

**STAKEHOLDER VOICES ON THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS IN PROVIDING FOOD TO STUDENTS WHO ARE
HUNGRY ON CAMPUS - THE CASE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN
UNIVERSITY**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented is original and has not been previously submitted in support of a degree, qualification, or other course.

Signed: 

Date: 15 March 2022

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Thank you to all my family and friends who have encouraged me to complete this dissertation. Thank you especially to my sisters who egged me on, even when I was ready to give up.

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ABSTRACT

Hungry students exist as an almost invisible population at universities. Yet globally, as in South Africa, student hunger is a growing phenomenon that threatens academic success. Should universities be providing food aid to students, or is food aid the remit of social service organisations alone? At the heart of the role of a research university is the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Traditionally, universities have not necessarily been concerned with the conditions under which students are expected to pursue academic activities. The reality though is that universities find themselves dealing with the problem of student hunger on campuses. Research in student hunger is limited to the prevalence and distribution of the phenomenon at universities. No research has delved into stakeholder views and attitudes about the role of the university in providing food aid to students. Understanding these attitudes requires research. This study is premised on a qualitative research approach, involving internal student and staff stakeholders of the University of the Witwatersrand. Online questionnaires, individual interviews and a focus group were used to collect data from volunteer participants. The research has illuminated differing views on the University's role in providing food aid to students, but more significantly, has helped us understand what the barriers are to developing a consensus approach to student hunger. The main conclusions drawn from the study are that student hunger *should* be addressed if access to encompassing education is valued and academic success is the goal. Information from this research may contribute to the development of policy on how best to respond to the issue of student hunger.

Keywords: Hunger, food insecurity, university, students, stakeholder, academic success, right to food, obligation.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

During my employment as a student development practitioner at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, I was responsible for the student volunteer programme. The aim of the programme was to encourage good citizenship and civic responsibility among students. Various community outreach projects were developed by students to meet the needs of communities both on and off campus. This work led to the establishment of a Wits Food Bank for students who were hungry on campus. In this time, many students shared iterations of the same struggle, that of, not having sufficient food to sustain themselves while on campus. While the project grew organically into an institutional response to student hunger on the campus, little was known about how stakeholders viewed this non-traditional and unlikely campus service, and what ideas they held about how student hunger should be addressed on a campus.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease
CUFBA	College and University Food Bank Alliance
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IPC	The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NSH	No Student Hungry
NSNP	South African School Nutrition Programme
OHCHR	The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PMBEJD	The Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity group
REDCap	Research Electronic Data Capture
SAFSAS	Southern African Federation for Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SNAP	Student Nutrition Aid Programme
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UDHR	United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WFP	World Food Programme

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One outlines the scope of the research by providing a broad background of the study, exploring the identified problem, the rationale for the study, the research question, the primary aim, and the objectives of the research and their relevance to the field of social work. Also outlined, are the key concepts and their definitions. A brief explanation of the research methodology is provided and an overview of the contents of each chapter is set out.

1.2 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Universities in South Africa are concerned about student hunger on campuses. This is a valid concern as general poverty in South Africa is a ubiquitous reality. Mosoetsa (2011) argued that post-apartheid South Africa made very little difference in the material and social well-being of the poor and noted widespread food insecurity as an actuality. She claimed that despite a radical increase in social welfare, the vast majority of South African households are poverty-stricken.

Firferrey and Carolissen (2010) help us connect Mosoetsa's (2011) description of the household and societal crisis to the context of South African Higher Education Institutions by noting that some authors suggest a link between poverty, drop-out rate and graduation rates in higher education. Letseka and Maile (2008, as cited in Firferrey and Carolissen, 2010) quote the Human Sciences Research Council's Student Pathways study of 2006 and 2007, which, found that approximately 60 per cent of students dropped out of university, and that 70 per cent of families of higher education dropouts are poor.

The aim of Van den Berg and Raubenheimer's (2015) study at the University of the Free State was to investigate food insecurity among students in a developing country with a high national food insecurity rate. Their study supported the notion that severe food

insecurity amongst students may be contributing to the high attrition rates experienced at universities in South Africa.

Many studies in the past years show alarming rates of food insecurity among students at universities in South Africa (Mabharwana, 2021; Munro et al., 2013; Sabi et al., 2020; Van den Berg & Raubenheimer, 2015; Rudolph et al., 2018). Studies at South African universities have mainly focused on the extent and prevalence of hunger among students (Rudolph et al., 2015; Munro et al., 2013; Van den Berg & Raubenheimer, 2015). These studies have also constantly identified students' socio-economic status as contributing to their parlous food security (Wagner, Kaneli & Masango, 2021; Munro et al., 2013; Rudolph et al., 2018). The extent of hunger, however, is not in question. The quest however, of this study, is to understand whether university stakeholders believe that the institution has a role in providing food aid to students who are hungry on campus. This inquiry, therefore, challenges the traditional role of the university. Is hunger and poverty alleviation solely within the purview of governments and charitable organisations? Does the university as an institution have a role in this? Are resources for food aid best deployed to the academic agenda of the university? Understanding these attitudes requires research. This study thus is a response to a perceived gap in this area of research. This will help us to understand what the barriers are to developing a consensus approach to responding to student hunger.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Hunger has been a global phenomenon of concern to humankind throughout history. The very story of humankind has been marked "by the constant pursuit for and attainment of reliable, adequate sources of nutrition" (Butterly & Shepherd, 2010, p. 55). The first documentable record of famine is noted to be a hieroglyphic inscription from the Ptolemaic Dynasty (300-30BC). It describes the presence of famine, and portrays the experience of human suffering, the depiction of which appears to be similar to what is experienced today (Butterly & Shepherd, 2010).

More recently, the 2020 Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report noted nearly one in three people in the world (2.37

billion) did not have access to adequate food – an increase of almost 320 million people over the preceding year. The report also noted that South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are home to most of the world's hungry people. About one in five people (21% of the population) was facing hunger in Africa in 2020, which is more than double the proportion of any other region (Worldvision, 2020).

The Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity group (PMBEJD) estimated that in 2020, approximately 30.4 million South Africans lived below the StatsSA determined upper-bound poverty line of R1 268 per month and almost 14 million people lived below the food poverty line of R585 (PMBEJD Household Affordability Index, February 2022). The most vulnerable to poverty in South Africa are children aged 17 or younger, females, black Africans, people living in rural areas, those residing in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, and persons with little or no education (StatsSA, 2017). South Africa is considered a food-secure nation, still performing well in terms of the general availability of food in the country. South Africa ranked the highest in food security out of 28 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), according to the 2020 Global Food Security Index (GFSI) report. In contrast to many other countries however, South Africa's poverty and hunger are exacerbated by its legacy of apartheid (Seekings & Natrass, 2015).

Even before institutionalised apartheid, and prior to 1948, racist laws existed and never pretended to serve the interest of blacks (Louw & Kendall, 1986). Various governments made it their aim to shield the minority population from economic competition, and to maintain an ongoing supply of “cheap black labour” (Louw & Kendall, 1986, p. 32). Apartheid legislation, policies and practices further entrenched the divide, creating an environment that was conducive for the impoverishment of black people in South Africa (Mathole, 2005). These policies and practices deliberately resulted in black people being dispossessed of their assets such as land and livestock, and were denied access to markets over a protracted period (Koch, 2011). Over many years of systematically implemented practices, a racially polarised society resulted, with unacceptably high levels of inequality (Mathole, 2005). Historically generated power inequalities meant that the majority of the black population lived in squalid conditions, had poor opportunities for work, were subject to inferior education, had to make do with poor access to health and sanitation, suffered

unfair discriminatory labour practices, experienced restrictions of movement, and were physically moved to impoverished areas on the periphery of cities and in rural areas (Mathole, 2005). Simultaneously, discriminatory practices enabled the economic advance of the white minority. Income poverty was evident as it “coexisted alongside great affluence” (Seekings & Natrass, 2015, p. 3).

The truth is that the conditions of poverty and subsequent hunger persist and have not been substantially altered, despite interventions of the new democratic dispensation (Masoetsa, 2011). The first decade of democracy saw a “rising unemployment rate”, “rising income poverty” and “rising inequality”, according to Borat and Kanbur (2006), who attribute this to the “lacklustre performance in economic growth”. Seekings and Natrass (2015) suggest that all is not negative as there have been some changes to the class structure: some Africans have moved into the upper classes with improved income, and urban workers’ wages have increased. Mathole (2005) agrees that some of the government’s policies like affirmative action and economic empowerment have had some success in that they have created a new group of the Black Elite. In a study by Govender et al. (2007), South Africa continued to battle high rates of unemployment and a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and many households were still without access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, health care and education. In 2002, poverty estimates indicated around 22 million people were living in poverty, and that the number living in poverty rose by at least two million between 1999 and 2002 (Meth & Dias, 2004).

Whilst South Africa is food secure at national level, the country is still food insecure at household level as not all households have access to adequate food. Almost 20% of South African households had inadequate or severe inadequate access to food in 2017 (StatsSA, 2019). More recently, an even bleaker picture has unfolded of South Africa’s national food security outlook linked to poverty. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report for September to December 2020 notes that 9.34 million people in South Africa (16% of the population analysed) faced high levels of acute food insecurity, driven mainly by the Covid-19 pandemic and mitigation measures. High food prices, drought and economic decline also feature significantly in these statistics. A further 5% of the analysed population was also then projected to be in food crisis by March 2021 (IPC, 2020).

High poverty levels and commensurate food insecurity in South Africa suggest that young adults from poor households who attend university would also be vulnerable to food insecurity (Munro et al., 2013). This notion is supported by Africa (2005) who holds that household food insecurity is likely to follow students to their classrooms and into their student accommodation. Student poverty and the lack of sufficient funding have consistently been cited as key reasons for student academic failure and progression difficulties (Africa, 2005; Letseka & Maile, 2008; CHE, 2010). Social challenges and endemic inequalities in South African society are mirrored on campuses across South Africa. Badat (2008) notes that social, political and economic discrimination and inequalities of a class, race, gender, institutional and spatial nature continue to characterise South African higher education. This, despite, the new democratic government committing itself in 1994 to transforming higher education, as well as the inherited apartheid social and economic structure, and undertaking the institutionalising of a new social order (Badat, 2008). Poverty and hunger in households add to the pressure experienced by families, as they seek to educate their children. Moreover, using their own income, without assistance, many South African households are unable to support a dependent at university (in terms of study and related accommodation and living costs) (CHE, 2016). Students from poor families are in precarious positions as they pursue their academic dreams, often at institutions far away from their homes.

Findings from the Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Review of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2010 revealed that South African universities enrol students from diverse racial and class backgrounds. Students who receive aid from NSFAS are in financial and material need and therefore would rely solely on financial aid to cover all their living expenses.

According to the 2019-2020 NSFAS annual report, the scheme disbursed R27.7 bn to 740 037 students. It may therefore be argued that most of the students on NSFAS support are vulnerable to varying degrees of food insecurity. The challenge of food insecure students is spread across the country at institutions of further and higher learning.

Studies have been conducted focusing on the prevalence and distribution of hunger among students at some universities in South Africa (Munro et al., 2013; Van den Berg & Raubenheimer, 2015). The fact that hunger among students exists, is not in contention. The question is whether food aid should be provided to students by universities. Hitherto, research has not delved into the psyche of a university through its stakeholders to determine their views of the university's role in providing food aid to hungry students. As recommended by Van den Berg and Raubenheimer (2015), urgent involvement of all stakeholders is required if effective and sustainable solutions are to be found to the food insecurity crisis emerging in higher education in South Africa. Anecdotal information suggests that many constituencies on the Wits University campus may be unaware of – or even indifferent to – student hunger in their midst. Some may not see attending to hunger among students as the university's responsibility. Understanding these attitudes requires research. This study thus is a response to a perceived gap in this area of research. This will help us to understand what the barriers are to developing a consensus approach to responding to student hunger. Information from this research may contribute to garnering more support for scaled interventions at universities, and influence policy with regard to what universities could do to support students in need of food, and how this can be attained. The role of the university in providing food aid, commonly seen as a social service, can be a contentious issue given the traditional role of universities. The traditional function of universities is knowledge creation and is not necessarily concerned with the welfare of students (Colish, 1997). Other views, envisaging a much wider role for the university in the life of the student and extending to outside of the lecture theatre, contend: Are students adequately housed? Is there time and facilities for leisure and recreation? Are they mentally resilient? Many of these views are unfortunately beyond the scope of this study.

1.4 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY TO SOCIAL WORK

This research is undertaken in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of a Master of Arts in Social Work. The research topic was deliberately selected because of its relevance for human development.

This study problematises the assumption of the traditional role of the university to the extent that it seeks to formulate a response to student hunger. The food concerns of students must be considered within South Africa's broader socio-economic and political history, including transformation of the higher education sector. Hunger is linked to poverty, a social development challenge all over the world (World Food Programme, 2018; United Nations Development Programme, 2018). In its broader engagement of poverty, it is imperative for the discipline and field of practice of social work to engage with student hunger and contribute to policymaking towards the well-being of communities. A study on student hunger and the role of the university in supporting students therefore falls within the purview of social work research.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the views of stakeholders on the role of the university in providing food aid to students who are hungry on campus?

1.6 PRIMARY AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the study was to explore the perceptions and views of different stakeholders (students, management, academic and non-academic staff) on the role of the university in providing food to students who are hungry on campus.

The secondary objectives were:

- To explore the perceptions of different stakeholders on student hunger on campus.
- To determine the views of different participants on the factors that contribute to hunger among students on campus.
- To examine the views of different participants on the stakeholders responsible to address the matter of student hunger on campus.
- To explore participants' suggestions on strategies to deal with student hunger on campus.
- To propose alternative ways to address student hunger on campus.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Key concepts used throughout this research are explored and defined next.

Academic success:

The achievement of scholastic pursuits and means that one has attained knowledge and can obtain work related to the knowledge acquired (York, Gibson & Rankin, 2015).

Food insecurity:

- A situation in which persons are uncertain of having or unable to acquire enough food, because they have insufficient money or other resources (Gundersen, 2013, p. 36-41).
- A household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food (USD as cited in Murthy, 2016, p. 655-657).

Hunger:

- A feeling of weakness experienced by the body when there is insufficient nutritious food to sustain it (WFP, 2018).
- A concept generally accepted in the medical community that a hungry person is chronically short of the nutrients necessary for growth and good health (Brown, 1987, p. 37).

Both definitions describe the phenomenon of food adequacy and nutritional value, rather than the political-economic implications of the *access to food*. This study uses the term *hunger* more broadly to encompass the lack of access to adequate and nutritious food.

Right to food:

The right to adequate food is realised when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights –Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR).

Stakeholder:

- Stakeholder: an entity with a stake (interest) in the subject activity (McGrath & Whitty, 2017).
- This is any individual, organisation or group who is affected by the success or failure (Omer et al., 2015, p. 45).

Stakeholders of a university include its students and their parents and guardians, all staff, alumni, donors, business, government organisations, and the natural environment. For the purposes of this study, stakeholders refer to senior management, staff and first-year students at the university.

Students:

A group of persons registered in various educational institutions for the acquisition of specific skills and knowledge under the management of teachers/lecturers/instructors (Adekunle & Adepoju, 2021). This study focuses on the views of first-year students.

Obligation:

Berteau (2014, p 6) describes this as a requirement, imposing a duty on the obligated to deliver for the obligee in accordance with an expectation created. He notes that an obligation makes conduct “exactable” and “compulsory”.

University:

In South Africa a university is defined as a Higher Education Institution, which refers to any institution that provides higher education on a full-time, part-time, or distance basis (Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997).

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research utilised mixed-method techniques to expand the scope and to improve the understanding of the research study, combining the qualitative and quantitative approach. The study applied a case study design to the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) by

eliciting views and perceptions from its various stakeholders on the role of the institution in providing food aid to students. Research participants comprised a sample of Wits University stakeholders, first- year, first- time students and staff (academic and non-academic) of three faculties, namely, the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management (CLM). Purposive sampling was utilised to select participants. During the data collection process, an online questionnaire was utilised for staff and students. Additional data was collected in a focus group meeting with staff from the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, and three face-to face interviews were held with staff from the Senior Executive Team (SET) using a semi-structured interview guide. The data was analysed utilising thematic analysis.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

A limitation of a research study implies the flaws or shortcomings of the research design that the researcher did not or could not control, and which could affect the results (Price & Murnan, 2004). No study is without limitations. Likewise, this study must also acknowledge its potential pitfalls. The sample drawn on was significantly smaller than the university population whose views and perceptions the study actually sought. For example, the response rate of 10.1% was particularly low for the online questionnaire, noting how Smyth, Dillman and Christian (2009) report a common response rate for online surveys at 12.7%.

The sample may also not have adequately covered the stakeholder categories within the university, with higher rates of responses from academic staff, and only first- year respondents, leaving a gap of perspectives from students in other years of study, as well as staff from categories other than academic. The study may however have potentially benefited from including other stakeholders such as parents or guardians, university alumni and donors. However, this is an inception study in this field of work. Far from closing the gap, it shines a light on precisely the lacuna that needs further exploration.

The phenomenon of sensitive research was also an authentic concern in this study. The issue of hunger is a personal and a sensitive issue with which many have to engage, particularly if participants themselves were hungry. McCosker et al. (2001) define

“sensitive” research topics as those that are dependent on context, cultural norms and values. Participants may have felt that their views on student hunger and the university’s role in providing food may not be what is popularly held and may not have been willing to respond truthfully if they sense a threat to their beliefs (Lee, 1993). In addition, the relatively high “no comment” responses may indicate an unwillingness to engage with the subject of hunger at the university (Albudaiswi, 2017). A further limitation of this study was my inability to probe respondents’ scant responses, or lack of responses to questions in the online questionnaire. Worth considering is the hiatus between the face-to face interviews and the focus groups (2019), and the online questionnaire (latter part of 2021), occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The researcher currently works in the University’s food programme and has advocated for nutrition support for hungry students on campus. Any potential bias was mitigated by the ethical constraints of the study and the ongoing audits in supervision. A lack of previous research into stakeholder perceptions on whether a university should provide food to students may be arguably perceived as another shortcoming of this research. There was no data with which to compare. Prior academic endeavour mainly focused on the extent and prevalence and symptomatic manifestations of student hunger. The applicability of such a study on other campuses would need to be more broadly explored.

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This research report is comprised of six chapters.

Chapter One outlines the scope of the research, by exploring the identified problem, the rationale for the study, the research question, the primary aim and the objectives of the research and their relevance to the field of social work. Also outlined, are the key concepts and their definitions. A brief explanation of the research methodology is provided and an overview of the contents of each chapter is set out.

Chapter Two discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the approach this study adopts, and the scholarly texts that support such an approach. Amartya Sen’s 1981 *Entitlement Theory* is the prism through which this study of student hunger is dissected. Sen (1981), through his entitlement theory sought to elucidate notions of hunger, starvation and famine. Also

focused on, as a theoretical foundation, is the Right to Food in the context of need for food security among students on campus. In literature, approaches to the issue of food fall broadly into two groups: one focuses on the production or decline in production of food, while the other considers economics and politics in relation to food. This chapter looks at concepts such as hunger, food security, food insecurity on a global level, food insecurity in South Africa, Hunger and Education, Hunger as a student issue, #FeesMustFall, the role of the university, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter Three is dedicated to the research methodology that was used in this study. The research question and aims and objectives, the research strategy, study population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations are all addressed.

Chapter Four focusses on the presentation and discussion of the findings of the online questionnaire and provides detailed findings and a discussion on the individual interviews with senior management and the focus group with staff in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management.

Chapter Five explores the overarching findings and discussion of the combined empirical data from the questionnaires, the interviews, and the focus group.

Chapter Six investigates whether the objectives of the study were realised through the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data in Chapter 4. It finally focusses on the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

“Hunger is not caused by the scarcity of food but the scarcity of Democracy. Those who are hungry are without voices in their societies.” Frances Moore Lappe

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the approach this study adopts, and the scholarly texts that support such an approach. Amartya Sen’s 1981 *Entitlement Theory* is the prism through which this study of student hunger is dissected. This, theoretical framework is fundamental to this study, and will be discussed in detail in this chapter. Also focused on as a theoretical foundation, is the Right to Food as recognised in legal instruments and under the Constitution of South Africa. The literature review herein broadly contextualises concepts such as hunger, food security and food insecurity and explores food insecurity as a global phenomenon, in Africa and at a regional level. It establishes the universal challenge of food insecurity among students at universities in developed countries, and then focuses on the context of students at South African universities, the #FeesMustFall protests, the traditional role of the university, the demands of a university serving a transforming social order, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2 THE ENTITLEMENT THEORY

The entitlement approach, in Sen’s view, is central to the question of hunger. This approach looks at people’s ability to establish command over food. He posits two ways in which each person has command over food: direct ownership of food via production, and the translation of wages into food. Sen (1981) argues that each person in the market has an entitlement *bundle*, the original endowment linked to ownership that a person has, and what they can subsequently acquire. Sen (1981) argues that there are four types of entitlement relations in a market economy. Firstly, a *trade-based* entitlement, in which one

is entitled to trade what one owns with a willing party. The second is a *production-based* entitlement, in which one is entitled to own resources by arranging the production of resources using one's own resources or resources hired from willing parties. Thirdly, there is an *own-labour* entitlement, which refers to what one is entitled to when one uses his or her own labour power. Lastly, there are *inheritance and transfer* entitlements, which one is entitled to own when given it by another who legitimately owns it, possibly to take effect after the latter's death (Sen, 1981).

