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**Exploring the experiences and challenges of adult learners
employed as Correctional Officials in the context of COVID-19**

By

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

Supervisor: Prof. V.M. John

Signed:  _____

30 January 2023

ABSTRACT

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), “most governments around the world temporarily closed education and training institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic” (ILO, 2020, p. 1). Literature argues that “COVID- 19 has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents” (United Nations, 2020, p. 2).

This study explores the experiences and challenges encountered by adult learners who, during the COVID-19 pandemic, were employed as Correctional Officials (COs) in the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) at Durban-Westville Correctional Centre, South Africa. In other words, while continuing to be rehabilitation facilitators and carers within their families they were also enrolled in as part-time students in different institutions of higher learning. The qualitative research tradition was used to explore the COs' interpretation of COVID-19 experiences and challenges in relation to their circumstances. Purposive sampling was employed, and data were generated using an online survey and in-depth interviews with six participants. Demographic and Thematic Analysis were employed respectively in analysing the raw data and generated themes that became key findings of the study

Findings revealed that studying COs had challenges that related to internal, external and program-related factors indicating the interrelated nature of these challenges. Findings further indicated that the challenges experienced by the studying COs varied depending on age, gender, skills as well as the context of the study. Findings also revealed that the pandemic has had significant impacts on the COs' personal and professional lives, with challenges such as limited resources and lack of support systems. However, the COs' personal circumstances and resilience have also shaped the pandemic's impact, leading to some positive coping mechanisms. The study recommends support systems for adult learners with multiple responsibilities and highlights the need for further research on the impact of COVID-19 on Correctional Officials. Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of the experiences and challenges encountered by adult learners with multiple roles during the pandemic in a correctional setting.

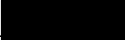
Keywords: COVID-19, South Africa, employed, adult learners, Department of Correctional Services, Correctional Officials, learner challenges and experiences.

DECLARATION

I, Vitalis Kwazikwakhe Shezi (205524251), declare that:

- The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated is my original work.
- This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
- This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a) Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;
 - b) Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.
- The work described in this thesis was carried out in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal under the supervision of Professor Vaughn John (Supervisor)

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- Last but not least, my Parish Priest Reverend Fr Thembelenkosini Mngoma for being so supportive and courageous. May God richly bless you Mabhala Ngozipho.

DEDICATION

To

My late Mom, MaZuma Shezi, the entire Shezi and Zuma family members who are a support system, and my lovely wife and children.

To all my extended family members, relatives, colleagues and neighbours, this is to challenge you from your different corners to wake up and believe in education as the only weapon to set us free and to make us prosper.

My children, this is your heir, hold it with both hands.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

COs:	Correctional Officials
COVID-19:	Coronavirus disease 2019
DCS:	Department Correctional Services
DL:	Distance Learning
EAP:	Employees Assistant Practitioner
EC:	European Commission
GSQ:	Google Survey Questionnaire
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
IT:	Information Technology
MERS:	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
PPE:	Personal Protective Equipment
S-SI:	Semi-Structured Interview
SARS:	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SERU:	Student Experience in the Research University
TA:	Thematic Analysis
TVET:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation
WHO:	World Health Organisation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
DECLARATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Background Information.....	1
1.2.1 The concept of 'rehabilitation'.....	2
1.3. Research Problem	4
1.4. Rationale for the study.....	4
1.5. Research Topic.....	5
1.6. Research Purpose	5
1.7. Key Research Questions	5
1.8. Significance of the Study.....	6
1.9. Location of the Study.....	6
1.10. Positioning myself as a Researcher.....	6
1.11 Methodological Approach	7
1.11.1 Research Paradigm.....	7
1.11.2 Research Tradition.....	7
1.11.3 Research Approach.....	7
1.11.4 Research Sampling.....	7
1.11.5 Data Generation Method.....	8
1.11.6. Research Quality.....	8

1.12 Study Overview	8
1.13 Chapter Conclusion.....	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1. Introduction.....	11
2.2 The Effects of COVID-19 on Education	11
2.3. Transitioning from Traditional to Online Remote Education.....	14
2.3.1 The Challenges Experienced with Online Remote Education	15
2.3.2 Inequalities and Digital Divide	19
2.3.3 Challenges Experienced with Online Learning	20
2.3.4 Advantages and Opportunities of Online Remote Education	21
2.3.5 Mental Health Effects of COVID-19.....	22
2.4 Chapter Conclusion.....	24
CHAPTER 3: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	25
3.1. Introduction.....	25
3.1.1. The Term ‘Theoretical Framework’	25
3.2 The Origins of ‘Emotional Geographies’ as a ‘Theoretical Framework’	26
3.3 Chapter Conclusion.....	28
CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	29
4.1. Introduction.....	29
4.1.1. Research Purpose	29
4.1.2 Research Questions.....	29
4.2 Part 1: Research Design and Methodology.....	30
4.2.1 Research Design.....	30
4.2.1.1 Research Paradigm.....	31
4.2.1.2 The Interpretivist Paradigm	33
4.2.1.3 Research Tradition	32
4.2 .2 The Research Methodology	33
4.3. Part 2: Preparations for Fieldwork	34

4.3.1 Ethical Considerations	34
4.3.2 Research Sampling.....	35
4.3.2.1 Purposive Sampling	36
4.3.3 Limitations	36
4.4. Part 3: Research Settings	37
4.4.1 Research Approach: Case Study	37
4.4.2 Data Generation Methods	39
4.4.2.1 Google Survey Questionnaire	39
4.4.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews	39
4.4.3 Research Technique	40
4.4.4 Research Instrument.....	40
4.5. Part 4: Data Analysis and Evaluation of Findings	40
4.5.1 Data Analysis	40
4.5.1.1 Deductive Data Analysis.....	41
4.5.1.2 Demographic Data Analysis	42
4.5.1.3 Thematic Analysis	42
4.6 Research Quality	42
4.6.1 Trustworthiness.....	43
4.7 Part 5: Chapter Conclusion	44
CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS	46
5.1. Introduction.....	46
5.2 Google Survey Questionnaires: Overview.....	47
5.3 Semi-structured Interviews: Overview	47
5.4 Response Rate	48
5.5 DEMOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF DATA	49
5.5.1 Age Group of Respondents	49
5.5.2 Gender of Respondents	49

5.5.3. Employment Contract	50
5.5.4 Marital Status	50
5.5.5 Parental Status and Number of Children Supported	51
5.5.6 Extended Family Responsibilities.....	52
5.6 The Impact of COVID-19 on Studying COs’ Professional Lives	52
5.6.1 The COs’ Response to the COVID-19 Impact on their Professional Lives	54
5.6.2 Support Provided by the Workplace	55
5.6.3 The Impact of Social Distancing on the Studying COs’ Professional Relationships	57
5.6.4 Professional Relationships that were perceived as being most affected.....	57
5.6.5 Themes Relating to the Impact of COVID-19 on COs’ Professional Lives.....	58
5.7. The Impact of COVID-19 on the Studies of the Studying COs	60
5.7.1 How the Studying COs responded to the COVID-19-related Studies’ Impacts.....	61
5.7.2. The Kind of Support Provided by Various Institutions	61
5.7.3 Themes Relating to the Impact of COVID-19 on COs’ Studies.....	63
5.8. The Extent of COVID-19 Impact on the Studying COs’ Personal Life	66
5.8.1 Responses of COs to the Impact of COVID-19 on their Personal Lives.....	66
5.8.2 Support Received with COVID-19 in Relation to COs Personal Lives	67
5.8.3 Themes Relating to the Impact of COVID-19 on COs Personal Lives	68
5.9 Chapter Conclusion.....	70
CHAPTER 6: THEORISING THE DATA	71
6.1 Introduction.....	71
6.2 Exploring the Findings Using the Theory of ‘Emotional Geographies’	71
6.2.1 Physical Geographies.....	72
6.2.2 Moral Geographies.....	75
6.2.3 Socio-cultural Geographies.....	77
6.2.4 Professional Geographies.....	79
6.2.5 Political Geographies	81
6.3 Chapter Conclusion.....	82

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	84
7.1. Introduction.....	84
7.2 Discussion.....	84
7.3 Findings.....	86
7.3.1 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Professional Lives of the Studying COs.....	86
7.3.2 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Studies of COs.....	86
7.3.3. The Impact of COVID-19 on studying COs’ Personal Lives	87
7.4 Recommendations.....	87
7.4.1 Recommendations Related to Professional Lives.....	87
7.4.2 Recommendations Related to the Study Lives of COs.....	87
7.4.3. Recommendations Related to Personal Lives of the COs	87
7.5 Chapter Conclusion.....	88
REFERENCES.....	90

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The rapid outbreak of Coronavirus disease in 2019, commonly known as COVID-19 was followed by a global health crisis that was never witnessed in the history of mankind. According to the *European Commission Report* (2020, p. 5), “the overarching effects of the COVID-19 crisis, stemming from both the virus itself and the restriction measures put in place, has created challenges for working environments, learning environments and the day-to-day life of individuals”.

In this chapter, I broadly outlined an overview of the research project which was aimed at investigating the experiences and challenges of the Correctional Officials (COs) who, during the COVID-19 pandemic, were adult learners at different institutions of higher learning. I start by providing brief background information about the context, focusing on the changing roles of the COs overtime and precisely concentrating on today’s correctional system. This chapter thus presents an overview of the background to the study, the research problem, the rationale, the research topic, the purpose of the study, the key research questions, the significance and the location of the study as well as positioning myself as a researcher, the methodological approach, and the conclusion i.e. overview of the entire thesis and the chapter summary.

1.2. Background Information

As a Senior Security Manager at a Correctional Centre, I have had first-hand experience of the impact of the pandemic on Correctional Officials (COs) and their ability to balance their job as rehabilitation facilitators and their own studies as adult learners. COs are employees of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), formerly known as ‘Prisons Services’. In the past, COs used to be known as ‘Prison Warders’, and they were recognised as guards, their role was to keep prison keys and their duty was mainly custodial in nature. The transitional period of South Africa saw change in the operations of prisons, which, for too long had been regarded as “breeding grounds of criminality, places of punitive authoritarianism and backwaters of everything despised by the society (DCS 2005, p. 7).

Everything that used to be associated with the then prisons’ practices had to transform and “reflect the beginning of a paradigm shift” that was aimed at correcting the offending behaviour in a humane environment through rehabilitation (DCS, 2005, p. 71). Even the approach that was adopted focused more on the end-product, i.e. the period after incarceration, being mostly dominated by a more progressive humanist approach that was aimed at preparing offenders to

reintegrate successfully and meaningfully into society. Rehabilitation was eventually placed at the centre of all the activities of the DCS as its long-term goal to crime prevention and to harness its potential to eliminate recidivism (DCS, 2005).

Given my experience, I am motivated to conduct a study on how COs manage to balance their work and educational responsibilities and the coping mechanisms they use in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. The study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges that COs face and identify potential solutions that could improve their work and educational experiences.

1.2.1 The concept of ‘rehabilitation’

According to Cilliers and Smit (2007, p. 83), rehabilitation could be defined as, “a process – not an event to bring about change within the offender and to change antisocial attitudes and behaviour”. They further described rehabilitation as being aimed at addressing the specific history of the offender’s criminal behaviour, which implies that the essence of rehabilitation is to bring about positive change in the offenders and their fundamental behaviour (Cilliers & Smit, 2007). For instance, if a person got convicted, mechanisms ought to be devised to have elements of the criminal behaviour corrected and to let that particular convicted person learn from those mistakes so that they do not re-offend in the future. It was the primary requirement that “in order for this change to be effected, an offender should come to the realisation that his behaviour, deeds or actions were wrong” (Cilliers & Smit, 2007, p. 84). On the other hand, the South African *White Paper on Corrections* (2005) describes ‘rehabilitation’ as,

The result of a process that combines the correction of the offending behaviour, human development and the promotion of social responsibility and values. It is a desired outcome of the processes that involve both departmental responsibilities of the government and social responsibilities of the nation³ (DCS, 2005, p. 71).

The Department of Correctional Services is solely mandated to develop and facilitate rehabilitation programmes for people that are lawfully convicted. Those rehabilitation programmes are developmental in nature and they are identified as “educational programmes, skills programmes, social work sessions, psychological sessions as well as spiritual sessions” (Cilliers & Smit, 2007, p. 87). With these programmes, the DCS endeavoured to address, to a certain extent, the causal factors that had an influence on the offence meanwhile preparing offenders for the positive transition into society when they are lawfully released from prison custody (Vacca, 2004; DCS, 2005). Like all educational programmes that got disrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions, rehabilitation was also affected.

The then 'Prison Services' occupation was stable, did not require much skill, and was mostly dominated by white males (Luyt, 2008). As time progressed and the country became more developed, a need arose for DCS to align itself with the changing world so that the services it delivers to the community could be relevant and up to date. In my research project I therefore investigated the experiences and challenges those COs faced since they were studying whilst also being responsible for facilitating rehabilitation programmes that were intended to prepare offenders to be productive citizens upon release from prison custody (Labrecque, Pyrooz, & Toslebe, 2020). The aim of the study was to explore the pandemic's impact on COs as part-time learners while fulfilling roles as rehabilitation facilitators and broader roles in their families and communities.

In order to enable DCS to make a fundamental contribution to the new system of corrections in South Africa, it became necessary to optimally develop human resources such that they are aligned with the ultimate goal of a "crime-free and morally regenerated country" (DCS, 2005, p. 109). It should be noted that, although not many studies have explored the role of COs in the new dispensation, their role has immensely changed over the years. Such changes resulted from the human resource strategy that incorporated education and training of human resources as means to help transform corrections as a recognised and respected profession (DCS 2005). As specified by Matetoa (2013), today the role of Correctional Officials comes with many duties and some of these duties are difficult to carry out, even the clientele is very complicated. The main role of a CO however is to balance security and be responsible for changing the offending behaviour of offenders or to facilitate rehabilitation with the aim of assisting offenders not to re-offend (DCS, 2005).

The challenges that come with the role of being a Correctional Official have left the COs with no choice but to acquire additional training and education in order to equip themselves with relevant skills that will keep them on par with the ever-changing correctional system globally. This kind of self-development culture is supported by the principles of the 2005 *White Paper on Corrections* (DCS, 2005). The *White Paper on Corrections* (2005, p. 111) regards an ideal CO as being a person that possesses a unique combination of competencies that incorporate "personal qualities, expertise, professional ethics, personal development, experience and multiskilling". COs have hence become lifelong learners too. Many COs are registered students at various institutions of higher learning and like all the other students in the world have been affected by COVID-19.

As stated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), "most governments around the world temporarily closed education and training institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the

COVID-19 pandemic” (ILO, 2020, p. 1). In reviewed literature, there are arguments that “COVID- 19 has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents” (United Nations, 2020, p. 2). As argued by Murphy (2020), the spread of COVID-19 compelled universities and colleges around the world to close and consider adopting alternative ways of teaching and learning one of which was online learning. The reason for effecting changes was to comply with general recommendations of the public health protocols that advised on observing social distancing as possible means to lower the infection and fatality rates.

1.3. Research Problem

Like many other countries that were affected by COVID-19, South Africa also had its challenges. In response to the *National Disaster Management Act* which guides certain regulations, various institutions had to close. These institutions included schools and universities. Although not many related studies had been done, the studies that were perused as part of the literature review revealed that changes that were made due to COVID-19 brought some challenges to the *status quo*. It is not only the *status quo* that had changed but the demands had posed challenges to both learners and educators in general as they had to adjust to the new ways of learning and teaching.

As this study investigated COs who were studying, it explored their experiences and challenges during the pandemic as they were not an exception to those experiencing similar challenges. The study explored the experiences and challenges encountered by these adult learners (COs) while continuing to be rehabilitation facilitators and carers within their families. The study particularly focused on exploring if and how these COs adapted to new learning styles, looking closely at their coping mechanisms in adjusting and adapting to the new style of learning with the multiple responsibilities they have.

1.4. Rationale for the study

The closure of educational institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic has affected learners worldwide, and Correctional Officials (COs) were not an exception. In South Africa, COs played a crucial front-line role in the correctional system, and the virus had taken a toll on their well-being and that of staff within the nation's prisons and jails. This study's rationale is to investigate how the closure of educational institutions affected adult learners' ways of learning and how they managed to balance their jobs as rehabilitation facilitators, their roles as parents and caregivers, and their own studies during the pandemic.

As a Senior Security Manager at Durban-Westville Correctional Centre, the researcher has observed the struggles of COs as adult learners during the pandemic. The personal motivation for conducting this study is to assist these COs and others in similar roles in recording their experiences and challenges, identifying coping mechanisms, and promoting efficient and innovative ways of learning in the middle of a crisis. This study's findings will provide insights into how adult learners can adapt to new learning environments and overcome the challenges of balancing multiple responsibilities in the face of unexpected disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the study aims to inspire and motivate COs and other adult learners who face similar challenges to pursue their dreams of studying and achieving their educational goals, no matter how difficult the circumstances may seem. By highlighting the resilience and determination of these COs, the study will show that it is possible to overcome obstacles and achieve personal and professional growth even in the face of adversity. Ultimately, the study's findings will contribute to the development of strategies and policies that can support adult learners in correctional facilities and other settings to pursue their educational aspirations and succeed despite difficult circumstances.

1.5. Research Topic

The topic of this study is;

- Exploring the experiences and challenges of adult learners employed as Correctional Officials in the context of COVID-19.

1.6. Research Purpose

The objectives guiding the study were to:

- Explore how COVID-19 has impacted adult learners' personal and professional lives.
- Establish what challenges these students faced and how their personal circumstances shaped the pandemic's impact.
- Explore how the students responded to these challenges and what the consequences of these responses were.

1.7. Key Research Questions

The study was anchored by the following key research questions:

- How has COVID-19 impacted adult learners in their personal and professional lives?

- What challenges did these students face and how did their personal circumstances shape the pandemic's impact?
- How did the students respond to these challenges and what were the consequences of these responses?

1.8. Significance of the Study

The study was intended to explore the experiences and challenges of adult learners, precisely COs, with multiple responsibilities during the outbreak of COVID-19. I believe that the study will, in a way, contribute to the empowerment of the DCS workforce in general towards upward mobility in the workplace despite COVID-19 challenges. With this study, I hoped to motivate all adult learners, in a similar situation as the target group, that no matter how destructive the catastrophe is, one can still achieve their educational goal and still be effective at work as well as in the community.

1.9. Location of the Study

The study will be conducted with COs stationed at a Correctional facility in KwaZulu-Natal, located about 15 kilometres away from Durban. The study targeted the COs who, during COVID-19, were studying and yet had a duty to perform as full-time employees and had other family responsibilities as parents/ carers. It should be noted that the participants were interviewed at a time convenient to them and different venues so there was no specific site for the research to be carried out. Several will be interviewed telephonically.

1.10. Positioning myself as a Researcher

The study was conducted at a Correctional facility in KwaZulu-Natal, where I work as a Senior Security Manager. As part of my responsibilities, I mentor newly appointed correctional officials, providing guidance and support as they adjust to the field of corrections. My background in education and training was acquired while working as a Human Resource Practitioner, Trainer, and Assessor for the DCS learnership and internship programs. I regularly interact with a diverse range of COs, which positions me to explore their experiences and attitudes.

In terms of data collection, I acknowledge that my position as a Senior Security Manager and my previous roles in education and training could potentially introduce biases into my research. To mitigate against this, I took several measures. Firstly, I conducted interviews with the COs anonymously, ensuring that they were comfortable sharing their experiences and attitudes

without fear of retribution or judgment. Secondly, I enlisted the help of a colleague who is not involved in the corrections field to review my analysis and interpretations to ensure objectivity. Lastly, I reflected regularly on my own biases and preconceptions, and actively sought out contradictory evidence to challenge my assumptions.

1.11 Methodological Approach

1.11.1 Research Paradigm

The case study was identified as the most appropriate approach in understanding the experiences and perspectives of studying COs with multiple responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.11.2 Research Tradition

I chose the interpretivist paradigm as the most appropriate philosophical assumption to enhance the quality of my study because I wished to understand how the COs interpreted COVID-19 lived experiences and challenges.

1.11.3 Research Approach

The qualitative research tradition was identified as most relevant for my study since I wished to explore the COs' interpretation of COVID-19 experiences and challenges in relation to their circumstances. Yilmaz (2013) defines qualitative research tradition as having to do with the "study of people, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal the meanings that people attach to their experiences" (p. 312).

1.11.4 Research Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed using the criterion sampling strategy, as described by Cohen et al. (2018), in which participants are selected based on their fulfilment of specific criteria relevant to the study. The primary criterion for the sample of this study was COs who were also part-time students, with multiple roles in the context of COVID-19.

To obtain an appropriate sample, a list of COs fitting the criteria was generated from professional networks and academic institutions. From this list, 20 COs were purposively invited to participate in the Google survey. Out of the 20 respondents, six were purposively selected for in-depth interviewing based on their diverse experiences and roles, as well as their availability and willingness to share their experiences in greater detail. This approach ensured that the participants selected for interviews provided rich, varied, and significant insights into the research topic.

1.11.5 Data Generation Method

An online survey was utilized to collect data from the 20 selected COs, consisting of a small number of questions designed to gather preliminary information on their experiences. Subsequently, six participants from the survey respondents were chosen for in-depth narrative interviews, as suggested by Duffy (2007, as cited in Beuthin, 2014), which allows for a more dynamic approach to understanding the participants' lived experiences. The interviews were instrumental in obtaining first-hand information about the COs participants' experiences as part-time students, with multiple responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.11.6. Research Quality

To evaluate the findings of my study, I used four elements of trustworthiness as suggested by Neuman (2006); namely: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Neuman (2006, p. 207) defines trustworthiness as “the corresponding term used in qualitative research as a measure of the quality of the research”. It is thus “the extent to which the data and data analyses are believable and are trustworthy” (p. 207).

1.12 Study Overview

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with the general outline of the study. It outlines the introduction to the study, background information on the context, statement of the problem, the rationale for the study, the topic, the purpose, and the research questions that guided the study. It further looked at the significance of the study as well as the location of the study. The chapter also highlights the design and methodology as well as the conclusion of Chapter 1 which has an overview of the thesis and the summary of Chapter 1 with highlights for Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide the reader with the literature that has been explored so far regarding the topic in question. Mokhele-Makgaila (2018), describes literature review as the part of research where the researcher identifies, synthesises and analyses the relevant previous work linked to his/her chosen work.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 4 presents the discussion of the ‘emotional geographies’ theory that I opted for as the most suitable theoretical framework to achieve the objectives of this study. The “emotional geographies” theory entails, “patterns of closeness and distance in human interactions that shape the emotions we experience about relationships of ourselves, each other, and the world

around us” (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1056). The theory was discussed in relation to the emotional relations that develop among COs, offenders, and peers. The chapter scrutinised the impact of COVID-19 on the emotional experiences and relations the studying COs had with their environment.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

Here I provide the reader with the most appropriate methodology that I employed to achieve the objectives of my study. I identified the qualitative research tradition, the interpretivist paradigm as most relevant in helping the reader understand how the studying COs interpreted COVID-19 experiences and challenges. I also outline the selection process of the six adult learner COs and research approach (case study), data generation method (online survey), data generation instruments (Google survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews) as well as the research sampling (purposive sampling). The chapter also tackles the issue of data analysis and further evaluates the findings of my studies using four elements of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) as well as ethical issues and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Findings and Data Analysis

The chapter presents the findings and data analyses from COs’ accounts. . The frequency and range of responses were used to qualitatively scrutinise and analyse data from the Google survey. My interview data set comprised transcribed interviews and field notes. After comparing all the responses, data were sorted as it is recommended by Coxon (1999, p. 3) i.e. “as specified by the researcher”. I shall use “narrative, thematic and conceptual analysis” in which information was “coded according to the set of themes present in a set of open-ended interview schedule” (Coxon, 1999, p.6). From these analyses findings were formulated according to the research questions.

Chapter 6: Theorization of Data

Chapter 6 theorises the findings of the research study in relation to the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework of this study. In other words, chapter 6 I am going to analyse the research findings using the theoretical framework of Hargreaves emotional geographies. In presenting my discussion, I am going to briefly discuss the data analysis process, summarise the demographic and thematic analysis and lastly discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical framework. In essence, Chapter 6 is going to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on COs using the theory of ‘emotional geographies’.

Chapter 7: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter provides a general conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the preceding chapter. This chapter opens up the opportunity for the reader and other scholars to investigate the subject further, should they so wish; however, copyright act will apply.

1.13 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter orientated the reader to the general background of the study that was aimed at exploring the experiences and challenges of the COs, who, during the COVID-19 pandemic, were adult learners at different institutions of higher learning and had other responsibilities. A brief description of the context was provided, focusing on the roles of the COs as well as the demands brought about by changes in the correctional system of today. It also outlined the title, the focus, research objectives and research questions as well as the location of the study and the position of the researcher within the study. The chapter also highlighted the design and methodology of the study and concluded with an overview of the entire thesis as well as the chapter summary. The next chapter will embark on the previous literature that is relevant to the study under review.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I provided the reader with an overview of the research project in which I investigated the experiences and challenges of the Correctional Officials (COs) who were studying at different institutions of higher learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 1 further orientated the reader to the background, significance, location and motivation of study as well as the statement of the problem, rationale, and the research objectives that are related to critical questions of the research. I also highlighted my position in the DCS as a researcher and also sketched out the methodological approach that would be employed.

