"That Other Student Population Group" An Investigation of Academic, Social, and Psychological Support Services Offered to Students on Augmented Curriculum Programmes: A Case of UKZN BSS4 Students' (Mis)perceptions and Persistence".

BY

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DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this exploratory and descriptive qualitative study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the university's academic support services offered to students on the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP). Therefore, the study interrogated how university academic support strategies, initiatives, mechanisms, and services assisted ECP students in attaining their academic goals. In this regard, three objectives of the study were developed, namely, (a) To explore (mis) perceptions and persistence of students towards UKZN BSS4's academic, social, and psychological support services; (b) To determine the scope of academic, social, and psychological challenges faced by students within the UKZN BSS4 Extended Curriculum Programme in realizing their academic goals; and (c) To explore the role of Extended Curriculum Programme in facilitating academic equity. Using qualitative methods of data collection, the study found that misperceptions about the BSS4 emanated from the lack of proper academic guidance and misinformation; challenges faced by ECP students are multifaceted, intricately intertwined, and commonly shared, and responsive measures are reasonably efficient but there is still a need to improve and maintain their quality to more appreciated standards. This is fundamental because the failure of student support services to address the implicit existence of stereotypes, academic, and socio-psychological challenges has the potential of diminishing the sense of belonging, motivation, persistency, and self-efficacy with adverse academic consequences.

Keywords: *Extended Curriculum Programme, academic support services, Students*

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Annual National Assessment **(ANA)**

Augmented Bachelor of Social Science degree **(BSS4)**

Central University of Technology **(CUT)**

Department of Basic Education **(DBE)**

Department of Higher Education and Training **(DHET)**

Extended Curriculum Programmes **(ECP)**

First-Year Experiences **(FYE)**

Food and Agriculture Organisation **(FAO)**

Information and Communication Technology **(ICT)**

National Student Financial Aid Scheme **(NSFAS)**

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development **(OECD)**

United Kingdom **(UK)**

University of Southern California **(USC)**

University of KwaZulu-Natal **(UKZN)**

ADDENDA

A	Memorandum of Understanding between Supervisor and Candidate	
B	Informed Consent Letter (English Version).	
C	Research Interview Schedule	
D	Ethics Committee Research Full Approval Letter	
E	Gate Keeper's Letter	

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the Study

The legacy of apartheid and post-colonial education development in South Africa contributed to socio-economic, poverty and inequalities among different racial groups with the most adversely affected being the Black majority. According to McKenna (2020) Apartheid, which was often referred to as "separate development", was made possible through the Population Registration Act of 1950. The premise of this act was to classify all South Africans according to their race as Bantu (all Black Africans), Coloured (those of mixed race), Asian (Indian and Pakistani) or white. Another fundamental act that made the apartheid system possible was the Group Areas Act of 1950. The Group Areas Act of 1950 was the extension of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts. Commonly, all these acts set aside more than 80 per cent of South Africa's land for the white minority. They all emphasized the separate residential and business sections in urban areas which were classified by race and members of other races were prohibited from living, operating businesses, studying, or owning land in areas that are not designated for them (McKenna, 2020). Consequently, this led to most Blacks, Coloureds, and Indians being forcefully removed from areas classified for white occupation and laws such as the pass laws were introduced to assure that segregated races were not encroaching on white areas.

Therefore, in enforcing the doctrine of segregation according to the Population Registration Act of 1950 and Group Areas Act of 1950, the National Party's apartheid government segregated and differentiated education for Blacks, Indians, Coloureds and Whites to assure that segregated races were not encroaching on white areas (Hofmeyr & Buckland, 1992). One of the legacies of apartheid was a racial education landscape against the Black majority, (Thobejane, 2013). According to Wassermann (2017), the apartheid government introduced the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which made white schooling free and compulsory while Black education was underfunded and neglected, with insufficient schooling resources and

infrastructure, teachers, and limited access. For instance, in the 1960s, there was an expenditure of the Bantu Education System, which then allowed more numbers of Black students to attend school. Without the increase in the infrastructure such as more schools, facilities and teachers, the national teacher-students ratio increased from 48:1 to 58:1 (SAHO, 2019). About 10% of the teachers were underqualified some with the highest qualification being the only matric, meaning Black education was fundamentally retrogressing. Furthermore, the Extension of University Education Act, Act 45 of 1959, prohibited Black students from attending white universities such as Cape Town and Witwatersrand (SAHO,2019). The act practically segregated tertiary institutions and education according to race with all Black students being relegated to underfunded and under-resourced Black universities such as Fort Hare, Vista, Venda, and Western Cape (SAHO, 2019). The Bantu Education System aimed to accommodate the resurgent need for exploitative labour to which Black people were going to be subjected. This meant that education for Black was rudimental and inferior, only enough for Black children to learn how to read and write for communicative and work purposes (Thobejane, 2013).

The dawn of democracy in 1994 brought many expectations and hope for most Blacks that education would be equitably transformed from primary to tertiary education (Thobejane, 2013; Reddy, 2006; Zipp, 2018; Nudelman, 2015). The focus was then placed on academic reform for the entire education system, especially tertiary education. This was of fundamental importance as tertiary education enrolment numbers of students from less privileged schools who were mostly Black Africans significantly increased in South Africa (Hannaway, et al., 2014). However, the quality of basic education for Black students, post-1994, remained poor because of poor infrastructure and lack of resources compromising the quality of education available for learners. For example, according to Amnesty International (2020) in 2018 out of 23,471 public schools, 20,071 have no laboratory and about 18,019 have no library, while 16,897 have no internet. Unfortunately, most institutions of higher learning have inherited students from this poor educational background who are underprepared and unable to deal with the academic demands of tertiary education. Consequently, this leads to a high attrition rate and the majority of students becoming dropouts. According to Van De Heyde and Siebrits (2019), most of the adversely affected students come from quantile 1 to 4 schools that are classified as disadvantaged and under-resourced schools from poor communities.

According to Tjønneland (2017), the proportion of poor Black students at South African universities comes from poor communities and there seems to be a link between their socio-economic background and continued poor university access and high dropout. Tjønneland (2017:01) assert, "less than five per cent of Black secondary students with parents earning less than 120 000 qualify for entry into universities while the percentage of students with parents earning more than 600 000 is 70 per cent". This highlights the discrepancies and inequalities between the rich and the poor societies in South Africa in terms of access to higher education, post-apartheid. Furthermore, Tjønneland (2017) and Van De Heyde and Siebrits (2019) assert that even though the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has provided financial assistance to students from poor communities, about two-thirds of undergraduate students have become dropouts five years after entering university. Most drop out within the first year of entry because of insufficient support for accommodation, food, clothes, and other amenities.

