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School of Human & Community Development

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

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology

University of the Witwatersrand

Johannesburg

2015

**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and that it has not been submitted for any degree at another university.

_____

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Submitted in August 2015

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CHET | - | Centre for Higher Education and Transformation |
| PWI | - | Previously White Institutions |
| ADP | - | Academic Development Programme |
| ELP | - | Effective Learning Programme |
| UNISA | - | University of South Africa |
| ODL | - | Open Distance Learning |
| HBCU | - | Historically Black College and University |
| GIST | - | Girls into Science and Technology |
| WISE | - | Women into Science and Engineering |
| GPA | - | Grade Point Average |
| HSRC | - | Human Science Research Council |
| MO | - | Mock Orals |
| SATQ | - | Student Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire |
| USEI | - | University Self-Efficacy Inventory |
| ICI | - | Internal Control Index |
| CSI | - | Coping Stress Inventory |
| MEDUNSA | - | Medical University of South Africa |
| STDs | - | Sexually Transmitted Diseases |

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Academic attrition remains a matter that various institutions are struggling with in present times. Attrition does not impact only on the individual who drops a course; repercussions extend to the institution and the institution's reputation. When an institution is faced with high rates in attrition, their educational and certification programmes are also affected. An article from Ascend Learning, LLC (2012), contended that attrition was a phenomenon that affected the individual as well as the educational and certification programmes that they were linked to. Their study concluded that the American government spent approximately three million dollars in paying for the education of students that dropped out of community colleges. Furthermore, the increasing rates of attrition mean that there are fewer qualified professionals that enter into the workforce.

Malati and Sharma (2013) argued that institutions which are rigorous in the recruitment and selection criteria of their academic staff and have provided students with competent training and development programmes are likely to experience lower attrition rates than those institutions that do not. When an institution spends below average amounts of money on marketing, advertisements, orientation and training; it is more likely that attrition rates will be higher. The inception of this study may have been as a result of the notion that institutions that have higher attrition rates generally have lower standards of education in comparison to other institutions. It is generally believed that institutions that do not consider students' abilities to cope with the workload and adopt a system of admitting anybody who can pay fees

are often faced with high rates of attrition and a drop in their standard of education in attempting to accommodate those students who cannot cope with the workload.

Stillman (2009) reiterated the importance of working on retaining students in their respective courses as attrition often spelled a failure in terms of gaining personal and financial success. Students who have supportive family structures are often also faced with the social disappointments of having dropped out of their studies. Attrition has also been found to have an emotional impact on individuals. Attrition is often associated with higher reports of depression, suicide and fewer incidents of job satisfaction (Fullick, 2011). Comparisons between individuals who had obtained a degree and those who did not indicated that individuals with degrees tended to be paid more and experienced long-term social and occupational success (Stillman, 2009).

Academic attrition, therefore, remains one of the biggest scourges in societies as it is a worldwide phenomenon and applies to all institutions despite the efforts that have been implemented and policy changes that have been made. The numbers of students who do not make it to their graduation ceremonies are still alarmingly high (Peterson, 2009).

The present study investigated factors that residence students perceived as having a bearing on their studies, both negative and positive. It also sought to answer why some students found it difficult to continue with their studies while others had the will to persist to the end. Results yielded from this study may assist institutions and faculties to gain a better understanding of the experiences of students who have persevered in their studies. This Chapter presents the background of the study, factors that brought the study to the fore, the statement of the problem and what the study hoped to achieve regarding the theoretical understanding behind the reasons for attrition.

## 1.2 Background

Institutions worldwide are faced with a high volume of enrolments at the beginning of each year and by the end of the first semester have reports of thousands of students who drop out of their courses. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate possible reasons for this phenomenon (Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002; McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Palmer, Maramba & Holmes, 2011). Many institutions have heeded these attrition rates and responded by implementing measures such as tutorials where dedicated staff members are available to consult outside of the lecture rooms for students who may need assistance. However, studies such as that conducted by Palmer et al. (2009) found that even with these support measures in place some students are reluctant to seek them out. This finding indicates that academic performance is not a one way process, but it is rather a reciprocal relationship between the individual, the institution and other entities that may affect them.

Letseka, Cosser, Breier and Visser (2009) argued that The National Plan for Higher Education (DoE 2001a) expressed concern over the graduation rate. They state that South Africa's graduation rates ranked at 15%, which was one of the lowest in the world, and raised further concern as graduation rates among white students were reportedly more than double the rate of black students. A study conducted by the Human Science Research Council found that South Africa demonstrated that 40% of students dropped out of institutions of higher learning within their first year of studies (Letseka & Maile, 2008). This was reported as a major problem in South Africa especially with the increasing rates of unemployment that the youth are faced with (Letseka & Maile, 2008). The National Plan for Education (DoE 2001) revised graduation rates in 2001; these, however, had to be revised in 2004 as students were failing to meet the set graduation benchmarks. Contact students are described as those students who can have contact time with lecturers and faculty members, whereas distance students are those who complete a course through

correspondence. It should be noted that the expected graduation rates for distance learners is lower than that of contact students. This may be because it is believed that when one has contact time with faculty members and can engage with other students on their studies, the better their chances of academic success.

Table 1 indicates that even with the graduation rates being reduced in 2004, institutions are still faced with high levels of attrition. The Centre for Higher Education and Transformation (CHET) compiled the general attrition rates across the various qualifications offered in Higher Education Institutions. Results indicated that attrition rates were significantly high and that undergraduate and Master's students were ranked amongst those with the highest attrition rates.

Table 1
*Comparison of attrition rates across professional qualifications*

| Qualification Level | Entrants | | Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 Year Diplomas | 37 330 | Graduate | - | 16% | 19% | 35% |
| | | Drop Out | 33% | 18% | 5% | 56% |
| Undergraduate Degrees | 32 178 | Graduate | - | 27% | 21% | 48% |
| | | Drop Out | 30% | 12% | 4% | 46% |
| Masters | 15 479 | Graduate | 6% | 25% | 12% | 33% |
| | | Drop Out | 28% | 15% | 13% | 57% |
| Doctorates | 2 140 | Graduate | 1% | 14% | 20% | 35% |
| | | Drop Out | 22% | 15% | 4% | 41% |

Source: CHET (2013)

Table 2 and Table 3 display the rates of attritions from various institutions in 2010 and 2011. These attrition rates were analysed using the 2004 benchmarks for expected graduation rates. Results indicated that nineteen out of the twenty-three institutions that were analysed failed to meet the set undergraduate benchmark for graduations in 2010 and 2011. Five institutions, namely, The University of Cape Town; Durban University of Technology; University of the Free State; Rhodes University and University of Stellenbosch came relatively close to achieving the Master's graduation benchmarks.

Table 2
*2010 Graduation rates*

Graduation Rates 2010 per Higher Education Institution

| Institution | Undergraduate Degrees and Diplomas (%) | Master's Degrees (%) | Doctorate Degrees (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cape Peninsula University of Technology | 23 | 12 | 8 |
| University of Cape Town | 20 | 28 | 14 |
| Central University of Technology, Free State | 18 | 8 | 5 |
| Durban University of Technology | 22 | 17 | 14 |
| University of Fort Hare | 18 | 23 | 15 |
| University of the Free State | 16 | 21 | 17 |
| University of Johannesburg | 19 | 20 | 9 |
| University of Kwa-Zulu Natal | 17 | 17 | 14 |
| University of Limpopo | 17 | 14 | 6 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University | 19 | 18 | 14 |
| North West University | 27 | 24 | 15 |
| University of Pretoria | 21 | 21 | 13 |
| Rhodes University | 21 | 28 | 13 |
| University of South Africa | 8 | 9 | 5 |
| University of Stellenbosch | 20 | 22 | 15 |
| Tshwane University of Technology | 20 | 11 | 11 |
| University of Venda | 23 | 7 | 8 |
| Vaal University of Technology | 15 | 9 | 17 |
| Walter Sisulu University | 15 | 3 | 3 |
| University of the Western Cape | 17 | 22 | 12 |
| University of the Witwatersrand | 18 | 17 | 9 |
| University of Zululand | 14 | 15 | 12 |
| Mangosuthu University of Technology | 16 | 0 | 0 |
| **Averages** | **16** | **18** | **12** |

Source: Department of Higher Education and Training (2013)

Table 3
*2011 Graduation Rates*

| Graduation Rates 2011 per Higher Education Institution | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Institution | Undergraduate Degrees and Diplomas (%) | Master's Degrees (%) | Doctorate Degrees (%) |
| Cape Peninsula University of Technology | 24 | 13 | 8 |
| University of Cape Town | 21 | 28 | 13 |
| Central University of Technology, Free State | 21 | 15 | 6 |
| Durban University of Technology | 23 | 27 | 20 |
| University of Fort Hare | 18 | 21 | 17 |
| University of the Free State | 15 | 25 | 19 |
| University of Johannesburg | 20 | 19 | 11 |
| University of Kwa-Zulu Natal | 20 | 18 | 12 |
| University of Limpopo | 15 | 10 | 9 |
| Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University | 19 | 21 | 13 |
| North West University | 25 | 23 | 12 |
| University of Pretoria | 21 | 21 | 12 |
| Rhodes University | 25 | 26 | 14 |
| University of South Africa | 7 | 11 | 7 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| University of Stellenbosch | 19 | 25 | 12 |
| Tshwane University of Technology | 21 | 13 | 11 |
| University of Venda | 20 | 8 | 8 |
| Vaal University of Technology | 17 | 19 | 9 |
| Walter Sisulu University | 18 | 11 | 13 |
| University of the Western Cape | 17 | 20 | 14 |
| University of the Witwatersrand | 19 | 21 | 13 |
| University of Zululand | 14 | 14 | 10 |
| Mangosuthu University of Technology | 19 | n.a. | n.a. |
| **Averages** | **15** | **20** | **12** |

Source: Department of Higher Education and Training (2013)

The current study subsequently aimed at seeking the reasons some students find it hard to cope with transitions to universities and what gives those who succeed that staying power to withhold the challenges with which they are faced. The main interest of this study was on tapping into the perspectives and views of those students who are still studying, focusing on their personal experiences with regards to studying. What, in their view, have been contributory factors in them persevering in their studies? What have been their major challenges and how did they overcome them? Furthermore, what are their opinions on why some of their counterparts dropped out?

## 1.3 Rationale

Although a large body of research (Lizzio et al., 2002; McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Palmer et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2011) investigating factors that promote academic success has been conducted in Euro-Western countries, not much is known about such studies in South Africa. This study sought to add to existing literature that is primarily focused on the South African population. It also differs in that, where most studies focus on first year students, this study also explored senior students' perspectives as they were able to provide insightful thoughts about factors that are essential for academic success. Various studies, such as that of Palmer et al. (2011), examined minority students and their experiences in predominantly white institutions (PWI). This study was not restrictive as it attempted to reflect views from across the racial and gender divide.

Tinto's(1975) model of student integration states that students need to be wholly immersed in their role as a student, both academically and socially, as a means of ensuring that they feel committed to their studies. Tinto also contended that internal factors such as frustration tolerance levels, learning styles and self-efficacy, as well as external factors such as support systems, being mentored and background all play a pivotal role in the decision making process of retention and attrition. Tinto's model is discussed further in the next chapter. The research questions were formulated following this model and trying to ascertain whether or not this model could be applied to the South African context where there is diversity in cultures, backgrounds and especially in an institution that was previously predominantly white.

## 1.4 Problem statement & objectives of the study

Various studies have been conducted to explain why first year students drop out of tertiary institutions but few have focused on the experiences of those students who have made it past their first year of studies (Palardy & Rumberger, 2005). Although it is important to gain insight as to the reasons why first year

students drop out from their studies, it is equally important to focus on senior students' experiences. Willcoxson, Cotter and Joy (2011) identified a gap in services that were put in place as a measure of reducing the rates of academic attrition beyond the first year and suggested that more studies be conducted focusing on senior students.

Living in residence halls means living away from home for long periods. Adjusting to a new environment can be challenging as it often entails having to adjust to new people, a new lifestyle and a new way of living with people. Failure to adjust has been reported to lead to high rates of depression, with students struggling to come to terms with being "home sick", leading to a decrease in academic performance as well as no sense of commitment to their studies (Neihart, 1999). Some studies, such as that by Gasser (2008), argued that residence students had an advantage over travelling students as they were considered to be more immersed into student life. It was found that being closer to facilities such as libraries as well as the faculty makes a profound impact on the immersion of students into their studies.

Young (1997) examined whether there was a difference in attitudes between residential and commuter students. This study, like many of its kind, showed that there was a significant difference with regards to attitudes around choosing the institution they wanted to study at; belief in their abilities to complete a course and a willingness to partake in activities that were organised within the institution. This study revealed that commuter students were more likely than residential students to be faced with demands on their personal lives that often served as a hindrance to their persistence in their studies.

As already mentioned, the present study aimed to investigate perspectives of senior residence students at the University of the Witwatersrand on what they considered to be factors that promote and hinder academic success. Focus was aimed at students' perspectives on what had motivated them to stay in their

respective courses as well as the challenges that they were continually faced with when it came to academic performance.

## 1.5 Outline of the research report

This study is divided into five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Results and Discussion. Chapter one reviewed what the recent problems in South Africa are that could be linked to academic attrition and how they linked to the study. It provided statistics on the rate of attrition from various university institutions in South Africa and discussed the importance of continuing research around this topic as it is a matter that has a ripple effect on the individual, the institution concerned and the economy at large.

Chapter two starts off by reviewing the effects of apartheid on past education systems and the lingering effects on the current education system and how it has contribute to a difference in the quality of education among different races. This Chapter also examines Tinto's theory of integration where it was stated that students must be fully immersed into the role of a student (academically, culturally and socially) in order to experience academic success. Various studies are scrutinised and possible causes of attrition internationally and in South Africa are explored. Factors that promote and hinder students in terms of academic progress are discussed under relevant headings.

Chapter three deals with the methods used in carrying out the study. A description of correlational and phenomenological research designs is provided as well as an explanation of which areas they explore. The instruments used in this study are presented and the current study's correlation co-efficients are compared against those reported in the validation of the instruments. The methods applied in gaining clearance to conduct this study are presented and the ethical considerations that the researcher had to take into account

are also reported. Analysis of the data was achieved through using the SPSS IBM programme Version 22 and Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic content analysis.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study and a discussion of the results. The results of the qualitative analysis were recorded in thematic form according to what the participants were required to report on in the questionnaires. The research hypothesis was also addressed and presented.

Chapter five provides a summary of the result findings and discussion of the results. The discussion of the results is led by the qualitative questions that participants had to answer and the analysis of the data in proving the research hypotheses. This chapter also discusses the limitations that the researcher encountered while conducting this study as well as recommendations for future research in this area of focus.

## 1.6 Conclusion

South Africa is a country riddled with high levels of unemployment and poverty (Mail & Guardian, 2011). It is common practice to encourage people to invest in their education for a better life; however, it raises serious concerns when the country is still faced with high rates of attrition. This study was spurred from this concern and, although focusing only on a small population, sought to explain what perceptions students may have in terms of their studies. What are factors that push students to either pull away from or towards their studies? What are issues that South African students are faced with that have major impacts on their studies and decisions they make with regards to their studies? This study sought to explore the different factors that have bearing on these decisions as well as investigate what perceptions students at the University of the Witwatersrand had on the matter.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

The apartheid era introduced the application of unequal and racist policies and programmes that were solely for the benefit of white South Africans and the oppression of Native African people. One such programme introduced in this era was "Bantu Education" which was primarily for Native African people. The introduction of "Bantu Education" (Act No. 47) in 1953 was aimed at targeting lower and higher primary schools, secondary schools, teacher and vocational training, night schools and continuing classes. The South African government at that time was in control of all learning programmes and designed Bantu Education for three specific reasons:

i. The country was in dire need of a surplus of general African labourers to help sustain the country's expanding economy.
ii. To limit the increasing number of Native Africans that was settling in the large metropolitan areas.
iii. To decrease the threat that radical young people were imposing by keeping them off the streets (Abdi, 2003).

The "Bantu Education" policy ensured that few Native Africans had the opportunity to progress to institutions of higher learning (Abdi, 2003). This programme also ensured segregation between racial groups and a difference in the quality of education that white South Africans and Native Africans received. Similarly, in the United States of America, the education system was tainted by an era of discrimination stemming from a period of slavery (Bertocchi & Dimico, 2010). African American citizens were awarded few opportunities of education (Orfield, 2010) and since the abolition of segregated education policies in 1954 there reportedly still is no difference in the improvement in the quality of education that various racial groups were awarded.

Horan (2010) found that learners who attended segregated schools did not receive the same quality of education. It was discovered that African American students who attended schools which consisted of 90% or more African American students attained lower percentages in reading proficiency and mathematics as compared to their white counterparts. It was argued that segregated schools meant a difference in access to resources and the type of educators they get. The same argument could be applied here in South Africa where learners from rural areas are mostly disadvantaged as they have limited access to facilities such as libraries, computer training and adequately equipped schools. These are factors that play a major role in determining whether or not one has success in one's studies.

In recent years, education in South Africa has evolved from being for the selected few to being available for everyone. However, most institutions seem to still be faced with challenges in terms of the quality of education that students were exposed to prior to enrolment at the institution as well as challenges such as background, socio-economic status, HIV/AIDS and the extent of exposure to technological facilities. These pose serious threats to an individual's success in his/her academic life.

This Chapter discusses various studies on attrition and the possible reasons behind students dropping out of their studies. The various student development programmes from numerous institutions are examined as a means of gaining insight into what institutions have recognised as being a leading factor in their attrition rates as well as what they did to overcome this problem. The reviewed studies are presented in thematic form where factors such as students' abilities to integrate, dealing with living in a new environment and how different backgrounds and socio-economic standing have been found to have an effect on student retention. The researcher decided to focus on the presented themes as they are regarded as being essential in understanding Tinto's model of integration, which was the basis on which the study was undertaken.

## 2.2 Student development programmes

Student development programmes were designed as a response to the increasing high attrition rates. Analysis of reasons for attrition revealed that most students struggled to complete their studies due to barriers in understanding the academic language, having limited contact time with members of faculty, financial constraints, under-preparedness and transitional difficulties. Most development programmes have proved to be beneficial to the institutions that introduced them and have enhanced the performance of numerous students to a point where students from impoverished financial and academic backgrounds are awarded the opportunity to improve on their skills and perform at almost the same level as their privileged counterparts. These programmes have also been a major contributor in improving the graduation rates in institutions by equipping students with the necessary skills for advancement in studies as well as increasing their prospects of completing their courses within reasonable time frames.