Chapter 2 broadly reviewed the related literature regarding adult learners' experiences and challenges under abnormal circumstances, including those that were encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter, I discussed the known literature by different authors on the lived experiences and challenges of adult learners as well as the strategies that are known to have assisted those adult learners to survive during similar outbreaks and natural disasters. Here I used the information on how the entire universe survived different catastrophes comparing and contrasting different backgrounds of the phenomenon. This was partly because the literature specific to COVID-19 and how it affected learners is limited and emerging.

Generally speaking, Chapter 2 explored the experiences and challenges encountered by adult learners during other catastrophes that existed in the history of mankind. The main focus was to review the relevant literature that has been explored so far about the phenomenon and provide a scholarly theory in outlining the topic under review. For Bruce (1994, p. 218), "the purpose of the literature review is to provide the background to and justification for the research undertaken. Mokhele-Makgaila (2018), describes the literature review as the part of research where the researcher identifies, synthesises and analyses the relevant previous work linked to his/her chosen work. In other words, Chapter 2 dealt with the known facts about the experiences and challenges of adult learners in the context of crisis due to any natural disaster in the history of mankind.

2.2 The Effects of COVID-19 on Education

The little available literature revealed that out of all catastrophes that have ever been experienced globally, COVID-19 stood out as the most challenging and the worst of them all considering its rapid development and spread in a short space of time. Most countries implemented a 'lockdown strategy' and other restrictions with the aim of mitigating and curbing the rapid spread of COVID-19 among populations (Islam, Barna, Raihan, Khan, &

Hossain, 2020). During the 'lockdown' period, most activities had to be suspended, however, those that were deemed essential remained in operation and that included health services, security services, and all other organisations that rendered essential basic services. The 'lockdown strategy' brought far-reaching transformation in most aspects of humanity throughout the universe. The education system was one of the aspects that endured the most exasperating effects of COVID-19's lockdown strategy. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), "most governments around the world temporarily closed education and training institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic" (ILO, 2020, p. 1).

In reviewed literature, there are arguments that "COVID- 19 created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting more than 94% of the world's student population in more than 200 countries and all continents" (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 133). According to the International Labour Organisation (2020, p. 1), the disruptions caused by COVID-19 affected "learning at all levels including work-based learning". As of July 2020, COVID-19 had already affected 98,6% of learners globally, which represented 1,725 billion children, youth as well as adult learners or students from pre-primary up to tertiary educational institutions (*United Nations Report*, 2020). Most educational institutions had to discontinue traditional teaching and learning practices in order to "flatten and control the transmission of the disease" (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 134).

As far as the experiences and challenges of adult learners with multiple responsibilities were concerned, little had been done regarding research. In other words, there was not much literature as far as the effects of COVID-19 on adult learners, who were workers and had family responsibilities too. Neither was there any literature about the known strategies that assisted adult learners to survive COVID-19 challenges as compared to other previous pandemics. The only challenge that Blankstein, Frederick, and Wolf-Eisenberg (2020, p. 3) perceived as being the most significant faced by adult learners who were working and had family responsibilities was that such students were "unable to balance school, work and home responsibilities". I think that was common to instances where working parents, after work, were found "actively facilitating their children's learning, leading to the challenges associated with juggling more 'roles' in their day-to-day life than before the crisis". (European Commission, 2020, p. 3). It then became impossible or rather difficult to give fair attention to all those responsibilities equally and effectively coupling them with studies.

For this study, I drew from the challenges faced by adult learners studying in institutions of higher learning and the fact that they were the ones who were mostly affected by this switching

of learning models, some of whom were not yet employed by then. The common work-based learning programmes that got disrupted were the ones where commercial activities and essential services were rendered during COVID-19 and for students who were on a compulsory Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme (European Commission, 2020 as cited in United Nations, 2020). A survey undertaken in Europe by the European Commission discovered that disruptions in the workplace affected apprenticeship or learnership programmes since TVET modules were not catered for in online learning (ILO, 2020).

The functioning of the health care professionals was found to have suffered the most both academically as well as psychophysically (Lovric, Farcic, Miksic, & Veev, 2020). This was found during the analysis of the perceptions and experiences of the nursing students in Croatia, three days before the lockdown and the implementation of remote learning. According to Lovric *et al.* (2020), the instinct of the study revolved around the attitude of the nursing students about the pandemic as well as the fear of transmission and preventative measures. Since COVID-19 was new, there was no relevant study to describe the perceptions and experiences of nursing students during COVID-19. However, it should be noted that “insights, perceptions and experiences of nursing students about an earlier Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus that occurred in Saudi Arabia in 2012” were used to relate the ones for COVID19 (Lovric *et al.*, 2020, p 2). The Saudi Arabian students considered Coronavirus “fatal for humanity and high risk for health professionals and the only preventative measure being isolation” Lovric *et al.* (2020, p 2).

With regard to the perceptions of students, the Croatian study results indicated that “students have somewhat divided opinions about the effectiveness of state institutions and their information policies” (Lovric *et al.*, 2020, p. 15). I think these results emanated from the fact that the issue of COVID-19 as a pandemic was not properly communicated in the first place. In other words, there was no policy in place to disseminate COVID-19-related information to the public. Instead, it was mainly disseminated through social networks and that concerned these student nurses a great deal (Lovric *et al.*, 2020). For Islam *et al.* (2020, p. 2), information disseminated via social media “contributed to the development of anxiety, depression and other health problems” as observed in China. Contrary to that negative publicity about social media, Islam *et al.* (2020) argued that a positive relationship “between risk perception and media exposure” was reported in South Korea during the MERS. Similar scenarios were evidenced even in our own society where information relayed through social media was either distorted or misleading, which created the wrong impression about the pandemic.

As far as students' experiences were concerned, the increased levels of mortality due to COVID-19 and the risk of transmission threatened the nursing students. The fear of “contagion and concern for their immediate families were common among student nurses” and thereby deemed it vital for them to adhere to preventative measures which necessitated “long distance teaching and postponed clinical internship” (Lovric *et al.*, 2020, p. 16). The study revealed that in the context of the pandemic, nursing students became aware of their responsibilities to the community and recognised the importance of adhering to preventative measures in order to minimise the rate of transmission of the virus.

2.3. Transitioning from Traditional to Online Remote Education

The state of emergency was declared globally, as expounded by Almaiah, Khasawneh, and Althunibat (2020) who further argued that alternative means to education continuity were essential. In response to the state of emergency which had engulfed the world, the shift from conventional education to distance and virtual learning was essential (ILO, 2020). Moore and Kearsley (2011, p. 2) defined distance education as “the planned teaching and learning activities provided through the use of the communication channel within an institutional organisation without any time and place limitations”. To facilitate distance learning, “educational institutions across the globe decided to use the already available technical resources to create online learning material for students of all academic fields” (Kaur, 2020 as cited in Adnan & Anwar, 2020 p. 1). For the European Commission (2020, p. 21), “social aspects, empowering aspects and work-based learning parts of adult learning” could not be moved to online as well as “assessment and examinations, especially in formal adult learning also posed challenges” In a nutshell, not all adult education activities could be facilitated through online learning, especially those requiring practical skills (European Commission, 2020).

Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo (2020) described online learning as the kind of instruction delivered using a digital device aimed at supporting learning in a critical situation like the COVID-19 era. In that sense, it became crucial to ensure that online learning is appropriate for adult learners' needs. It should be noted that the literature revealed that the move from traditional ways of teaching to online teaching and remote learning had been supported by the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). According to Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo (2020), UNESCO perceived online learning as having the potential to stop the transmission of the virus “by avoiding direct interactions between people” hence UNESCO provided “a list of additional educational platforms and resources that can be used for online learning in line with each institutional education needs” (p. 1).

Being ill-prepared for such a sudden move, the online learning model became a challenge to both adult learners as well as educators. That was not the case in the medical schools, since, for Rose (2020, p. 2131), online learning was not new to medical students, as “for more than a decade, the medical school has eliminated lecturers using technology to enhance anatomy and laboratories; implementing self-directed learning”. Interestingly, it should be noted that the United Nations (2020, p. 2) saw the crisis experienced during COVID-19 as “stimulating innovation within the education sector”, rather than viewing it as a crisis. Similar innovative solutions were last evidenced emerging during Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) pandemics (Singh, Srivastav, Bhardwaj, Dixit, & Misra, 2020). The fact that some governments developed alternative models of teaching/learning on their own, affirms how innovative, committed, and passionate governments were in ensuring that education was readily accessible to all. It should be noted that the issue of ICT infrastructure, internet connectivity, digital skills, accessibility, affordability, and capacity remained a challenge, therefore, not all governments were able to assist in implementing online learning because of the complex provision (European Commission, 2020).

The perused literature revealed that the closure of educational institutions as a protective mechanism against the spread of COVID-19 had dire consequences for “education, well-being and functioning of all parties involved and benefitting from the educational system in the world” (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020 p. 1). A qualitative research was once instituted in Kosovo to explore and describe the concerns of students, parents, and educators in relation to online remote education (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020). These two researchers had a hunch about the factors that might have jeopardised the quality of education due to switching over to online remote education. The findings confirmed that most concerns were revolving around the new COVID-19 circumstances that necessitated a change of the education system due to isolation being precipitated by unpreparedness, support, and motivation. It was therefore imperative for the three role-players to be digitally literate, be conversant with ICT gadgets or have access to technological infrastructure since “the use of technology had been considered most appropriate for the educational system to function” (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020, p. 2)

2.3.1 The Challenges Experienced with Online Remote Education

According to the report from Education and Training (ET) 2020, the working group on adult learning, switching to online learning came up with challenges that affected mostly those aspects “requiring more intensive physical interaction”, as they had “to be put on hold”

(European Commission, 2020, p. 20). The formal adult learning subsectors were not immune to these challenges but the European Commission (2020) argued that the formal education subsectors faced lesser challenges since some had already been exposed to online and they “found quick workarounds to continue serving their learners” (p. 20). The European Commission (2020) categorised the challenges into three different perspectives, namely; challenges faced by the sector in organising education activities online, challenges faced by education providers, and those challenges faced by adult learners themselves.

From the countries that were visited, it emerged that another key challenge was the issue of equal access to learning opportunities. More difficulties were experienced by adult learners from specific vulnerable groups. Learners lacking digital competencies, and ICT tools, as well as those that faced health-related challenges, cannot always find and access adult learning activities online. This was not only a challenge for individual adult learning providers but for the sector as a whole (European Commission, 2020). European Commission (2020, p. 22) argued for support structures to be established in order “to reach out to new adult learners and support existing adult learners in selecting and participating in courses effectively” in this new online mode. The European Commission (2020) also revealed some “sub-sectors where organising distance learning posed additional challenges, such as in prison education” (p. 22).

- **Challenges Faced by the Sector in Organising Education Activities and Ensuring Equal Access**

The European Commission (2020), revealed that all countries reported that they faced challenges concerning the organising of education activities online. The main challenges in organising adult education to online learning related to “transforming face-to-face activities into online ones”, establishing an online learning environment, and securing the equipment and infrastructure” (European Commission, 2020, p. 21). The transformation further looked at the elements of adult learning courses that can be shifted online and those which cannot. According to the European Commission (2020, p. 21), “social aspects, empowering aspects and work-based learning parts of adult learning” appeared to be more challenging to move online.

Furthermore, assessment and examinations, especially in formal adult learning also posed challenges (European Commission, 2020, p. 21). The report further identified the challenges of inaccessibility and lack of support structures as making it difficult for learners to switch over to online learning especially those learners from vulnerable groups (European Commission, 2020). Drawing from James and Theriault (2020, p. 129), adult learners from disadvantaged communities that had difficulty accessing online learning ended up encountering “additional barriers in completing their educational projects”. In complement, Adnan and Anwar (2020),

identified “lack of proper interaction and contact with instructors as well as ineffective technology” as being among the major challenges faced by higher education students in Pakistan (p. 49).

According Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021, p. 133), “social distancing and restrictive movements’ policies” resulted in a significant disturbance of the traditional educational system and thereby impacted adversely in the teaching and learning encounter. In their research, they identified “the weakness of online teaching, the information gap, non-conducive environment for learning at home, equity and academic excellence in terms of higher education” as impacting the teaching and learning process in the context of COVID-19 (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 134). That simply suggested that for distance education to be effective, both educators and learners needed to be oriented on the use of different online educational tools. Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) argued that although there had been challenges regarding online platforms there were unique opportunities that were created. They argue that both learners and educators were able to explore online platforms like “Google, Zoom, virtual learning environments, and other various group forums like Messenger, WhatsApp, etc. (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 137). The affordability and accessibility of these ICT infrastructures for learners from various economic backgrounds remained a challenge.

- **Challenges Faced by Adult Learning Providers and Professionals that Relate to Capacity and Infrastructure**

Adult learning providers also faced challenges related to the online training abilities of professionals and providers. As mentioned earlier, providers that had been already exposed to online education activities had been better equipped to transit during the COVID-19 crisis. For other sectors, “gaps in digital competencies of adult learning providers affected the quality of training offered during the crisis” (European Commission, 2020, p. 23). In other words, whilst other education sectors adjusted quickly and well, others could not and that created a vacuum in the online quality education.

While the focus had been on making education available online, it was imperative for adult education providers to focus on increasing the quality of the instructional design of the online teaching, improving the quality of the delivery, and ensuring that learners reached the desired learning outcomes through the online teaching in future. In this instance, the issue of staff capacity, skills, and teaching methods seemed to have impacted on the intended lifelong education for adult learners. Delivering online training did not only require providers and professionals to be digitally competent, but also required “strong tutoring and assessment skills and the ability to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances” (European Commission,

2020, p. 23). Another challenge that was identified by the *European Commission Report* (2020) was related to the funding of adult education activities.

The paradigm shift that was brought about by the transition in the education system did not only affect the learners but it also called for education professionals to adjust their teaching strategies and adapt as well. A survey was once undertaken in Spain to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on education professionals. The focus of the study was on the “consequences of COVID-19 in the field of education specifically how professionals managed to adapt” during the transition from face-to-face to on line learning (Espino-Diaz, Fernandez-Caminero, Hernandez-Lloret, Gonzalez-Gonzalez & Alvarez-Castillo, 2020, p. 1). What was mostly evidenced was that education professionals suffered high level of stress and anxiety which was fuelled by “excessive bureaucratic tasks, poor online teaching infrastructure, lack of teacher training, lack of support in teleworking and lack of technical means” (Espino-Diaz, *et al.*, 2020, p. 1). According to the analysis of this Spanish survey, education professionals ought to be capacitated in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in order to close the gap of incompetency and ineffectiveness in the online education system.

- **Challenges Faced by Adult Learners themselves**

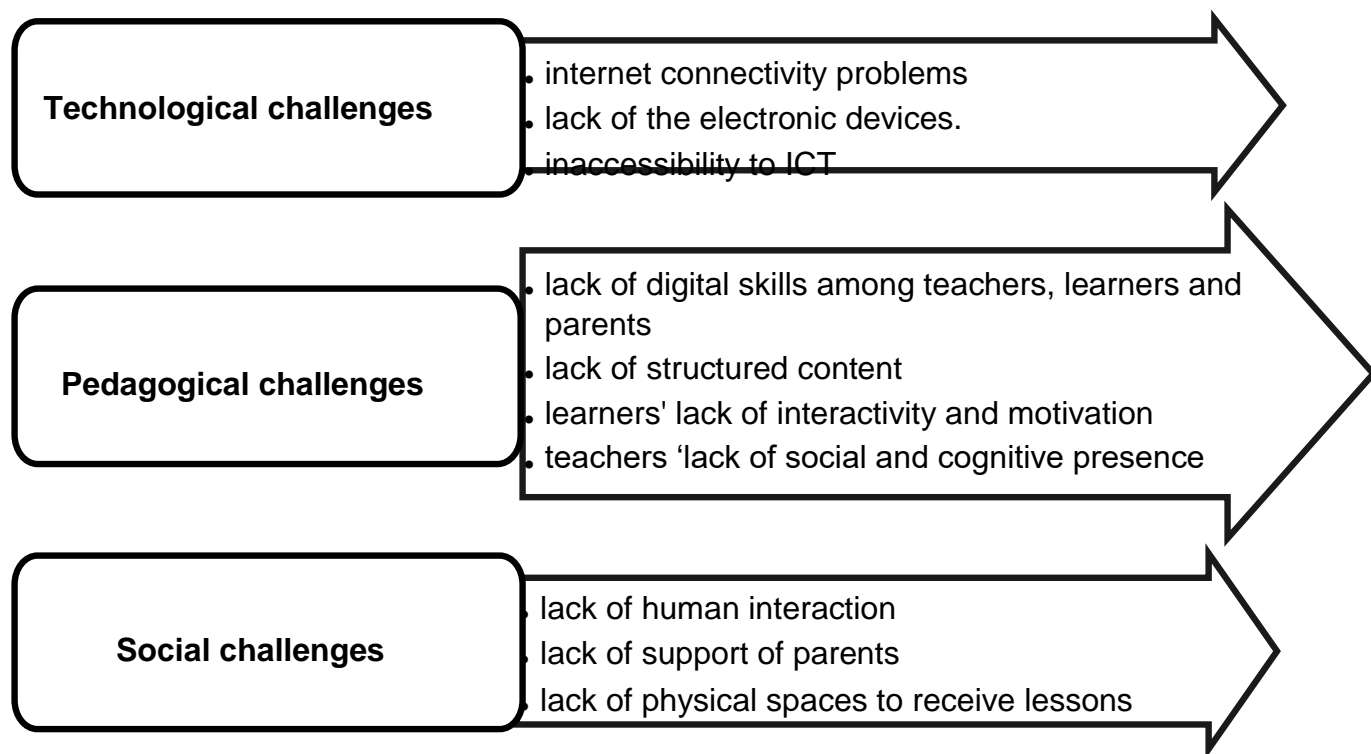
Besides the adult learning sector and adult learning providers, the COVID-19 crisis affected learners in their capacity as adult learners. According to the *European Commission Report* (2020), adult learners significantly faced challenges that included the “lack of equipment, time for learning and digital capacities of the learners” (p. 25). Online learning necessitated that every learner be able to access ITC equipment and be technologically literate and also be able to afford the digital equipment. It should be noted that due to the sudden shift, some adult learners did not have the devices to which they could access online learning, and others needed to be capacitated on the usage. What appeared to be common in most adult learners with multiple responsibilities, was to balance their learning with their working and caring responsibilities (European Commission, 2020; Blankstein, Frederick, & Wolf-Eisenberg, 2020). Other than a lack of digital skills, the Irish adult learners were found to fundamentally, “lack self-directed learning skills and the skills to self-motivate to learn” (European Commission, 2020, p. 25).

An exploratory study was once conducted by Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoc, and Cagiltay (2019) to explore the challenges faced by adult learners in online distance education through the analysis of the relevant literature. The findings revealed that adult learners experienced interrelated challenges that relate to “internal, external and programme related” and in addition to that the factors of “age, gender, knowledge, and skills as well as the context” were perceived as varying

characteristics (Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoc, & Cagiltay, 2019, p.17). According to Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoc, and Cagiltay (2019), these findings have “practical implications for distance learning stakeholders such as administrators, instructors, and instructional designers and “theoretical implications for researchers” (p. 17). This simply meant that distance education activities must be tailor-made such that they cater to the challenges that emerged due to the disruptions of the COVID-19 crisis. In other words, those online distance programmes were supposed to meet the needs of diverse learners including adults (Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoc, & Cagiltay, 2019).

The findings from a qualitative research that was undertaken in Rome, Italy, with the aim of analysing the opportunities and challenges of emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19 summarised experiences as several “technological, pedagogical and social challenges” (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020, p. 13).

Fig 2.3.1: Challenges of online learning and remote teaching due to COVID-19 in Rome, Italy



2.3.2 Inequalities and Digital Divide

In a reviewed study undertaken in Ethiopia it was revealed that besides the challenges associated with technical infrastructure, the issue of social inequalities also impacted the ineffectiveness of distance learning as an alternative means to face-to-face education as a result of COVID-19 (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). Tadesse and Muluye (2020) identified “disadvantaged families lacking access to technology, parents who lack Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and learners with poor learning motivation” as some of the social inequality factors that crippled the education system in most developing countries (p.

161). It should be noted that an option of “zero-fee internet educational resources, free online learning resources and broadcast teaching infrastructure” were perceived as ideal alternative in successful distance learning in developing countries (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020, p. 159).

In an editorial article by James and Theriault (2020), issues of social inequalities resulting from COVID-19 were seen as affecting “access and participation to lifelong learning and eventually had dire consequences to the well-being and mental health” of adult learners (p. 129). Those social inequalities include limited access or inability to access the equipment or connectivity to take full advantage of the online and digital learning or for the fact that an adult learner was born before technology was invented and has never been properly orientated on the use of the equipment. These inequalities became additional barriers for adult learners to complete their intended educational project.

Jervelund and Eikemo (2021) argued that the inequalities that are mirrored during COVID-19 had been experienced in other pandemics “with higher rates of infection and short- and long-term morbidity and mortality among the most disadvantaged groups – particularly in more socially unequal countries” (p. 1). They further argue that the inequalities that emerged through COVID-19 “interact with existing social inequalities in chronic disease and the social determinants of health” and perceive the COVID-19 crisis as “representing a double burden for disadvantaged groups in the society” (Jervelund & Eikemo, 2021, p. 2). These health related inequalities together with issues of digital competencies, inability to access ICT infrastructure as well as being unable to afford the ICT gadgets, made it extremely difficult for adult learners to cope with the online remote education system.

2.3.3 Challenges Experienced with Online Learning

Another study was conducted by Adnan and Anwar (2020) in Pakistan higher education with the aim of examining the perspectives of “students towards compulsory digital and distance learning university courses amid COVID-19” (p. 45). The study embarked on the effectiveness of online classes versus conventional classes with specific reference to higher education students (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). The results of the study revealed that desired results could not be achieved since Pakistan is underdeveloped and that an enormous majority of students had no access to the internet as a result of technical and monetary issues. These findings coincided with Almaiah *et al.* (2020) who argued that challenges in “usage and adoption of eLearning” as an alternative to traditional learning differs “from one country to another due to different cultures, contexts and states of readiness (p. 4).” In this case, it was because Pakistan was one of the underdeveloped countries like South Africa whereby students who resided in rural areas faced more difficulty than those residing in urban areas due to digital infrastructure.

Because South Africa has a very high level of inequality the digital divide exposed during the COVID-19 era was great.

2.3.4 Advantages and Opportunities of Online Remote Education

According to Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoc, and Cagiltay (2019), the flexibility of distance education was identified as an advantage to adult learners' life-long learning. Despite the challenges as being identified in Fig. 2.3.1 and for the widely spread fact that socially disadvantaged populations were adversely affected by the transition, online learning brought about several advantages and opportunities. Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo (2020) observed that the advantages of online learning revolve around;

Studying from anywhere, at any time; possibility of saving significant amount of money; no commuting on crowded buses or local trains; flexibility to choose; saving time and offering the opportunity to remain in touch, even if remotely, with classmates and teachers and to follow lessons (p. 2).

In addition to the advantages of online learning and remote teaching as highlighted above, opportunities were evidenced emerging in the vicinity of the COVID-19 crisis. According to Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo, (2020, p. 2), "it stimulated experts, policymakers, citizens, teachers and learners to search for new solutions". In other words, all populations had to find ways of ensuring that teaching and learning continued and that no one got disadvantaged as a result of a natural catastrophe hence some governments were seen taking a lead. Some criticalities were highlighted too. One of them was that online learning was unable to teach practical and clinical work as per analysis from the study in medical and dental institutes of Pakistan (Grifoni & Guzzo, 2020). Nevertheless, online learning and remote teaching had emerged as the best viable alternative in any natural disaster that one may come across in the future since they enabled teaching and learning to continue without being interrupted.

Alongside the challenges that emerged as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, Morrow-Howell, Galucia, and Swinford (2020) anticipated opportunities to be seized and argued that being able to articulate those opportunities "might maximise positive changes that might be possible in the spread of COVID-19" (p. 527). That implied that despite frustrations brought about by economic setbacks, and adverse health and well-being effects, opportunities for improving the lives of older people emerged. According to Morrow-Howell *et al.* (2020), the opportunities that they anticipated pertained to;

Increased connectivity through technology, family and intergenerational relationships, and renewed energy to combat social isolation, more respect for self-care and time management'

increased awareness about the importance of advanced directives, expanded workforce specialising in aging (p. 530).

