introduction to university.

The participants want the University to run a bridging or an induction to university course run by peers and selected staff before students are enrolled in their respective courses. A **get-to-know-your-university** program that covers subject selection, time management and mental health.

Participant 2: “A three month, even, not even that long. So, three months intro into university. Like a intro module, for example, where they are taught like all the facilities that the university offers from like the counselling facilities to men, anything, anything that the university anything and everything the university offers.” (Participant 2)

Participant 3: “like the BUDDY system for even after the orientation program would be good. Or have a follow-up to the orientation program to ensure everyone is

acclimatized to the university cause. Me and my friends are saying. You do not pass your degree alone. Imagine you do study alone”. (Participant 3)

Participant 4: “Basically, more in-depth explanations of what everything means and how you are supposed to go about things because like I mentioned that I did not even know what a prerequisite module was before or basically up until I actually failed. So, therefore, I would basically say that. Umm. Basically, going that extra mile to ensure that students are aware of these things and. Um, how important it actually is too. Pass all your modules, or yeah, I do not know what other faculties, what the rules or regulations are at.” (Participant 4)

Participant 6: “I would say an induction should be arranged for matriculants. It should start at matric already. Umm, to illustrate how campus actually works, and I feel like that would equip future university students. Um. Yeah. And they would be more open and yeah, they would be more open to going to university and to seeing, oh, this is our campus works.” (Participant 6)

Botha (2021) said that a bridging course could connect an educational gap by placing students in 6 to 12 month courses that will better equip them for postsecondary education if they do not instantly match the standards. Several other Universities in South Africa are offering these courses to ensure that students enrol in the correct studies and are equipped for university life.

#### **5.7.4 Institutional support:**

##### **5.7.4.1 Awareness of mental health programs**

Although only one participant brought this up, it must be brought and kept under the University’s attention.

Participant 3: “Stuff like other mental health support programs that a lot better. I think there is a lot of. As much as they are there, maybe you are normal. And I think people are people that are not aware of the services or. They are not being made aware of the services” (Participant 3)

Universities should implement mindfulness training, as it is seen as a possible intervention to reduce perceived stress. It focuses on enhancing emotional awareness and developing skills related to emotional regulation and may therefore aid students in managing anxiety and emotional distress during their time at university. Therefore,

future research should investigate the potential role of mindfulness training as a support strategy.

#### **5.7.4.2 Catering vs non-catering residences and food safety:**

One participant felt very strongly about catering and non-catering residences and suggested that the University brings back the choice to live in catering or non-catering residences as it would be more convenient and efficient.

Participant 3: So, I would say have meal prep or meals or like have yeah, at least they cover breakfast and dinner for students that stay on campus and stay far away from home. That would help those students a lot. (Participant 3)

Other than the degree, the primary item to consider at university is where you will be living; if you are in the first year, this is likely the residence halls. Halls are a terrific place to be – typically convivial with people like you, but you need to choose whether to be catered (meals provided) or self-catered (where you have to cook for yourself). Consider these factors for each option: sociability, variety, time, money, and independence. Sociability: The kitchen is where people convene for tea or dinner in self-catered halls. But if you all cook simultaneously, it might get busy in the kitchen, depending on the time. After a long day of studying, one could knock on one's friends' doors and talk over food; at least one would get to see people because everyone needs to eat. Variety: Self-catering lets you prepare whatever you want if you can cook. Unless they have a kitchen, catered pupils must eat what they are served. Time: Catering saves time compared to cooking. Unless there is a line, you can get dinner at the end of the day. This is helpful if exams are approaching because you can take meals to your room. Money: Catered halls are more expensive than self-catered halls, but this cost is usually included. Independence: Self-catering could be an excellent idea if you want to do as much as possible. It is an excellent way to settle down, and there is always extra time to practice if your catered hall has a working kitchen. Choosing which hall to go to is a big decision, so make friends with someone in the other hall. If you are catered for, someone may cook for you, or your catered buddies may buy you lunch. The participant spoke on behalf of others and wanted us to put his suggestion forward,

### 5.7.4.3 Financial literacy and support: access to more bursaries

Through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, the government provides bursaries or loans as a source of income for post-secondary students (NSFAS) (Groener, 2019). There are very few bursaries and funding for postsecondary education, and most students cannot afford to pay for their studies and everyday expenditures. This directly and indirectly, affects their academic performance (Mthimunye, 2018). Some participants stated that they spend most of their time studying to qualify for departmental bursaries and social activities (Mntuyedwa, 2019). Participants need money or bursaries to fund their studies. This financial burden is the sole cause of sleepless nights and headaches for both student and parent; once this is taken care of, one can significant sigh relief.