Drower and Kleijn (2008) reviewed how the history of the South African education system known as Bantu Education has had a 'ripple effect' on the present education system. They initiated the Capacity Building Program at the University of the Witwatersrand as a means of assisting Social Work students who were at risk of academic failure. The idea for this Capacity Building Program originated from the need to help students with their transition from secondary to tertiary education. It was discovered that students who came from impoverished communities tended to have a gap in terms of what they expect tertiary life to be like and the realities of what it truly entailed. These students were termed academically under-prepared as they found it difficult to engage with the study material and cope with the workload (Drower & Kleijn, 2008).

This programme also identified the need to address not only academic issues but also personal issues in trying to ensure academic success. In this programme students were offered financial aid so as to minimise the financial burdens that most students faced on top of academic functioning as well. Other factors that

had a negative bearing on academic functioning such as HIV/AIDS, discrimination and social functioning were dealt with by ensuring that the educator was aware of the difficulties that the student was facing and was helped accordingly. This improved students' performance in that their emotional as well as academic difficulties were not being overlooked.

While still assessing the effects of South Africa's history on the education sector, Sikakana (2010) identified a gap in the education system where a need was identified for diversity in the student population. However, the majority of under-represented populations were from under-resourced backgrounds and few were able to achieve competitive academic entrance scores. Sikakana's (2010) study investigated whether an Academic Development Programme (ADP) would succeed when applied to the South African training programme. It also investigated what impact the ADP had on academic performance and whether high school performance predicted the quality of performance in medical school. Non-ADP and ADP medical students' academic records were compared. Comparisons were made with student records from 1991 to 2001. Factors such as retention, period to graduate, matriculation results and tertiary academic performance were analysed.

Results yielded from this study indicated that there were lower retention levels of ADP students in comparison to the non-ADP students (Sikakana, 2010). However, implementation of the ADP enabled students who graduated to do so within a reasonable time frame and to perform well in their final examinations. Implementation of the ADP also reduced the association between low admission scores and poor performance at a tertiary level.

Various institutions have adopted student development programmes to help students become competent in their academic life as well as to orientate them into the life they are expected to lead for the duration of their degrees. Nowicki, Duke, Sisney, Stricker and Tyler (2004) probed a programme called the Effective

Learning Programme (ELP) and how it could be put in place to reduce the dropout rates amongst at-risk high school students. The results from this study indicated that those learners who participated in this programme had better chances of graduating from high school than those who did not. This could be attributed to the fact that the ELP focused on developing the skills and knowledge needed to stay on par with one's academic path.

The University of Pretoria was previously an Afrikaans institution and shifted to using English as an added medium of instruction in 2004 (Du Plessis, 2006). As this university uses two languages, students who are not proficient in both languages tended to perform poorly. It was then that the University of Pretoria heeded the need for helping students develop their language skills further. The university established the Unit for Language Skills Development in 1999. This unit assessed first year students to determine their levels of proficiency in English and Afrikaans. Those students who were found to be functioning below their expected proficiency levels were offered remedial English and Afrikaans courses (Webb, 2002). Although this initiative has proved to be a step in the right direction, Webb (2002) stated that it would be beneficial to extend the programme to students who have made it past their first year as it was also discovered that students at postgraduate levels also struggled with language proficiency. South Africa is a land with diverse cultures and languages; most students who enrol into institutions of higher learning are bound to be from backgrounds that use English as a secondary language. The Language Development Program is one that would assist greatly in aiding students who are not primary English speakers to further develop and increase their chances of academic success.

The University of South Africa (UNISA) is a distance learning institution. This means that the institution mainly offers courses through correspondence. This has negative impacts on the progression of students as they are not awarded the same opportunities as traditional students, e.g. attending lectures. It was because of this that Subotzsky and Prinsloo (2011) examined ways in which student success could be improved for

Open Distance Learning (ODL) students at UNISA. They maintained that while there have been significant efforts put in place to try and eradicate the rates of academic attrition, e.g. bursaries in reducing the number of financial exclusions and policy changes in the admittance criteria to include under represented populations, the numbers are still alarmingly high. Factors such as under-preparedness and low socio-economic backgrounds have been identified as factors that play a vital role in students not succeeding in their studies. ODL institutions have greater attrition concerns as most students are part-time and non-traditional students which means that they have even less contact with academic staff and have more non-academic factors that have a negative bearing on their success.

This has prompted UNISA to initiate face-to-face tutorials, having satellite broadcasts of lessons and video conferencing, as well as decentralising counselling and student advice services. This initiative has helped not only in guiding underprepared students, but also the underprepared institution in knowing how to deal with issues that may not necessarily be academically related, but have a negative bearing on student success.

Skelton (2010) investigated how gender issues within the classroom setting have changed over the years. In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist studies argued that the reason girls were outperformed by boys was because of a lack in self-esteem fuelled by an under-representation of females in academic fields. Initiatives aimed at increasing female participation have been supported by various governments e.g. the Girls into Science and Technology (GIST) project and the Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) project in Britain. In South Africa, the Take a Girl Child to Work initiative has been implemented. Even with these initiatives being put in place, there has not been significant change in girls' academic performances. Girls are still reportedly lacking self-confidence and the pressure from the expectation to achieve better results because of the implementation of the projects mentioned earlier adds to the anxiety to perform well.

The researcher has included this section on academic development programmes to highlight the various interventions numerous institutions and government structures have put in place in an attempt to improve retention rates. The researcher also hoped to put emphasis on the severity that attrition has on individuals and institutions alike as well as to accentuate the importance of studies such as these in understanding the types of challenges that students are facing that may possibly compromise their ability to complete their studies.

## 2.3 Understanding academic success

Academic success is a broad term and cannot be pinned down to a specific description. For the purposes of this study, the term 'academic success' should be understood in terms of how well students integrate into their campus environment. Integration entails how well adapted their study habits and coping mechanisms are, examining the levels of self-esteem and motivation that foster perseverance in studies as well as the level of system support a student receives.

## 2.4 Understanding academic failure

Academic failure in this context is defined by risk factors such as the maladaptive ways in which students may approach social and academic integration, ineffective study habits and coping skills, low self-esteem and lacking positive motivation to persist in studies, as well as not having a good enough network of support.

Willcoxson et al. (2011) were concerned by the limited studies on attrition rates beyond the first year of tertiary education. Their study was conducted over two years on 5 211 students from six universities. Willcoxson et al. (2011) argued that efforts like educational programmes and supportive services that have been put in place to increase student retention are lost from the second year of studies. This has not

necessarily been because senior students do not require the support; rather that primary focus is made on the first year experience. This study found that factors that facilitated academic attrition were differentiated by year of study and the type of university attended. This was an indication that, while retention efforts are important, it is equally important to extend them beyond the first year experience.

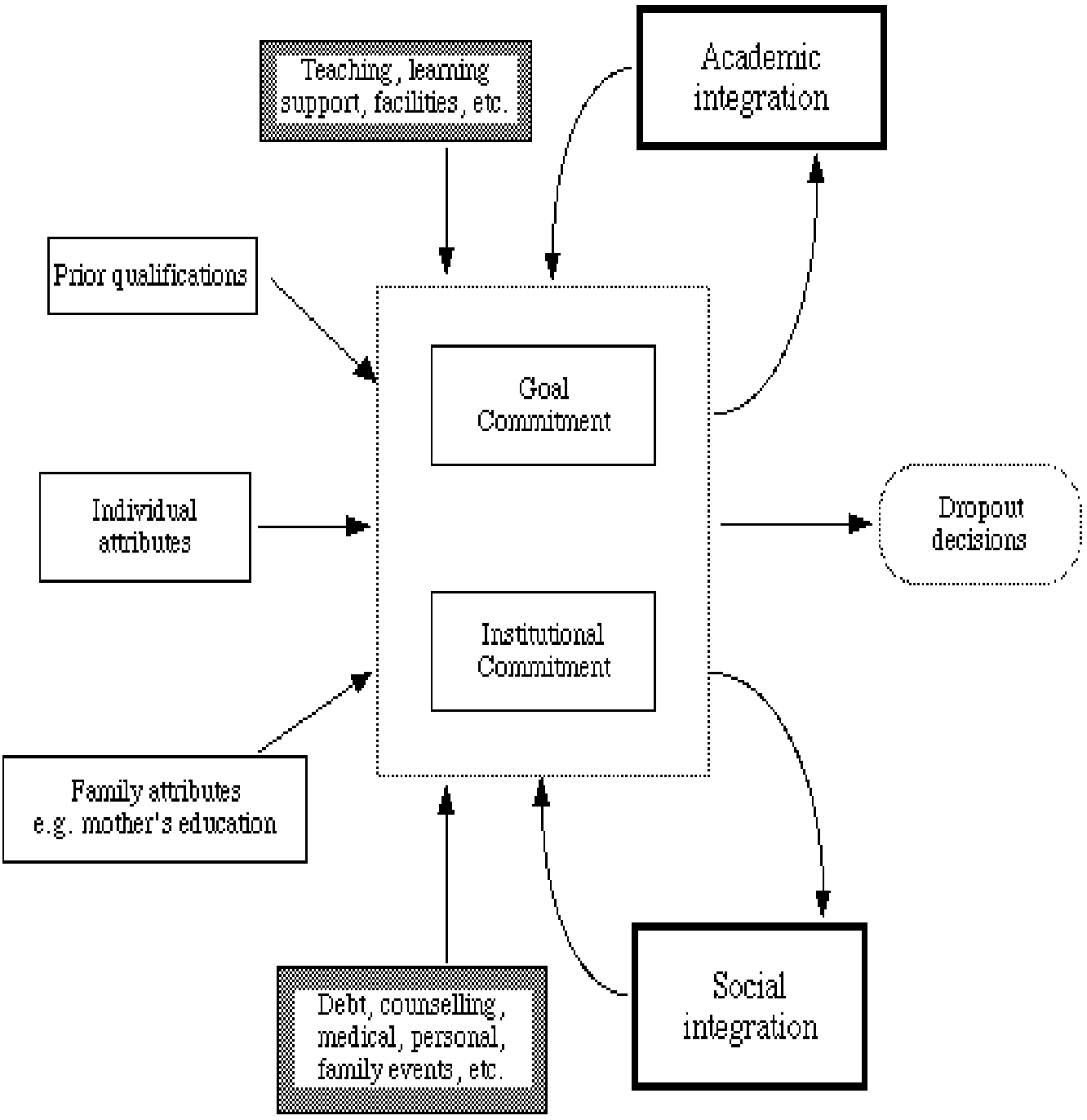
## 2.5 Theoretical model

This study was based on Tinto's model of integration. "Tinto (1975) developed a student integration model which suggests that a match between the academic ability and motivation of the student with the social and academic qualities of the institution foster academic and social integration into the university system" (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001, p. 22). This approach means that if a student participates in the social activities that happen on campus, they are less likely to feel lonely, sad or as if they don't quite fit into the university context. Tinto (1975) argued that the reason why most students did not persevere in their studies was closely linked to how they felt they contributed to or were part of the new environment they found themselves in. The same could be said about their academic life; if students feel that they have the support of their lecturers, tutors or faculties, the more the likelihood of them succeeding in their studies.

Figure 1 is an illustration of factors that Tinto regarded as having an influence on students' attrition or retention decisions. Tinto's model clearly illustrated that when a student is committed to a goal the greater the likelihood of academic integration and commitment to an institution (i.e. seeing yourself as belonging to the university and its culture) and the greater the likelihood for social integration. Factors such as teaching styles, support from faculty members and exposure to academic facilities are influential in the manner in which a student is able to establish academic integration; whereas factors such as the ability to pay tuition fees, family matters and personal attributes contribute to social integration. Success or failure

to achieve academic and social integration subsequently has an impact on the decision the student makes to either persist with studies or simply give up.

*Figure 1.*
Tinto's model of integration



## 2.6 Integration

### 2.6.1 Defining integration

The Webster Comprehensive Dictionary (1992, p. 660), defined integration in psychological terms as "The orderly arrangement of the physical, emotional and mental components of the personality into a more or less stable and harmonious pattern of behaviour". This definition alludes to the fact that for integration to take place there needs to be a process of bringing fragmented parts of various states into forming one consolidated part.

O'Keefee's study (2013) argued that student attrition carries far greater implications than that associated with the individual but rather impacts on the economy as well. Students that were identified as being at risk of attrition were part time students, those in their first year of studies and those who were first generation students. This study further supported the above mentioned definition of integration where alienating factors such as disability, mental health challenges and being from an ethnic background were regarded as crucial factors that often swayed students' decisions to drop out of their studies. A common thread among these factors was that students need to develop a sense of belonging and feel as if they are filling their "college student role" (O' Keefee, 2013, p. 612) in order to increase their chances of academic retention.

Daily, Bishop and Maynard-Patrick (2013) conducted a study whereby 156 undergraduate business students completed a survey that examined whether the organizational behaviour theory could be applied to students and student success. They questioned whether a commitment-support model led to success in the academic environment; whether a felt responsibility fuelled commitment to studies and whether there was a difference in perspectives of the commitment-support relationship in the workplace and academic environments. Participants responded on items that measured perceived support, commitment and felt

responsibility constructs. Results from this study indicated that support and peer relationships play a vital role in creating a sense of belonging and identification with the institution. Parental support was also a significant factor that added to students' feelings of commitment to their institutions and chosen career fields. Felt responsibility was therefore found to have a correlational relationship in the workplace and academic environments.

These studies are in line with the theoretical model that guides this study as they indicate that there are numerous factors that are vital in the integration of students. Integration includes all aspects of academic, social and emotional functioning and it is through addressing such factors that may prove detrimental to a student's progress that a move towards integration is likely to happen.

### 2.6.2 A move towards social and academic integration

### (a) Academic factors in integration

Astin (1999) examined levels of student involvement and its effect on academic performance. Astin (1999) defined student involvement as being psychologically and physically involved in matters that concern academic functioning. He contended that the more a student was involved in class discussions, consulting lecturers for clarification, student societies and being fully encompassed into 'campus culture', the more the chances of experiencing academic success.

It is common practice for institutions to consider prospective students' applications through judging their academic performance at school to determine whether or not they would manage with the academic demands of the institution. In attempting to understand the reasons behind the number of nurses leaving the profession as compared to those entering it, Peterson (2009) sought to examine whether self-esteem, self-efficacy and environmental variables were predictors of attrition in the first semester of studies. This

study was carried out in three residential campuses and 31 000 full time students participated in the study. Self-esteem and self-efficacy seemed to have no bearing on students' academic performance. However, past academic performance was the main factor that correlated with present academic performance. Those students who attained satisfactory results while at school are regarded as having implemented strategies that strive for success. These strategies may include consulting lecturers and attending tutorials and therefore forge a students' path towards integration.

McKenzie and Schweitzer (2010) concurred with the notion of there being a correlation between past academic performance and academic success. They conducted a study on a sample of 197 first year university students where they examined the relationship between academic, psychosocial, cognitive and demographic variables in relation to students' Grade Point Average (GPA). The results of this study indicated that students with high university entry scores were more likely to maintain those high marks and were therefore inclined to academic success. Students who reported high levels of self-efficacy had high GPA scores whereas students who enrolled for full-time studies and had the extra pressure of having to work on a part-time basis were reported to have lower GPA scores.

Another study that considered admission criteria to be reflective of whether or not students would be successful in their studies was conducted by Daugherty and Lane (1999). This longitudinal study examined what differences between eventual graduates and eventual drop-outs were in terms of academic ability, family, legacy status, stress perceptions as well as self-perceived social alienation. First year students were considered for this study; after four years, academic and attrition data on the participants was obtained. Results indicated that there was a correlation between academic performance and psychosocial factors and college attrition and retention. Students with low Standard Assessment Test (SAT) and GPA scores were associated with increased vulnerability to attrition. It was additionally

suggested that certain types of stressors and alienation at the beginning of the college career, e.g. homesickness and being a first generation student were precursors of attrition.

The researcher is in agreement with these findings and believes that self-efficacy fuels the drive to succeed and take initiatives that will promote success. Part-time employment, while perhaps is a necessity for some students in order to pay tuition fees, often means that students are involved primarily in the academic part of the college/university experience and may not get a chance to be exposed to the social aspects of the institution as well. This social aspect of the institution does not include only activities such as joining a club or society, but may also take into account time spent in supervision and forming study groups.

In a 2011 study by Palmer et al. it was contended that taking an active role in studies (e.g. attending tutorials and supervision) led students to form good working relationships with their lecturers and tutors. In relationships whereby students felt that they were undermined or not taken seriously because of their race or not being treated fairly as compared to other students, negative attitudes were evoked towards those particular lecturers or tutors and the courses they offered. This study investigated factors that promoted academic achievement among minority students at a previously white institution (PWI) and its results illustrated that three factors are crucial in promoting academic achievement. These were that engaging in cultural and spiritual societies helped one to have a sense of belonging, that having a supportive faculty and faculty members had a positive impact on studies and, finally, that those students who had friends who motivated and guided them in their studies, as well as made them take responsibility for wanting to succeed in studies, reported higher levels of success. These findings indicate that, while academic integration was important, a move towards social integration was just as important in helping students feel supported.

## (b) Emotional factors in integration

"In this early stage, before students establish new friendships, emotional support from family and friends at home can act as a buffer against the stress of feeling alone in a strange environment" (Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2006, p. 713). Wilcox et al. (2006) conducted a study on 34 university students of whom 22 had completed their first year studies and 12 had withdrawn from their studies within the first year of enrolment. The main objective of the study was to explore students' experiences of life on campus. Findings in this study indicated that although family plays an integral part in monitoring studying and managing stress or anxiety levels that are brought on by the new environment, once one has become accustomed to and integrated in the university system, friends tend to take on that role. Being too fixated on missing home makes one feel more isolated and detached from the university. This in turn leads to students rejecting any form of social and academic integration efforts.

The transition from secondary education to a tertiary institution is one that is often marred by mixed emotions where students' feelings can range from happiness to sadness. The transition into a tertiary institution can be compared to a change in developmental stage. Being in a tertiary institution carries certain responsibilities and implies losing some aspect of who you were in secondary school. This stage is regarded as the beginning of adult life as a person is expected to start paving a path towards a career that will sustain him/her. This transition brings with it a flood of emotions that if negative and are not addressed may serve as a barrier to learning.