Sen (1981) is of the view that a person is exposed to starvation or chronic hunger if all the exchange entitlements they can get with their ownership bundle, do *not* contain sufficient food for them to consume. Several factors influence the person's exchange entitlement. These include available employment and opportunities for earning, what can be earned by selling non-labour assets, what can be produced with labour power, the value of the products sold and the social security benefits to which the person is entitled. Furthermore, a person may experience hunger and starvation if some economic change makes it impossible to acquire enough food. This is known as an entitlement *failure* and can be caused by loss or a reduction of an entitlement, for example, a loss of labour power through illness, the death of a breadwinner, or an increase in the price of food. Sen (1981) thus believes that hunger and starvation are a function of entitlements and not the food supply or availability — although food supply and availability also play a role in determining entitlements. A person therefore goes hungry because he does not have the ability to secure enough food through his exchange entitlements, and that hunger is a consequence of entitlement failure.

Mukherjee (2004, p. 6), while supporting Sen's *Entitlement Theory*, ventures an important question such as: What causes a lack of entitlement and how is entitlement capacity built?

Mukherjee (2004) attributes the lack of entitlements to food security, to factors outside of the individual or family unit to include: "institutional sanctions, barriers to choice, a secondary food system, powerlessness and politics, violence and militarism, poverty, rapid population growth exerting strain on environment and overconsumption, racism and ethnocentrism, gender discrimination and vulnerability and age". His critique of Sen's theory is that it focuses on the deficits in entitlements as it relates to individuals, and not on

the individual's ability to choose the proper entitlement of food. However, using Sen's *Entitlement Theory*, we can explain that students as a group of unemployed young adults, are more likely to have a deficit of entitlement bundles of their own. They are without labour power as they transition between dependency and independence. They could possibly be without ownership, trade and transfer-based entitlements. Their command of food in Sen's way of thinking would be limited unless their families – who as young people they may be dependent on – are able to establish entitlement to enough food through their labour power, ownership, trade, or transfer-based entitlement relationships.

South Africa's history of inequality between the race groups and class groups, high unemployment and other socio-economic factors can lead to entitlement failures resulting in families experiencing poverty and hunger. This is consistent with what Mukherjee (2004) sees as gaps in Sen's theory – the institutional and systemic barriers such as racism, lack of choice and powerlessness, all of which prevent access to food.

2.3 THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION

The right to food is a discrete and fundamental human right recognised in several instruments in international law. Already in 1948, Article 25 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) incorporated the right to food. Later, Article 11 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) dealt more comprehensively with this right, giving recognition to "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions" (OHCHR, 1999). Although not an international law, it is a key international treaty which seeks to encourage State Parties to address challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty, which are critical to the strategic goals of governments. The right to food is based on a commitment to the value of human life, encompassing dignity, rights acknowledgement, transparency, accountability and empowerment concerns.

Furthermore, a rights-based approach to food holds that the obligation for its realisation rests with state parties. The state's principal legal obligation is the progressive, full realisation of the right to adequate food as quickly and expeditiously as possible (*aide-*

memoire of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter mission to Canada, May 2012). The right to food as a basic human right imposes three levels of obligation on state parties: the obligation to respect, to protect and to fulfil, with the obligation to fulfil, implicating both an obligation to facilitate and to provide. While state parties are ultimately held accountable for ensuring the right to food according to the ICESCR, all members of society, individuals, families, local communities, non-governmental organisations, and the private business sector have the responsibility to help realise the right to adequate food for everyone.

Alston and Tomaševski (1984) say that to assert the right to food is easy enough. What is difficult, is the application and supervision of this, as an “operational legal right”. They note that the right to food appears in international statements and is the most endorsed right. However, they also note that even in the context of ongoing and widespread hunger in the world, it is the most “comprehensively and systematically violated right”, more so than any other right. Alston and Tomaševski (1984) also note as did Sen (1981), that food access rather than availability is the main concern. They claim that the existing food production levels, if equitably distributed would be sufficient to satisfy everyone’s right to food. Their second claim is that hunger mirrors poverty, and poverty is a result of gross inequality in income levels. Poverty, according to them is also a development issue that reflects a country’s politics, economics and social structure. In this way then, any attempt to resolve hunger requires development outcomes.

The question is whether the right to food can be realised without addressing a range of other rights. While it is important to ponder such questions, these are complex and multifarious concerns that do not elicit definitive answers. It would therefore be indefensible to postpone efforts to promote the realisation of the right to food.

2.4 THE RIGHT TO LIFE

A common reason given in support of the university’s obligation to facilitate access to food for students, is that everyone has the right to life as guaranteed in section 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The right to life is recognised as a fundamental “God-given right”. It is not a legal right (Villa-Vincenzo, 2002). Humans

possess the right to life by virtue of being human (Serfontein, 2015). Section 11 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996) guarantees the right to life to everyone as an unqualified right. As such, the existence of all people is guaranteed, even in the law of the country.

Alston and Tomaševski, (1984) assert that the right to life is philosophically and physiologically a significant component of the right to food and is often cited as such. The inextricable link between the two rights can be further considered by looking at Sen (1981) and Nussbaum's (Nussbaum, 2006), capability theories of justice, which refer to the rights of access. Whereas Sen refused to list specific capabilities and instead spoke broadly about nutrition, health and basic liberties, Nussbaum presented a list of what she considered fundamental human capabilities. First on her list of ten capabilities is *Life: Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living*. Secondly, *Bodily Health: being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter* (Holst 2010, p.3).

2.5 SECTION 27 OF SOUTH AFRICA'S CONSTITUTION

South Africa's constitution, specifically section 27 of the Bill of Rights set out in Chapter 2 of the supreme law, concerns rights to health care, food, water, and social security. This is the principal legal instrument available to eliminate the barriers that Mukherjee (2004) and Sen (1981) reference. Section 27 further compels the state to take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve their progressive realisation. This approach was affirmed by the Constitutional Court in the *Grootboom* case (Constitutional Court of South Africa, 2000). Briefly, the Court's decision in *Grootboom* arose when a group of residents living in an informal settlement moved onto land earmarked for low-cost housing and were evicted by local authorities. The group sued, arguing that they had a right to immediate access to dignified housing under the South African constitution. This decision, more validation than precedent, gives credence, at least theoretically, to a rights-based assault on the vectors of hunger.

The right to food of people living in poverty is recognised by the South African government's pro-poor programmes such as the Department of Social Development's (DSD) school feeding schemes and food parcels for indigent people. The right to food thus has groundings in both theory and law. It is given a measure of practical effect through poverty relief programmes, especially in times of social distress such as during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when the South African government implemented targeted interventions to support vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and disabled people. The government increased the levels of existing social grants and introduced a temporary Social Relief of Distress (SRD) fund to support unemployed people. These relief interventions were stopped in 2021 (Gabriel et al., 2021).

2.6 REVIEW OF RELEVANT CONCEPTS

This section presents a bird's-eye view of the main concepts and contexts explored in understanding student hunger. An iterative approach was used to firstly focus on wider global concepts such as hunger and global food security, to secondly looking at more specific regional concepts such as food security in Africa, and then thirdly focusing on distinctive South African concepts and context.

One of the earlier definitions of hunger is that it “is a dull ache or gnawing sensation referred to the lower mid-chest region and the epigastrium” (Cannon & Washburn, 1912, p. 441). Later definitions move away from a physiological focus to encompass a more holistic description considering health and socio-economic aspects of hunger. DeRose et al. (1998) put forward a more accurate, less clinical, and more relevant definition — by describing hunger as the “consumption of a diet inadequate to sustain *good health and normal activity, growth, and development...*” Everyday use of the word *hunger* is meant to refer to food deprivation, undernourishment, malnutrition and even poverty. Mason (2003) thought better than to fixate on one definition. He notes the difficulty in defining hunger and malnutrition in “precisely measurable terms.” He accepts the everyday meanings and adds that the term *malnutrition* is used to mean “the biological and functional consequences of hunger”, thereby integrating biology with social factors. Another useful view is that of Hanoman (2017), who cites that hunger has many faces and does not exist alone, but is a convergence of economics, politics, environment, and social elements. In this view, the

absence of a biological component in the meaning of hunger is clear. It thus suffices to regard a hungry person as someone who does not have sufficient energy in the form of nutritional food to live a good and healthy life, making hunger therefore a most noticeable feature of a person's poverty.

2.6.1 Food security

The widely accepted definition of food security is the one adopted by the 2006 World Food Summit hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). According to the FAO (2006, p. 1), "food security exists when all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". Inherent in the definition are three dimensions, namely: availability, which speaks to the supply of food, which is related to food production and food reserves; access which is the physical access to nutritious and adequate food through one's entitlements and economic capability to obtain food; and food utilisation which is how the body uses the nutrients in the food (FAO, 2008). The last revision of this definition took place at the 2009 World Summit on Food Security which added a fourth dimension, stability – "as the short-term time indicator of the ability of food systems to withstand shocks, whether natural or man-made" (Berry et al., 2015, p. 1).

Maxwell and Smith (1992) note that the definition of food security has undergone several iterations over the past two decades, and that there were about 200 definitions of the term *food security* in published writings. Historical definitions of the term favoured the need for the availability of food stocks nationally and internationally. However, in 1981, Amartya Sen's work on poverty and hunger helped shift the thinking of food availability to *food access*. The term *food entitlement* which he coined, also conferred on it the meaning that food insecurity prevailed *despite* food availability. This was made evident in the '70s and '80s when governments formulated policies to address food availability, and at the same time the green revolution – the use of technology in agriculture which contributed to increased food production. This increase in food stocks, however, did not solve the issues of a lack of access to food by many people living in poverty (Pingali, 2012).

Thus, it appears that for food security to prevail, it must exist at several levels: availability at a national level, accessibility at a household level, utilisation from an individual perspective, and stability, which affects all levels. All four of these dimensions must be intact for full food security (Berry et al., 2015). To have any impact, these dimensions must be as relevant to the national food system as they are to provinces, regions, communities and individuals. These dimensions can therefore be equally applied to the university community.

A definitive focus on the individual in the universal definition now more closely resembles the definition of the right to food by all. Why did it take so long to recognise the human dimension which is now agreed, is inherent in the notion of food security? After all, the right to food was already established in 1948 in the UDHR and the ICESCR. The very defining characteristic of this right is its focus on the individual or person. Could it be the reluctance on the part of some states to recognise and accept the obligation *implicit* in the right to food? Like food security, the right to food is in any event premised on the availability of and access to food, and the right to food already acknowledges barriers to access by making provision for its progressive realisation.

2.6.2 Food insecurity on a global level

Food insecurity exists “when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life” (FAO, State of Food and Nutrition in the World, 2015, p. 53). From this, then, it may be inferred that life itself is compromised for those without access to the right amount of safe and nutritious food.

Food insecurity includes physiological, social and economic dimensions. Food is the main basis for human development, health and behaviour. The absence of food security affects a community's economy, taxes its resources, and influences its social policies (Breglio, 1992, cited in Cason, 2001, p. 34). This sentiment is supported Dreze and Sen (1989, as cited in Riches, 1997) when he quotes Dreze and Sen's description of hunger as a many-headed monster that manifests a wide range of deprivations, including the biological, economic and social deprivations.

Despite the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of halving world hunger by 2030, new projections reported in the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021 report, confirm that hunger will not be eradicated by 2030, unless the inequality in access to food is addressed. In fact, they go as far as projecting that at least 660 million people may still face hunger in 2030, in part due to the lasting effects of the pandemic on global food security.

Despite hunger having grown under the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a contradiction: Erdman (2018) notes that the world's farmers produce enough food to feed 1.5x the global population. That is enough to feed a world population of 10 billion and we are currently at 7.6 billion. The United Nations data reveals that approximately 2 800 dietary calories are available per person per day on the planet. Fraser (2016) supports the view that contradictions exist because of a system of unevenly distributed food. They note that even though there is sufficient food, it is priced too high for the people living in poverty to afford it. Roughly, one-third of the world's food goes to waste. Food grown is used as feedstock rather than for people. Similarly, fuel is produced from food, such as in the case of ethanol from corn in the United States (Fraser, 2016). As crops are being diverted for biofuels, contradictions in the food system continue. There is growing demand for meat and dairy products, particularly in Asia, with its burgeoning middle class. International companies are buying up land as the biofuel market booms. GRAIN, an international non-profit organisation working with small farmers in Tanzania, cites in the November 2007 white paper, *An African Call for a Moratorium on Agrofuel Developments* – the eviction of farmers from their lands for large companies to plant sugarcane and jatropha trees (Tenenbaum, 2008). Sufficient food on the planet today may not be the case in the future. Food insecurity is likely to worsen with climate change. High temperatures, drought or floods, an increase in food prices beyond the reach of the people living in poverty, and less food production will place many in the world at risk. Hunger will be exacerbated by the impact of climate change, and countries will become unstable as wars are waged for food, arable land and water.

It is observed that the worst effects of climate change will be in “semi-arid parts of the world, particularly Africa, the Middle East and possibly the Indian sub-continent” (Phillips, 2009).

489). These regions are already vulnerable to food insecurity and experience civil strife. Poorer countries in the world therefore face a “double-headed problem”, that of climate change and violent conflict. Climate change will lead to conflict, leaving more people poorer; they will be less resistant to hardship, and unable to respond to the consequences of climate change. Forty-six countries are predicted to be worst affected by climate change; some already experiencing violent conflict as a result of economic, social and political problems, and others are at a higher risk of civil strife. Africa is identified as a part of the world most vulnerable to climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014). The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s 1999 yearbook also records the continent as most affected by armed conflicts, and where armed conflicts are on the increase.

2.6.3 Food insecurity in South Africa

A pessimistic outlook for food security in Africa due to vulnerabilities to climate change and civil strife, means that South Africa too is likely to continually experience the challenge of food insecurity. In fact, in 2006 already, the South African Department of Agriculture confirmed food insecurity as a major socio-economic challenge for the country.

However, food security for citizens is part of the Section 27 Constitutional Rights in South Africa. On these rights, the Constitution states that “every citizen has the right to have access to sufficient food and water”, and that “the state must by legislation and other measures, within its available resources, avail to the progressive realisation of the right to sufficient food” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). The South African Government in 1994, upon the advent of democracy, prioritised food security and implemented several initiatives to facilitate food access. Public expenditure was reprioritised and spending was increased on social programmes such as school feeding schemes, child support grants, free health services for children between 0-6 years and for pregnant and lactating women, pensions for the elderly, provincial community food garden

initiatives, land reform and farmer settlement, a production loans scheme for small farmers, infrastructure grants for smallholder farmers and the presidential tractor mechanisation scheme. In 2002, the Integrated Food Security Strategy was introduced in response to preventing the duplication of efforts in several government departments and to streamline initiatives (Department of Agriculture, Integrated Food Security Strategy Pretoria, 2002).

Despite policies and programmes to address food insecurity in South Africa, immense inequality between households and across the country still exists. As early as in 2009, Altman, Hart and Jacobs noted that while hunger decreased in 2002, undernutrition remained a serious problem. They critiqued government's focus on poverty pockets and rural areas, saying that this would not reach the largest number of food insecure people as many of them now lived in urban areas. They further asserted that many people who were eligible for social grants did not receive such grants, ultimately undermining food security.

According to Mwaniki (2006), there are many factors that cause food insecurity, but its root cause in developing countries such as South Africa, is the inability of people to gain access to food due to poverty. Some of the factors that contribute to poverty in South Africa include the remnants of apartheid, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS that leaves children to fend for themselves in child-headed households, high unemployment and poor governance. Poor governance as reflected in the phenomenon of widespread corruption in government and at other levels of society, also undermines food security. Irregularities, corruption and poor oversight of spending result in barriers to access for many who are food insecure. Corruption Watch is a South African NGO that monitors and exposes corruption. A report which it produced in 2013, documented irregularities in the South African School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). They reported theft of food by people running the programmes – through inflating food prices and providing substandard food. It also mentions that over 8 million primary and secondary school children in some of the country's poorest areas are dependent on the NSNP (Talane, 2013). More oversight in this case could mean more children having access, possibly to better food.

2.6.4 Social context in South Africa

South Africa emerged from apartheid with a mountain of social and economic challenges.

South Africans were promised material dignity with political freedom, based on a constitution recognised as one of the most advanced in the world. While apartheid is relegated to history and political freedom gained, material dignity still eludes many South Africans. South Africa battles high rates of unemployment, a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and many households are still without access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, health care and education (Govender et al., 2007).

Youth unemployment remains high (StatsSA, 2021). The official unemployment rate is 32,6%. More distressing is the rate of 46,3% among young people aged 15 – 34 years, implying that almost one in every two young people in the labour force does not have a job. Young people who are not in employment or in education or training, implies that they are disengaged from work or even the prospect of work. It may be reasonably inferred that individuals from this cohort who enter institutions of higher learning, would in all likelihood experience hardship. This is fast becoming a norm as South African Higher Education Institutions admit more students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from “working class and rural backgrounds” (CHE, 2010, p. 3).

Unemployment has caused severe strain on households. Families and individuals deal with financial stress, homelessness, poor physical and mental health, family strife, social isolation and crime, to name a few of the challenges. Being unemployed also means that individuals will likely not attain skills or education for gainful employment.

A correlation exists between unemployment and crime where it relates to a monetary incentive linked to crimes such as burglary, theft, car theft and even violence and death. Increasing income reduces political instability and in turn reduces crime (Baharom & Habibullah, 2008 as cited in Fedderke & Luiz, 2008). Both studies concluded that a positive correlation exists between income and crime. This is particularly the case in South Africa where unemployment can be directly linked to crime. Crime is reported in the media daily and in varying degrees of severity, to the extent that it has become part of the South African psyche. Crime, particularly violent crime is reported to have increased since 1994 (Louw, 1997). A study conducted by Fry (2017) examined the fear of crime in South Africa and concluded that its citizens should be afraid of crime, as 64% of the respondents

in the study revealed some level of fear of crime, and 33 % had actually been a victim of crime.

The estimated prevalence rate of persons living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in 2020 is reported as 13,0% among the South African population, approximately 7,8 million. However, for adults aged 15–49 years, the estimated prevalence rate of HIV positive people is 18,7% of the population (StatsSA, 2020). No doubt, an epidemic on such a scale has wreaked havoc in the lives of communities, families and individuals, and the country as a whole. A study into the health and economic impacts of HIV and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was conducted in the Free State, in controlled cohort studies, comparing “affected households” to “unaffected households”. The study reflected higher morbidity and mortality rates in households that were affected by HIV/AIDS compared to unaffected households. People living in poverty experience particular difficulties in accessing health care and human needs because they do not have the most basic income for transport, food and basic clothing. Expenses related to the costs of caring for ill members in the family, have also increased exponentially. The study also showed that affected households, compared to unaffected households tended to be larger, poorer, and to have lower employment rates (Bachmann & Booysen, 2003). Even where persons living with HIV are on antiretroviral treatment, the efficacy of such medication is reduced if the person does not have adequate nutrition, the cause of which is poverty.

South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, with a persistently high inequality that has increased since 1994 (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018). Inequality in South Africa is 0.66 measured by the Gini coefficient, where zero equals complete equality and one is absolute inequality. Affluence and poverty live side by side.

Education is meant to break the cycle of poverty. Tertiary education particularly plays a central role in poverty alleviation, job creation, and reducing inequality. In South Africa, greater access to tertiary education is essential to overcome historic inequalities and prepare the economy for growth and more jobs. A 2011 study reviewing 40 developing countries over the period 1999 – 2007, found that education is the most significant contributor to poverty alleviation by increasing employability. Indeed, StatsSA found that during 2006 – 2011 the unemployment rate amongst people aged older than 25 and who

possessed a tertiary education was only 7%, compared to 20% for adults with only primary school education (Janjua & Kamal, 2011).

2.6.5 Hunger and education

There is considerable evidence from multiple studies in the United States on the impacts of food insecurity on children of school-going age (Chaparro et al., 2009).

The fact that these impacts have been negative, has justified the introduction of school nutrition programmes, a policy intervention also introduced in South Africa as a response to the findings of research conducted into hunger and educational outcomes. Yet, there is limited knowledge of the consequences of food insecurity on student populations in higher and further education, much less so policy to guide possible interventions.