The combination of both academic and financial difficulties has been attributed to most psychological issues that students within the universities face (Dlamini, 2019; Motau, 2015). Students may be subjected to various stresses, such as the academic work pressure from lecturers and poor integration into the academic system. Moreover, time concerns, fear of failure, classroom interactions, and economic issues are also some causes of stress amongst college students, (Essel and Owusu, 2017). Consequently, these students' social, emotional, physical, and family statuses are affected thereby affecting their academic performances. Accordingly, universities have established psychological services "to enhance and promote students' psychological well-being and to reduce psychological distress in students' lives, so that students have the mental and emotional stability to face their daily challenges" (Dlamini, 2019:01).

Even though society and the education system have drastically transformed, post-apartheid; the apartheid footprint is still evident. According to Zipp (2018) and Nudelman (2015), it is a commonly shared view that the progress made so far has been insufficient to address the apartheid's social and economic discrepancies and inequalities. On the other hand, the persistence of these discrepancies and inequalities has hurt South African higher education, predominantly Black students from poor communities. Unfortunately, it seems like there is no imminent solution. However, to address some of the issues there is a need to improve both the quality of secondary education and fix the undergraduate university system. This could be

achieved by providing academic, socio-economic, and psychological support for students and establishing extended curriculum programmes to ensure that students have the necessary skills to succeed at a tertiary institution (Tjønneland, 2017). It is against this background that there is a need to understand the challenges and evaluate academic support programmes such as Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECP), especially those from poor communities.

1.2.1 The History and Formation of the Extended Curriculum Programmes

According to Slabbert (2015:46), the Department of Higher Education (DHET) established extended curriculum programmes in South African universities "to offer support and create successful academic pathways for the under-prepared and unprepared students entering higher education for the first time". Extended Curriculum Programmes in South African universities have predominantly assisted Black students from previously racially divided and disadvantaged educational backgrounds by offering them access to university academic programmes, (Boughey 2005, DoE, 2001). Wood and Lithauer (2005) assert that Extended Curriculum Programmes provide students with alternative avenues of access to university education by equipping them with tailor-made academic knowledge and skills required to meet desired academic outcomes.

According to the Higher Education Ministerial Statement on University Funding 2017 / 2018, these programmes are prevalent in 24 universities, with a total budget of R336 Million for 2017/2018. Garraway and Bozalek (2019) posit that Augmented Programmes are designed, not so much to address the concerns of access to university education, but rather to reduce the alarmingly high dropout and failure rates of university students entering the first year, whereby only 35% of student cohort graduated. Furthermore, Bass (2011) believes that Augmented Programmes aim to articulate and address the academic gap between schools from poor communities and universities. Van De Heyde and Siebrits (2019) concur that students from poor communities where Quintiles 1 to 4 are found, usually struggle to adapt to university academic workload, and thus, the failure and dropout rates are high. In most cases, students who benefit from Augmented Programmes come from disadvantaged schools, which are categorized by the Department of Education as quintile 1 to 3 as measured by the "poverty index" based on the physical condition of schools and the poverty of the surrounding community (Department of Education, 2006). The poverty index is used for resource targeting purposes (where quintile 1 is the poorest and quintile 5 is the least poor

school); Quintiles 1 and 2 are no-fee schools. Therefore, learners from quintile 5 schools are usually not considered for Augmented Programmes as these schools are in most cases ex-Model C schools.

According to Slabbert (2015), all South African universities have implemented extended curriculum programmes in their various academic programmes. In this regard, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Extended Curriculum Programme allows students from poor schools to complete their chosen qualification in one more year than the normally allocated time. Such students are, *"given extra tuition in the first year, where they are separated from the mainstream lectures, tutorials, and practical. The content and expected outcomes of the augmented modules are the same as for the mainstream equivalent modules but in addition, the augmented courses are supplemented by additional lectures, practical sessions, and small group tutorials. Students cover the foundational material that may not have been covered in their school leaving qualification, which earns them foundation credits. Further, instead of enrolling for eight modules in the first year, they will take only four, together with a module for Scientific Communication and another module for Life Skills,"* (UKZN,2017:1).

Therefore, the need to offer extended curriculum programmes at UKZN is designed to respond to the challenges faced by students coming from disadvantaged schools, and who lack the particular knowledge and skills required from prospective students to succeed in their specific programmes. This intervention is premised on the assumption that because of the inferior education from the school level, students from disadvantaged backgrounds lack the necessary knowledge and skills, which hurts some students' preparedness to be accepted into mainstream programmes (Scott, 2009). Therefore, extended curriculum programmes at UKZN were designed and implemented to address the access potential of the students from disadvantaged backgrounds and enhancing their access to the university. According to Mabila et al (2006), students are 'disadvantaged' if they 'had inadequate access to quality education service, resulting in a lack of opportunity to fully develop their academic potential. The proposed outcome of completing the additional year is that students should have acquired the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to succeed in further studies. The Department of Education (DoE) has funded the foundation provision at the University of KwaZulu-Natal since 2007 (DoE 2006).

1.2.2 Augmented/Extended Curriculum Programmes: A Case of UKZN

The University of KwaZulu-Natal offers extended curriculum programmes in various academic programmes in different colleges such as the College of Humanities and College of Agriculture and Engineering Sciences. Even though other extended programmes from other colleges are highlighted, the focus of this study is the Augmented Bachelor of Social Science degree (BSS4).

1.2.2.1 BSc-4 (Augmented): College of Agriculture and Engineering Sciences

According to Kirby (2018:1), "Alternative Access routes into tertiary science degrees have become a well-recognized option for Black South African students with academic potential but who do not make Science Faculty entry requirements". Accordingly, the BSc-4 (Augmented) degree is for students from disadvantaged schools who wish to enrol into science degrees who have full National Senior Certificate but with slightly low matric results to meet the conventional selection criteria. Table 1 presents the selection criteria for the BSc-4 (Augmented) degree in Agriculture, as outlined by UKZN handbooks for 2009 and Admissions Policy (2008):

Degree Category	NSC	Admission Point Score	English	Mathematics	Science
BSc-4 (Augmented)	Full Exemption	22	Level 4 (50-59%)	Level 3 (40-49%)	Level 3 (40-49%)
BSc (Mainstream)	Full Exemption	28	Level 4 (50-59%)	Level 4 (50-59%)	Level 4 (50-59%)

Table 1. Criteria for Selection into the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, UKZN from 2009 (Kirby, 2018).

Students enrol into first-year B.Sc. but initially take fewer courses with extra tutorials and practicals, and a course in Scientific Communication. The first year of the degree is therefore spread over a maximum of two years during which students can also take some second-year modules. Thereafter, students carry the normal load for their degrees. Thus, students take four years to complete a three-year Science degree, having progressed more slowly but being more assured of success, (UKZN, 2014:1). Both Extended Curriculum Programme and mainstream student cohorts take the same modules. However, from the second year, the

student's choice of modules must be approved by the school appropriate to their chosen major. In their first year, students will register for 64 foundation credits and 80-degree credits. The latter 64 credits must be from the approved four augmented year modules. In addition, students will register for two modules in Communication. Furthermore, students will enrol for the Life Skills module, which however does not carry any credits. In their second year, students will normally register for between 64- and 80-degree credits from four modules. In their third year, students will normally register for 128 credits selected from Levels 2 and 3. Lastly, in their fourth year, students will register for the credits required to complete their qualifications.