Change can be interpreted differently to different people. Change is universally viewed with an optimistic eye; however, most first year students associate change from secondary to tertiary schooling with a sense of loss (Gold, 1998). When this sense of loss is left unattended, it can consume the student, making them feel lost and out of touch with their new environment. There is also a notion that because students are in a tertiary institution they should be happy about the fact that they will be getting their lives in order or

working towards a better life (Gold, 1998). This notion leaves many students suppressing their unhappy feelings to try and seem normal. These suppressed feelings may eventually lead to a student dropping out from their studies. The pressure of putting up a front as well as having to secretly cope with feelings that weigh them down may be what pushes many students over the edge. The kind of emotions that students feel towards their academic life predicts the manner in which they will perceive and experience academic life. A student who is content in his/her academic life and has a positive outlook on it has better chances of success than a student whose outlook is negative and finds no pleasure in the course for which he/she is registered.

Analysis of first year students' perceptions on their first semester experience (Thompson, Orr, Thompson & Grover, 2007) revealed that students' perceptions should be regularly monitored as they influence performance, degree completion, satisfaction and positive student outcomes. There was a total of 320 participants for this study, most were male and lived in residence halls. Perceptions on stimulating courses, satisfaction with the university experience, plans for returning the next semester, the transition from high school, encouragement to attend university as well as difficulties in high school were examined. Most students reported positive perceptions on these constructs and were therefore regarded as being likely to experience academic success.

The emotional wellbeing of students is something that tends to be overlooked and is an important factor in the decisions that students make. Society is often preoccupied with attaining good results and attending to concrete reasons for attrition. This may be what spurred Sparkman, Mulding and Roberts (2012) to examine other non-cognitive factors, i.e. emotional intelligence, which could possibly have an effect on academic success. This study was conducted on first year students who had attended Orientation Week. They found that people most likely to graduate within the given time frame or succeed in their studies would be white females who are single, live in the university residences and have either one or both

parents who have a four year degree. The reason for this outcome was that first generation students were regarded as mostly having limited resources and thus tend take longer to graduate. At-risk students are also more likely to experience financial challenges and not have adequate emotional support to continue with studies.

On emotional testing, results indicated that empathy, social responsibility and impulse control were strong indicators that one would graduate. Being able to be in tune with others' feelings, wanting to have a positive influence on others and being able to control one's feelings indicate that a person will strive for success and will most likely surround him/herself with people who share the same kind of aspirations. A level of emotional intelligence is crucial in academic success. Emotional intelligence implies that a student is better equipped to deal with the uncertainties associated with studying, such as having the resiliency to work harder after failing an assignment, coping with living away from home and building a support network.

## (c) Residential factors in integration

Life in the residences is difficult in that a huge difference exists between that life and the life at home. In the context of home, parents often take on that role of checking on your work and giving support whenever difficulties with studies arise. At university, the onus is mainly on the individual to make sure that they attend classes, do readings, submit assignments on time and seek help when struggling. Being in university then brings on an aspect of maturity, motivation, as well as discipline that are expected from the student. The kind of relationships that stem from the people a student lives with in the residences also has an impact on abilities in studies. Wilcox et al. (2006) state that people who are able to establish good relationships with the people they live with (i.e. roommates or housemates) tend to have a bond similar to that of family.

Having lived in a residence hall herself, the researcher is well acquainted with the problems that may arise from sharing space with a roommate as well as the advantages that it may present. Having had a turbulent first semester due to the incompatibility between her roommate and herself, the researcher asked to be assigned to a different room with a new roommate. The researcher found that her academic work had suffered as a result of being stressed by her living arrangements. This move proved beneficial as the researcher was able to complete her studies and obtain her degree.

The positive kinds of relationships that are built between roommates are greatly appreciated when stress from studies or personal life arise as those relationships are mainly established for one's emotional wellbeing. In these relationships, you may find that one party would take on a more parental role where they check if you are still on par with your studies and therefore act as a motivator to do well because disappointing them would be like disappointing a member of your family. In contrast, if one does not relate to one's roommate/housemates, a struggle is most likely to ensue whereby one feels rejected and out of place. This is a major contributory factor to academic attrition.

Astin (1999) argued that residence students have been shown to have increased chances for student involvement. Residence life is argued to give students more opportunities to engage with their faculties and to be more actively involved in the social aspects of campus life, e.g. sports, house committees and leadership roles. Astin (1999) also argued that students who live in residences are more likely than commuter students to be more persistent and forge ahead to complete their studies. Student involvement and living in the residences is then described as a pivotal factor in ensuring academic success as the student would feel like he/she have had a fulfilling experience of campus life.

The act of being integrated in studies covers all aspects of a student's life: social, emotional, academic, financial, and so forth. In fostering academic success, it is important that these are all addressed and that

they are taken into account when threatening the success of a student. While these factors can be regarded as promoters of academic success, they can just as easily serve as barriers to academic success when the opposite of what was discussed happens. The next section takes a closer look at what can happen when students fail to integrate themselves into their academic lives.

### 2.6.3 Inability to integrate into the role of a university student

### (a) Failure to integrate academically

The inability to integrate into the university student role is an important factor in academic success and can lead to failure to achieve satisfactory academic requirements in order to progress. As with most people who experience some barrier to learning, more often than not this failure to achieve may be linked to social or emotional difficulties that they encounter.

Sexual harassment has been an issue that has tainted institutional reputations and affected the work ethic of faculty members and students alike. In Gouws and Kritzinger's (2007) study on sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning, issues of sexual harassment were regarded as a harsh reality. It was discovered that those student who were experiencing challenges in their studies were the ones most at risk of being victims of sexual harassment. It was common practice among female students to exchange sexual favours to lecturers in favour of obtaining better marks (Magenya, 2012). This practice has been found to have negative and detrimental effects on these students as they are often left with feelings of guilt, ridicule and being under pressure to keep the lecturer happy in order to succeed in their studies.

However, sexual harassment does not only refer to acts of "sexual favours" between students and lecturers. It can also be extended to the manner in which students are treated by their different gendered colleagues within the academic environment. Female students may become victims of sexual harassment

not only at the hands of lecturers by their male counterparts but also by their male counterparts as well. This is often done as a means of marking their territory and trying to belittle their female counterparts. The emotional impact of sexual harassment often tends to affect students' academic progress (Wear & Aultman, 2005). This is because victims of sexual harassment are less likely to participate in class and are often not able to concentrate as they would be more concerned with trying not to draw any attention towards themselves. Such incidents often go unreported from fear that they will further be discriminated against by being labelled as 'trouble makers' and being regarded as 'weak' and not being able to fight their own battles (Gouws & Kritzinger, 2007).

Emotional stressors such as sexual harassment in institutions have also been found to be contributing to attrition rates. Women may still find themselves being objectified because of male students or lecturers wanting to prove their masculine constructs and hold their authority over people they may regard as supposedly inferior to them.

## (b) Failure to integrate socially

University is a different world because of the various worldviews that the 'new students' might be exposed to. This is especially true for male students as they find themselves in a new space where they hold no authority or power, and are vulnerable because they are in a different setting where they are required to intermingle with the unknown and with people from different backgrounds. Their 'natural male construction' becomes challenged and this may be a condition that is worsened if they come from rural areas and the university is in an urban setting.

In a review of the experiences and perceptions with regards to learning of black male students at a historically black college and university (HBCU), Palmer et al. (2009) found that there were two main factors that hindered academic success. The first one was that these students reported a lack of financial

means being a barrier to achievement. Universities tend to financially exclude those students who fail to meet deadlines for payment of fees and the pressure of having to get employment to be able to pay fees, led them to not be able to concentrate solely on their studies. The second factor was that of pride overshadowing their needs. These male students were particularly hesitant to seek out help out of fear of being labelled as 'weak or not man enough'. As most black males would come from families where they were probably seen as 'the man of the house', they felt the need to keep up the strong 'act' even when needing help from lecturers or tutors. This lack of integration had a negative impact on their studies.

This sense of being resistant to programmes put in place to assist students could be linked to the kind of backgrounds that students come from. When an individual grows up in an environment that is not conducive, they are likely to adopt self-helping strategies and may not see the importance of sourcing other people for assistance (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). This may hinder students from coming into contact with other students and forming networks that will benefit them in their studies. Coming from a disadvantaged background can also serve as a barrier to integrate as diversity and individuality are encouraged in academic institutions. These are mostly characterised by concrete effects that set visible differences between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. These are some of the reasons why students can steer from forming relationships with peers.

There is a growing trend among young students to "have swagger"; this is distinguished by the clothes that they wear and the kind of company they keep. This means that a failure to integrate at times can be marked by obvious factors such as wearing designer clothing and being associated with "cool and happening" people. LeCompte and Dworkin (1991) argued that external factors such as standing out as coming from a disadvantaged area puts strain on students that ends up negatively affecting their studies. Some students from this study had anxieties over not dressing and talking in the same manner as other students. This was as a result of perceiving their differences as a distinguishable factor of them coming

from a poorer background. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are then more likely to be under more stress for money as they may want to blend in with their peers, need to pay their own tuition, buy books, photocopies and, in most cases, need to pay for transport between the university and home. Socio-economic stressors therefore have a negative impact on studies as it not only adds external factors that one has to deal with but also affects the way in which studies are approached.

However, coming from a disadvantaged background is not only a stressor when it comes to not fitting within the culture of the institution; most students are also faced with finding means of financially assisting their families. Palmer et al. (2009) stated that coming from a low socio-economic background was frustrating for some students as they reported a need for wanting to find employment to assist their families as much as they could. First born students in this study felt uncomfortable to 'bother' their parents for money when they also had younger siblings to consider. Although financial aids were available, sometimes trying to secure a study loan or financial aid was a tiresome process that discouraged students from pursuing their applications. Students in this study also reported being shocked at the amount of debt they were in through the study loans they had. Financial pressures tend to have a negative impact on studies and in the way in which students approach their studies.

Students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are constantly exposed to factors that impact negatively on their academic performance need support and encouragement in order to boost their resilience and will to achieve more. By receiving the guidance and being properly monitored students will be able to acquire new learning and coping strategies that will help them to greatly improve their performance. In an effort to fit in some students may go as far as denouncing who they are and doing things that suit the culture of the institution. This often has detrimental results as students often become preoccupied with keeping up appearances and in the process perhaps neglecting their emotional state and thus let their academic work suffer.

Harris and Marsh (2010) studied whether or not the notion of a raceless identity enhanced black students' chances of academic success. Fordham (1988, 1996) as cited in Harris and Marsh (2010) noted that black academics tended to go against traditional methods of blending into varsity culture and identifying more with people of your own race in order to have the support needed for academic success. He argued that black academics believed they had to divorce themselves from their race in order to gain success in their studies. Harris and Marsh (2010) found that a raceless identity did not in fact help students achieve better results as they were less likely to cope with the stress that came with academic work and not have adequate support structures in place. They found that those students who reported to be proud of their heritage and race tended to value their education and strived to do well in their studies.

In the post-apartheid era most black students are urged to aspire for academic achievement and there is a drive from institutions to have a good representation of black students. The idea of a "raceless" identity in striving for academic progression is one that the researcher does not believe exists in the South African context. South Africans are trying to show that we are an egalitarian nation where we have moved past the binds of our edu-political history and hope that all students, regardless of race, would aim to acquire a good education as a means of helping this country in its development.

## 2.7 Socio-cultural/socio-economic background

Students' backgrounds in the context of this study were approached holistically and included factors such as quality of education, level of proficiency in English, exposure to technology and other modes for academic mobility, family socio-economic status, family history and external factors that affect an individual's general performance.

### 2.7.1 Education

Education or the schooling environment as a basis where we learn social and academic skills is very important as the school is a place where an individual is shaped by their experiences. It can be argued that we all do not have the same experiences and that a person can know other people within the same school who are similar to themselves, and yet have different experiences within that same school. In this study, the participants' education as well as their parents' education was an important factor to consider. This was mainly because it is believed that those students who had an experience of a good schooling system would carry that experience with them and seek that same experience in their institution of choice.

When exploring students' perspectives on what they thought were important factors in academic success or failure, Mushtaq and Khan (2012) found that the type of secondary education that one receives was highly influential. Study participants reported that communication, learning facilities, proper guidance and family stress had impacted on their performance. Communication referred to where a student studied as well as the language in which they were taught. Students who were taught in English were regarded to be at an advantage as opposed to those who were not. Learning facilities puts emphasis on whether or not a student was previously exposed to facilities such as the internet and a library. Proper guidance is the moral support and guidance that students get from home and their respective faculties. Family stress relates more to students from lower socio-economic conditions. Variables such as class attendance, family income, parents' levels of education and whether or not a student lives in close proximity to the university are directly linked to the family's financial standing.

As indicated earlier in this Chapter, while South Africa is moving towards equality, there are lingering effects of the apartheid system that hamper equality in the education system. Our so called township and rural schools are still faced with problems that often deter students from succeeding in studies. In 2013 there were reports about a shortage of textbooks in rural schools in Limpopo; there are still pupils who

walk long distances to go to school and some rural schools are still in a dilapidated state. These are physical factors that have a negative impact on the quality of education and how students perform in school.

In Kirby, White and Aruguete's (2007) study predictive factors of academic success for white and 'non-white' students at a women's college were reviewed. Results of this study indicated that marks obtained in high school, high school class rank, using standardised tests and the number of courses a person takes were good indicators of academic success. However, there were differences in perceptions as high school marks, rank and the numbers of hours put into college work were good predictors for white students. Predictors of success for 'non-white' students were found to be their marks obtained in high school and class rank. So those students who obtained good marks and ranked amongst the top achievers in high school were considered to have better chances of academic success than those who did not.

This study ruled out the hypothesis that students from high socio-economic backgrounds had better chances of succeeding in their studies than students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Findings revealed that students who reported to need financial assistance obtained better marks because they were motivated to keep their bursaries. The researcher, however, believes that, while this may be true, the number of success stories is not enough to equate coming from a disadvantaged background to motivation for success.

Having worked within the education system and being in contact with learners with special educational needs, the researcher has seen first-hand how learning barriers often lead pupils to drop out of school. Learning barriers are often accompanied by shame and ridicule that a person is not able to perform as well as his/her peers. These learners tended to perform badly as well as exhibit behavioural difficulties when placed in a mainstream school environment because they could not cope with the curriculum offered. This

often led to expulsions from school, having a negative experience in school as well as adopting a negative attitude towards scholastic material. However, when correctly placed in an environment where they could cope, these students thrived and were happy to attend school.

When Dunn, Chambers and Rabren (2004) observed variables that affected students' decisions to drop out of school, their population sample included students that were diagnosed with mental retardation and some that were diagnosed with learning difficulties. Dropout rates among this population were related to four factors: disability status, helpful class, helpful person and the belief that the school was preparing them for a better future. Those students with learning disabilities were found to have higher rates of attrition than those with mental retardation. Consistent with other research findings is the fact that those students who found the class and institution to be helpful as well as had hope for a bright future were prone to achieve better results. A good support system and a positive attitude towards studies promote emotional and academic well-being.

In her work with children with special educational needs, the researcher also observed how learning barriers were often the basis for those children to either be bullied or bully other learners. In bullying others, children with special educational needs often adopted a strong persona to make up for their inability to progress with school work. In instances where they are victims of abuse it was mainly because they felt defeated and other learners would emphasize their challenges. This emphasis on their challenges led learners to have a low self-esteem and therefore be susceptible to abuse from other learners. Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard and King (2008) considered the rates of bullying behaviour and whether or not it had an impact on the rate of school drop-outs in Cape Town. Their findings were that bullying played a major contributory factor in students' refusal to attend school and dropping of marks. Interestingly enough, it was also found that bullying not only had an impact on the victim; it also affected the psychological well-being of the bully. Bullying mostly stems from a perpetrator's need for power and

dominance over others; this behaviour also leads to false feelings of power through the use of drugs and alcohol. So students that bully as well as those that are being bullied are labelled as ‘at risk’ students for dropping out of school.

A good schooling system is not merely where one attended school but rather encompasses factors such as whether or not the well-being of the student was nurtured, whether teachers took an active role in the transference and cultivation of skills and whether parents also participated in their children’s learning system. These are factors that the researcher assumes to be pivotal in transcending the school experience to how a person is able to take in learnt information, confidence in seeking help in difficult courses, genuine interest in studies and wanting to succeed and in the case of many black students, gaining mastery over the academic language which is English and most probably a second language.

### 2.7.2 Language and acculturation

University is almost a global environment, where massive exchanges occur in terms of technology, culture and ideas; this was wonderfully illustrated in Powell and Steel’s (2011) article in which they revisited Appadurai’s (2006) explanation of how universities have become a place where globalization occurs. Appadurai coined the term “scapes” to describe fluid manners in which information, culture, languages and ways of living were exchanged between people from all walks of life. In a country where there are eleven official languages as well as influences from other nations that reside in it, there is bound to be clashes in cultural beliefs as well as a means of attempting to modify them and accommodating those that are different.

Researchers such as Webb (2002) highlighted the fact that having English as a secondary language could affect students’ abilities to succeed in their studies. Most study material in institutions of higher learning is offered in English and takes very little cognisance or has little room for accommodating second language

English speakers. This means that where students rely solely on their own understanding of the material; chances of academic success become minimised. Webb (2002) also argued that English second language speakers generally tend to achieve lower marks as a result of having a lowered self-image and esteem and being hesitant to engage lecturers out of class times as a result of their inadequate proficiency in the English language.

However, this is a debatable issue because there are various reasons for which people learn a second language (survival, academic, business, etc.) For some students, the need to succeed may motivate them to learn a second language and therefore perform excellently. This is especially true in South Africa where the majority of the population is English second language users and have become adequately competent in the use of the language.

Acculturation is the act of one group adopting the beliefs and behaviours of another mainly dominant group. Lew, Allen, Papouchis and Ritzler (1998) examined the relationships between gender, acculturation, achievement orientation and fear of academic success within 185 Asian American undergraduate students. This study was inspired by the recognition that the traditional model of achievement was applicable to individualistic cultures. The traditional model focuses mainly on individual achievement. The Asian culture emphasized interdependence and minimalized individuality. However, in a situation where participants were faced with bicultural identity, they moved to perceiving personal achievements as a positive reflection on the family. In attempting to understand a fear of success, a cultural variable was added whereby a social-oriented achievement goal was significantly linked to an academic fear of success. High parental standards and monitoring achievement were linked with achievement anxiety.

