

**Understanding the perceptions of the
University of KwaZulu-Natal students with disabilities
of parental support and the effects
it has on their academic performance**

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Declaration

I, Sithabile Mntambo, declare that:

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at another university.
3. The dissertation does not contain other persons' data, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This dissertation does not contain another person's writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers.

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Date:

Dedication



*This dissertation is dedicated to God
who is the Alpha and Omega of my life*

and

my parents,

Nokukhanya Hellen Mntambo and Jabulani Mntambo



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I would like to express my appreciation to the following:

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- To the University of Kwazulu-Natal. for giving me the opportunity to conduct this research study.
- And lastly to all the young university students that agreed to be interviewed and shared their perceptions and experiences. May this research study bring about change and positive influence.

Abstract

This study focused on understanding the perceptions that students with disabilities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal have of parental support and the effect it has on their academic performance. In this qualitative study, eight participants were interviewed utilising a semi-structured interview schedule; the interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants using an audio-recorder. The data obtained was analysed using thematic content analysis which gave rise to various themes. The following themes emerged: Transition to university, university challenges, recommendations and methods to overcome challenges, perceptions of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement and parental support preference that can be put in place to assist students with disabilities. The findings of this research study indicated that parental support has a positive impact on the performance and adjustment of students with disabilities. The parent's lack of knowledge, beliefs and acceptance of the student's disability proved to be barriers towards effective parental support. Therefore, based on the research findings, it is recommended that parents and other family members should become more involved towards the academic life of students. While the university of KwaZulu-Natal should consider changing infrastructure to better accommodate students living with disabilities. Additionally, the university should motivate the involvement of parents. Due to the limitations of the research which can be found under chapter six, it was recommended that further research be conducted on this topic.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

According to Bloom (1980), parental involvement can be defined as parent's personal aspirations for their children's academic achievement. This is consistent with Rutholt, Gore and Dukes (2015), who state that parental involvement is characterized by the presence of a parent in children's daily life and school activities. Therefore, parental involvement can be understood as the active involvement or participation of parents in the students' academic quests. While parental support incorporates the emotional role of parents in the student's lives (Rutholt, Gore & Dukes, 2015). It is whereby parents provide the emotional support such as inspiration, motivation and warmth. These terms will be used interchangeably for this research study.

The notion of involving parents in children's education and the effect this has on their academic performance has received increased attention among researchers (Christenson, Rounds & Gorney, 1992; Epstein, 1986; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Haynes, Comer & Hamilton-Lee, 1989; McLaughlin & Shields, 1987). The growing literature and interest of researchers on parental support may thus be argued to contribute fundamentally towards our understanding of the various parental support methods that tend to be offered by parents and their contribution towards the child's academic success and school adjustment. The role of parents is perceived as that of utmost importance towards the academic progress and development of children (Ahmad & Gates, 2016). Parental support is therefore valued by some as it is seemingly alleged to be an answer and contributing component towards a child's accomplishments. Nevertheless, according to Fan and Chen (2001), although parental involvement has been found to some degree to be a solution for school education, findings around it have been conflicting.

Different views when it comes to the impact of the involvement of parents in the child's education. The findings revealed that, although some analyses indicated a positive effect of parental involvement, others have found little, if any, such measurable effects (Fan & Chen, 2001). Furthermore, although there has been increased interest and research regarding the perceptions of the effects of parental support on the academic performance of students, there has been little research conducted on university students. The findings suggest that students

living with disabilities often feel stigmatised and discriminated against on the basis of their disability (Lombardi, Murray & Kowitt, 2016). Disability can be understood as the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participations restriction (Leonardi et al., 2006), It is the negative interaction between an individual with a health condition and their social environment. This may consequently have a negative impact upon the student's academic performance and university adjustment. Therefore, students living with disabilities may be argued to be a vulnerable group.

Providing suitable support for students living with disabilities at university level can be argued to be mandatory and a constitutional obligation of the university. Nonetheless, to accommodate students with disabilities, changes have been set up such as the implementation of acts and legislations to protect students with disabilities. For instance, the Americans with Disabilities Acts of 1990 (section 504), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 went through such changes (Christ & Stodden, 2005). The South African government has implemented the National Education Policy Act, Act 27 of 1996, and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, Act 4 of 2000, in this regard. The sole purpose of these acts is to direct all institutions and to provide sensible facilities to people (students) with disabilities so that they may obtain equal access to all services and programmes being offered. In addition, this is to ensure that no person is discriminated against nor denied the opportunity to receive an education because of their disability.

Education practitioners believe that the inclusion of guardians and parents in the education process of students with disabilities is fundamental (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Therefore, the inclusion of parents is somewhat a requirement and necessity when it comes to students living with disabilities due to its positive impact towards the child's academic achievements. Research by Rahat and İlhan (2016) demonstrates that parental involvement is rather important for students as it enables them to adjust to the university life and culture. They further stated that students who are at risk of failure, dropping out or finding university life difficult, are freshmen students with low self-regard and students with disabilities. Therefore, parental support is essential for these students and thus should be encouraged.

1.2 Problem statement

Students with disabilities encounter various challenges during their transition period from high school to university. The findings by Rahat and İlhan (2016) indicate that students with disabilities are at the risk of not completing their university qualifications or not completing

their studies on time. This was attributed to the student's inability to adapt to the unfamiliar environment and its expectations. According to the study conducted by Ahmad and Gates (2016), parental support seems to be the most valued form of support system to be utilised. Therefore, parental support may be utilized as one of the university adjustment method and support system for students living with disabilities. There is, however, limited research that looks at the views of university students living with disabilities regarding parental support and the influence it may have towards their academic performance. There is also a limitation in studies that use the qualitative method to look at parental support and its impact on the child's academic performance; hence, this project will thus use a qualitative form of method to get in-depth knowledge and understanding.

Essentially, it is worthwhile to conduct such a research to see the different parental support methods that may be utilized for students with disabilities. Methods of support that have a positive contribution towards the students' academic performance may be further reinforced. Furthermore, it has been found by researchers that on the chance that parental support is related to positive academic accomplishment, it could likewise be argued that it is also related to a student's overall university adjustment (Hopson, Schiller & Lawson, 2014). The role of parents was affirmed to give a little, yet noteworthy, contribution to the student's university adjustment (Hopson et al., 2014). Therefore, it may be argued that parental support may consequently influence the university adjustment and adaptation of students living with disabilities. Consequently, a study of this nature will also shed light on the importance of parental involvement in the academic performance of university students living with disabilities.

1.3 Aim, objectives and research questions

1.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to get a better understanding of the perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) students with disabilities of parental support and the effect it has on their academic performance.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study

1. To understand the perception of parental support and various forms of support being offered by parents.
2. To explore the impact of parental support on the academic performance of students.

3. To identify possible barriers that may contribute to low parental support.

1.3.3 Research questions

1. What are the perceptions of students with disabilities regarding parental support?
2. How does parental support impact on students' academic performance?
3. What are the perceived barriers that may prevent effective parental involvement?

1.4 Summary

This chapter entailed the background of the study and the reason for conducting this research study. This chapter highlighted the aims of the study which were to get a better understanding of the perceptions of the UKZN students with disabilities of parental support and the effect it has on their academic performance. This chapter further highlighted the objectives of the study and the research questions that the researcher sought to answer. This chapter is the first chapter and therefore the researcher stated the benefits and importance of having to conduct a research study of this nature.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

According to Chohan and Khan (2010) various literature has indicated a decline in student's academic performance which has resulted in the involvement of parents in children's education. The inclusion of parents in their children's education is viewed as an imperative component of academic success (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Therefore, the inclusion and support from parents has been regarded as an effective method for successful learning for their children for decades. Parental involvement is valued as it is perceived to contribute towards the academic success of their children; however, the observations of this have been inconsistency and conflicting. Nevertheless, the critical role of parents still proceeds as it is perceived by the educator and parents themselves that it is fundamental for complete development of the identity and academic success of their children (Gonzalez-Pianda et al., 2002). Parents and other family members contribute fundamentally towards the academic development of the child (Chohan & Khan, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that parents and other members of the family play a vital role in the academic success of the child, thus support and involvement from these sources are essential.

Forms of support offered tend to differ and depend largely on the parent's beliefs, culture, socio-economic status and parenting styles. In addition to this, research has indicated that the nature of the parental support offered tends to change with the age of the child (Gonzalez-Pianda et al., 2002). For instance, the form of support that a parent may give to their child when in primary school, as compared to when in high school, differs. However, one may argue that this should be expected as the degree of expectation and demands at this level of the child's academic life is different. It has been shown that as the child grows older parental support tends to also decrease (Fan, 2001). This could be due to the assumption that the growth of the child is associated with his/her ability to be responsible and independent.

A research study conducted by Chohan and Khan (2010) demonstrated that as children grow older, they tend to develop a sense of awareness of their academic expectations. However, the development of this sense of awareness may be influenced by the student's condition and

his/her environment. It has been argued that parental involvement increases when the child encounters difficulties (Otter, 2014). For instance, the parent could motivate the child to persevere and work harder. However, parental involvement can also be present when children perform well by reinforcing the behaviour and assisting the child towards maintaining the positive behaviour.

Although parental support is associated with positive outcomes, there has been limited research on university students with disabilities. According to Wintre and Yaffe (2000), the transition to university from high school is characterised by stress, challenge in personal growth, emotional maladjustment and depression. In a research conducted by Hong, Ivy, Gonzalez and Ehrensberger (2007), it was demonstrated that students with disabilities were more prone to experience frustration and discouragement within the university setting, thus leading to them encountering less positive academic results. Therefore, the question of parental support becomes crucial.

There are various forms of support and coping methods that are required to help students adjust to a new university environment, which will then help diminish anxiety that may be associated with having to be in that environment. The inquiry and real utilisation of support and the view of its potential accessibility are considered as components that can diminish anxiety involved in the quest for education or academic success. Different studies found that a high view of support favours academic accomplishment (De la Iglesia, Stover & Liporace, 2014). Academic performance is said to be higher when the perception of support from parents is high. It is therefore sensible to accept that academic performance would run in the same direction as academic adjustment (De la Iglesia et al., 2014). The improvement of academic performance by the enhancement of support not only leads to positive academic achievement but also to adjustment. Therefore, Parental support work as defensive components that counteract low accomplishments and school withdrawal.

Research demonstrates that successful university education for students with disabilities leads to a more beneficial and satisfying life (Christ & Stodden, 2005). Furthermore, it has been found that employment rates for people with disabilities exhibit a more positive correlation between level of education and rate of employments than has been found in the trends or patterns for the general population (Stodden, Whelley, Chang & Harding, 2001). Therefore, it is essential for people with disabilities to further their education and to be motivated to do so as this increases their chances of employability and enables them to be financially independent.

Disability scholars and disability rights activists have made a considerable commitment towards bringing into recognition the needs of students with disabilities within society (Green, 2007). The disability rights activists contend that people are disabled not by their hindrances but rather by basic and attitudinal barriers. Students with disabilities are regarded and perceived as being more at risk as they are subjected to discrimination and stigma (Christ & Stodden, 2005). Nevertheless, universities are now obligated to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This was done by passing the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Clark, 2007). One of the roles of these acts is to protect students with disabilities.

2.2 Parenting styles and students' academic achievement

According to Maccoby and Martin (1983) and Baumrind (1991), parenting styles consist of two dimensions which are demandingness (referring to the extent of which parents show control, maturity demands and supervision) and responsiveness (referring to the extent to which parents show affective, warmth acceptance and involvement). Based upon this, a four-fold classification of parenting styles was formed which is inclusive of authoritative parents, authoritarian parents, permissive and neglectful parents.

Authoritative parents have been said to be demanding and responsive; thus, they are controlling but not restrictive (Aunola, Nurmi, Onatsu-Arvilommi & Pulkkinen, 2000). This, therefore, implies that they are actively involved in their children's academic career and participating in their activities. According to Maccoby and Martin (1983), authoritative parents tend to also exhibit a high level of communication, trust, acceptance, encouragement, high behavioural and monitoring control, including awareness of their children's whereabouts. Therefore, it is no surprise that this form of parenting style has been associated with positive academic outcomes for children. Various studies have demonstrated that adolescents who are raised in authoritative homes tend to perform better in school as compared to their peers (Dornbusch, Ritter, Liederman, Roberts & Frelegh, 1987; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg & Dornbush, 1991).

These studies suggest that authoritative parenting is correlated with good academic performance. This was further asserted by Dornbush et al. (1987), based on an analysis which indicated that authoritative parenting styles are positively correlated with adolescent school performance. This, therefore, implies that the impact of other parenting styles, although they have some form of impact on students' academic achievement, is not as positive as compared to the authoritative parenting style. Additional research that was conducted on school

outcomes, other than grades, indicated that authoritative parenting is additionally associated with an increase in the number of attitudinal and behavioural indicators of academic orientation during adolescence, including a stronger work orientation, greater engagement in classroom activities and more positivity about school (Lamborn et al., 1991; Patterson & Yoerger, 1991; Steinberg et al., 1989; Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992).

In other words, the parents are more involved and interested in their children's academic and school activities which, in turn, also contributes towards their better academic performance. Authoritative parents are more likely to be involved in their children's school and more likely to encourage academic excellence (Bogenschneider, 1990). They are most likely to offer support and participate in school activities; this, in turn, contributes towards their children's achievements. For example, offering encouragement to achieve academic success will motivate the child academically, and additionally be aware of their parent's expectations. According to Sewell and Hauser (1980), it was suggested that parental encouragement is the primary mediator of the well-established connection between family, social class and students' academic performance.