Traditionally, students at universities were considered rich. The mere notion of a hungry student would have been antithetical to the culture of a higher education institution. Yet today, universities in South Africa grapple with student hunger. Little is known about the food concerns of students and how this could be managed from a student development and support point of view. A case in point is the food programme at Wits, where food insecurity has become a significant issue for many students. Initially founded in 2013 as a small community outreach project by student volunteers, the project then distributed food parcels to approximately 50 students. In 2018, a regular daily hot meal was provided to over 1 000 students per day, through partnerships with corporates and relief organisations (Wits Annual Report, 2018).

Chaparro et al. (2009), Freudenberg et al. (2011) and Patton-Lopez et al. (2014) all state that the issue of student hunger is a growing phenomenon in developed countries. An increasing number of students in higher education in these countries are experiencing rising levels of relative poverty, without their basic needs being met. A review study concluded that food insecurity among students in America is a public health concern that has implications for academic performance, retention and graduation rates. The study points to the need for more interventions at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and institutional

levels, and more research on the effectiveness of these interventions (Payne-Sturges et al., 2018).

2.6.6 Hunger as a student issue

Much more research literature concerning student poverty and subsequent food insecurity in higher education institutions is available than ever before. Hughes et al. (2011), when studying the prevalence, distribution and severity of food insecurity among samples of Australian students at a Queensland-based university, described student food insecurity, as a “skeleton in the university closet.” The results of the study, using a single item measure, showed a rate of 12.7% in the sample, 7.5% more than is observed in the broader Australian population. By applying a multi- item measure, they found that 46.5% of students were food insecure without hunger. More significant is that 25.3% of the sample were food insecure with hunger. The results of the study highlight a correlation of food insecurity with students who were renting, boarding or sharing accommodation, with low incomes or receiving government assistance. Another Australian study conducted by Mansour (2014) on food insecurity among students at the University of Wollongong found that food insecurity is a widespread problem experienced by up to three in five students. Several smaller studies revealed food insecurity at universities in the USA (Chaparro et al., 2009; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Patton-Lopez et al., 2014). The study conducted by Chapparo et al. (2009) at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa found that 21% of students were food insecure and Patton Lopez et al. (2014) in their study, found that over half of the student population at a mid-sized rural university in Oregon were food insecure. Both studies noted the adverse effect of student food insecurity on their academic performance.

One of the largest surveys – spanning 33 000 students at 70 community colleges in 24 states – was published in 2015 by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab (since renamed Hope Center) as the *Hungry for Knowledge* report. The survey was conducted to determine food and housing insecurity among community college students in the US. The study looked at a larger, more diverse sample size compared to other studies referred to here. The report estimated that 52% of students were food insecure, with 20% qualifying as hungry, and 52% were housing insecure, including 13% who were homeless.

In Canada, the national campus food organisation *Meal Exchange*, in a survey of five universities found that fee increases caused 39% of the 4 013 students surveyed to compromise on the quality of food they ate. They did not eat balanced meals and were worried about running out of food.

The findings of the studies conducted in Australia, the United States and in Canada are testimony to the reality that student food insecurity is a growing phenomenon even in high-income countries where national food stocks are relatively high. In Australia for example, the majority of food sold is grown and supplied by Australian farmers and more than half of their agricultural produce is exported (Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs, 2015). National food availability is therefore high.

Munro et al. (2013) in their study note that attention is being paid to the issue of student hunger in developed countries. Evidence of this is the existence of the College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA), a professional US organisation founded in 2012 to support campus food banks at community colleges. These food banks assist students from low-income families with food. In May 2018, CUFBA had a membership of more than 500 food banks, established at universities and colleges in the USA (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018).

While there are some studies on the prevalence and distribution of hunger at South African universities, such as those conducted by Munro et al. (2013) and Van den Berg and Raubenheimer (2015), more information is required to inform possible interventions at South African universities. The studies that have been conducted show food insecurity among students as a growing concern and even a potential public health crisis (Fekisi & Jaffer, 2014). Van den Berg and Raubenheimer (2015) posit that severe food insecurity amongst students may be contributing to the high attrition rate at South African universities. More than 50% of students never graduate and at some institutions the drop-out rate can be as high as 80% (Letseka & Maile, 2008). Food insecurity among students at UFS showed that only a quarter of the students reported having enough food to eat, 10% of the students never had enough money for food and many had to borrow or steal money for food.

During 2015, the Southern African Federation for Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education (SAFSAS) gathered data on the food programme interventions at South African universities. Of the 25 universities contacted, 10 responded to the questionnaire. The overall results suggest that seven of the 10 respondent universities have programmes in place to assist food insecure students. Two additional universities have informal and case-by-case interventions to manage incidences of food insecurity. The University of the Free State (UFS), for example, has implemented the “No Student Hungry” (NSH) programme, allocating a food bursary to successful student applicants based on academic excellence and the commitment to public duty. The bursary offers a small daily allowance of R37 to qualifying students who maintain a minimum 60% average. The NSH programme is sustained by external donations to the programme. The University of Johannesburg (UJ) has a dedicated kitchen run by Gift of the Givers, a South African non-governmental organisation (NGO) operating in the area of humanitarian aid. Students are assessed for inclusion in the programme by social workers at the university. UJ has more than 4 000 students on their programme. In addition, they also provide students with toiletry items and dry food packs. The University of Pretoria has the Student Nutrition Aid Programme (SNAP), which provides R65 per day to successful applicants, amounting to approximately R8 000 per student in need, per annum, based on their academic performance. One hundred and eighty students are supported in this programme. A further 80 students receive a weekly parcel of non-perishable food items.

Many other universities have more ad-hoc arrangements for assisting students who may be hungry. For example, assistance with food at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University involves providing food parcels to 1 100 students per month. The SRC at the University of Limpopo provides food parcels to students when donations are available. The SRC at Rhodes University has arranged for one meal per week for students, sponsored by a corporate. They also assist students on a once-off basis with money for groceries. These different approaches to a common concern reflect a lack of a national strategy to respond to a potential crisis in higher education. The number of students who are hungry at various universities are however not readily available. Further research is required at individual universities and jointly to determine prevalence rates. The SAFSAS survey notes that the

need for food is extensive and that funding and universities' programme administration appear to be barriers to the wider provision of relief to students who are hungry.

2.6.7 #Fees must Fall

In 2015, students at South African universities took to the streets to voice their discontent about the cost of university studies. The student protests, likened to the Soweto uprising of 1976, saw large numbers of students rallying behind the slogan #FeesMustFall (Baloyi & Gilad, 2015). The protests exposed the dire situation of poorer students in South Africa. Students decried their inability to pay fees and their struggle to sustain themselves. Implicit in the demand for free education was that subsidiary needs such as accommodation and food be subsidised. The #FeesMustFall protests attracted widespread media coverage and sparked international interest, resonating with constituencies struggling with similar issues. For example, students in the USA also protested in 2015 against increasing student loan debts and called for tuition-free public universities (Reuters, 2015).

2.6.8 The role of the university

A review of scholarly thinking about the role and place in society of institutions of higher learning assists this study not only to understand the social milieu in which the crisis of student hunger on campus is to be addressed, it also serves to aid formulating possible responses to the challenge. Revisiting of notions of the traditional role of universities (Chan, 2016, p. 2) unearths a range of contesting views, framed as it is between the dilemma of "acquir[ing] new knowledge and to prepar[ing] one for the workforce" and "aiming for more ideal contributions to the commonwealth society".

Kuhnen (1978), almost five decades ago, accused the traditional university of being an elitist group of society, which was were driven largely by personal interests of those connected to them. Mamdani (2018) supports Kuhnen's view when he noted that even post-colonialism, how the modern African university still does not resemble an African institution, and that it continues to imitate the colonial archetype. This they illustrated as current universities mimicking the discipline model and maintaining its distance from communities around it. Mamdani (2018) describes the university as a walled community

that maintains a clear difference between its administrators, its academics, its professionals and the fee-paying students. Mamdani (2018) and Kuhnen (1978) describe the traditional universities as the proverbial “ivory tower”, that are extensions of Western models and satisfying their own research needs.

Debates prior to democracy in South Africa concerning the nature and mission of a university, centred on the relevance of the university in the South African context (Mosha, 1986). The university was seen by some as a mechanism for social change that promoted national development by means of solving crucial social and economic challenges, and a “means of spreading social services and other benefits equitably; and ensuring education for all as the surest gateway to recognition and status, to lifelong occupational challenges and a lucrative career” (Mosha, 1986, p. 165).

The South African Higher Education system is a product of South Africa’s apartheid history and is shaped by social, political and economic inequalities of class, race, gender, and a spacial nature (Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2014; Badat, 2010). Post-1994, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been mandated by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to redress inequalities experienced by previously disadvantaged individuals through transformation of the education sector (South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2014).

Transformation-oriented initiatives in higher education were developed and implemented since 1994 to effect institutional change (SAHRC, 2016). Badat (2010) noted a range of interventions including re-examining and redefining the purposes and goals of higher education; engaging in extensive policy research and new policy formulation, funding, academic structure and programmes, quality assurance, the enactment of new laws and regulations, and major restructuring. While there have been some transformative change and growth in higher education systems in South Africa, there are still concerns about students’ access, graduation rates among black students and issues of equity that are critical in the transformation debate (Badat, 2010).

Waghid (2008) makes a case for the interconnectedness of higher education and social justice by positing that universities are influential in causing a worthwhile change in

individuals through various encounters, and Boulton and Lucas (2008, p. 4) state that one of the functions of HEIs is to be “agents of social justice and mobility”. Badat (2016) declares that HEIs become exclusionary and unjust when HEIs do not further the aims of social justice, democratic citizenship and social and economic development.

Badat (2016) also acknowledges a range of challenges that have undermined the successful transformation of HEIs. The South African Human Rights Commission (2017) supports this view and recognises the current socio-economic reality of poor income households, which, are barriers for previously disadvantaged individuals to successfully access and complete their higher education studies. This has implications for employment equity, the redistribution of resources within the university, decolonising the taught curriculum and – importantly for this study – equal access. Access here would refer to not only physical and legal access to the institution, but also access to all the resources to become a fully-fledged student including study material, accommodation, transport, student counselling and support and sufficient energy from a nutritious diet.

2.6.9 Covid-19 pandemic

Since December 2019, several cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology have been reported in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. On 7 January 2020, a novel coronavirus was identified from a throat swab sample of a patient by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention and was subsequently named 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) by the World Health Organization (Gao, Chen & Fang, 2020). The World Health Organisation defines the Coronavirus disease as an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome, Coronavirus 2 (SARSCoV-2). The disease has caused a pandemic of respiratory illness. Older people and the presence of chronic illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus and hypertension have increased the risk of hospitalisation and death. The pandemic is currently causing substantial morbidity and mortality globally (Muniyappa & Gubbi, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has brought not only the risk of death from infection but also unbearable psychological pressure.

The full extent of how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the world is not known. What is known is that the pandemic has wreaked havoc, leaving many poorer and increasing inequality levels amongst households. About 97 million more people are living on less than \$1.90 a day because of the pandemic, increasing the global poverty rate from 7.8% to 9.1%; 163 million more are living on less than \$5.50 a day. Globally, three to four years of progress towards ending extreme poverty are estimated to have been lost (Sánchez-Páramo et al., 2021).

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report for September to December 2020 noted that 9.34 million people in South Africa (16% of the population analysed) faced high levels of acute food insecurity, driven mainly by the Covid-19 pandemic and mitigation measures. High food prices, drought and economic decline also feature significantly in this. A further 5% of the analysed population was projected to have been in a food crisis by March 2021. In South Africa, with high levels of poverty and inequality already present before the pandemic, an even bleaker picture is rendered when considering the national food security outlook for families and their children.

Anecdotal evidence from the Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach office shows that despite the Food Bank being closed during the hard lockdown on campus in 2020, students emailed the office appealing for food from home. It is likely that the need for food among students will increase once contact classes resume. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. Families have been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In some families' livelihoods and breadwinners were lost, leaving many more individuals in need of greater support particularly with food. (International Labour Organisation, World Health Organisation, Food and Agricultural Organisation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, joint statement, 2020).

2.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

Chapter 2 provided insight into the fundamental theoretical approaches to the issue of student hunger in this study. These include Sen's *Entitlement Theory* and the Right to Food as a fundamental human right as acknowledged in multilateral agreements and legal

instruments and under the Constitution of South Africa. It also explored concepts such as hunger and food security and insecurity at global and national levels, and described the peculiarities of the South African socio-economic context in which the issue of student hunger resides. This chapter also highlighted the #FeesMustFall protests and the Covid-19 pandemic. Lastly, this chapter investigated the role of the university.

The next chapter will focus on the research methodology used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed description of the research methods utilised in this study. It provides information on the qualitative approach to the research, the case study design, the study population, the study sample and the sampling procedures utilised. It also describes the research instrument that was employed. The methods of data collection and data analysis are also highlighted in this chapter. The latter part of this chapter deals with the trustworthiness of the study, the ethical considerations observed, and the study limitations.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

The research approach incorporated a mixed-method technique incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis. The qualitative component of the study was the more dominant approach to develop an in-depth understanding of the social experiences of participants, and to learn about how they interpret their social and material circumstances, and to appreciate their perspectives and histories (Ritchie et al., 2013). This type of research was useful as it was conducted at Wits University, in a setting where the issue of student hunger occurs, and data was collected in the field (Creswell, 2007). Researching the views and opinions of stakeholders about the university providing food aid to students, is best done in the context of the university and therefore within a qualitative paradigm. This research takes the position that “the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated” (Cohen et al., 2002 p. 19). It follows from the idea that reality is understood by individuals as they experience it, and that stakeholders should express their views as they experience it. The availability of demographic data (numbers) in this study also allowed for the utilisation of a quantitative approach (Clark et al., 2008). Quantitative research is also concerned with investigating social phenomena by using statistics and numerical data.

A case study was the most appropriate design choice for this research. A case study is described as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real- life context...” (Yin, 2012). Case studies are preferred when the ‘how’ or the ‘why’ of an issue is being established through research. Case studies are best when the researcher has little control over events, and when the focus is on a present-day occurrence, such as with student hunger on campus (Yin, 2012).

The university is the case study, and data was elicited from various stakeholders within the university. These varying voices within the study helped to illuminate different interests and attitudes prevalent within the university about the role of the institution in providing food aid to students.

3.3 POPULATION SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

3.3.1 Population

The study population was students and staff, as stakeholders of Wits University. The university population is large. According to its 2019-2020 Annual Report, Wits University student enrolments in 2019 stood at 40 881 and academic staff members were 1 152. It was therefore impossible to study the views of the entire staff and student stakeholder population in this study.

3.3.2 Sample

Sampling is a process of choosing a representative sample of the “population of interest” that is being studied. It is a useful tool for research studies because the population of interest usually consists of too many individuals for any research project to include as participants (Majid, 2018, p 3). Research participants therefore comprised a sample of Wits University stakeholders. These included students, management members and various categories of academic and non-academic staff. Academic and non-academic staff encompass a wide range of occupations, from the professoriate, senior and junior lecturers to tutors and non-academic staff. The latter cohort included professional staff such as nurses, psychologists, social workers, accountants, and administrative workers, protection and parking officers, maintenance, and other general workers. The constituencies

comprised a cross-section of internal stakeholders who are involved in the day-to-day delivery of the academic programme.

The research focused on student and staff samples from three faculties only, namely the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management (CLM). These were selected from among the institution's five academic faculties all housed on the Braamfontein Campus where they deliver their academic programmes. The only criteria were that student participants were to be in their first-year of study and that staff participants represented the diversity of the various categories of academic and non-academic staff. The diversity in the sample reflects the university as a microcosm of South African society, mirroring the diversity of race, class and sexual orientation. The diversity of income and status in occupations is also represented.

A first-year student cohort was selected from the student stakeholder group because they are new to the university and have not fully acquainted themselves with student support services. First-year student voices are refreshing as they are new to the student experience. Beside first-year students, especially those who do or have received food aid, are unlikely to have views that challenge the need for universities to continue to assist them, if not do more. While valid, such views would not aid the purpose of the study viz. to explore stakeholder views on the role of the university in student hunger on campus.

3.3.3 Sampling procedures

To select a sample from the population, purposive sampling, also known as judgemental sampling, was used to select potential staff participants. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which a researcher relies on his/her subjective judgement to select members of a population. The researcher in this instance considered the selected participants useful in exploring the research question (Neuman, 2006). It is also a sampling strategy that is used to select participants who are not difficult to access (Neuman, 2006).

The purposive sampling method allowed for various categories of staff to be included in the final sample (Campbell et al., 2020). Staff candidates from each of the three faculties were selected from a staff email address list. Each page in the address list consisted of ten staff members. An email was sent to 230 individual addresses from every odd-numbered

page in the address list for each of the three faculties. A total of 710 staff members were invited from the three faculties. To ensure consistency, the same email was sent via the university registrar's office to 4 255 first-year students from the three faculties.

I envisaged a diverse range of backgrounds, views, and experiences of participants. This view is supported by Powell and Single (1996), who note that diversity in the sample helps identify important issues and illuminates complex phenomena. The diversity in the sample should reflect the university as a microcosm of the South African society, including the diversity of race, class, and sexual orientation. The diversity of income and status in occupations was also considered in the sampling.

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

This study used three research instruments. These included an online questionnaire, a focus group guide for focus group discussions, and an unstructured interview. Permission was sought to deviate from the initial plan to conduct only focus groups with staff and students. This was necessitated by the risk of infection during the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing. Physical proximity is one of the greatest risks for infection, and social distancing is the main form of protection against the virus. Using online questionnaires was a safer medium due to the absence of direct contact.

Validity and reliability are important concepts in research (Singh 2017). Field describes validity as basically meaning - to measure what needs to be measured (2005, as cited in Taherdoost, 2016). Reliability, on the other hand is concerned with repeatability. Singh (2017) refers to the term "test-retest" reliability if researchers get similar results using the same questionnaire, and conditions have not been altered. The research questionnaire was developed specifically for this study, considering the research question. There is therefore no validity or reliability data as the questionnaire has not been used before or tested against any other criteria. This questionnaire appears to have face validity in that it measured what it intended to measure, and participants responded to the questions as they considered it relevant (Taherdoost, 2016). Face validity is therefore a subjective opinion of respondents, which the questionnaire sought to elicit. The instruments used in this study

also appeared to be reasonable, unambiguous and clear, and therefore had face validity, as noted by Oluwatayo, (2012, as cited in Taherdoost, 2016).

The online questionnaire comprised ten (10) closed-ended and seven (7) open-ended questions. The aim was exploring stakeholder perceptions on the role of higher education institutions in providing food to students as a student support service. This is a relatively new area in the broad student support arena, unlike for example, counselling services, which has been provided as a support service for a much longer period. The goal of using open-ended questions in this case study allowed respondents to introduce new ideas or concepts into the study that the direct study question may limit (Lee & Lutz, 2016).

The use of open-ended questions was to elicit rich, spontaneous information from participants, who used their own words rather than choose from a set of answer choices (Zull, 2016). Erickson and Kaplan (2000) also support the use of open-ended questionnaires for greater anonymity and the possibility of eliciting responses that are more authentic. Open-ended questions in an online questionnaire encourage participants to express themselves more freely and for the researcher to evaluate respondents' sentiments in an easier way (Jain, 2014). The length of the questionnaire was limited to the 10 closed-ended questions and 7 open-ended questions, so that it did not appear 'onerous' for the participant (Sahlqvist et al., 2011). The questions probed student and staff perceptions and opinions about the role of the university in food aid to hungry students. However, the researcher was mindful of, and took into account Bowling (2005)'s caution that a questionnaire can likely produce less in-depth responses in the absence of a face-to-face interviewer who is able to probe responses or clarify ambiguities.

A focus group guide was used for one focus group discussion that took place before the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (2015), a focus group guide provides an opportunity to stimulate discussions and interactions in focus groups. The focus group guide contained a set of pro-forma questions that were put to participants in the focus group discussion. These questions were open-ended questions to enable discussion. The initial line of questioning was general with more specific questions being asked once the group was more comfortable (Krueger, 2001). The aim of the guide was to allow for a smooth discussion with indicators built into the script to probe a little more. An advantage

forwarded by Powell and Single (1996), is the dynamism of the interactions among members in the focus group and the ability of participants to clarify and expand on their contributions as each member raises their own points of view.

The focus group guide focused on staff's experience of hunger on campus, whether food aid should be a core support service at the university, and who should take responsibility for dealing with hunger among students. Probes and prompts were used to elicit more information, clarify responses, and moderate discussion between the participants.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used in three individual interviews. These were also conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. A semi-structured interview schedule was useful as it allowed the researcher to have a list of key themes to guide the interview. The order of the questions was flexible enough to accommodate a change in direction in the interview. One of the advantages of using a semi-structured interview is that it allows the researcher to appear competent (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The researcher needs to be skilful in facilitation through practising and be able to manage a relational focus (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). However, the interviewer does not have to adhere to a detailed interview guide, which will allow the researcher to be "freer" (Kajornboon, 2005). These instruments assisted in facilitating discussion, thereby eliciting views and opinions about the role of the university in providing food aid to students.