I think these anticipated opportunities emerged out of the kind of educational encounter adopted as demanded by the distance learning and remote education system. The change from traditional face-to-face to online saw an increase in the usage of technology as compared to the period prior COVID-19 pandemic. For Morrow-Howell *et al.* (2020), “social distancing created a ‘sink or swim’ moment” (p. 530). The motivation to learn grew across all age groups even in the most disadvantaged communities as the system of education so demanded. The fact that there was no movement kept families together and that strengthened connections among families. Parents and children had to find ways to ensure that education continued and that applied to adult learners as well. It should be noted that older people became aware of their shortfalls and strived to work towards “social justice and health equity (Morrow-Howell *et al.* 2020, p. 533)”.

2.3.5 Mental Health Effects of COVID-19

The literature revealed that since the 11th of March 2020, when the World Health Organisation (WHO), declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, the lives of people across the globe got affected in one way or another (Islam, Barna, Raihan, Khan, & Hossain, 2020). Besides fatality, serious health problems were experienced which included psychological problems like anxiety, depression, stress, sleep disorders and fear” (Islam *et al.*, 2020, p. 02). After learning about the heightened level of depression and anxiety among Bangladesh university students, Islam *et al.*, (2020) instituted a web-based survey in which they wished to investigate the prevalence of depression and anxiety as well as identify the determinants of depression and anxiety among Bangladesh university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results revealed that the depression and anxiety symptoms that were seen were due to academic and professional uncertainty and were being exacerbated by “financial insecurity” (Islam *et al.*, 2020, p. 9). I think their academic and professional uncertainty was mostly tainted by the unprecedented lockdown period and the fact that their prospective professional careers were at stake. Concerning the issue of financial insecurity Islam *et al.* (2020) argue that a number of these Bangladesh students were unable to go to their part-time jobs which used to boost their livelihoods financially.

Islam *et al.* (2020) went on to compare the psychological problems suffered by Bangladesh students during COVID-19 to the psychological problems that were suffered by Canadians during the severe acute syndrome (SARS). Their findings revealed that a similar correlation existed between the lengthy quarantine stays and psychological problems (that included anxiety

and depression). In both instances, people suffered these negative mental problems out of being isolated because of the circumstances surrounding the transmission of those deadly pandemics. The unfortunate part about these mental health problems was that they created “a psycho-emotional chaotic situation” among people which eventually led to “increased substance abuse and sometimes suicidal behaviour” (Islam *et. al.*, 2020, p 02). Such mental health problems required to be addressed to avoid further harm. Islam *et al.* (2020) argued that the government needed to work alongside the institutions of higher learning to provide distance online remote learning, and “parents should be encouraged to support” (p. 09).

Literature also revealed that the mental health problems experienced during COVID-19 impacted badly on the well-being of the students and that “students experienced them differently” (Schlesselman, Cain, & DiVall, 2020, p. 677). That did not suggest that mental health effects were somehow experienced positively or otherwise but rather argued that victims thereof handled them in different ways and ultimately found resilience. Schlesselman *et al.* (2020) undertook a study of pharmacy students who experienced similar mental health problems during the COVID-19 outbreak and found out that those students managed to overcome those setbacks through the involvement of interventional programmes. The pharmacy school proactively designed some interventional programmes to address the psychological setbacks that could be experienced as a result of COVID-19. They found that the depression and anxiety that affected these adult learners resulted from the fact that “their needs as defined by Maslow’s eight hierarchical needs, were not sufficiently met” due to being quarantined (Schlesselman, 2020, p. 677). Other than mental health problems, Schlesselman *et al.* (2020) raised very sensitive academic challenges which seem to have been overlooked when the switch of learning modes was necessitated. Those include visually impaired, hard at hearing as well as adult students who might have a language barrier.

The transition from the traditional education system to online remote learning appeared to have undesirable effects causing “psychological and emotional stress” among learners who were unable to adapt due to their varying levels of competence and the fact that not all of them were able to access the ICT infrastructure (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 135). The Bhutan study that was conducted to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on online teaching and learning across the world revealed that despite mental health effects, transitioning to an online modality was the only option with no alternative (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Therefore, in the vicinity of those mental health challenges teaching and learning had to continue and learners eventually had to be exposed to ICT for the first time.

The situation was compelling for everyone to switch over to the e-learning system. As highlighted earlier on, difficulties that were experienced were coupled with some opportunities and some benefits to learners, parents and educators. Educators had to adjust or align their teaching methods and thereby enriching their expertise without compromising the quality of education. Parents had to provide their children with online educational tools irrespective of their family background. In the context of Bhutan, “strong connections were forged between parents and children” (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 138). I think this emanated from the interactive engagements parents and learners were obliged into.

2.4 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an overview of related literature on the experiences and challenges of workers who happened to be studying during COVID-19 or any other pandemic that has ever occurred and affected almost all spheres of human life globally. As noted by many scholars, COVID-19 shook many aspects of societies globally “affecting access and participation to lifelong education and ultimately the well-being of adult learners” (James & Theriault, 2020, p. 129). Little research had been done regarding the phenomenon under review. For me, the scarcity of literature based on adult education in the context of the pandemic raised a ‘red flag’ about a gap in the adult education field that required in-depth research. That made me see it vital to research more on the topic and find out exactly the lived experiences and challenges of adult learners with multiple responsibilities. In the following chapter, the reader will be orientated about the theoretical framework that underpinned this study.

CHAPTER 3: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter, Literature Review, dealt with the published debates concerning the challenges and experiences of adult learners that were encountered during the global natural catastrophes, including those experienced during the COVID-19 crisis. In that chapter, I identified, synthesised, evaluated and analysed the relevant published works of different scholars from different contexts relating them to my study. I also scrutinised, compared and contrasted data obtained from empirical findings in this literature where possible and further stated my position as far as my study was concerned.

3.1.1. The Term ‘Theoretical Framework’

In Chapter 3, the reader was introduced to the term ‘theoretical framework’, a compound noun lexically made up of two words; ‘theory’ and ‘framework’. The word ‘theory’ could be loosely described as a set of interrelated concepts that attempt to interpret something associated with a particular phenomenon (Kivunja, 2018). According to Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage, Young (2019, p. 6), the word ‘theory’ could be defined as “an abstract description of the relationships between concepts that help us to understand the world”. On the other hand, the denotative meaning of the word ‘framework’ is simply “the essential supporting structure”. Thus, my study employed a particular ‘theoretical framework’ which served as the structure that supported the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, as well as the research questions. In a nutshell, Chapter 3 introduces the reader to the theoretical framework which I adopted as a guide to ground my research project.

According to Grant and Osanloo (2014), the term ‘theoretical framework’ could be defined as a blueprint for the entire dissertation which “serves as the guide on which to build and support your study, and also provides the structure to define how you will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the dissertation as a whole” (p. 13). In other words, the theoretical framework orientates the reader to the ‘locus of research’ for my research project. On the other hand, Kivunja (2018, p. 46) argued that the theoretical framework cannot be viewed as the summary of the researcher’s thoughts but rather as “a synthesis of the thoughts of giants in your field of research, as they relate to your proposed research and how you will use those theories to understand your data”.

For me to achieve the objectives of my research project I found it befitting to opt for ‘emotional geographies’ as the most suitable theoretical framework (Hargreaves, 2001, p.1056). ‘Emotional geographies’ denotes the “patterns of closeness and distance in human interactions

that shape the emotions we experience about relationships of ourselves, each other, and the world around us” (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1056). The emotional geographies theoretical framework summarised the concepts that were developed from previously tested and published knowledge and provided the foundation for my research study. The arguments were extracted from the connections of the interrelated concepts within the phenomenon in question.

3.2 The Origins of ‘Emotional Geographies’ as a ‘Theoretical Framework’

In this research project, I focused on the concept of emotional geographies in the context of the prison system and its relevance to the interactions between COs and their educational environment, in the midst of other responsibilities. Emotional geographies, originally developed in the study of schools, examining the daily interactions and emotional relations between learners, teachers and parents (Hargreaves, 2001). I aimed to apply this theoretical framework to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the emotional well-being of the studying COs and how that affected their daily interactions with their immediate environment.

I think it is going to be proper to distinguish between Hargreaves’ ‘emotional geographies’ and Moran’s (2013) ‘carceral geographies’ since I applied emotional geographies theory in the prison environment. The term “carceral geography,” as defined by Moran (2012), refers to the geographical research into practices of incarceration and explores the distributional geographies and social and spatial relations within carceral spaces. In the context of my study, emotional geographies and carceral geography intersected as I examined the emotional relations that developed between offenders and COs during rehabilitation programs. These relationships resembled those of a teacher and learner, as rehabilitation can be seen as a form of adult education within the prison setting.

By incorporating Hargreaves’ emotional geographies theory in the prison environment, I wanted to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the emotional well-being of the studying COs, their peers, and well as their environment. By observing changes in behavioural patterns and improvements in tensions associated with the prison culture, I aimed to understand the impact of emotional geographies on the human interactions between studying COs and their immediate environment and how the pandemic affected the personal and work lives.

It is important to note that I did not intend to dispute the description of prison life as a "culture of mistrust, fear, aggression, and barely submerged violence" (Crewe, Warr, Bennett, & Smith, 2013, p. 1). Instead, I focused on identifying a distinctive emotional geography within the "emotion zones" where emotional feelings are more or less acceptable, specifically in the teaching and learning activities within the prison context.

According to Wood and Smith (2004), understanding emotional geographies helps us grasp how lives are lived, experiences are shaped, and relationships are formed. Emotional relations between the studying COs, peers and their environment fostered empathy, love, and a sense of brotherhood, akin to the concept of "Ubuntu." Despite the diverse backgrounds and differences in life styles, living together enabled learning from one another. However, emotional experiences and relationships have often been marginalized in understanding human life (Anderson & Smith, 2001).

Adult educational programmes, like other educational encounters, involved varying degrees of closeness and distance among stakeholders. Even the success of rehabilitation and the likelihood of recidivism depended on the emotional relations among COs, offenders, and peers. Hargreaves (2000) argued that the closeness and openness in human interactions influence the feelings and emotions we experience. Positive emotional relations fostered better outcomes in rehabilitation. In this research study, the closer the relationship among studying COs, offenders and peers, the better the outcomes of educational encounter and recidivism became probable. Hargreaves (2000, p. 816) further argued that this closeness and openness were influenced by “physical, moral, socio-cultural, professional and political” aspects “and their consequences” which gave rise to either positive or negative emotions. The physical, moral, socio-cultural, professional, and political aspects therefore, played influential roles in emotional geographies within the prison environment.

□ **Physical Aspects**

The physical aspect of emotional geographies refers to “geographies of time and space which can bring and keep people in proximity over long periods so that relationships might develop” (Hong-Biao & John, 2006, p. 4). In this instance, physical aspects related to the activities meant to enhance rehabilitation, such as education, sports, recreation, arts, cultural programs, and vocational skills training. However, constraints in service delivery, such as staff shortages and overcrowding, posed challenges (Cilliers & Smit, 2007).

□ **Moral Aspects**

According to Hong-Biao and John (2006), moral aspects of emotional geographies relates to the instances “where people pursue common purposes and feel a sense of accomplishment together, or where they are defensive about their own purposes and unconcerned about the purposes of others” (p. 4). Moral geographies aspects concerned the relationships among individuals, including mutual mistrust, fear, aggression, and violence, as described by Crewe et al. (2013). However, this description provided only a partial account of the emotional world within the prison.

□ **Socio-cultural Aspects**

Sociocultural geographies aspects involved differences in culture, race, gender, and class that could create distance between people and perpetuate stereotypes. (Hong-Biao & John, 2006). In the prison environment, sociocultural influences was mostly characterised by sociocultural geography which became exacerbated by involvement in gangsterism and eventually made rehabilitation impossible. It was through these influences that one finds habitual criminals and often hindered rehabilitation.

The literature described the culture of most men's prisons as that "of tense machismo and vigilant emotion management" where the prisoner needs to re-establish his sense of masculine self-esteem (what we would call compensation), develop a persona which saves him from exploitation (what we would label protection), and identify the benefits that can be gained, in a place where status and resources are scarce, from developing a reputation for aggressiveness (what we would call competition). (Crewe *et al.*, 2013, p. 8). In my view, such socio-cultural aspects were the ones that made the prison environment distinct, unique and frightening.

□ **Professional Aspects**

Professional emotional geographies aspects referred to instances of discrimination among professionals and with clients, which could compromise the effectiveness of rehabilitation (Hong-Biao & John, 2006). Such a tendency deserves to be discouraged as far as possible since it defeats the purpose of any interpersonal interaction. For me, it is not acceptable worse if it is practised by experts who by virtue of their position ought to be leading

□ **Political Aspects**

Political geographies aspects existed where hierarchical power relations distorted emotional and cognitive aspects of interactions among stakeholders, potentially compromising the educational encounters.

3.3 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has introduced the concept of the theoretical framework, focusing on emotional geographies. I have highlighted the reasons for choosing emotional geographies theory, emphasizing the role of emotions in our situatedness, bodily engagement with the world, and connections to others. The reader was introduced to the fact that, "emotions connect us to ourselves and to others and also engage us with one another but also with space and with memory..." (Berrens, 2016, p. 76). The following chapter will present the methodology used to structure the arguments regarding the chosen phenomenon.

CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I introduced the reader to the theoretical framework which served as the foundation on which metaphorically and literally constructed all knowledge for my research study. Chapter 3 helped further explain the phenomena, draw connections and raise questions about the research study at hand. The ‘emotional geographies’ theory was identified as being the most appropriate theoretical framework to help me realise the objectives of my research project.

In this chapter, I present the two crucial aspects of research without which research objectives may not be achieved, namely; the research design and the research methodology. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) emphasise that these two concepts play a crucial role in answering the research questions. They describe the concept ‘research design’ as being aligned with the planning of research and the concept ‘research methodology’ as having to do with the act of conducting research, in other words, the ‘how’ part of conducting the research project. They further argue that “the research purpose and the intended outcomes, research questions as well as the literature review” are fundamental in developing a research design and methodology (Cohen *et al.*, 2018, p. 109).

4.1.1. Research Purpose

The objectives of the study were to:

- Explore how COVID-19 has impacted adult learners’ personal and professional lives.
- Establish what challenges these students faced and how their personal circumstances shaped the pandemic’s impact.
- Explore how the students responded to these challenges and what the consequences of these responses were.

4.1.2 Research Questions

My study was anchored by the following key research questions:

- How has COVID-19 impacted adult learners in their personal and professional lives?
- What challenges did these students face and how did their personal circumstances shape the pandemic’s impact?

- How did the students respond to these challenges and what were the consequences of their responses?

I divided this chapter into five parts, each focusing on a specific aspect of my research project. Part 1 focused on the research design and methodology wherein I identified qualitative research tradition, the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm as most relevant in helping the reader understand how the Correctional Officials interpreted COVID-19 experiences and challenges. In Part 2, I commenced with preparations that were necessary for the field work, which included addressing the issues of ethical considerations as well as the issues of limitations for the study. I also outlined the selection process of the participants whereby I employed a mixed methods approach which consisted of a combination of quantitative and qualitative tradition to select participants from a bigger group. Quantitative data were used to draw data from a bigger number using a survey and the qualitative data collection method was employed for six specifically selected adult learner COs being interviewed. In other words, data collection began with administering questionnaires which were followed by interviews. This was guided by the purpose of the research project at hand, hence purposive sampling was employed.

In Part 3, I sketched out the research settings, identifying the appropriate research approach (case study), data generation methods (online survey, interviews), and data generation instruments (google survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews). In Part 4, I went tackled the issue of data analysis and further evaluated the quality of the findings for my study using four elements of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability). In a nutshell, Chapter 4 orientated the reader to the research design and methodology that has been chosen to realise the objectives of the research study. I then closed Chapter 4 with Part 5 which is the conclusion.

4.2 Part 1: Research Design and Methodology

4.2.1 Research Design

Asenahabi (2019, p. 77) defines research as being “a systematic process of discovery and advancement of human knowledge”. He further argues that for research to be successful, the researcher ought to have a “suitable research design” which he describes as “a plan adopted by a researcher before data collection commences so as to achieve the research objective in a valid way” (Asenahabi, 2019, p. 76). His description matches that of Boru (2018) who views research design as being “the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems with the pertinent (and achievable) empirical research” (p. 2). The connotative meaning of the

concept 'research design' in both these descriptions dictates "what should be studied, how the research should be done and how the results should be interpreted" (Boru, 2018, p. 4). According to Cohen, *et al.* (2018), the role of a 'research design' is to identify "the logic that underpins the connections between purposes, objectives, questions, data and conclusion" (p. 175).

Literature reveals that there are three types of research design, each classified according to "the purpose of the research area each design serves" (Boru, 2018, p. 2). That simply suggests that each research design differs from others based on its research area as well as the purpose it serves. The different types of research design include exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research. For my research project, I employed an exploratory research design which for Boru (2018) is conducted when enough is not known about the phenomenon and which is aimed at gaining new insights about the phenomenon. The study attempted to explore the experiences and challenges of COs engaged in a part-time study during the COVID-19 pandemic. The exploratory research design, therefore, directed me on who to select, how to research and how should to present my findings in order to find out the effects of COVID-19 on the studying COs. It should be noted that it is the choice of the researcher to decide on "the most appropriate design which befits the type of research work" (Asenahabi (2019, p. 78). Literature has also revealed that the research design is further divided into three groups, which I opted to refer to as 'research traditions' for the purpose of my research project, namely: "quantitative; qualitative and mixed method research design" (Asenahabi (2019, p. 78).

4.2.1.1 Research Paradigm

According to Scotland (2012, p.9), 'research paradigm' refers to "the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning each piece of research" as well as how these assumptions relate to the chosen methodology and methods. In other words, the research paradigm describes "the underlying philosophical views of the group of people" involved in research "about the world they live in and the research being conducted" (Gilliland, 2020, p. 86). For Boru (2018), philosophical assumptions could be described as a "cluster of beliefs that dictates what should be studied, how research should be done and how the results should be interpreted" (p. 3). The researcher may not achieve the objectives of the research without an appropriate research paradigm. Grix (2004), as cited in Mack (2010), argues that the researcher ought to clearly understand the philosophical underpinnings informing the research questions, methodology, methods as well as intentions for conducting the particular research. Durant-Law (2014) asserts that the research paradigm has to provide answers to three questions; namely, 'what exists, how do I know and what is valuable'.

In terms of the research paradigm, I chose to adopt an interpretivist paradigm for my research study. This paradigm aligns with my research objectives, which aimed to gain an understanding of the experiences and challenges facing COs engaged in part-time study during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interpretivist paradigm is concerned with understanding social phenomena and the meanings attached to them by individuals. This aligns with my goal of exploring the subjective experiences of COs during the pandemic. Additionally, the interpretivist paradigm values qualitative research methods, which allow for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences. Overall, an interpretivist paradigm was the most appropriate for my research objectives and allowed for a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by COs during the pandemic.

4.2.1.2 The Interpretivist Paradigm

According to Gilliland (2020), philosophical assumptions are based on certain beliefs called “research paradigms or research perspectives” (p. 87). He further argues that these perspectives influence people’s understanding of reality and their names are; “positivist, interpretivist, critical and design science research paradigms” (Gilliland, 2020, p. 87). The purpose of my research project was to explore the lived experiences and challenges of studying COs who also had other responsibilities in the context of COVID-19. For me to achieve that purpose I chose the interpretivist paradigm as the most suitable research paradigm which was going to let participants explain their own individual experiences and challenges.

According to Mack (2010), the interpretivist paradigm is also referred to as the constructivist paradigm because “it emphasises the ability of the individual to construct meaning” (p. 7). In support of this notion, Scotland (2012, p.11) argues that the interpretivist epistemology is subjective to the real “world phenomena”, which could be loosely interpreted as whatever knowledge one creates, he or she bases that knowledge on the world that surrounds him or her. For me to enhance the quality of my research study, I had to get information from individual COs who were directly affected and further find out from them how they interpreted those challenges. Gathering data from different individuals might seem ambiguous but the bottom line is that each has to make sense of reality in relation to his or her surrounding world. According to Mack (2010), “social reality is seen by multiple people and these multiple people interpret events differently leaving multiple perspectives of an incident” (p. 8).

4.2.1.3 Research Tradition

As alluded to in the preceding paragraph, Boru (2018) classifies the research design into three types, namely; exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research design each aligned to the purpose the research serves. For this research project, I referred to these types of research designs as research traditions. The qualitative research tradition appeared to be the most relevant type to help me explore the COs' interpretations of COVID-19 experiences and challenges in relation to their circumstances. Hammersley defines qualitative research tradition as “a form of social inquiry used to study a number of naturally occurring cases in detail, using verbal rather than statistical forms of approach”. (Hammersley, 2013, p. 12). Yilmaz (2013) goes on to describe qualitative research tradition as having to do with the “study of people, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal the meanings that people attach to their experiences” (p. 312). In complement, Creswell (2014) argues that qualitative research emphasises on exploring and understanding the meaning that a person or group of people ascribe to a social or human problem.

According to Merriam (2009), the main focus of the qualitative research tradition is to generate “meaning, purpose or reality from opinions and experiences of participants” (p. 23). I therefore chose the qualitative research tradition hoping that it would enable me to comprehend the experiences and challenges of studying COs in the context of COVID-19 and the meaning those studying COs attach thereto. Choosing the qualitative research tradition made me conform to what Yilmaz (2013) regarded as “exploring what was socially constructed”.

According to Asenahabi (2019) qualitative research tradition approach “values individuality, culture and social justice hence providing a content and context rich breadth of information which despite being subjective in nature, it is current” (Asenahabi, 2019, p. 81). In this instance, the interpretation of the COVID-19 experiences and challenges were explored through the people involved (the COs) in relation to their circumstances. Getting the side of their stories (lived experiences) was crucial in making sense of the effects of COVID-19. It should be noted that literature asserts that one of the greatest strengths of qualitative methods is that they have the potential to generate rich descriptions of the participants' thought processes and tend to focus on reasons “why” a phenomenon has occurred (Creswell, 2003).

4.2 .2 The Research Methodology

Crotty (1998) describes methodology as being “the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of particular methods” (p. 3). Scotland (2012, p. 9) further simplifies this notion by arguing that methodology relates to “why, what, from where, when and how data is collected and analysed”. Methodology is concerned with how the researcher “go about finding

out whatever they believe can be known?” using certain methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108).

It should be noted that there is a difference between the denotative meanings of the terms ‘methods’ and ‘methodology’ which sometimes creates confusion. In distinguishing between the two terms Cohen *et al.* (2018) view ‘methods’ as being concerned about “instrumentation: how data are collected and analysed, whilst methodology justifies the methods used” (p. 186). For me to find out what the experiences and challenges faced by studying COs with multiple responsibilities were, I had to employ certain techniques and procedures but in collecting and analysing that data I used the term ‘methods’ which I deemed appropriate.

4.3. Part 2: Preparations for Fieldwork

4.3.1 Ethical Considerations

According to Gilliland (2020, p. 119), research ethical considerations relate to “what is permissible and acceptable when one is conducting research”. If ever the researcher fails to comply with ethical considerations, research quality could be compromised and harm could be done. Supporting this notion, Sin (2010) argues that “the ethical conduct of the researcher is an important attribute of research quality” (p. 311). Gilliland (2020) highlights that the researcher should always be responsible and accountable no matter whether research involves human beings, animals, or the environment. The researcher’s creativity, skilfulness, as well as insightfulness, contribute critically to the research quality (Sin, 2010). Sin (2010) further cautions the researchers to take into consideration the “effects and consequences that the interpretations and conclusions of the research can have on people or groups, such as minority or marginalised groups”.

As indicated earlier, I conducted research with my co-workers whose working environment and conditions I was familiar with. . First and foremost, I made it a point that I explained to the participants “the nature and purpose of my study” and obtained their informed consent before participation (Sin, 2010, p. 311). In order to avoid tapping into other people’s persona and to avoid finding myself violating human rights in one way or another, I ensured that I was honest and truthful about my intention to undertake research. I also complied with ethical considerations as prescribed by the Department of Higher Education, in particular, the University of KwaZulu-Natal by applying for ethical clearance to undertake this study which was approved (HSSREC/00002658/2021, see Appendix F). I also informed the participants of their voluntary participation and that they may withdraw at any stage. I also assured the participants of confidentiality and that pseudonyms were going to be used. The issue of trauma

and other emotional setbacks that arose out of memories and stress emanating from COVID19 were also catered for by arranging for the services of the Employee Assistant Practitioner (EAP) at no costs. The EAP was available to provide counselling to all participants that experienced trauma.

4.3.2 Research Sampling

In their broad definition, Oppong (2013) describes research sampling as “a process of selecting subjects to take part in a research investigation on the ground that they provide information considered relevant to the research problem” (p. 2). Etikan, Musa, and Alkassium (2015) suggest that the term ‘population’ as applied in research sampling does not necessarily refer literally to the entire population, but rather to the research portion known as the ‘sample’. In qualitative research, Oppong (2013) argues, the concept of sampling necessitates selecting only a subset of the population, known as the ‘sample’. Further, he explains that “the aims of a particular research as well as the features of the study population influence the decision of which individuals and the number of individuals to select for a given research enquiry” (p. 2).