Learning the academic language and moving around these scapes that Appadurai was referring to has led to students being acculturated as a means of fitting in with the current university trends and striving to achieve at a certain level. This acculturation may serve as a promoting factor in fostering an air of oneness within the institution and perhaps promoting success in studies as well.

### 2.7.3 The parental role

The role of the parent is one that irrefutably has a huge impact in all our lives. This is mainly because parents shape our world in terms of how we understand it and how we react to it as well as our attitudes towards it. Parental involvement is regarded as the driving force in student retention rates. When parents support their children and show interest in their studies and how they are coping academically, the more likely that the students will persist in their studies. This involvement is advantageous in instances where a student is not performing well. Parents who are involved are more likely than those who are not to find means of helping their children succeed. This notion was supported by Griffin and Galassi (2010) where they examined parental perceptions of barriers to academic success. In focus groups, parents of academically successful and at-risk students identified factors that they perceived as barriers to academic success. Although there were no significant differences between perceptions of parents of successful and at-risk students, parents of at-risk students, however, had more insight into what was needed to help their children. It was also found that parents of at-risk students felt the need to actively seek out resources that would help the school.

This level of involvement indicates the importance of parents in the achievement of children in learning areas. However, there may be instances where the lines between involvement and over-involvement may be blurred. Parents can also push their wishes and expectations on their children, making it difficult for children to distinguish between what their dreams are and which ones belong to their parents. In most

cases in institutions this is characterised by a student choosing a career field that their parents want rather than one that they are interested in. Parents often put pressure on their children to pursue courses that they think will give them success and wealth as opposed to choosing courses that their children have a passion for. Although this serves as a motivator, it can also serve as a barrier to achievement when students stay in a course they are not prepared or suited for. Choosing the wrong course or one that is not suited for you in most cases also affects the way in which a student will learn.

The roles that parents play is not only distinguished by the interest they show in their children's studies, but also in the manner in which they raise their children. This includes the values, beliefs and society in which a student is brought up. In exploring how self-conscious emotions had an impact on how students perceived possible academic failure, Bidjerano (2010) conducted a study on students from two countries (the United States of America and Bulgaria). Bidjerano found that self-conscious emotions were closely related to the type of culture that one is accustomed to, parental feedback and negative affectivity. Students who are raised in collectivist cultures tend to hold other people's opinions in high regard and judge their success by means of how well they blend in with their parents' views of what is 'good' behaviour and achievement. These are the type of students who will view bad reports or feedback from lecturers or tutors and internalise it as a sign of them not being able to succeed or being good enough. These students then adopt a self-pitying mentality where they end up not doing what is required to improve their performance.

The Bedouins are a part of a predominantly desert-dwelling Arabian ethnic group traditionally divided into tribes or clans known in Arabic as ʿashāʾirand. They are part of a very paternalistic society (Islam dominated) and they consider the education of a woman to be a threat to male domination. Hoz, Kainan and Reid (2000) studied Negev Bedouin parents' views on the reasons for school drop-out rates. This study comprised of 211 Bedouin nationals, 99 females and 112 males, who came from towns with high

rates of attrition. It was found that most explanations for school attrition were attributed to society, culture, economy and tradition. In the Bedouin society, it was taboo for females to have any contact with males before marriage and it is also believed that the more educated a woman is the more she would be able to elevate her family position and also threaten the patriarchal structure of society. School is thus seen as a threat to the manner in which society is run and to the society's morality. It is because of these beliefs that in the Bedouin society, males' education is valued over that of females. As discussed, there tends to be a strong pull for women in this cultural group to put little emphasis on their own education and achievement in an effort to appease parents and society.

There are numerous stressors associated with a low socio-economic background; some of those may be parents not having adequate parenting skills. In South Africa parents living in dire circumstances often leave their homes in the early hours of the morning to go to work and often come home late, mostly after their children had gone to sleep. This scenario paints the reality of many households and it is in these environments where one finds the majority of cases of reported and unreported abuse. Mallet (2012) examined the effects of maltreatment of children and youth on their academic performance. Maltreatment was found to have a correlation with lower GPA scores and lower academic performance. A pilot study was conducted to investigate how students would react to the introduction of the School Success Programme. This was a mentoring programme whereby at-risk students were assigned a full time qualified teacher who would help them with their academic challenges. Evaluations conducted over a period of three years indicated that where these at-risk students were functioning below their expected grade levels, they now seemed to be on par with their peers.

In determining what effect a low socio-economic background has on academic performance, Dass-Brailsford (2005) considered stressors that the youth was faced with, what made them succeed, perceptions of schools and the level of support from their families and communities. This study included

sixteen students who were in their first year of studies. These students reported racial segregation, oppressive and unjust education systems and negative reactions from others as stressors, but their determination to pave their own paths and not let their misfortunes carve out a path of further oppressive systems is what gave them the strength to pull through. Supportive family systems, religion, having black teachers that they identified with and looked up to as well as perceptions of feelings of jealousy from community members are what spurred the participants to succeed in their studies.

The researcher believes that the positive outcomes in these studies were mainly as a result of the students coming into contact with someone who had time for them and who provided them with a shield from the reality of their circumstances. Although this shield came in the form of education, it was the hope they attached to education being their ticket out of their current circumstances that fuelled their tenacity to achieve well. In reviewing these studies the researcher came to think about the role of the parent in the South African context. Does 'parent' only apply to biological parents or can it also be applied to people who have a hand in raising the child? The researcher believes that the latter is true as with the increasing trend of single parenthood and grandparents having to raise grandchildren and child-headed households, the word 'parent' has evolved to including various people.

The family structure has changed greatly from what it used to be fifty years ago. In today's society, grandparents are custodians of their grandchildren and have had to accustom themselves with parenthood with the present generation. Oburu (2005) examined whether care giving stress had an impact on the adjustment of children. Oburu (2005) compared children who were raised by their grandmothers against those who were being brought up by their parents. While other studies indicated that most orphans were likely to have issues with socio-emotional and cognitive development as compared to peers who were living with their parents, Oburu's study explained the reasons behind that. Oburu found that the reasons why grandparents reported higher levels of stress were due to their age and that many of them could have

health problems that could act as negative buffers to their grandchildren's normal social and academic development. As a grandparent, one is expected to be at a stage in one's life where one no longer has to worry about raising children and having to adjust to parenthood may be problematic as there are generational differences.

Social and academic development is not only compromised where one is raised by a grandparent, but also by single parenting. In an absent father household the mothers often have to carry the added burden of acting as both parents to a child. An article by Freakonomics (2011) discusses how coming from absent father household had an impact on how a child develops as well as had a negative impact on cognitive development. In this article, it was found that the impact of absent fathers was gender specific where it was mostly boys who were likely to be affected more by this void than girls. This is not to say that girls are in no way affected by not having their fathers present in their lives, but rather that boys needed that guidance and role models in order to adjust in a proper manner.

Another study that confirmed the negative impact that a father absent environment had on a child was that of Mboya and Nesengani (1999). High school learners were tested using the Human Science Research Council's (HSRC) Scholastic Achievement Test to find out if there would be significant differences in how father-present and father-absent adolescents would score. Results from this study indicated that adolescents who came from a family where both parents were present seemed to perform better on all three scales as compared to other adolescents who came from father-absent homes. These results would suggest that students who come from single parent households (particularly where the father is absent) are more at risk of academic failure than students from households where both parents are present.

The notion of absent father households having a negative impact on academic performance is one that the researcher does not believe applies to South Africans as single parenting is a common factor in most

homes. In the African culture, when a father is absent, his role is usually taken on by other members in the family (e.g. uncles, brothers, aunts, grandmothers). As there would be other key role players that have the ability to shape the child's life in a positive manner, the void of an absent father would not be greatly felt. Mathambo and Gibbs (2009) shared the same sentiments when they studied the role of the extended family in helping children adjust to transitions. They stressed that while the death or absence of a family member can take its toll on the family it was how the family solidified and stood as a unit that helps children adjust. In the South African context where a child loses his/her mother or father, their parents' siblings take on a parental role. The deceased's siblings take on the role of being a senior or junior parent to the child who has lost a parent and thereafter take on the responsibility of attending to the financial, scholastic and emotional well-being of the child. In doing so, the family structure does not collapse but rather plays a pivotal role in helping the child to adjust and have a sense of security.

## 2.8 Teaching and learning styles

Teaching and learning styles are marrying factors whereby the importance of both student and institution is emphasized in the academic relationship. The institution needs to take into account that the students it hosts come from various backgrounds and thus have different orientations. It is for this reason that numerous institutions have taken to putting measures in place that are for the benefit of the student, as the student development programmes discussed earlier in the chapter. There have been suggestions to introduce programmes in institutions that will ensure that students are able to use academic language, are able to navigate their way through technology and are made to feel comfortable to engage with academic staff. This is an indication that institutions of higher learning recognize the diversity amongst its students and acknowledge the fact that some students may require additional measures in assisting them to succeed. In putting the needs of the student and progression first, the institution motivates the learners to

apply themselves even more and strive to succeed because they have the supportive backing of the institution.

It has been noted that most non-English first language speakers were at a disadvantage with regards to tackling academic literature and comprehending lecture discussions. This is possibly why studies such as that of Jager and Nassimbeni (2002) highlighted the importance of literacy training in institutions. Literacy training in institutions does not only encompass teaching students to know their way around the library, but also to know how to gather information using other sources, e.g. computer, research and internet. Literacy training is regarded as being a vital factor in how students cope with their academic careers. Literacy training can be applied to all modules and faculties as it equips students who come from disadvantaged areas with the necessary skills to ensure that they are also exposed to equal opportunities as far as academic success is concerned.

A proposal was put forward that computer training be an added curriculum in institutions of higher learning (Dunmade, 2008). Although Dunmade (2008) viewed this skill as being important to teach graduates who are about to enter into the world of work, the researcher is of the opinion that it is equally important to consider using it as a means of teaching tertiary students who enter a tertiary environment. This is because some first year students enter tertiary with no knowledge of using a computer and fail their studies as a result of this. The skills acquired from these computer training programmes will be crucial in the completion of assignments and learning how to research and use computer programmes efficiently. We now live in a technologically evolving society where success in studies now relies heavily on one's proficiency in using computers and other forms of technology. It is for this reason that computer literacy is important and should be a module that most institutions of higher learning should consider introducing to its students as a means of increasing success rates of students.

While the above mentioned studies indicate what measures institutions can put in place in improving retention rates, the following studies draw reference to retention being a collaborative effort between the institution and the student. Wyatt, Saunders and Zelmer (2005) considered differences in perceptions of academic consistency and engagement between undergraduate students and members of faculty. Results yielded in this study indicated a discrepancy in the perceptions of members of faculty and students. Members of faculty were able to estimate the amount of time students spent on studying outside their lecture times and did not consider this time spent as sufficient enough to obtain A or B aggregates. Conversely, students who obtained A and B aggregates and spent the number of hours studying as predicted by members of faculty regarded the courses to be challenging. These students did not consider time studying outside lecture times as added work. The researcher believes that in order for these students to obtain good aggregates, there has to have been some communication from lecturers as to what was expected of the students and compliance from the students. This correlation was what spurred positive input from lecturers in terms of teaching styles and positive output from students in the form of learning styles and results produced.

The following studies also highlight what activities students can engage in as a means of improving their learning styles. This can be achieved through various methods; however, class attendance remains one that is of utmost importance. In their study on 289 second year Cognitive Psychology students, Thatcher, Fridjhan and Cockcroft (2007) argued that there was a relationship between lecture attendance and academic performance. Students who made the effort to attend all their classes were found to perform significantly better than those who were reported to seldom or never attend lectures. There were numerous reasons that were offered to explain why this was so. It was suggested that regular attendance led to increased comprehension levels and that teaching styles and levels also impacted on motivating students to attend lectures.

When students feel overwhelmed in their studies and perceive the teaching methods as irrelevant, they are more likely not to apply themselves to their studies. University students' perceptions on how their academic environments had an impact on their learning styles and results were explored in a study by Lizzio et al. (2010). Students who perceived the institution as giving them a heavy work load as well as using inappropriate assessment measures tended to cover the basic elements in terms of studying, not seeking to go in-depth to understand and be able to apply what they have learnt. Perceptions of good teaching styles, good teaching environments as well as maintaining stability between these variables had a positive impact on learning styles and habits which ultimately lead to academic success. Students who adopted this surface-based learning style would find it limiting when they have to sit for exams or even when they had a practical assignment in which they had to apply the theoretical part of knowledge acquired.

A question that the researcher deems pertinent in understanding the learning styles that students adopt is whether self-confidence and attitude play a role in how students learn. It can be argued that when one loses passion for studies or is uncertain of one's capabilities then the more likely one is to be detached from one's studies. Detachment is characterised by performing poorly and barely managing to achieve satisfactory results. Seabi (2011) also questioned whether there was a significant relationship between learning strategies, self-esteem, intellectual functioning and academic achievement and carried out a study amongst engineering students in their first year of studies. Results yielded in this study indicated that, while learning strategies did not impact much on academic achievement, what seemed to matter was the students' attitudes, adaptive information processing styles and thorough preparation for exam situations. What seems to foster a culture of academic achievement is adopting good study habits such as drawing up study time-tables, self-testing and drawing up notes or summaries that may enhance one's knowledge of a

particular subject. Good study habits promote a sense of calmness and reduce the level of anxiety in anxiety-provoking situations such as test and exam taking.

Tests and exams can be an anxiety-provoking experience that needs one to be well prepared and calm. Seabi's (2011) study indicated that when good study habits are adopted students tend to be in a relaxed state when being assessed. One of the methods that students are taught from an early age is that of revision and reciting as means of remembering information. The importance of this method was reiterated by Church (2009) through investigating the likelihood of doctoral students' academic success and its relationship with their attending Mock Orals (MO). The study's population comprised of two populations: the 1991-2006 population and the expanded population from 1977-1991. These populations were subdivided into three groups: (i) completers (162), (ii) non-completers (20) and (iii) in-progress students (56), a total of 238 participants. The MOs were regarded as a critical factor in facilitating success among students as they reported that it allowed them the opportunity to publicly present their research, be faced with challenging questions, gain knowledge and confidence for their final oral presentations. The MO was subsequently found to have a positive impact on doctoral students' academic success.

## 2.9 Motivation

The issue of what motivates students to succeed in studies has been briefly reviewed in earlier segments of this Chapter. There are numerous explanations of what spurs motivation and these explanations are interlinked. It should be noted that in terms of motivation, the explanations behind it do not serve as true to all students. What serves as a motivator for one student, cannot serve as a motivator for another student as each person differs in terms of background, exposure and upbringing. This is illustrated in Lebedina-Manzoni's (2004) study whereby students' perceptions on factors that attributed to their academic success and failure were examined. This study went a step further by determining differences between successful

and unsuccessful students in attribution of academic success and failure as well as differences in responses on the Student Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (SATQ) between successful and unsuccessful students. Characteristics that were linked with personality, i.e. persistence, being organized and having the will to gain knowledge were things that successful students regarded as important in succeeding in studies. Unsuccessful students, on the other hand, reported mood on the day of the exam, interesting contents, parents and responsibility as determinants of success. It was concluded that successful students relied on inner factors such as personal characteristics whereas unsuccessful students relied on external factors that were often beyond their control. In determining if there were differences in the manner in which successful and unsuccessful students responded to the SATQ, unsuccessful students scored higher on automatic thoughts that related to worrying about parents' reactions and anticipation of failure.

"Elliot's (1999) hierarchical model of achievement motivation suggest that individuals with high self-efficacy beliefs are inclined to adopt mastery and performance-approach goals, whereas individuals with low perceived competency tend to adopt performance-avoidance goals" (Phan, 2010, p. 302). This model argues that students who think and believe that they will do well in their studies generally tend to show more interest and adopt a higher level of understanding of their studies and are therefore more likely to succeed in their studies than those who do not. This model highlights the importance of adopting good study habits as they are also linked to academic success.

What motivates students to study? Phan (2010) focused on Elliot's four types of goals to learning. 1. Mastery - the emphasis is on the challenge posed as it motivates one to persevere and want to do well. 2. Performance – this approach is goal orientation and the emphasis is on one's performance and needing to perform better than your peers. 3. Performance-avoidance - is not wanting to do more than what is required, sticking to the basics because of fear of failing in that task. 4. Work-avoidance - is when one avoids challenges and new ways of thought as that would mean steering away from the known and what is

comfortable for them. The type of goals that students strive for will determine their level of input towards their studies, how seriously they take their studies and academic success or failure.

Elliot's (1999) hierarchical model was used as a basis for Ramnarain's (2013) study in trying to identify the types of goal orientations that disadvantaged Grade 12 pupils employed. This study consisted of 300 Grade 12 learners from six township schools and 12 learners who showed to be the most goal-oriented were selected for interviews. Results indicated that learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to adopt a performance goal orientation. This goal orientation did not only come from learners but was also encouraged by parents, teachers and the school. Learners are encouraged to do well in order to gain university entrance, to make their parents proud, and to prove that their teachers and the school were able to produce learners who were capable of doing well despite their impoverished backgrounds. However, this type of goal orientation was found to act as a shortfall when it came to how prepared the learners were for university studies as well as succeeding in studies as a result of understanding the work. This goal orientation was linked more with academic attritions.

These findings tie in with those reviewed earlier where the role of the parents was discussed. When one comes from a disadvantaged background, entering into a tertiary institution carries with it the added expectation of being the one family member who will improve the home circumstances. This unfortunately means that students easily become susceptible to attrition as they choose career fields that offer financial security and not necessarily consider the emotional impact that building this career will entail.

When students make hasty decisions in enrolling for courses, the emotional toll that this decision has is often seen through the self-destructive activities that students engage in. These self-destructive activities were central to a study by Leondari and Gonida (2007). The relationship between self handicapping, goal

orientations, social goals, future consequences and achievement in mathematics was reviewed. Self handicapping is defined as ways in which an individual sabotages his/her attempt at success on matters he/she deems important. There are two types of self handicapping, namely behavioural self-handicaps and self-reported handicaps. Behavioural handicaps are mainly within an individual's control and include behaviours such as alcohol and drug taking, lack of sleep and rest. Self-reported handicaps are beyond an individual's control and could be characterised by performance anxieties, headaches and psychological disorders during stress provoking situations. Self handicapping was found to be linked to performance avoidance goal orientation. As it was also linked to the goal of pleasing significant others, those students who perceived their achievement as a way of gaining favour amongst others tended to use this handicap more often than behavioural handicaps. Attaining this goal orientation is an indication that students who resort to self-handicapping activities have little confidence in themselves and their abilities. These students are also likely to criticise themselves harshly and develop unrealistic expectations of themselves.