Nonetheless, studies indicate that students whose parents are more involved in their education tend to do well at school (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). These students tend to achieve academic success, thus justifying the correlation between authoritative parenting style and good academic performance. Though just as parental involvement results in good academic performance for children, good academic achievement of children is also a motivational factor for parental involvement. This argument was asserted by Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch and Darling (1992) who demonstrated that higher levels of student achievements are associated with greater parental involvement.

Authoritarian parents tend to be demanding but not necessarily responsive; thus, they show little affiliative relationships with their children compared to that of authoritative parents (Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000). These parents are demanding of their children; yet fail to actively assist them towards achieving the expected goal that has been set by them as compared to the authoritative parenting style.

Nonetheless, typical of these parents is a low level of trust and engagement towards their children, a discouraging form of open communication and a strict control which is more adult-than child-centred (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Pulkkinen, 1982). These parents treat their children as adults and are less involved in their activities. They tend to discourage their children

and may be harsh towards them. This, in turn, may result in children having negative feelings about themselves and a sense of fear for their parents. In addition to this, these children may stop trying, for example, because if a child is continually being discouraged they may feel there is no point in trying to prove their parents otherwise. This may consequently affect their academic performances or achievement. Moreover, authoritarian families are characterised by a high level of psychological control, which can be described from the adolescent's point of view as a feeling of being controlled, devalued and criticised (Barber, 1996; Baumrind, 1971).

Permissive parents, in turn, tend to be responsive but not necessarily demanding; thus, they are generally warm, accepting and have a child-centred attitude (Baumrind, 1989; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This is the opposite of the authoritarian parenting style which is more demanding and a less child-centred form of attitude. This parenting style can be argued to be sensitive and child-centred with no form of demand or child expectation. Parents employing this form of parenting style tend to not require mature behaviour from their children, but rather allow them to behave autonomously and independently (Baumrind, 1991). This may thus result in the child not forming a sense of maturity and a lack of control on the part of the parent.

While neglectful parents are neither responsive nor demanding, they do not support or encourage their children's self-regulation and often fail to monitor or supervise their behaviour (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These parents are unaware of what happens to their children; for instance, they may not be aware of the whereabouts of their children. Furthermore, they are not involved, nor do they exert any form of demand or expectation on their children. Nonetheless, each of these parenting styles have an impact on children which differs according to each parenting style. Authoritative parenting has been found to be associated with children's school adjustment, a high level of performance and positive attitudes towards school (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Pulkkinen, 1982; Steinberg et al., 1989). As previously stated, authoritative parenting styles has been associated with positive correlation with children academic achievement.

The positively associated impact of authoritative parenting styles has been assumed to be based on the encouragement of independent problem-solving and critical thinking (Hess & McDevitt, 1984). It has been because of parent's overall positive involvement in the children's life and their desire for their child's success. Consequently, authoritarian parenting styles, particularly the element of excess control, have been associated with children's passivity and lack of interest in school (Barber, 1996; Pullkinen, 1982; Steinberg et al., 1994). The high level of

demand and control versus limited encouragement and motivation, results in children's negative attitudes towards academic education, while children from permissive and neglectful parenting styles have been associated with underachievement (Onatsu-Arvilommi & Nurmi, 1997). This may be argued to be due to the parental style and environment in which the children reside in. Neglectful families, in particular, have been shown to be at a disadvantage in terms of academic achievement (Baumrind, 1991; Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This may be blamed upon parent's lack of interest in their children's academic achievements, and poor assistance.

2.3 Barriers to parental involvement

There are numerous definitions of parental involvement in education; however, it can be simply defined as parent's interactions with schools and with their children to promote academic success (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Parental involvement is therefore a form of parent's participation or support that is given to children to enable good academic performance. Parental involvement offers a unique opportunity for both parents and children which also has implications for children's academic and behavioural outcomes (Turney & Kao, 2009). This, therefore, means that parental involvement in the academic lives of their children has an impact on their overall behaviour and academic life, which is also faced with various barriers and factors that may prevent effective parental involvement. Nonetheless, involving families in school activities has become a major focus of academics and particularly those working with at-risk students (Bermudez & Marquez, 1994; Corra, 1989; Walberg, 1984). In other words, parental involvement has sparked an interest for those working with students who are at risk of dropping out or facing unique challenges due to their disabilities.

According to Petersen and Warnsby (1992), the initial uneasiness of parents to become actively involved in their children's education and school activities is generally due to feelings of low self-worth and alienation from a system that they do not really understand. Parents' personal feelings about their ability to assist and their lack of knowledge and understanding of the school system have an impact on their comfortability of being involved in their children's academic lives. There are different barriers to effective parental involvement such as socio-economic status, parental beliefs and expectations and level of parent's education.

2.3.1 Socio-economic status

The issues of class (socio-economic status) and ethnicity may act as barriers to effective parental involvement. These factors may further play a role towards the level of involvement that parents may exhibit. Nonetheless, it has been indicated that parents that tend to be involved in academic activities are typically those of the white middle-class, married and heterosexual (Reay, 1998). Therefore, implying that those who do not fall under these categories are less likely to be involved. According to Reay (1998), parents who are classified as those who tend to be actively involved are perceived and labelled by teachers as ‘good parents’.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) stated that parents who are from a lower class, unmarried and non-heterosexual tend to be less involved, less represented and informed, less likely to have access to resources, as well as more likely to have problems associated with language, transportation, communication and childcare. However, it may be argued that the challenges that these parents face are obstacles that lead to less parental involvement such as problems with language. Parental problems with language may result in parents not being able to effectively assist their children due to the language barrier. In addition, research has found that the relationship dynamic between teachers and parents differs with some being valued more depending on the categories they fall under. For instance, married versus unmarried and lower class versus middle or upper class (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Studies found that the interaction among parents and their youngsters are affected by the socio-economic and cultural factors of the specific society that they are a part of (Chohan & Khan, 2010). Parents who have a low socio-economic status tend to not have enough money to spend on additional home education such as tutoring (Chohan & Khan, 2010). Otter (2014) stated that children from a less advantaged background find school more challenging when compared to more advantaged children. Necessary resources therefore become an intricate factor in academic achievement.

Parents’ cultural beliefs regarding their children with disabilities may pose as barriers towards parental involvement. According to Munyi (2012), people with disabilities are perceived as hopeless and helpless throughout the African continent. Therefore, there are limited expectations about what they can do or amount too. The cultural beliefs that are held by people tend to have an influence upon how people with disabilities are treated and viewed, and the level of parental involvement. A study by Munyi (2012) found that Africans in general and Nigerians in particular, tend to attribute the causes of disabilities to witchcraft, sex-linked factors and supernatural forces.

According to Young (1998), cultural roles, expectations and values play a pivotal part in how trust is perceived and developed between parents and schools, which is further evidence of the need to be aware of the context of culture and ethnicity. Therefore, taking into consideration other cultures and how they do things, develops a sense of trust which results in collaboration and overall understanding between parents and schools. This will therefore contribute towards achieving and working towards the expectations and goals of both these parties. Nevertheless, the failure to understand the impact of ethnicity on parental support and to incorporate programmes that are genuinely inclusive of other cultures is probably another contributing factor to less effective involvement of parents in schools (Young, 1998).

2.3.2 Parents' beliefs and expectations

Parents' beliefs and expectations regarding education tend to have an impact on their extent of parental support (Otter, 2014). The beliefs and expectations that parents hold regarding education may further influence the perceptions of their children towards education. For instance, if the parent who holds the belief that a child living with a disability does not have the capability of reaching university level may thus expect minimal of him/her when it comes to academic achievements. In addition, parents' beliefs and views regarding various issues related to their children's education, may act as obstacles to effective parental support (Otter, 2014). Fan (2001) revealed that a parent's educational desires are strongly associated with the student's academic development, thus showing his/her appreciation and expectations regarding the child's education.

Through their criticism, support and the certainty they show in their children, parents act as an essential wellspring of information about the child's limits (Côté, Bouffard & Vezeau, 2014). Therefore, parents' role in their children's education is critical as it works as a powerful buffer, resulting in building strong self-efficacy. Researchers argue that children internalise their parents' desires and expectations (Côté et al., 2014). Consequently, satisfying these desires turns into a principle in which children create their own fulfilment with their accomplishments and the consequential opinions about their own capabilities.

Harter (1992) stated that the most ideal type of parental support is unconditional emotional support. This idea is not new as Rogers (1959) also argued that people who receive conditional forms of love tend to reject the parts of themselves that are not appreciated or valued. Therefore, unconditional love, which is the appreciation and recognition of all that the child's tries to achieve, is generally argued to be a better form of support. This will therefore enable the child

to embrace their shortcomings and motivate themselves to push and embrace their identity, thus enabling an adjustment to the university environment.

A study conducted by Clark (1983) demonstrated that parents have the belief that they ought to be actively part of their children's education by offering support at home and cooperating valuably with schools. However, it is not only the beliefs and expectations of parents that impact on the academic performance of children. Weiner's attribution theory (1986) asserted that "the causal beliefs children hold about their successes and failures have important consequences for their feelings, expectations, and behavior". Moreover, Weiner further (1986) recommended that children who believe that their challenges are brought about by external and uncontrollable factors such as destiny or bad luck, are more apt to consider perceived complications as perpetual obstructions to success. On the other hand, individuals who ascribe their inability to internal and controllable causes such as exertion, are probably likely to defeat their difficulties (Heiman, 2006).

According to Clark (1983), parents of high-achieving students tend to believe that they have the ability to effectively assist their children to perform well at school. Therefore, they tend to be more involved in the academic life or activities of their children. It may be argued that the positive outcomes associated with parental involvement in the life of a child living with a disability further motivates future involvement by the parents.

Parents' self-efficacy in their ability to help children towards academic success is crucial towards parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) indicated that parents with a low level of confidence in their abilities to support and assist their children were likely to avoid contact with school due to their view that such involvement will not bring about positive academic outcomes. Therefore, parental beliefs in their abilities can either be a motivation or a barrier towards parental involvement.

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), parents who hold the belief that children's intelligence is immovable, and that school achievement is primarily due to children being lucky enough to have high abilities will not see the point in getting too involved in their children's education. The belief that their children have the natural ability to do well without their assistance, results in perceptions that their involvement is not necessary. Therefore, this belief held by some parents may become a barrier to effective parental involvement. Alternatively, parents who believe that academic achievements are influenced by the child's efforts as well as ability, and that abilities can be developed, are more likely to be involved in their children's

education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). These parents are likely to be active when it comes to their children's schoolwork and academic activities and may perceive that their involvement may also be a contributing factor towards their children's success.

In addition, these parents tend to also hold a belief about the role which they should play towards their children's development (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Hence, parents who believe that the role which they play towards the development of their children has an impact on their development and success, are most likely to be more involved. Consequently, it can be argued that those who do not hold such beliefs are most likely to have limited involvement in their children's lives and education. Nonetheless, parents who think that parental involvement is not valued by teachers or schools tend to be less likely to get involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). In other words, parents who feel that their involvement in their children's school activities is not valued are less likely to become involved. Therefore, it can be argued that to encourage parental involvement there should be an equal partnership between parents and the school.

2.3.3 Level of parents' education

Parents levels of education has an influence on the type and level of involvement exhibited. It is stated that educated parents tend to empower their children and give them appropriate directions in school-related matters (Chohan & Khan, 2010). A study by Khan and Malik (1999) demonstrated that parents' educational level significantly affects the child's learning and their perception of the importance of education. Therefore, parents level of education consequently influence their perceptions regarding education and support. However, the same may be stated with regard to parents who are not educated but recognise the importance of education.

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), parents' perspectives on whether they have the adequate abilities and knowledge to assist their children with academic activities has been found to be influenced by their level of education. Parents may feel as though they do not have the necessary skills or abilities to effectively assist their children academically. Therefore, it may be argued that the perspectives and knowledge held by parents has an influence on the extent of parental involvement exhibited. According to Bermudez (1996), inability to understand the language of the school is another major preventive factor to effective parental involvement for parents who have not achieved English proficiency. Parents who may not have the ability to speak English may have difficulties in assisting their children, thus resulting in

them offering limited support. This is in accordance with Simich-Dudgeon's (1993) findings which stated that parents of students enrolled in higher education or classes have indicated that they want to help their children; however, their inability to understand the language of the assignments has prevented them from doing so. Therefore, level of education either pose a barrier or fosters parent's involvement in the academic life of students living with a disability. Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that there are various other forms of support that parents may offer their children such as emotional support. Furthermore, the literature demonstrated that because of challenges and difficulties associated with the transition from high school to university, parental support is nevertheless essential.

2.3.4 Learning difficulties and disabilities

According to the findings by Hornby and Lafaele (2011), parents' level of involvement tends to be influenced by their children's academic performance. Therefore, children's performance at school may motivate or demotivate parental involvement. The academic performance of the child can either be positive or negative and the level of academic difficulties that the child may have has an impact on the level of parental involvement. For example, when children are struggling with their schoolwork due to learning difficulties or disabilities, parents are generally more inclined to be actively involved (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Parents are required to be more involved due to their child's unique condition by means of providing support where they are facing difficulties to enable good academic performance. In addition, the involvement of parents is necessary for the implementation of educational programmes of children with disabilities (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

2.4 Types of parental involvement

There are various ways in which parents may become involved in their children's academic life such as those comprised in the Epstein parental involvement model. The Epstein parental involvement model comprises six types of parental involvement that contribute towards the academic achievement of the child (Epstein et al., 2002):

- *Type 1 – Parenting:* Assist all families to find a form of parenting method that will assist students living with disabilities. This may be achieved by providing the children with the necessary parental motivation and support which may include emotional support towards furthering their education. This can be achieved by conducting a family needs assessment that will highlight the needs of the family and enable the development of programmes that

will assist in that particular area (Epstein et al., 2002). The focus of the programme will then be mainly on addressing the needs of the family which has been indicated by them, thus making it effective. For example, providing skills to parents that will better enable them to assist their children with their academic activities or support such as providing them with resources that will foster academic achievement.