3.4.1 Pretesting of the research instruments

The online questionnaire was pretested in hard-copy form with a group of student volunteers as a self-administered questionnaire. The focus group interview guide was piloted with colleagues and the semi-structured interview guide was tested with a fellow social worker to assess its feasibility.

3.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

This study utilised three methods of data collection, namely an online survey questionnaire with staff and students, a focus group with staff, and three individual interviews with university management stakeholders.

The researcher designed an online questionnaire using REDCap. REDCap is an acronym for the Research Electronic Data Capture web-based application system that allows respondents to view and respond to online questionnaires and in so doing, consent and participate in the research study. The REDCap platform allowed the creation of a secure online form, which afforded anonymity to respondents and was informed by the literature review. The common reason for offering anonymity to participants is that they will be more 'candid' and those of them who hold critical views will freely participate, without fear of any 'threatening consequences' (Pearlin, 1961, p. 641). An anonymous questionnaire is also believed to provide 'clearer and more complete' responses (Gosling et al., 2004).

The questionnaire focused on eliciting respondents' views. The questionnaire specifically required demographic information that could shape opinion forming such as age, race, gender, level of education, and year of study. It necessarily required participants to state whether they were staff or students and if staff, how long they had been in the university's employ. The open-ended questions focused on how, if at all, participants had encountered student hunger, whether they were aware of any campus resources available for students who were hungry, what they would recommend the university do about its hungry students, and whether counselling was given more attention than food for hungry students.

An email inviting students to participate in the study was sent via the Registrar's office to all 4 255 first-year students on 3 September 2021 and then recirculated on 30 September 2021. The same email invitation was bulk emailed to 710 staff members between 8 and 16 September 2021. A reminder message to staff was posted on the WitsNews site on 16 and 23 September 2021. The link to the online questionnaire remained open until 6 October 2021.

Mertler (2002) suggests the use of emails to make direct contact with members of the sample. He notes that the ability to publicise a web-based questionnaire and to encourage participation through email invitations enabled the researcher to determine the response rate, with a possibility of an increased confidence in the research results within a specific context.

The original choice for this research study's data collection method was focus group discussions with students and staff. The need for social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated a change in approach, and therefore an online survey questionnaire was used that complied with Covid-19 regulations.

One focus group discussion was however conducted with eight academic and non-academic staff from the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management. This was the only focus group that was conducted as it was the first to be scheduled before Covid -19 restrictions applied.

A focus group is defined by Powell and Single, (1996, p. 499) as a “group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research”. This was useful in eliciting individual views and opinions and drawing upon participants' subjective views and beliefs in a way that was not achievable in the online questionnaire surveys. The focus group discussion was robust and took many twists and turns, and the group relied on the interaction and dynamics within the group based on the semi- structured guidelines supplied by the researcher. The focus group discussion is ideal for collecting data from many individuals at the same time, rather than collecting data from individual participants (Rubin & Babbie, 2010).

The focus group discussion was held in a large, well-ventilated boardroom at the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management and lasted for one hour. The researcher assured participants that their contributions were confidential and that their anonymity would be guarded to the extent that was possible, given that many in the group already knew each other.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face with three staff members from the senior management team. The interviews were conducted in their respective offices, upon requests for an interview time. The duration of the interviews was between 30 and 50 minutes. Interview participants and focus group participants consented to participating in the study and assented to being audio-recorded (using electronic recording devices).

The focus group discussion and the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher reviewed all the transcripts against the original audio-recording to ensure accuracy. Verbatim quotes were edited only where they were used in this report to improve readability, and understandable grammar. Personal identifiers were removed. Data gathered from the focus group was analysed together with the three face-to-face interviews. The intention was to triangulate three sets of data - online responses, focus group discussions and interviews.

3.6 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Hatch (2002) holds that data analysis is a systematic search for meaning and is a way to process information learned so that it can be transferred to others. Data for this study was analysed for both its qualitative and quantitative insights. Demographic information from the questionnaires provided an opportunity for quantitative analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify and analyse themes or patterns within the data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative approach to examining research data. It is used to understand and represent the experiences of people (Bowen, Edwards & Cattell, 2012).

Of the 4 255 first-year students emailed, 1 735 students were from the Faculty of Humanities, 1 360 from the Faculty of Science, and 1 160 from the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management. The combined sample of randomly selected students and staff was 4 965. A total of 145 respondents returned completed questionnaires.

A dataset consisting of 2 600 discrete pieces of information – made up of 145 respondents each answering 18 questions and including demographic attributes, was collected through the questionnaire. These, together with data from the focus group and interviews formed the basis for data analysis. The process for data analysis began with consolidating the data into a more manageable format. All questionnaire responses were collected using REDCap software and results were exported to Excel[®] for analysis. The focus group and semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researcher immersed herself in the data by reading and rereading the transcripts and the responses to the open-ended questions to obtain a broad picture of the data collected. The large volume of verbatim responses was useful to gain a better understanding of stakeholder views and

perceptions on the role of the university in providing food aid to students. Processing data, however, was challenging as data collection methods varied.

When constructing the open-ended questions, the researcher limited the open-ended responses to a defined number of alpha-numeric characters. A set number of lines was provided in the body of the questionnaire to reflect the size of the response required (Brinck, Gergle & Wood, 2001). This was a pragmatic solution to overly lengthy and possibly off-topic responses, which could have been more difficult to categorise and analyse (Copeland, 2017).

The next step in the analysis process was looking at the quantitative findings – the demographic information from the online questionnaire – before coding the responses to the open-ended questions. Coding was required to get to grips with the data and to understand it by spending time with it, and to eventually generate data for the report (Elliot, 2018). The next step was to note similar words, phrases and ideas in each of the seven open-ended questions, and to categorise them into themes for developing a thematic framework. A process of data reduction through grouping similar ideas together coded into *a priori* or exploratory code categories, then followed.

Data analysis of interviews and the focus group discussions were manually processed to extract qualitative data. By a process of annotating transcripts, using word codes and creating a coding scheme, themes emerged. A process of data reduction through grouping analogous themes resulted in a list of *a priori* themes similar to the process undertaken with the open-ended responses in the questionnaire. The *a priori* themes included predetermined subtopics that were implicit in the questionnaire, the focus group and in the interviews, such as student support programmes, food as a right, and the university's role. After identifying the categories and developing themes, a matrix of the main themes was presented to clearly demonstrate the views and perceptions of students and staff.

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The trustworthiness of a study has to do with others' confidence in the quality of the study regarding its data, methods and analysis (Connelly, 2016). The researcher is compelled to encourage readers and stakeholders that the findings are trustworthy (Babbie & Mouton,

2001). Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability are the four criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba and accepted by many qualitative researchers when considering the trustworthiness of a study (1985, as cited in Connelly, 2016).

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba (1989), refers to the ‘truth’ of the findings. Credibility is achieved if all stakeholders, including the researcher, the participants and respondents, and anyone who reads this account, recognise it as truthful and believable (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This research study is credible as the researcher conducted the study with due diligence to ensure that the findings of the study are consistent with the data collected. The triangulation of sources method utilising multiple sources of information, namely online questionnaire responses, the focus group discussions and the interview findings assisted in cross-checking themes that were identified (Yin, 2018). The availability of the audio-recordings of the focus groups and the interviews with verbatim transcripts and the online questionnaire responses are available for fact checking. Commitment to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of participants and respondents also encouraged honesty and trust. The supervisory role was useful in questioning and monitoring the standard procedures used in this qualitative study and whether any deviation was justified (Connelly, 2016).

3.7.2 Dependability

The dependability of a study is about ensuring the findings of this study is replicable and repeatable with the same findings if conducted with the same group of respondents and participants (Forero et al., 2018). The research supervisor has been a constant mirror, reflecting on and guiding the authenticity, objectivity, and dependability of the study (Creswell, 2014). The online questionnaire had a different set of questions to the focus group guide and the interview schedule. All the questions aimed to elicit responses that meet the needs of the research.

3.7.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the researcher. According to Anney (2014), confirmability is achieved when the findings are confirmed by others as reflecting the data

collected. The researcher in this study is involved with a food provision programme at the university and is invested in determining the true perceptions of stakeholders regarding food provision to hungry students. The data is available for fact checking and the role of triangulation of sources promotes confirmability. A key consideration throughout the study has been the acknowledgement and recognition of potential subjectivity and reflecting on aspects of bias and reflexivity. The researcher has relied on the supervisory role in the audit trail of the entire process.

3.7.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to findings of one study having applicability to other contexts, with new settings and new samples of individuals (Creswell, 2014; Lietz & Zayas, 2010). The researcher is wary to confirm the transferability of this research study. Although transferability would assist in advocating policy, the findings of this study are peculiar to the characteristics of the context in which this study was undertaken. Factors such as the geographical context, organisational tradition and culture would need to be considered and reported on in order to assess the extent to which findings may be true of stakeholders at other universities.

Nevertheless, findings of various studies with the same aims if conducted at different universities may provide a basis for transferability, with this study forming a baseline from which a comparison can be drawn. Understanding a phenomenon happens slowly, through numerous studies, rather than through one project only (Shenton, 2004).

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations refer to the norms for behaviour that separate right from wrong or what is acceptable or unacceptable in the research process (Resnik, 2011). Particular sensitivities arise when doing research with human subjects. Special care and consideration are required, as was the case in this study (Yin, 2018). A commitment to the principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, informed consent and confidentiality throughout the research process, guided the ethical considerations of this study. The fact that the researcher is involved in the Wits Food Programme at the university places an additional

responsibility on the researcher to be particularly mindful of ethical research practices, in the event of any conflict of interest.

3.8.1 Ethics approval

Before commencing the research study, an application was presented to the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) for ethics clearance. This required the submission of a research proposal (Creswell, 2014). An ethics clearance certificate with protocol number H18/11/55 was obtained.

The researcher is a registered social worker with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). Registration with the Council commits members to adhere to the code of professional ethics (SACSSP, n.d.), which are commensurate with the principles explained next.

3.8.2 Permission to conduct research with staff in faculties and with students at the University

An application to the University registrar for permission to conduct research with first-year students and staff at the University of Witwatersrand was granted (Appendix 2). In addition, permission was sought from the Deans of three faculties, that of the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management. Email correspondence to conduct research with staff in their faculties is available. In addition, the following ethical principles were observed:

3.8.3 Doing no harm

A fundamental ethical principle in research is that no harm should come to participants because of their involvement in research. This means that participants should not be exposed to pain, physical or psychological, including being subjected to any adverse consequence for participating in research (Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013). Participants may however experience discomfort and it is the researcher's responsibility to identify potential risks. To mitigate any ethical compromise, the researcher has safeguarded the integrity of the process by ensuring that no participant was harmed; this was easily allayed, as the personal impact of this research is low. It was most important that all participants

and respondents were aware of the scope of the research through information in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B).

3.8.4 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation refers to a human research subject's exercise of free will in deciding whether to participate in a research activity (Lavrakas, 2008). The researcher ensured voluntary participation of students and staff as key stakeholders by clearly noting the need for their volunteer participation. No student or staff member was coerced or placed under any undue pressure to participate in the research. All participants and respondents, both online and those who participated in the interviews and the focus group, were provided with information sheets that fully informed them of the purpose and scope of the research. Participants and respondents were also informed of their right to withdraw during, and even after information had been collected and analysed. All participants and online respondents exercised freedom of choice in deciding to participate in the research.

3.8.5 Anonymity

A respondent to or participant in a research study remains anonymous if their contribution cannot be linked back to them (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Van den Hoonaard noted that guaranteeing complete anonymity to participants in qualitative research is an “unachievable goal” (2003, cited in Saunders, Kitzinger, C. & Kitzinger, J. 2015). This is the case with this research, as participants were drawn from the university where individuals may know each other and the researcher. The use of themes to highlight views and perceptions is a way of anonymising respondents and participants. The built-in anonymising facility of the REDCap web-based system is also useful in not identifying respondents. Using specific quotations to support the themes identified, however, may uncover individual voices, but individual participants will not be identified (Jelsma & Clow, 2005). In this instance, the principle of informed consent is most important.

3.8.6 Informed consent

Each participant in a research study must give permission to participate in the study (Wiles et al, 2005). To respect participants' right to make informed decisions, the researcher adequately explained the purpose of the study, indicated the estimated time required to

complete the questionnaires, the interviews and the discussions, and described what participants were expected to do during the study. The researcher also described any direct or indirect risks or benefits for participants or other people, which might result from the study. The researcher obtained signed consent forms from participants in the interviews and those in the focus group discussions. Respondents to the online questionnaire were required to consent to participation in the online survey by ticking the first question, which read, “Do you consent to participating in this research study?” They were not allowed to continue if this question was not answered. The researcher and the supervisor’s contact details were provided to prospective participants, if they needed to have anything clarified. The researcher sought various permissions during the research process as and when the need arose. For example, during the lockdown phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, meeting face-to-face with participants in a focus group was not possible, this then necessitated a change to an online questionnaire for data collection. Consent is an ongoing process and not a once-off activity (Koch & Elster, 2017).

3.8.7 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to keeping secret participants’ identity and their contributions. It is therefore the protection of information provided by research participants (Lavrakas, 2008). The researcher ensured confidentiality by saving all audio-recordings on a password-protected computer. Transcripts are currently stored safely and securely under lock and key. Data, only in the form of findings, is shared in the research study.

All research data will be securely stored for a required period of five years as recommended by APA (Creswell, 2014). After this period, the data will be destroyed to prevent it from potentially ending up with other researchers who might misuse the data. The researcher will respect participants, treat all participants equally, avoid deception, respect power imbalances, and ensure objectivity and non-bias in the research process. The researcher has been committed to fairly processing participants’ and respondents’ personal information and to ensure its confidentiality (Wiles & Boddy, 2013). The researcher has also been mindful of the prescripts of the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013.

3.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

The chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research methodology and strategy employed in this study. A mixed-method study incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, and the use of a case study research design were discussed. In addition, the research population and sampling with sampling procedures were explained. The research instruments, pretesting of these and the data collection methods were also presented in this chapter. The latter part of this chapter highlighted the research trustworthiness and ethical principles of the study. In the proceeding chapter, the decoded data will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FROM THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The presentation and discussion of findings in this chapter focus on the information collected from the online questionnaire. The first section looks at the demographic attributes of the respondents in the online questionnaire, and offers points for discussion and a literature review. The second part of this chapter examines the views and perceptions of the sampled students and staff from the three faculties, under the various themes identified from the collated responses.

4.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS TO THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

To aid in disaggregating the responses to the online questionnaire, this section highlights the demographic data of the students, staff and respondents.

Table 4.1 depicts the number of students and staff who responded to the online questionnaire and the faculties they represent.

Table 4.1: Number of students, staff and faculties represented in online questionnaire (N=145)

	Number of Respondents	Faculty of Humanities	Faculty of Science	Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management
Students	81	25	37	17
Staff	64	25	14	27
Total	145	50	51	44

Broadly speaking, there appears to be only a slight variation in the number of responses from each of the three faculties. Significant however, is the difference in the numbers of

student and staff responses in each faculty. In Humanities, equal numbers of students (25) and staff (25) responded, while more students (37) than staff (14) responded in Science, and fewer students (17) than staff (27) responded from CLM. There are no apparent reasons for these differences. It is not unreasonable however to deduce that Humanities scholars – staff and students – are motivated by the need to improve understanding of the human condition and are interested in topics such as poverty and hunger. The global challenge of poverty and hunger are directly within their sphere of interest.

Table 4.2 highlights the demographic (age, race, gender) characteristics and statistics for respondents in the online study. The largest cohort (48.97%) of student respondents were between the ages of 18-25-year-olds, and staff respondents (32.41%) were mainly within the 32-55-year-old age range. The majority (64.14%) of respondents were African. Respondents were mainly female (67.58%).

Table 4.2: Demographic profile of respondents to the online questionnaire

	Value	Students		Staff	
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Age	18-25	71	48.97	1	0.69
	26-31	4	2.76	6	4.14
	32-55	4	2.76	47	32.41
	56-65	0	-	11	7.59
	>65	0	-	1	0.69
Race	African	59	40.69	34	23.45
	White	7	4.83	19	13.10
	Coloured	4	2.76	2	1.38
	Indian/Asian	9	6.21	10	6.90
	None	0	0	1	0.69
Gender	Female	50	34.48	48	33.10
	Male	28	19.31	16	11.03
	Other	1	0.69	2	1.38

Students in the 18-25 age group make up the largest portion (48.97%) of respondents to the online questionnaire. This correlates with the sample of first-year students selected who are commonly within this age range. The majority of staff members (32.41%) are within the 32–55-year age range, which is in line with the South African labour force participation rate as published in the fourth quarter of 2020. In the same publication, there is an indication of a 71% participation rate among 35–44-year-old individuals, and a 73% participation rate among individuals in the 45–54-year-old age range.

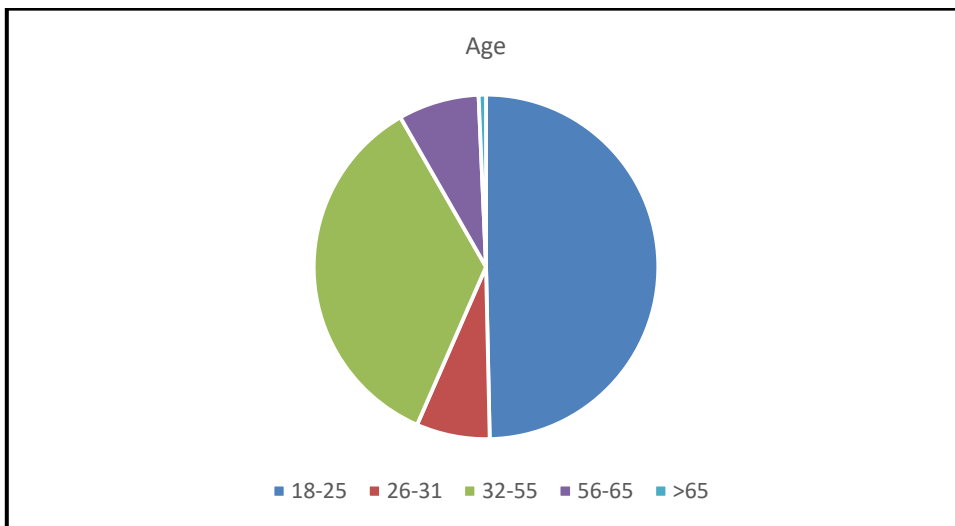


Figure 4.1: *Age range of respondents in the online questionnaire*

Most respondents are black. African (64.6%), Coloured (4.2%), Chinese and Indian (13.2%), constituting 82% of the respondents. White respondents comprise 18.1%. This accords with the University's race demographics, as reported in the institution's 2018 annual report, with student numbers at 39 953, black students – incorporating African, Chinese, Indian and coloured students – making up 82.94% and white students constituting 16.93% of its enrolment.

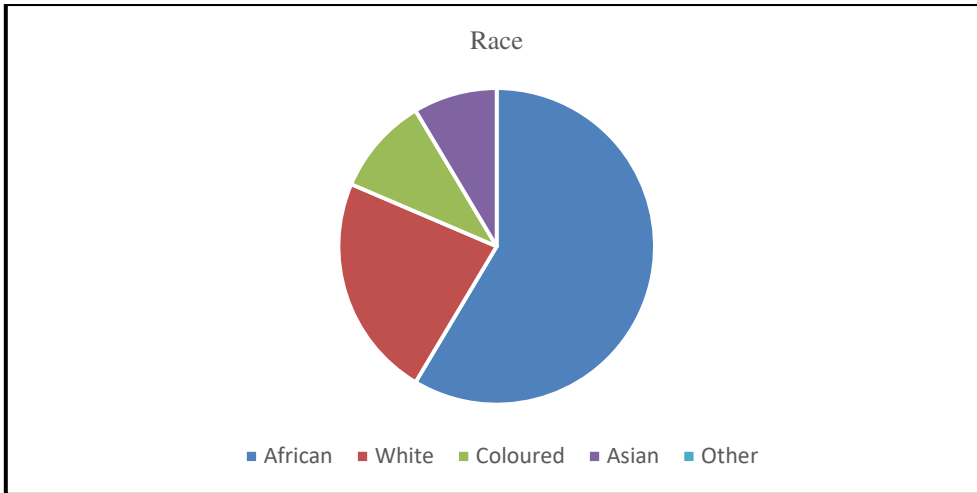


Figure 4.2: *Race of respondents in the online questionnaire*

Respondents – students and staff – were, at just over two-thirds (67.6%), predominantly female. In addition, the number of responses from both female students and female staff members were more or less on par, with 50 female students and 48 female staff members responding. Male respondents comprised 30.3% of all respondents. Respondents who identified as other made up 2.1% of the total respondents.