In contrast, self-compassion is regarded as a booster for motivation and is strongly linked to Elliot's model of achievement motivation. In trying to prove this hypothesis, Neff, Hsieh and Dejitterat (2005) studied the relationship between self-compassion, achievement goals and perceptions of academic failure among undergraduate students. Self-compassion is described as "being open to and aware of one's own suffering, offering kindness and understanding towards oneself, taking a non-judgemental attitude towards one's inadequacies and failures and framing one's own experience in light of the common human experience" (Neff et al., 2005). Two studies were conducted and they both reflected that self-compassion had a positive correlation to positive motivational patterns. It contributed to students adopting mastery motivated goals as they fully engaged with their studies and perceived failure as a means of starting afresh by focusing on what they did not understand. Self-compassionate individuals do not excessively blame themselves in times of adversity and fully embrace their experiences as a learning curve.

The reviewed studies examined the numerous factors that motivate students to succeed in their studies; the most pertinent one discussed Elliot's four types of goals for learning. Elliot described the ways in which students approached their studies and discussed which ones were conducive to learning. Self- esteem, self-efficacy and self-compassion were also found to play a pivotal role in students' approaches to learning.

## 2.10 What about first generation students?

First generation students are those students who have had none of their parents attend an institution of higher learning; they are the first generation in their families to gain entrance into such an institution. There are studies that argue that being a first generation student contributes to academic failure. However, those same arguments that are put forward for academic failure can be put as arguments for facilitating success. A sample of 804 first generation students who had enrolled for their first year of studies was included in Woosley and Shepler (2011) study on issues that first generation students were faced with. Their study had a sample of 804. 64% of the participants were female (514) and 36% males (290). They discussed how it was found that even when parents of first generation students encouraged their children to attain higher levels of education than themselves, they had no idea what university life was like and thus could not render relevant support to their children.

Studies that argue that being a first generation student has been linked to increased levels of attrition are often guided by the notion that these students essentially lack role models that they could identify with. Parents of first generation students may be considered as not being overly concerned with their children's academic progression. This may be because most first generation students come from a disadvantaged background where more emphasis and importance may be placed on financial security. Non-first generation students on the other hand are generally considered to have the advantage of having parents who have been through similar experiences and could therefore offer support, guidance and act as role

models for their children. Non-first generation students are also regarded to be under pressure to do well and persevere in their studies as their parents have a much higher expectation of them completing at least one degree.

This notion of first generation students being at a disadvantage may not be applicable in the South African context as demonstrated in Bidjerano's (2010) study. South Africa could be described as a collectivist nation and being a first generation student would mean that one could be more determined than their non-first generation counterparts to achieve what most communities would deem an act of empowering that particular community. Being a first generation student holds a lot of promise in different families, communities and individuals as succeeding means that they would be the first person in their families to make it (academically). Takalo (2012) reiterates the researcher's views by discussing how South African first generation students were under pressure to succeed because they are in most cases expected to look after siblings and the family. Education in South Africa is associated with stable employment and high salaries; these are what first generation students are raised to aspire for, "Often those who are first generation students say they'd like to make their families proud, change their economic circumstances, and want to help their siblings or other relatives achieve the same, if not higher, education" (Takalo, 2012).

While European based studies such as that of Woosley and Shepler (2011) show that being a first generation student has a negative impact on one's studies because of not having parents who know more or less what challenges one may be faced with, a South African based study by Takalo (2010) has contested that it could also be a major contributory factor in one's motivation to succeed in studies and want to beat the odds. It also ties in with other studies covered earlier that tap into the resilience and determination of those 'at risk' individuals.

## 2.11 Last thoughts

These studies relate to this study as they highlight the main issues that are also relevant in the South African context. Issues such as maintaining one's masculinity alludes to the shift in gender roles that exist in South Africa. In the past, emphasis was put on males' education and success and women were not regarded as having a place in the work force and therefore were not encouraged to further their studies. With the shifting of times, more females are encouraged to enter what was a once male dominated work field. Does this new focus somehow have an impact on statistics in terms of which sex is more likely to succeed in studies?

With unemployment being one of South Africa's biggest scourges, it would be logical for people to want to alleviate their social standing by obtaining diplomas or degrees so as to be on the forefront of job seekers (Takalo, 2012). Low socio-economic status stems from unemployment and low paying jobs. This state of financial standing leads to issues of fewer opportunities (academically and socially), poor self-esteem and how people view themselves and their capabilities. What are the factors that spur some students to have that drive to pull themselves from those situations and some not?

A person's ability to socialise and form long-standing relationships with people who will serve as buffers against negative feelings will boost their ability to perform well and succeed. As social beings, we need that constant reassurance that we are on the right track or that whatever we may be going through at the moment will be worth the effort when the time comes to reap those rewards.

## 2.12 Conclusion

This chapter began by looking at the history of education in South Africa and how this history has shaped the way in which education policies are now reviewed. While there have been numerous changes since 1994, the ripple effects of the apartheid system are still felt to this day. Institutions are flooded with

increasing rates of attrition and have introduced programmes that have been designed to curb these high rates of attrition. The studies that were reviewed in this study revealed how factors such as integration, socio-economic background, socio-cultural background, education, role of the parents, language, acculturation, teaching and learning styles as well as being a first generation student affect a student's decision to either remain in his/her studies or drop out. These studies have also revealed that the decision to drop out of a course is not a clear path where it is guaranteed that if one had to follow a particular path, one would succeed. The factors discussed in this chapter could either promote or hinder academic success, depending on a student's specific experiences, personality and perceptions of the situation at hand.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODS

## 3.1 Introduction

As stipulated in the first Chapter, the purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of residential students as to what factors they thought contributed to academic success or failure. This Chapter presents the procedures and research methods used in this study. The research design, sample, instruments and data analysis are discussed.

A mixed-methods study was considered as it allowed the researcher to gain perspectives on what residential students considered as motivating for academic success or failure and it provided information necessary to yield information on the statistical correlations. A mixed-method approach is taken into account when considering complementarity of research approaches in answering specific research questions (Creswell, 2012). The researcher sought to measure factors such as the perspectives of residential students on reasons for academic success and failure. The researcher also measured whether participants' levels of self-efficacy had an impact on their locus of control and the manner in which they coped in stressful situations and whether participants' locus of control impacted on how they coped with stress.

## 3.2 Hypothesis

$H^1$: There is a statistically significant correlation between university self-efficacy and locus of control.

$H^2$: There is a statistically significant correlation between university self-efficacy and coping mechanism.

$H^3$: There is a statistically significant correlation between locus of control and coping mechanisms.

## 3.3 Research design

This study used a triangulation mixed methods design. This was decided on the basis that a qualitative or quantitative study alone would not suffice in exploring this topic. The current study sought to gain understanding in terms of perceptions of residential students and needed the number of participants to be reflective of the residential population. Since concrete data was required for statistical analysis, a mixed methods study was therefore considered to be the best approach for the study. The qualitative section allowed for the researcher to draw common themes that arose from participants' responses and report on these findings. Quantitative data was acquired through use of the research instruments.

Quantitative data was analyzed using the correlational research design and qualitative data analysis was done using the phenomenological research designs. Correlational research designs measure relationships between two variables (Williams, 2007) and are often used to determine whether the variables are linked. A correlational relationship can either be a positive or a negative one. A positive correlation denotes that whatever changes happen to one variable should also apply to the other variable. In a negative correlation, there is no connection between the variables and thus a change in one variable will not affect the other. A phenomenological research design is defined as a means of trying to understand the crux of a phenomenon by exploring the views of those people who have experienced that phenomenon (Williams, 2007). This design method is concerned with the experiences of the participants and is often achieved through interviews and engaging with participants for a better understanding. The qualitative section was comprised of two self-report questions that required participants to reflect on factors that contributed to their own academic success thus far as well as factors they considered to contribute to the attrition in others.

Participants were informed that although there was a section that required them to provide their demographical information, that was for the purposes of reporting on the participants' profile. A self-report question was posed to gain understanding on personal motivators and inhibitors in terms of academic performances. The questionnaire was completed through the use of a descriptive rating, Likert-type inventories, the *University Self Efficacy Inventory*, *the Internal Control Index* and the *Coping Stress Inventory*. Likert-type scales are widely used approaches to scaling responses in surveys or questionnaires. Use of these inventories allowed for data to be analysed statistically.

## 3.4 Context of the study

The University of the Witwatersrand is a previously white institution and accepted registrations by black students in the late 1950s. The university has expanded since it was awarded full university status in 1922 (Wikipedia, 2014). The university has five campuses spread across Johannesburg and twenty-one residences that house over four thousand, five hundred and sixty students. Participants were sourced from four residences at the university and only students that had successfully completed their first year of studies were considered for participation.

## Participants

A total of sixty-six participants took part in this study with 54.5% females, 39.4% males and 6.1% participants who did not indicate their gender. Participants' ages ranged from nineteen to thirty-eight with a mean age of twenty-two years six months. The participants were between their second year of study and doctoral level of study. These students had experienced living in the residence for some time and had become accustomed to what was required of them to succeed in their studies.

A total of 43.9% of the participants attended former Model C and independent schools, while 50% attended government schools. Participants were also asked to indicate their parents/guardian's level of education as a means of providing insight into whether or not the notion that not having parents/guardians that have been at an institution of higher learning truly does increase one's likelihood of attrition. A total of 39.4% of the participants reported that either their parents or a guardian had achieved education at a level lower that Grade 12, while 24.2% of the participants' parents/guardians who had achieved a postgraduate education.

Although the sample size is small and does not give a holistic reflection of the majority of the residence population, it does give a snapshot of the issues that students are faced with. It is hoped that more studies will be conducted on residential students and add to findings in this study.

## 3.5 Instruments

This study was conducted through the use of questionnaires. The *University Self-Efficacy Inventory* was used to gain insight into students' degrees of confidence in terms of their studies. The *Internal Control Index* was administered as a means of understanding whether students had an internal or external locus of control. The *Coping Stress Inventory* was used to ascertain what methods students used to cope in stress inducing situations.

### 3.5.1 University Self-Efficacy Inventory (USEI)

The *College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI)* as compiled by Solberg and his colleagues in 1993 was used as a measure of the relationship between self-efficacy and whether or not students were able to adjust to the tertiary environment (Barry & Finney, 2009). Barry and Finney asserted that the more confident a student feels in being immersed into the university, the better his/her chance for success. The *CSEI*

measured the experience of students on activities that were scholastically and socially inclined. This inventory comprises twenty statements that focus on measuring self-efficacy on three subscales; course efficacy (*taking good class notes, asking questions in class*, etc.), social efficacy (*consulting lecturers, making friends on campus*, etc.) and roommate efficacy (*dividing space equally, getting along with your roommate*, etc.).

Self-efficacy is the belief that a person has in his/her abilities to produce or achieve something. The word 'college' was replaced with 'university' to suit the context of the present study. University self-efficacy is therefore a student's degree of confidence in his/her competency to complete certain academically and socially related tasks. The *University Self Efficacy Inventory* was used to measure residential students' confidence in their abilities.

The *University Self-Efficacy Inventory* was used to ascertain the degrees of confidence the participants had in developing a sense of immersion in their studies and social lives. Participants were given a statement to which they answered on a Likert-type scale using a five point scale: 1= Very unconfident, 2= Unconfident, 3= Undecided, 4= Confident and 5= Very confident. Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, Kennel and Davis (1993) tested the reliability of this inventory; the Social Efficacy was comprised of nine items ($\alpha$ = .88), the Roommate Efficacy component was made up of four items ($\alpha$ = .88) and the Coursework Efficacy component was comprised of seven items ($\alpha$ = .88). A retest correlation by Solberg et al. (1998) yielded reliability at Social Efficacy ($\alpha$ = .86), Roommate Efficacy ($\alpha$ = .89) and Coursework Efficacy ($\alpha$ = .79) as well as an additional component: Social Integration Efficacy ($\alpha$ = .62).

This current study yielded an overall measure with the three components Social Efficacy ($\alpha$ = .50), Roommate Efficacy ($\alpha$ = .37) and Coursework Efficacy ($\alpha$ = .45). Low scores on the reliability of this

measure could have been as a result of measuring multiple components of efficacy as opposed to measuring efficacy as a single component.

### 3.5.2 Internal Control Index (ICI)

The *Internal Control Index (ICI)* was compiled by Patricia Duttweiler in 1984 and used to investigate where students obtained their source of reinforcement. The ICI is a twenty-eight item questionnaire that contained statements that were used as a means of measuring students' locus of control or rather the extent to which they believed that they are in control of their lives (Smith, 2003). A high internal locus of control is indicative of students feeling that they are in control of the incidents that happen to them. In examining how that is related to academic performance, these are the type of students that believe that the outcome of their results is due to the effort they have put in their studies. Students with a high external locus of control tend to relate everything to external factors. These are students who are likely to reason that they were not awarded sufficient time frames for completing assignments or that the lecturer does not like them. Locus of control has a major impact on motivation as a high locus of control means that students believe that they are in control of what happens in their lives and a low locus of control is an indicator that students feel that they have little control over what happens in their lives. Students with a high locus of control are regarded as being likely to put more effort in their studies as well as believe that they have the potential to have the drive to succeed.

The *Internal Control Index* measured the thought processes that students had when faced with scenarios that are regarded as promoting or hindering success. This also measured students' confidence in their abilities and whether they perceived themselves as being competent in their work. Participants were required to respond to twenty-eight statements using a five point scale on how they rated their confidence and competency levels: 1= Rarely, 2= Occasionally, 3= Sometimes, 4= Frequently and 5= Usually.

Negatively phrased items (i.e. items 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26 and 27) were scored in reverse so as to obtain a consistent measure of locus of control.

Analysis of the reliability of this inventory for this study indicated that Internal Control ($\alpha = .56$) was relatively not a good measure of reliability when compared to Duttweiler's (1984) reliability measure ($\alpha = .84$). The low measure on confidence levels may be due to the reverse coding of data as well as the missing data that was reported in the analysis.

### 3.5.3 Coping Stress Inventory (CSI)

Lazarus (1985) together with his colleagues designed a scale called the Ways of Coping (Gadzelea, Pierce & Young, 2008). This scale measured the manner in which people cope within stressful situations. Lazarus (1985) contended that there were two ways in which people dealt with stress, problem-focused and emotion-focused. The problem-focused individuals were preoccupied with the problem and attempted to solve it or change it. Emotion-focused individuals on the other hand were more concerned with dealing with the emotional effect that problem had on them. Modification of this scale led to Holahan, Moors and Schaefer (1996) adding a third dimension to the subscales that existed: the cognitive or behavioural focused. After all the modifications and reviews, the *Coping Stress Inventory (CSI)* was adapted with three subscales on coping mechanisms, behavioural, emotional and cognitive appraisal.

The *CSI* has twenty-two items that require participants to think of a stressful situation that they were in and then tick the responses that they were more likely use when in that stressful situation. In this study, this scale was used to assess the various coping strategies that students employed. This inventory included coping strategies that were regarded as dysfunctional. Students who employ these dysfunctional coping strategies are effectively unable to handle pressure and tend to perform poorly on their academics.

The *CSI* examined the different coping mechanisms that students employed in attempting to cope and deal with the workload. Coping strategies were categorised under three components: Behavioural and Emotional manners of coping and the application of Cognitive Appraisal in assessing the stressor. Participants were given a statement to which they answered on a Likert-type scale using a four point scale: 1= I didn't do any of it, 2= I did little of it, 3= I did a medium amount of it and 4= I did most of it.

The *CSI* was used to gain insight into whether residential students generally perceived themselves to be under tremendous stress and which coping mechanisms they had adopted as a means of coping with this perceived stress. Cronbach's Alpha for Behavioural, Emotional and Cognitive Appraisal strategies were reported at ($\alpha$ = .47 $\alpha$ = .77 and $\alpha$ = .77) respectively in Gadzelea et al.'s (2008) study. This study recorded the Cronbach Alpha to be at ($\alpha$= .27, $\alpha$= .39 and $\alpha$= .17) for Behavioural, Emotional and Cognitive Appraisal strategies respectively. Reliability was weakened by offending items and removing these items improved the reliability of this scale; Behavioural $\alpha$= .36, Emotional $\alpha$= .40 and Cognitive Appraisal $\alpha$= .25.

## 3.6 Procedure

Accessing participants was carried out by means of first obtaining permission to conduct the study from the relevant residential co-ordinators. Verbal permission was granted and the researcher thereafter sought to obtain ethical clearance. The proposal to continue with this study was accepted and the researcher was granted ethical clearance from the ethics committee at the Humanities Faculty. The study questionnaire was subsequently sent out to residential students via their student e-mails. There were approximately twelve responses to these e-mails; this was insufficient to conduct the study and the researcher resorted to approaching participants at selected residence halls. A convenience sample was therefore used, meaning

whoever was available or interested in partaking in the study was regarded. This sample was easier to obtain as it was faster and participants were readily available.

The researcher printed out two hundred copies of the questionnaire with a note on what the study was about and instructions to leave the questionnaire at the residential security office when completed. An equal distribution of the questionnaires was disseminated to four residence halls; namely, International House, West Campus Village, Barnato Hall and David Webster. Few students responded to the request to complete the questionnaire and return it to the residencial security office. About twenty-three students responded and returned the questionnaires to the security office. The researcher resorted to going to each residence and stood at the entrance to request the students to participate in the study and fill-in the questionnaires.

## 3.7 Data analysis

The SPSS IBM programme Version 22 was used to analyse correlations between the inventories used. Descriptive statistics were generated on the demographic questions in the inventories and results were recorded in tabular form.

The research hypotheses were tested through the use of inferential statistics. Data was analysed to determine whether statistical correlational relationships existed between self-efficacy levels, locus of controls, self-efficacy and coping mechanisms. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic content analysis data was carried out to explore the themes that emerged from the qualitative data. Qualitative responses were noted and examined thoroughly. Recurring and emerging themes were identified using the deductive approach to thematic analysis. The data was thereafter coded and broken down into sections. Themes that were identified in the sub-sections were named and defined. Results were thereafter summarised and will be presented and discussed in the following Chapter.