- *Type 2 – Communication:* Establish effective forms of two-way communication exchange between the school and home regarding school programmes and children's progress. This can therefore be achieved by providing various ways and methods for parents to collaborate with the school which will strengthen the family-school partnership and thus build a mutual responsibility for the children (Epstein et al., 2002). Furthermore, the two-way communication will make clear the expectations of both parents and the school. The progress and limitation that the child may have will be communicated, thus enabling a collective solution that will be beneficial for the child. In addition, the child will be made aware of his/her progress and actions required to obtain good academic performance.
- *Type 3 – Volunteering:* This type is based on recruiting and organising parent assistance at school, home or at other locations. However, for this to occur the university would need to have clear procedures in place for parents to become volunteers. Parental involvement can be increased by making parents feel welcomed and ensuring that their active involvement is appreciated and valued (Epstein et al., 2002). For example, having a parents' appreciation day whereby gratitude is given to parents. Furthermore, make parents aware about the valuable and impactful role that have towards the student's academic involvement.
- *Type 4 – Learning at home:* Make available information and ideas to families about how to help university students at home with academic work, decisions and planning. For example, the university can provide the necessary information for families on skills and expectations required from university students and how to assist them in achieving these. This type of parental involvement will equip parents with skills to assist and encourage students at home while creating a positive academic attitude (Epstein et al., 2002). This will consequently have an impact on the student's academic performance at university level.
- *Type 5 – Decision-making:* This includes parents from all backgrounds in school decisions and on school committees. Callison (2004) described decision-making as a process that includes the input of various individuals such as parents and community members in the decisions about how the school should function. For instance, the ideas and perspectives of

each of these individuals are put together to achieve a common goal or vision that may be beneficially for the school through various methods. This therefore implies that children are represented by their parents at school meetings; furthermore, it means that parents have an input on school policies in relation to their children's education.

- *Type 6 – Collaborating with the community:* Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes that will later be beneficial for the students' learning at university level. For instance, utilising parents and teacher knowledge in the community to enable the development of programmes that will essentially benefit the children (Epstein et al., 2002). This will further assist other parents with skills that may be used to assist their children. Furthermore, it will enable an awareness of resources that are available within the community and those which are necessary.

It is stated that when there is collaboration between schools and parents there is a successful academic outcome for students as there is a consistent message being generated from both sources about the importance of education (Epstein et al., 2002). Therefore, a common message being transferred by the university and parents communicates clear expectations of the student. Bennet (2001) argued that increasing parental skills and knowledge regarding children's academic achievements will better equip them to assist their children in a home setting. Parents will be able to effectively assist their children academically, resulting in positive academic consistency and results. In addition, by encouraging parental participation in school decisions, parents will be more committed to the academic success of their children and their visions recognised. Nonetheless, it is important for the school to create a welcoming environment to enable parental participation (Constantino, 2003). This will thus motivate parental participation and involvement.

2.5 Transition to university for students with disabilities

There has been an increase in the number of students with various disabilities entering university which has resulted in an increase of accommodation (easy access to buildings) requests (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). The rise in the number of students with disabilities enrolled within universities means there should be an increase in the availability of disability-friendly accommodation and access to facilities. In spite, the increase in the number of students with disabilities being enrolled at a university, students living with disabilities continue to be less

likely to pursue post-secondary education when compared to students without disabilities (Stodden, 2005; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza & Levine, 2005).

Transition in general is difficult and requires time for adjustment and effort to minimise the challenges that may perhaps be associated with change (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). However, each individual experience change differently, and so is the case with students with disabilities. Research has demonstrated that the transitioning from high school to higher education is particularly difficult for students with disabilities (Madaus, 2005). This implies that, although students encounter challenges with the shift from high school to university it is inevitably more difficult for student with disabilities. The responsibility for students with disabilities to manage their accommodation along with their academic coursework present a set of challenges unique to these students (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005).

Perhaps what is most worrying about the issue of self-disclosure for students with disabilities, according to Wagner et al. (2005), is that some of these students enrolled for higher education tend to hold the belief that they do not have a disability. Therefore, students with disabilities may not see the need for being classified and treated differently but rather may prefer to be treated like other students without disabilities. According to Eckes and Ochoa (2005), a student with a disability is expected to self-identify as having a disability to enable him/her to be able to request the necessary accommodation and support from the university; however, some students may decide to not disclose their disability Even so, some students may wait until they experience academic challenges to self-disclose (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005).

Students with disabilities need to develop various skills that will equip them at university such as developing self-determination skills and self-management/ independence skills. According to Getzel and Thoma (2008), students living with a disability require self-determination skills to successfully transition, adjust and remain at university. Therefore, self-determination skills enable students to adjust to university life and motivate them to continue with their studies regardless of challenges encountered. Furthermore, these skills are a set of interpersonal skills that may include the acceptance of a disability and understanding its effects (De Fur, Getzel & Trossi, 1996; Eaton & Coull, 1998; Getzel, Briel & Kregel, 2000; Getzel, McManus & Briel, 2004). Therefore, it is essential that students with disabilities are prepared for the transition from high school to university by developing the necessary skills and understanding of university life and expectations.

2.6 The role of parental involvement in student's academic performance

Families and schools have been working together in collaboration since the beginning of formalised schooling (Hill & Taylor, 2004). This collaboration has been put in place to assist students; moreover, those living with a disability. However, the nature of this collaboration has since evolved over the years. According to Hill and Taylor (2004), parental involvement is defined as entailing the following activities: Volunteering at school, communication with teachers and other school personnel, assisting in academic activities and attending school events. There are various forms of parental involvement and support that may be provided. This may consequently have a positive impact on the academic performance of the child. Parental school involvement is associated with early school success, including academic and social competence (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill, 2001; Hill & Craft, 2003).

An intervention programme that was developed for 'at-risk children' emphasises the importance of parental involvement as a critical feature of children's early academic development (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Hill and Taylor (2004) further stated that this was because parental involvement promotes positive academic experiences for children and has positive effects on the parents' self-development and parenting skills. This further demonstrates the importance of parental involvement, not only for the child, but also for the benefit and development of the parent. According to Hill and Taylor (2004), there are two major mechanisms by which parental involvement promotes academic achievement, which is increasing social capital and having social control. Social capital is the relationships and networks that parents form, for example relationships with other parents.

Furthermore, Hill and Taylor (2004) stated that parents' school involvement increases their skills and information which makes them well prepared to assist their children's academic-related problems. This is achieved by learning how to assist their children and tackle academic challenges that they face through their interaction with teachers and other parents. Furthermore, when parents and teachers interact, teachers learn about parents' expectations for their children and teachers (Hill & Taylor, 2004). This enable teachers to have a clear understand and insight of parents' desires for their children and the expected role of them as teachers. Baker and Stevenson (1986) found that parents who are academically involved in their children's life and school tend to develop more multifaceted strategies for working with the school and their children towards academic achievement.

Social control is a second method through which parental involvement will contribute towards academic achievement. According to Hill and Taylor (2004), social control occurs when families and schools collaborate towards forming an agreement about appropriate behaviour. This, therefore, means that the agreed upon behaviour will be communicated and emphasised, both at home and at school. Hill and Taylor (2004) further stated that when children and their peers receive similar messages about suitable forms of behaviour from various sources and settings, the message becomes clear and academic expectations are clarified. Hence, this will motivate the desired behaviour as expectations of children are communicated from various sources with their environment and interactions (such as relationships with peers) stressing the same. Therefore, social control is basically whereby parents take control of their children's academic achievements by partaking in academic discussions that will be beneficial to their children.

Through both social capital and social control children receive messages about the importance of schooling which increase children's competence, motivation to learn and engagement in school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). This, in turn, channels the child into the right direction which will have positive implications for his/her academic performance. Nonetheless, due to the perception that parental involvement has positive effects on children's academic achievement, it can be thus used as a remedy for academic success. However, there remain some thorny issues related to research on parental involvement because of the inconsistent research findings (Fan & Chen, 2001).

2.7 Theoretical framework

The framework model for parental support that was used for this research study is the ecological approach. This model could assist in the explanation of factors that contribute towards the growth of children and the involvement of parents. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that development and growth of children depend on their environment and their closest relationships. The environmental factors and the relationships that children have, tend to impact on their sense of self and progress. Therefore, the ecological model was used in relation to this research study. It is important to note that for the purpose of this study the focus will be on students with disabilities.

The ecological model suggests that children function within multiple layers that have an impact on their behaviour and development. This study focused on four system levels in relation to the ecological model, namely the microsystem level (individual's immediate environment which

includes home, school, neighbourhood and peers); the mesosystem (comprises of the linkage that occurs between two or more settings involving the child, such as relations between school and home); the exosystem (relations between the microsystems and systems in which the person is directly involved); and the macrosystem (social class, religious groups and ethnicity). Each of the systems are interconnected and influence the functioning and behaviour of the people within them. The ecological model considers the reciprocal interactions of human development and the multiple environments in which it unfolds (Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley & Roggman, 2014).

2.7.1 Microsystem

The microsystem level is the smallest layer and closest to the child. This layer encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with his/her immediate environment (Berk, 2000). The structures that can be found within the microsystem layer include the family, school and neighbourhood. Bronfenbrenner (1990) stated that at this level relationships may impact in two directions: away from the child and towards the child. For example, the academic beliefs and expectations that the parents hold towards their child with a disability may influence the child's beliefs and behaviour. However, the child can also affect the behaviour of the parents, therefore this can be argued to be the most impactful level to the child. For instance, challenging the beliefs that parents hold by overcoming their perceived limitations.

2.7.2 Mesosystem

For the purpose of understanding parental involvement, the mesosystem includes the relations of the family system and other microsystems in which the family members spend time, for example the school and church. The mesosystem is a layer that provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem (Berk, 2000). Actions occurring in one microsystem can result in reactions in the other layers. For example, children whose parents are not actively involved in their academic life may have difficulties at school.

2.7.3 Exosystem

The exosystem is the layer that defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly. The structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with some structure in his/her microsystem (Berk, 2000), for example, parent's workplace schedules. In this level, the child is not directly involved; however, he/she does feel the positive

or negative force that occurs at this level. For example, long working hours for parents might increase the available resources for living with a disability. However, it may reduce parental involvement and physical presence of the parent.

2.7.4 Macrosystem

This layer may be considered the outermost layer in the child's environment and the principles held here influence other layers. While not being a specific framework, this layer is comprised of cultural values, customs and laws (Berk, 2000). This layer comprises the values held regarding disabilities, which consequently influence other layers within the ecological system. For example, if it is the belief or a law that parents should be the ones responsible for raising the child living with a disability, then parents are less likely to be provided with the necessary resources. This, in turn, affects the structures in which the parents function. Therefore, understanding a child's development and behaviour requires understanding of all the systems in a child's life.

2.8 Summary

This literature review illustrated the impact of parental involvement on children's academic achievement. Considering the impact of parental involvement on children, one could understand the need for parents to be actively involved in the academic activities of their children. However, there are various barriers that have been proved to prevent this from occurring as has been highlighted in the literature review, such as socio-economic status, parental beliefs and expectations, level of parent's education and child factors. There are nevertheless various methods that may be utilised to address these barriers. Therefore, it may be argued that parental involvement plays a significant role towards the academic success and adjustments of students living with disabilities. The transition from high school to university in general is argued to be filled with challenges and requires time for adjustment and effort to minimise the challenges that are associated with change (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005).

Therefore, parental involvement may assist towards this transition by providing a support structure, thus enabling environmental adjustment. The transition from high school to university was found to be more challenging for students living with a disability (Madaus, 2005). This could be contributed to their unique conditions and circumstances. Nevertheless, parental involvement eases this transition and thus increases the likelihood of academic success. There are various ways in which parents may become involved as suggested by

Epstein which, if utilised, could bring about the formation of a positive and collaborative relationship between the parents and the school, thereby increasing students' academic achievement. Furthermore, it will equip parents with skills that will enable them to effectively assist their children. These various parental involvement approaches highlight the academic expectations of both parents and the school, thus making it clear for children what is required of them. It was indicated that parenting styles also have an impact on students' academic success with authoritative parenting styles being correlated with good academic results. The ecological approach or model was discussed as it was to be utilised in the research study.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter entails the methodology and procedures that were used during the collection process of the research data and analysis. As defined by Kothari (2004), research is an art of scientific investigation and search for knowledge. In other words, research is a process used to obtain more knowledge about a particular phenomenon of interest. According to Clifford Woody (as cited in Kothari, 2004) research comprises defining and redefining problems, formulating a hypothesis or suggesting a solution, collecting, organising and evaluating data, making deductions and research conclusions. Research is hence used to obtain the necessary knowledge and answers to the research topic of interest through the use of scientific methods and procedures.

The choice in methods and procedures used is based on the research topic and its main objectives. In the case of the current research study the main purpose was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of the UKZN students with disabilities of parental support and the effects it has on their academic performance; exploring specifically the impact that parental support may have on the academic performance of students and identifying any possible barriers that may contribute to low parental support. Furthermore, understanding students with disabilities' perceptions regarding parental support.

This chapter outlines the various research data collection methods that were used during the study by exploring the research methodology used, research instrumentation, sample, research setting, data collection and data analysis.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 A qualitative approach

Willig (2001) argued that qualitative research is usually concerned with meaning and how people make sense of the world through their experience. Therefore, for this study, a qualitative method was used looking at the perceptions of students regarding parental support. Qualitative research is further able to provide an in-depth analysis of the experiences of a relatively small

number of respondents (Griffen, 2004). Although the participants that were used for the study were small in number, nonetheless this method enabled the researcher to obtain the necessary in-depth data.