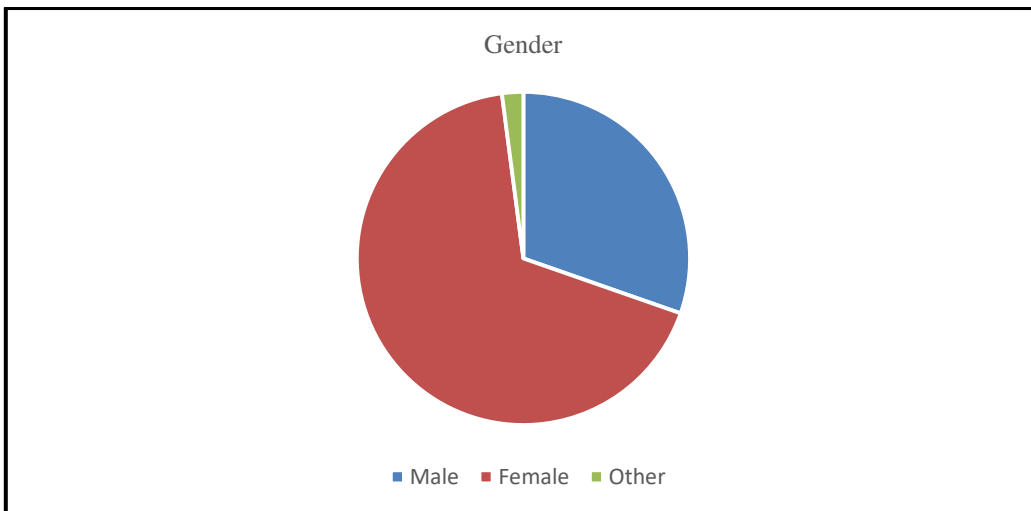


Figure 4.3: *Gender of respondents in Online Questionnaire*

The overall response rate was highest from Science (35.2%), followed by the Humanities (34.5%) and trailed by CLM at 30.3%. This is a surprising outcome considering that Humanities is the largest faculty at the University. The assumption is that more students and staff in that faculty ought to have responded to the questionnaire, given that the topic falls within the ambit of challenges that social scientists ponder.

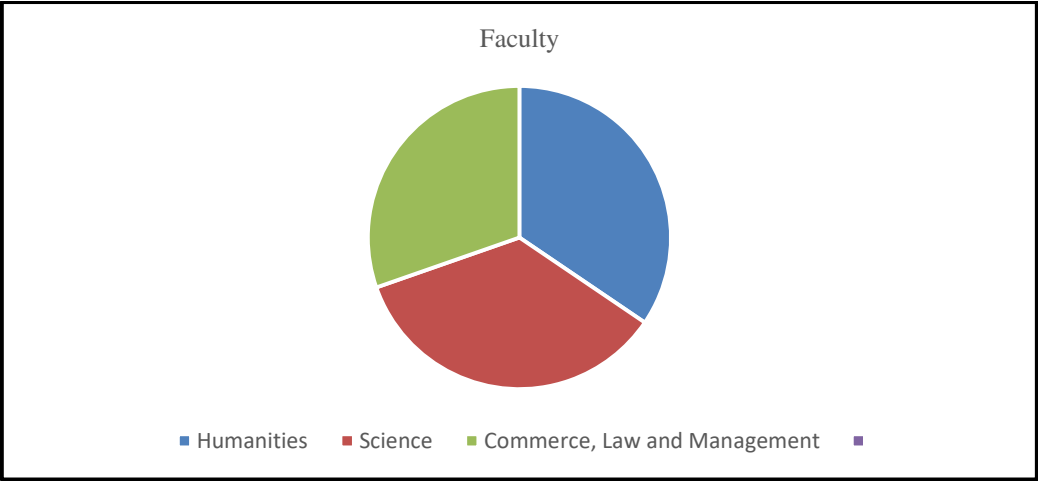


Figure 4.4: Faculty response rate

Staff responses were highest from among those who hold a Doctorate (29), followed by those with Master’s (17) and Honours (8) as postgraduate qualifications. There were six respondents with undergraduate degrees, 2 with Diplomas and 1 staff respondent with a Grade 12 qualification. There is a noticeable lack of respondents from the non-academic, professional and administrative categories of staff as well as support staff such as cleaning services and protection services. A possible reason is the use of the online questionnaire that staff respondents accessed through their email inbox, a technology that may have unwittingly side-lined other categories of employees. This, despite the fact that in randomly sampling staff, the email addresses of these categories of employees were well represented.

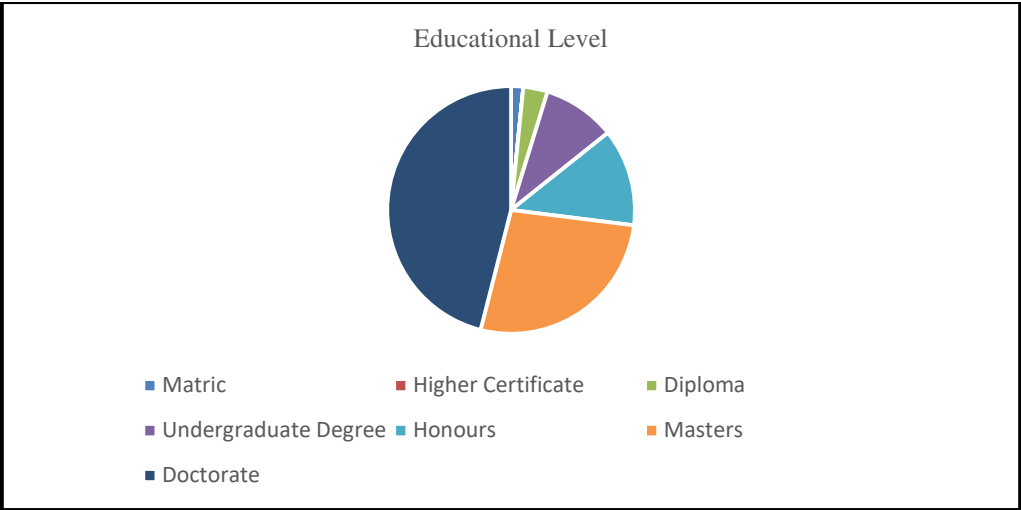


Figure 4.5: Staff educational levels

Staff employed for longer periods at the university formed the largest cohort of staff respondents. These include staff who were employed by the University for 5 to 10 years (23.8%) and those employed for 10 to 15 years (23.8%). This was followed by staff working for the University for between 2 to 5 years (22.2%), those employed for less than 2 years (15.6%) and staff employed for more than 15 years (14.3%).

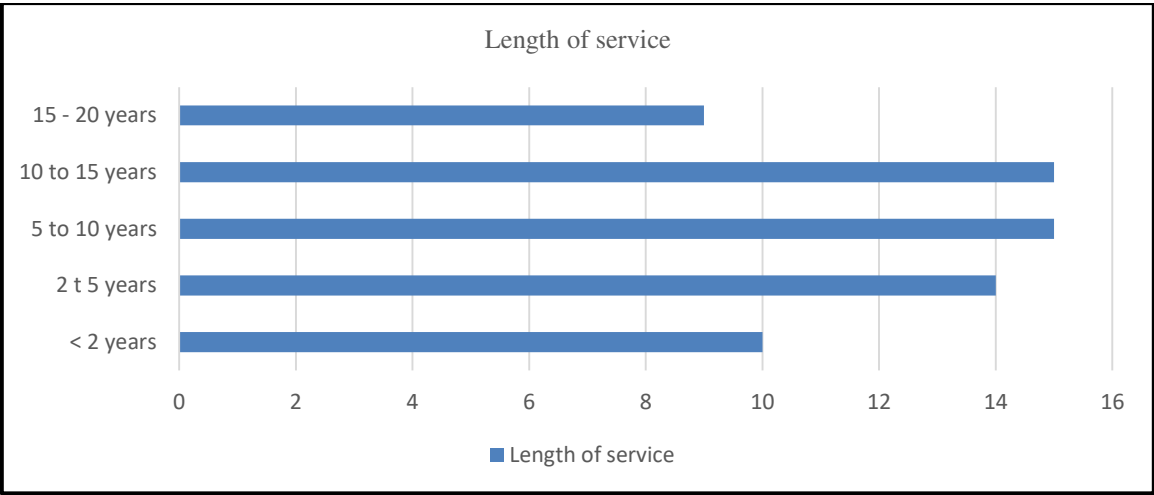


Figure 4.6: Staff length of service

There appears to be a correlation between the number of years served at the University and the rate of response. This may be linked to experience related to student matters gained over a period. Alternately, it may be the increase in the prevalence rate of student hunger across the years. This is particularly allied to academic staff, who are in positions that intersect with student academic struggles.



Figure 4.7: Staff categories

A higher percentage of academic staff (61.9%) responded to the questionnaire compared to professional and support staff (38.1%).

4.3 FINDINGS - ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

This section deals with the responses to the questions or statement in the order that they appear in the questionnaire.

4.3.1 Question 1: Are you aware that students go hungry on Wits’ campus?

In ascertaining the respondents’ awareness of hunger on campus, 101 (69.66%) respondents confirmed that they were aware of hunger on campus, while 30.34% were not aware that students experienced hunger.

Of the 101 affirmative responses, 58 were staff and 43 were students, indicating a strong awareness of hunger on campus by staff. Only eight staff members revealed that they were not aware of student hunger on campus, whereas 36 students were unaware of hunger

among their peers. Of the 58 staff respondents who were aware of student hunger on campus, 37 were academic staff, 18 were from the support or professional categories, and the categories of two staff respondents were not disclosed. The lower rate of awareness of student hunger among the first-year cohort may be attributable to the current mode of teaching and learning, through the e-learning platform, now a nearly ubiquitous teaching tool in higher education during the Covid-19 pandemic (Kim, 2020). First-year students were not exposed to the phenomenon of student hunger on campus because they were not on campus during the Covid-19 period. Many first-year students did not have the benefit of life-shaping experiences due to the unprecedented university environment with which they found themselves engage in a time of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic deprived first-year students of the space and opportunity to experience and participate in student life on campus (Jun et al., 2021).

Staff who were aware of hunger also appeared to have been employed at the university for longer periods (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Staff number of years at Wits and awareness of hunger (N=66)

	Number of Years at Wits	Unaware of Student Hunger
More than 2 years	19	5
More than 5 years	15	-
More than 10 years	13	2
More than 15 years	8	1
Unknown	3	-

4.3.2 Question 2: How have you encountered or experienced student hunger on campus?

When asked to comment on how respondents encountered and became aware of student hunger at the University, several respondents (51.72%) noted having had some knowledge of student hunger and had encountered the phenomenon by either being asked directly for

assistance with food or money for food (29.66%), or hearing about it through media reports or from colleagues and peers (10.34%).

Eleven students cited their physical absence (online learning) from the campus as a possible reason for not having encountered student hunger, and one (1) staff member's response indicated that he/she was new to Wits and likely not to have encountered student hunger for this reason.

A little more than a third of respondents (35.17%) had not encountered student hunger at Wits, while almost 20% of student respondents indicated being hungry themselves.

“The students used to trouble us at WBS by stealing our programmes’ food or invade our graduation ceremonies in order to get food”.

“I have experienced hunger ever since I came here in April”.

“I am hungry”.

Of the 16 student respondents who experienced hunger, 15 were African and one was coloured. Seven of the respondents who were hungry were female and nine were male. This is consistent with Van den Berg and Raubenheimer's (2015) finding that the highest prevalence of food insecurity is among black and coloured students, students who are undergraduate, first- generation, male, unemployed and those reliant on loans or bursaries.

The relative absence of White and Indian students seeking food aid provided a reflection of the income distribution among South Africa's population groups where the white individuals, followed by Indian individuals, attract higher shares of income available to individual South Africans. This in turn, is a function of education, skills and inherited wealth, among other factors.

4.3.3 Question 3: Do you know of any programmes or initiatives to support hungry students at Wits University?

Yes – 76 (52.41%)

No – 68 (46.90%)

Of those who responded in the affirmative, 49 (64.47%) were staff and 27 (35.52%) students. Fifty-two (75.36%) students were not aware of any programme or initiative to support hungry students on the campus. There appeared to be a correlation between the number of years staff had been employed at Wits and their awareness of available resources for students who are hungry on campus. Seven staff members had been employed for 15 years at the University, 13 staff members (26.53%) had been at the University for more than 10 years, 12 staff members had been at Wits for between 5 and 10 years, and five staff members had been employed for less than 2 years.

Little or no awareness of available initiatives among first-year students highlight their lack of exposure to student life and the full range of existing support or experiences, while undertaking a unique online learning experience, as a mitigating measure, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“I have not due to the current situation of online studies”.

“I haven't personally encountered student hunger at Wits as yet, because I have been doing online learning”.

These comments bear out the fact that, especially first-year students found themselves in an unprecedented university environment. They were denied a particular form of learning from the student life experience, where they could have been directly in touch with the realities of student life. These students could otherwise have experienced a food crisis themselves or through the plight of their peers, through a process described by Kolb (2014) as experiential learning.

In answering the above question, the following support programmes for students who were hungry at Wits were identified as depicted in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: *Food initiatives and number of times cited by respondents*

Name of Initiative	Number of Times Cited by Respondents
Wits Food Bank (WCCO)	62
Daily meal project	10
Food gardens	7
Road to Success Programme	7
Engineering and Built Environment programme	2
Health Sciences food bank	2
Trinity Church soup kitchen	1

Altogether, seven initiatives were identified by respondents. In their study, Rudolf et al. (2001) only identified one food support intervention, namely, the Oppidani meals programme. There appears to be a clear trajectory of increased interventions over the years at Wits. More broadly, many universities had begun implementing a range of interventions for access to food for their students as their primary constituency (Hames & Lewis, 2021). These include the University of Free State’s (UFS) “No Student Hungry” (NSH) Programme; the University of Pretoria’s Student Nutrition Aid Programme (SNAP); and the University of Johannesburg’s Stop Hunger Now Programme (SAFSAS survey, 2015).

4.3.4 Question 4: What should the university do about its students who are hungry?

Respondents provided a range of responses from who should be doing what, to what the university specifically could itself do to address student hunger. The view of 56 of the respondents (38.62%) was that the University could use various means to address student hunger. Fourteen respondents (9.66%) felt that the University should enlist the support of corporate donors to assist in running food support programmes. Eight respondents (5.52%) mentioned the use of charitable organisations such as NGOs to support hungry students.

Five (5) respondents (3.45%) indicated that a government subsidy was required to meet the needs of hungry students and that the university should facilitate this. Three (3) respondents (2.07%) noted that the University is a business and should not be responsible for providing food to students who were hungry. Displayed in Table 4.5 are some of the main themes, and sub-themes derived from responses to Question 4.

Table 4.5: Responses on what the University should do about student hunger on campus

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Direct quotes</i>
Corporate Donor Support	<p><i>“Approach donors to support with food or donations towards food”.</i></p> <p><i>“Collect Funds to ensure that students who are hungry are catered for”.</i></p>
University should provide food support through whatever means	<p><i>“The university should provide food, within reason”.</i></p> <p><i>“Assist them as much as they can”.</i></p> <p><i>“Have a feeding scheme every day or donate food packages to students who are hungry, which could last them for a month”.</i></p>
Government-subsidised food support	<p><i>“The government should be providing better funding to the students”.</i></p> <p><i>“Make sure to supply subsidies to deal with student hunger”.</i></p> <p><i>“A public offer of food at subsidised prices should be available for students in South Africa nationwide”.</i></p>
NGO, Charity support	<p><i>“NGOs should cater and make lunch packs for students that need the assistance”.</i></p> <p><i>“There are various NGOs that can help”.</i></p> <p><i>“Partner with government agencies and NPOs to assist were possible but it’s not a university mandate”.</i></p>

Some respondents envisaged a vaguely defined role for the University: ‘Assist students as best it can’ or ‘Assist them as much as they can’, and ‘Support the students the best way the University is able to assist’. These respondents, although not articulating a specific role for the University, nevertheless put the challenge of student hunger in the University’s court.

Those respondents who saw the University leading efforts to tackle hunger on campus, put forward several ideas. Table 4.6 highlights suggested interventions that the University can take to address student hunger.

Table 4.6: Interventions that Wits itself can take to address student hunger

	Cited	Students %	Staff %
Feeding Scheme (One or two meals a day)	53 times	44.44	32.81 (n=21)
Food Banks and food parcels		18.52	18.75
Food vouchers for campus vendors or free meals at campus dining halls		11.11	3.13
Food gardens		1.23	12.5
Food-for-work programmes		1.23	4.69
Affordable food		6.17	-
No response		N=5	N=2

4.3.4.1 Feeding scheme or one meal a day

The concept of ‘feeding schemes’ is a long-standing intervention to alleviate hunger and malnutrition among school-going children. It is described as the first welfare intervention dating back to the 1900s in Britain when free meals were provided to destitute and poorly nourished children (Atkins, 2001). Suggestions for “one meal a day”, “a food parcel a month”, or a “daily voucher for a free meal” are immediate solutions to the proximate issue of hunger on campus.

Since 1994, many transformation-oriented initiatives were developed and implemented to effect institutional change (SAHRC, 2016). The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), which provides daily meals to about 9 million children in over 20 000 public schools across the country, was implemented at primary schools in 1994, with the objectives of improving food security levels among learners and improving educational outcomes for younger children. This intervention should have been extended to tertiary education as students attending universities come from the very households from which learners in basic education come. These households are unable to gain access to food due to poverty (Mwaniki, 2006).

A report by The State of School Feeding Worldwide (2020), which reviewed the status of school feeding programmes across the world, reported that school feeding programmes are ubiquitous in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) and will continue to be a global intervention to alleviate hunger.

4.3.4.2 Food banks and food parcels

Food parcels are another social protection measure suggested by respondents. This is like the food bank model in the US, that has burgeoned across campuses in the United States (US). Evidence of this is the existence of the College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA), which is a professional organisation founded in 2012 to provide support, training and resources for campus food banks. Starting with a membership of just fifteen schools in 2012, CUFBA has grown to more than 650 members (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). These food banks assist students from low-income families with food. Also referred to as food pantries, these services operate as supermarkets on the campus with various categories of non-perishables and fresh produce.

According to a CUFBA survey of 262 unique food pantries, 87% of these facilities allowed students to pick whatever food they needed from the pantry. Only 13% of campus pantries offered students pre-bagged or boxed food. Of the food banks, 88% limit the amount of food a student can take at one time. Food banks on campuses in the US are dependent on the benevolence of donors, and some purchase food at discounted or market rates to supplement inventory (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018).

Like feeding schemes, food parcels are common social protection measures that are policy imperatives in efforts to sustainably reduce poverty in developing countries (Devereux & Vincent, 2010). Programmes to alleviate food insecurity, such as food distribution, noted in South Africa and around the world during the Covid-19 pandemic, were historically government- led initiatives. In the past years, however private assistance through food banks (NGOs) has surfaced as an essential supply of food for communities. In South Africa, the national NGO Food Forward operates to source food so that they can distribute food parcels to NGOs and faith-based organisations working directly with communities.

4.3.4.3 Food vouchers for campus vendors or free meals at campus dining halls

It is widely accepted that providing students the option of choosing their own food with a voucher or in the dining hall is better than receiving a food parcel or meal that they may not like. Giving people a choice, grants them more freedom and control and gives them a sense of agency – a feeling of being in charge and in control when it comes to their own actions. Agency and freedom are often considered to be inextricably linked. Indeed, if a student cannot freely choose a course of action, the very notion that they are an autonomous agent is undermined (Barlas & Obhi, 2013).

Some respondents who preferred vouchers or dining hall meals emphasised the importance of not stigmatising students who are hungry. They noted that integrated programmes such as the dining hall or voucher programme would be beneficial in not marginalising students. The following responses provide insight into this sentiment:

“...it should be done in a way that does not make it obvious that they are supported by the programme”.

“This should be normalised and there shouldn't be stigma around sourcing food (a basic need), which is what my anecdotal observations indicate is the current status quo”;

“...that takes away the shame, it takes away the stigma. It is us trying to... not denying poverty but for us to take away the shame of poverty”.

There is an assumption in the statements that hungry students will unconsciously escape their poverty by participating in integrative programmes. Probyn (2005) argues that by individualising their hunger and poverty, we may be diminishing the legitimacy of their lived experiences of poverty and hunger. We can draw from Probyn's (2005) conceptualisation of shame, which is a deeply felt emotion that leaves people feeling unsure and out-of-place.

The concern about the stigmatising students in separate and specially designed programmes, was however not an overwhelmingly expressed sentiment.

4.3.4.4 Food gardens

Overall, the responses indicated a relatively low awareness of the use of food gardens on campus to alleviate student hunger. This is contrary to popular discourse and is confounding in a time of climate disaster and the need for 'sustainable' food options. Sustainable food initiatives are growing fast at universities in North America. This is verified in a survey of 322 institutions in the United States and Canada where 70% of them maintained a campus community garden or farm (Barlett, 2011).

Sometimes referred to as "campus farms," these food commons aim at alleviating hunger among students and in neighbouring communities. For example, the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) has fourteen food gardens, providing for staff and students' personal use and for academic courses. Other gardens form part of broader communities such as local churches or municipalities (Sherry, 2021). Campus community gardens are beneficial for students as they provide opportunities for students to learn about food gardening, develop friendships by working with others, and can provide access to fresh food (Jones, 2011; Soga et al., 2017).