1.2.2.2 BSS4: College of Humanities

According to UKZN (2017), the Augmented Bachelor of Social Science degree (BSS4) caters to students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds to redress the inequalities of the apartheid education laws. The main aims of UKZN Extended Curriculum Programmes are to enhance previously disadvantaged students' academic and psychosocial skills to succeed at university. Therefore, Extended Curriculum Programmes prepare and support students to meet the challenges of studying at a university academic and social life. The UKZN BSS4 Extended Curriculum Programmes enrol 10% of the Humanities first-year students per year as per requirement by the Department of Higher Education and Training. Students enrol in Academic Literacy, English Language Development, Basic Computer Literacy, Basic Numeracy, and Life Skills and each student is required to take one mainstream module from Political Science, Sociology, and Psychology. In the second semester, students enrol in Exploring Literacies in Humanities and each student is required to take two mainstream modules from Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. Students who pass all modules may continue with the BSocSc degree in the College of Humanities or change to another degree in other Colleges.

The Extended Curriculum Programmes is run by a coordinator who reports to the College of Humanities Dean of Teaching and Learning. There are also counsellors, who are qualified psychologists to cater for the psychosocial needs of the students. Figure 1 below highlights the administration structure of the Augmented Programme at UKZN.
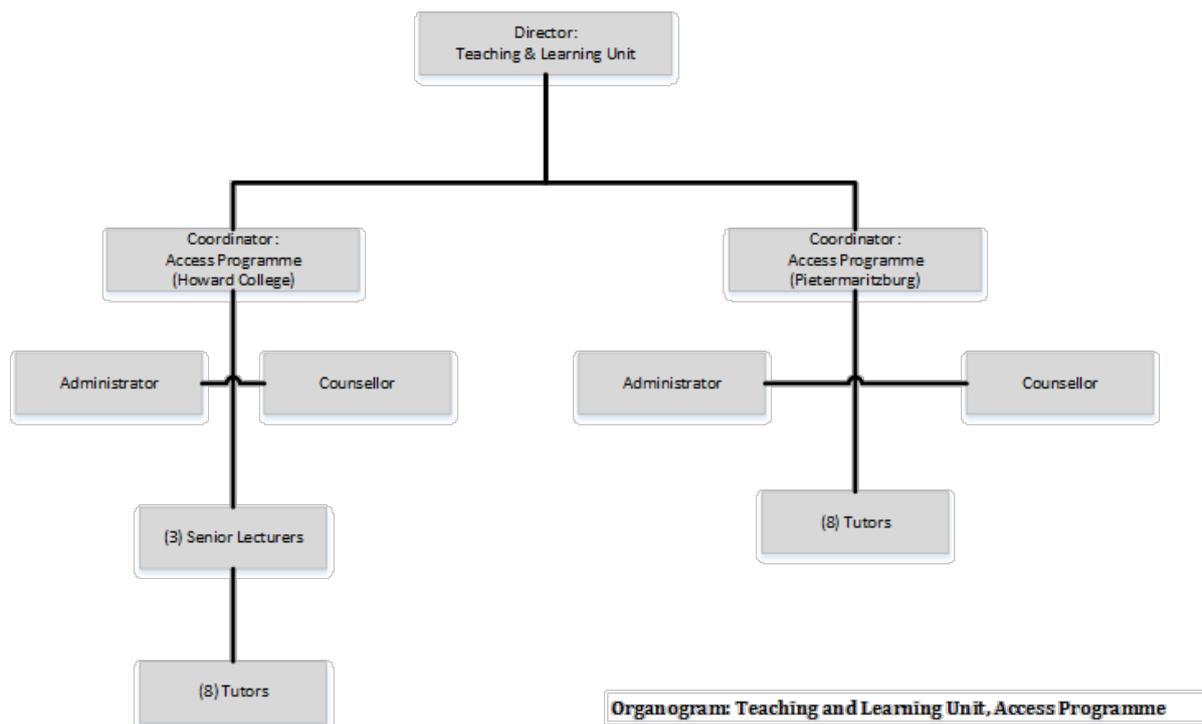
Figure 1. UKZN Extended Programme Management Structure (UKZN (2017:1).

1.3 Problem Statement

Even though Extended Curriculum Programmes have been employed to mitigate the dire effects of the apartheid education system, which manifested into low throughput, high attrition rate, high levels of exclusion and drop-out amongst the disadvantaged Black students (Johnson, 2019; Sibiya, 2018; Thobejane, 2013), but these issues have persisted and remained highly alarming amongst South African Universities. According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), graduation rates indicate that more than 24% of students drop out of university after their first year, 14% graduate in three years, and approximately 52% graduate with their first degrees after an average of seven years, while 48% of the group never graduate (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). Consequently, according to Johnson (2017), this has led to some quarters of society questioning Extended Curriculum Programmes' success and calling for their cancellation. On the other hand, Ogude et al. (2019) and Sibiya (2018) have noted the relative success of ECP with room for improvement.

As part of this discourse, several studies have investigated and evaluated the impact and effects of the ECPs in an attempt to enhance their efficiency and relevance as an intervention

to some of higher education problems (Johnson, 2017; Chetty, 2014; Tyson, 2010; Borg, 2009 and others). Their focus has been on how students perceive their situation, opportunities, and experiences concerning their full curriculum peers, the impact of the programme throughput and retention rates for students in the programme, and students' experiences of success and failures. It is upon these premises that this study will focus on the effects and impact of ECP's academic, social, and psychological support services that they offer to their students to affect students' (mis)perception and persistence. This study believes that the persistence of the problem requires further investigation into the pertinent issues and a renewed perspective from the previous investigations and evaluations.

1.4 Aim of the Study

This study aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the effect and impact of the universities' academic, social, and psychological support services offered to students within the Extended Curriculum Programme.

1.5 Main Research Question

How do UKZN BSS4's academic, social, and physiological support services assist students on Extended Curriculum Programme to realize academic success by removing all types of unfair discrimination and redressing past inequalities?

1.6 Key Research Questions

1.6.1 What are BSS4 students' (mis) perceptions that affect their persistence within the Extended Curriculum Programme?
1.6.2 What are the Academic challenges faced by students in UKZN BSS4 Augmented Curriculum Programme and their effect on academic success?
1.6.3 What is the role of the Extended Curriculum Programme in facilitating academic equity?

1.7 Objectives of the Study

1.7.1 To explore (mis)perceptions and persistence of students within UKZN BSS4.

1.7.2 To determine the scope of academic, social, and psychological challenges faced by students within the UKZN BSS4 Extended Curriculum Programme in realizing their academic goals.