The sole purpose of this research study was to get an ‘understanding’ from the perspective of the participant. Creswell (2007) stated that qualitative research begins with an assumption, a worldview and the study of research problems with the curiosity of the meaning individuals may assign to that phenomenon. The participants were the ones who obtained the necessary information and therefore were the teachers, and the researcher the learner enquiring data. The researcher did not impose her own views but rather sought to obtain a sense of understanding from the standpoint of the participant. This research study incorporated the voices of the participants and the reflexivity of the researcher. The study avoided closed-ended forms of questions that prompt particular types of responses, but rather opted for an open-ended form of questions which enabled participants to freely express themselves.

3.2.2 Research setting

The research study was conducted at one of the five UKZN campuses known as the Howard College campus that is situated near Berea in Durban. This campus was opened in the year 1931, following a generous donation by Mr TB Davis. The Howard College campus offers various degree options within the fields of engineering, law, humanities, social science, architecture and nursing. This campus also offers various facilities and programmes that cater for students with disabilities such as the disability unit. The disability unit is basically responsible for developing and facilitating a wide range of services for students with disabilities. The services being offered include academic support, accommodation and financial support. Ethical clearance to conduct the research study was obtained from the UKZN before the commencement of the research study. The university setting was convenient as the participants that were interviewed resided within the university campus residences. The interviews were conducted at the disability unit as this was perceived to accommodate and guarantee comfortability of the students.

3.2.3 Measurement instrument

Measurement instrument is the methods that the researcher uses to obtain data from participants (Brislin, 1986). Data was obtained through the use of interviews. A semi-structured interview

guide consisting of nine open-ended questions was used to collect data during the individual one-to-one interviews with the students.

3.2.4 Sampling

The non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling was used to select eight students living with a disability enrolled at the UKZN. Purposive sampling is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants (Dolores & Tongco, 2007). The non-probability sampling method is a selection method based on the personal judgement of the researcher about who will be most informative for the research study (Polit & Beck, 2010). The researcher decides on an informant who possess the qualities and possible information that will be relevant to the study. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) further stated that non-probability sampling does not involve a statistical principle of randomness and that purposive sampling is a method used when sampling depends on both availability and their willingness to participate.

The researcher decides on what needs to be known and set out to find participants who can or are willing to provide the necessary information by virtue of knowledge and experience (Barnard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006). Therefore, purposive sampling is an informative tool that can be used to select purposive participants. By using this method, it ensures that the participants who are willing to participate in the study have the necessary experience and information to contribute. In the case of the current study, purposive sampling was therefore appropriate as the focus was on students with disability from the UKZN Howard College campus.

There was no guarantee that the potential participants would be available nor willing to participate in the research study. The researcher therefore arranged and scheduled the interview time and days based on the availability of the potential participants. For each interview, the researcher explained the topic and emphasised that participation was voluntary. A consent form was given to the participant before the interview commenced which further explained the ethical procedures that were in place. Eight participants were interviewed for this research study which were inclusive of six males and two females. The participants interviewed for this research study were those who were doing their second year of study and above. The reason for this was the assumption that they would have more information considering that they had a year or more of experience within the UKZN.

3.2.5 Data collection

The researcher personally interviewed the eight participants using a semi-structured one-to-one form of interview method. This was to enable the researcher to obtain rich in-depth information and perceptions from the students in relation to the topic. At the beginning of each interview the researcher explained the aims and purpose of the study, and clarified any other queries that the participant may have had. Each participant was informed of the voluntary nature of their participation as well as anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were then asked to sign an informed consent form before the commencement of the interview (Appendix A). An audio-recorder was used to record the interview at the consent and agreement of the participant and later transcribed by the researcher.

Although the interviews were originally set to be conducted at the disability unit, the participants however had a choice of where they wanted to be interviewed. This ensured that each interview was conducted in a quiet and private room at the comfort of the participant. The interviews were conducted for an approximate time of 30 to 45 minutes. Interviews were all conducted in English and guided by an interview schedule which obtained nine questions (Appendix B).

3.2.6 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse and record data obtained from the interview. Thematic data analysis is a method that identifies, analyses and reports patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This form of data analysis method enables the structuring and detailed description of data obtained from the interview. Themes and concepts obtained in the interview are revealed and noted. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme captures vital information in relation to the research questions and presents a level of meaning and pattern with the data obtained.

Thematic analysis was chosen for this study because of its flexibility and usefulness to providing a rich and detailed account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The six step by step guide suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) to do the thematic analysis was used for this study, namely familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and lastly, producing the report.

□ *Step 1: Familiarising oneself with the data*

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), at this stage it is essential that the researcher has some prior knowledge of the data before they commence with data analysis. Therefore, the researcher immersed herself with the data collected and read and reread the research findings while writing down initial ideas that the researcher might have had at that time. Moreover, at this stage it was necessary to first read through the whole data set before coding and formulating themes as this made it easier for the researcher to identify possible patterns. Furthermore, this can be argued to be an effective way to familiarise the researcher with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

□ *Step 2: Generating initial codes*

This stage commenced once the researcher had read and familiarised herself with the data and generated an initial list of ideas about what was in the data and what was interesting about them. This stage essentially involves the process of coding, which can be understood as identifying features within data that appears to be somewhat interesting to the analyst (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, Braun and Clarke (2006) mentioned the fact that the process of coding was part of an analysis progression which will enable the researcher to organise data into meaningful groups.

The researcher utilized Braun and Clarke manual coding methods to code themes obtained. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), manual coding consists of writing personal notes on the texts that the researcher is analysing by using highlighters. This enable the researcher to indicate and recognise the potential patterns. Therefore, the researcher used highlighters to identify emerging patterns and themes. This process required the full attention of the researcher. The researcher worked systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item, and identify interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of the repeated themes across the data set.

□ *Step 3: Searching for themes*

The researcher commenced with Step 3 once all her data had been coded and assembled, which entailed a list of various codes obtained from analysing the data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this phase entails the researcher organising codes into potential themes and having to gather all data that is relevant to each potential theme. Therefore, at this stage the researcher was in the process of organising codes into potential themes, while gathering

information that may be relevant to each theme. The researcher used visual representations to help sort the different codes into themes. The researcher wrote a brief description under each codes name. Braun and Clarke (2006), assert that it might be helpful to use tables, mind-maps or write the name of each codes on a separate piece of paper and play around with organising theme into theme-piles. The researcher wrote a brief explanation and discussion under each codes name. Moreover, the researcher starts to think about the relationship between codes, themes, and between different levels of themes (e.g., main overarching themes and sub-themes within them) at this phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some initial codes may form main themes or sub-themes, while others may be discarded. The researcher observed that the themes addressed the objectives and research questions of the study.

□ *Step 4: Reviewing themes*

At this stage, the researcher had obtained themes from the previous phases which were, however, not necessarily the final themes. Therefore, this stage involved the researcher's examination of the usefulness of the themes obtained in relation to the coded extracts in the first step and the data set in Step 2, thus generating a thematic map of the analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), Step 4 begins when you have developed a set of potential themes and modification of those themes which will enable the researcher to recognise relevant themes. Therefore, this stage involves the process of reviewing and refining of the themes while adding additional data that may have been missed before. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), data within the themes should cohere together and make sense. Furthermore, there should be a clear and notable distinctions between the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The themes should adhere together and bring about meaningful meaning.

This phase involves two levels of reviewing and refining of the themes. Level one consists of reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This meant that the researcher had to read all the obtained data extracts for each theme, and consider if they appear to form a clear pattern. Once the researcher realised that the themes appeared to form a coherent pattern, the researcher moved on to the second level of the phase. The second level of the phase involves a similar process, but in relation to the complete data set. The researcher had to consider the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set. In this phase, the researcher re-reads the entire data set for see if the themes work in relation to the data, and to code any additional themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At the end of the phase, the researcher had a good idea of the various themes and how they fit together.

□ *Step 5: Defining and naming themes*

This step was whereby the researcher was conducting ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), define and refine means recognising the essence of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures or addresses. Therefore, at this stage it is significant that the researcher considers how each theme could be incorporated in relation to the research data while avoiding the overlapping of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Considering this, the researcher focused her themes in relation to the research questions so as to not deviate from the essence of the research study. In addition, the researcher ensured that she linked the themes to the research questions and the main aim of the research study. Clear definitions were generated, and each theme named and captured by the researcher.

□ *Step 6: Producing the report*

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), Step 6 begins when the researcher has a set of fully worked out themes and involves the final analysis and write-up of the report. It was therefore essential for the researcher to commence with this step when she was confident enough about the themes. The researcher at this phase had selected themes that were most relevant to the research study, and thus commenced with the analysis and writing the report. The write-up entailed themes which were obtained from the research data.

3.3 Critical reflexivity

According to Watt (2007), critical reflexivity involves careful consideration of the phenomenon which is under study, as well as the way in which the researcher's own assumption and behaviour may impact on the study. The fact that the researcher was a student not living with a disability doing research on the perceptions of UKZN students with disabilities regarding parental support and its effects on their academic performance, required that the researcher had to reflect on own bias and assumptions. As defined by Cunliffe (2004), critical reflexive practice means embracing subjective understanding of reality as a basis for thinking more critically about the impact of a person's assumptions, values, and actions on others. Given the subject position, it was of utmost importance that the researcher critically reflects on own bias which may have an impact on the findings.

According to Carey (2009), from a researcher's personal perspective, key forms of analytical reflexivity can include questioning preconceived assumptions made regarding any research

topic; querying possible stereotypes or prejudices held about participants, such as those transmitted through norms, dominant values or personal experiences; reflecting upon the learning process and findings as they evolve throughout the research process; and lastly, asking the question on how has the new information gathered altered your beliefs, values and possible future practice.

Using these reflective pointers or questions, the researcher reflected on some preconceived assumptions and beliefs which she had before and after the research study.

3.4 Trustworthiness

Validity and rigour were obtained through looking at the trustworthiness of the research. Four components were taken into account, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.4.1 Credibility

In accordance to Thomas and Magilvy (2011), a qualitative research study is perceived as reliable when it presents an accurate interpretation of human experience which may be recognisable by those who share the same experience. For instance, the experiences and perceptions held by one student with a disability may be somewhat similar or recognisable by another student with a disability. To ensure credibility of the research study, the researcher returned to the participants with the data obtained, to ensure that the data that was collected was accurately interpreted and represented the perceptions of the participants.

3.4.2 Transferability

According to Thomas and Magilvy (2011), transferability can be understood as the process or ability to transfer the research findings or methods from one group to another. Transferability was achieved through the description of the geographical area of the research study and the in-depth description of the participants. In addition, detailed methods of the research study process were discussed by the researcher by means of the research methodology.

3.4.3 Dependability

Dependability of the study was achieved through the explanation of the methods used to collect data, the time frame, and how the collected research data was analysed. Furthermore, dependability was achieved through the description of the purpose of the study, how and why specific participants were chosen for the study.

3.4.4 Confirmability

According to Thomas and Magilvy (2011), confirmability may occur once credibility, transferability and dependability have been established. The researcher obtained confirmability through the process of reflexivity in which the research reflects upon own assumptions. Through the in-depth open-ended interviews, the assumptions of the researcher were eliminated.

3.5 Ethical considerations

It is vital to highlight that in the progression of this research study there was bound to emerge several ethical issues which were to be addressed. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2002), the fact that human beings are the objects of study in the social sciences, brings about unique ethical problems. Therefore, it was of utmost significance that the researcher had to attend to all the ethical considerations that may arise when conducting a research study. These involve doing no harm, getting informed consent, anonymity in reporting, gatekeeper consent, confidentiality and consent from participants. A formal consent letter was sent to the UKZN Registrar who played the role of gatekeeper before the commencement of the research study (Appendix C). The data obtained was to be stored in a safe place for a period of five years to ensure safety. Upon the completion of the five-year period, the data obtained from the research study will be disposed. Ethical clearance for the research study was obtained from the UKZN ethics committee, thus granting the researcher permission to conduct the research study (Appendix D).

Part of an ethical issue that needs to be considered is that the research study should not harm the participants. According to De Vos et al. (2002), participants may be harmed in a physical or emotional manner. Therefore, it was the researcher's ethical obligation to prevent any form of harm upon the participants during the commencement of the research study. Dane (1990)

stated that the researcher has the duty to protect participants against any form of discomfort that may arise during the research study. Therefore, it was important for the researcher to inform the participants about the content of the study and what it entails so that the potential participant may make an informed decision. No harm was brought upon the participant and no form of dangerous experiments were conducted during the research study. Furthermore, the researcher informed the participants that should they experience a sense of discomfort during the interview process the necessary support and arrangement would be made.

Before the commencement of the interviews the researcher first pursued to obtain the participants informed consent (Appendix A). The reason for this was to ensure that the participants had the necessary knowledge and information about the research study before participation. According to De Vos et al. (2002), it is of importance that accurate and complete information is given to the potential participants so that they are able to make an informed decision about their possible participation. Therefore, participants were informed about the research study, the purpose and benefit of it before conducting the interviews. The participants were further informed that participation was voluntary; hence, they would not be indebted to participate in the study and had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were further informed and given assurance of confidentiality of the information that they would be sharing with the researcher. In addition, informed consent from the participants to audio-record the interview was obtained before the commencement of the interviews. This was all stated in the consent form and required to be signed by the participant who agreed to participate in the research study.