In the context of the study in question, the main interest is focused on the experiences and challenges faced by COs who were studying in institutions of higher learning during the COVID-19 pandemic while also having other responsibilities. As it was impractical to investigate the entire population of studying COs, a ‘sample’ matching the exact criteria was selected, hence purposive sampling was used. Criteria selection is used to identify a population that best matches the research question, as noted by Cohen et al. (2018), who termed it “criterion sampling,” in which participants were selected using “a particular criterion being studied” (p. 119).

For “yielding greater insights into the theoretical issue under investigation,” the population comprised six COs who were studying in various institutions of higher learning (Cohen et al., 2018, p.120). According to Wilson (2014), credibility must be considered when selecting a sample, he argued that “a valid sample must be considered in order to obtain generalizability in quantitative research and trustworthiness in qualitative research” (p. 105). The target population for this research study is designed to be studying COs with multiple responsibilities, with the research population selected deliberately to identify the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 period.

Cohen et al. (2018) highlight the importance of sampling strategy when considering the suitability of a research project. Research sampling is classified into two methods, probability and non-probability sampling, and Etikan and Bala (2017) explain that the difference between the two methods is based on “without control (unrestricted) and “with control (restricted)”

respectively (p. 1). Probable sampling types include “systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling, multi-stage sampling, and area sampling,” while non-probable sampling includes “quota sampling, accidental sampling, purposive sampling, expert sampling, snowball sampling, modal instant sampling, and heterogeneity sampling” (Etikan & Bala, 2017, p. 2).

4.3.3.1 Purposive Sampling

A purposive sampling model was used in this research study. Literature explicitly argues that purposive sampling is “based on the judgement of the researcher as to who will provide the best information to succeed for the study objectives” (Etikan & Bala, 2017, p. 2). Purposive sampling is done to identify and select a sample that can assist with a phenomenon of interest by providing essential information that cannot be obtained from other choices (Taherdoost, 2016, p.23). Unlike random sampling, which deliberately includes a diverse cross-section of ages, backgrounds, and cultures, the idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on people with particular characteristics who will better assist with the relevant research (Etikan *et al.*, 2016, p.3). For this study, focusing on COs with multiple responsibilities studying during the COVID-19 pandemic required a purposive sampling method to ensure the selection of appropriate participants.

While purposive sampling is commonly used due to its cost-effectiveness and ease of selection without the need for a list of all population elements, critiques argue that it may be deliberately selective and biased towards accessing “knowledgeable people” (Ball, 1990, p. 120). Moreover, a significant limitation cited by Acharya, Prakash, and Nigam (2013, p.323) is that data from such purposive sampling cannot be generalized beyond the sample

4.3.3 Limitations

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019), the operational definition of the term ‘limitations’ in research concerns the “potential weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher’s control, and are closely associated with the chosen research design, statistical model constraints, funding constraints, or other factors” (p. 156). Ross and Zaidi (2019) observed that these potential weaknesses “may influence outcomes and conclusions of the research regardless of the format scholarship assumes” (p. 261). Literature reveals that study limitations need to be acknowledged in order for a reader to find the appropriate meaning of the study. It should be noted that “authors may be limiting the impact of their research by neglecting or providing abbreviated and generic limitations” (Ross & Zaid, 2019, p. 263). Ross and Zaidi (2019) further argued that when a researcher presents limitations, he should “describe the potential weakness, explain implications and describe mitigating alternatives” (p. 262). In

other words, listing categories alone is insufficient but the researcher ought to identify the originality of the limitations, and then threats may be addressed.

Concerning the research project under review, the limitations revolved around the research design which only focused on the studying of a small group of COs which would threaten generalizability of the findings. The COs' profession is very rare and very few COs are studying. The results of the study could not be then generalised in that sense. The experiences and challenges of studying COs would not have been judged to match other professionals who are employed and also studying because the type of responsibilities is not the same. Another possible limitation was due to the choice of participants some of whom were still suffering from anxiety, high level of uncertainty, fear, traumatic experience, and emotional stress caused by COVID-19 to humankind worldwide.

Failure to understand the implications of all these limitations might have tapped into the emotions of some participants since some had lost close relatives, colleagues as well as clients over the pandemic and others were still recovering. Another limitation was pertaining to the risk that COs were exposed to since they were among the government employees who were classified as essential workers because of the nature of their jobs and that made them vulnerable to the pandemic. They were at the forefront of the pandemic and exposed their families to the danger of getting infected. Some would even resist divulging sensitive information for the fact that they had a bad experience regarding the pandemic. Another possible limitation was around finding a suitable number of participants that fully matched the criteria and that forced me to 'bend' the criteria somehow to suit the available adult learners on a vocational programme some of whom do not have many family responsibilities. To minimise these limitations, it was necessary to acknowledge them as such and also adhere to the ethics procedures

4.4. Part 3: Research Settings

4.4.1 Research Approach: Case Study

According to Gilliland (2020), the research paradigms are often linked to certain research approaches depending on the problem that triggered the research to be conducted. My research was triggered by the interest I had in how the COs interpreted the experiences and challenges of studying in the context of COVID-19 while having other responsibilities. The findings of the research were extracted from the participants' interpretation of 'the chain of events', hence this study was steered by an interpretive paradigm which is usually linked to a case study research approach. I, therefore, identified a case study as being the most suitable approach to

help me achieve the purpose of my research study which was to establish ‘what it is like’ to be a studying CO with multiple responsibilities in the context of COVID-19.

Yazan (2015, p. 135) argues that a case study is one of the frequently used research methodologies which may not be easily differentiated from other types of qualitative research because of not having “well-defined and well-structured protocols”. However, he still advocates case study as a “legitimate methodology to conduct inquiries into a theoretical position” (Yazan, 2015, p. 136). In contrast to Yazan’s theory, Merriam (1998) views research conducted using a case study approach as producing “knowledge about the world” (p. 3). Merriam’s epistemological stance on a case study is complemented by Stake’s viewpoint that “knowledge should cling to reality” and that “knowledge is constructed rather than discovered” (Stake, 1995, p. 99). Both Merriam’s and Stake’s arguments correspond with the kind of data (experiences and challenges) that were shared by the studying COs which were more related to the individuals’ interpretation constructed from their surrounding world.

In describing a case study, Cohen *et al.* (2018) stated that “case studies are important sources of research data on their own and constitute an approach to research in their own right” (p. 375). It should be noted that a case study has many definitions hence (Yazan, 2015, p. 134) termed it a “contested terrain”. These differences or contestations are dictated by the research context as well as “the researcher’s view and interpretation” Cohen *et al.* 2018, p. 377). For this study, I used Yazan’s version which defines a case study as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context by addressing the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions concerning that phenomenon of interest” (p. 138). Yazan’s definition corresponds with the viewpoint of Cohen *et al.* (2018, p.380.) who argue that “case studies can establish cause and effect (‘how’ and ‘why’); indeed, one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects, and that in-depth understanding is required to do justice to the case” (p. 376).

The CO’s experiences and challenges lend themselves to being studied as a case study as this study explored the experiences of studying whilst working and also having other responsibilities in the context of COVID-19. Thus, I found the case study design to be most relevant to provide “rich detail and thick description” of the studying COs’ lived experiences and feelings about the situation they were facing within their immediate context (Cohen, *et al.*, 2018, p. 377). The ‘case’ in this instance was the studying COs with multiple responsibilities in the context of COVID-19. Creswell (2014) argues that when a case study is chosen as a research approach, it provides a detailed, in-depth description and analysis of one or more cases such as a person or group of people. Notwithstanding the identified weakness of the case study

results that cannot be generalised (Wellington, 2015 as cited in Cohen, *et al.*, 2018), I presumed that the findings of this study were going to provide a unique example of real people within real situations enabling readers to understand how ideas and principles of a certain theory made meaning (Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

4.4.2 Data Generation Methods

For my research project, I employed a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative traditions. I utilised Google survey as quantitative means to gather data from a larger sample and semi-structured interviews as qualitative means to generate data from a smaller sample. The larger sample consisted of twenty COs from whom I required answers for the Google survey questionnaire that was generally based on their personal background and experiences about the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews were the main methods to generate data and the primary source thereof consisted of six COs that were purposely selected. Beuthin (2014) argues that “narrative interviewing is a dynamic approach that helps gain access to a participant’s lived experiences” (p. 126).

4.4.2.1 Google Survey Questionnaire

A cross-sectional-web-based survey was conducted using an online survey called ‘Google forms’ to gather information from a larger sample. The questionnaire comprising open-ended and closed-ended questions was developed and distributed through digital platforms that included Whatsapp and emails. The reminders were also sent using digital platforms, so were the responses. Software was used in the analysis and the results were described in pictorial charts. The final survey consisted of twenty COs from whom I required general answers based on their personal background and experiences about the phenomenon. Of the twenty respondents, six were purposively selected for an intensive interview, that is, meeting a particular profile which was a full-time employed studying CO with other responsibilities. It should be noted that the Google survey questionnaire was primarily used to easily identify the relevant participants that met the set profile and that the participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout.

4.4.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Longhurst (2010) defines semi-structured interviews as “a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions” (p. 103). According to Rabionet (2011), semi- structured interviewing is “a flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experience”. In

my view, both these descriptions complement each other in the sense that for one to get to the root of the problem, the semi-structured interviews method was ideal. Literature reveals that “although the researcher prepares predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important” (Longhurst, 2010, p. 103). Cohen *et al.* (2018) argue that “in the semi-structured interview, the topics and questions are given, but the questions are open-ended and the wording and sequence may be tailored to each individual interviewee and the responses given, with prompts and probes” p. 511). With this kind of questioning, I intended to enable the interviewees to elaborate as far as possible in response to the research questions, and that in turn enabled me to probe further questions.

4.4.3 Research Technique

The semi-structured interviews took a dialogical process between myself and the interviewees. The collected information was jotted down as field notes, scrutinised, qualitatively analysed, and then transcribed into a concise report. In support of this notion, Beuthin (2014) argues that “interviews are most often audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and converted to a transcript that offers exactness and efficiency of the data” (p. 125). In-depth information was obtained with the help of probing questions or clarity-seeking questions.

4.4.4 Research Instrument

An interview schedule was used to prompt information from the participants. I purposely chose interviews as the main research instrument to retrieve first-hand information regarding the proposed research questions. Beuthin (2014, p. 125) argues that “understanding interviews is important as the data generated through interviews form the foundation of all that ensues within a research study”. Interviews were relevant because the selected participants were the ones who experienced COVID-19 challenges.

4.5. Part 4: Data Analysis and Evaluation of Findings

4.5.1 Data Analysis

Literature defines data analysis as the process of discovering data that is used to answer the research questions (Leek, 2013). Data analysis aims to “derive conceptions of the phenomenon of interest” from the data (Sin, 2010, p. 314). According to Pope, van Royen and Baker (2002), data analysis in a qualitative study is done “inductively or deductively in an attempt to preserve the textual form of the data gathered and to generate analytical categories and explanations” (p. 149). Upon completion of data collection, outcomes are expected to be “analysed and

interpreted in order for them to be useful and to contribute to any research conclusion” (Gilliland, 2020, p. 104). Zikmund *et al.* (2013) refer to the data analysis stage as the “coding and editing” of data that is done to transform “raw data into electronic data” (p. 459). Gilliland (2020) stated that the term ‘coding’ is used to “represent the meaning of data” and ‘editing’ as referring to the assessment of data “with the purpose of adjusting data for correctness, consistency and legibility” (p. 104). In other words, the data analysis stage involves the process of translating the collected data into findings.

As far as my research study is concerned, data were collected through a Google survey and interviews. The former was analysed using the participants’ responses on the information that required gender, age, marital status as well as the effects of COVID-19 on the family, work and study lives of the studying COs. The frequency, key trends as well as common behaviours among the respondents formed the basis of my statistical results. All the responses were scrutinised for their similarities, grouped, and presented statistically. The survey consisted of a mixture of close-ended and open-ended questions. Conclusions were drawn and presented quantitatively using tables, graphs, and contextual analysis for each major response to help me work out the frequency distributions.

The latter data set consisted of transcribed interviews, and field notes. . It should be noted that English was used during the interviews however participants were allowed to switch to isiZulu, should they so wish. The field notes were checked against the recorded interviews and that was used to authenticate collected data. As a researcher, I read all the transcripts, attached meaning, and interpreted the data. Out of the similarities and differences inducted from the generated data themes started to emerge (Pope *et al.*, 2002). After comparing all the responses, I sorted them as recommended by Coxon (1999) i.e. “as specified by the researcher” (p. 3). I used “thematic analysis” in which information was “coded according to the set of themes presented in a set of open-ended interview schedule” (Coxon, 1999, p. 6). From these analyses findings were formulated regarding the research questions. The findings were then presented in point form and shared with other scholars. It should be noted that the process of data analysis occurs “either at the beginning or part way through the analysis as a way of approaching the data”. (Pope *et al.*, 2002, p. 149).

4.5.1.1 Deductive Data Analysis

According to Thomas (2006, p. 238), deductive data analysis refers to the approach “that sets out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator. The above description implies that the deductive analysis approach relates to the process wherein a researcher tests a known assumption using another

theory. Braun and Clarke (2012, p. 3) term this method as the “top-down approach”. Figure 5.9 below shows the steps in the deductive data analysis.

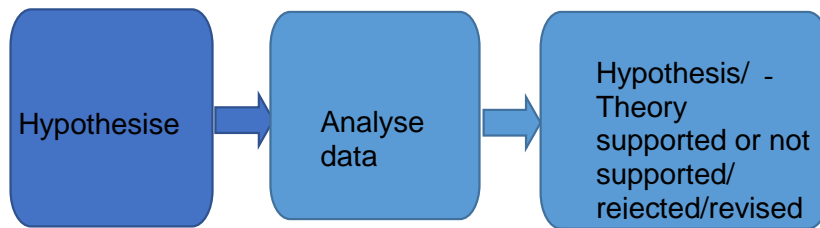


Figure 5.9: Deductive Data Analysis Steps

4.5.1.2 Demographic Data Analysis

Literature defines demographic data analysis as collecting and examining the quantifiable statistics of a particular population (Connelly, 2013). In this section, I analysed the distinct demographic characteristics of the respondents against the outcomes of the quantitative research method used to reveal the impact of COVID-19 on the studying COs. I examined the demographic variables that included age, gender, and marital status, type of employment, parental status, number of children supported, and extended family responsibility. Saleh and Bista (2017), argue that demographic features influence the response rate in data analysis.

4.5.1.3 Thematic Analysis

According to Alhojailan (2012, p. 40), thematic analysis (TA) is a qualitative data analysis method “considered the most appropriate for any study that seeks to discover using interpretations”. I found TA to be the most appropriate means of exploring in-depth data analysis for the six participants that were purposively sampled. I used TA in my research study for “condensing raw textual data into a brief, summary format”. (Thomas 2006, p. 40). This brief summary produces themes that Javadi and Zaria (2016, p. 34), defined as “a kind of agreement that, in comparison to the main text from which the theme is extracted, is more concise, accurate, simpler and shorter”. In other words, the themes were generated from the findings extracted from the raw data, usually regarded as outcomes of the research.

4.6. Research Quality

According to Yilmaz (2013), using validity and reliability as a determining factor of quality in qualitative research “is not only irrelevant but also misleading” (p. 318). The concepts of ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ are used to evaluate quality in a quantitative study. Validity determines whether the research truly measures what it was intended to measure and whether

it corresponds with credibility, trustworthiness, and authenticity in the qualitative counterpart (Yilmaz, 2013). Reliability corresponds with dependability and auditability in the qualitative study and they all judge the extent to which results are consistent overtime under similar conditions (Yilmaz, 2013).

4.6.1 Trustworthiness

According to Jordan, Gust, and Scheman (2011), the concept of ‘trustworthiness’ relates to “what makes it rational for people to accept research findings - to build future research upon them, to utilise them to inform public policy, and to use them to guide individual choice and community action” (p. 41). It is therefore important for the researcher to ascertain that the research project accurately reflects the truth and the actual ideas of the participants. In order to secure trustworthiness for my study, I ensured that I familiarised myself with the participants by having prolonged engagements in the field (Yilmaz, 2013). Such a gesture assisted in fostering a relationship of trust between the interviewees and myself which would eventually positively influence the research results. I also allowed what Rule and John (2011) and Yilmaz (2013) refer to as ‘member checking’ by allowing the six selected participants to verify whether the final report or the interview transcript reflected what was discussed during the interviews.

I further utilised the trustworthiness criteria as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1989) namely;

- credibility,
- dependability,
- confirmability, and
- transferability.
- credibility

According to Connelly (2016), the credibility of the study, or the confidence in the truth of the study and therefore the findings, is the most important criterion. To make certain that the findings were reflecting the truth about the “participants, context, activities, settings so that the reader fully understand ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions”, I backed my interview transcripts with field notes and an audio-tape (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 320). In other words, I applied what Rule and John (2011, p. 109) term, “triangulation”, which could be loosely described as “utilisation of different means or sources to draw a conclusion. By doing so I was confirming the extent to which the case reality was fulfilled (Guba 1981, as cited in John & Rule, 2011).

- **Dependability**

Literature equates dependability with reliability which simply refers to the consistency of the findings overtime. To enhance dependability, the researcher needs to be transparent in outlining procedures that led to the research outcomes (Carcary, 2009). For my study, ensured that, “the process of selecting, justifying and applying research strategies, procedures and methods was clearly explained and its effectiveness was evaluated” by myself, confirmed through ‘member checking’ and ultimately audited (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 320). Rule and John (2011) argue that dependability focuses on “methodological rigour and coherence towards generating findings”. To ascertain the quality of my study, I ensured that the selected participants were well-informed about every step of the research process.

Confirmability

Confirmability relates to “the neutrality or objectivity of the data” proving that the research outcomes are the results of the research conducted (Connelly, 2016). In my case, I did data analysis after conducting interviews with the selected COs, and the audit trail was presented using identified codes categorised in themes. The participants themselves audited the findings through ‘member checking’ as a tool to enhance trustworthiness.. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all acquired.

- **Transferability**

According to Connelly (2016), transferability refers to “the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings” (p. 435). Literature reveals that the transferability criterion is equivalent to generalizability in quantitative research. The effects of studying in the context of COVID-19 and yet having multiple responsibilities in the case of my study had to be shown in the findings if it was possible. In other words, the findings of the study ought to reveal that studying while working and having other responsibilities was either easy or difficult during COVID-19.

4.7 Part 5: Chapter Conclusion

Chapter 4 focused on the methodological decision used in exploring the experiences and challenges of the COs, who, during the COVID-19 pandemic, were adult learners at different institutions of higher learning and had other responsibilities. The framework of the selected methodological decision was outlined using the two crucial aspects of research without which research objectives may not be achieved, namely; the research design and the research methodology (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Part 1 of the chapter dealt with the research design and the

philosophical assumptions that gave birth to the research design. Part 2 dealt with the field work preparations which embarked on the issues of who to include in the focus group, the selection procedure as well as issues of ethical considerations and limitations.

Part 3 highlighted the methodology and methods that were employed in the study. The distinguishing features between these two terms were clarified as methodology having to do with how data should be best collected and methods as providing details of how data were collected. Part 4 tackled the issues of data analysis and further evaluated the integrity as well as validity and reliability of the findings using four elements of truthfulness; namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. According to Cohen *et al.* (2018), “the research purpose and the intended outcomes, research questions as well as the literature review” are prerequisites in designing a research design and methodology (p. 109). The next chapter deals with the practical presentation of this methodological decision. Meaning that the next chapter will be presenting the findings of the research study in question.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the methodology and design of the study, which entailed how the research project was planned to be conducted as well as how the research objectives were going to be achieved. The chapter further described where the research project was conducted, how and why the identified participants were chosen i.e. sample, sampling process and sample size. In addition, the issues that pertain to data collection and data analysis techniques were discussed. The reader got introduced to a case study research approach wherein quantitative and qualitative means of data collection were seen being concurrently employed. The ideal participants were identified and selected to partake in the Google survey, as a larger number and later trimmed to a smaller sample that had to undergo a semi-structured in-depth interview. These semi-structured interviews built on the participants' insights gathered through survey questions that aimed to generate in-depth data regarding the experiences and challenges of Correctional Officials who were studying and had other responsibilities.

In Chapter 5, I present the integrated quantitative and qualitative findings as generated using the two data collection sources; i.e. Google Survey Questionnaire (GSQ) and Semi-Structured Interviews (S-SI), respectively, as outlined in Chapter 4. The former consisted of twenty participants whose set of questions was based on the nature, the extent as well as the general effects of the COVID-19 challenges as experienced by studying COs. The interviews targeted six COs and the questions were meant to derive richer qualitative data using transcribed semi interviews, and field notes. The GSQs were electronically delivered to the group of twenty participants using emails and WhatsApp messages and the S-SIs were conducted later.

The responses varied according to individual respondents' insights and further probed in-depth, qualitatively, as S-SI. The outcomes of quantitative data were presented using graphs, tables, and text in response to the questions asked whereas qualitative data were presented inductively from the data generated, attached meanings, and arranged them thematically (Coxon, 1999). According to Younas, Iyanat and Sundus (2021, p.100), using two methods of data generation in a case study (i.e. web-based survey and interviews, in this case) "offers an excellent method for rigorous, contextualised, and transparent, synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings and the generation of adequate inferences in mixed methods reviews".

The objectives guiding the study were to explore and establish the challenges experienced by studying COs during COVID-19. The findings are arranged in line with the following research questions:

- How has COVID-19 impacted adult learners in their personal and professional lives?
- What challenges did these students face and how did their personal circumstances shape the pandemic's impact?
- How did the students respond to these challenges and what were the consequences of these responses?

For me to achieve the objectives of the research study and to provide meaningful answers to all the above critical research questions, I first gathered raw data from the identified population. Upon comparing and contrasting all the responses, I systematically identified and organised patterns of meaning “across the database” using demographic features as well as thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.3). Therefore, the purpose of Chapter 5 is to present the research “findings in a clear, concise and detailed fashion” using illustrations (i.e. graphs, charts and tables) and text, presented thematically (Chae, Backer, Mullen, & Cakmak, 2022, p. 6).

5.2 Google Survey Questionnaires: Overview

The Google survey questionnaire was a source of mainly quantitative data. It was developed and distributed online so as to gather information from a larger sample anonymously. The larger sample consisted of twenty studying COs from whom I required general answers based on their personal background and experiences about the phenomenon. Out of the twenty respondents, six interviewees were purposively selected i.e. meeting a particular profile which was that the COs were employed full-time while studying part-time and with other responsibilities. It should be noted that a final question in the Google survey questionnaire was used to invite relevant participants to an interview.

5.3 Semi-structured Interviews: Overview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six of the twenty studying COs. These one-on-one interviews were conducted individually and on separate days, venues and times with the identified participants. I applied a semi-structured interview method in this study to generate in-depth data regarding the experiences and challenges of COs who were studying and also had other responsibilities. I expected their answers to be informed by their own experiences hence as a researcher I was interested “in understanding the meaning or sense

people make of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Bush & Amechi, 2019, p. 639). I formulated more specific questions for this exercise emerging from the main research questions. Participants were assured of confidentiality and that their identities were protected. Most data were built on the participants’ insights gathered through survey questions. For me to spark “insight and develop meaning” out of the raw data, I used a recursive form of data analysis known as “iteration” process wherein I repeatedly interrogated my raw data. (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p.77). According to Srivastava and Howood (2009), it is out of such an “iterative framework” that a researcher can develop “patterns, themes and categories” which are driven by the objectives guiding the research project (p. 77).

5.4 Response Rate

This section looked at how the identified participants responded to the chosen data generation methods. It also addressed factors that influenced the responses to the survey and the interviews respectively. According to Copeland, Yoon, and Zhang (2021), the response rate relates to the total of the chosen sample who participated in the completion of the survey questionnaires and interviews. Saleh and Bista (2017) argue that the survey response rate is usually influenced by the research interests of the selected participants. In this case, the study was relating to a global phenomenon of interest as it was affecting communities worldwide at that particular point in time. For me, the fact that the phenomenon was of global interest played a crucial role in ensuring an increased response rate (Saleh & Bista, 2017).

Saleh and Bista (2017) further highlight the important factors that have to be considered for one to receive a high response rate in the survey; namely,

- “pre-notification sent by email,
- survey structure- an email with a clear research subject heading,
- professional invitation,
- short and concise question items, □ few or no open-ended questions, and
- a reminder” (p. 69).

As far as my study is concerned, the response rate was remarkably good since all the selected participants fully participated in both web-based surveys as well as interviews. I think the fact that the data collection process was pre-arranged with the ideal participants impacted the response rate. It should also be noted that the response rate met the needs of the study since participants were purposively selected. The fact that the phenomenon studied in this research

was of global interest motivated the participants or rather played a crucial role in ensuring an increased response rate (Saleh & Bista, 2017).