Participant 1: "Sanzaf and Oasis small businesses that offer like bursaries to students, and then they have a graduate programme after you have like completed your studies, which I think is very encouraging for students knowing that the financial burden is ticked off." (Participant 1)

Participant 6: Yes, yes, especially financially. Financially, in the sense that they pay for my university fees and my textbook fees. "(Participant 6)

### 5.7.4.4. Corporate internships

Some students also noted that becoming more responsible required anticipating deadlines, such as obtaining financial aid and initiating connections with mentors and organisations that could help them apply for internships and positions at the university, the community, and other organisations (Covarrubias et al., 2019).

Participant 2: Like a shadow. Like job shadow. Um. In different, in the in whatever you know feel that they are going in within various companies or with the university can sort of link students up with various companies because. Obviously, there is a lot of students that, you know, have their degrees and they have like the honours and the masters, but they sometimes they are like, you know, they cannot get a job where they sitting with this degree and no job. So, I think that is something that the university could maybe incorporate" (Participant 2)

Participant 4: "in my matric year. I was signed to PwC as well. I did not even see what my studies were, yet I was already signed to them. I am going to do my

articles. it is a great support, and it helped me a lot because now I do not have to go and look.” (Participant 4)

Participant 6: Yeah, I can understand that it is a choice, but I feel that if you are busy shaping so many young minds every year and sending people out into the real world, then the least that you. That that you have to do is to is to want to connect to people and teach them, and you know, have like a connection with somebody about something. Because otherwise, you are just sending people out into the world with just the knowledge of your subject and nothing else” (Participant 6)

In our day and age, there is an overreliance on our current income, which restricts prospects for internships and entry-level career-related positions. Frequently, students do not know how to plan for the future and make the best decisions (Eichelberger et al., 2017). Participation in extracurricular activities is one of the finest ways for students to distinguish themselves from their peers and be competitive for internships, cooperative education opportunities, and jobs (Mntuyedwa, 2019). From the University’s side, they need to introduce a monitoring system that looks at professional growth, supervision of internships in firms, employment facilitation, and labour market exploration (Morillas et al., 2014). The findings also indicate that employers put the most weight on internships and apprenticeships when they look at a job candidate's application and their project-based learning experiences (Grimm, 2016). During and after COVID-19, there is a need for field directors to actively monitor students and coordinate with professors or mentors, so that their students are given the necessary supervision and support during their internships (Kim et al., 2022).

#### **5.7.4.5 Shuttle service to and from non-residence areas.**

Multiple obstacles impede access to higher education. The cost of college is probably the most common of these, and this is likely because of economic factors. Direct costs include things like tuition, housing, and transportation. Indirect costs come from students' inability to work while in school (Bozzetti, 2018). According to higher education and nursing research, environmental factors significantly impact student academic achievement, perseverance, and retention (Jeffreys, 2015). Transportation from home to college and clinical placements adds additional obstacles. In addition, many stated that living at home is stressful since they are expected to conduct

household chores like everyone else, leaving little time to study (Mthimunye, 2018)). In one incident mentioned by Scanlon et al. (2019), a mother told them that when she and her daughters talked about colleges, location and access to public transportation were essential factors. Certain universities were shortlisted based on bus routes, while others were essentially ruled out (Scanlon et al., 2019).

Participant 1: "I have thought about this also. You show your student card to get onto the bus, and it is not like, it is not like you have to have a shuttle or bus stop at every, in every like what you call it area. Like you can have a main drop off and pick up." (Participant 1)

Participant 3: "So, like you have a lot of burdens on their mind. Even accommodation, for example. The student has to be far away from campus. I am lucky that I still wake up and I walk. I live on campus and. I am one of the lucky few. There are many that stay far away. That would take some taxis, taxi routes, justification. So, I think. On that side, though, they do try with that critical lesson, but that is not enough. (Participant 3)

College-level expenses include tuition, miscellaneous fees, books, uniform, personal necessities, rent, transportation, and many others; therefore, college money for education must be provided to support and meet the student's various demands. This ensures their learning and development (Bonquin et al., 2017b). Emergency grants and vouchers have helped many community college students pay for books and transportation (Cooper, 2010). One such organisation at this institution, "Making a difference, " helps students monthly with monies for necessities, including transportation. We need to support these organisations in order for them to grow and support more needy students.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This study has identified the barriers students may be experiencing which may hamper academic success at a University in the Western Cape: Several themes and subthemes emerged from the thematic analysis of the participants' interviews. The identified themes include community, family support, Institutional support, academic success, and academic readiness that support and ensure a thriving university. The

study explored the participant's viewpoints on the term known as academic readiness, and four sub-themes were identified. These include key cognitive skills, key content, academic behaviours, and contextual skills. It is further identified that most of the participants viewed that academic readiness as the start of the journey which began in their high schools and not just a temporary phenomenon. Academic readiness cognitive and non-cognitive influences on academic readiness study habits, skills, and attitudes are non-cognitive factors of academic readiness and were effective predictors of college success. The Cognitive predictors are Matric results, Admission Point Scores and National Benchmark test scores. It was also revealed that academic readiness background, high school attended, and the community one came from influence how well students are prepared at university. Other elements that affect academic readiness In-depth academic advisory services, mentorship, and tutoring should be implemented as particular measures to support student progress.