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participant was one of the ethical requirements that had to be addressed by the researcher. According to De Vos et al. (2002), confidentiality is whereby only the researcher is aware of the identity of participants. Therefore, the researcher informed the participants about the issue of confidentiality and reassured them that their identity would remain anonymous. During the process of reporting the research data, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were maintained.

3.6 Summary

This chapter entailed the research procedures and methods that were utilised by the researcher to obtain and organise the necessary data. This chapter detailed the steps which the researcher undertook to obtain the information, the instruments used, the setting of the study and participation of the students. In addition, the chapter stated the method and detailed the steps

that the researcher used in order to analyse the data collected from the participants. This study mentioned the ethical considerations utilized during the commencement of the study.

Chapter 4

The Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to answer the critical research questions which guided the research study focus areas (see chapter 1). The use of the research questions resulted in the emergence of major themes based on the findings, which will be discussed in this chapter. The themes emerged as follows: perceptions of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement, parental support preferences, transition to university, university challenges, methods to overcome challenges, barriers to parental involvement, strategies and structures that the university can put in place to assist students with disabilities.

4.2 Demographic representation of participants

Before discussing the findings of the study, the chapter will look at the socio-demographic features of the participants (see Table 4.1).

The demographic data showed that there was an unfair or uneven representation of the genders with the males being higher than the females. The reason for this was due to the assumption by the researcher that these students would be able to provide in-depth information considering that they had some form of experience of UKZN. The participants were in their twenties, with mostly males being keen to participate in the research study.

TABLE 4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

		Number of participants
Gender	Males	6
	Female	2
Level of study	2 nd	3
	3 rd	5

The researcher found it difficult to obtain more female participants as most were shy and afraid of opening up about their perceptions regarding parental support. The study focused mainly on UKZN students from the Howard College campus due to financial constraints and limited time frame for the research study. For the purpose of the study and to ensure anonymity, the participants were given the following pseudonyms: Participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, participant 4, participant 5, participant 6, participant 7 and participant 8.

4.3 Perceptions of parental support

Parental involvement can be explored as a possible means through which students can be provided with additional support. The findings demonstrate positive effects of parental involvement on students' academic achievements. This has consequently resulted in positive perceptions and attitudes regarding parental support. This was noted in Participant 4 statement:

Parental support I think plays a big role because in as much as, ok for me I would say my disability is not as [paused] like I can do almost everything that you can think off. I cook, I wash for myself like I can do everything by myself so parental support I don't really need it that much because a lot of things that you as a normal person can do I can also do. It only a few things that I am unable to do but parental support I get it from like encouragement to just focus at school, so I think like parents should encourage you to and put pressure to study hard because they send you here to study and learn.

Emotional support from parents impacted positively upon the academic life of the students which consequently influence their academic performance. The encouragement received from parents motivated the students to further push themselves academically. This was further asserted by Participant 2 who stated:

Yes, it has impacted on my academic performance at school in a sense that you have come this far and reached university level so do what you can. Basically, just encouraging to do better and be an example to other people like if as a person with disability I can go thus far what will stop other people who may not have a disability and stuff. So, they always tell me this all the time, to just go and study, work hard and get a job.

Regardless of the student's achievements, persistent encouragement ensured that the student worked hard.

The impact of parental support may be argued to be associated with positivity and growth of the child. This was proclaimed and noted in Participant's 5 statement:

Well like you see, through [paused] ok through my mom teaching me that I have to work hard in everything I do, I think that also like helped me to like even if I'm going through difficulties academically that I don't give up, yeah. I even got a golden key invitation maybe that yeah but then like I don't give up but then like whatever I do I finish it, I always find a way to do it no matter how hard it is even if I have to ask and whatever, even if I have to work extra hard. But then like I also like wana have my one car you know, I wana live my own life and maybe like the only way I think for a disabled person without a degree without something, like I don't think it easy to survive maybe for a person like you it better like you can just tell to go look for a job maybe get a job at the factory and get promoted and end up like being a line manager, but for a disabled person you know their needs so that also that motivation like yeah.

Furthermore, Participant 6 stated:

I would say parental support has an impact on academic achievement like for me it does. I'm sure if my mother, like ok my mom is the only one who supports me so if she wasn't there, or like around maybe I would also not be here you know. Because sometimes there are a lot of things that I need like sunscreen, like as an albino I get easily burnt by the sun so like if my mother could not like support me with sunscreens and those kinds of things I would get burnt and then start looking ugly you know. And end up having low self-esteem and end up not being able to attend class and stuff. So, I would say parental support does have an impact [paused] like I don't know if I am making sense, like sunscreen is very important for someone with albinism cause without it you will be ugly straight up you know. So, me being ugly like I know myself I am someone with a lot of pride so me being ugly will results in me having a low self-esteem and not attend due to being scared of what people will say you see. So, it actually has an impact on academic performance because if you attend you will do good you know.

Offering financial support proved to be valuable to the participants. Financial assistance from parents ensures that the needs of the student, such as skin care products, are provided.

However, it was discovered that some students had received a disability bursary or sponsor that helped fund their academic studies. Nevertheless, parents were involved towards funding the additional needs of the student as proclaimed by Participant 4:

They not actively involved in my academics, but they support me in a sense that if I need something maybe financially then they will assist. Like I have a sponsor but maybe if for whatever reasons I need something, and I am out of cash then they are able to come to school and assist me. So, they support me financially with whatever that I need, so yeah, I would say one way or the other they are involved in my academics.

Participants note that, parents motivate a sense of independence, thus ensuring their survival in various situations and settings. This was further pointed out by Participant 6:

*Ok parental support, like I think like your parents should be there for you but then they should teach you how to be independent. Because like aaah, they won't be always there for you [paused] and you know yeah. And I think that the best thing I think that my mom and dad did for me was to teach me to be independent and even though maybe at times I thought no man like my parents like my mom she was the first person who convinced me to take the taxi after school. My mom is a teacher so like she couldn't have always been able like let say I'm writing a paper that finish at 12 she would have not always been able every day to fetch me at 12. And **minake** [personally] I am not a person who likes to ask you see people like the biggest thing for a disabled person is to be symptomized like I actually don't like that. So, like through that and through my mom's encouragement and mom saying that I'm going to be ok it just happened but then likely the people I'm surrounded with were ok. You know I ended up knowing rank managers and taxi drivers, like in the morning the taxi would come fetch me outside my door step so like yeah like yeah.*

Although the parent supported and was involved in the academic life of the child, they also encouraged that the child be self-reliant. The physical presence of the parent helps to ease the university life of the students which limits them from living their life fully. This was asserted by Participant 1:

It is that like she comes see me whenever she has time, she comes and assist me with all that I need like cleans and wash for me, she asks me how I am doing at school. Yeah ... like if I need something outside school she will go with me or get for me. Like my mom is very active in my life.

Some participants perceived parental support as necessary and deployed a positive attitude towards it, while other participants emphasised independence, as was asserted by Participant 1:

*I am independent and responsible for myself, so I wouldn't say I failed because I didn't get family support.... And I wouldn't say I pass because of them, like **yonke into** [everything] happens because of **mina** [me].*

The participants felt that it is their responsibility to do well academically and not necessary the level of parent involvement. Furthermore, not receiving parental support or support from family members who have taken up the guardian or parental role, has not been found to have hindered the academic performance of the students as is evident in the statement by Participant 7:

From my experience because I don't have parents, so I don't have someone who is supporting me. I receive support from the money I receive here at school, so I would say it doesn't have an impact, you don't need your parents to keep reminding you to study and stuff. Maybe where you could need them could be maybe if you need extra cash but in terms of maybe getting disturbed or distracted academically and stuff I don't think parental support fits in. From first

year until now about to finish I have never, it has never affected like I don't have parents or someone who supports me financially I support myself, but I study and pass I don't have a problem.

The success of the student depended more on the student's self-determination. The research findings concluded that some students had to overcome challenges on their own, as verified by Participant 7:

No, it just me if I have a problem it my problem and I solve it no one else helps me with it.

Some students have been forced to be independent and overcome the challenges that they face within the university on their own.

4.3.1 Preferred forms of students support

Parental support preferences are another theme that came up. The researcher was further curious to know what form of support students with disabilities required but were not necessarily obtaining. By doing this, ensuring that students receive the support that they really need in accordance to their disabilities. Participant 7 stated:

I would say in my personal life, like support with regards to how I live like as someone with a disability I have extra needs so maybe have that support like a person next to me. Because at times you find that the person you are living with abuses you because they know maybe that you don't have parents but maybe if parent was present it would be easier for them to handle them and see to it that the person you are living with doesn't abuse you. So additional support would be that.

Participants indicated that they required additional assistance such as that of caretakers.

The physical presence and availability of parents was indicated as one of the parental support preferences. This was affirmed by Participant 6 who stated:

[laughs] I am ok [laughs] ok I will say what I am thinking at this particular moment [laughs] ok I would have loved it if I could get hold of my mom whenever I need her cause I have albinism and yeah like I have to sometimes go to town and each time I go to town I have to take taxies and get sun burnt you know. Like if I had to go somewhere for something concerning school I have to take taxies and I get sun burnt. Like I don't like being exposed to the sun, it affects my eyes besides being burnt by it, so like if my mom was always around I would maybe just call her. I would love to have that support, but I know it too much [laughs] like if I need her now I will get hold of her now [laughs] so that I'm always ok but yeah.

However, it was recognised that parents are unable to always be physically there for the child. Therefore, it is necessary for students to have a sense of independence ensuring that they are able to do certain things for themselves.

Parents might not have much expectations and belief in the academic success of the student. This consequently results in parents not supporting their children towards academic success, but rather doubting their abilities. This was asserted by Participant 1 who stated:

Mmm [paused] My family doubted me academically while I was in high school like my ability to achieve and reach the level that I'm in now, so I learnt to be independent and have faith in myself. Like when I passed matric they didn't believe it [paused] when I got to university I got the same attitude that I will not make it. So, I taught myself to be independent and figure things on my own.

Some of the participants emphasised that they were receiving all the support necessary from their parents which has consequently helped to ease their life. This was further asserted in the statement by Participant 5:

Yoh I would love for my parents to buy me car [laughs] but I know that is not feasible because I would stop using cabs you see. That is just a luxury because like Yoh yeah, my parents do a lot for me like I'm even on medical aid just to make sure that when I need crutches I get them easily. So, like I have really like think that like yeah that my parents have really went out their way, they took me to expensive schools just to ensure that I have the best things so like yeah. So, like I think my parents have really done a lot and they have like yeah, they have really went out their way, and I think it all up to me now to improve my life and not to give up on anything. So, like that all [paused] I'm just channelled to be in depended and even though my parents are there for me, even though I could call my mom now and she would come through but then yeah, they have taught me to first try for myself rather than me calling them. Because at home I am the oldest boy so like I am the person who always puts other people first more than myself so yeah and I'm very understanding yeah, I don't know I don't think I have a preference. Maybe like other people who are disabled like maybe their parents are not as accommodating but they are accommodating to a certain way like they do accept that so and so is like this and give them love. Just like my parents, like I won't lie to you before I knew how to cook for that two weeks my mom ensured that the other family members around ensured that I cooked and then yeah, they did because like I have close family that stays around like sisters stay around. My dad's happy because my dad told me that while he was growing up disabled people never used to go to school. And then yeah so seeing me in varsity is just something that makes them happy.

Students with disabilities require the accommodation and acceptance of parents of their condition.

4.3.2 Barriers to parental involvement

Parental involvement has been associated with positive academic performance and the overall university adjustment of students living with disabilities; however, there are various barriers that tend to prevent effective parental involvement. Participant 6 stated that what tend to prevent parental involvement is unawareness, as quoted:

I would say ignorance, like parents must learn about their child's condition like know what the child needs like how they can help their child be ok. Like they need to learn about the child's condition.

The lack of consciousness of the child's disability needs leads to parents not being able to effectively support their children. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that parents learn about the disability of their children thus obtaining in-depth knowledge of the condition and its needs. Knowledge about the condition enables them to effectively support their children and provides them with the necessary ability to assist.

This was further asserted by Participant 7 who stated:

It could be not having enough information like with those who are at home and not studying and stuff, it could be that lack of information. Yeah because here in south Africa we are a minority there is not a lot of us, so information about maybe that someone with a disability can continue studying until they reach university level. Because even with us we come across situation whereby people ask like why are you studying what will you do because you are disabled you might as well stay at home. Like what can I say I think people are not aware that someone with a disability can do other things as well, so I think maybe it the lack of knowledge especially amongst those people living in the rural areas. There is no knowledge about a person with a disability, that they can study and stuff.

It was discovered that the perceptions and beliefs that people hold regarding 'disability' has an influence on their expectations. This was asserted by Participant 4 who stated:

I think there is still that thing that or stereotype that someone with a disability should not go to school because they will not get a job. Which is not true there are a lot of people with disabilities who graduate and get jobs, that are proper just like everyone else. So, there is still that stereotype that people with a disability should stay at home, just like I said like you are able to put the child in high school until they finish then why not continue. So, it starts there if you believe in education and in your child as a parent that your child with a disability will be able to study then I don't see the reason to not support the child further when they have reached tertiary.

On the other hand, Participant 1 stated:

Like I lived with my grandmother mostly.... like the reality is that even for those who are normal sometimes their parents may have doubts about them like the attitude and mentality was that if like people who are normal and don't have any form of disability fail matric for years how much more for a person with disability who has learning challenges. So, I think that my mother had doubts that I would cope and like not living with my mother caused her to not know how I overcame the challenges that I faced like academic challenges.