A reliability analysis was conducted to explore internal consistency of the measures used. In order to establish the reliability and validity of each research instrument, it is necessary, firstly, to clarify these concepts and, secondly, to relate them to the research in question. According to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006) reliability is considered an assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable. It is a measurement concept that represents the consistency with which an instrument measures a given performance or behaviour. A measurement instrument that is reliable will provide consistent results when a given individual is measured repeatedly under near-identical conditions. The diagnostic measure used was the reliability coefficient that assesses the consistency of the entire scale, namely Cronbach's Alpha, which is the most widely used measure. The generally agreed upon lower limit for Cronbach's Alpha is 0.70, although this may decrease to 0.60 in exploratory research (Hair et al., 2006; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightman, 1991a; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightman, 1991b).

## 3.8 Ethical considerations

All participants were informed what the study was about. Participants were also informed that participation in this study was purely on a voluntary basis; that there would be no payments or marks in courses allocated for participation in the study. Participants were informed that all information disclosed would be kept confidential and that they had the right to anonymity should they not wish to have their identities disclosed. During data collection students' names would not be used. The only information they were asked to divulge was their race, age, gender and year of study. Raw data was kept in a lockable cupboard that only the researcher had keys to and was also stored on the researcher's password-protected personal flash drive.

Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point and that the final copy of the research would be made available to them on request. Participants were also informed that the study would be reported as a research report and would be available in the main library. After the stipulated time frame of six years, the data will be destroyed by means of a shredder.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate what residential students considered to be factors that promoted or hindered academic success. For the qualitative part of the study, participants were requested to indicate factors that they considered to contribute to academic success or failure. Responses will be presented as part of the discussion in this Chapter. The literature review section of this study indicated that there were various factors that impacted on academic performance. These factors guided the three hypotheses of this study: (i) There is a statistically significant correlation between university self-efficacy and locus of control; (ii) There is a statistically significant correlation between university self-efficacy and coping mechanisms; and (iii) There is a statistically significant correlation between locus of control and coping mechanisms. Results of this study are therefore presented in line with these hypotheses.

## 4.2 Qualitative Results

### 4.2.1 Students' perceptions regarding academic success and failure

The participants were also asked to indicate factors that they thought contributed to their own academic success as well as factors that they thought caused other students to drop out from their studies. Common themes included having a good support structure, working hard, being religious, doing more than what is expected of you as well as having financial security. Factors that participants thought contributed to academic failure included being exposed to too many parties while living in the residences, living away from home, lack of effective time management skills, maladaptive coping mechanisms (e.g. drug and alcohol use) and not fully engaging with one's studies. These themes are presented below in detail.

## 4.3 Factors contributing to academic success

### 4.3.1 Background

### (a) Socio-economic background

Participants stated that students' good socio-economic background was important in facilitating academic success. Financial stability was regarded as an important factor by most participants as it allowed for students to focus on their studies and not worry about financial exclusions. Numerous students indicated that their studies were being funded by various scholarships and that these scholarships often allocated a budget for textbooks and accessing other resources needed for advancement in studies. Participants reported that their academic achievement was also fuelled by a fear of losing out on their bursaries. Most scholarships and bursaries have strict contractual clauses that state that retention of the fund is guided by a students' academic performance; failure in studies could result in the funds being revoked. Below are some of the factors participants listed as motivators of academic success where financial assistance is concerned.

"*Fear of losing financial support from bursary*"

"*Scholarship*"

### (b) Socio-cultural background

Emphasis was also put on the spiritual life of students. Participants reported that they found it helpful to be able to pray and ask for guidance whenever they were faced with stress associated with their studies. A religious background was therefore listed as a contributor to academic success. Students reported that it was helpful to find other students to form prayer groups with as well as have prayer intentions for success in studies. Participants reported that a religious background also served as a guide in terms of engaging in

"immoral" behaviours such as engaging in sexual activities and the consumption of alcohol and illegal substances. Religion became the "spiritual parent" that saw to it that people abided by its laws and therefore remained focused on the tasks at hand and looked for academic rewards at the end of their studies.

"*Religion, praying, religious beliefs"*

*"Disciplined parents (morals), religion and faith"*

*"Faith in God"*

Educational and family backgrounds were also regarded as motivators for success. A strong academic background in terms of results and the quality of education received in high school were reported as determinants of performance at tertiary level. Participants seem to put emphasis on being exposed to the kind of educational environment that had good resources, and qualified and dedicated educators who motivated students to strive for success. A good educational background was also considered as a factor that prepared people for the tertiary standards of working as well as exposed students to resources such as libraries, computers and having the ability to conduct research on assignments.

"*Teacher support in high school"*

*"Good school and study environment"*

*"Good schools, good education system"*

*"Having attended the best high school, parents that believe in education, parents that can afford the best schools"*

In terms of family backgrounds, participants put emphasis on being the eldest child at home as a motivator for success in studies. As the eldest child, there is pressure to achieve and be in a position to help parents in raising younger siblings. Academic failure as the eldest sibling may be regarded as a disappointment to the family that already has immeasurable potential vested in a person's success. Success as the eldest sibling is also regarded as having a positive influence on younger siblings in terms of the types of goals that they should aspire towards.

*"Being the eldest child"*

*"Responsibility"*

### 4.3.2 Commitment

Participants also indicated commitment as a motivator for success. They reported that the more vested a person was in the course that they were registered for, the more likely there is to be an increase in lecture attendance, studying for tests and examinations, spending more time outside of lectures with course literature as well as showing a genuine interest in his/her studies. Participants regarded these factors as playing a pivotal role in success as they all constitute towards a better understanding of study material through increased engagement with it. Responses indicated that laziness was regarded as having a negative impact on studies. Students who were committed to their studies were less likely to be lazy and put more effort in working towards achieving good results.

"*Commitment, dedication, hard work"*

*"Determination, hunger for success, dedication, lecturers/tutors, hard work"*

*"Dreams, hard work, inspiration"*

*"Extra course work"*

*"Studying, consulting lecturers, going over past papers with friends"*

*"Tutorials, study groups, attending lectures and consulting lecturers"*

A student's attitude determined his/her approach to studies. Students who had a positive attitude and approach to studies were perceived as more likely to succeed in studies. A positive attitude was associated with a willingness to learn, acceptance of help when needed (i.e. consulting lecturers outside of lecture times, attending tutorials, etc.) and finding a suitable fit between teaching and learning styles. A student who has a positive attitude towards the course and lecturers is more likely to enjoy the course and illustrate commitment towards achievement in studies.

"*Working very hard, encouraging yourself, studying most of the time"*

*"Eagerness/determination"*

*"Hard work, being open minded"*

Commitment is also closely linked with goal setting and goal attainment. When a student sets a goal for him/herself and works towards the attainment of that goal, it thus becomes difficult to deter him/her from attempting to attain that goal. A number of participants reported that they found it easier to manage the stress associated with their studies when they were motivated by the knowledge that they were working towards a certain goal. Goal setting is in most cases determined by a student's home circumstance as well as parental influence. Students who come from underprivileged backgrounds often use that circumstance as a motivator and work towards alleviating the situation at home. One participant in the study who was in her honours year of study indicated that her mother worked as a domestic worker. In most cases this would mean that the mother would have had to make certain sacrifices in order to give the child the

opportunity to attend university and may motivate for success in order for the child to obtain better employment and lead a better lifestyle.

*"Determination, hunger for success, dream for a better life"*

*"Being grounded and goal oriented"*

*"Personal drive for success"*

*"Ambition"*

### 4.3.3 Living in the residence halls

Although residence living adds to the annual fees that students have to pay, the benefits that students thereafter reap seem to surpass the burden of those costs. With commuter students it was illustrated in the second chapter that some students failed to attend lectures because of a lack of funds for transportation to get to the institution. There are twenty-one residence halls at the University of the Witwatersrand, of which ten provide meals for students. The institution offers a bus shuttle service between residence halls that are situated off campus as well as a bus that runs off campus for students to shop during weekends. Most of the residences are situated within the campus and are within close proximity to the libraries, computer laboratories and lecturers' consultation rooms. One participant indicated that they have personally found living in the residence a positive factor in their academic life as this meant that they never had to worry about meals and resources. Living in the residence halls often provides students with some security as academic as well as social resources are easily accessible.

*"Living on res and not having to worry about food, resources, classmates, having goals and working hard"*

Living in a residence hall and having your life centred on the institution was also regarded as a positive factor as it added time to a student's life. Unlike most commuter students, residential students do not travel long distances to move to-and-from the institution and therefore have more time to spend at the library, computer laboratories and on the internet use as well as consultation times with lecturers outside of lecture times. This may mean that residential students regard themselves as better equipped in terms of time management skills.

*"Available resources"*

### 4.3.4 Integration

Integration as motivating for academic success was associated with two factors: support and interacting with others as well as an ability to form study groups, attend tutorials and consulting with lecturers.

### (a) Support

Participants as an overwhelming majority reported support as a factor in facilitating success. Students felt that the support that they experienced as being shared by peers, family members as well as by academic staff helped them to feel as if there were people who shared their hardships with them. Parental, peer and faculty support often brought a sense of being united and served a purpose of making the student feel as if they belonged and that there were people who had their best interests at heart and wanted them to succeed.

The thought that there were people who are supportive made it easier for students to relate with people they regard as being vested in their success. In being able to relate with others students are often able to offload some of their difficulties onto people they regard as helpful.

*"Support (parents and boyfriend)"*

*"Support from family and friends"*

*"Parental support and expectation"*

*"Motivation from family"*

## (b) Interacting with others

Being able to interact with others and having positive relationships with them reduces the amount of stress and loneliness that a student is likely to feel. Emotional factors seem to play a pivotal role in how a person is able to interact with others as well as how they will perform on scholastic tasks. If a student is not able to interact with others, it is highly likely that academic performance will decrease as a result of feeling like an outsider and as if nobody else understands the difficulties he/she faces.

Interaction with others within an academic environment often relates to working with others on team assignments, studying with others, consulting lecturers when facing difficulties and attending lectures and tutorials. When a student feels comfortable around other people and is able to engage with them, the more likely that they will participate in academic social programmes. These are helpful and provide students with more than one perspective of looking at study material and helping them gain a better understanding of course material.

*"Ability to interact with people"*

*"Engaging in sporting, musical, departmental activities"*

*"Right People around you"*

*"Being motivated by others"*

*"Working with others"*

*"Group study"*

## 4.4 Factors contributing to academic failure

### 4.4.1 Background

### (a) Educational Background

Students' backgrounds can also serve as negative barriers in studies. Most students reported that lack of proficiency in English, unavailability of money, lack of support, family stress and obtaining lower grades were factors that they regarded as impacting negatively on other students' performance.

Participants regarded the type of school that at person attended as instrumental because it determined the language of instruction as well as his/her proficiency in English. As most academic material is presented in English and lectures are addressed in English, participants thought that competency in the language was crucial in understanding study material as well as being able to understand and participate in lectures. Students who attended the so called township or rural schools were considered to be at a disadvantage when compared to those who attended schools that were considered to be prestigious. This is mainly because these students are perceived to struggle with English proficiency as there is a belief that the schools they attended did not put emphasis on using English as a medium of instruction. These schools are often also associated with having limited resources and therefore putting students at a disadvantage when they to complete research for assignments. Coming from a disadvantaged background thus has a negative impact on students' studies as they would not be exposed to the kind of material that students from more privileged backgrounds would be.

*"High school background, proficiency in English, lack of support system"*

*"Secondary school quality"*

The type of school that a person attended also influenced how a person manages to adjust to tertiary life. Students who are accustomed to small class sizes may experience difficulties in adjusting to the large class sizes at tertiary institutions. Larger class sizes decrease the likelihood for one-on-one interactions with lecturers because supervision is limited to certain times and days. Small class sizes in school may also leave students with a sense of dependency and no inclination to be pro-active and initiate change on their own without the help of a mentor.

*"Independence"*

*"Not asking questions in class"*

## (b) Social background

In terms of the social background being a contributor to academic failure, participants considered a lack of support and guidance from home and academic faculties as well as stress related to these factors as crucial. Support from family and faculty leads to students knowing what is expected of them and aiming to satisfy those that supported them in their studies. Some participants reported how, coming from a disadvantaged background, parents were likely to expect that their children chose a prestigious career field where they will earn enough money to help support the family. When people take a less desired career field, parents tend to be unsupportive and dismissive of the choices that a person has made. This in most instances leads students to following courses that they have no interest in and are not passionate about. When support is absent, students may be overwhelmed by the demands of the course and may be susceptible to experiencing more personal difficulties.

*"Finances"*

*"Family problems, availability of fees, exposure to relevant information"*

*"Not choosing the correct courses in under grad"*

Participants also reported that students from lower socio-economic status families were considered to be at greater risk of academic failure than their privileged counterparts. Variables such as class attendance, family income, parents' levels of education and whether or not a student lives in close proximity to the university are directly linked to the family's financial standing. Participants reported that not having the funds to afford books or transport fees to commute to the institution was the reason why some of their counterparts dropped out of their studies in pursuit of employment.

*"Limited transportation and resources needed for course"*

*"Not having money to buy books or pay fees"*

*"Geographical location, lack of resources, lack of funding, lack of support (Community)"*

### 4.4.2 Non-conducive living environments

Non-conducive living environments were factors that were listed as pertaining to academic failure. Participants indicated that living in an environment whereby one was constantly faced with family problems as well as having to concentrate on studies was a mammoth task. They reported that family problems were a factor that affected both residential and commuter students alike. Participants reflected on how difficult it was for them to concentrate on studies when they were aware of problems that the family may be facing and feeling helpless because they felt they were too far away to help. They reported that with commuter students living with the problem on a daily basis must be just as difficult.

*"Being away from home"*

*"Family problems"*

*"Not attending lectures and having personal problems"*

*"Toxic atmosphere, family issues"*

Participants also reported that there were numerous parties that were often held on campus and particularly in their residences. They reported that they found that these can be distracting when a person is not disciplined and concentrates solely on those and neglects his/her academic work. It was reported that often coming from strict family backgrounds most of them were enjoying the freedom that residential life awarded them. However, they were cognisant that this freedom can also serve as a barrier to studies when faced with roommates or residence hall mates who often played loud music that disturbed the serenity of the environment when trying to study.

*"Disturbing neighbours"*

*"Friends wanting to chill"*

*"Non-conducive environments"*

*"Res parties"*

### 4.4.3 Motivation

Participants reported on three factors that affected the level of motivation that a person had with regards to studies. These were reported as showing a lack of interest in studies, having a heavy workload and having low self-esteem or doubting one's abilities.

## (a) Lack of interest

Having a lack of interest in studies often meant that one had no passion for what one was doing and a lack of passion often implied an attitude of not caring about the quality of work or whether or not one would succeed in it. A lack of interest in studies also led students having decreased pleasure in what they were studying. This means that those students may often perform poorly in examinations and assignments. Consistent poor performances often led to academic exclusion.

*"Procrastination, distractions, lack of focus, inability to say no"*

*"Procrastination, doing only what is necessary at times and not going beyond that"*

*"Time management, lack of dedication"*

*"Laziness, procrastination"*

## (b) Too much work

Some participants reported that they often found it difficult to cope with the workload and the time frames that were often set up for deadlines. They reported that they were often awarded limited time frames for submissions and found these frustrating. They reported that they often worked hard to meet these deadlines but that there were students who did not have this tenacity to forge ahead and strive to meet these deadlines. A heavy workload was also described as demotivating and often resulting in students delivering poor work standards as a means of attempting to keep abreast with the work demands. Participants regarded this as something that should be considered when planning submission dates within faculties as well by students in terms of acquiring effective time management skills.

*"Limited time for submission deadlines"*

*"Poor balance in all occupational performance areas e.g. School, leisure, social, rest, sleep, personal management"*

*"Lack of interest, little understanding, too much work"*

### (c) Low self-esteem/self- doubt

Low self-esteem was regarded as having a major emotional impact on a student and thus affecting academic progress. Participants reported that as a student one needed to have a level of self-esteem to believe in one's abilities and to be able to deal with disappointments with studies. It was reported that in studying one had to constantly re-adjust and participants believed that this was not possible when a person had low self-esteem. Low self-esteem often led to students being shy to ask for clarity in lectures or securing appointments for consultation and even hindered one from participating in oral discussions.

*"Self-doubt, time management, lack of dedication"*

*"Nervousness, self-doubt, stress, procrastination, lack of sleep, lack of study groups"*

*"Negative attitude"*

*"Low self-esteem, low grades"*

## 4.4.4 Maladaptive coping mechanisms

Acquiring a tertiary education was something that was considered as stressful and often led to students adopting various coping mechanisms in keeping up with the demands that a tertiary education required. Participants reported having used maladaptive coping mechanisms such as drinking Coke with Disprin in an effort to stay alert and not fall asleep while studying. Other measures that students often resorted to were drinking alcohol excessively and misusing drugs to cope with stressful situations. Students were also

reported to use avoidant coping mechanisms such as sleeping and engaging in sexual activities in trying to forget about the stressful situation that they were in.

*"Alcohol, not studying, sex"*

*"Friends, alcohol, drugs"*

*"Poor planning, bad friends, partying"*

*"Partying, having too many friends, sugar daddies and relationships"*

*"Substance abuse, peer pressure"*

## 4.5 Quantitative results

### 4.5.1Inferential statistics

Hypothesis one postulated that there is a statistically significant correlation between the students' levels of efficacy and locus of control. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the self-efficacy and internal locus of control. Results yielded a positive correlation between the three constructs of the university self-efficacy and locus of control, namely, self-efficacy in terms of social life ($r=.571$, $p<0.01$); self-efficacy roommate ($r=.575$, $p<0.01$) and self-efficacy coursework ($r=.638$, $p<0.01$), as presented in Table 4.

Hypothesis two asserted that there is a statistically significant correlation between the students' levels of efficacy and the manner in which they cope with stressful situations. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between self-efficacy and the Coping Stress Inventory. Results yielded a positive correlation between the three constructs of university self-efficacy and the three constructs of ways in which students coped with stress. Correlations ranged in

magnitude from .893 to .990. The strongest correlations were between self-efficacy (roommate) and coping stress (emotional); ($r=.990$, $p<0.01$). When considered collectively; the correlation results shown in Table 4 between the University Self-Efficacy Inventory and the Coping Stress Inventory indicate strong support for the second hypothesis.