1.7.3 To explore the role of the Extended Curriculum Programme in facilitating academic equity.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The study will adopt the integration model by Tinto (1975, 1993). Students entering university come from diverse backgrounds, most evidently, the poor state of basic education, and limited access to funding and other resources. Figure 1 highlights Tinto's model of student retention, highlighting how academic and social integration play a pivotal role in reducing dropouts.
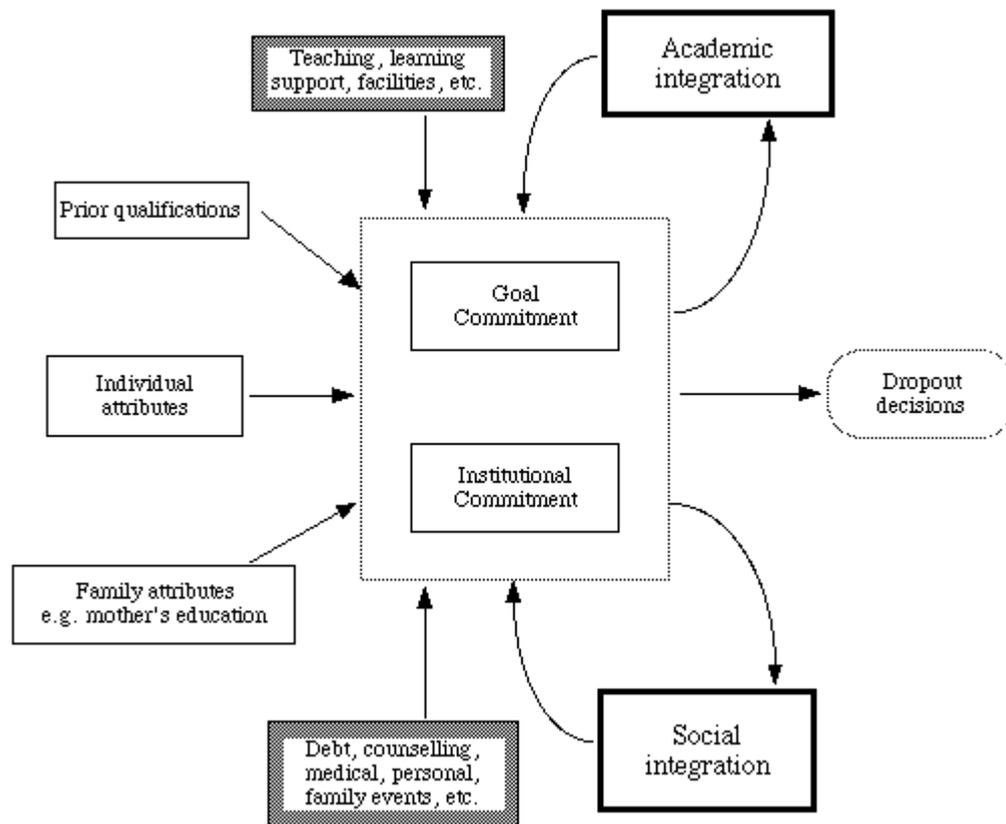
Figure 2. Tinto's Model of Student Retention (Draper, 2008).

The above integration model acknowledges students' backgrounds family, individual attributes, and prior academic experience. Tinto (1993) regards students' pre-entry characteristics as influencing students' ultimate social and academic integration. Tinto

theorises that the interactions between student characteristics and level of commitment to the university influence their level of engagement and success.

1.9 Justification for the Theoretical Framework

Tinto's integration model emphasizes structural and normative integration within the institution, which provides a useful framework to analyse data in terms of student support structures available in the institution. It also emphasizes how universities should enhance academic and social integration within campuses. According to Starodubtsev (2015) integration, help students to improve their academic self-esteem, which positively affects their personal development.

1.10 Significance of the Study

This study seeks to provide essential information to both students and the university as to which strategies augmented students utilize to cope with university demands and lifestyles. It further seeks to contribute to a body of knowledge on university extended learning programmes, hence contributing to policy development. The study also seeks to empower students enrolled in Extended Curriculum Programmes.

1.11 Organization of the Dissertation

This research is made up of five chapters. Chapter One explores the background of Extended Curriculum Programme in SA universities. The chapter further highlights the motivation for the study regarding the Extended Curriculum Programme. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the aim, objectives, and key research questions for the study. Chapter Two reviews the literature on Extended Curriculum Programmes. It discusses Extended Curriculum Programmes in the context of global, African, and South African university education systems. Chapter Two also explores the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that are vital in unpacking and understanding the prospects of Extended Curriculum Programmes in South Africa. Chapter Three explains the research methodology that was used in this research by highlighting the study context, data collection methods, sampling, sampling strategy, and limitations of the study and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the results obtained from the research analysis. Chapter Five discusses research results and gives recommendations.

1.12 Conclusion

The chapter presented the wider background within which the research was conceptualized and provided the reasons why such a study was deemed necessary. The focus of the study is to explore Extended Curriculum Programmes in South African universities. The background of the study highlighted some important points on the research phenomenon.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study investigates the role of ECP from the perspectives of university students. For this study, it is important to define what is meant by ECP, also referred to as Augmented Curriculum Programme. According to the DoE policy (2006), it is a first degree or diploma programme that incorporates a substantial foundational provision that is additional to the coursework prescribed for the standard programme. "The foundational provision incorporated must be (a) equivalent to one or two semesters of full-time study, (b) designed to articulate effectively with the regular elements of the programme, and (c) formally planned, scheduled and regulated as an integral part of the programme," (DoE (2006) cited in Borg, 2009:14). Therefore, the literature review intends to explore the (mis)perception and persistence that university students have towards ECP. To achieve this, the review will be guided and informed by the research three questions posed in the study. According to Johnson (2017:5), "South African Universities have responded to the global trend towards massification of higher education by public policy imperative to redress the legacies of apartheid, [whereby ECPs] are used to implement this policy to remedy the limitations of disadvantaged primary and secondary schooling". The review will thus be tailored to identify the gap in the information existing on how students perceive ECP.

2.2 Students' perception and Persistence about the Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs)

This section explores students' perceptions of ECPs and universities on how they have bridged the gap between secondary and tertiary education. The section also discusses any potential negative outcomes generated by ECPs.

2.2.1 Student Motivation/Perception and Persistence

Despite different socio-economic backgrounds amongst students, Tinto (2017:1) argues, "Students, however, do not seek to be retained. They seek to persist," Furthermore, Tinto