Closer to home, in a study conducted at the University of Witwatersrand on the food security status of students and their coping mechanisms, among the recommendations were to "improve, enhance and extend food gardens on campus, including roof food gardens" and "establish regular markets, box schemes and selling, and organic food for staff and students" (Rudolph et al., 2018).

According to Giraud (2021), a scholarship on urban agriculture has grown tremendously in the food system scenario (Giraud, 2021). He argues that this interest relates to its contribution to alleviating hunger, sustainability, social justice, and urban planning. Also useful is the emphasis on the ability of urban agriculture to build trust and social cohesion (Camps-Calvet et al., 2016.) This is particularly significant on university campuses, which have recently experienced increased volatility and tension - #FeesMustFall, and trust is still evasive.

Additionally, Barthel et al. (2010) argue that urban agriculture gives its participants the opportunity for caring and nurturing life. Urban agriculture, they contend, helps restore ecological knowledge, which is a critical condition for stronger stewardship of the natural environment.

4.3.4.5 Food-for-work programmes

The food-for-work argument was promoted in an individual interview as a solution to the crisis of financial constraints with which students struggle. Referred to as a ‘work study’ programme, it was promoted as income-earning opportunities for students, working as teaching assistants, tutors, mentors and other positions in faculties.

While proponents of such a programme could easily see its applicability on the campus, others may see it as further entrenching the inequality of access to education. This raises the questions as to why students who are already disadvantaged have to work to feed themselves, while others focus solely on their academic work, and whether this would not further disadvantage them by depriving them of the time needed for their academic endeavours.

4.3.4.6 Affordable food

Only student respondents (6.17%) mentioned ‘affordable meals’ as a necessary university intervention. Studies on the prevalence of student food insecurity show that students are experiencing increasing levels of relative poverty. Lower incomes provide limited financial means to purchase food, and place students at risk (Gallegos et al., 2014).

A study of the food insecurity levels of Wits undergraduate students within the physical food environment found food to be expensive, unhealthy, and there were unequal food distribution points (Rudolph et al., 2001). They maintain that these contributed to the food insecurity status of students at Wits. Price was the most important reason for food choices and students consequently “consumed mostly starchy grains, meat, fat and sugar.” This is in line with the conclusion drawn in the study of 2 765 people by Kern et al. (2017) from Drexel’s Dornsife School of Public Health. Their conclusion was that on average, healthier foods were twice as expensive as unhealthy pre-packaged foods.

Furthermore, when looking at nutrition, food insecurity was associated with the lower consumption of fruits and vegetables. This is also consistent with the findings of previous studies (Chaparro et al., 2009). Foods such as fruits and vegetables are of less value for the student pocket as compared to their energy-dense counterparts such as bread and potato chips. This thinking is supported by a respondent’s statement:

“...and just to look into the nutritional perspective, you know a lot of students who don’t really eat...healthily, so they will...if they got the money go for fast food which is not necessarily best for them, so you can help to curb that and address those kinds of issues.”

Consequently, to maximise the value of their money, students will look for more affordable food and compromise on nutritional value (Rudolph et al., 2018). Universities can be likened to ‘food deserts’ for students who are hungry. This term, commonly used by academics, policy makers and community groups, describes urban areas of people, in this case the university campus – where residents (students) do not have access to maintain an affordable and healthy diet (Cummins & Macintyre, 2002).

4.3.4.7 No response answers

Interestingly, five (5) staff offered a ‘not sure’ response to what the University should do, as compared to two (2) of the student respondents. Albudaiswi (2017) noted that if respondents do not respond to a question, the researcher can read that as hesitance or even that they are reluctant to share their views. A ‘not sure’ response could also mean neutrality

or even indifference to the topic, but it could also mean that the respondents are not informed.

Statement 1: The right to food is a human right and the University is obliged to facilitate access to food for students who are hungry

The majority of staff and students (80%) agreed that the right to food is a human right and the University is obliged to facilitate access to food for students who are hungry. Approximately 16% disagreed with the statement, and 3.5% of the respondents did not comment.

4.3.5 Question 5: Please explain why you agree or disagree that food is a human right, and the university is obliged to facilitate access to food for students who are hungry on campus

Several themes were derived from the responses on why respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement on whether the university was obliged to facilitate access to food for students who were hungry on campus. The main themes, sub-themes, and verbatim quotes to support the findings are explored below.

4.3.5.1 Theme 1: Government is obliged to facilitate access to food not the University

The view that the government and not the University is obligated to facilitate access to food was held by 13.61% of respondents. Of these, 10 were staff and 3 were students. Respondents make a clear distinction of the roles between the state and the university, noting that the university exists to provide education and it is government's responsibility to facilitate access to food.

"I feel that the University's main goal is to give us education and it is the government's duty to make sure rights to food are met".

This argument is founded on the rights-based approach to food, which holds that the obligation for its realisation rests with state parties. The state's principal legal obligation is

the progressive, full realisation of the right to adequate food as quickly and expeditiously as possible.

The right to food of people living in poverty is recognised by the South African government's pro-poor programmes, such as the Department of Social Development's (DSD) school feeding schemes and food parcels for indigent people. The right to food thus has groundings in both theory and law. It is given a measure of practical effect through poverty relief programmes, especially in times of social distress such as during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when the South African government implemented targeted interventions to support vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and disabled people (Devereux 2021).

The right to food for people living in poverty is acknowledged by government through poverty relief programmes such as school feeding schemes and food parcels to indigent people (Koch, 2011). This understanding, however, does not extend to students in higher education institutions. Universities themselves, having recognised the right and need for food, do not have definitive policies for student food support (Masutha, 2016).

4.3.5.2 Theme 2: The University should facilitate access to food. There were 3 main reasons provided by respondents as to why universities should facilitate access to food.

- **Fees are too high**

Of all the respondents, 79.31% thought that the University should facilitate access to food. Of these, 65 were students and 50 were staff. A small percentage of respondents cited high fees as a reason to include meals for students in the overall cost of education.

“Provide food for them, we all pay similar fees to those who get food at the dining halls, so it would be appropriate for the university to allow them to collect meals until they can feed themselves”.

High university fees were the subject and focus of the 2015 student mobilisations at South African universities during 2015 and into 2016. The protests against the 10% increase in tuition fees for 2016, interestingly, started at Wits University under the banner

#FeesMustFall (FMF), and then spread to universities throughout the country. Students demanded a “fee-free decolonised education system” (Mutekwe, 2017). Implicit in their demands was acknowledgement of their struggle to meet the expenses of accommodation and food as well (Adeniyi, 2018). Again, in March 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the “Wits Asinamali” protests began in opposition to the National Treasury’s announcement that the NSFAS budget was to be reduced (Tshikalange, 2021). Referred to as FMF 2, this protest again highlighted students’ frustration with the high cost of tertiary education in South Africa. The sheer force of the two protests – with the second wave only months before this study, precipitates the observation as to why more students did not bemoan the cost of fees and the need for subsidised food, than what is represented in the study.

On the other hand, first-year students, even those from disadvantaged backgrounds on NSFAS funding support, rarely suffer serious adversity in their first year of study. It is only in subsequent years that they are affected, and then mainly when they fail. In terms of the criteria, continued funding for NSFAS beneficiaries is based on academic eligibility testing which includes the N+ rule. N is the minimum qualification completion time, also known as regulation time, specified by the institution for a programme of study funded by NSFAS. N+1 applies to first-time entering students first registered after December 2017, whilst N+2 applies to students who first registered before January 2018 applies to first-time entering students first registered after December 2017, whilst N+2 applies to students who first registered before January 2018 (Nzimande, 2021). Other funders or bursars usually terminate funding after a student fails. Wits for example uses the N+2 rule, which could place further financial strain on students who have already lost funding due to academic failure.

- **University has a duty of care and a moral obligation**

Nineteen staff and 16 students (24.14% of respondents) cited that the University had a moral obligation to provide food for students who are hungry on campus. Respondents who disagreed that the University was obligated, still felt that the University had a “moral obligation”. One respondent thought that it would be “untenable” and another alleged that it

was “morally reprehensible” not to cater for students who are hungry. A standard dictionary definition of “moral” is that which concerns or relates to what is right and wrong in human behaviour. An “obligation”, in the same way, and as previously noted and described by Berteau (2014, p. 6), is a requirement, imposing a duty on the obligated to deliver for the obligee in accordance with an expectation created. He notes that an obligation makes conduct “exactable” and “compulsory”.

The question however is: Who decides what is right or wrong? The case of feeding a hungry student, for example, in the view of Narveson (1999) may not be anyone’s obligation if that person or entity did not cause the student’s hunger. These respondents to an extent, share Narveson’s attitude:

“People may have a right of access to food, however access to food cannot be obtained by causing damage to another person or entity. I cannot see how an educational institution can be held responsible to feed a person – on what grounds?”

“By that logic if we were all hungry then Wits, regardless of income, would have to feed students. Therefore, if every student were hungry Wits would be broke. Wits is not making people suffer here and therefore they do not have to fix it. This question is going to provoke lots [of] sympathy from people who cannot see the reality of how complicated the situation is. Wits does not hate hungry students; it is just helping them. It’s unsustainable, given there are lots of them.”

For many people morality and religion are the same. Iwuagwu (2018, p. 52) challenges this assumption and maintains that morality can stand independent of religion. They state that “through their concerns, preoccupations and constituent elements differ and there is no definitional connection between them; morality and religion are complementary in the development of a balanced personality as well as the creation of a peaceful, just and egalitarian society.”

Kranak (2019) cites Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) as one of the most influential ethics theorists in contemporary Western ethics. He interpreted Kant’s work to implicate that all people deserve equal moral consideration, and we should not make special exceptions for others or ourselves. In Kant’s view, morality must be rational and right action is a “rational decision.” In the end, it does not matter much whether respondents were moved by moral obligation due to religious conviction or by a sense of personal ethics: they were broadly moved to ‘right action’, regardless of other factors.

- **Promote academic success of Wits students**

Many respondents (36.55%) perceived that the University should facilitate access to food to ensure student academic success. Of these, 21 were staff and 32 were students. More than half of the staff respondents were senior academic staff who perceived hunger to affect academic performance. Nine (42%) of these academics held doctoral degrees, while seven (33.33%) were Master’s graduates. The following responses represent some of the views:

“One thing I know is one can’t study on an empty stomach”. “Without food students won’t have energy to learn”.

“The university cannot expect students to perform well while they attend classes on an empty stomach”.

Success in higher education as represented by increased graduation rates, brings benefits to students, the institution and the state (Yorke & Longden, 2004).

Students have opportunities for better employment and commensurate standards of living; the university enjoys a positive reputation and governments can account for public funding investment in tertiary education. Many universities invest heavily in resources to promote their retention strategies and various services are made available to students to this end (Johnson, 2000). The notion of student success has grown beyond student dropout and throughput rates and now involves a more holistic understanding of and approach to the student. Student success interventions thread through the entire student lifecycle from enrolment to graduation, including support services, health care, counselling services, leadership development, career planning and entrepreneurial training. It is evident that

substantial investment is made in resources to promote student success (Kuh et al., 2011; Yorke & Longden, 2004). Nonetheless, despite it being well known that nutritional health is associated with academic performance and well-nourished students are better able to learn and less likely to miss class for health reasons (Taras, 2005), food services for students as an academic success intervention is still lagging behind. There is also a clear lack of literature on the provision of basic needs such as food and housing for students as an essential intervention for their academic student success.

The Higher Education Act, 1997 refers to institutions providing optimal opportunities for learning. The reality is that support is limited for poor students at university. While counselling services and health services are standard offerings at universities, the provision of social services is not yet a mainstream consideration. The question about a university being meritocratic and providing all who work hard equal opportunities to succeed, is then in conflict with the fact that students cannot succeed academically if their most basic needs are not met (Sobuwa & McKenna, 2019). The issue of food aid for students requires recognition and acknowledgement, including innovative thinking based on an understanding of its value in promoting academic success.

4.3.5.3 Theme 3: Parents and guardians are obliged to provide for their children

A negligible number of respondents (2.07%) viewed the role of the parent or guardian as significant in providing food for their children or wards. Even though this is a minority view, it is important to note that some respondents held strong views that parents and guardians of students should bear responsibility for their children's basic needs such as food. There appears to be a lack of contextual understanding and the extent of socio-economic deprivation among students in South Africa, where many people live below the poverty line (Breier, 2010).

4.3.5.4 Theme 4: The University is not obliged to facilitate access

Ten respondents' (6.9%) view was that the University is not obliged to facilitate access to food for students who are hungry. These were 4 staff members and 3 students. The vociferous nature of some responses reveals an understanding of the university in the traditional sense, without the complexity of diversity, poverty, and the South African

socio- economic context (Breier, 2010). The traditional university of the past did not have to grapple with issues of transformation and assumed that all its students had the wherewithal to be full academic citizens; that they came prepared with a basic high school education that would prime them for tertiary education. The traditional university was not necessarily concerned with the conditions under which students were expected to pursue academic activities. Traditional universities did however make some provision for indigent students. Bursaries, loans and scholarships were available, but students were expected to pay their way. The academic institution's perceived function in society was to receive and impart knowledge to students who would then assume their designated roles in the economy. Provision of free food, apart from that provided in catered university residences and paid for by the students, was not a consideration. The notion of "handing out food" is the remit of social service organisations or charity, and not a function of the traditional university. However, as Badat (2007) cautioned, while there is value in holding onto the idea of a traditional university, there must be an acceptance of other concepts and models of the 'university', as universities have changed over time. Graham (2005, as cited by Badat, 2007) notes that 'name "university" now applies to institutions with widely different functions and characters.

Nine respondents provided a "no-comment" response. A 6.21% (9) no-comment response is relatively high, particularly where these respondents are among the main staff members (5), 3 of whom possess Doctoral degrees.

Statement 2: Food support for students does not enjoy as much attention as student counselling services

The majority (81.38%) view was in concurrence with the statement that food support for students does not enjoy as much attention as student counselling services. At least 4.83% of respondents did not venture a response.

4.3.6 Question 6: Please explain why you agree or disagree with the statement that food support for students does not enjoy as much attention as student counselling services

Various rationalisations were provided for responses provided to the assertion that counselling services enjoyed more attention. Themes generated from responses and sub-themes are presented next.

4.3.6.1 Theme 1: Only heard of counselling services not food support interventions in Wits' communication

Of the 63 respondents (39 students, 24 staff) who professed to greater awareness of the University's efforts regarding counselling services, 37 were African, 13 were Indian/Asian, 11 were white and two coloured. Of the student respondents, 25 were African, 7 Indian/Asian, 5 were white and 1 was coloured. Staff respondents were 12 African, 6 Indian/Asian, 6 white and 1 coloured. This disaggregation coincides largely with the racial demographics of Wits' student enrolment.

Wits University's 2018 Annual Report reflected the student numbers as 39 953, with black students - which include African, Chinese, Indians and coloureds – making up 82.94% of the student community, and white students making up 16.93%. But this is also a reflection of income distribution among the Wits student population. It reinforces the reality that Africans bear a larger share of the country's social deficit burden and, concomitantly, student hunger on campus. African students are thus more likely to be aware of what appears to them a disproportionate focus on student mental wellness compared to student hunger.

4.3.6.2 Theme 2: Stigmatisation of poverty

Just under 25% of the respondents (36) held the view that services for hungry students were not prioritised compared to counselling services, because of the stigmatisation of hunger and poverty. This response drew the same number of views from students and staff i.e., 18 each.

Within this subtheme Africans comprised 63.89%, coloureds 2.77%, Indians/Asians 8.33% and whites 11.11% of respondents, being nine from CLM, 10 from Humanities and 12 from Science.

Students experiencing emotional or mental health issues also suffer stigma and there is currently a public focus on the mental health of students in higher education in South Africa (Schreiber, 2018). The following statement encapsulates this respondent's concern:

“Counselling is talked about all the time as though people are the problem rather than their circumstances.”

This response compels a look at social justice issues rather than focusing only on psychological functioning without providing context, as has been the case in the field (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Atomising the individual undermines real problems of poverty and hunger, which are systemic challenges. The emphasis on the individual's lack of psychological strength to overcome hunger and poverty is a fixation on placing the onus of hunger on the individual and symptomatic causes (Hames & Lewis, 2021). This sentiment is also encapsulated in the following response:

“A student would be suffering because of financial reasons and the lack of basic needs like food and the University would advise students to go to CCDU. Regardless of how much counselling one gets; no student can excel on an empty stomach...”

Student counselling today deals with a range of issues that span barriers to studying, relationship problems, psychiatric illness, gender diversity, stress related to homelessness and hunger (Brailsford, 2011). Challenges arise when students require more tangible support such as food or housing. The following response is a case in point:

“Once a university accepts responsibility for students' academic success by introducing various interventions, it becomes difficult to draw a line between emotional or psychological on the one hand, and material support on the other”.

The following response captures the sentiment shared by Watts and Flanagan (2007) about the need to contextualise mental illness, particularly if fundamental needs contribute to mental ill health.

“Mental health is the biggest concern at the moment and although it is important, it is taking away the pressure from the government to focus on fixing the fundamental issues our country faces such as hunger and housing. I believe these are more important than mental health”.

4.3.6.3 Theme 3: Greater need for counselling services rather than food aid by students

Eleven respondents (7.59%) perceived the need for counselling services to be of greater need than the need for food in the university community:

There is growing concern about student mental health worldwide. A South African study suggests that 12% of students experience moderate to severe symptoms of depression, 15% have moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety, and 24% report suicidal ideation (Bantjes et al., 2016). In recent years there have also been increasing rates of student suicides at South African universities. This has required universities to put in place interventions that make counselling services more available and accessible (Kaminer & Shabalala, 2019).

4.3.6.4 Theme 4: Equal attention is provided by Wits to counselling support and food support

Only 6.21% of staff and students felt that equal attention was given to students in terms of their need for food and psychological support.

Eight respondents did not respond to this question.

Individual counselling of university students in the South African context, has been criticised for its historical bias towards Euro-American models and approaches (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2011). Atomising individual issues portrays a lack of appreciation for the socio- economic, political, cultural, and historical challenges that characterise South African society, such as “grinding poverty, persistent unemployment, and deep inequality” (Seekings & Nattrass, 2006 cited in Young, 2013, p. 427).

Nevertheless, the psychological wellbeing of a person in poverty and experiences of shame and stigma still tend to be treated on a narrow individual level, or as a separate domain from the person's financial problems, or the broader socio-economic and political context (Jo, 2013).

There is however no doubt that the transition to university life is life-changing for many students the world over (Kagee, Naidoo & Mahatey, 1997, as cited in Schreiber 2007). Providing counselling support assists students to cope with the transition and other life challenges.

This useful view of one of the respondents sums up the complex issue of systemic challenges of hunger and poverty and, places the need for counselling as equally important.

“...dichotomising these two equally critical interventions is not helpful. Hunger is a product of poor socio-economic conditions [of] which are a precipitating factor with regard to some mental health ailments. They are intrinsically linked to the well-being of students and should be fully prioritised. To the extent that university communication is a suitable proxy, there seems to [be] greater awareness being provided for mental health services as opposed to services for hunger relief. The response should be greater effort in the provision of services to alleviate both plights with proportionally [,] more attention given to the communication of food relief interventions”.

4.3.7 Question 7: What additional thoughts do you have about the University's role in providing food aid to its students?

There were no more significant views under additional thoughts about the university's role in providing food aid that had not already been covered by previous responses.

4.4 FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The findings in this section focus on the information collected from the focus group discussion and individual interviews. The recurrent views and opinions from both

interviews and the focus group discussions are collated into identified themes and these are discussed within the theoretical framework and the literature review.

4.5 PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

4.5.1 Focus group discussion with staff

One focus group discussion was conducted with eight Commerce, Law and Management staff comprising of both academic and non-academic staff. One staff member was male and 7 were female. Six of the 8 focus group members were white, and 2 were African. A semi- structured interview guide enabled the production of in-depth data on their views about student hunger on campus. The staff profile for the focus group participants is depicted in Table 4.7.

4.5.2 Face-to-face interviews with management

Three interviews were conducted with senior management staff at the university. The managers represented the full range of the upper managerial strata of the university, namely the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and two Deans. All are members of the senior executive team (SET). Intended as a subsection of a larger study, the sample size for this qualitative component was deemed adequate. All three of the management staff were male. The staff profile is presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: *Demographic profile of participants in interviews and focus group (N=11)*

	Management Interviews	Focus Group
Number of participants	3	8
Age:		
18 - 15		1
26 - 31		
32 - 55	1	6
56 - 65	2	1
≥ 66		
Race:		
African		3
White		4
Coloured	2	

Indian/Asian	1	1
Gender:		
Female		6
Male	3	1
Other		
Staff category:		
Academic		2
Non-Academic	3	6

4.5.3 Thematic findings

Four main themes emerged from the analysis of the responses from the interviews and focus group discussions. These are listed next:

- The University should provide a holistic environment for students with a focus on academic services.
- Resource constraints and resource management need to be addressed.
- Wits' dual culture must be considered.
- The South African context cannot be ignored.