In terms of hypothesis three, it was suggested that there is a statistically significant correlation between locus of control and the ways in which students cope with stressful situations. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the Internal Control Index and the Coping Stress Inventory. Results yielded a positive moderate to strong correlation between the three constructs of ways in which students coped with stress and locus of control. Cognitive appraisal as a means of coping with stress ($r=.576$, $p<0.01$) and emotional ways of coping with stress ($r=.576$, $p<0.01$) indicated moderate correlations. The strongest correlation was with behavioural ways of coping with stress ($r=.647$, $p<0.01$). The correlation results shown in Table 4 between the Coping Stress Inventory and the Internal Control Index indicate strong support for the third hypothesis.

Table 4.

*Relationship between Self-Efficacy, Locus of Control and Coping with Stress*

| | ICI Ave. | CSI_B | CSI_E | CSI_CA | USEI_S | USEI_R | USEI_C |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ICI Ave. | - | | | | | | |
| CSI_B | .647<br>.000 | - | | | | | |
| CSI_E | .576<br>.000 | .894<br>.000 | - | | | | |
| CSI_CA | .576<br>.000 | .893<br>.000 | 1.000<br>.000 | - | | | |
| USEI_S | .571<br>.000 | .919<br>.000 | .966<br>.000 | .966<br>.000 | - | | |
| USEI_R | .575<br>.000 | .942<br>.000 | .990<br>.000 | .990<br>.000 | .987<br>.000 | - | |
| USEI_C | .638<br>.000 | .893<br>.000 | .957<br>.000 | .956<br>.000 | .946<br>.000 | .958<br>.000 | - |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01. level (2-tailed).

Note: ICI Ave denotes Internal Control Index Average
CSI_B denotes Coping Stress Inventory_ Behaviour
CSI_ E denotes Coping Stress Inventory _ Emotional
CSI_CA denotes Coping Stress Inventory_ Cognitive Appraisal
USEI_S denotes University Self Efficacy Inventory_ Social
USEI_R denotes University Self Efficacy Inventory_ Roommate
USEI_C denotes University Self Efficacy Inventory_ Coursework

## 4.6 Conclusion

This Chapter began with a description of the demographic characteristics of the participants. The main aim of the study was to gain perspective on the perceptions of residential students with regards to

academic attrition. Participants were asked to report on what they thought contributed to academic success and failure respectively. Participants' responses were reported on qualitatively into categorised themes. The research hypotheses were tested through correlation analysis. A correlation analysis was conducted to assess whether there were statistically significant correlations between the students' levels of self-efficacy and locus of control and ways in which they coped with stress as well as between locus of control and ways of coping with stress.

The data suggested that there were statistically significant correlations between the instruments that were used on all the categories that were measured. Self-efficacy had bearing on locus of control and the way in which students coped in stressful situations. Locus of control also had an effect on measures that were adopted in coping with stress. Chapter five provides a discussion on the results and conclusions.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

## 5.1 Introduction

The researcher started the study by stating the fact that issues of academic attrition were not only applicable to the South African population, but that it was a universal phenomenon that institutions worldwide were still struggling to grapple with as well as address within various institutions. This research was influenced by Tinto's (1975) model where he asserted that a student needed to feel a sense of belonging to the academic environment in order to be motivated to achieve. This model seemed not only to put focus on the academic life of a student but also emphasized the importance of emotional well-being. Tinto affirmed that academic success relied on a student's ability to immerse him/herself into the academic environment. This immersion entailed the ability to engage with the course work, faculty members and fellow students. It was believed that the more open the network around students the less likely that they would become engulfed in their difficulties.

This current study sought to examine perspectives of residential students at the University of the Witwatersrand as to what the reasons for academic success and failure were. In order to study students' perspectives as well as note possible significances between levels of self-efficacy, locus of control and ways of coping with stress, the following research hypotheses guided this study: (i) There is a statistically significant correlation between students' levels of efficacy and locus of control, (ii) There is a

statistically significant correlation between students' levels of 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.

In light of the findings that were presented in the previous Chapter this Chapter discusses these findings in-depth and explains the reasons behind the outcomes of the results. The discussion is based on themes and according to the research questions and components that were highlighted in each of the inventories that were used. This Chapter also presents a discussion on the limitations of the study, recommendations for future studies and implications that the current study may have.

## 5.2 What are the perceived factors for academic success?

It seemed that the students were well attuned with their needs and were aware of the fact that their academic performance did not solely rely on academic performance; however, their performance in studies also depended on their emotional well-being.

Academic success seemed to be a factor that numerous people could respond to timeously and this may have been as a result of having experienced some factor(s) that motivated the participants to pursue their studies. Most students attributed their academic success thus far to social links, either through family or having some supportive friend or faculty member who supported them through the difficult times. Responses were categorized under socio-economic and socio-cultural background, commitment, living in residence halls and integration through support and interacting with others.

### 5.2.1 Socio-economic background

The transition from a secondary education environment to a tertiary environment is one that can be daunting for students who not only have to focus on academic achievement, but have the added stress of not being financially well-off. Coming from a low socio-economic background leads students to worry about how they will pay for fees or afford to buy material needed for advancement in courses. Fraser and Killen (2003) agreed with the notion of a lack of finances having a bearing on academic performance and in their study proved that financial difficulties were indeed factors that contributed to academic failure. The participants reported that they found bursaries and being awarded financial assistance helpful as it meant that they could afford tuition fees and were therefore able to focus solely on academic achievement. This was also supported in a study by Bain, Fedynich and Knight (2010).

While being awarded financial assistance may be beneficial in terms of students not having to carry the financial burden by themselves, low socio-economic backgrounds have far greater consequences than that associated with finances only. Some studies refuted the notion of financial assistance being a buffer for academic success. Studies such as that of Huffman, Mehlinger and Kerivan (2000) indicate that low socio-economic status has unfavourable effects on IQ, achievement at school as well as emotional well-being of students.

Worley (2007) claimed that a low socio-economic status not only meant a lack of resources, but that it may also mean that students coming from these backgrounds may have few support systems. Support systems are important in fostering emotional well-being and therefore a lack of support makes students have a strong inclination towards lack of achievement. This suggests that even where a student is

awarded financial assistance, if they do not have an adequate support system, the more the likelihood of them not attaining success in their studies. Adding to negative effects of a low socio-economic status is that fact that in some instances students may be discouraged to persevere in their studies because of the belief that there are no guarantees of a job opportunity after completion of studies. This belief may be held more in South Africa where we are faced with a growing number of graduates who are unemployed. Students coming from a low socio-economic background also tend to be enticed by the prospects of earning a living immediately rather than having to wait to complete studies first before earning an income (Najimi, Sharifirad, Amini & Meftagh, 2013).

### 5.2.2 Socio-cultural background

### Religion

The role of religion in facilitating academic achievement was addressed in this current study with participants reporting having spiritual life as a factor that motivated them to achieve. Toldson and Anderson (2010) concurred with these reports in their study where they argued that religious life had an impact on the increment of grades. It was stated that a spiritual life was strongly linked to students who had positive self-concepts and exuded positive feelings towards the institution, had more parental involvement and had fewer disciplinary issues.

The researcher believes that this is mainly to do with the fact that, as a spiritual person, there are certain expectations that are put on you as a person and your lifestyle. Spiritual people are expected to act virtuously and live up to virtues prescribed by their chosen religious path (Hilton & Wood, 2012). Besides providing people with a set of virtues to follow, religion also helps students stay grounded and persevere when faced with the prospects of dropping out. The belief and reassurance that there is some

plan that is set out for you always seems to help people to persevere.

Hilton and Wood (2012) also spoke about religion as a confidant. This reiterates the discussion in the previous chapter about religion serving as a "spiritual parent". Spirituality in this sense becomes personified and is credited for providing the inspiration to achieve as striving for excellence is considered as an important virtue. Being aligned to a spiritual way of life also means that a student is likely to encounter fewer relational distractions. Activities such as alcohol and drug use are likely to be avoided as they are not associated with the Christian way of life.

It was also interesting to note that the role of religion had more weight in low socio-economic status communities in comparison with high socio-economic communities (Regnerus & Elder, 2003). Youths from low socio-economic status communities' academic progress was increased with religious involvement. This may have been because, for low socio-economic status communities, religion holds the promise and answer for a better life.

## Prior learning opportunities

In terms of being exposed to a good educational system prior to entering into a tertiary institution, Schaps (2005) supported the idea that supportive school environments promoted academic success. Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus and Noguera (2013) also added that a lack of instructional coherence and being equipped with inexperienced teaching staff contributed to academic failure.

It can be argued that a school should have a clear set of goals and values. These can be attained only when the principal has an exceptional leadership style and there is collaboration between the parents and the school. When the leader of an institution involves parents in the decisions and processes within the institution, the more success they will experience. Parental involvement adds to understanding that

students will also feel included in the process within an institution. This inclusion sets the tone for what role students are expected to play in order to succeed in their studies.

### Position in family

The issue of position in family is one that has been the focus of numerous studies as it is generally believed that it is linked to differential treatment between siblings. Some study participants reported being motivated to succeed because, being first born in the family, there are more expectations for success. Participants reported being expected to succeed and help parents raise younger siblings. Hotz and Pantano (2013) found that parents indeed tendered to be stricter on first born children. Parent studied here indicated a lesser inclination to punish later born children for bad results. This study also supported claims of first born children as being inclined for academic success by raising concern over the seeming decline in school performance associated with birth order. Later born children experienced a decline in the level of stringency of their parents' disciplinary measures.

These relaxed parenting measures may serve as good guidelines in explaining how Carette, Anseel and Van Yperen (2011) found differences in motivation goals according to position in family. First born children were found to adapt mastery goals when compared to performance goals of second born children. Colston (2008) supported these findings in his study where he found that first born and only children tended to be high achievers. Colston's (2008) study further stated that first born children had higher Intelligence Quotients (IQ).

## 5.2.3 Commitment

The term 'commitment' connotes a shared interest and unity to some degree. It suggests a sense of belonging (Love, 2013). In raising the issue of a shared interest and a sense of belonging, the researcher

hopes to illustrate how participants feel towards the institution and how that is seen through their progress. Participants reported that in order to succeed one needed to have a positive attitude towards one's course, set clear and realistic goals and go the extra mile. These responses are an indication that students feel as if they are part of the culture at the University of Witwatersrand. Students show their commitment through achieving well.

Commitment to studies is also characterized by an interest in academic development. There was a strong correlation between frequent library usage and high GPA and retention rates (Soria, Fransen & Nackerad, 2013). In doing so, not only do students indicate that they are willing to spend extra hours on trying to understand their work, but that they have an open attitude to learning. Cukrowska, Staskun and Schoeman, (1999) reviewed this attitude to learning on two groups. These two groups were from the University of the Witwatersrand and the Medical University of South Africa (Medunsa) and found that the academic achievement of both these groups was linked more to attitude than aptitude. This suggests that achievement, as indicated by study participants, relies heavily on a positive attitude and willingness to expand horizons.

### 5.2.4 Living in residence halls

Study participants reported that living in the residences promoted their success as it allowed them the opportunity to interact with academic staff more frequently as well as offered the assurance of meals and access to resources at convenient times. Jones (2011) attested that the close proximity to resources and academic staff that residential living awarded was beneficial to academic success.

As a residence student, one often comes at the fore-front of the programmes aimed for student involvement. This means that residence students are at an advantage as they experience the full campus

experience and may be better able to integrate into the institutional experience than commuter students. When people feel included in the institutional experience, the higher the likelihood of them persisting in their studies (Upcaft, Crissman & Ishler, 2005).

Grayson (1997) however held different views in that his study revealed that although commuter students had lower levels of involvement when compared to residence students, they were still reported to obtain higher marks. It is believed that this was a result of commuter students having the support of family unlike residence students who were separated from their families. The researcher, however, believes that residence living can also present the student with an opportunity for growth and maturity. Tertiary life is the bridge between dependent life and adult life. When one is faced with independency and having to take decisions that will have an impact on one's life as an adult, the more likely that one will take the task seriously.

### 5.2.5 Integration

Tinto's model clearly illustrated how there were various factors that needed to be taken into consideration when assessing integration. Participants reported that offered support & interacting with others contributed to their sense of integrating into the University of the Witwatersrand culture. Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley and Calstrom (2004) added that there was a correlation between perceived social support, social involvement, commitment, self-efficacy and predicted college success. It is then important to note that integration into an institution is a joint effort from the institution and the student. It is for that reason that care should be taken in ensuring a positive integrative experience. Integration is also closely linked to emotions, because if a student has negative emotions towards the institution and its people, the harder it will be for him/her to integrate into the institution. Conversely, when emotions are positive, the easier integration will become. Expressing these negative/positive emotions will affect

achievement (Valiente, Swanson & Eisenberg, 2012). Negative emotions lead to failure, while positive ones lead to success.

In expressing these positive emotions or trying to get a sense of being integrated into the institution, students may engage more in activities that facilitate integration. In performing more activities that promote integration, the student should have a sense of gaining something from the institution (Miller, 2012). Integration then plays a central role in making students feel less like outsiders and feel as if they belong within the institution.

## 5.3 What are the perceived factors for academic failure?

In answering this question it seemed as if students located the reasons behind attrition onto external factors such as financial difficulties as well as having friends that badly influence one's progress and behaviour. Participants struggled in answering this question and seemed to find it difficult to visualise other people and think about what possible reasons they had for attrition. Responses were categorized as educational and social background, non-conducive living arrangements, motivation and maladaptive ways of coping with stress.

### 5.3.1 Educational and social background

Poor educational background is associated with low socio-economic status. This often means that parents are unable to afford a private school or former Model C type of education for their children. Government or township types of schools are plagued with low retention and achievement rates. Ferguson, Bovaird and Mueller (2007) attest that a low socio-economic status impacts school readiness and overall academic achievement. This implies that students from low socio-economic status backgrounds are not

expected to achieve as well as their more privileged counterparts. The American Psychological Association (2012) also drew reference to a low socio-economic status being linked to lower grades, poor attendance and disengagement from school.

The type of secondary school that a person attended sets the tone for whether or not he/she will achieve. This is a view held by participants where they indicated that the type of school attended affected proficiency in the English language as well as exposure to certain resources. Borman and Rachuba (2001) reiterate that proficiency in English seemed to be a barrier to academic success as most institutions use English as a medium of instruction. It was suggested that, unless students who struggled to comprehend the language were offered programmes for improving language proficiency, they were likely not to succeed in studies.

Another study found that people who experienced poverty in their pre-school or early school years were more affected than those who experienced poverty in later years (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). This finding draws attention to how poverty affects early development and how it can affect the foundation on which future learning aspects are built.

### 5.3.2 Non-conducive living arrangements

Non-conducive living arrangements were not only linked to the physical conditions in which people lived, but rather conditions that had negative emotional bearing and were not favourable in promoting academic success. As such, participants reported worrying about familial problems and being exposed to a culture of partying where there is likely to be substance use as factors they considered to be non-conducive. Cooley-Strickland, Quille, Griffin, Stuart, Bradshaw and Furr-Holden (2009) supported the notion that negative emotions affect academic well-being.

In instances where students had more stress and little support, they tended to display behavioural difficulties and had little life satisfaction (Baqutayan, 2011). Living in the residence can stir these feelings up when there is discontentment with a roommate/housemate or an inability to adjust to living away from home. Where there is little life satisfaction, it is highly likely that a person may feel as if he/she is gaining nothing from those activities. The threat of attrition lies in harbouring these negative feelings.

Living in an environment where there is little or no support can render people feeling helpless and hopeless in their situation. Lu (2012) emphasized that a split in family dynamics disrupted the family structure and often led to children performing poorly in school. This shift in dynamics has also been linked to a high susceptibility to negative behaviour patterns; in this study these were reported to be the exposure to parties and the excessive use of alcohol and drugs and engaging in risky sexual behaviour as a means of 'escaping' the reality and negative emotions associated with it.

### 5.3.3 Motivation

The issue of a lack of motivation is one that is difficult to address as it is not something that can be taught nor implemented. Motivation differs from person to person depending on background, beliefs and socio-economic status. Study participants indicated that there were numerous factors that led to students not being motivated. Ones that they regarded as pertinent in fostering a lack of motivation were lack of interest, thinking that they were given too much work and having a low self-esteem or self-doubt.

Lack of motivation has been linked to under-preparedness rather than an inability to understand academic work (Howey, 2008). Students mostly get to institutions having a romanticized idea of what tertiary life will be like. This romanticized idea of what tertiary life is like is often crushed by the realization of what

it really entails. Reality may often cripple students into developing a fear of failure (Anderson, 2009). This fear of failure often leads students to not engage in academic activities such as submitting assignments out of fear of the kind feedback they may be given back. Fear of failure also extends onto test and examinations where a student is often riddled by anxiety and thus struggles to display his/her competency in the course work.

Procrastination is an example of what a fear of failure may lead to (Anderson, 2009). It is contended in this study that students often put things off to the last minute and end up not presenting good quality work standards or miss set deadlines. Procrastination as a result of fear of success makes the student seem as if he/she lacks motivation or zeal for academic work. Procrastination also left students with little motivation for academic work and diminished self-efficacy (Sirin, 2011). The researcher believes that this may be because, when forced to complete an assignment or study for a test/exam, the workload is often overwhelming and leaves students feeling exasperated and as if they are not competent enough to achieve. This is enough to devalue all other efforts that the student has put into the course and cause them to perform poorly.

### 5.3.4 Maladaptive coping mechanisms

Tertiary life is one that is stressful and needs the employment of various coping mechanisms to succeed. However, the stress of academic life and a negative emotional state can lead students to employ coping mechanism that are maladaptive and detrimental to their academic success. Staff, Patrick, Loken and Maggs (2008), like participants in this study, indicated that there was a link between excessive alcohol consumption and a decrease in educational attainment.

Alcohol consumption has been argued to impact on judgment. Goldman (2002) not only commented on

the effect of alcohol on mental abilities but also that it was linked to reports of violence (including rape and assault), unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and criminal consequences that could affect future job prospects. When under the influence of alcohol or drugs, students often engage in activities that are not of sound judgement and may also engage in multiple risk behaviours as indicated by MacArthur, Smith, Melotti, Heron, Macleod, et al. (2012).

Most students adopt these maladaptive coping mechanisms from being coaxed by peers that it is how things are done at that institution or out of the belief that they are relieving tension. Students often employ these maladaptive coping mechanisms being unaware of the long term effects that alcohol and drug use may have not only on their academic life, but also on social and emotional well-being in the long run. What seems as an activity that will relieve tension for a moment in reality has negative consequences that linger well over the pre-empted time-frame.