believes that students' persistence and motivation must be viewed through the eyes of students themselves to get the optimal analysis of the impact of ECPs. Graham et al. (2013) posit that persistence should be understood as one manifestation of motivation. Students show persistence when faced with challenges; however, if they lack motivation, it adversely affects their coping mechanisms. Tinto (2017:3) argues that motivation is malleable that can be enhanced or diminished by a student's university experiences, and therefore there is a need to explore, "the nature of those experiences and how they come to influence student motivation to persist in college and turn their willingness to expend the effort needed to do so". Figure 2 below highlights that those goals lead students to enrol at college and therefore their experience on motivation is an outcome of the interaction among student goals, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and perceived worth or relevance of the curriculum, (Tinto, 2017).
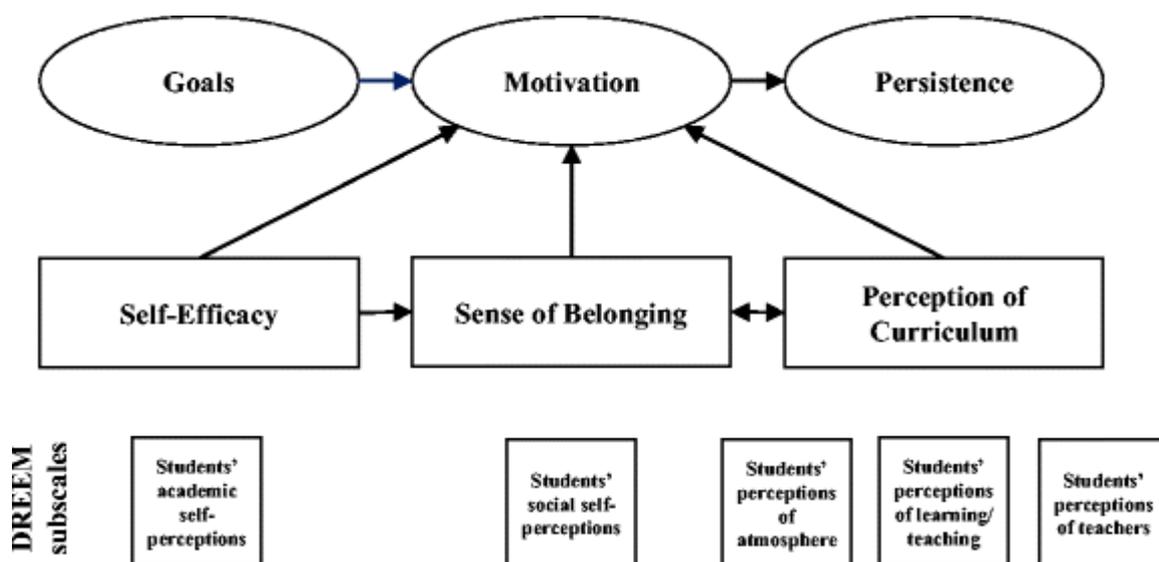
Figure 3. A Model of Student Motivation and Persistence (Tinto, 2017:3).

Tinto's (2017) model of motivation and persistence highlights the perception of the curriculum, where students note the quality and relevance of their academic programmes. Tessema (2012) posit that perception is derived from how students are taught, institutional quality and their preferred learning style and values. Frick et al. (2009) believe that a curriculum must have students preferred and expected values that justify why they are spending a considerable amount of time and effort. Therefore, a curriculum that falls short of students' expectations is viewed as unrewarding and irrelevant.

2.2.1.1 Goals and Aspirations

Tinto (2017) believes that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds have goals of completing their university education. However, events at universities can influence their goals and motivation and more so their goals may differ in both character and intensity, for instance, some may wish to transfer to other universities, or change their degree programmes, (Tinto, 2017). This, according to Tinto (2017) shows that students have different intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for attending universities, as some students may wish to learn because they want affiliation, development, income, or an occupation. However, Dietsche (2012) argues that, if students lack motivation, they undermine the completion of their degree programme. Dietsche (2012) further explains that some students may be only weakly committed to the goal of completion; hence, the slightest of obstacles can affect their persistence. Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall & Abel, (2013), cited in Tinto (2017) observe that student differences in the character and intensity of their goals are vital to explore because students with different goals and motivations can be affected by their experiences in universities.

2.2.1.2 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is paramount to understanding motivation and persistence at campuses. Bandura (1994), cited in Tinto (2017) defines self-efficacy as a student's belief in his ability to excel in a specific situation or at a specific academic work. As such, self-efficacy is a manifestation of how a student perceives himself from experiences and interactions with other students and his ability to exhibit locus of control. However, Tinto (2017) notes that self-efficacy is not in-born but is learnt from colleagues and society. Tinto (2017) also argues that high levels of self-efficacy determine how a student achieves his goals, work, and challenges. Therefore, "a strong sense of self-efficacy promotes goal attainment [and] persons with high self-efficacy will engage more readily in a task, expend more effort, and persist longer in the completion of that task and do so even when they encounter difficulties," (Tinto, 2017:4). As such, a weak sense of self-efficacy affects academic performance. Tinto (2017) further asserts that self-efficacy is a cornerstone upon which student persistence is anchored. This entails students to believe in themselves, and that they can achieve whatever is at hand. However, some students do not believe in their inner abilities to excel. Unfortunately, this is because of

negative stereotypes, or bad past socioeconomic, academic, and political experiences, (Tinto, 2017). According to Tinto (2017:5), it is therefore vital, "that institutions address the implicit, if not explicit, the existence of stereotype threats on campus through interventions that provide alternative ways of understanding one's identity". Universities can monitor and frequently assess students first-year academic performance and provide necessary academic and socio-psychological, to uplift their motivation and persistence, (Perin, 2017). According to Dweck (2002), students' beliefs to succeed must be built, reinforced, and maintained throughout their academic journey at universities; otherwise, they will falter along the way. However, Hall and Ponton (2005) believe that reshaping students' beliefs, especially those with poor self-efficacy is vital for them to succeed. On the other hand, Tinto (2017) argues that even those with high beliefs to succeed can face problems that can weaken their high sense of self-efficacy, usually during the critical first semester, as students seek to adjust to the heightened demands of university life.

2.2.1.3 Sense of Belonging

Tinto's (2017) motivation and persistence model explores students' sense of belonging, which reflects students' perception of themselves in the social environment. Students must feel to be part of the broader university community, or class, whereby lecturers value their participation, (Bean and Eaton, 2000). Tinto (2017) believes that a positive sense of belonging creates a positive social relationship that is useful to fight life challenges. According to Stebleton et al. (2014), a student's sense of belonging depends on his prior experiences; however, it is most directly shaped by the university climate and the perceptions of belonging students' access from their day-to-day interactions with other students and lecturers. This is supported by Tinto (2017:5) when he asserts that, "Students who perceive themselves as belonging are more likely to persist because it leads not only to enhanced motivation but also a willingness to engage others in ways that further persistence". On the other hand, Walton and Cohen (2007) argue that students who have a sense of not belonging develop withdrawal syndrome, which ultimately affects their motivation to persist. Therefore, universities must enhance and develop students' sense of belonging to create high self-sustaining student communities and levels of motivation and persistence. However, some students may persist even when there is little sense of belonging because of the extrinsic benefits of earning a college degree that is justifiable to complete the degree programme.

2.3 Challenges Faced by University Students

"Students are not a homogenous group. They have a range of experiences, concerns, and aspirations. The attachments they have are sometimes shared and sometimes incredibly distinct, but they all study and have a belief in education. They are also concerned about the quality and relevance of their educational experience," (Owain James cited in Exner, 2003:1).