It is the lack of belief in the children and limited expectations towards education that causes a barrier towards parental support. Nevertheless, although knowledge may be argued to provide parents with understanding of the condition (disability), the issue of acceptance of the disability still plays a vital role. Participant 5 stated:

I think the first thing is acceptance, the fact that let say you get a child that like this and this. The fact that you haven't accepted that your child is like this starts there, that the first barrier. The other thing that the person does is because the person has not accepted the situation, the person is angry maybe you blame yourself or maybe you blame God. But then the people, the parents that I have spoken too maybe their parents like I just see that they have not accepted the whole situation and then if you do not accept that whole situation how are you gona make sure the child is well treated so I think the most key barrier that leads to other difficulties is acceptance yeah.

A parent of a child living with a disability tend to find it hard to accept the condition which consequently lead to them not being effectively involved in the life of the child. The participant highlighted that most of the parents that he has spoken to who have a child with a disability lack acceptance, and as a result, fail to offer the essential support to their children.

4.4 The transition to university

The findings demonstrated that while some of the students found the transition to university demanding and challenging, some were nevertheless well prepared and thus able to adapt. Participants had similar experiences during their early university life; however, they embraced it differently. Some participants found the experience undesirable as pointed out by Participant 3:

There were a lot of demands like with time, dedication aah, financially there was also demands I had to move from home to res. Like at home everything was there now here you have to cook your own food and do things for yourself, that was a big challenge for me. One of them which was cooking, like I wasn't cooking at home because my mom would cook for us you see. But here you have to cook for yourself, and you must balance both like you can't study hungry.

The study found that students with disabilities had self-determination as they did not let their disabilities hinder them from continuing with their studies or educational journey.

Participant 8 pointed out:

It was a little challenging for me due to my disability, the time I got here [paused] I finished in 2010 and the time I got here it was 2012. Yeah because I took a gap year in 2011 because like I had issues when I had to come here because in high school I was in a special school. We had house mothers, care takers like that help you with stuff like bathing. Then when I got here one I had to pay someone who will help me, and when I got here it was still worse like the school did not take note of the fact that you need someone to live with you and all that. So, I became the first student, they did not cater for the person who was living with me, so I had a little challenge.

The extent of support required by students with disabilities depends largely on the type of disability. The participant had a physical disability which consequently limited her movement and abilities to do things independently. This, therefore, meant that the student required a caretaker to assist her. However, the university offers various services such as the disability unit. The assistance of these personnel's helps to ease the transition and aids towards university adjustment as was pointed out by Participant 2:

It was good with the help of mentors and stuff, like they got me mentors and they helped me adjust because it wasn't an easy task. Like in high school I use to write short essays, I wasn't really exposed to that much essays but more of short questions because I was in science and now I am in humanities and I am required to write a lot of essays. So, it was a big challenge but with the help of mentors and stuff yeah it was good.

Students are provided with services such as separate testing services and venues, extra time on tests and assistance. It was through the utilisation of the disabilities unit services that the students could adapt and adjust to demands of the university environment. This was further asserted by Participant 6:

Hum it been hard but yeah, I managed somehow with the help of cause from the disability unit from here. Like in high school my mom enrolled me in a good school, a special school. Like even though she doesn't know much about my condition aaah the school she enrolled me in like it was expensive but she paid. People there were able to like say: you know as an albino I need this and that so, when I came here to university like I have never been required to do a lot of work. All that was required of me was to study you know cause even applications at school they did all that for us. They understood that we have special needs you know so they did everything for us. Even here when we arrived we got assistance from the disability unit, it been an easy transition.

Students should prepare themselves for transition to university while still in high school as it is perceived as more effective in facilitating environmental adjustments (Belch, 2005; Kosine, 2006; Milsom & Hartley, 2005). Findings demonstrate that, participants who were prepared for university eased into the transition period, thus effectively adjusting. This was proclaimed by Participant 4 who stated:

High school prepared me in terms of studying and academics like there was a study periods there like you knew that at this point in time you should be studying and doing your schoolwork. And most of the time there you spent on your books, so I would say they were preparing us and teaching us to not really rely too much on teachers but self-study. There were also other chores like we washed our own cloths I think that was to prepare us that when we get to university we need to be independent so yeah.

Participant 1 also stated:

Aaah it was alright because the teachers groomed me for school so when I got here to varsity it wasn't that much of a difference. It was a change because it varsity but not much of a change in terms of social and academic setup.

Students with disabilities tend to be enrolled in 'special schools' which are schools designed to cater for their needs and accommodate students living with disabilities. Nevertheless, some parents opt to enrol their children in mainstream schools to enable interaction with other students without disabilities. It was demonstrated by the participants that doing this consequently eased the shift to university. This was asserted by Participant 5 who stated:

Ok so for me I would say like I went to main stream schools, like I didn't go to special schools so for me I would say I'm used to being the only one who is disabled. So, like yeah it was nice I had various privileges, so like me coming to university it wasn't such a big transition for me because for like a person who was enrolled in special school and was surrounded by other disabled people to adapt to just being surrounded by other people and maybe in terms of infrastructure you know my school had stairs so I was prepared.

Students who are enrolled at a mainstream school are exposed to diverse students, infrastructure and academic demands that are similar to those at university. Therefore, participants who were previously enrolled at mainstream schools indicated that it helps ease the transition to university; this was attested by Participant 5 who stated:

Like I would like to say you see my parents, they didn't like the whole situation of special school tendencies because like even though you in a closed environment where you are catered for where you have everything you need you won't be in that environment forever. So, like my parents always taught me my mom especially that if I can't do something they will always find

a way teach me and means for me to get it. So even when I'm at school you know I always have to wait for that no matter what happens to strive and make sure that I am able to do it some way or another you know to do it at the end. So, like yeah that how my parents taught like yeah, they taught me to be independent and to not be dependent on other people because at the end of the day even if my mom was there for me like she told me she won't always be there for me I need to be independent, I need to grow.

Encouragement of independence at a tender age enables the child to function independently in the outside world, regardless of disability.

According to Ankeny and Lehmann (2011), children with disabilities ought to be exposed to risks and challenges instead of being safeguarded from them, to enable the development of suitable skills necessary to face real-life challenges. This ensures that the student is equipped with the necessary skills to perceive and overcome situations that may occur in their lifetime. However, although exposure to challenges and risks may have positive outcomes for the student, it also has its failures (Moreno, 2013). For instance, although some of the participants viewed being enrolled at mainstream schools, as beneficial and that they could adapt, for some it was not the case. This was affirmed by Participant 7 who stated:

I would say for me varsity has been better than high school, like high school was very bad I didn't go like to these schools for disabled students. I was in a normal school near home.

This demonstrated that although exposed to risk and challenging situations, the student had an undesirable experience. This consequently resulted in the preference of a university environment that offer services to students with disabilities.

The study established that most of the participants were enrolled in mainstream schools; however, others were enrolled into special schools. Although special schools are perceived as environments that accommodate students with disabilities, for some it has not been fully the case. This was verified by Participant 1 who stated:

I think primary was accommodating of my disability and then in high school we had to adjust to the system because there like the workload did not accommodate you in terms of your disability so that why even in varsity it was easy for me to adjust because the workload from high school was similar to the one here in varsity.

Although enrolled at a special school, the school system nevertheless was structured to help students cope within an educational setting that does not cater solely for children with disabilities.

4.4.1 Challenges faced by student's living with disabilities at university level

Students with disabilities tend to face multiple trials when they transition to university due to their unique condition and the unfamiliar environment. The study revealed that students with disabilities face challenges which revolve around infrastructure, finances and academics. For example, students with disabilities find it hard to keep up during lectures due to their condition which may limit or hinder them in some form. This was asserted by Participant 6 who stated:

Academically I would say it was a little hard for me, like I was used to being spoon feed at school like in high school I never took notes. Like taking notes for me is a problem like I can't take notes in class aaah like I can't write fast because I have a sight problem like I can't see clear. So those were some of the challenges I faced when I got here, yeah.

The study found that the participants had difficulties when writing tests and exams; thus, they required additional times as their physical condition limited how fast they could write. This consequently resulted in them not completing their exams. This was proclaimed by Participant 1 who stated:

I think the issue for me was generally lectures, like the lecturer would say something on the side that I could not write like write all. And like during exams they would recruit someone to write the exam for me but then you find that the person who is supposed to help me write my exam would sometimes not understand me when I talk which resulted in me taking long to finish and like you would find that time runs out before I finish.

Nevertheless, the UKZN offers assistant services to students with disabilities who are unable to personally write their exams.

The increase workload and demands from the university proved to be challenging for some participants who were used to minimal work requirements. This was asserted by Participant 3:

One of my challenges where I didn't do humanities in high school as a subject so I was not familiar with this thing if writing and assignments. Like assignments and exams as forms of essays, like I was used to writing short questions and short exams. So, I had to adjust to the idea of having to write essays which were approximately 3-4 papers and 10 papers at some point, so I had to adjust. Even now it is still a challenge for me like I won't lie to you I am still struggling to write an essay, like a proper essay.

Participant 8 pointed out:

Here I would say it the tests, in high school it was a matter of coming from the dome room to class with your books and you had people helping you. But here in university it not like that but

luckily, I came here with a table already so my books I would put it on the table. My first test I wrote it myself and during my first test I was very scared because one I know that I am very slow, matric I wrote it myself and then they gave us that extra 15min because the school had not requested it. Here they have extra time for students with disability and is added per hour per hour. So, life here I found it to be a little better but entrance test I wrote for myself, but they found that I am very slow, like I took a long time but they waited for me until I finished. When I finished on that day I was like wow here they actually wait for you to finish. But then they said next time I will have to use a scribe because they noticed that yes, I can write for myself, but I am slow. Even now I use a scribe but it not that hard because even writing it just that you get tired and typing is easier, but I think life here became more easy. I got a computer and adapted easily and typed instead of writing with a pen. The challenges I would say are the venues like the stairs, but we speak to other lecturers and they assist with changing the venue. But honestly there are other challenges you find that you cannot go to certain places like you find that the place has a lift, but the lift is not working. Like you will tell yourself that the venue is fine because there is a lift only to find that the lift is not working, and you find yourself not attending the whole semester. That once happened to me for English, you end up failing for no reason because of not attending and you can't attend. Lecturers are not the same, some will give you notes while others just don't care.

All participants spoke about challenges revolving around the university's infrastructure, indicating that this was a crucial issue.

It may be argued that the participants felt that the university does not fully accommodate students with disabilities. This was proclaimed by Participant 4 who stated:

Ok the challenges that I faced when I got here was more of aaah infrastructure, the way the school is built. Like I said I went to a school for people with a disability meaning everything there was made for people with disabilities. But university the way it is made, like it was built a long time ago for people who are able bodied. Here there are lifts that are not working and mostly stairs, but that because in the olden times there were only abled boded students. So yeah, the challenge I had was more of venue access like were not wheelchair friendly. The structure of the school is bad, but I think it similar to other universities. Like as you know before it used to be blacks, women and then people with disabilities, so they were not really catered for in most places. And for us like person with disabilities we are still left behind in that infrastructure is bad. Especially us, like I will speak about myself who has a physical disability it difficult to access venues so yeah.

Students with disabilities found it difficult to access some lecture venues as was emphasised Participant 7:

Yeah here in school I would say the challenge was, like for instance in class like in Shepton I for instance accessing venues. If you are attending at Shepton 1 it becomes kinder like a challenge because you are unable to hear the lecturer when they are speaking in front, there

are some lecturers who speak softly and don't use the microphone. So, it becomes kinder different when you have to go back and do the work alone, because there is one lecturer that I could not hear what they were saying so that becomes a challenge. Another challenge is for instance at the criminology department it difficult to go consult because I cannot get to the venue. Sometimes I request to consult only to find that the lecturer cannot come down to speak to me and instead talk to me via email, as a result you find that I end up not getting enough information which becomes a problem for me.

Participant 7 further stated:

The only challenges that I faced I would say are the general ones, the issue with venues access [paused] yeah not being able to access venues was the challenge but it was still better then high school. High school like what can I say, my mother passed away while I was doing my matric hum I mean grade 8 and I got injured in 2008. In 2010 my mother passed away and then high school was difficult because money and all that we didn't have so I was forced to go to school near home instead of these expensive disability schools.

Fortunately, regardless of the challenges that students with disabilities encounter, there are ways in which these students can be supported through the disability unit. For instance, lecturers post notes and work by means of the online learning site.

4.4.2 Recommendations and Methods to overcome university challenges

Participants expressed that they were utilising various methods to overcome the challenges mentioned above, which they were facing in university. Participant 2 stated:

to be in constant contact with the disability unit here at school like as them to talk to the lecturers or form a relationship with the lecture venue administration and ask if it possible to change a class to another venue that caters for my disability. Like some of them do agree to this like L5 venue I cannot enter but I can enter at L6 if both of these venues are free at the same time, the lecturer can always talk to the administrator and ask for the class venue to be shifted. Or if that's not possible then I talk to the lecturer about maybe giving me notes in advance and consult more than the other students, that how I overcame the challenges.

Consulting with the lecturers and utilising the disability unit whose sole purpose is to assist students with disabilities further motivates the notion that students need be independent and self-determined to succeed.

In this regard, Participant 7 stated:

What I did was invest more of my time on self-study, but for those that are beyond me for instance the accessing of venue I would go to the disability unit and state my case there and they would assist in changing the lecture venue.

The participant looked within herself to actively overcome the university problems that she was facing. However, the participants further expressed their inability to overcome the encounters at university. This was further pointed out by Participant 6 who stated:

Let me see [paused] I would say I am still facing those challenges [laughs] like even now I don't take notes in class, what I do instead is use the learn site. If the module does not send notes to learn then I go to them and explain that I am a disability unit student, so I need notes. After that they send them to the disability unit yeah.

Even so, there are various services that are offered by the university to help assist students with disabilities, such as 'Module'. 'Module' is a learning site where lecturers communicate with students and can upload the necessary lecture notes.