4.5.3.1 Theme 1: University should provide a holistic environment with a focus on academic services

There was consensus that the University should provide a range of support services, focusing particularly on academic support to make the academic experience as “productive” as possible. Subsidiary services such as health care, psycho-social services, food programmes, banking and financial services should all be made available and accessible to students. A student being at a university was equated to a resident in a new neighbourhood, who needed a range of services that are close by. There was a sense from one of the participants that there was not enough being invested in academic “stuff” – this was not clearly defined.

Participants in the focus group were keener about the role of the University in ensuring services and enumerated the services as those that broadly covered “social, economic, academic [also] course-related academic and online management, those type of things and also administrative support”. They emphasised the need to consider “a package of socio-economic basic services students may need”. Like senior management’s concern about academic support, some participants noted that:

“There is still a lot more that needs to be done and particularly on academic support as we are sitting with students who can’t write essays so how do you cater for 800, you know, first-year students, [the] majority [of whom] need basic academic skills”.

“Same way that this university has invested masses of money to make sure that all students have Wi-Fi access, because by talking about that access to internet is a basic human right, surely access to food is even more a basic human [right] and on that premise why would we then cater for one basic human right. Internet access, but not for the other, food security”.

4.5.3.2 Theme 2: Resources constraints and resource management by students

A participant noted that the University should make these services available but mentioned that:

“... I’m not necessarily saying that the university should make these services for free,” because “at the end of the day, someone has to pay for it”.

Senior management raised their concern about the sustainability of food programmes in a resource- constrained environment. Comments like “*money for feeding projects is going to mean that something else has to be cut*”, reinforced the anxiety about the sustainability of university programmes. The anxiety about the sustainability of these additional student programmes, including the fear of food support efforts being swamped, whilst extant, need not immobilise efforts to find solutions. Participants also raised their objection to students sharing their funding with their family. They felt that funding is sufficient if students

learned better ways to budget and not expect the “*university to cover the shortfall*”; that attending a university could be likened to an “occupation”. The view was that students need to “make choices” and “clearly articulate the role of the university.” Another contrasting view was that NSFAS funding was not enough. In the focus group, mention was also made about students sending their funding to their family members and “*putting their entire academic prospect in jeopardy*”. They acknowledged difficulties experienced by families but thought that the University could better manage the funding if funds were not given directly to students. They felt that the “*funding model in universities is problematic.*”

Letseka and Maile (2008) hold that the average NSFAS loan in 2005 was R10 000, only a small portion of the cost of a university degree. The suggestion that NSFAS was not doing enough, was confirmed by NSFAS itself, when the scheme submitted to the Presidential Commission on Higher Education that students were underfunded, some to a greater degree than others (NSFAS, 2016).

Webb (2021) provided an analysis of South Africa’s #FeesMustFall protests focusing on young people’s concerns around debt and family obligations, commonly referred to as “black tax.”

Drawing on a panel survey data from youth in Cape Town, for example, Harper and Seeking, (2010) found that black youth described many responsibilities and obligations to family members, including those who were distantly related. Forty per cent of black youth acknowledged obligations to two or more categories of kin compared to only 2%–3% of white and coloured respondents. Harper and Seekings (2010) concluded that “anticipated obligations” to family play a crucial role in the lives of many young South Africans, particularly those who are the first in their family to attend higher education. In his analysis, Webb (2021) stated that the obligations of poor students to their families are not only anticipated, but are immediate, as students used their student loans to support family members well before graduation. The view that students remove themselves not just physically but also emotionally from their family struggles at home is a tall order, particularly in the context of poor struggling households. It is, however, also true that when an 18-year-old enters university for the first time, a poor household potentially loses a

childcare grant. It is not surprising therefore, that a family may seek to substitute a grant lost with a family member's NSFAS allowance.

4.5.3.3 Theme 3: Wits' dual culture

Participants in the focus group commented about the existence of a dual "Wits' culture" – they referred to "a tale of two cities" where the rich and the poor study side by side. To support this dichotomy, they referred to "privately run" food places that are either "unhealthy" or "expensive".

"Some academics believe that ... Wits is a tale of two cultures... I mean the whole thing from the parking to everything, it's two worlds that are here, the campuses reflect the two worlds that exist, the food you find in the west you don't find in the east... healthy food for rich people ... I think it's got to close that gap on campus."

4.5.3.4 Theme 4: We cannot ignore the South African context

Despite the reservations about resources and the overwhelming adherence to the traditional role of the university, there was general acceptance of the South African context that made it difficult to ignore student hunger. One participant mentioned the "added role" of South African universities, that of mindfulness of the need for "social justice", unlike other traditional universities. Another participant mused: "Look...in a perfect world, no –we would not be providing food aid. If our students did not come from low-income households, and where resources were sufficient, the university could say no to additional programmes such as food support". The reality is that student hunger exists, and:

"We cannot ignore the fact that our students' performance and the general experience will be dramatically affected by whether or not they have had enough food".

One participant was emphatic that the issue goes beyond the University, "because it's about the socio-economic context that students come from". Resolving this issue requires the involvement of other social partners, "a church" or "government through social

development” or “businesses” and even “just individuals in community. It’s how we take responsibility”.

Two participants felt that food interventions are the domain of the Student Affairs Department, and one thought the University’s operational division was best at dealing with it. Also mentioned was the need for a centralised and cost-effective service. Participants in the focus group thought students who require food assistance should ideally receive meals in an integrated way, at mainstream dining halls or cafeterias.

The issue of universities working collectively to address student hunger was raised, but managers felt that the range of universities was too diverse and they had different needs. Focus group participants saw merit in coming together as a network to address the food insecurity issue.

In summary, participants from management felt that food programmes should be available to “*a limited extent*”, and focus group participants saw a more integrated intervention to institutionalise food aid. A significant observation is the different views captured from senior management as compared with staff in the focus group. The focus group members were mainly concerned with how the University could resolve the issue of student hunger, while management raised concern about the sustainability of food programmes and who would pay for it. Like senior management, however, they too emphasised the need for academic programmes to support students’ academic progress.

4.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter provided the findings from the data of the online survey questionnaire, the focus group discussion and the individual interviews. Respondents’ contributions were analysed and recurrent themes and patterns were identified and then presented in discussion for better insight into the themes.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 MAIN FINDINGS

Having distilled the recurrent themes and analysing the findings of the empirical data from the online questionnaire, the focus group discussion and the interviews, this section presents overarching themes and provides analysis based on the literature review.

5.2 AWARENESS OF STUDENT HUNGER

Student hunger as a phenomenon is an accepted fact and a reality at Wits University as reflected in a study carried out with the entire 2019 first-time, first-year undergraduate student cohort (n=5 356). The study revealed that nearly a quarter of the students (23%) were experiencing food insecurity with hunger (Wagner et al., 2021).

Twenty per cent (20%) of the student respondents in this study had themselves experienced hunger. This is consistent with the study (above) of food insecurity with hunger at Wits of first-year students, and comparable with Munro et al.'s 2013 study at UKZN, which showed that the experience of 20.8% of their sample “often” or “almost always” worried about where they would obtain food. This figure has possibly increased since 2013. The following responses portray the insight and awareness among staff of student hunger on the Wits campus.

“I’m always subconsciously aware that when a student walks into my office and I’m eating something because I don’t know if that student has eaten today or in the last two days, and I think that there are ways of changing that by making food, something as basic as food available to all students”.

“I no longer use the toaster in my workspace because there is something about toast cooking that is so I can just see students being stricken because they are not going to eat until a certain time, but I think that”.

These staff participants' reluctance to partake in their own meals arguably signals their discomfort with student hunger that they observe on the campus. There is general awareness of student hunger among students and staff. Several views abound among students and staff about student hunger on campus, and how, if at all, it should be addressed in a higher education setting.

5.2.1 Food sufficiency

In discussing the views shared in this study about student food insecurity or hunger, which, is used interchangeably in this study, it is important to note the World Health Organization's definition of food security: "food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (World Food Summit, 1996).

This definition encompasses the concept of food entitlement introduced by Amartya Sen. Sen's entitlement theory asserts that hunger exists despite a sufficient food supply (Sen, 1981). Sen argues that it is not about the availability of food, but about the ability of an individual or a household to access a safe, sufficient and nutritious diet. This lack of entitlement is the basis of student hunger. On a country level, according to Koch (2011), South Africa "is a net exporter of agricultural commodities and has a high per capita income, even for an emerging economy." The country has flexible foreign-exchange controls and is fortunately not landlocked, making import and export easier. This leads one to think that food availability is not a problem.

This is particularly relevant for a community such as the Wits' student community that represents South Africa's diverse and unequal population, characterised by both affluence and poverty. This statement is reflected in a respondent's assertion that there exists, "a Wits with two cultures": one with food for rich people and cheaper food for poorer students. The respondent further makes the assertion - that there is a need to "*close that gap on campus*".

Pursuant to Sen's entitlement theory, food aid provided to students at the University will help to increase students' food entitlement bundles and reduce student hunger.

5.2.2 Corporatisation of the Academy

Some respondents referred to the university as a corporate entity that needed to do its share of corporate social responsibility by providing food aid to students:

“Wits is business and it’s nice to give out free food to hungry students ...”.

“The University should make it to be part of its corporate social investment”.

In an interview, a participant noted that the University should:

“ make these services available but that “... I’m not necessarily saying that the University should make these services for free,” because “at the end of the day, someone has to pay for it.”

The idea that the academy is a corporate entity with students as customers, is a controversial one. According to this understanding, universities have adopted a corporate culture with a focus on efficiency and profit (Clare & Sivil, 2014). Some argue that universities, as corporate citizens run the risk of only focusing on the bottom-line and may not take cognisance of the human side of the institution (Sanderson & Watters, 2006). It is claimed that many academics feel that the corporate model is inappropriate as it threatens the core academic values of “autonomy and academic freedom” (Clare & Sivil, 2014).

In South Africa, after 1994, policies to broaden the participation of black students at universities have led to increased numbers of poorer, black students at universities. This ‘massification’ of higher education coincided with reduced subsidies, resulting in increased fees to cope with funding uncertainties (Dlamini, 2018). The #FeesMustFall protests in 2015 were in direct reaction to high fees at universities. The protests exposed the difficulties faced by poor students in South Africa. Students expressed an inability to pay, what they complained were exorbitant fees, and that they struggled to sustain themselves.

“What has happened in the last 10-15 years in the education sector and it maybe has to do with the way the millennials have been raised, there is an expectation that the institution, in this case the higher education institution,

must make these services available for free and I think then we are in a totally different domain”.

The management view provided captures the corporatisation of the university over the past years since democracy in South Africa. It portrays a terrain of higher education institutions that are at odds with student demands for accessible public education.

Universities are in a double-bind. Corporate models may keep them afloat but restricting access as a result of high fees will “further skew the uneven distribution of talent and human capital” (Dlamini, 2016). Such an atmosphere feeds inequality and is a contributory factor to unrest on campuses. It is therefore unclear as to how a corporate model of higher education will contribute to righting historical missteps.

5.2.3 Reliance on corporate and NGO interventions and donations

A common idea among respondents was corporate donor-supported initiatives and the enlistment of NGOs to help ‘carry the can’. Only a few noted government’s responsibility in providing social assistance to students in the form of subsidised food aid. The idea that the university solicit corporate funding for food programmes is a popular understanding that the corporate citizen has a responsibility to the society in which it operates, and is an effective partner in overcoming concerns such as student hunger. However, corporate social responsibility is never an unlimited resource and comes with specific conditions, often at the behest of the donor. Riches (2018) claims that corporate social responsibility blindsides us into believing that there is an equal partnership and that there is corporate solidarity in overcoming hunger. He asserts that corporate donations may be a way of ameliorating hunger, but cannot guarantee demand. The corporatisation of hunger removes the responsibility of governments in taking care of the ‘income poor’ and makes hunger a matter of charity, rather than politics (Riches, 2011). Fisher (2017) supports this view in his critique against American society’s handling of hunger and its reliance on what he calls, ‘Big Hunger’ or corporates, to resolve the issue of hunger. They held that “food charity was an admirable stopgap for a man-made economic disaster, but has since become little more than a band-aid for a gaping wound.” They further provide a cogent argument for not expanding food charity in isolation against more meaningful, collective reforms.

Another recommendation by some respondents promotes a charitable model to alleviate student hunger, in which NGOs and charitable organisations assist with food programmes on campus, which is not a direct function of the University. NGOs and charitable organisations are considered to be more attuned to community needs than government or other agencies (Lyons, 2003). They are also considered to be more flexible and targeted than government welfare services (Lyons, 2003). However, the sustainability of NGOs, both individually and as a sector, is dependent on their success in soliciting private donations and government grants (Omura & Forster, 2011). This, yet again calls for a reliance on corporate social responsibility or private sector benevolence. While charities start out as altruistic and for the benefit of their recipients, if they prize their survival, they may be forced into strategies that adversely affect their recipients. In a highly contested environment, NGOs compete for the charitable rand. NGOs are also burdened by increasing social needs, limited budgets and worries about their sustainability. There is also strong concern that NGOs do not enjoy government's goodwill, resulting in poor collaboration and this has impeded their effectiveness and efficiency. This, in consequence, reduces their impact on their targeted beneficiary communities. This relationship has sometimes compelled NGOs to deviate from their original mandates, and instead undertake work that government is supposed to do (Kang'ethe & Manomano, 2014).

The use of NGOs at HEIs is wasteful in the light of mounting community needs. NGOs are better utilised in larger communities beyond the walls of the institution, when you consider that only 5% of South Africans aged between 15 and 34 are students in universities, while 34% are unemployed. (StatsSA, 2018). There is a strong need to think outside the 'charitable box'.

Hilal Elver, the UN's 2014 – 2021 Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food succinctly commented, "Do not confuse food charity with 'right to food'" (UN, 2020). Elver implies that charity in the form of food parcels and food banks reinforce the vulnerability and powerlessness of people and prevents governments from taking responsibility.

5.2.4 State's obligation

The rights -based approach to food holds that the obligation for its realisation rests with state parties. Even posed as a question, this comment raises a significant issue about government's responsibility in meeting the needs of the hungry.

South Africa is considered a 'food-secure' nation, producing enough calories to adequately feed every one of its 53 million people, according to an Oxfam Internal Report in 2014. The report notes that government has reneged on its commitment and has only made a little progress since South Africa's democracy because the reality is that half of the population live in 'precarious' circumstances. The expectation that a university work with government in securing subsidies for student meals would appear far-fetched, considering South Africa's inability to provide for most of its citizens. In thinking about the possibility of soliciting government support, a senior manager's comment that "we can always ask government to try and get more..." did not inspire much confidence. Oxfam, in their report, was scathing about South Africa's inability to implement policies to address hunger. It criticised government's attempts as "uncoordinated" and "unaccountable" to those who faced hunger.

Respondents who shared this view required that government fulfil its obligation to protect and respect students' right to food by providing food through the university. This, some would argue, is already implemented as a strategy by government to address the needs of poor students, through the state-funded and ever-growing National Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). NSFAS funding provides for tuition, accommodation, textbooks, and an allowance meant to cover basic needs such as food.

NSFAS, in a period of 10 years from 1994 to 2004, increased support for students from impoverished backgrounds 45-fold, from R20 million to R900 million (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2017). The impression created is that government's national strategy to meet the most human needs of destitute students studying at an institution of higher learning, is a success.

Notwithstanding the rapid increase in NSFAS funding, there were early signs in 1998 already that the student funding levels were grossly inadequate and that funds disbursed were insufficient to cover the real cost of higher education (Bunting, 2006).

More significant is the possibility of losing NSFAS funding because of poor academic performance. Students in this position often narrowly manage to register at the universities, but are essentially without any funding for tuition, accommodation or food.

Wits administers about R1 billion in student financial aid, scholarships and bursaries annually. About 27 000 of Wits' 37 500 students receive some form of financial aid, scholarship or bursary support. Historically, approximately 12 200 students receive NSFAS-funding, 14 000 students are donor-funded, and 4 500 are usually assisted via the Council budget (Wits Presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology, March 2021). Effectively, 72% of the student population are dependent on some form of funding. Those who for whatever reasons lose or forfeit their funding, often become destitute on campus.

5.2.5 Sustainability of solutions proposed

The view that the University itself implements these programmes such as daily meals or food parcels may be considered by some to be myopic for the long term. They would still require funding or donations, to which effort the University, like any other NGO, would need to apply its own capacities and resources. These interventions are social protection measures and nevertheless do reduce vulnerability.

More interestingly is that providing hand-outs in the moment builds a prospering food charity response, under the guise of social protection and 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR). The idea of 'Big Hunger' purported by Fisher (2017) is useful in understanding the assumptions that underpin the focus of these food response efforts. Jayaraman (2017, as cited in Fisher, 2017) cites the following assumptions when considering the role of corporate food aid: that it assumes that there will always be an underclass that cannot be self-sufficient and will continue to remain dependent on the benevolence of corporations; that households will never have employment to take care of their families and that hunger will be solved by donations from large corporations on an ongoing basis and at their whim.

They also note that corporates expect to be praised for their generosity, rather than be held publicly accountable for their role in the economy of high food prices and low wages. Providing handouts in the form of food parcels delivers only temporary relief to students. This, according to Hendriks and McIntyre (2014), exacerbates poverty and inequality, if government continues to promote a fragmented food policy and neglects socio-economic development.

5.2.6 Stigmatising of poverty

The idea of mainstreaming hungry students into established catering programmes – such as residential dining halls or food points on campus was raised in the focus group as well as by respondents to the online questionnaire. This means that students would be integrated into available services that would otherwise require them to pay. Another suggestion was to integrate both staff and students in a common dining area where students would not be identified as ‘the hungry student.’ Separate food programmes are described as stigmatising of individual students:

“...I don’t know your socio-economic background, I don’t know whether you have eaten or that your family cannot afford food, you and I are just going there to get meals...to... not deny poverty but for us to take away the shame of poverty”.

“I also think that a system that is more, that is more integrated it’s almost less stigmatising. I mean I would love to get in at the cafeteria and then if that kind of system would include you know the ability for hungry students to be supported through that... that sounds like a better system to me like something that builds the university community it doesn’t just split us all us into so many categories”.

A review of qualitative research by Pemberton, Sutton and Fahmy (2013) shows how personal stigma is internalised if it is perceived or experienced by individuals from low-income groups. Their claim is that poor people attribute individual significance to social and political ‘discourses of poverty’ and then personalise it as their own failure. This results in guilt, shame and humiliation, which affects their self-esteem (Walker, 2014).

Lister supports this theory when they define poverty not only as material disadvantage but as a “shameful and corrosive social relation” (2004, as cited in Jo, 2013). Conversely, the integration of hungry students into mainstream dining halls may be a way to obfuscate hunger and poverty, and trivialise its reality. It may be a way of sanitising bothersome images of poverty (Swanson, 2007). Another interpretation is to consider the ‘them’ and ‘us’ discourse, which is the basis for a social stratification within which hungry students position themselves and others. The ‘us’ have a shared understanding, which helps to mitigate the impact of shame (Chase & Walker, 2013). In this regard, the hungry student may not particularly want to be integrated into the mainstream.

In recognising the damaging effect of shame on students, it is also crucial to identify that shame emanates from a social relation and is usually the ‘scorn’ or ‘contempt’ of others (Jo, 2013, p518). Jo goes on to explain that an individual cannot be fully responsible for his experience of shame, or in this case feeling stigmatised, because it is ‘others’ in society who judge and revile them. Lynd (1958, as cited in Jo, 2013) argues that the ‘others’ are broadly categorised as the dominant subject of socio-cultural norms and discourses within that society. Dominant public discourses on poverty focus on the inability of individuals to be independent and self-sufficient. This view is supported by Hames and Lewis (2021) in their study, which describes research into student hunger as a ‘burgeoning’ industry of scholarship. They cite Anne Harley from UKZN, who analysed research studies on student hunger at South African universities. Harley found that the predominant approach to the study of student hunger is that of prevalence and extent of hunger, focusing on individual experiences such as their symptoms and struggle, rather than the social and structural factors that contribute to hunger.

A worthwhile opinion in looking at the university’s role is the view of Verharen (2015) who notes that the research university’s primary ethical role is to “solve the people’s unsolved problems!” He talks about the university proposing hypotheses that are ‘preposterous’ and promoting ‘diversity of programmes’ throughout the university. This view can be likened to a new food programme solving the hunger issue on campus. In its ‘turning toward the one’, the university must embrace the many (Verharen, 2015).