Student challenges in post-independence SA have a colonial connotation, legacies of apartheid still breeding and affecting the previously disadvantaged Blacks. The government's acknowledged this, as it designed the White paper on Higher Education and Training of 1997 which aimed to transform the sector through "equity and redress, democratization; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy; and public accountability……. [with special focus on] institutional culture; curriculum and research; teaching and learning; --- diversity; social cohesion; and social inclusion…," (Keet, Nel, and Sahar,2015:5). Students need academic support and development, such as training in study skills, developing their academic literacies and additional tutoring, for them to carry out, successfully, their academic work.

2.3.1 Poverty, Inequality, and Educational Outcomes

There is a political contestation about the prevalence of poverty in the world. According to Richmond (2007), the structure of the international economy is the source of poverty and disparity, which is experienced regionally and locally, hence the need to tackle the root causes of poverty is paramount. In South Africa, debates on poverty are heated around the political legacies of apartheid. According to Gomez, et al. (2012), South African students enter universities from backgrounds of adverse inequality, concerning schooling, race, social class, and socioeconomic resources. Poverty in South Africa, therefore, needs to be discussed in the context of apartheid racial policies. According to Gomez, et al. (2012), poverty is the deprivation of basic capabilities, rather than merely defining it in the context of low income. Students coming from poverty-stricken backgrounds are under-prepared for university education. Kapp (2014) posits that university students from poor socio-economic backgrounds lack confidence and self-esteem whilst pursuing their academic studies and this influences their sense of belonging in the new environment. For example, according to Gomez, et al. (2012) recent studies by Pather & Chetty (2016), Norodien-Fataar (2016), and

Van Zyl, Gravett and De Bruin (2012) believe that pre-university non-academic circumstances such as family support and life circumstances influence how a student learn and achieve desired university educational outcomes.

Furthermore, Van der Berg (2008) refers to two research findings that depict that there is a relationship between economic and education variables. These research findings conclude that home background is a determinant of education outcomes. It is important to note down the sentiments of Ahmed (2010) who says that, getting rid of poverty is the biggest challenge in the world and is an indispensable requirement for achieving sustainable development goals. For example, rapid population growth, climate change urban industrialization can only be solved if the society is well educated. On the other hand, a society can be well educated if it is poverty-free. Acquisition of Education can reduce poverty. For example, when more people are educated people, they are most likely to be employed. More so, Cleyle and Philpott (2012) propound that university support structures, such as access to academic information and advice, and high-quality course content and programmes improve student engagement for underprepared students in enhancing student academic engagement and success. However, according to Pather (2017) research indicates that access to universities in South Africa by previously disadvantaged and underprepared learners does not necessarily guarantee meaningful social and academic engagement.

On the other hand, society accrues more demographic dividends through more education. According to Van der Berg (2008: 10), if more girls are educated, the population gets more "social benefits such as lower fertility, improved health care of children, and greater participation of women in the labour market". The attainment of Higher Education qualifications improves the earning potential of individuals and families, especially of the poor, and helps to compete for jobs, (Van der Berg, 2008). However, access to education can be attributed to the socio-economic status of families. According to research conducted in the UK, there is compelling evidence that poverty and poor educational outcomes are associated (Raffo, et al. 2007). However, in South Africa, the poverty and inequality landscape are highly attributable to apartheid legacies, whose repercussions are described by Simkins (1998), cited in Van der Berg (2000) as one of the footprints in the sand of poverty and inequality. It is also important to note that, "Empirical research has shown that poverty decreased significantly over the last 10 years in South Africa, while inequality remains

stubbornly high," (Chitiga-Mabugu et al. 2016:7). The reasons behind this can be attributable to inequalities. Social structures have changed over the past decades. Raffo, et al. (2007:8) further posit that the advent of social exclusion for certain population groups because of globalization has deepened socio-economic inequalities, as evidenced by "ghettoization, health inequalities, high levels of unemployment, poor housing and poor infrastructures". Furthermore, according to Chitiga-Mabugu et al. (2016) distance to schools and the direct and indirect user costs of education also harms the educational outcomes of poor communities.

These factors contribute to poor educational attainment. SA schools are classified in Quintiles 1 to 5 according to the relative socio-economic status of their surrounding communities. According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2004:8), "Quintile 1 are schools that cater for the poorest 20% of learners, Quintile 2 schools cater for the next poorest 20% of schools, and so on, and on the other hand, Quintile 5 schools are those schools that cater for the least poor 20% of learners". To elaborate, Quintile 1 to 3 schools are no-fee paying schools, and the government heavily subsidize their expenses. In most cases, poor education outcomes are witnessed in quintiles 1 to 3 schools. However, the DBE paid particular attention to the poor performances of these schools by introducing migrating factors "to address poor outcomes, the government has introduced interventions such as Annual National Assessments for grades 3, 6 and 9," (SA Government, 2013).

The Annual National Assessment (ANA), introduced nationally in 2011 offered the possibility to assess learners' literacy and numeracy performance. These tests were a revelation on the extent of the relationship between poverty and education. The results of the analysis of the performance of ANA showed a vast learning gap between children from advantaged and non-advantaged backgrounds (Pather, 2017). Unfortunately, the National Annual Assessment was discontinued in 2015, because of a lack of shared mutual understanding between DBE and teacher organizations (Pather, 2017). Currently, ANA has never been featured in the school examination system, which could have disadvantaged learners from disadvantaged schools from improving their numeracy and literacy skills. On the other hand, Raffo, et al. (2007) aptly sum up this entire scenario when they note that, the extent to which disadvantaged, and less privileged schools can offer well-equipped academic programmes is heavily influenced by the socio-economic statuses of the learners in schools, the strain that poverty exerts on the schools, and the teaching capabilities of teachers. If

schools can create strategies to tackle poverty challenges, underprepared high school graduates meant for higher education can be drastically reduced.

2.3.2 Low Retention and Attrition in Universities

Education is one of the chief drivers of poverty eradication in any population group. According to World Bank (2018: 1), "Accelerating poverty and inequality reduction will require a combination of policies that promote inclusive growth through boosting access to education". University students must graduate on time so that they enter the job market. Unfortunately, the reality of the SA academic field on graduation, retention, and attrition speaks a different language. Mason and Matas (2015) cited in Adusei-Asente and Doh (2016), define retention as the continuation of studies by students in the subsequent year until graduation. Most university students do not graduate on time. For example, about 15% of Black university students complete their studies in regulation time (Scott, 2012). On the other hand, attrition paints the same picture as retention. Letseka and Maile (2008) define attrition as the dropout rates of students in a particular academic course. Students withdraw from academic programmes or fail to complete their studies. According to Letseka and Maile (2008:5), "in South African universities, 30% of students drop out after the first year. This indicates that such students, mostly Blacks, may have enrolled in degree programmes that did not match their intellectual capacity". Attrition is more evident amongst students from poor socio-economic groups, who demographically are predominately Blacks because of the legacies of apartheid.