## 5.4 Research hypotheses

**$H^1$: There is a statistically significant correlation between students' levels of efficacy and locus of control.**

It is generally believed that residential students have a better sense of tertiary life when compared to their commuting counterparts. This is mainly because, by living on campus, residence students are regarded as being exposed to campus social life and having an opportunity to engage with academic staff more regularly. Efficacy refers to the belief in the ability to achieve a desired result and this hypothesis was guided by the thought that, if a student believed in his/her abilities to succeed in his/her studies there therefore should be a link with possessing levels of internal locus of control. Self-efficacy is not, however, limited to a belief in the ability to succeed in studies, but students should also experience the feelings of autonomy that are associated with taking the initiative in accomplishing something. In the

academic context, this may entail that students feel free to explore and learn in a manner that is suitable for them. These types of learners are those that find learning to be enjoyable as well as display greater levels of autonomy in terms of academic work (Taylor, Schepers & Crous, 2006).

Results yielded a positive correlation between the three categories of the *USEI* and *ICI*; social life; roommate and coursework. This correlation indicates that high levels of belief in one's abilities are linked to a high sense of internal locus of control. Kalantarkousheh, Mohagheghi and Hosseini (2013) and Tella, Tella and Adika (2008) also found a positive correlation between self-efficacy, internal locus of control and academic achievement. However, Kalantarkousheh et al. (2013) further contended that this correlation was found more in males than in females. This current study had a higher ratio of female participants as compared to male participants, and found this correlation also to be present in females. The researcher therefore does not agree with the notion of there being gender differences where self-efficacy and internal locus of control is concerned.

**$H^2$: There is a statistically significant correlation between students' levels of efficacy and ways of coping with stress.**

Self-efficacy was linked with the ways in which students cope with stressful situations. Students with good self-efficacy should engage in adaptive ways of coping with stress, i.e. tackling the situation and possessing problem solving skills or report there being few times where they considered using maladaptive coping mechanisms (Khan, 2013). Dwyer and Cummings (2001) argued that ways in which we cope with stress are in most times linked to our levels of perceived support. High levels of good coping strategies were correlated with perceived support and the employment of emotionally based coping strategies.

A good sense of efficacy is the basis on which a person is able to stay motivated and produce good results, even in situations where it seems impossible to do so (Saleem & Shah, 2011). Results yielded from the current study indicated a positive correlation between the three constructs of university self-efficacy and the three constructs of manners in which students coped with stress. Correlations ranged in magnitude from .893 to .990, indicating that a good self-efficacy often resulted in a person being rational when under stress and often employed useful strategies in that situation. These findings are in line with Davenport and Lane's (2004) study where they indicated that self-efficacy served as a driving force in keeping people motivated and persisting. This persevering nature and motivation were also what participants indicated as having promoted their success in studies thus far. Possessing high levels of self-efficacy is influential in getting people to increase their efforts and show the tenacity to strive for that end goal.

Self-efficacy can also be described as a person's ability to integrate into a certain role or lifestyle. High levels of self-efficacy in this context therefore imply an ability to integrate into university culture as well as high levels of university satisfaction. It can thus be further stipulated that satisfaction with the institution implies happiness and overall good emotional well-being; these factors have been discussed in earlier sections as having an impact on reducing levels of stress and facilitating success.

**$H^3$: There is a statistically significant correlation between locus of control and ways of coping with stress.**

The third research hypothesis was formulated under the guidance of the thought that where a student possessed an internal locus of control, the better equipped he/she is in dealing with stressful situations. This understanding was confirmed in Shalom, Knafo and Goldner's (2014) study where it was found that

possessing an internal locus of control provided better chances of adjustment. The researcher believes that this is because people that believe that control is located internally are more likely to take care of themselves in order to be able to deal with stress. High levels of internal locus of control were also linked with low levels of stress (Oosthuizen & Van Lill, 2008).

A positive correlation between locus of control and ways of coping with stress therefore suggests that these students do not become overwhelmed by stress and have adopted ways of regulating control over their lives. Results in the current study yielded a positive correlation between the three constructs of ways in which students coped with stress and locus of control. This indicates that an internal locus of control is mandatory in adopting effective ways of dealing with stress. This finding was reiterated in Darshani (2014) and Khan, Saleem and Shahid's (2012) studies where a correlation was found between high internal locus of control and low levels of stress, better coping skills and a mediating ability of stress.

Internal locus of control has also been associated with high levels of ethical behaviours (Boshof & Van Zyl, 2011). This may provide an explanation as to why students that reported having an internal locus of control tended to adopt coping mechanisms that were deemed ethical. Study participants reported not engaging in maladaptive coping mechanisms. In an interesting study by Roddenberry (2007) an external locus of control was linked with higher levels of stress and illness. This may be because an inability to resolve stress may lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms which have a detrimental effect on health and emotional well-being.

## 5.5 Limitations to the study

The researcher acknowledges several limitations that could have had an impact on the credibility of the results of the current study: (a) The study was restricted to residential students at the University of the Witwatersrand. (b) The sample size was not reflective of the residential community. (c) Perspectives of participants on factors that contributed to academic success or failure were collected through self-report questions. Participants therefore may not have provided true reflections on these factors. One-on-one interviews may have provided an opportunity to assess responses as well as require elaboration on responses that were vague or ambiguous. (d) There was no space provided on the questionnaire to allow participants to elaborate on answers. (e) Questionnaires were sent out via e-mail and handed out in four of the residences. This method of disseminating questionnaires meant that the researcher had minimal contact with participants and was not available to add clarity where participants may have been uncertain of what the question in the questionnaire was asking. Participants who were given an explanation on items they did not understand were those that the researcher requested to complete the questionnaires at their respective residences. This means that some questions were not clear and that those who were not in contact with the researcher were left without an explanation. This may have caused inconsistencies in terms of how participants understood the questions and responded on items.

## 5.6 Recommendations for further study

In light of the limitations that are highlighted above, the following recommendations for future research were put forward. (a) This study was restricted to residential students at the University of the Witwatersrand. Perhaps the focus should be extended to participants from other institutions as this may yield different results in terms of experiences of students from other institutions. (b) Future researchers

should consider using a larger sample size that is considered to be representative of the population on which results will be generalized. (c) Broadening the scope of the study to include semester results may yield more information on the constructs measured in the instruments that were used. (d) It would be interesting to conduct a parallel study in which the faculty's perceptions are measured. This would allow the researcher to determine whether there is discord in terms of understanding of reasons for attrition. (e) A parallel study could also be conducted on commuter students to ascertain whether there are major differences in the way in which commuter and residential student perceive things.

## 5.7 Recommendations for practice

This study has yielded numerous viewpoints from students that institutions can use in their attempt for academic retention. The researcher would like to further suggest the following in an effort to contribute new suggestions for retention:

a) Assign mentors for students. These mentors will be assigned with the task of helping students transition from high school or other institutions into their current institution. The mentor should not only be concerned with academic functioning, but should also play a role in assisting the student in matters like gaining financial assistance, emotional well-being and serve as the link between the student and the institution.

b) Provide on campus employment to students from impoverished backgrounds. This may decrease the number of students who are enticed by the prospects of dropping out of their studies in order to make a living.

c) A collaborative approach is needed between the institution and academic staff in filtering for students with poor academic language skills. There should be programmes put in place to

remediate language difficulties in order to allow a student to succeed in studies.

d) Orientation week is mainly aimed at first year students. Focusing solely on the first year student was earlier highlighted as one of the problems that led to attrition. Institutions need to make more effort in integrating post first year students into the institution. First time students in an institution need to be oriented around the campus and have computer and literacy skills evaluated for possible difficulties.

## 5.8 Conclusion

With the introduction of the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE 2001a), the Department of Higher Education and Training had hoped to set targets that would assist in getting graduation rates of students in institutions of higher learning to soar. However, this dream was shattered with the realization that attrition rates were increasing and the National Plan for Higher Education had to review the set graduation rates and bring them to a level most fitting of the current situation in South Africa. This has urged various institutions of higher learning to take an active stand against attrition and strive to retain the number of registered students on an annual basis.

Tinto's (1975) model of integration takes a holistic approach to student attrition rates, stating that students who become wholly integrated in their academic environment tend to perform far better than their counterparts who struggle to integrate into tertiary life. This study investigated three inventories that measure integration to a certain extent. The *USEI* focused on determining students' perceived abilities on tasks that related to their relationships with roommates or people they lived with, course work and their social life. The *ICI* examined whether students had an internal or external locus of control. Students with an internal locus of control were prone to being well-adjusted and be aware that they were the drivers in

the decisions they made. The *CSI* considered the coping mechanisms that students employed when feeling stressful. Did they illustrate preference for adaptive coping mechanisms or maladaptive ones? A correlation analysis was run to determine whether these inventories had an effect on each other and whether the correlation was statistically significant or not.

Results indicated that students perceived socio-economic and socio-cultural background, commitment, living in residence halls and the ability to integrate as factors that facilitated academic success. In determining factors that facilitated academic failure, participants listed educational and social backgrounds, non-conducive living arrangements, lack of motivation and maladaptive coping mechanisms as factors they perceived to lead to attrition. Significant statistical positive correlations were established between self-efficacy and internal locus of control, self-efficacy and ways of coping with stress and internal locus of control and ways of coping with stress. Results provided qualitative and quantitative data on students' perceptions and could be used in expanding on the topic further by exploring perceptions of faculty staff members in determining whether the same conclusions would be reached.

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# APPENDIX A

**Factors that promote and hinder academic success of university residence students**

**To whom it may concern**

This study seeks to uncover factors that play a significant role in academic success of residence students. Specifically, *it intends to find out which factors have you found as promoting your academic success, and which factors did you find to be barriers to your learning and academic success*?

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate in the study, or decide you want to stop at any stage, or not to answer any specific questions in any of the questionnaires, there will be no consequences. Confidentiality of information gained is ensured. A summary of results from the study can be emailed to you, if you wish, when the study is completed.

This research has been approved by the Faculty of Humanities and cleared by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand. Should you be willing to participate in this study, would you please be so kind as to complete the attached questionnaire and send it to my supervisor, Joseph Seabi, on joseph.seabi@wits.ac.za.

Thank you

Lerato Hlalele

Cell: 0769525584

Email: lerato.hlalele25@gmail.com

Supervisor: Mr. Joseph Seabi

Educational Psychologist / Senior Lecturer

011 717 8331

**Joseph.seabi@wits.ac.za**

# APPENDIX B

Demographic Questionnaire

Please provide the following demographic information:

Year of Study ..... Degree enrolled for.....

Age: .....

Gender: (Delete whichever is not applicable)

Male Yes Female Yes

Race/Ethnicity: (Put Yes next to the applicable box)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1 African | ☐ | 3.3 Coloured | ☐ |
| 3.2 Indian | ☐ | 3.4 Asian | ☐ |
| 3.5 White | ☐ | 3.6 Other | ☐ |

Home Language: (Put Yes next to the applicable box)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Afrikaans | ☐ | 5.7 English | ☐ |
| IsiZulu | ☐ | 5.8 Ndebele | ☐ |
| Sepedi | ☐ | 5.9 Sotho | ☐ |
| Swati | ☐ | 5.10 Tsonga | ☐ |

Tswana ☐ 5.11 Venda ☐

Xhosa ☐ 5.12 Other _____

School Type (Matriculation): (Put Yes next to the applicable box)

Government School ☐

Independent School ☐

Former Model C ☐

Other _____

Parental Education: Please tick one box to indicate the years of schooling of your parents or guardians. If one is deceased, please tick N/A

| | Below Grade 12 | Grade 12 | College Diploma | University Degree | Postgraduate Degree | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7.1 Father | | | | | | |
| 7.2 Mother | | | | | | |
| 7.3 Guardian | | | | | | |

Parental Occupation

Father : _____

Mother: _____

Guardian: _____

**Academic Success**

Kindly list below the factors you believe to have facilitated/promoted your success thus far:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

Kindly list below the factors you believe to inhibit/hinder academic success:

8)

9)

10)

11)

12)

13)

## APPENDIX C

### University Self-Efficacy Inventory

This questionnaire seeks information regarding your degree of confidence in completing tasks associated with being a student at the university. You will be asked to respond to a series of statements by selecting the number that best represents your present attitude or opinion. Remember this is not a test and there is no right or wrong answers. The categories range from:

0= Totally unconfident

1= Very unconfident

2= Unconfident

3= Somewhat unconfident

4= Undecided

5= Somewhat confident

6= Confident

7= Very confident

8= Totally confident

| | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Make new friends at college | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Talk to your professors/instructors | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Take good class notes | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Divide chores with others you live with | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Research a term paper | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Join an intramural sports team | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Understand your textbooks | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Get a date when you want one | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ask a professor or instructor a question outside of class | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Get along with others you live with | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Write a course paper | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Work on a group project | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Socialize with others you live with | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Do well on your exams | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Talk with a school academic and support (e.g. advising ) staff | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Manage your time effectively | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Use the library | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Join a student organization | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Ask a question in class | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Divide space in your residence (if applicable) | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Participate in a class discussion | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| Keep up to date with your school work | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |

# APPENDIX D

## Internal Control Index

Please read each statement. Where there is a blank _____, decide what your normal or usual attitude, feeling, or behaviour would be:

(A) Rarely (Less than 10% of the time)

(B) Occasionally (About 30% of the time)

(C) Sometimes (About half of the time)

(D) Frequently (About 70% of the time)

(E) Usually (More than 10% of the time)

| | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| When faced with a problem I _____ try to forget it. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I _____ need frequent encouragement from others for me to keep working at a difficult task. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I _____ like jobs where I can make decisions and be responsible for my own work. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ _change my opinion when someone I admire disagrees with me. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| If I want something I _____ work hard to get it. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I _____ prefer to learn the facts about something from someone else rather than have to dig them out for myself. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I _____ will accept jobs that require me to supervise others. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I _____have a hard time saying "no" when someone is trying to sell me something I don't want. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ like to have a say in any decisions made by any group I'm in. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ consider the different sides of an issue before making any decision. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| What other people think ____ has great influence on my behaviour. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| Whenever something good happens to me I ____ feel it is because I've earned it. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ enjoy being in a position of leadership. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ need someone else to praise my work before I am satisfied with what I've done. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I am ____ sure enough of my opinions to try and influence others. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| When something is going to affect me I ____ learn as much about it as I can. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ decide to do things on the spur of the moment. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| For me, knowing I've done something well is ____ more important to me than being praised by someone else. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ let other people's demands keep me from doing things I want to do. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ stick to my opinions when someone disagrees with me. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____ do what I feel like doing not what other people think I ought to do. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I ____ get discouraged when doing something that takes a long time to achieve results. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| When part of a group I ____ prefer to let other people make all the decisions. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| When I have a problem I ____ follow the advice of friends or relatives. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ____enjoy trying to do difficult tasks more than I enjoy trying to do easy tasks. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| I ___ prefer situations where I can depend on someone else's ability rather than just my own. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| Having someone important tell me I did a good job is ____ more important to me than feeling I've done a good job. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |
| When I'm involved in something I ___ try to find out all I can about what is going on even when someone else is in charge. | **(A)** | **(B)** | **(C)** | **(D)** | **(E)** |

# APPENDIX E

## Coping Stress Inventory

Think of the statements below separately as what you did (not what you should have done) as follows:

(a) I didn't do any of it

(b) I did a little of it

(c) I did a medium amount of it

(d) I did a lot (most) of it

| **A. Behavioural (Action)** | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I gave up because I couldn't handle it. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I went to sleep. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I went for a walk (or jogged). | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I punished myself. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I ate food and drank soda. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I took pain killers (Aspirin, Tylenol). | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I smoked cigarettes. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| | | | | |
| **B. Emotional (Feeling)** | | | | |
| I got angry. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I cried. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I felt I was to blame. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I felt I needed some advice. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I felt I needed moral support. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| | | | | |
| **C. Appraisal (Evaluation )** | | | | |
| I took time to plan what to do. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I denied it really happened. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I decided not to do anything. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I decided to pray (meditate) | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I analyzed the situation as to why it happened. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |
| I re-evaluated the situation and accepted it as my fault. | **(a)** | **(b)** | **(c)** | **(d)** |

# APPENDIX F

## Reverse Scores on the Internal Control Index

| Item | Content |
|---|---|
| 1 | When faced with a problem I _____ try to forget it.[a] |
| 2 | I _____ need frequent encouragement from others for me to keep working at a difficult task.[a] |
| 3 | I _____ like jobs where I can make decisions and be responsible for my own work. |
| 4 | I ____ _change my opinion when someone I admire disagrees with me. [a] |
| 5 | If I want something I _____ work hard to get it. |
| 6 | I _____ prefer to learn the facts about something from someone else rather than have to dig them out for myself. [a] |
| 7 | I _____ will accept jobs that require me to supervise others. |
| 8 | I _____have a hard time saying "no" when someone is trying to sell me something I don't want. [a] |
| 9 | I ____ like to have a say in any decisions made by any group I'm in. |
| 10 | I ____ consider the different sides of an issue before making any decision. |
| 11 | What other people think ____ has great influence on my behaviour. [a] |
| 12 | Whenever something good happens to me I ____ feel it is because I've earned it. |
| 13 | I ____ enjoy being in a position of leadership. |
| 14 | I ____ need someone else to praise my work before I am satisfied with what I've done. [a] |
| 15 | I am ____ sure enough of my opinions to try and influence others. |
| 16 | When something is going to affect me I ____ learn as much about it as I can. |
| 17 | I ____ decide to do things on the spur of the moment. [a] |
| 18 | For me, knowing I've done something well is ____ more important to me than being praised by someone else. |
| 19 | I ____ let other people's demands keep me from doing things I want to do. [a] |

20 I ____ stick to my opinions when someone disagrees with me.

21 I ____ do what I feel like doing not what other people think I ought to do.

22 I ____ get discouraged when doing something that takes a long time to achieve results. [a]

23 When part of a group I ____ prefer to let other people make all the decisions. [a]

24 When I have a problem I ____ follow the advice of friends or relatives. [a]

25 I ____enjoy trying to do difficult tasks more than I enjoy trying to do easy tasks.

26 I ___ prefer situations where I can depend on someone else's ability rather than just my own. [a]

27 Having someone important tell me I did a good job is ____ more important to me than feeling I've done a good job. [a]

28 When I'm involved in something I ___ try to find out all I can about what is going on even when someone else is in charge.

---

[a] Item is reverse scored