5.5 DEMOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF DATA

Literature defines demographic data analysis as collecting and examining the quantifiable statistics of a particular population (Connelly, 2013). In this section, I analysed the distinct demographic characteristics of the respondents against the outcomes of the quantitative research method used to reveal the impact of COVID-19 on the studying COs. I examined the demographic variables that included age, gender, and marital status, type of employment, parental status, number of children supported, and extended family responsibility. Saleh and Bista (2017) argue that demographic features influence the response rate in data analysis.

5.5.1 Age Group of Respondents

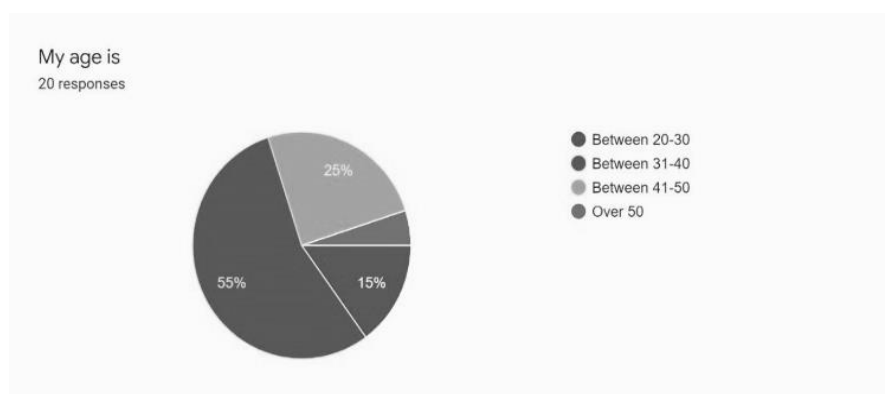


Figure 5.1: Age Group of Respondents

Figure 5.1 above illustrates the age categories of the respondents with most 55% (n=11) aged between 31 and 40, followed by 25% (n=5) aged between 41 and 50 as well as 15% (n=3) aged between 20 and 30, and lastly, the smallest category 5% (n=1) aged over 50.

5.5.2 Gender of Respondents

As shown in Figure 5.2, 70% (n=14) of COs who responded to my survey were males and 30% (n=6) were females. This could be related to the fact that in Durban-Westville Correctional Centre were mostly dominated by male officials since they house a huge percentage of male offenders.

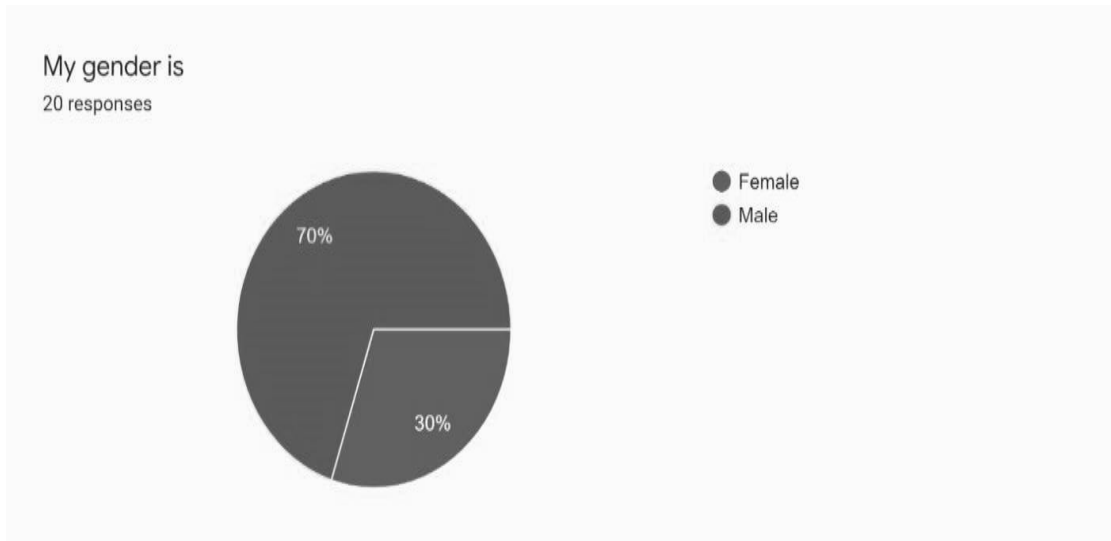


Figure 5.2: Gender of Respondents

5.5.3. Employment Contract

All twenty respondents were employed on a full-time basis and were part-time students.

5.5.4 Marital Status

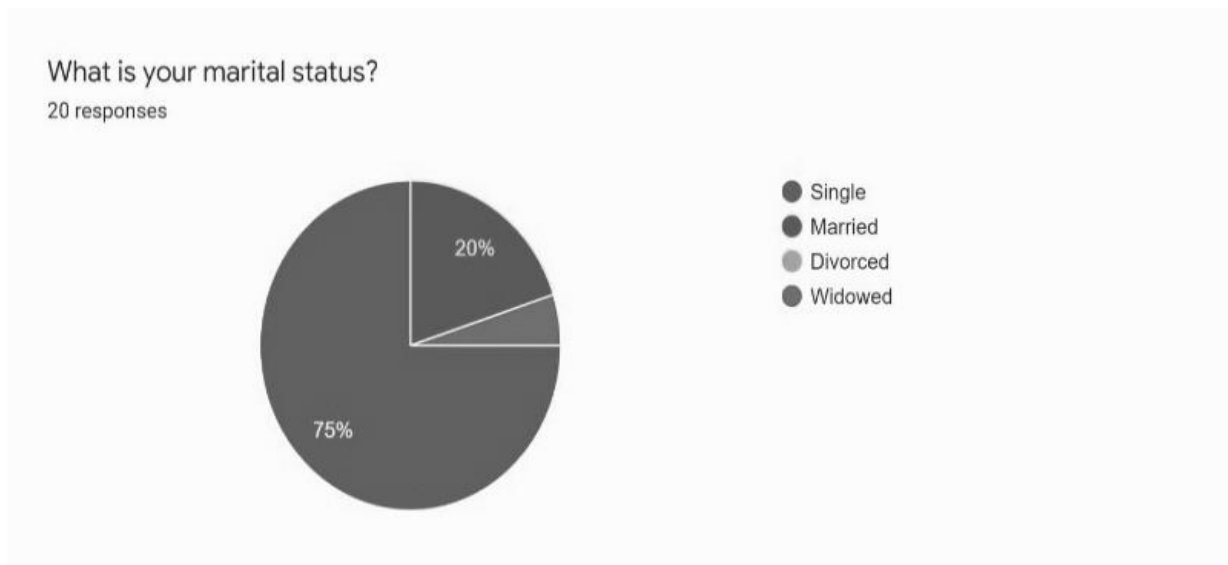


Figure 5.3: Marital Status

The question on marital status was solely intended on investigating the extent to which being married and full-time employed affected studies in the context of COVID-19. It emerged that most 75% (n=15) of the participants were single.

5.5.5 Parental Status and Number of Children Supported

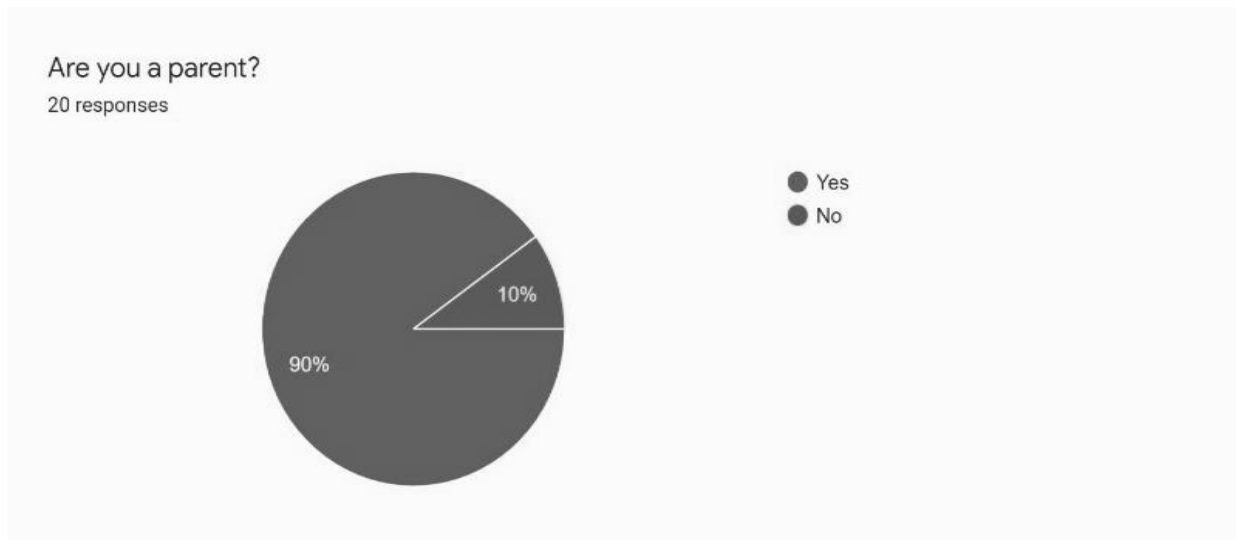


Figure 5.4: Parental Responsibility

It was discovered that 90% (n=18) of the participants were parents. In-depth knowledge about the impact parental responsibilities contributed to the study challenges was probed during one-to-one interviews. Figure 5.5 indicates that 10% (n=2) of the participants were not parents.

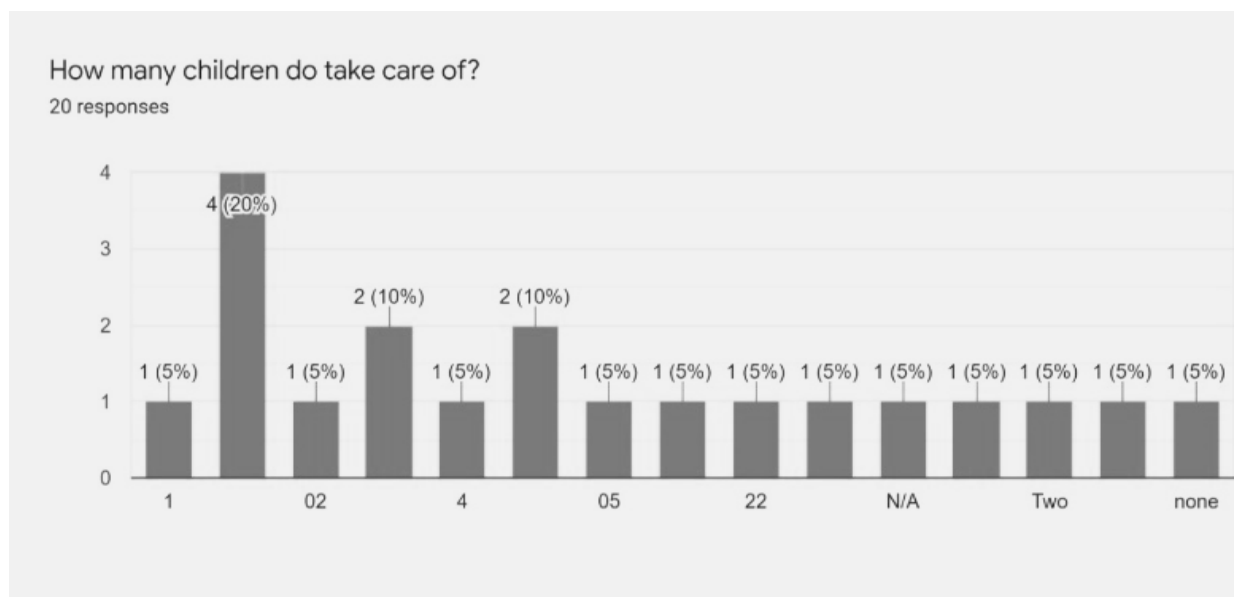


Figure 5.5: Child Support Responsibility

Figure 5.5 illustrates that 20% (n=4) of the respondents had one child each. The respondent that had the greatest number of children to look after had four children. Most of the children being cared for were very young, with respondents indicating ages of 1, 2, 4, 5 and 22 years.

5.5.6 Extended Family Responsibilities

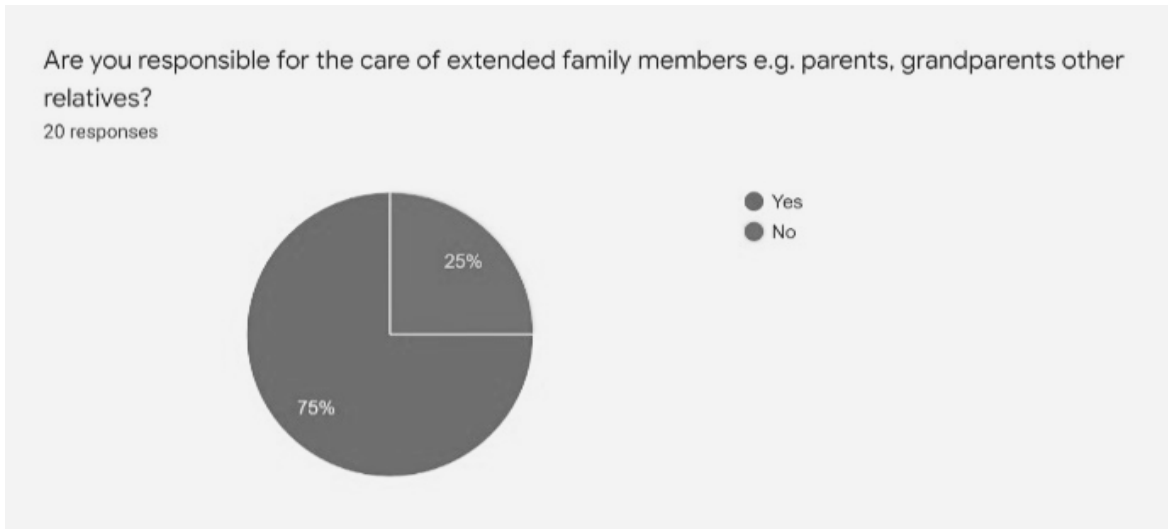
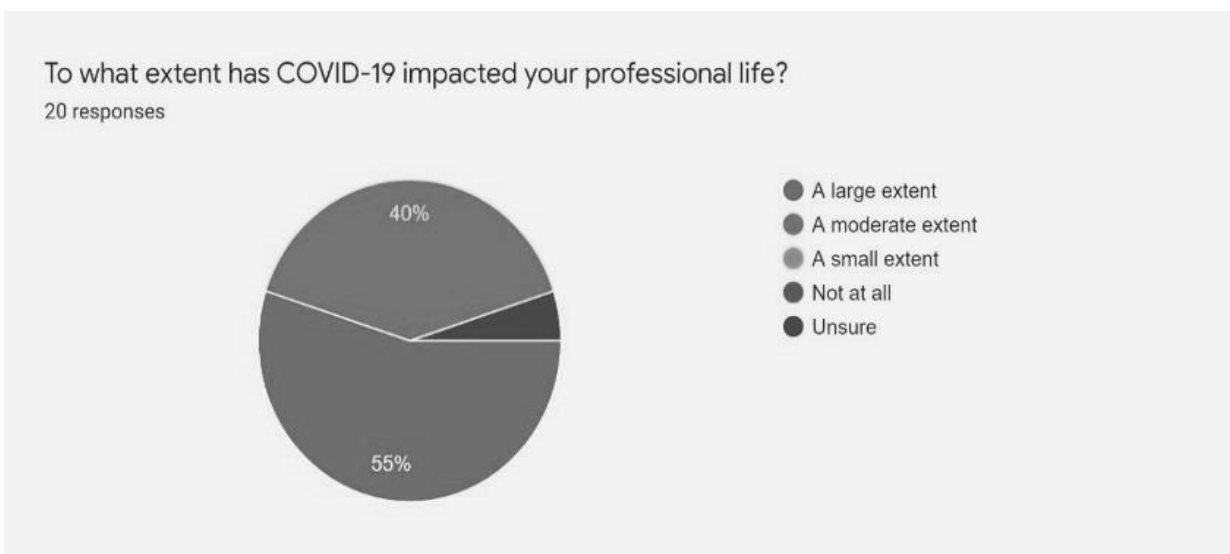


Figure 5.6: Extended Family Responsibility

In this question, the majority of respondents indicated that they had to take care of their extended family members, for example, parents, grandparents and other relatives. Precisely 75% (n=15) respondents appeared to carry such an extra burden. In other cultures, looking after extended families is a norm, and that in a way proves one to be more responsible. Most of the participants likely abide by this norm which could eventually have had an impact on their studies.

5.6 The Impact of COVID-19 on Studying COs' Professional Lives

Figure 5.7: Illustration of COVID-19 Effects on Professional Lives



All twenty respondents rated the impact of COVID-19 on their professional lives as illustrated on Figure 5.7 above. It should be noted that the majority of participants indicated that their professional lives were impacted to a large extent. This category constituted 55% (n=11) of the

participants. Forty percent 40% (n=8) indicated that their professional lives were affected to a moderate extent. Only 5% (n=1) were unsure of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on their work lives. Importantly no participant chose 'not at all' or to 'a small extent' when reporting on the impact of COVID-19 on their professional lives.

The impact of COVID-19 on professionals has been significant, as indicated by the accounts of the respondents. They described how the pandemic has affected their professional lives, highlighting the challenges brought about by the changes in the work environment. Respondent 1 specifically mentioned the need to adopt new ways of working online and practicing social distancing, which sometimes disrupts the rehabilitation process.

The sentiments expressed by Respondent 1 are supported by research findings that emphasize the adoption of online platforms and resources to facilitate distance learning. As educational institutions worldwide faced the need for remote education, they utilized existing technological resources to develop online learning materials for students across various academic fields (Kaur, 2020 as cited in Adnan & Anwar, 2020, p. 1).

These findings indicate that the impact of COVID-19 on professional lives has resulted in a shift towards virtual platforms and online work. While this transition has enabled continuity in education and work, it has also presented challenges, particularly in fields such as rehabilitation where physical interaction plays a crucial role.

As far as rehabilitation (the core business of the COs) is concerned, changes in this fashion would eventually jeopardise the end product of the process since rehabilitation entails a close interpersonal encounter that is aimed at bringing about "change within the offender and to change antisocial attitudes and behaviour" (Cilliers & Smit, 2007, p. 83). Traditional ways of working had to be altered to new patterns in order to accommodate COVID-19.

It further emerged that there were many disturbances in the COs' routine work most of which bore negative impact. One of the participants registered a concern regarding the compromise in service delivery due to restrictions brought about by this pandemic. For example, one participant said: "service delivery has been hindered since we were not working at full capacity". Other respondents also indicated that a new shift pattern that would help minimise the spread of the disease was necessitated. "A 50/50 rule was applied in terms of work attendance" and that impacted badly the professional lives of the COs since "duties were not conducted fully and professionally" as revealed by one participant. The 50/50 rule implied that half of the staff would be at work and another half be at home to avoid further infections. It also emerged that the level of exposure could not be overemphasised especially for the COs

who were responsible for escorting offenders to public hospitals and courts. One respondent even indicated that he was “stressed at work fearing to be infected” and therefore DCS was bound to look at the option of implementing a less risky shift or where possible allowing employees to work from home.

Several respondents cited the loss of colleagues which resulted in a dire shortage of personnel. They even reported that “one employee could be required to do work for three or four members due to shortage and could not be replaced”. One participant even said that the department suffered a “loss of the instructor”. Three of the respondents indicated that they were on a learnership programme and that programme got disturbed as well. These are their stories; “it reduced my full-time employment opportunities” Respondent 16. “My learnership was almost cancelled due to COVID...” Respondent 17. Respondent 19 had this to say, “The country was on lockdown, and I could not perform my assigned duties. I could not cover the syllabus at the specified time”.

5.6.1. The COs’ Response to the COVID-19 Impact on their Professional Lives

Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021, p. 134) emphasized the need for educational institutions to adopt alternative teaching and learning methods in order to mitigate the spread of the disease. Consequently, significant changes were implemented in the work environment, requiring individuals like the studying COs to adapt to online platforms for teaching and learning, while also reducing the frequency of group sessions to minimize the risk of infection. One participant explained, "I had to adapt to teaching and learning using online engines, also had to reduce the number of group sessions at work." These alterations in the work environment necessitated the adoption of new approaches to maintain a safe and healthy setting for all. The experiences of respondents 6, 8, and 15 aligned with previous research, as they expressed that adjusting to these new ways was challenging, demanding, and caused anxiety and stress.

However, organizing adult education for online learning posed significant challenges, as highlighted by the European Commission (2020, p. 21). This included transforming face-to-face activities into online formats, establishing an effective online learning environment, and ensuring the availability of necessary equipment and infrastructure. The difficulties faced in adapting to online learning and the associated technological requirements support the experiences expressed by participants.

In summary, the study conducted by Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) underscored the need for educational institutions to adapt to alternative teaching and learning methods during the

pandemic. The participants' expressions were consistent with previous research, which demonstrated the challenges and stress associated with adjusting to new ways of conducting activities. Nonetheless, some individuals exhibited resilience and were able to embrace the changes. The challenges faced in organizing online adult education further reinforced the difficulties encountered in transitioning to online learning.

I have noted that some respondents misinterpreted or rather misunderstood this question. Instead of telling us about how they responded to the impact of COVID-19, they told us about the manner they used the precautionary measures to curb the spread of the pandemic. Their responses revolved around how they adhered to the COVID-19 protocols as promulgated by the World Health Organisation (ILO, 2020, *European Commission Report*, 2020). By the way, the government gazetted certain regulations or protocols that were meant to, somehow, curb the spread and thereby ease the COVID-19 impact. Those protocols included wearing masks, washing hands, sanitising hands, screening, wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as wearing hand gloves.

COs responded to the COVID-19 impacts on their professional lives, and some responded about how they protected themselves using the above-mentioned protocols. One responded by saying, “always wear masks and wash hands with sanitizer”. Similar to that response, seven other respondents related their responses to the adherence to protocols. For example, Respondent 3 had this to say, “I responded positively and followed the COVID-19 precautions. Always wash hands, use sanitizer, and wear a mask at all times”. Respondent 5 said, “I ensured that COVID-19 protocols were observed”. Respondent 10 based his response on the contingency plan that was implemented in order to ease the workload as well as to strengthen security. For me, this response was more related to the operations of the organisation, same as Respondent 19 who said, “We had to work overtime when the country reopened”.

5.6.2 Support Provided by the Workplace

Of the 20 respondents, 19 responded to the above although Respondent 1 indicated that the employer did not provide any support at all. Most of the responses indicated that the employer provided the PPEs to curb the spread of the disease. Those PPEs included sanitizers, face masks, hand gloves as well as disposable aprons. In support of this notion, Respondent 14 said, “Our workplace provided us with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for example masks, gloves, sanitizers...” On top of that, officials were screened every morning as revealed by Respondent 5.

According to some respondents, the employer also ensured that a less risky shift pattern was implemented in order to avoid overcrowding. A 50/50 working model was introduced whereby half of the staff had to come to work and the other half be off for seven days in succession. For example, Respondent 12 said, “reduced workers to 50% in terms of roistering in order to mitigate the spread of the virus”. Respondent 16 responded by saying, “Is to work 7 days in and 7 days off in order for us not to pass COVID-19 from one division to another”. It also emerged that the employer made provision for quarantine, especially for the officials that were residing within the terrain of the institution. Respondent 12 highlighted that, “they reserved certain buildings for isolation and quarantine site”.

It also emerged that the employer conducted awareness campaigns by educating the workforce with any new prevailing information. More than that kind of empowerment, COs were provided with counselling through the services of an Employee Assistant Practitioner (EAP). According to Respondent 12, “When not feeling well the employer pays for testing”, especially when there were suspicions that the virus was acquired in the line of duty. According to Respondent 12, officials who showed symptoms of the virus were tested at state expense.

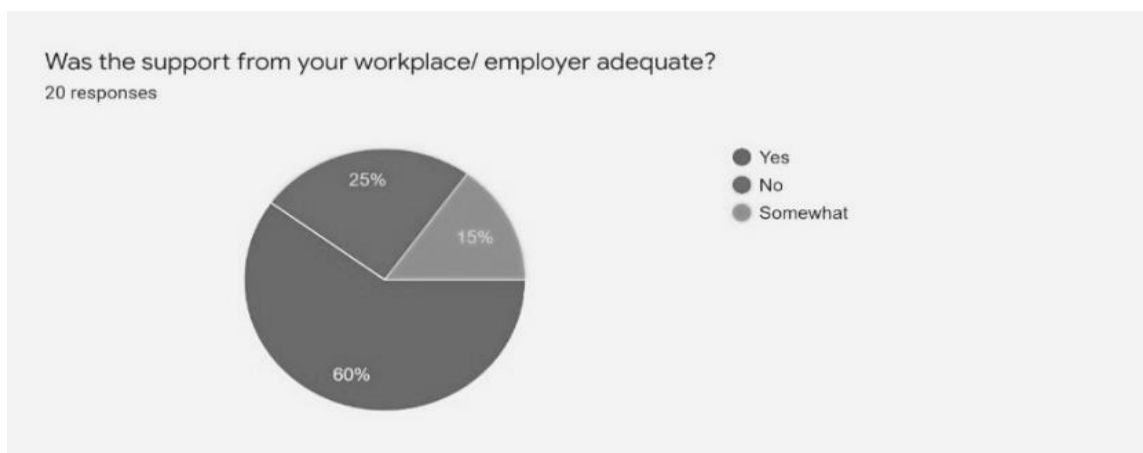


Figure 5.8: How adequate was the workplace support?

