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University of the Witwatersrand residence students' perspectives on factors that promote or hinder academic success

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ABSTRACT

Academic attrition remains a phenomenon that riddles educational institutions world-wide. This study sought to explore perceptions of residential students on the matter; to engage them in ascertaining how they have managed to pursue their studies as well as perhaps find out what challenges the students faced which that could lead to attrition. Correlational and phenomenological research designs were used. The correlational research design was used in determining the relationship between variables measured through the study instruments. The phenomenological research design was used to explore students' views on how they had experienced academic success thus far. This study was conducted with residential students from the University of the Witwatersrand. A total of sixty-six participants participated in this study and their ages ranged from nineteen to thirty-eight years.

The University Self-Efficacy Inventory, Internal Control Index and the Coping Stress Inventory were used to address the three research hypotheses: (i) There is a statistically significant correlation between levels of self-efficacy and locus of control; (ii) There is a statistically significant correlation between levels of self efficacy and ways of coping with stress; and (iii) There is a statistically significant correlation between locus of control and ways of coping with stress. Results yielded from the correlation analysis indicated:

a) Significantly positive correlation between levels of self-efficacy and internal locus of control.

b) Significantly positive correlation between levels of self-efficacy and ways of coping with stress.

c) Significantly positive correlation between internal locus of control and ways of coping with stress.

Analysis of the qualitative data revealed that academic attrition was not solely linked to difficulties in studies; emotional, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors were also to be considered as factors that students perceived as having an impact on students' abilities. This study hopes to add to existing literature on the topic as well as contribute to theory, research and practice.