The utilisation of university services was found to be another method that assists students with disabilities to not only adapt to university demands and changes but to overcome the challenges that they may face. This was pointed out by Participant 3 who stated:

My mentor, especially last year he is the one who taught me everything, he was like a brother a father like everything to me. So, he helped me out a lot to adjust in every way.

Participant 8 agreed:

One thing that I noticed was you need to communicate with your lecturers first, the first thing you must do is to check your time table and check the venues. I did that at honours like I found that one of that seminar room I would not be able to access, so I communicated with the lecturer early and informed him that I am happy that I would be one of his students but I am not happy about the venue as it is not accessible for me as a student that uses a wheelchair. And they understood and changed the venue.

The support that the participants received from his mentor assisted him to overcome the challenges he encountered at university and helped with his adjustment of the university setting.

Being attentive during lectures and taking down personal notes proved to be a method that was used by the students. This enabled them to somewhat overcome the issues related to lecture venues such as a student's inability to take down lecture notes due to sight impairment. This was pointed out by Participant 3 who stated:

I had to listen very carefully and make sure that if I read through the notes when I'm alone I am able to recall and then type on the side and add footnote. But the other issue is I type with one hand, so my hand would like ... like sometimes get tired. But besides that, I cannot write for myself, so I had to get someone who will write for me. But at the same time typing can be

the solution for exams but the problem is I type with one hand, so I was slow, and my hand would get tired during the exam so it better if someone else writes for me.

Participants raised the issues of writing their own exams. It was discovered that some students are unable to personally write their own exams due to a physical disability. Therefore, to overcome this the students utilised the services of the disability unit assistance who wrote the exams on their behalf.

The participants felt that the university structure did not sufficiently accommodate students living with disabilities. The issue of infrastructure was raised multiple times, as stated by Participant 4:

They should focus more on disability, make sure that year in year out they try to change infrastructure, again I will talk about someone with a physical disability because that the disability I know more about, like they should ensure that were ramps are required that they prioritise putting those ramps. If they know that there is a class I cannot access they should do something like put lifts in that venue, so that the only thing that they need to do like priorities like is the place accessible you know yeah.

The issue of limited venue access was raised by all of the participants, which implies it being a core issue.

Participant 6 stated:

Ok let me start with us living with albinism, we need free sun screens. Like there are people with albinism who can't afford sunscreen, we need more places that we can chill at like open area that has a shelter. Like at the park, there are places that need to have shelters so that we can also be able to chill outsides with others. Yeah and for people using wheelchairs, I believe we need more ramps like there are places that these students cannot enter because there are no ramps. Like there was this other guy who asked us to submit for him because he could not enter at the criminology department because there are no ramps. So, we also need ramps [paused] yeah.

It can be further argued that although there are services put in place to assist students with disabilities, the university structure still poses an issue for some of the students.

On the other hand, there are channels that students can utilise to assist them when faced with challenges within the university setting such as the disability unit. The disability unit's sole purpose is to assist students living with a disability with their needs and requirements. Participant 7 stated:

If there is a venue that you cannot access as far as I know you usually go to the disability unit and tell them that there is a venue that you are unable to access. Like I had that problem at the beginning of the year, you tell them that there is a venue that you are unable to access, and then they will talk to the lecturer. Maybe if the lecturer can swop or change venue then they do that, sometimes if it becomes difficult, like when you find the lecturer doesn't want like for 301 psych the lecturer refused to change venues for just one student. So, I went to the SRC and it was handled by them and she ended up changing the venue.

Some of the students come from special schools which means they are not used to mainstream schooling. This resulted in some of them not being comfortable within this new environment, as Participant 6 mentioned:

So, like maybe there should be separate rooms for people with disabilities, like get maybe give them their own lecture rooms that are separate you know. Not that I am discriminating this happens like even in schools you find special schools and mainstream schools. So, they should do that also here in varsity so that it will be easy for them, because they are not used to this you see. Like there is this guy like he got burnt, I have never seen him attending like I assume he has low self-esteem because people are always staring at him and stuff. Like they not used to that, so we need separate lecture venues for people with disabilities so that they may feel more comfortable you know. Yeah, I feel like that would be good.

Participant 7 suggested the following:

They could possibly like check to see what are people's majors and under status indicate a student with disability. So maybe before they allocate the module venue to first check if that venue doesn't have someone with a disability. Because sometimes they say you have to check your timetable early, some other people like if you at home don't have access to internet just like me. If I am at home I don't have access to the internet so the timetable I only do when I get back here at school. That sometimes causes problems for me because you find that when I come back it close to lecturers getting started. So, I think it would be easier if they first check before allocating if it has a student with a disability and then allocate.

Investigating if any of the students enrolled for a module have a disability, was one of the methods suggested by the research participants.

It was also recommended by the participants that the university, and moreover the disability unit, hire people to assist students on a long-term basis. The reason behind this was due to the lack of capability to fully assist the students. This was asserted by Participant 1 who stated:

I don't think that there is more that the university can do, like I think it has done enough. Maybe have access to the lecturer's personal notes and like when it comes to exams like have people who are competent enough to follow through with their work. Because the problem is that the students' assistances are hired on a three-month contract ... before they get use to their job

they have to be changed so that puts us on a disadvantage. So, like it better to hire people on a long-term base, like in the previous years it was like that but now they have changed.

Nevertheless, the students did assert that the university was actively involved in accommodating students with disabilities.

4.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the research study and the themes that arose. The chapter highlighted the transition experience of students with disabilities to university and the challenges that they encountered. This chapter further discussed the methods utilised by the students which helped ease and adjust them to the university environment. The barriers to parental involvement and the perceptions of parental involvement were discussed. It was indicated that parental involvement was associated with positive impacts. The chapter further highlighted student's recommendations regarding the university structure and parental support preferences.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The present study had a number of findings that add to the literature based upon the main research questions, aims and objectives of the study (**see chapter 1**). Mainly the purpose of the study was to understand student's perceptions towards parental involvement, the perceived barriers and impact of parent's involvement. Although the findings of the study were mixed regarding parental support, the study nevertheless was consistent with the findings in the literature. Therefore, this chapter encompasses the discussion of the findings.

5.2 Parental support

5.2.1 Perceptions of parental support

According to literature the involvement of parents was emphasized as having a positive influence on the academic performance of students (Gonzalez-Pienda, Nunez, Gonzalez-Pumariega, Alvarez, Roces & Garcia, 2002). This study affirmed this as, the findings indicated that parental involvement contributed significantly towards student's accomplishments at university. Therefore, it is of no surprise that students who received parental support held positive attitudes regarding parent's involvement. This mirrors the findings of Hornby and Lafaele (2011), who state the active participation of parents in the academic life of students contributes towards student's academic success and adjustments. This was further evidence in the study, as the various forms of support such as emotional and financial support, had positive contributions towards the student's academic achievements. These forms of support assisted and help ease the transition to university of students living with disabilities.

Moreover, the study discovered that parenting style methods utilized have an impact on the academic performance of students. This study found two forms of parenting styles, namely authoritative and neglectful form of parenting. Authoritative parenting method, which is associated with positive academic achievements is whereby there is an active involvement of parents (Maccoby & Martin 1983; Dornbush et al. 1987). Parents of the students expressed emotional support, such as encouragement which consequently motivated students to work

hard. The study found that parents' recognition of the students' achievements helped the students move past the doubts and challenges encountered due to their disabilities, thus affirming the findings in literature.

Parents of students living with disabilities further expressed financial support, which proved to be one of student's necessities. Although students living with disabilities receive disability bursaries and sponsorships which contribute towards their academic expenses and university accommodation. It was additionally expressed that university life comes with additional expenses such as sun screen products for students with albinism, that bursaries do not contribute towards. Therefore, it may be argued that although limited, some form of financial assistance from parents is beneficial. According to Berks (2000) ecological model, there are various layers which interconnect between the structures of students living with disabilities. The mesosystem, which is inclusive of elements such as the community or school states, an action in one layer fosters a reaction in the other layers. Therefore, it may be emphasised that parent's active involvement in the academic life of children has a positive impact on the academic performance of students.

Nevertheless, it was emphasized that parents encouraged the students to be self-reliant. This ensures that the child is equipped with skills that can be utilized in cases whereby the parent is not available to assist them; in addition, being surrounded by a network of people who understand the needs of people living with a disability. However, the study found that not all students received parental support. This consequently influenced their perceptions of parental involvement. The perception that parental involvement does not necessary impact on student's academic performance was consequence of parent's lack of involvement. These findings can be argued to be in association with the characteristics of neglectful parenting styles. Neglectful parents are the opposite of authoritative parents, with their lack of participation and involvement in the academic life of students (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). It was demonstrated that, parents doubted the student's abilities and potential to successes within the university environment.

Nevertheless, the findings indicated that students living with disabilities believed that it is their responsibility to do well academically. These findings correspond with Chohan and Khan (2010) findings that state, a child will be aware of their academic expectations and requirements as they grow older. Therefore, demonstrating that, lack of parental support does not necessary hinder student's academic performance.

5.2.2 Preferred forms of students support

Students disabilities limits their abilities to partake in daily routine chores such as bathing. This would then imply that the students require additional assistance such as caretakers. However, it was indicated that caretakers tend to abuse students with disabilities and fail to effectively offer the necessary support. Therefore, it was suggested that parents should be involved in the selection process and employment of someone who will assist the child. The involvement of parents in this process ensures that the selected caretaker can be trusted and is the one who will successfully assist the student living with a disability.

The study found that students living with disabilities require the physical presence of their parents, regardless of their awareness of the impossibility of this. Nevertheless, the university setting requires that students be independent, thus ensuring that they can function independently. This environment prepares the students for the outside world through fostering skills such as independence and self-determination. The study found that parents tend to not have much expectations and belief in the success of their children; therefore, resulting in limited parental support and involvement. It was further pointed out by the participants that their parents and family members doubted their capabilities of academic success. However, through self-determination, participants could achieve their goals regardless of parental support.

Students with disabilities require additional parental support in the form of encouragement and motivation. This teaches the students to look past the boundaries that their disabilities produce and be encouraged to achieve their academic goals.

5.2.3 Barriers to parental involvement

One of the objectives of the study was to identify the barriers to parental involvement. The study found numerous barriers that contribute towards this subject, including parents lack of consciousness. It is of utmost importance that parents learn about the disability of their children thus obtaining in-depth knowledge of the condition and needs. Knowledge about the condition enables them to effectively support their children and provides them with the necessary ability to assist.

Cultural understandings of disabilities are so influential that Groce (2005) argued that people with disabilities are limited, not so much by impairment or activity limitations, but more by the cultural interpretations of the disability. These contribute towards the perceptions of parents regarding the abilities and expectations of a student living with a disability; for instance, that a child with disability will not survive in a university setting or that they will not amount to much in life. The study found that some parents doubted the abilities and potential of the participants due to their disabilities. This perception and belief further contributed towards limited parental involvement.

Nevertheless, research conducted by Dube (2011) has demonstrated that, although attitudes towards people with a disability across Africa are starting to change, people with disabilities still face many challenges from the additional costs for health care services, stigma and discrimination. Students with disabilities are perceived as only achieving limited accomplishments. In addition, the study found that parents hold doubts in relations to the student's abilities and potential within a university setting. Bronfenbrenner (1990) state in his ecological theory, at the microsystem level relationships may impact in two directions: away from the child and towards the child. The perceptions that parents hold regarding the abilities and capabilities of their children influence their level of involvement and consequently their behaviour. For instance, it was recognised that through encouragement and motivation the participants worked hard.

Nevertheless, not all parents held these beliefs as some doubted the participants' abilities and potential of success. The findings indicated that the participants challenged these beliefs held by their parents by overcoming their limitations. Disability stigmas and stereotypes are the basis of negative perceptions and frameworks that qualify invalidation and marginalisation (Barton, 1993; Oliver, 1992). These cultural practices and beliefs consequently turn a disability into a strange human experience. This thus limit or hamper students with disabilities' relationships with peers and adults without disabilities.

According Wagner et al. (2005) and Webster (2004), it is sensible to have parents step in to provide support to enable students to pursue their educational goals, especially now when many students with disabilities aspire to pursue university level education, to increase their life opportunities. However, this support should be offered moderately to foster persistence and independence which consequently may enable to obtain skills that will assist with university

adaptation. The study found that some parents motivated a sense of adopted independence; this ensured that participants could easily survive at a university setting.

5.3 The transition to university

Transition can be defined as any event or non-event that results in altered relationships, routines, assumptions and roles (Schlossberg et al., 1995). The unfamiliar university environment (academic and social) can have either desirable or undesirable influences on students living with disabilities. The transition into this new environment impacts upon the student's educational achievements and overall university life experience. Transitions provide opportunities for growth and development; however, positive outcomes cannot be assumed for all individuals involved (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988; Schlossberg et al., 1995). The study found that while some participants found the transition difficult, other participants were well prepared for the new environment. Nevertheless, the findings showed that the participants had similar experiences; however, they embraced them differently.

Students with disabilities encounter various challenges during their transition to university, which in turn impacted on their university adjustment and academic performance. According to Coccarelli (2010), the transition to university hastily forces students to manage their workload without outside influences and control from educational personnel. Students are expected to be independent and do things for themselves such as their own cooking and washing. It may be emphasised that self-determination is key in this case to ensure that the participant overcomes the undesirable experiences that may be associated with transition. The study found that participants did not let the challenges associated with transition hinder them. According to Colvert and Smith (2000) and Madaus (2005), students with disabilities are entitled to receive reasonable accommodation through designated personnel in the disability services office.