The findings indicated that 60% (n=12) of the participants perceived the support provided by the employer to be adequate and that accounted for the majority. Twenty-five percent (n=5) argued that the support of the employer was not adequate and 15% (n=3) indicated that “the support from the employer was “somewhat” adequate.

Almost all respondents indicated that the employer could have provided more support to their employees. Surprisingly, the kind of support that they mentioned as being needed more, was already made available by the employer as per the COs’ responses to the previous question.

For example, the employer was confirmed to be providing PPEs, and psychological support through counselling, changed shift to minimise the risk of getting infected, conducted a vaccination drive for officials, educated COs on new trends of COVID-19 and paid for employees who contracted COVID-19 in the line of duty. It should be noted that three of the twenty respondents commended the employer for providing adequate support. For example, Respondent 13 said, “Given the circumstances of how the pandemic outbreak was continuously evolving, they did the best they could”. Sharing similar sentiments, Respondent 18 had this to say, “They did what they could, which was much appreciated”.

5.6.3 The Impact of Social Distancing on the Studying COs’ Professional Relationships

The duties of the COs involve an interpersonal encounter with offenders whereby the COs facilitate developmental programmes that are aimed at addressing, to a certain extent, the causal factors that influenced the committing of crime (Vacca, 2004; DCS, 2005). Moran (2013) described this kind of relationship as “carceral geography” whose intention is to “contribute to positive social change” (p. 174).

Most respondents perceived social distancing as having compromised working standards in the professional relationships of the COs, which ultimately hampered service delivery especially the rendering of correctional programmes. Hence Respondent 16 had this to say, “Social distancing compromised service delivery. Ineffective rehabilitation programmes”. Since it was believed that the virus spreads easily in overcrowded environments, correctional programmes that require group sessions had to be ceased. It also emerged that even one-to-one consultation was affected because a 50/50 working strategy was adopted and escorting offenders to such sessions got affected. The fact that the department had implemented a 50/50 working pattern impacted negatively teamwork as well as parental relations with offenders. One of the respondents said that “It affected the elements of close bonding with colleagues; strategies such as team building were not possible”.

5.6.4 Professional Relationships that were perceived as being most affected

Most of the responses revolved around the compromise in service delivery resulting in an inability to carry out the constitutional mandate of DCS i.e. rehabilitation. In other words, Moran’s ‘carceral geography’ was compromised since congestion was prohibited. COs had to adopt new ways of facilitating rehabilitation which necessitated lesser interpersonal encounters. Respondent 12 said that “Conducting rehabilitation programmes was mostly affected because Correctional programmes are set to be facilitated in groups which was impossible with lockdown restrictions”. The professional relationship damage went as far as

denting the “member-offender relationship because offenders were scared to interact with the members as members were at a high risk of contracting the virus while traveling with public transport” as argued by Respondent 15. Social distancing even affected the relationships among fellow workers. The introduction of the 50/50 working principle had a good intention of minimising the spread of the virus but the disadvantage was that socialising and teamwork were threatened.

Literature reveals that strategies that were implemented to mitigate the spread of the virus “brought about massive health, social and economic impacts” (Tremblay, Castiglione, Audet, Desmarais, Horace, & Pelaez, 2021, p. 1). Relating this argument to the professional lives of the studying COs, it became evident that some of those strategies could not materialise inside the prison due to the nature of the prison environment. Some COs indicated that they were experiencing “a deficiency in safety needs due to insecurity, fear, and prolonged uncertainty about becoming infected as well as lack of support” (Tremblay *et al.*, 2021, p. 3).

It became apparent that the health of the studying COs and even that of their family members was at risk due to the COs’ working environment. This was because social distancing was impossible as a result of overcrowding inside the prison cells. The research also revealed that the social lives of the COs were affected by the suspension of all group activities that are useful in relieving stress. Suspension of the group activities had good intentions but on the other hand, it had detrimental effects on the moral well-being of the COs. People could not mingle and socialise, even gyms and sports and recreational activities were among those strategies. I think it would have been ideal to design a strategy that would suit the contextual experiences of a specific environment like the prison in this case.

According to the respondents, the changes in shift patterns were among the strategies implemented to lower the infection rate. For me, such changes were irrational for a place like prison that keeps offenders who do not want to be imprisoned. Less personal power was putting more constraints on the COs on duty and their lives were also put at stake. It should be noted that other types of leave of absence were not suspended. One would find that from the 50% that had to be on duty, some officials would take other types of leave and create further shortages which consequently hampered the facilitation of rehabilitation.

5.6.5 Themes Relating to the Impact of COVID-19 on COs’ Professional Lives

The following themes emerged prominently as impacts of COVID-19 on the professional lives of the studying COs.

- **Compromise in Service Delivery**

During the one-on-one interviews, it emerged that the changes that were implemented in the working patterns were detrimental to service delivery. DCS implemented a '50/50 working strategy' which allowed half of the staff to be at work at any given time to minimise the spread of the virus. The challenges that participants cited as having a detrimental impact on service delivery as a result of a change in work patterns included; shortage of manpower, security risk, exploitation of human capital, lack of proper planning, suspension of group activities, delayed services, inefficient workforce, etc. When I asked Participant 2 about the impact of COVID19 on her working patterns, she said that: "I could not have parole board sittings due to the minimisation of contacts with the offenders, leading to a backlog". Participant 1 cited the issue of a CO's job as classified under essential services and had this to say; "We could not work from home due to the nature of our job and that put us at risk. We had to work with minimal staff since some colleagues (who had had contacts with positive cases) had to go on quarantine or isolation and that made working difficult and stressful".

- **Untimely Loss of Colleagues and Relatives**

When probing further into the issues of stress, anxiety, frustration, and depression as cited by most participants, I discovered that COs were experiencing these emotional disorders as a result of bereavement that was happening at work as well as in their communities. They were losing colleagues, loved ones and relatives. "Whenever COs demise as a result of COVID-19, that derailed us emotionally and eventually amounted to shortage and stress," said Participant 6. Regarding the impact of COVID-19 on professional and personal lives, Participant 3 responded by stating that: "the experience of losing colleagues, friends and relatives left me 'doomed', not even knowing who I am. The worst thing is that COVID-19 restrictions prohibited us from even attending funerals, hence we had no closure".

- **Shifting Institutional Practices**

COVID-19 shook all aspects of the correctional system in multiple ways. Due to the threats posed by the virus, everyone was subjected to screening at the access control. The screening entailed checking on the temperature and answering survey questions on health status and that was done by professional nurses. Once someone was found to be having some flu symptoms or once the temperature was above 36, one was sent back home and advised to go for testing. According to the interviewees, the practices that were shifted included practising social distancing as far as practicable, suspension of visitation, suspension of group programmes, and granting amnesty to certain categories of offenders. The aim of shifting some institutional

practices was solely “to minimise the risk of spreading the disease”. (Pyrooz *et al.*, 2020, p. 10). Most of the interviewees argued that shifting institutional practices tallied with some gazetted COVID-19 protocols and regulations. That included the compulsory use of the personal protective equipment (PPE) that was supplied by the DCS.

- **Poor Work Performance**

The one-on-one interviews revealed that testing COVID-19 positive hampered work performance in the sense that when COs happened to have contact with a positive case, that individual had to go into quarantine. Further than that, “the potential positive case would have to be isolated waiting for results with a turnaround time of 14 days. That also hampered work performance of the COs,” answered Participant 4. Among other factors that were highlighted by interviewees as impacting negatively on work performance, they mentioned; suspension of recreational activities, fear of getting infected, heightened stress level, insecurity, low productivity, emotional instability, laziness, absenteeism, uncertainty, etc. Participant 2 had this to say, “Sometimes we had to be absent due to someone testing positive that affected work performance in meeting deadlines and submitting monthly stats”.

5.7. The Impact of COVID-19 on the Studies of the Studying COs

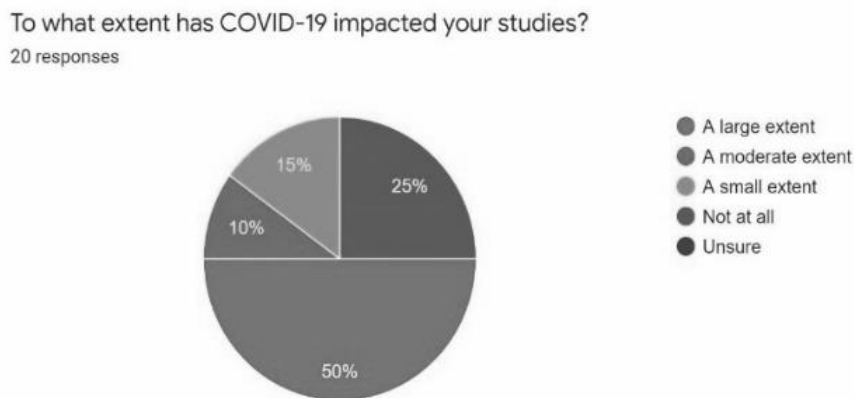


Figure 5.9: The Extent COVID-19 Impacted the Studies

Half the respondents (n=10) indicated that the pandemic impacted their studies to a large extent. A quarter of the participants chose ‘not at all’ which could be loosely interpreted as that COVID19 did not affect their studies. Fifteen percent (n=3) and 10% (n=2) of the respondents selected the ‘small extent’ and ‘unsure’, options respectively.

Most instances reported revolved around the anxiety brought about by the switch from the traditional way of teaching and learning to the online mode. Most respondents pointed out challenges related to the inability to adjust and adapt to new ways. For example, one participant

reckoned, “Online exams and assignments feedback came very late. The buying of data every day for zoom classes was costly”. The challenges of the network were also registered as having an impact. Respondent 17 pointed out that, “I was supposed to continue with my studies but because of network or online system was giving me a problem I ended up dropping out. Same as Respondent 19 who said, “I had to take a break from my studies during this period”. Another respondent indicated that, “the online classes and tutorial classes were introduced without training”. Two of the participants cited the challenges they experienced through the closure of libraries due to the national lockdown. Students could not access libraries to obtain textbooks and journals.

5.7.1 How the Studying COs responded to the COVID-19-related Studies’ Impacts

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of respondents adjusted positively to the new normal, while two participants dropped out of their studies due to the negative impact of the pandemic. A study conducted by Adnan and Anwar (2020) examined the effectiveness of online classes versus conventional classes in higher education in Pakistan during the pandemic. Their research revealed that desired outcomes were not achieved primarily due to technical and monetary issues, as a significant number of students lacked internet access. This finding is consistent with the argument presented by Almaiah et al. (2020, p. 4) who highlighted that the challenges of adopting e-learning as an alternative to traditional learning vary across countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed significant inequalities, particularly in countries like South Africa, where students residing in rural areas face greater difficulties compared to their urban counterparts due to the lack of digital infrastructure.

The study conducted by Adnan and Anwar (2020) provides empirical evidence supporting the participants' expressions regarding the effectiveness of online classes during the pandemic. The lack of internet access and the associated technical and monetary challenges hindered the desired outcomes of online education. Additionally, Almaiah et al. (2020) also supported the participants' views by emphasizing the differences in e-learning adoption challenges across countries. This suggests that the negative impact of the pandemic on education is not universal and can vary depending on the digital infrastructure and resources available in different regions.

5.7.2 The Kind of Support Provided by Various Institutions

Seventeen out of 20 respondents reported that institutions provided them with online support sessions and also supplied them with data. These were provided even during examinations. For example, one respondent said, “They gave us data for free to access information”. Another one

indicated that they even introduced them to online classes. Nevertheless, it is important and encouraging to note that very few respondents (3) reported that no support was provided.

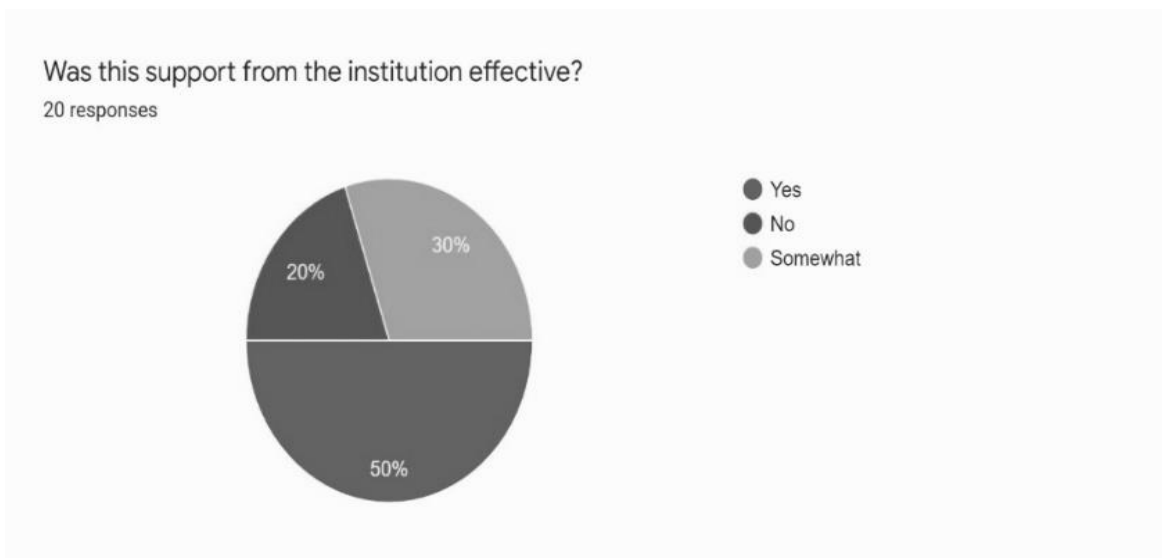


Figure 5.10: How effective was the support from the institution?

Fifty percent affirmed the support as being effective whereas 20% (n=4) had a negative opinion and 30% (n=6) said that support was 'somewhat effective'. The majority of the COs appeared to perceive support as achieving its purpose.

The feedback from various respondents indicates that educational institutions were expected to enhance students' abilities in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and provide them with necessary devices and data. Respondent 6 emphasized the importance of acquiring "basic computer skills," while Respondent 4 highlighted the need for laptops and an "updated IT support system in case of load shedding." Furthermore, Respondent 12 pointed out network difficulties during examinations, emphasizing the requirement for improved infrastructure. However, Respondent 13 expressed satisfaction with the support received from their institution.

These challenges were particularly evident among adult learners from vulnerable groups, who lacked digital competencies, access to ICT tools, and faced health-related obstacles. This research aligns with the findings of the European Commission (2020), which advocated for support structures to actively reach out to new adult learners and assist existing learners in effectively selecting and participating in online courses.

This research reveals that the challenges arising from the COVID-19 outbreak primarily revolved around the abrupt transition from face-to-face to online teaching and learning, for which few were prepared. There was no evidence of proper orientation on the use of technological gadgets, making it impossible for those lacking basic ICT skills to adapt. The

support provided by educational institutions also appeared to be insufficient. The immediate imposition of online learning without phased introduction or consideration of more accessible alternatives exacerbated the difficulties faced by learners. The technology used for online learning was not user-friendly, causing havoc for learners.

These experiences exposed serious inequities, demotivating learners with good intentions. Affordability and accessibility were common issues raised by participants, reflecting inequalities. Dube (2020, p. 152) argues that the government should prevent the widening of the global divide between the rich and the poor, as well as rural and urban areas, during COVID-19. This underscores the need to address inequalities in terms of network connectivity and affordability. It also emerged that not all institutions provided comprehensive or relevant support, placing the burden on students to adjust and adapt to online learning. This lack of proper support considering students' age, gender, skills, and context raises questions about the institution's expectations for student progress.

Overall, the research findings and participants' expressions highlight the challenges faced in the transition to online learning, the importance of ICT skills and support, and the need to address inequalities in accessibility and affordability. The European Commission's recommendations for support structures and Dube's call for addressing inequalities align with these findings.

5.7.3 Themes Relating to the Impact of COVID-19 on COs' Studies

During the process of interviews, I discovered that COs experienced a series of challenges that varied depending on their age, gender, knowledge, and skills as well as the context in which they studied (Kara, Erdogan, Kokoc, & Cagiltay, 2019). The following themes emerged from the findings generated from the interviews.

- **Online Learning and Remote Teaching**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions worldwide had to adapt to the crisis by implementing distance online e-learning and emergency remote teaching, with the exception of work-based learning programs (UNESCO, 2020; ILO, 2020; Kaur, 2020). Online learning, defined as "instruction delivered on a digital device that is intended to support learning" (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020, p. 2), became the primary mode of education. However, while online learning offers several advantages, it also presents challenges, including technological, pedagogical, and social difficulties (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020).

Participant 3, when asked about her response to the challenges of studying, confessed that her lack of technological skills led to failures in some modules and even made her contemplate

quitting due to discouragement. This experience aligns with Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo's (2020) study, which identified technological challenges as a barrier to effective online learning and emergency remote teaching. Therefore, addressing technological literacy gaps becomes crucial to ensure students can access and benefit from online learning platforms.

It is important to note that, despite the challenges in implementing online teaching, participants also acknowledged advantages and opportunities associated with this mode of education. Duraku and Hoxha (2020) argue that one of the advantages of online education is the rapid progress in digital education, which would normally take years to achieve. Additionally, Yokozeki (2020, as cited in Duraku & Hoxha, 2020) suggests that the shift to remote learning provides both teachers and learners with the opportunity to become stronger, more creative, and innovative.

Participant 4, a 56-year-old, shared their perspective on the rapid shift to online learning, stating that while others perceived it as a challenge, it provided them with an opportunity to learn online. They expressed gratitude for the chance to learn the online language, which they wouldn't have had at their age if it weren't for being a student during the COVID-19 pandemic. This sentiment reflects the idea that the transition to online learning, despite its difficulties, brought unexpected benefits and learning opportunities (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the adoption of online learning and emergency remote teaching in educational institutions worldwide. While challenges exist, particularly regarding technology, research studies support the participants' experiences and emphasize the need to address technological literacy gaps. However, participants also acknowledged the advantages and opportunities presented by online learning, highlighting the potential for rapid progress in digital education and the development of stronger creativity and innovation among teachers and learners. Participant 4's experience as a mature learner exemplifies the positive perspective on online learning's unforeseen benefits during these challenging times (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020; Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020; Yokozeki, 2020).

- **Inequalities**

It should be noted that inequalities were also identified as one of the themes that hampered studying COs. Some of the participants did not even have computers, let alone being connected to the internet. One of the participants indicated that he had to ask his children to help him connect to zoom and other internet programmes. Participant 3 appeared to have encountered more problems that she associated with her rural schooling background as compared to people that schooled in urban schools. She hails from the rural Eastern Cape and blames underdevelopment as having an impact on this.

According to the study conducted by Adnan and Anwar (2020) in Pakistan, it was evidenced that underdeveloped countries had difficulty accessing digital and distance learning amid COVID-19. The study concluded that “online learning cannot produce effective results in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan, where the vast majority of students are unable to access the internet due to technical and monetary issues” (Adnan & Anwar, 2020, p. 49). Tadesse & Muluye (2020, p. 160) further argue that “lack of internet connectivity, information technology, educational materials and digital technology skill, distance learning is difficult for teachers, students and families in developing countries”.

- **Adult Learner**

When asking the COs why they were studying, their reasons generally revolved around upward mobility, professional development and job enhancement. Research reveals that alongside the reasons for adult learners to study, there are “a variety of barriers that impede their participation” (Isaac, 2011, p. 1101). In this study, the COs were not immune to this since they also experienced barriers that deterred them from participating without limitations. From their responses, it emerged that most barriers were associated with their definition or character of being an ‘adult learner’.

Being an ‘adult learner’ alone appeared to have brought unique challenges in the studying COs as they alluded to in their interview responses. The uniqueness of the ‘adult learner’ characteristic identified as “having accumulated foundation of life experiences” was identified as having a deterrent effect in balancing their multiple responsibilities (Falasca, 2011, p. 584). Precisely their responsibilities at home and work ended up negatively impacting their progress. Asking participants whether they were able to balance work, studies and domestic responsibilities. They responded as follows:

Participant 1: I sometimes had to take unplanned time off from work so I could attend to my studies meanwhile creating a shortage at work, When I get back to work I usually find a backlog on my administrative work.

Participant 5: Ever since we had to change the mode of learning I started experiencing mental fog, I could not concentrate and I had trouble with my memory. I could understand that maybe it was because of this wicked problem of COVID-19.

Participant 6: I had problems with balancing my responsibilities, as a result, I suspended Semester

5.8. The Extent of COVID-19 Impact on the Studying COs' Personal Life

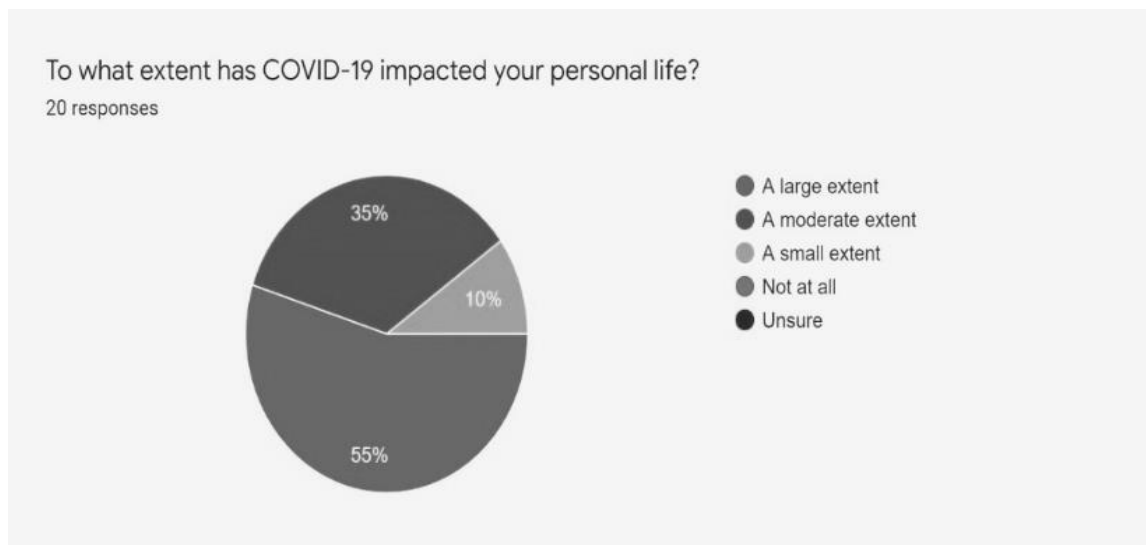


Figure 5.11: The Extent of COVID-19's Impact on the Studying COs' Personal Life

Fifty-five percent (n=11) of the participants showed that COVID-19 impacted their personal lives to a large extent. A second group of 35% (n=7) reported that COVID-19 impacted to a moderate extent in their personal lives. No one indicated that COVID-19 had no impact at all or that he/she was 'unsure'. These are the indications that COVID-19 impacted everyone in one way or another. Most respondents reported that their personal lives were mostly impacted by the bereavement they experienced. Most lost their loved ones, colleagues and relatives. One respondent said, "I lost many people that were closed to me and my family. Worse than all, one of my family members was buried twice". The body was exhumed after discovering that we buried the wrong body since a body came wrapped and we could not identify the body because of COVID-19 restrictions". Some respondents also indicated that the lockdown restrictions forbade them to meet their family members that resided in other provinces. Others could not even attend funerals because of restrictions in numbers exacerbated by fear to be infected. It emerged that some were even victims of the virus and another CO indicated that he lost a parent.

5.8.1 Responses of COs to the Impact of COVID-19 on their Personal Lives

Six respondents pointed out that they simply adjusted and accepted the situation as they could not change it. Respondent 4 said that: "I have accepted the reality of COVID, and then moved on". "It was a very overwhelming situation that shocked all of us" narrated Respondent 20. Respondent 9 even said that he was "emotionally drained". Four respondents indicated that they simply adhered to COVID-19 protocols as gazetted in the government regulations. It also emerged that others perceived the pandemic as a curse such that they resorted to praying for

God’s protection. Respondent 18 had this to say: “I had to pray about it because it was out of my control”.

5.8.2 Support Received with COVID-19 in Relation to COs Personal Lives

Some 50% of the participants pointed out that the support they received was not effective. Respondent 10 said that: “I can’t recall any except a motivation from my wife”. Respondent 5 indicated that he got vaccinated “in order to stay a little safer”. On a positive note, few respondents indicated that they received support like counselling and getting assisted with funeral arrangements during their bereavement.