5.3 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the findings and applied a literature review in discussing these. The respondents and participants contributions were examined for recurring views and opinions in order to formulate themes and patterns. The following, final chapter will present the main findings, conclusions and present recommendations, which can be used to advocate for policy on food, support for students.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The final chapter seeks to determine whether the aims and objectives of the study were realised through the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data in Chapter 4. In this chapter, the main findings are made, and conclusions are drawn. Information from this study can be considered as a guide for university management and could potentially be used to influence policy at state level.

The study provided insight into what attitudes and views stakeholders held about the role of the university in providing food support to students who are hungry on campus.

The essence of this study's finding is aptly captured by the following line from Pablo Neruda's poem "*The Great Tablecloth*":

"...for now, I ask no more than the justice of eating."

The quickest and simplest answer to whether the university has a role in providing food to students who are hungry is, yes, it most definitely does. The reason is that hunger among students exist and is a serious barrier to their well-being and their academic progress.

6.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of the study was to explore the perceptions and views of different stakeholders (students, management, academic and non-academic staff) on the role of Wits University in providing food to students who are hungry on campus. The aforementioned was accomplished through the following objectives:

- **To explore the perceptions of different stakeholders on student hunger on campus.**

This objective was achieved through a predominantly qualitative study and a quantitative study exploring the views and perceptions of a sample population of staff and first-year students in three of the five faculties at the University of Witwatersrand. This was conducted through a literature review, an online survey questionnaire, a focus group, and individual interviews.

- **To determine the views of different participants on the factors that contribute to hunger among students on campus.**

This objective was realised mainly through the literature review and contributions of respondents in the online survey questionnaire and participant contributions in the individual interviews and the focus group.

- **To examine the views of different participants on the stakeholders responsible to address the matter of student hunger on campus.**

This objective was realised predominantly from the contributions of interviewees, focus group discussions and responses to the online survey questionnaire.

- **To explore participants' suggestions on strategies to deal with student hunger on campus.**

This objective was achieved from the various recommendations and suggestions made by respondents and participants, but also from the literature reviewed.

- **To propose alternative ways to address student hunger on campus.**

This objective was achieved from the various recommendations and suggestions made by respondents and participants, but also from the literature reviewed.

This area however still requires more research.

6.3 CONCLUSION

It is heartening to note that the campus community is not oblivious to the needs of students who are hungry. There is heightened awareness among staff particularly, and to a lesser degree among first-year students who were not on the campus because of Covid-19 restrictions. Food as a human right is acknowledged across the board from respondents and participants and there is an overwhelming view that the University has a role to play in various ways and, in whatever ways possible.

While state parties are obligated to facilitate the right to food, it is unlikely that the austerity measures that we have seen in the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with the negative economic forecast for South Africa will permit additional social spending. Amid many other demands, it is not easily envisaged that any real government support for hungry students will materialise in the short-term. This does not mean that universities should not continue to lobby government.

Student hunger needs to be addressed head-on just like any other student deficit that may form a barrier to academic success. The barrier to this action remains the persisting understanding of the University that is rooted in its traditional role. The growth in this type of social welfare service at South African universities will no doubt lead to discussions on the pros and cons of the universities' role in fulfilling these. What is important to consider, is that universities have long accepted responsibility for supporting the well-being and health of their students by providing health, counselling, accommodation, sports facilities and career services.

The university should now be prepared and willing to step-up and embrace the extension of what they have hitherto, considered their outer limits of their duty of care. After all, the provision of food is a human right and food is life itself.

If education is a way out of poverty, every opportunity to educate South Africans, particularly those from poor socio-economic circumstances, should be cultivated – so that the current landscape of inequality and poverty may begin to reverse.

One of the respondent's contributions is a pertinent statement in summation of our unique South African context and the University's role in relation to its students who are hungry:

“South Africa is a middle-income country. It is unacceptable that parts of its population go hungry. The problem of hunger is always one of wealth and power distribution, which is notoriously unequal in South Africa. The problem is therefore structural. The University may help along in addressing this structural problem, especially with regard to its own student body, but the problem needs ultimately to be addressed at the level of the state”.

In our context, we understand that Sen's entitlement theory tells us that there is availability of food. What needs to happen is the facilitation of access to improve the capability of individual students. This in turn will ensure academic progress, improve employment prospects, and ultimately widen the spread of incomes. Broadening the distribution of available incomes will result in increased social equality.

The study findings are peculiar to the Wits context with its unique history and socio-political landscape. It may, however, mirror the general views and attitudes of other university staff (including management) and students to the challenge of student hunger on campus, and how the University should respond to it.

There is a need for more research into how universities should be responding to food poverty among its students, particularly by engaging university stakeholders. More research would enable Student Affairs departments to respond to this growing challenge on university campuses.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study proffers the following recommendations based on the findings and conclusions presented above:

- The University should formulate a clear policy statement on its commitment to assisting students who are hungry, the methods it will deploy to do so, and the resources it will dedicate to achieving this goal.

- The University should provide students who are in need of food on campus with a ‘meal or two a day’, through whatever means possible.
- The University should provide students who are in need of food assistance with a monthly food parcel, by whatever means possible.
- Awareness of student hunger should be standard practice as part of the University’s public health awareness programmes, and even during the orientation of new and returning students.
- There needs to be ongoing efforts dedicated to raising funds to meet the food needs of students and this should be promoted among the University’s corporate and public donors at the level of the University fundraising office. On other levels, staff and students who can afford to donate, should donate non-perishable food on an ongoing basis, a practical example being a commitment to provide two items of canned foods or a jar of peanut butter once per month. This will assist with high demand and low stock. It also cultivates an ethos of giving and sharing.
- All available food programmes should be advertised as a student support service, so that students are aware of the availability and accessibility of food.
- Inherent in the student food policy should be the commitment to provide more sustainable student poverty alleviation solutions, by developing food farms on the campus. This will minimise dependence on ‘Big Hunger’ and private donations. Thriving food farms will make food readily accessible for students.
- The University should dedicate human and other resources to the sustainability of food supply sources by firstly identifying suitable spaces that can be re-purposed for growing food, and to employ a farmer to oversee food production. Some aesthetic gardens may be replaced by food gardens.
- Universities both as individual entities and as a collective, should lobby government to formulate legislation and programmes of action with ring-fenced budgets to feed

students in HEIs. A proposal for an NSNP equivalent for students at HEIs would be a good starting point.

- The issue of hunger among students should be highlighted as a barrier to access and a threat to the transformation objectives of higher education.

Additionally, none of the above recommendations should be viewed as mutually exclusive.

The following schematic representation provides a conceptual model including all food interventions as proposed in the findings. As shown in Figure 6.1, food security for students on campus requires a multi-faceted approach of targeted interventions involving short-term relief and more sustainable alternatives such as campus food farms and urban food growers.

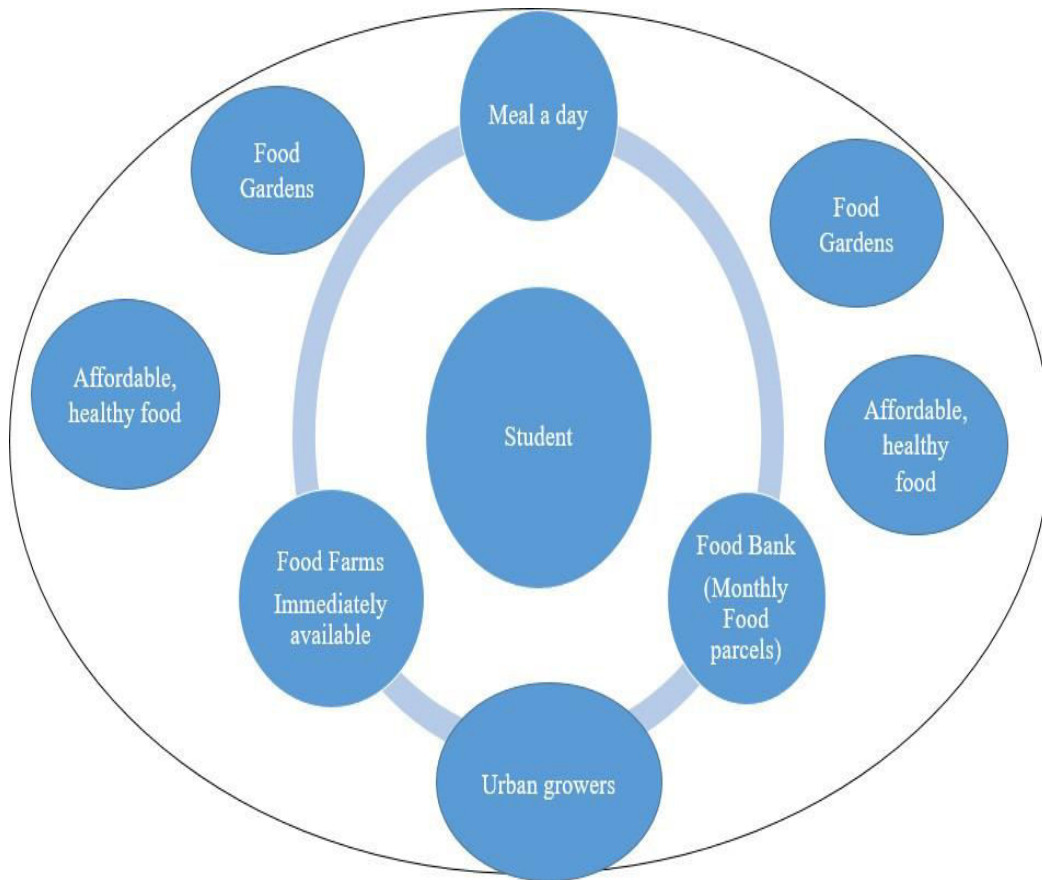


Figure 6.1: A Conceptual Model of food interventions as proposed for food security of students who are hungry on campus

Note. The above schema is a representation of all interventions to address student hunger, in relation to each other, providing proximate and sustainable food solutions. This diagram draws on the findings and the recommendations and is provides a comprehensive approach to addressing the student hunger.

6.5 POSSIBLE AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

What remains unexplored are the possibilities between HEIs for collaborating in tackling student hunger. For example, the University of Pretoria has a Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and the Sefako Makgatho University teaches Nutritional Studies and Dietetics. As a region, these universities can take advantage of opportunities to collaborate by organising sustainability discussions, share ideas, best practices, and resources.

More research is required into the support for students who are hungry on campus. The current literature points mainly to the extent and prevalence of food insecurity among students. The more pressing challenge is to overcome the problem, rather than describe the problem.

Findings from these studies will guide University management and could be used to influence policy at the level of the state.

6.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

The main findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented in this final chapter, including gaps in the research. A diagrammatic model of a future scenario is offered as a guideline, which draws on the literature and research from the study. Extensive recommendations are presented to encourage broader engagement with the issue of student hunger at various levels of the HEI stakeholder groups. Given the high inequality levels, poor growth in the economy and the aftershocks of the Covid-19 pandemic, the university will continue to see increased numbers of students who are food insecure.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Stakeholder voices on the role of higher education institution in providing food to students who are hungry on campus. the case of a South African university

AAA
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Stakeholder Voices on the Role of Higher Education Institution in Providing Food to Students who are Hungry on Campus. The Case of a South African University

Dear Participants,

My name is Karuna Singh. I am a post-graduate student registered for and studying toward an MA in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. Student hunger is a growing phenomenon in South Africa and globally and is a potential public health crisis. My research objective is to understand the views and perceptions of university stakeholders on the role of the university in providing food aid to students who are hungry on campus. I am undertaking a survey, the objective of which is to contribute to knowledge and understanding of the management of student hunger on campuses. It is also intended to assist in developing a national legislative framework to address the problem. As a university stakeholder, you are ideally positioned to participate in the research study. I would like to invite you to take part in a once-off online research survey, a questionnaire comprising of both multiple choice and open-ended questions. Participation in the research will have no personal cost to you, nor yield any direct benefit. You may withdraw your participation at any point during or after completing the questionnaire. Your responses will be confidential and anonymous, with no identifying information required. The research uses "REDCap, which has an in-built facility to anonymise participants. The study will be written up as a research report. Results of the research may also be used for academic purposes including books, journals and conference proceedings. A summary of findings will be available to participants on request. If you have any questions about the research study, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or myself through the contact details listed below. If there are any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) via telephone (+27 11 717 1408) or email (hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za).

Karuna Singh (590342@students.wits.ac.za)

Supervisor: Prof Edmarie Pretorius (edmarie.pretorius@wits.ac.za)

Do you consent to participating in this research study? Yes

* must provide value

Age

* must provide value

- 18-25
- 26-31
- 32-55
- 56-65
- >65

Race

* must provide value

- African
- White
- Coloured
- Indian/Asian

Gender

* must provide value

- Male
- Female
- Other

Faculty

* must provide value

- Humanities
- Science
- Commerce Law and Management

Are you a staff member or a student?

* must provide value

- Staff
- Student

Are you aware that students go hungry on Wits campus?

* must provide value

- Yes
 No

How have you encountered or experienced student hunger at Wits University?

* must provide value

Do you know of any programmes or initiatives to support hungry students at Wits University?

* must provide value

- Yes
 No

What should the university do about its students who are hungry?

* must provide value

The right to food is a human right and the university is obliged to facilitate access to food for students who are hungry.

* must provide value

- Agree
 Disagree

Please explain why you agree or disagree that food is a human right and the university is obliged to facilitate access to food for students who are hungry on campus.

* must provide value

Food support for students does not enjoy as much attention as student counselling services.

* must provide value

- Agree
 Disagree

Please explain why you agree or disagree with the statement that food support for students does not enjoy as much attention as student counselling services

* must provide value

What additional thoughts do you have about the university's role in providing food aid to its students?

* must provide value

Submit

Appendix B: Participant information sheet for individual interview



SOCIAL WORK
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4472 • Fax: 011 717 4473 • E-mail:
socialwork.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Title of the study: Stakeholder voices on the role of higher education institutions in food provision to students who are hungry on campus. The case of a South African University.

Good day,

My name is Karuna Singh. I am a registered post graduate student studying for an MA in Social Work, by research, at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. In part, fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research to understand the views and perceptions of university stakeholders on the role of the university in providing food aid to students who are hungry on campus.

It is hoped that the study will contribute to determining how stakeholders perceive student hunger, which is a growing phenomenon at South African as well as international universities. It is also hoped that the study will develop knowledge on how the issue of student hunger may be managed on campuses, which can contribute to policy development.

As a university stakeholder, you are ideally positioned to participate in my research study. I therefore, invite you to participate in my research by allowing me to interview you. Should you accept my invitation, your participation will be voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You may also choose not to answer questions that makes you

uncomfortable. There are no consequences or personal benefits of participating in this study. If you agree to participate, I will interview you at a time and place convenient to you.

It is envisaged that the interview will last approximately 30 minutes. If you choose to participate, I will ask for your permission to tape-record the interview. No one other than the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the recording. The recording will be stored in a password-protected computer. The recording of the discussion will be kept for two years following any publication or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. The transcript of recording (without any identifying information directly linked to you) will be stored permanently under lock and key. It may be used for future studies.

Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report. The results of the research may also be used for academic purposes including books, journal and conference proceedings. Summary of findings will be made available to participants on request.

Please contact me on +27 83 452 9652 or 590342@students.wits.ac.za or my supervisor, Prof Edmarie Pretorius on Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za or +27 11 7174 476 if you have any questions regarding my study. We will endeavour to answer your questions to the best of our ability. If you have any complaints about the study, please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) Administrator: Ms Shaun Schoeman on Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za or +27 11 717-1408.

Thank you for taking your time to consider participating in the study.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karuna Singh', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Karuna Singh

Appendix C: Participant information sheet for focus group



SOCIAL WORK
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4472 • Fax: 011 717 4473 • E-mail:
socialwork.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Title of the study: Stakeholder voices on the role of higher education institutions in food provision to students who are hungry on campus. The case of a South African University.

Good day,

My name is Karuna Singh. I am a registered post graduate student studying for an MA in Social Work, by research, at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. In part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research to understand the views and perceptions of university stakeholders on the role of the university in providing food aid to students who are hungry on campus.

It is hoped that the study will contribute to determining how stakeholders perceive student hunger which is a growing phenomenon at South African as well as international universities. It is also hoped that the study will develop knowledge on how the issue of student hunger may be managed on campuses, which can contribute to policy development.

As a university stakeholder, you are ideally positioned to participate in my research study. I therefore, invite you to participate in my research by attending a focus group discussion. Should you accept my invitation, your participation will be entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You may also choose not to answer questions that you may feel uncomfortable with. There are no consequences or personal benefits of participating in this study. If you agree to participate, I will inform you of the time and place for the group discussion. I will as far as possible, try to accommodate participating members by agreeing to times and dates that are convenient for participants.

It is envisaged that the group discussion will last approximately one and a half hours. If you choose to participate, I will ask for your permission to tape-record the interview/discussion. No-one other than the myself and the supervisor will have access to the recording. The recording will be stored in a password-protected computer. The audio recording of the discussion will be kept for two years following any publication or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. The transcript of recording (without any identifying information directly linked to you) will be stored permanently under lock and key. It may be used for future studies.

Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report. The results of the research may also be used for academic purposes including books, journal and conference proceedings. Summary of findings will be made available to participants on request.

Please note that should you feel emotionally distressed after participating in the focus group discussion, you can contact the CCDU therapy team available for intake on a daily basis on 011 717 9140, to assist you to debrief after the research process.

Please contact me on +27 83 452 9652 or 590342@students.wits.ac.za or my supervisor, Prof. Edmarie Pretorius on Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za or +27 11 7174 476 if you have any questions regarding my study. We will endeavour to answer your questions to the best of our ability. If you have any complaints about the study, please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) Administrator: Ms Shaun Schoeman on Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za or +27 11 717-1408.

Thank you for taking your time to consider participating.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brig". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Karuna Singh



Appendix D: Consent form for participation in the study

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4472 • Fax: 011 717 4473 • E-mail:
socialwork.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Title of the study: Stakeholder voices on the role of higher education institutions in food provision to students who are hungry on campus. The case of a South African University.

I hereby consent to participate in the study. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me.

I understand that:

- My participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I may choose not to answer any specific questions asked if I do not wish to do so.
- There are no foreseeable benefits or particular risks associated with participation in the study
- My identity will be kept strictly confidential and any information that may identify me will be removed from the interview transcript
- A copy of my interview/discussion transcript without any identifying information will be stored permanently under lock and key and may be used for future research
- I understand that my responses will be used in the write up of the research report and may be presented at conferences, as book chapters and journal articles.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix E: Consent form for audio-taping of the interview



SOCIAL WORK
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4472 • Fax: 011 717 4473 • E-mail: socialwork.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Title of the study: Stakeholder voices on the role of higher education institutions in food provision to students who are hungry on campus. The case of a South African University.

I hereby consent to recording of the interview or discussion. I understand that:

- The recording will be stored in a password protected computer with restricted access to the researcher and the research supervisor
- The recording will be transcribed and any information that could identify me will be removed
- When the data analysis and write up of the research study is complete the audio recording of the interview/discussion will be kept for two years following any publication or for six years if no publications emanate from the study
- The transcript of recording (without any identifying information directly linked to me) will be stored permanently under lock and key. It may be used for future studies.
- Direct quotes from my interview without any information that could identify me may be cited in the research report or other write-ups of the research.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix F: Interview guide for individual interviews and focus group



SOCIAL WORK THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4472 • Fax: 011 717 4473 • E-mail:
socialwork.SHCD@wits.ac.za

1. What are the core support services that the university should provide for its students?
2. Are you aware of students who are hungry on campus?
3. Should universities be providing food aid to students who are hungry on campus?
4. Why?
5. In your opinion who should take responsibility for dealing with hunger among students
6. If you were in favour of the university providing food to students who are hungry, what would you, if you were the responsible unit do about it?
7. Do you believe that universities should work together on developing solutions or should universities manage their own student hunger on their own?
8. If your answer is yes – how do you propose universities do this and who should take the lead.
9. Closing remarks

May I take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to talk to you despite other commitments you may have had.

Appendix G: Clearance certificate



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Singh

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: H18/11/55

PROJECT TITLE

Stakeholder voices on the role of higher education in providing food to students who are hungry on campus. The case of a South African University

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Mrs K Singh

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

Human and Community Development/

DATE CONSIDERED

23 November 2018

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved

EXPIRY DATE

26 March 2022

DATE

27 March 2019

CHAIRPERSON


(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Dr E Pretorius

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

____/____/____
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix H: Permission to conduct research



OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY REGISTRAR

24 April 2019

Karuna Singh
Staff number A0025121
Masters in Social Work
School of Social Work

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

“Stakeholder voices on the role of the university in providing food aid to students”

This letter serves to confirm that the above project has received permission to be conducted on University premises, and/or involving staff and/or students of the University as research participants. In undertaking this research, you agree to abide by all University regulations for conducting research on campus and to respect participants' rights to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you are conducting research on certain student cohorts, year groups or courses within specific Schools and within the teaching term, permission must be sought from Heads of School or individual academics.

Ethical clearance has been obtained. (Protocol Number: H18/11/55)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicoleen Potgieter".

Nicoleen Potgieter
University Deputy Registrar