The study also identified how undergraduate students perceive the influence of community support on academic readiness. Community support was divided into five different types of support: The main groups were Family support and Institutional support, with sub-groups identified as Parents, Family, and friends and under Institutional, the subgroups were Lecturers, Tutors, and Peers. Participants in this study agreed that community support in the form of parents, friends, Institutional help, high school, extracurricular activities, self-help groups, and programmes had been crucial in helping them with their academic readiness before and during their studies so they could finally succeed academically.

The study identified how undergraduate students perceive the influence of academic readiness on their academic success of undergraduate students. The key to these questions is balance. Students must balance their internal environment, family environment, school environment, and social, economic, and policy backdrop, which all affect how undergraduate students see academic readiness for their academic success. If students lack these skills, they cannot fulfil their goals. The present research study found that students learnt how to be academically prepared in high school or from classmates with college experience. Students still needed the key cognition, key content, academic behaviours, and contextual abilities. Students are given the agency to build skills for future studies and careers, and they have control

over how they are educated. Academic success only leads to perseverance and continuous participation when positive psychological consequences exist.

The study identified what other factors contributed to the student's successful completion of their undergraduate studies. There were additional factors mentioned by participants that stood out to the researcher as 2nd generation university undergraduates and Transition to Independence, which describes the previous generation's influence on the current second-generation graduates. There is a significant connection between the two generations in terms of sharing previous experiences that is invaluable to a first-year student. Transitioning from high school to university is challenging, and some variables may exacerbate this difficulty if the students are exposed to it.

This study concludes that community support and academic readiness influence academic success on a large scale and may seem holistic across universities but vary in terms of the individual student. Based on this study at a selected university in the Western Cape, it has been revealed that some of those factors could be detrimental to academic success and may present future difficulties if not addressed.

## **5.7 Final word**

The researcher knows that this experience has transformed her as an individual, a researcher, and an author. It has not been an easy journey, but it was necessary since she learned more about how self-reflection can enhance one's quality of life. These discoveries and debates helped the researcher because they ensured she stayed focused on the gathered data and did not just rely on her opinions about community support, academic preparation, and academic success. Because of the various obstacles she faced during this process, and a desire to give up before the end, the researcher also learned how adaptable, resilient, and innovative she is. Further investigation revealed that simply understanding what community support, academic readiness, and performance are, does not improve the situation for students; instead, one must actively put the gained information into practice. Following the study's findings, the researcher developed practical time management skills, used academic preparation principles in her research, and took ownership of her personal experiences to raise awareness of these issues among herself and her fellow students.



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## Appendix A: Ethical clearance



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE



05 September 2022

Mrs A Mohamed-Cleophas  
Industrial Psychology  
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

**HSSREC Reference Number:** HS21/9/26

**Project Title:** A study to understand the influence of community support on academic readiness and undergraduate academic success at a selected university in the Western Cape

**Approval Period:** 03 September 2022 – 03 September 2025

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology, and amendments to the ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

**Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.**

For permission to conduct research using student and/or staff data or to distribute research surveys/questionnaires please apply via:

<https://sites.google.com/uwc.ac.za/permissionresearch/home>

*The permission letter must then be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.*

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape*

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

Director: Research Development  
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FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

## Appendix B Interview schedule

*A STUDY TO UNDERSTAND THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT ON ACADEMIC READINESS AND UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC SUCCESS AT A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN THE WESTERN CAPE*

### Qualitative Approach: Semi-structured Interview Guide

**Format:** 45 to 60 minutes

**Target Audience:** Final year Undergraduate students.

**Structure per semi-structured interview:**

Introduction

Thank participant for participating in the research.

Confirm overview of the research

Confirmation/finalisation of any (outstanding) Consent Forms and recordings

#### **Participant details:**

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty/department: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Start date: \_\_\_\_\_



#### **Standard Questions:**

1. How would you define Community Support?
2. What are the barriers students may be experiencing which may hamper academic success despite community support?
3. How would you describe Academic Readiness?
4. What are the barriers students may be experiencing which may hamper academic success despite academic readiness?
5. How would you describe your perception of the influence that community support had on your academic readiness?
6. How do you perceive the influence of academic readiness on the academic success of undergraduate students?

7. *Have you made use of campus facilities that aided your academic success?*
8. *Have you made use of campus facilities that aided your academic readiness?*
9. *Probing question: Did these programme/s meet your expectation?*
10. *If not: How did you meet your own academic readiness needs? (i.e., Self-management strategies, support from family, etc)*
11. In your own opinion, does the Universities Community support structures adequately cater towards equipping undergraduate students for academic readiness to be able to cope with the pressures achieving academic success?
12. If you could make some suggestions of what should be offered as part of the Community support initiatives on academic readiness and academic success, what would your top three suggestions be?