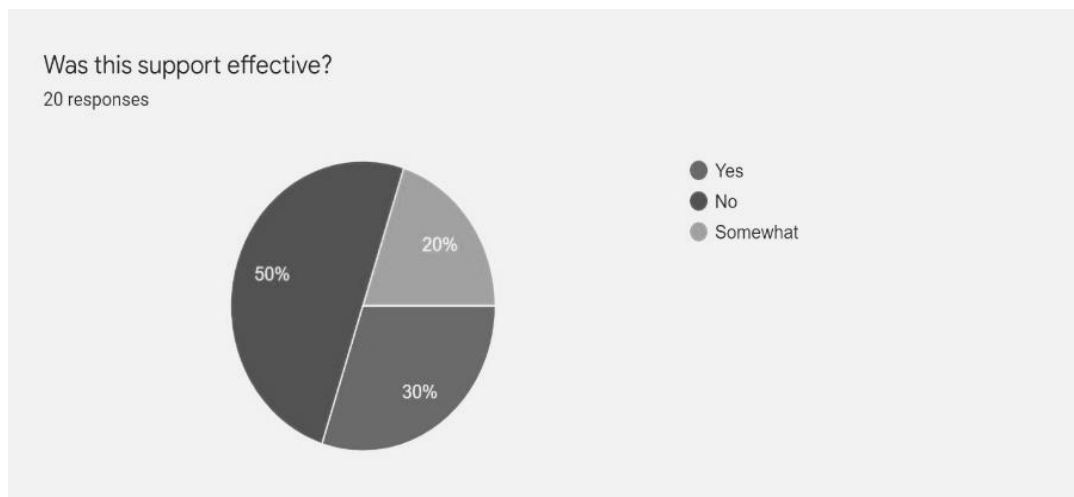


Figure 5.12: Support Received with COVID-19 in Relation to COs’ Personal Lives

Figure 5.12 illustrates that 50% (n=10) of the respondents said ‘No’ to the effectiveness of the support. Thus, implying 50% (n=10) of respondents indicated that the support was not effective at all and only 20% (n=4) said “yes” the support was effective. Thirty percent (n=6) were not sure hence they chose: “somewhat”. About 70% (n=14) of the respondents indicated that they got the best support from their family members which included parents, wives, fiancés and siblings. Others indicated that they got the best support from their friends, colleagues and employers. Sadly, three respondents indicated that they did not receive any support at all.

According to Tremblay *et al.* (2021, p. 3), “contextualised experiences and meaning attributed to COVID-19” did not receive remarkable attention in mitigating the impact of the pandemic and yet it affected individual personal lives. Tremblay *et al.* (2021, p. 3) further argue that “capturing a deeper understanding of current lived realities of those affected by the pandemic” was going to be useful in mitigating the spread of the virus. In other words, understanding the lived experiences of individual participants could remedy the impact of COVID-19. It is

therefore imperative to theorise the challenges experienced by the studying COs in order to come up with a possible remedy for tomorrow should a similar crisis engulf the globe.

The findings of this study indicated that the personal lives of all participants got impacted in one way or another but little is said about the intervention of the employer in normalising the situation. The findings suggest that the studying COs experienced the impact of COVID-19 in all spheres of their lives as people that had multiple roles but the majority received the best support from close family members. Very little indicated that they got support from colleagues or the employer and yet these people spent most time at work. For me, the employer should open up platforms whereby every employee shares their lived experience about COVID-19 impact. This should be beyond those that became sick of COVID-19 only or those who experienced the bereavements of their immediate relatives and friends through the pandemic. With all the experiences alluded to by participants, it is doubtful that the core function of rehabilitation was effective. One may not perform well under duress unless proper attention is given to one's problem.

5.8.3 Themes Relating to the Impact of COVID-19 on COs Personal Lives

The outcomes of the survey confirmed that COVID-19 impacted everyone's life in one way or another with 55% proclaiming that it impacted them to a large extent. Those outcomes were supplemented by the findings acquired during semi-structured interviews. Below are the themes that were identified as impacting the COs' personal lives.

- **Adoption of Specific Behaviour Change**

Soon after the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, the government announced a total shutdown to be implemented in order to flatten the curve and control the transmission of the disease. That was going to compel everyone to be confined at home except those who performed essential services. The lockdown strategy contributed a great deal towards building stronger connections to families and intergenerational connections which for many families was impossible (Morrow-Howell, Galucia, & Swinford, 2020). Interestingly one participant once witnessed a scenario whereby a younger person assisted the older one in the use of online technology.

The participants also stressed the point of protecting one another even while staying at home which could only be achieved by adhering to COVID-19 protocols. "I made sure that my family and I adhered to the rules and regulations of COVID-19 and that we had everything that we needed in case one had to go on isolation," said Participant 1. In complement to this, Participant

2 had this to say: “I stopped shaking hands and hugging people. I kept recommended social distance of two meters. That is how I protected myself, friends and family from getting infected.” Participant 3 responded as follows: “I always wash my hands according to the protocol, because this is the most important measure of protection. I always wear a face mask and also encourage my children at home to adhere to protocols”. All six participants described their adherence to COVID-19 protocols as “perfect”

- **Adverse Health and Well-being Effects**

According to Lovric *et al.* (2020, p. 1), COVID-19 is the “latest pandemic with a high rate of morbidity and mortality worldwide” that has developed rapidly over a short space of time. The research has revealed that young adults are more likely to be infected and that the elderly are most vulnerable. To lessen the chances of getting infected, one has to be extra cautious about his health and avoid crowded places hence social distancing was adopted as one of the strategies to curb COVID-19 transmission. Upon asking my interviewees about the disease control strategies they had in place to mitigate chances of getting infected, this is how Participant 5 responded: “I knew the elderly are the most vulnerable group and I was worried greatly about my 84-year mom. I did all I could to make sure she was protected and she survived”. Participant 3 said: “I strictly kept mom at home, bought home remedy ingredients, kept her clean and tidy with her face mask properly worn”. Most participants sounded so concerned about older family members.

With regard to the practising of social distancing in crowded places like the prison, it became apparent that “due to overcrowding, social distancing was impractical” as revealed by Participant 4. Literature reveals that the risk of transmission to health professionals working in hospitals is unavoidable and “poses a serious threat to nursing students” (Lovric *et al.*, 2020, p. 2). Lovric *et al.* (2020, p. 1) argue that the morbidity and mortality crisis witnessed by nursing students in hospitals “harm them psychophysically and academically”.

- **Anxiety and Stress**

From all the responses the terms ‘anxiety’ and ‘stress’ have always been cropping up. In all challenges that were registered as having impacted the studying COs, anxiety and stress were mentioned. I then asked some probing questions on this, to which participants responded: Participant 1: “Untimely death of loved ones, colleagues and friends therefore it took a lot of emotional strain”.

Participant 2: Wellness programmes were suspended even gyms were closed. I was emotionally unstable.

Participant 3: Fear of getting infected. Had no choice but had to be at work.

Participant 4: Suffered from the first wave. Had fear of the infection, with more concern for older family members.

Participant 5: Experienced shortage of food, could not do glossaries since most shops were closed. Was unable to go and check on my cattle on the farm because of restricted movements.

Participant 6: Experienced financial hardships. Most people lost their jobs. Transport and other businesses were closed down.

It should be noted that other than the above challenges, the role of the state was also perceived as having caused anxiety and stress. The interviewees unequivocally lambasted the state for its intervention which according to their explanation was “delayed and insufficient”. “I don’t think the population is getting accurate data on the actual numbers of infected and deceased. It may be a panic prevention measure”, said one of the participants. The study by Lovric *et al.* (2020) found the state to have not played its role in disseminating the information regarding the transmission of the virus. “The spread of information on social media and risky behaviour of the population” was associated with the inefficiency of the state in disseminating information regarding the spread of the virus (Lovric *et al.*, 2020, p. 16).

5.9 Chapter Conclusion

Chapter 5 dealt with the generation, presentation and analysis of data quantitatively and qualitatively. The reader witnessed a cross-sectional, web-based survey being conducted using an instrument called Google Survey Questionnaire, which generated quantitative findings. The reader also witnessed the use of Semi-structured Interviews as means to generate qualitative findings. These quantitative and qualitative findings were generated from the COs, who, during COVID-19 pandemic were studying in institutions of higher learning and also had other responsibilities. After collecting the raw information, the data were then analysed, checked for commonalities and presented demographically and thematically. Themes were then identified and formulated out of the commonalities and other semantical meanings that were extracted from the raw data. All the findings and their interpretations were explored in relation to the research questions and the objectives of the study. The following chapter will expand on the issue of deductive analysis whereby the concepts of Hargreaves’s theory of ‘emotional geographies’ (a theoretical framework found suitable for the study) will be used to theorise the research findings.

CHAPTER 6: THEORISING THE DATA

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, I presented the demographic details of participants as well as thematic findings generated using GSQs and qualitatively using S-SIs. Being guided by the key research questions as well as the research purpose, I analysed the data by interpreting the responses of the respondents, identified commonalities, and formulated themes. In analysing the data, I used an inductive approach whose primary purpose is to “allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238).

Chapter 6 will discuss and theorise the findings of the research study in relation to the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework of this study. In other words, I am going to analyse the research findings using the theoretical framework of Hargreaves emotional geographies. In presenting my discussion, I am going to briefly discuss the data analysis process, summarise the demographic and thematic analysis and lastly discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical framework. In essence, Chapter 6 is going to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on COs using the theory of ‘emotional geographies’.

6.2 Exploring the Findings Using the Theory of ‘Emotional Geographies’

As indicated in Chapter 3, Hargreaves’ theory of ‘emotional geographies’ was identified as a framework to guide this research study. The concept of ‘emotional geographies’ entails: “the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/ or distance in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and colour the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other” (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1061).

Originally Hargreaves’ theory of ‘emotional geographies’ was concerned with the study of emotional symbiotic relations that develop through the living togetherness of learners, teachers and parents in a school environment. Applying Hargreaves’ theory of ‘emotional geographies’ in the prison environment would be investigating the emotional relations influencing the challenges of studying COs. In other words, it would be looking closely at the emotional relations that may influence the living togetherness among peer COs, or between COs and offenders, or offender relatives as well as with the prison environment itself.

According to Hargreaves (2000, p. 815), the concept of emotional geographies helps one “identify support for and threats to emotional bonds and understanding arising from forms of distance or closeness in people’s interactions or relationships”. In this study, I investigated the

factors that supported or threatened the emotional relations of all stakeholders in the rehabilitation process including the habitat during COVID-19. Hargreaves' 'emotional geographies' should not be confused with Moran's (2013) 'carceral geographies' which specifically relates to the 'spatial geographies' and experiences of the incarcerated people in the prison environment (2013). Carceral geographies' is more concerned about "how prisoners adapt to the prison life" (Crewe *et al.*, 2013, p. 1). While the study of 'carceral geographies' encompasses a broad range of topics related to the spatial dimensions of punishment and incarceration, including the location and design of prisons, it does indeed also explore the lived experiences of prisoners within these spaces. This can include examining how prisoners adapt to the physical and social environment of the prison, as well as the effects of confinement on their well-being and relationships with others. In this sense, the field of carceral geographies is concerned with both the macro-level structures and policies that shape the prison system, as well as the micro-level experiences of those who are subject to it.

The 'emotions' referred to in Hargreaves' 'emotional geographies' theory are those described by Lawson (2005, p. 1) as "feelings that colour our lives and allow us to experience all the joys and sorrows of life". According to Hargreaves (2000, p. 816) 'emotional geographies' are influenced by "physical, moral, socio-cultural, professional and political" aspects "and their consequences" which give rise to either positive or negative emotions. In this section, I am going to embark on the emotional geographies that affected COs in their three spheres of life, i.e. as professionals, as students as well as in their personal lives.

6.2.1 Physical Geographies

For Hargreaves (2001), the physical aspect of 'emotional geography' refers to the physical encounter that establishes bonds among the stakeholders. Hargreaves (2001) further argues that "the emotional understanding and the establishment of emotional bonds require proximity and some measure of intensity, frequency and continuity in interaction" (p. 1070) According to Lasky (2000) and Hargreaves, (2000, p. 816) physical geographies could be described as "formalised and episodic encounter replacing the possibility of relationships between the teacher and the student or teachers and parents". Applying Lasky's argument to the prison setting, physical geographies would relate to any emotional encounter that emanates from the physical interpersonal interactions among offenders, between offenders and COs and among COs or between any of the above-mentioned entities and the prison environment itself. I think the emotional relations of closeness and distance in that regard would be judged by the influence that particular encounter has in those relations or rather whether emotional understanding is achieved or not through that encounter.

- **Physical Geographies Affecting the Professional Lives of the COs**

The physical geographies that affect professional lives relate to the mutual interaction that creates closeness or distance in the line of performing duties. Therefore, here I shall be looking at emotional relations that affect the working lives between offenders and COs. As discussed in the introductory chapter, rehabilitation is a process of bringing about change to the lives of the offenders and it is aimed at correcting the offending behaviour and promoting of social responsibilities (Cilliers & Smith, 2007, DCS, 2005). In all rehabilitation programmes, offenders and COs physically interact (the COs being facilitators and offenders being clients or learners or players). The rehabilitation programmes vary from individual ones to group activities. Group activities include programmes like social work group programmes, Sports, Recreation Arts and Culture (SRAC) programmes, church services, schooling programmes, and other programmes that have mass participation. As far as closeness or distancing of emotional relations are concerned, any factor that threatens the practice of these activities is interpreted as causing physical distance whereas if it promotes practice it is interpreted as causing physical closeness.

The findings of this study revealed that the changes that had to be implemented in order to mitigate the transmission rate created physical distance and negatively impacted emotional relations to the working lives of the COs. The first and foremost was the suspension of the group activities in compliance with social distancing regulations. Suspension of such beneficial group activities impacted the emotional relations of both offenders and COs thereby creating physical distance between them. One of the respondents said, “I also had to reduce the number of group sessions at work” in order to lessen the chances of infecting the unaffected. Responding about the impact of changes effected, Respondent 1 said, “As far as rehabilitation (core business of the COs) is concerned changes of this fashion would eventually jeopardise the end product of the process since rehabilitation entails a close interpersonal encounter”.

Like all other institutions, the Department of Correctional Services also applied certain strategies in mitigating the rate of rapid transmission. Among the strategies that were implemented was a new shift system that necessitated 50% of officials to be on duty at any given time. The working togetherness among fellow COs got tempered with and that resulted in service delivery being compromised. One respondent even said that “service delivery has been hindered since we were not working at full capacity”. The implementation of the shift system created physical distance emotional relations between COs and other COs.

- **Physical Geographies Affecting Study Lives of the COs**

The study revealed that the majority of the participants indicated that the pandemic impacted their studies to ‘a large extent’. Most cases revolved around the replacement of face-to-face traditional ways of learning with remote online learning. That alone created a physical distance emotional geographies affecting the studies of the COs. It should be noted that the switching over to the new mode of learning came unexpectedly and without proper capacitation. Another respondent indicated that, “the online classes and tutorial classes were introduced without training”. The physical distance emotional geographies were also evidenced by the suspension of lecturers at the universities and all other educational institutions whereby bonding among all stakeholders was challenged. Respondent 19 said that he: “had to take a break from studies during this period”. Another respondent reported that he failed dismally.

It also emerged that the changes in the education system exposed inequalities among students since some could not afford the online system and others could not access the network due to lack of connectivity. One had this to say; “The buying of data every day for Zoom classes was costly”. One of the participants indicated that she nearly quit because she could not access online classes. Another participant reported that he dropped off because of the network challenges he experienced during exams. All the above points created physical distance emotional relations between COs and their studies.

It should be noted that not all instances negatively affected the studying COs with regard to their studies. The majority of respondents indicated that the support they received from their institutions was overwhelming. Seventeen out of 20 respondents reported that institutions provided them with online support sessions and also supplied them with data. These were provided even during examinations. For example, one respondent said, “They gave us data for free to access information”. Another one indicated that they even introduced them to online classes. These responses, according to me, created physical closeness between the COs and their studies.

- **Physical Geographies Affecting Personal Lives of the COs**

According to the findings, COVID-19 impacted the COs’ personal lives in different ways and no one reported that it did not affect them at all. Most personal distance influences were related to the bereavements the COs encountered during COVID-19 that were due to the pandemic. One respondent said, “I lost many people that were close to me and my family. Worst of all, one of my family members was buried twice. The body was exhumed after discovering that we buried the wrong body since a body came wrapped and we could not identify the body because of COVID-19 restrictions”. Such experiences created a personal physical distance between

COs and the environment. “It was a very overwhelming situation that shocked all of us,” narrated Respondent 20.

The second aspect that was reported to have caused personal physical distance to the COs was the lockdown restrictions which forbade people to move or to visit relatives and families as well as restrictions on the numbers of funeral attendees. All other group activities were suspended and that included sporting activities and other events that involved crowded people. Events with mass participation were reported to have been suspended. Suspension of activities that were of great assistance in addressing boredom and stress created personal physical distancing for COs who suffered stress due to the pandemic.

On a different note, the same lockdown restrictions were reported to have created personal physical openness within families in instances where it was evidenced to contribute to strengthening family connections as cited by one of the participants. Personal closeness emotional relations were found to have prevailed between COs and praying to God also emerged as a coping mechanism. Respondent 18 had this to say: “I had to pray about it because it was out of my control”. It also emerged that others perceived the pandemic as a curse such that they resorted to praying for God’s protection. The adoption of social distance prohibited most interpersonal activities thereby creating personal distance among stakeholders of rehabilitation.

6.2.2 Moral Geographies

According to Hong-Biao and John (2006, p. 4), moral geographies relate to the instances “where people pursue common purposes and feel a sense of accomplishment together, or where they are defensive about their own purposes and unconcerned about the purposes of others”. Hargreaves (2001) argues that moral closeness or distance is triggered by either achievement or failure to achieve the purpose. For example, “achievement and success bring satisfaction and pleasure” and that amounts to openness (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1066). Negative emotions that amount to ‘moral distance’ occur “when purposes are being threatened or have been lost, resulting in loss, grief and bereavement” (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1067).

- **Moral Geographies Affecting the Professional Lives of the COs**

Emanating from the findings, moral closeness and distance have been evidenced in several instances. Successes attained in lowering the infection rate with the aid of adhering to COVID19 protocols and by implementing screening at the access control points got appreciated by employees and thereby creating moral closeness between the COs and the employer. It also emerged that the employer supplied the COs with PPE and also conducted

COVID-19 awareness sessions as means to sensitise them in line with the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. That signalled how caring the employer was and contributed to moral closeness to the COs professional lives. Supplying PPE in a way created professional moral closeness between the COs and their employer. The entire support that was provided by the employer contributed a great deal to creating moral closeness in professional relations. It further emerged that there were many disturbances in the COs' routine work most of which bore negative impact and thus contributed to professional moral distance in their emotional relations.

Participant 1 said: "I sometimes had to take unplanned time off from work so I could attend to my studies meanwhile creating a shortage at work. When I get back to work I usually find a backlog of my administrative work". The strain that was experienced due to the shift pattern as well as the impact caused by absenteeism as a result of being a potential case and in case one had contact with a positive case, resulted in distance emotional influence among officials. It should be noted that 'emotional geographies' address how the studying COs' emotions "are embedded in the conditions and interactions of their work" (Hargreaves 2001, p. 1057).

- **Moral Geographies Affecting Study related Lives of the COs**

The findings revealed that instances of positive and negative moral geographies that affected study lives were found to have prevailed in my study. Here, I refer to instances of failure and success in achieving study goals which in a way caused moral closeness or distancing between the COs and their studies. All instances of failure and success were reported to have been based on the switch to online distance education. The changes taught the COs new ways of doing things. The first participant pointed out that; "I had to adapt to teaching and learning using online engines". That adaptation implies moral closeness in relation to COs' study lives. Similarly, Respondents 6, 8 and 15 indicated that adjusting to new ways was tedious, strenuous and gave anxiety and stress. The latter response indicates that new ways of doing things also created moral distance in the study lives of the COs.

It also came up that issues of stress and anxiety cropped up creating moral distance in the study lives of the COs. Upon probing further, Participant 5 argued that: "Ever since we had to change the mode of learning, I started experiencing mental fog, I could not concentrate and I had trouble with my memory. I could understand that maybe it was because of this wicked problem of COVID-19".

- **Moral Geographies Affecting Personal Lives of the COs**

The support that the COs reported to have received from family members, friends, colleagues and siblings also amounted to closeness in terms of moral emotions. Despite the misfortunes brought about by COVID-19, a handful number of respondents responded positively to the new ways of doing things hence they were able to adjust. One of the participants even pointed out that “I accepted that it is real and moved on” and another mentioned that “I realigned myself completely”. The above responses indicate that closeness in terms of moral geographies prevailed in the COs personal lives.

It should be noted that the issues of stress, anxiety, frustration and depression were cited by most participants as creating moral distance in emotional understanding. I discovered that COs were experiencing these emotional disorders as a result of bereavements that were happening at work as well as in their communities. They were losing colleagues, loved ones and relatives. “Whenever COs demised as a result of COVID-19, that derailed us emotionally and eventually amount to shortage and stress,” said Participant 6. Participant 3 responded by stating that: “the experience of losing colleagues, friends and relatives left me ‘doomed’, not even knowing who I am. The worst thing was that COVID-19 restrictions prohibited us from even attending funerals, hence we had no closure”. The grief that the COs were experiencing and which resulted in dire stress and anxiety amounted to distance moral influence. One participant even said that the department suffered “loss of the instructor”. The counselling services that were offered by the EAP at work also provided comfort to the stressed Cos.

6.2.3 Socio-cultural Geographies

Sociocultural geographies relate to the instance where “differences of culture, race, gender and class can create distance between people, and lead them to be treated as a stereotype” (HongBiao & John, 2006, p. 4). The most distinctive culture that Crewe, *et al.* (2013, p. 1) identify with prison life is that of “mutual mistrust, fear, aggression and barely submerged violence”. In terms of emotional geographies theory, the above-mentioned emotional behaviours logically create distance in interpersonal relations which in this case could mean among all inhabitants within the prison environment.

- **Socio-cultural Geographies Affecting Professional Lives**

As far as the research findings are concerned, the changes in the working patterns as well as the implementation of the shift pattern that necessitated that half of the staff are on duty at any given time posed a great risk to the security of the prison. The minimal staff complement was not that effective in ensuring that the prison culture was stabilised. The change in shift pattern

implied some adjustments in other professional lives of COs, some of which impacted negatively the core function of rehabilitation. The fact that the 50% principle necessitated at least half a number of personnel to be at work as a means to flatten the infection rate put more strain on those on duty. Respondent 12 said, “Reduced workers to 50% in terms of roistering in order to mitigate the spread of the virus, put more strain”. That created distance with sociocultural practices as there was not much efficiency in maintaining tightened security.

According to Crewe *et al.* (2013, p. 9), “Members of a performance team rely on each other to maintain the performative projection”. In other words, the dire shortage that was reported to have engulfed COs during COVID-19 was disrupting the collective performance in dealing with adverse prison culture which would impact negatively the professional lives of the studying COs. It also emerged that the employer made provision for quarantine, especially for the officials that were residing within the terrain of the institution. Respondent 12 stated that, “they reserved certain buildings for isolation and quarantine site” and that contributed to professional closeness in socio-cultural geographies.

- **Socio-cultural Geographies Affecting Study Lives of COs**

The findings also revealed that COs experienced a series of challenges that varied depending on their age, gender, knowledge, and skills as well as the context in which they study (Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoc, & Cagiltay, 2019). The nature of COs being adult learners also brought challenges in balancing between studies, work and family responsibilities. The uniqueness of an ‘adult learner’ characteristic identified as “having accumulated foundation of life experiences” was identified as having a deterrent effect in balancing their multiple responsibilities (Falasca, 2011, p. 584). Literature relates to those kinds of challenges as being barriers for adult learners which pose threat to the study lives of COs and thereby causing socio-cultural distance. When asking Participant 3, how she responded to studies-related challenges as an adult learner, she indicated that her “technological illiteracy made her fail some modules”. She further indicated that she became so discouraged that she even thought of “quitting”.

The study also revealed that despite the challenges in the implementation of the online teaching method, the participants acknowledged some advantages and opportunities which for me was socio-cultural closeness in terms of studies. Supporting this notion, Duraku and Hoxha (2020) argue that one of the advantages of using an online mode of education “is rapid progress in the field of digital education which would take years under normal circumstances” (p. 2). It also emerged that shifting to the remote learning format “gives teachers and learners the opportunity to become stronger, more creative and innovative” (Yokozeki, 2020, as cited in Duraku and Hoxha, 2020, p. 2). Upon interviewing the participants, Participant 4, a 56-year-old CO had

this to say, “Although others perceive the rapid shifting of learning/teaching from traditional face-to-face to distance online e-learning as a challenge, on the other hand, it opened another opportunity for me to learn online. At my age, I would not get time to learn the online language had it not been that I was a student during COVID-19. For me, this was a blessing in disguise”.