According to Jones (1996), students with disabilities are often at risk when they enter the university due to their unique exceptionalities. However, with the assistance from university personnel and services they can adapt and adjust to the new environment. The study found that the students living with disabilities require caretakers who would assist them with their basic needs. The study further found that the increased workload proved to be a challenge for some of the participants who were used to minimal workload and requirements. At the University of KwaZulu-Natal, students living with disabilities are accommodated through the disability unit.

The disability unit offers students various services such as mentors, lecture venue enquiry and student assistance.

According to Belch (2004), understanding the strengths and weaknesses related to a student's disability and utilising services offered by the university, contribute towards the academic success of students with disabilities in higher education institutions. The participants were found to have been or are utilising some of the university services offered for students with disabilities, such as the disability unit, mentors, ramps or lifts. The utilisation of the university services contributed towards the participants' university adjustment.

The findings demonstrated that the transition to university is easy when the students are well prepared. According to Brinckerhoff (1996), students with disabilities tend to be discouraged from furthering their education after high school; however, early transition planning encourages them to consider post-secondary education options. The participants are better informed about university life and expectations; thus, they are groomed and ready for their new environment. The study demonstrated that while some participants were previously enrolled at special schools, some were enrolled at mainstream schools. It should be emphasised that mainstream schools do not fully accommodate students with disabilities. Instead, mainstream schools foster a sense of independence and cater for students without disabilities.

Nevertheless, although this may be perceived negatively, the findings showed that mainstream schooling was useful. It was demonstrated that these mainstream schools encouraged students to develop a sense of self-advocacy. These skills ensured that students could adapt to the university environment effortlessly. The adaption of mainstream academic methods made it more likely that the student would effectively be able to adjust to the increased workload at university level.

5.3.1 Challenges faced by student's living with disabilities at university level

According to Leyser, Vogel, Wyland and Brulle (1998) most faculties have limited to no experience with working with students living with disabilities and often have not been exposed to any form of training about disabilities. The study found that using the one-size-fits-all approach within the educational setting was challenging for students living with disabilities. This is linked to Hill (1996) findings that indicate, students with disabilities held perception, that faculties should be trained about the implications of disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary

that an approach in instructional practices that will accommodate students with disabilities be formulated. Literature demonstrate, students with disabilities experience challenges within the university setting that tend to be related to the lecturer's lack of skills and knowledge, insufficient resources and attitudes, which contribute to difficult professional relationships and low self-esteem in students (Schutz, 2002; Webster, 2004).

It was indicated that, although the university has made some provisions to accommodate students with disabilities, it nevertheless has fallen short. For instance, students living with disabilities tend to fail to access some venues due to lifts not working or lack of ramps for students with physical disabilities. Transitioning into an environment that does not fully accommodate students with disabilities has an undesirable impact upon the students. Consequently, student's may have feeling of exclusion and a sense of not belonging. Moreover, not being able to access the lecture venues consequently affected the academic achievements negatively. It was raised by the participants that, although they could consult with some lecturers and obtain the necessary work, it was not always the case, thus posing a challenge for them. In addition to not being able to access lecture venues.

5.3.2 Recommendations and Methods to overcome university challenges

According to Vacarro, Kimball, Wells and Ostiguy (2015), the utilisation of self-determination skills is perceived as necessary towards assisting students with disabilities to develop role clarity related to being a university student. Wehmeyer (1992) defined self-determination as the attitudes and abilities required to act as the primary causal agent in a student's life and to make choices regarding his/her actions, free from undue external influences or meddling, which consequently helps students with disabilities. Issues such as lack of lecture venue access tend to result in the students not completing their qualifications within the given time frame. Therefore, it may be argued that it is necessary that the students utilise the university services that are put in place, such as mentors and the disability unit.

The university environment should be structured and suited for students with disabilities. Strange (2000) stated that for students with disabilities to attain a sense of belonging within the university environment, is by feeling safe and inclusive, physically and psychologically. A sense of physical safety can be the infrastructure accommodating the students with disabilities, while the psychological safety can be the central characteristics of the campus. All the participants highlighted an issue with the infrastructure of the university environment. According to Hadley (2007), implementation of accommodation can have a significant impact

on the educational progress of students with disabilities. Due to the lack of proper infrastructure, the students are unable to access some university venues. This thus posed a challenge, as it limited access to university services and departments negatively affects student's academic work. The students therefore recommend that the university be aware of not only the presence of students with a disability registered for a module, but also the type of disability and required care or assistance. This will ensure that the necessary precautions or steps are taken to fully accommodate the students. This will consequently result in students being able to access and utilise the lecture venues effectively. It is further emphasized that the disability unit hire individuals to assist students on a long-term basis. This will ensure that the students gain experience and the skills to effectively assist the students.

5.4 Summary

The findings demonstrated that parental support had positive impacts on the academic achievement of the participants. However, it was discovered that even without parental involvement participants could triumph academically. This was due to self-determination and a sense of independency. There were various barriers to parental involvement that arose from the study, such as the lack of consciousness and knowledge of the child's disability. The study found that the participants encountered various challenges during their transition to university. Challenges such as difficulty accessing lecture venues and taking down lecture notes. Nevertheless, the participants utilised the university services, such as 'student assistances' which assisted towards student's adjustments. The utilisation of the university services additionally assisted participants towards overcoming university challenges. There are numerous strategies that the university can put in place to assist students living with disabilities, such as employing experienced student assistants. This chapter further entailed the ecological model theory which was used for the research study.

Chapter 6

Major Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of UKZN students with disabilities on parental support and the effects it has on their academic performance. Overall parental support was perceived as good and beneficial as it contributed towards transition to university and adjustment thereof. Parental support impacts on the academic performance of students positively. However, it should be added that some students do not receive parental support, which consequently affected their attitudes and perceptions of parental support. The students felt that parental support was not necessary but rather empathised a sense of independence.

Parental support is associated with positive impacts on the performance of students. The study demonstrated that parental support can come in various forms. The study indicated that the students received various support from parents, ranging from emotional, physical and financial support. These forms of support influenced the academic success and adjustment to the new university environment. The emotional support which was inclusive of encouraging and motivating the students to not let the challenges they currently face, or their disability hinder their academic goals and desires. This proved to have a positive effect as it motivated the students to work hard and develop self-determination skills. The students asserted that they received physical support from their parents by means of assisting them with cleaning, cooking and obtaining the necessary academic resources that they required.

Financial support was also offered by the parents to help fund the expenses associated with being a student at UKZN. However, it was discovered that some students were funded by sponsors and had bursaries. These forms of support consequently help ease the transition to university.

The study discovered that there are various barriers that affect effective parental involvement, such as the lack of knowledge, consciousness and acceptance of students with disabilities. The lack of knowledge regarding the student's disability result in parents not being able to effectively support their children. Knowledge of the child's disability may enable parents to know the extent of care and support that the child may require. Parental beliefs also contribute to lack of parental involvement. Parents' cultural beliefs regarding disabilities influences the extent of support and the treatment exhibited towards the child living with a disability. For

instance, parents who believe that students with disabilities will not survive at university level, will not expect much from the child and consequently not support their child.

The lack of consciousness or acceptance of the condition was another barrier that prevented parental involvement. Parents were not conscious of the needs of their children and were in denial of it, thus consequently unaware of what the students required.

Based on these findings the next section will discuss the recommendations.

6.1 Recommendations of the study

6.1.1 Parents

- Parents and family members should be encouraged to be somewhat involved in the academic life of students living with disabilities as this has been proven to have a positive impact upon the academic achievements and adjustments of students.

6.1.2 University of KwaZulu-Natal

- The researcher recommends that the findings of the study be used to demonstrate to students with disabilities the advantages of participating in research studies. The reason for this is that most students opted not to participate in the research study because of fear that it might be too personal or believed that it would not necessarily bring about change. Students with disabilities have a perception that research studies are conducted on them; however, physical change is not brought about.
- The researcher recommends that the university updates its infrastructure to better accommodate students with various disabilities.
- Accessibility of lecture venues should be ensured and obtained by all students, regardless of their form of disabilities.
- Change the one-size-fits-all approach in teaching to that which accommodates students with disabilities.
- Motivate parental involvement for students with disabilities.

6.1.3 The disability unit

- Provide students with assistant workers that are competent and have had experience with working with students with disabilities.
- Allocate students in lecture venues that can be accessible to them.
- Provide the students with all lecture notes.

6.1.4 Further research

- This research only focused on students living with disabilities from UKZN; as such, the researcher recommends further research on students with disabilities enrolled at other universities within South Africa, thus giving an all-inclusive outlook. This will further enable comparison of research findings between the various universities.

6.1.5 Limitation of the study

- The study did not represent the general perceptions of all students with disabilities regarding parental support and the effect it has on their academic performance.
- The study was inclusive of mostly students with physical disabilities, albinism and visual impairment. Therefore, the research did not obtain the perceptions of students with other forms of disabilities such as hearing impairment.
- In addition, there are multiple universities in South Africa; however, the study only focused on UKZN. The ideal would have been to possibly include other students living with a disability from other universities. Nevertheless, due to the limited time and financial constraints, other universities could not be included.
- Another limitation of the study was the position of the researcher as the researcher was a student at UKZN; however, was not living with a disability which may have impacted on the participants' level of openness. Nevertheless, the researcher utilised critical reflexivity to restrict bias on the research findings as discussed in the research methodology.
- There was only a limited number of students who agreed to participate in the study within the limited time frame, resulting in the researcher only interviewing eight students (two females and six males).

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Dear Student

My name is Sithabile Mntambo and I am conducting a research study as part of my Master's in Health Promotion degree. The research study is aimed at getting a better understanding of the perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal students with disabilities on parental support and the effects it has on their academic performance. Ethical clearance will be requested from the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethics committee.

The duration of each interview will be approximately 30-45 minute and with your informed permission the interview will be audio-recorded. Participation in this study is completely voluntary therefore should you agree to participate you will be allowed to withdraw from the study at any given time. The refusal to participate in the study or withdrawal will involve no penalty whatsoever. I want to assure you that all information you provide will be kept confidential and that you will remain anonymous. All collected data will be stored in a safe place for a period of five years after which it will be destroyed.

For any further information please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor Mr Mthokozisi Hlengwa.

Contact Details

Sithabile Mntambo

Mr Mthokozisi Hlengwa

Tel: 0620312425

Supervisor

Email: tmntambo01@gmail.com

Email: hlengwaml@ukzn.ac.za

Regards

Sithabile Mntambo

INFORMED CONSENT

I (full names) consent that I have been informed about the study entitled “Understanding the perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal students with disabilities on parental support and the effects it has on their academic performance” that will be conducted by Miss Sithabile Mntambo.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study and therefore agree to participate knowingly.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time if I feel the need with no consequences.

I understand that my identity will be anonymous and the information that I give will be kept confidential and stored in a safe place for a period of 5 years.

I have been informed that access to the information will not be given to anyone except the researcher, the supervisor and the assessors.

I hereby provide addition consent to: Audio-record my interview **YES/ NO**

I have asked all necessary questions and have been provided with clarity.

If I have any further questions/ concerns related to the research study I understand that I may contact the researcher or the Supervisor at:

Contact details

Sithabile Mntambo

Mr Mthokozisi Hlengwa

Tel: 0620312425

Supervisor

Email: tmntambo01@gmail.com

Email: hlengwam1@ukzn.ac.za

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix B

Interview schedule

- How has the transition from high school to university been for you? Can you walk me through it?
- What have been some of the challenges that you have faced in university? How have you overcome these?
- What are your perceptions and attitudes regarding parental support?
- How would you describe your relationship with your parents?
- How would you describe your parents' involvement in your academic now that you are in university?
- Has parental support impacted on your academic performance? If so what impacts (positive/negative) has it had on your academic performance? (Please elaborate). If it has not impacted on academic performance, why do you think this is the case?
- Which form of parental support would you like your parents to do for you? And why?
- What would you say are some of the barriers that may prevent parents from being effectively involved in the academic life of their children?
- What are some of the strategies and structures that you believe the university should put in place to assist students with disabilities academically?

Appendix C

Gatekeeper's Consent

The Registrar:

RE: GATEKEEPER PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT UKZN

My name is Sithabile Mntambo and I am conducting a research study for the purpose of obtaining a master's in Health Promotion degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The research topic is "Understanding the perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal students with disabilities on parental support and the effects it has on their academic performance". The main aim of the study is to get a better understanding of the perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal students with disabilities on parental support and the effects it has on their academic performance.

I request your permission to conduct face to face interviews with 10 students at University of KwaZulu Natal Howard College. The interviews will be tape-recorded, transcribed and interpreted with permission from the participants. The data obtained from the research study will be stored in a safe place and shredded after 5 years. Confidentiality of the participants will be guaranteed and their participation in this study will be voluntary. Informed consent letters will be given to participants to be signed before they can participate in the study. Should participants display emotional reactions, I will provide support and make referrals when necessary.

I will be grateful if you will grant the requisite permission, on behalf of UKZN for me to conduct the study as I need to commence the study as soon as possible. I will be grateful if you could e-mail me a copy of your letter at: 213502213@stu.ukzn.ac.za or tmntambo@gmail.com.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research supervisor, Mr Mthokozisi Hlengwa at hlengwam1@ukzn.ac.za

Regards

Sithabile Mntambo

Appendix D

Ethical Clearance



3 November 2017

Msv Sithabile Joy Mntambo 213502213
School of Applied Human Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Mntambo

Protocol reference number: HSS/1491/017M

Project title: Understanding the perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal students with disabilities on Parental Support and the effects it has on their academic performance

Full Approval – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

In response to your application received 21 August 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application 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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Mr Mthokozisi Ilengwa
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn
cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Ntuli

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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