South African universities have devised some strategies to mitigate against retention and attrition. Adusei-Asente and Doh (2016) assert that attrition is more pervasive for poor people and one of the strategies for attrition is to integrate and create a sense of belonging especially for those who feel isolated. For example, peer mentoring is successful when dealing with attrition as it bridges the social and academic gaps often associated with university education. For example, according to Ogude et al. (2019), the University of Pretoria's institutional model offered comprehensive academic, psychosocial, and financial by designing and implementing supplementary instruction, peer-mentorship, academic advising, and psychosocial counselling programmes. Confirmed results of this strategy indicated that students who benefited from this initiative had a sense of belonging to the Pretoria academic system, thus reducing the rate of retention and attrition (Ogude et al., 2019).

2.3.4 Under-Preparedness and First Year University Experiences

According to Johnson (2017), under-preparedness describes students who lack basic skills in reading, writing, or mathematics. Ramphele (2012) posits that underprepared students are also those students who have an insufficient personal view of the university culture and of what is required to successfully study at these higher institutions of learning. Van De Heyde and Siebrits (2019:170) believe that "The legacy of the Apartheid continues to haunt the education system in South Africa, with many students from neglected school backgrounds being underprepared for science studies at tertiary level". The Council for Higher Education, (CHE, 2013), within the South African context, defined student under-preparedness as a challenge faced by students to tackle prescribed university curriculum either in class or at the individual level. This also includes the student's inability to study independently university curriculum as the student lacks intricate skills needed in the degree programme.

Van Broekhuizen et al. (2016) cited in Scott (2016) posit that there is a positive link between matric results and university performance. Ramphele (2012) argues that students' under-preparedness manifests itself through a lack of mastery of study materials, poor examination coping mechanisms, and deficiencies in understanding core study material. Students from poor communities entering universities have not been adequately prepared because of financial and resource constraints, and as such, are one of the contributing factors for high dropouts. This is further supported by Firfirey (2010: 987) who notes that, "approximately 60 per cent of students dropped out of university and that 70 per cent of families of higher education dropouts are poor". This possesses many challenges as Julius (2017) also notes that the under-preparedness of university students speaks volumes of the students' emotions, as they disguise their poverty through different strategies.

Johnson (2017) argues that students from poor communities circumvent psychosocial stress associated with poverty by taking responsibility for their poverty and attributing it to structural factors. They survive under the myth that a university qualification is the only tool to overcome their poverty; hence, they are resilient and persistent amid academic challenges. Scott (2016) believes that underestimating the deficiencies of university students' preparedness will not assist the students, as this impedes their effective developmental needs. More so, Scott (2016) argues that student under-preparedness is a result of inadequate

coherence between secondary education and tertiary education, where higher education consists of its own set of academic discourses and practices rarely acknowledging this gap. However, Borg (2010) believes that students from disadvantaged schools have limited access to key academic approaches due to their educationally disadvantaged environment, which lacks strong academic foundations, and ethics deemed necessary for higher university studies, hence such students cannot cope with the demands of university education unless a well-concerted programme is designed for them.

First-Year Experiences (FYE) at university are paramount as gatekeepers to how students excel in their academic work. This is done by providing mentorships, for example, peer mentorships, to first-year students. Mentoring first-year students improve their academic success, (Julius, 2017). According to Du Preez, Steenkamp, & Baard (2013), FYE mentorship promotes students' cognitive and personal growth and consequently their social engagement abilities.

2.3.5 Lack of Safe and Sustainable University (campus) Accommodation

Many university students leave their families to get an education. However, Doygun and Gulec (2012) point out that accommodation is the first challenge encountered by students leaving their homes and moving to another city for public university education. Safe student accommodation at public universities is the responsibility of the government, the university, and the community at large. Drawing from newspaper reports, in 2010 the minister of higher education and training, Blade Nzimande, established a ministerial task committee to assess the provision of student accommodation at universities, (Van Wyk, 2017). Unfortunately, the ministerial review report indicates that the demand for public university accommodation would not be met in the near future because of the supply-demand chain, as the number of students was growing, "107 598 beds available for the approximately 535 000 learners, approx. 8% available to new first-year students," (Van Zyl, 2018:31). Students took to the street to voice their grievances about filthy and expensive accommodation. In 2019, the University of the Witwatersrand voiced their displeasure against lack of accommodation and they went on hunger strike. The Cape Peninsula University of Technology students erected a shack to symbolize challenges faced by students on accommodation, the Durban University of Technology protested about accommodation and a student was shot when students and

security guards clashed. At UKZN Westville campus, students burnt mattresses in protest over filthy beds, (Erasmus et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in 2018, UKZN protested about poor conditions at residences, under the hashtag #Kwazekwanzima, which means "it is very difficult", whereby students demanded humane conditions at residences, which leaked when it rained, had bed bugs and no hot water for showers, (Erasmus et al., 2019). In 2010 students from the Mangosuthu University of Technology in Durban, the Tshwane University of Technology and Stellenbosch University's Tygerberg campus protested about filthy and expensive accommodation. Moreover, in 2009 students at the University of Limpopo had to protest about the lack of accommodation at their campuses. As a result, Erasmus et al. (2019:1) still believe that student accommodation at universities is a great challenge, "Although Zuma [Former President Jacob Zuma] mentioned that more student accommodation would be built, old student housing refurbished and urgent attention given to historically disadvantaged institutions, the current shortage of accommodation is dehumanizing for students who cannot afford accommodation, and this has a direct effect on their academic success".

However, some students stay in private accommodation, and these have their challenges, as outlined in the study conducted by Mudau (2017). Mudau (2017) found out that students staying off-campus are facing high rentals, long distances from the university, inability to access library and internet services and more alarmingly, lack of security on their way to university as they risk being mugged by criminals. This has a psychological effect on students, as they feel alienated from university life.

2.3.6 Financial Difficulties and Food Insecurity

Financial difficulties faced by students are a global phenomenon that affects students from both developed and developing economies and they range from inadequate financial assistance, financial assistance received late and lack of any other financial sources, (Daud, Norwani, and Yusof, (2018); Gwacela, 2013). However, the 2015/2016 hashtag (#) #FeesMustFall nationwide university protests highlighted the financial difficulties faced by the student. "Hashtags, short words or phrases that follow the hash or pound sign (#), are used on social media platforms to brand advocacy movements, archive messages for the movement, and allow those not personally connected to a user to see and comment on

messages that use the hashtag," (Saxton, Niyirora, Guo and Waters, 2015:154). Financial difficulties lead students to lack food and other necessities, which affect negatively their academics. More so, in the United Kingdom (UK), studies carried out by Harding (2011) indicate that students face unexpected financial challenges as they progress through their university education. A Euro student survey found that over 33% of college students in Ireland have severe financial difficulties, (Foley, 2019). Furthermore, the survey conducted by the University of Central England, found that 51.9 per cent of the 1,139 full-time undergraduates polled believed their academic performance was negatively affected by financial difficulties they face, (Harding, 2011). Doygun and Gulec (2012) point out that dietary needs are important for students' physical and mental survival, growth, development and leading a long, healthy, and efficient academic life.