- **Socio-cultural Geographies Affecting Personal Lives of COs**

It also emerged that the employer conducted awareness campaigns by educating the workforce with any new prevailing information about the pandemic. More than that kind of empowerment, COs were provided with psychological support and counselling through the services of an Employee Assistant Practitioner (EAP). According to Respondent 12: “When not feeling well, the employer pays for testing”, especially when there are suspicions that the virus was acquired in the line of duty. According to Respondent 12, officials who showed symptoms of the virus were tested at state expense. These socio-cultural geographies indicate how concerned the employer was with their employees which in a way was positive and eventually caused socio-cultural closeness in emotional relations.

One other remarkable step taken by the employer was that of ensuring that the COs’ personal lives would not be endangered while on duty. Steps included changes in shift pattern to minimise the risk of getting infected; conducting a vaccination drive for officials, educating COs on new trends of COVID-19, and paying for employees who contracted COVID-19 in the line of duty. It should be noted that three of the twenty respondents commended the employer for providing adequate support. For example, Respondent 13 said, “Given the circumstances of how the pandemic outbreak was continuously evolving, they did the best they could”. Sharing similar sentiments, Respondent 18 had this to say, “They did what they could, which was much appreciated”. The above instances also relate to the socio-cultural closeness in the emotional relations between the COs and the employer.

6.2.4 Professional Geographies

The professional ‘emotional geographies’ exist where issues of discrimination among professionals themselves as colleagues as well as with clients are evidenced.

- **Professional Geographies Affecting Professional Lives of the COs**

The implementation of a ‘social distance’ strategy which resulted in the suspension of the group rehabilitation programmes and all other interpersonal activities amounted to professional distance influence. The suspension of visitation also amounted to professional distance influence since Crewe, *et al.* (2013, p. 14) perceives visit rooms as ‘emotion zone’ described as “marginal spaces where many of the normal rules of the prisoner society were partially

suspended, permitting a broader emotional register than was possible in its main residential areas”. According to Crewe, *et al.*, (2013, p. 2), ‘emotion zones’ “enable the display of a wider range of feelings than elsewhere in the prison”, which points out that in terms of emotional geographies, ‘emotion zones’ relate to professional openness.

Literature reveals that the “recurrent emotional experiences that people have in their respective occupations affect their identities and their relationships with clients in distinctive ways” (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 1057). The emotional relations that used to emerge between COs and offenders, peer COs and studying COs as well as between offenders themselves and with the environment amounted to openness professional influence. With the suspension of such interpersonal activities, a professional distance influence was created. Rehabilitation is an interpersonal process whereby the COs sought to facilitate developmental programmes that were aimed at addressing, to a certain extent, the causal factors that had an influence in the committing of crime (Vacca, 2004; DCS, 2005).

- **Professional Geographies Affecting Study Lives of the COs**

The findings revealed that changes in the teaching and learning modes did not only threaten progress but it also opened opportunities for exposure to the digital world. People were introduced to different online platforms, one participant said that “I had to adapt to teaching and learning using online engines...” Three of the respondents indicated that they were on a learnership programme that got disturbed as well due to COVID-19 setbacks. These are their stories; “it reduced my full-time employment opportunities” Respondent 16. “My learnership was almost cancelled due to COVID..,” said Respondent 17. Respondent 19 had this to say, “The country was on lockdown, and I could not perform my assigned duties. I could not cover the syllabus at the specified time”. The above instances badly influenced the study lives of the COs and thereby caused professional distance emotional relations to their study lives.

- **Professional Geographies Affecting Personal Lives of the COs**

The findings revealed that COVID-19 did not only affect COs as workers or as students but also as human beings in their personal capacity. The impact left COs with scars that are still bleeding today. One of the respondents indicated that he could not bury his family member due to COVID-19 restrictions and therefore did not find closure. The fact that they were short-staffed due to the shift pattern and that others were off-sick created professional distance in their personal lives. Several respondents cited the loss of colleagues which resulted in a dire shortage of personnel. They even reported that “one employee could be required to do work for three or four members due to shortage and could not be replaced”. The shortages that were

experienced were also reported to have compromised security and put the lives of the COs at stake, thereby causing professional distance in terms of the personal lives of COs.

It also emerged that the level of exposure to the virus could not be overemphasised especially to the COs that were responsible for escorting offenders to public hospitals and courts. One respondent even indicated that he was “stressed at work fearing to be infected” and therefore DCS was bound to look at the option of implementing a less risky shift or where possible allowing employees to work from home. That also made COs lose the interest in going to work fearing getting infected and that caused professional distance in life emotional relations.

6.2.5 Political Geographies

According to Hargreaves (2001, p. 1072), emotions “are bound up with peoples’ experiences of power and powerlessness”. In other words, in every encounter one has to have authority over another. The literature further argues that political closeness and distance exist in instances where power and powerlessness relations “distort the emotional and cognitive aspects between teachers and those around them” (Blasé & Anderson, 1995, Hargreaves, 2000, p. 816).

- **Political Geographies Affecting Professional Lives of the CO**

The changes effected in the routine operations were imposed in order to comply with the social distancing regulations that were aimed at lowering the infection rate. Such political interference was intended to create political closeness in the professional lives of the COs. The ultimate political distance was evidenced and that resulted in the compromise of service delivery. For instance, the implementation of 50/50 shift pattern was intended at mitigating the chances of the spread of the virus but eventually not all rehabilitation programmes could be delivered. Another aspect was that of suspending group activities also due to social distancing. Most beneficial interpersonal activities that would contribute to the social changes in offender behaviour had to be suspended and that hindered the purpose of rehabilitation and in a way caused political distance in terms of COs’ profession. In such instances, the intention appeared to relate to emotional closeness but the results ended up creating distance political professional influence, just because of the distortion of intent.

Among other factors that were highlighted as creating political distance to their professional lives is the suspension of recreational activities, fear of getting infected, heightened stress level, insecurity, low productivity, emotional instability, laziness, absenteeism, uncertainty, etc. Participant 2 had this to say, “Sometimes we had to be absent due to someone testing positive that affected work performance in meeting deadlines and submitting monthly stats”. Further

than that, “the potential positive case had to be isolated awaiting results with a turnaround time of 14 days. That also hampered work performance of the COs,” answered Participant 4.

- **Political Geographies Affecting Study Lives of the COs**

In this research study, findings did not indicate much political distance but rather political closeness although they eventually distorted emotional and cognitive aspects. For me, the closure of the traditional face-to-face educational system to online mode was closeness in terms of lowering infection rate but challenges encountered by students that relate to accessibility and ability to use the equipment ended up creating political distance influence. It should be noted that the closure of educational institutions as well as the switching of educational modes was informed by the changes effected globally in the education fraternity. In that case, no one else had the power to stop that kind of transition irrespective of whether students were prepared or not. In fact, the political distance that affected study lives was due to regulations imposed by the Government.

- **Political Geographies Affecting Personal Lives of the COs**

Instances of political geographies affecting personal lives were seen prevailing in some instances resulting in positive and negative consequences. The mere fact that the COs’ jobs are classified as essential services compelled them to be at work and that bore negative consequences. One of the participants had this to say; “We could not work from home due to the nature of our job and that put us at risk. We had to work with minimal staff since some colleagues (who had had contacts with positive cases) had to go on quarantine or isolation and that made working difficult and stressful”. It should be noted that other than the above challenges, the role of the state was also perceived as having caused anxiety and stress. The interviewees unequivocally lambasted the state for its intervention which according to their explanation was “delayed and insufficient”. “I don’t think the population is getting accurate data on the actual numbers of the infected and deceased. It may be a panic prevention measure”, said one of the participants.

6.3 Chapter Conclusion

The study revealed that the COs who were studying and had multi-responsibilities during COVID-19 experienced challenges regarding their studies, profession as well as domestic responsibilities. Chapter 6 deliberated on the findings of the research study in relation to the identified literature review. This discussion of the findings shows how Hargreaves ‘emotional geographies’ theory can help us to understand and theorise the challenges encountered by the COs in all spheres of their lives as students, as parents as well as employees of the Department

of Correctional Services. The data analysis process was briefly outlined, the demographic and thematic analysis summarised and the influence of the Hargreaves emotional geographies theory argued alongside five aspects of emotional geographies, namely; physical, moral, professional, political and socio-cultural. The next chapter is the final one whereby I am going to summarise the research study, summarise findings and outline the themes developed from the findings, share my reflections on the research process, and offer some recommendations for the Department of Correctional Services and future researchers.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed the research findings in relation to the theoretical framework i.e. Hargreaves' theory of 'emotional geographies'. Via the lens of this theoretical framework, I discussed the findings in relation to the concept of the 'emotional geographies' theory, focusing on the five aspects of 'emotional geographies' and their consequences.

This research study set out to explore the challenges experienced by full-time employed COs, who were studying part-time in institutions of higher learning while also having other domestic responsibilities during COVID-19. The findings respond to the three research questions and yielded themes that addressed challenges experienced by the studying COs as discussed in Chapter 5. In this chapter, the findings are summarised and the three critical research questions are engaged with:

- How has COVID-19 impacted adult learners in their personal and professional lives?
- What challenges did these students face and how did their personal circumstances shape the pandemic's impact?
- How did the students respond to these challenges and what were the consequences of these responses?

Chapter 7 is the final chapter in which I shall be summarising my research study, drawing conclusions from the study findings and making recommendations for the Department of Correctional Services and future researchers. My summary will be presented in two sections; firstly, I will give a summary of each chapter of the thesis. Secondly, I will outline the research findings under each research question. Recommendations, based on the data that were presented and thematically analysed will also be unpacked. In addition, suggestions for further research will be provided.

7.2 Discussion

In Chapter 1, I orientated the reader to the general background of the research study. A brief description of the context was provided, focusing on the roles of the COs as well as the demands brought about by changes in the correctional system of today. It also outlined the title, the focus, research objectives, and research questions as well as the location of the study and the

position of the researcher within the study. The chapter also highlighted the design and methodology of the study and concluded with an overview of the entire thesis.

In Chapter 2, I provided an overview of related literature on the experiences and challenges of workers who happened to be studying during COVID-19 or any other pandemic that has ever occurred and affected human life globally. As noted by many scholars, COVID-19 shook many aspects of societies globally “affecting access and participation to lifelong education and ultimately the well-being of adult learners” (James & Theriault, 2020, p. 129). Little research had been done regarding the phenomenon under review. For me, the scarcity of literature based on adult education in the context of the pandemic raised a ‘red flag’ about a gap in the adult education field that required in-depth research. That made me see it vital to research more on the topic and find out exactly the lived experiences and challenges of adult learners with multiple responsibilities.

In Chapter 3, I introduced the reader to the theoretical framework. I first described the lexical orientation of the concept of a ‘theoretical framework’ and then orientated the reader to the theoretical framework that underpinned my research project which was ‘emotional geographies’ (Hargreaves, 2001). In this chapter, the reasons why I opted for emotional geographies theory were highlighted. The reader was introduced to the position that “emotions contribute to our situatedness and to the ways in which we relate bodily to the world, hence to our emplacement... In addition, emotions connect us to ourselves and to others and also engage us with one another but also with space and with memory...” (Berrens, 2016, p. 76).

In Chapter 4, I provided the reader with the most appropriate methodology that I employed to achieve the objectives of my study. I identified the qualitative research tradition and the interpretivist paradigm as most relevant in helping the reader understand how the studying COs interpreted COVID-19 experiences and challenges. I also outlined the selection process of the six adult learner COs and the research approach (case study), data generation methods (online survey and in-depth interviews), data generation instruments (Google survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews) as well as the research sampling (purposive sampling). The chapter also tackled the issue of data analysis and further evaluated the findings of my studies using four elements of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) as well as ethical issues and the limitations of the study.

In Chapter 5, I dealt with the generation, presentation, and analysis of data, both quantitative and qualitative data. The reader witnessed a cross-sectional, web-based survey being conducted using an instrument called Google Survey Questionnaires (GSQ), with the aim of generating quantitative findings. The reader also witnessed the use of Semi-Structured Interviews (S-SI’s)

as means to generate qualitative findings. These quantitative and qualitative findings were generated from the COs, who, during the COVID-19 pandemic were studying in institutions of higher learning and also had other responsibilities. After collecting the raw information, the quantitative data was then analysed, checked for commonalities and presented demographically and thematically. Themes were then identified and formulated out of the responses. All the findings and their interpretations were explored in relation to the research questions and the objectives of the phenomenon under review.

In Chapter 6, I theorised the data that were generated in Chapter 5. I first presented a brief description of the data analysis process and further summarised the demographic and thematic data analysis. I then deliberated on the identified theoretical framework, i.e. Hargreaves' theory of 'emotional geographies', while exploring and theorising the challenges experienced by studying COs during COVID-19. The insights and perspectives via the five aspects of Hargreaves 'emotional geographies' theory illuminated the COVID-19 challenges.

7.3 Findings

The primary data were gathered through GSQ's and supplemented with S-SI's for in-depth information regarding the challenges experienced by the studying COs in the context of COVID-19. Twenty participants were sampled for GSQs and to achieve the research objectives a smaller sample of six COs meeting a specified criteria i.e. full-time employed, studying part-time and having other domestic responsibilities. The research findings are summarised and presented under each key research question, as follows.

7.3.1 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Professional Lives of the Studying COs

The study found that COVID-19 had a significant impact on the professional lives of studying COs. They faced increased workload, lack of training on how to deal with the pandemic, and fear of contracting the virus. Despite using coping mechanisms such as social support, self-care, and seeking information, the support provided by their workplace was inadequate in addressing their concerns.

7.3.2 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Studies of COs

COVID-19 had notable impacts on the studies of COs, with the main challenges being digital illiteracy, lack of resources, inefficient online learning environments, and difficulty in time management. However, the COs responded positively by using online tools and optimal time-management strategies.

7.3.3. The Impact of COVID-19 on studying COs' Personal Lives

COVID-19 also had significant impacts on the personal lives of studying COs, such as financial challenges, mental health problems, fear, and anxiety. However, they managed to cope by seeking social support, engaging in self-care, and raising their awareness about the virus.

7.4 Recommendations

The following insightful recommendations emerged from the study findings and are offered as possible solutions for similar crises in the future. I have arranged them in such a way that they reflect the impact of COVID-19 on all three spheres of life of the studying COs, following the research questions.

7.4.1 Recommendations Related to Professional Lives

To address the challenges identified in the professional lives of studying COs during COVID-19, the following recommendations are made:

- **Drastic Changes:** Correctional institutions should consider developing pandemic plans that include working conditions, workload management, and training on infection prevention and control. Institutions can also recruit more COs to ease the burden on the existing staff.

7.4.2 Recommendations Related to the Study Lives of COs

To address the challenges faced by studying COs during COVID-19, the following recommendations are made:

- **Basic Digital Orientation:** Institutions should provide basic digital orientation to all staff to improve their digital literacy. In addition, they should provide access to laptops and other electronic gadgets to facilitate efficient online learning.

7.4.3. Recommendations Related to Personal Lives of the COs

To address the challenges faced by studying COs in their personal lives during COVID-19, the following recommendations are made:

- **Awareness:** Institutions should create awareness about mental health, financial and social support services available within and outside the institutions. By doing so, they can encourage COs to seek help when facing personal challenges.
- **Decentralisation of Counselling Services:** Institutions should decentralize counselling services to provide COs with easy access to such services. They can also establish

volunteer or peer support groups to offer additional support and encouragement to study COs facing personal challenges.

7.5 Chapter Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the challenges experienced by adult learners employed as COs in the context of COVID-19. Literature related to the study was presented to support and provide context to the study. Furthermore, a case study was conducted wherein two data generation techniques were employed, i.e. web-based survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The generated data were then analysed using the demographic features of the participants as well as by formulating themes inductively. A further deductive analysis was conducted whereby the identified challenges were discussed in relation to the chosen theoretical framework, Hargreaves' theory of 'emotional geographies'.

A series of themes were identified which eventually formed the basis of the research findings. The challenges experienced by the studying COs were highlighted during the research, and so were the solutions to these challenges in the recommendations section. It is my hope, as a researcher, that the research findings will be of great influence on the responsible authorities in the Department of Correctional Services as well as in policy formulation in the future. I also hope that the findings help COs to better understand their context, and the impacts of a pandemic on their lives and that such understanding better prepares them for the future.

As an employee in correctional services and as a new scholar in this area, I have learnt a lot about the impact of the pandemic on the different aspects of COs' lives. The study has shown me how important it is to see COs not just as rehabilitation personnel in a correctional facility and as front line workers. They are also breadwinners, caregivers and often part-time students. When correctional facilities and governments are planning responses to crises like the COVID19 pandemic, they should consider the CO as a full person within a multi-faceted emotional geographic landscape.

Undertaking this study has been a valuable learning experience for me as a researcher. One of the major takeaways from this study is the importance of employing multiple data collection techniques in qualitative research. The combination of a web-based survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews provided a rich and comprehensive set of data that allowed for an in-depth exploration of the challenges faced by COs during the pandemic.

Another lesson learned is the significance of using an appropriate theoretical framework to guide the study. Hargreaves' theory of emotional geographies helped me to understand and

analyse the experiences of COs in a more meaningful way, and to link the challenges they faced to the emotional and physical spaces they inhabit.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of paying attention to the demographics of the participants in data analysis. By examining the data through the lens of the participants' age, gender, level of education, and years of experience, I was able to identify patterns and themes that were specific to certain groups and that would have been overlooked had I not considered their demographic characteristics.

Overall, this study has been an enlightening experience that has expanded my knowledge of correctional services and the impact of pandemics on front-line workers. I hope that the findings of this study can be used to improve the lives and working conditions of COs, and that future research in this area continues to shed light on the experiences of this important group of workers.

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Appendix A

Google Forms Questionnaire

My name is Vitalis Kwazikwakhe Shezi, Master of Education student from University of KwaZulu- Natal, School of Education, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves the exploration of the experiences and challenges of adult learners employed as Correctional Officials in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this research is to focus on the experiences and challenges of Correctional Officials during the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to their studies, alongside work and family roles.

Please be advised that you are not forced to participate in this study, the decision is yours and will be respected. The survey involves 31 questions and should not require more than 20 minutes to complete.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00002658/2021).

In the event of any concerns or questions you may contact the researcher at veekay.shezi@gmail.com or my supervisor Prof. Vaughn John, JohnV@ukzn.ac.za or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

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No costs will be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study. Confidentiality will be highly observed and your identity as a participant will be protected. Please note that there are no anticipated risks or harm to you.

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Data sets will be stored in a locked cupboard in the supervisor's office. Digital data will be password protected. The password will only be known by supervisor and researcher. After 5 years such data will be shredded and digital data will be deleted.

A summary report will be sent to all participants, should you choose to provide any contact details. A report will also be provided to the school principal via email because of COVID-19 restrictions.

It is important that you answer all the questions as honestly as possible.

Completion of this survey means that informed consent is granted.

1. Please indicate your gender.

Female

Male

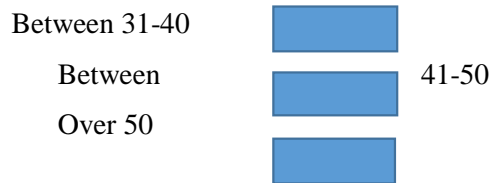
Other

2. Are you employed on a full-time basis? Yes

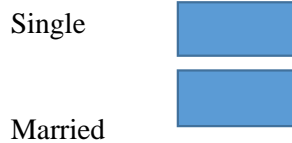
No

3. What is your age? Between 20-30

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4. Please state whether you are single or married?



5. Are you a parent?



No

6. How many children do you have?

7. What are their ages?

8. Are you responsible for the care of extended family members e.g. parents, grandparents?



9. To what extent has COVID-19 impacted your professional life?



A moderate extent

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A small extent

Not at all

Unsure

Please share some detail of this impact

10. How did you respond to these COVID-19 related impacts?

11. What support did your workplace/ employer provide?

12. Was this support effective?

Yes

No

Somewhat

13. What more could your workplace/ employer have done?

14. How did the COVID-19 pandemic with its social distancing affect your professional relationships?

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Which professional relationships were most affected? Why was this so?

15. To what extent has COVID-19 impacted your studies?

A large extent



A moderate extent



A small extent



Unsure



Not at all

Please give some examples of how COVID-19 affected your studies?

16. How did you respond to these COVID-19 related impacts?

17. Name the course that you are currently studying?

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18. At what stage are you in your studies?

19. Which institution are you currently studying at?

20. What support did your institution provide?

21. Was this support effective?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. What more could your institution have done?

23. To what extent has COVID-19 impacted your personal life?

A large extent	<input type="checkbox"/>
A moderate extent	<input type="checkbox"/>
A small extent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unsure	<input type="checkbox"/>

Not at all

Please share some detail of this impact

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24. How did you respond to these COVID-19 related impacts?

25. What support did you receive with this?

26. Was this support effective?

Yes

No

Somewhat

27. What other support would you have liked?

28. Did you face any challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes

No

Please share some detail of these challenges

29. Did you receive any support with these challenge?

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Yes

No

If support was received, please share some detail of this support

—

30. Would you be interested in participating in an interview and further data generation processes in this study?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide a contact number or email address

If completing this survey has caused you any distress, please contact me at the following number: 0825338092 and I will arrange for a counsellor to contact you.

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Appendix B

FOR RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Preamble:

- Explain study and thank respondent
- Get Permission to record
- Switch on recorder

NB. During the interview probing questions will also be used in addition to the following:

FOCUS AREA	EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is your name?• How old are you?• What are your hobbies?• Are you married?• Do you have children?
2. Job related challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How long have you worked for the Department of Correctional Services?• What is your position in the Department of Correctional Services and what does your job entail?• What are the key performance responsibilities for your job?• How has COVID-19 affected your working patterns?• How has COVID-19 impacted in your work performance?• How did you manage to deal with the impact of the pandemic?

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<p>3. Domestic related challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you live with your family? • Are you caring for children? • Are you caring for any older family members? • What are your household responsibilities? • Were you able to perform your household responsibilities effectively during COVID-19? • How has COVID-19 affected your family life? • How have managed your household responsibilities in the context of COVID-19?
<p>4. Studies related challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What is your highest level of education? <input type="checkbox"/> Are you currently studying, if so, in which institution are you enrolled and for which course? <input type="checkbox"/> What challenges do you experience in your studies being a family mother/ father and a Correctional Official? • How did you respond to those challenges and what were the consequences of those responses? • How do you manage to balance between work, studies and family responsibilities? • How has COVID-19 impacted in your studies? • What strategies did you employ to cope with your studies during COVID-19?
<p>5. General & Conclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has COVID-19 brought any change in the manner you have been running your daily chores, if so, how did you manage to adjust? • Are you able to manage all your multiple responsibilities with efficiency under the COVID-19 circumstances and if so, how? • How has COVID-19 impacted in your personal and professional lives? • What would be your advice to other employees who are experiencing similar predicament? • Is there anything else related to the impact of COVID-19 on you that you would like to share?

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APPENDIX C

Re-Informed Consent to participate in Research

Topic: Exploring the experiences and challenges of adult learners employed as Correctional Officials in the context of COVID-19.

Dear Colleague

I am Mr Shezi VK, a Masters' student in the school of Adult Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I hereby kindly invite you to consider taking part in the study that seeks to establish the experiences and challenges encountered by Correctional Officials who are studying part-time and with multiple responsibilities in the context of COVID-19. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore the experiences and challenges explored by adult learners employed as Correctional Officials in the context of COVID-19. The study will be undertaken with Correctional Officials who are currently enrolled as part time learners in one of the institutions of higher learning.

Before you agree to participate in this project, I would like to inform you about the following aspects concerning your participation.

1. Your participation in this research project is voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage.
2. You will not be disadvantaged if you decide not to participate.
3. Your participation will be anonymous (any writing, presentation and publication from this research project will respect your anonymity).
4. Your responses will be treated with strictest confidentiality as well as respect during and after the research process. Only Prof. John, my supervisor and I will have access to this (raw) material.
5. You will be required to participate in a short Google survey which should take you about 15 minutes to complete.
6. You will be interviewed once for an hour and answers will be recorded and be used for writing the report. The interview transcript and recording will be destroyed once the research project is complete.

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7. Only if you understand and agree to the above points, can you sign and then take part in this research project
8. Your willingness to participate is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

VK Shezi

For any further information please contact

Professor V John: Supervisor of Research Project, Ph D,

University of KwaZulu-Natal

(031) 2605069

V K Shezi: M Ed. (AE) Student, University of KwaZulu-Natal

veekay.shezi@gmail.com

0825338092

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Declaration

I..... (Full names of participant)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the
research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I agree to participate in the Google Survey Yes _____ No _____

I agree to participate in an Interview Yes _____ No _____

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I understand that these interviews will include voice recording for research purposes even though I will be anonymous.

I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I agree to participate in this study.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

I agree to the interview being voice recorded

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

By completing this questionnaire, I acknowledge that I understand the purpose of this research and the terms of my participation as set out above. I also hereby provide consent to participate.

Appendix D

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



22 September 2021

Vitalis Kwazikwakhe Shezi (205524251)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear VK Shezi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002658/2021

Project title: Exploring the experiences and challenges of adult learners employed as Correctional Officials in the context of the COVID-19.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 23 August 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

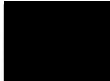
This approval is valid until 22 September 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X57001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8330/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

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