Food insecurity is the inability to access and eat an adequate amount of food and sufficient nutrition, which is a global phenomenon amongst university students who go to lectures and are bed hungry, (Morris, et al. 2016). According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2015), food insecurity amongst university students is detrimental to the health of affected students as they face malnutrition, hunger, and starvation (Morris, et al. 2016). Sabi et al. (2018) argue that students who experience food insecurity experience psychological and emotional stress which can adversely affect their health, self-esteem, and motivation, resulting in poor academic performance, and ultimately affecting their self-actualization.

In a study conducted at four public universities in Illinois, USA, by Morris et al (2016), findings indicate that 35% of students were food insecure. Hughes et al. (2011) posit that Australian university students have the same food security challenges as the USA as about 47% of Queensland University of Australia undergraduate students experienced food insecurity. In both studies, the most attributing factor to food insecurity by university students was financial difficulties faced by students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. In SA, although the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) covers tuition fees, accommodation, and a stipend for most poor students, Sabi et al. (2019) argue that there is little money left by the student to meet food costs. A study conducted between 2007 and 2010 by Munro et al. (2013) revealed that the UKZN, with about 53% of the student population from poor communities who are on NSFAS faced food insecurity. However, Sabi et al. (2019:1) complement some hunger mitigating actions by some universities, "the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where nearly half the students are from poor households, meal vouchers

and food hampers have been offered since 2012". As highlighted earlier, food insecurity is attributed to poor socio-economic backgrounds. However, Sabi, et al. (2019) further attribute university students' food insecurity to income and financial mismanagement by students and food theft by fellow students, in insecure residences.

2.3.7 Habituation and Orientation Adjustment Problems

This challenge is experienced when students leave their homes and lives, in which they have been, living and start a different life, (Doygun and Gulec, 2012). Such students encounter different challenges such as the problem of adjustment to the new academic environment, and they may experience depression, as they worry about the future, their education, and bilateral relations, (Exner, 2003). A study conducted by Deb, Strodl and Sun (2015) reveals that depression, anxiety, and behavioural problems such as irritability are common in students with high Habituation and Orientation Adjustment Problems including academic stress. About 75% to 80% of higher education students are moderately stressed (Deb, Strodl and Sun, 2015). This may lead to alcohol abuse and suicide, (Deb, Strodl and Sun, 2015). There is therefore a need to cater for the mental needs of students at universities.

2.3.8. Language Issue

Decoloniality and transformation of SA higher education from Euro-centric epistemologies is a contested discussion since the new dawn of democracy. Students feel that there is a need for a radical transformation in the curriculum, hence the call for a decolonial curriculum, which is centred on indigenous knowledge and indigenous languages as central to scholarly engagements, (Mbembe, 2016). Students need to be taught in their mother tongue, hence some of the demands in the #FeesMustFall protests. Nyika (2015:1) argues "One of the factors attributed to poor performance of some indigenous students at universities in developing countries is the use of a second language – mainly English. Thus, students whose mother tongue is used as the language of instruction at their universities have an advantage over students whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction at their universities". However, Mbembe (2016) argues that although empirical research has shown that the use of a mother tongue in early education is more effective than the use of a foreign second language, 12-14 there is a scarcity of empirical evidence, which highlights that the use of a vernacular language at higher levels of learning could improve the success at higher institutions. Alternatively, Nyika (2015) also believes that poor performance by students who

are taught in a second language (for example, English) cannot be solely contributed to a poor grasp of English. However, to a host of other factors such as the overall quality of primary and secondary school education received quality of teaching staff, socio-economic background of their families and the type of environment in which the students live and study under.

2.3.9 Stigmatization and Labelling

Stigmatization is a global social phenomenon that leads to the marginalization of a specific person, or a group of people, (Pingani et al., 2016). Stigma ultimately leads to discrimination and loss of dignity because of prejudices by other members of society. Universities who have a clear understanding of the background of students who are in the Extended Programme, and the Stigma and labelling associated with being a student in this Programme by mainstream students should be very careful in ensuring that these students do not feel like an outcast with the university environment. If the aforementioned is not well treated, students enrolled in Augmenting Programme are most likely to succumb to stigmatization and labelling which could hamper their academic performance significantly.

2.3.10 Technology Efficacy

According to Chima (2015), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) entails the effective use of technology to access, retrieve, convert, store, organize, manipulate, and present data and information. Computers and internet technologies have penetrated and transformed nearly every facet of modern academic landscapes, especially in universities, hence the need for all students to be computer literate. Henson (2013) argues that computer skills for higher education are of utmost necessity, as students are often expected to obtain campus information through the internet. Furthermore, the application of technology in all university libraries in SA has demanded the need for competency in the use of computers. In a study conducted in Nigerian universities, Chima's (2015) findings indicate that computer literacy in higher education enhances students' performance as it facilitates online searching and effective use of library databases. Henson (2013) posits that computer literacy is critical to students' success [and], "many students entering South African universities for the first time are not adequately equipped with the computer skills that they will need during their first year of study".

2.3.11 Psychosocial Issues

The transition from high school to university could cause psychological, social, and academic shock to students as they face a new environment, for some, away from home. Students will face new teaching methods, demanding academic tasks, new social contacts, and new living arrangements. This research focused on stress, alcohol and substance abuse, and gender-based violence as the main psychosocial issues encountered by ECP students. These are discussed in the following segment:

2.3.11.1 Stress, Anxiety, and Depression

Kadhiravan & Kumar (2012) posit that recent studies have indicated the prevalence of stress and drastic increase among students in higher education. According to Essel and Owusu, (2017:347), "Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or suspense and as several normal reactions of the body (mental, emotional, and physiological) designed for self-preservation''. Because of stress, students may have low moods, poor concentration, short temper, changed sleep patterns and loneliness, fatigue, headaches and stomach aches, (Essel and Owusu, 2017). Students may be subjected to various stresses, such as the academic work pressure from lecturers and poor integration into the academic system. Moreover, time concerns, fear of failure, classroom interactions, and economic issues are also some causes of stress amongst college students, (Essel and Owusu, 2017). Consequently, these students' social, emotional, physical, and family statuses are affected thereby affecting their academic performances. University education is inherently stressful, challenging, and demanding and there is minimal opportunity for recreation which in some cases leads to serious sleep deprivation, (Firth-Cozens, 2001). Conversely, lengthy, continual, startling, and unmanageable stress is damaging. A survey conducted by American Psychological Association shows that 45% of college and university students went for counselling for stress-related issues, (Winerman, 2017). More worrisome is that Kim (2018) reports that 3 out of 4 college students admit that they are stressed, and some of these students have shown suicidal tendencies. However, some students try to deal with stress using unorthodox means, which in most cases are detrimental to their health. Kadhiravan & Kumar (2012) note that some students use drugs, analgesics, alcohol, smoking, and eating, which however may aggravate the stress.

2.4 Coping Mechanisms

Earnest and Dwyer (2010:3) define stress coping mechanisms as, "the ability to apply strategies that minimize and manage the stress response," and these can be broadly classified into problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping mechanisms. Coping mechanisms deal with an individual's psychological response to emotional regulation strategies, thought processes, and behaviours and how they respond to stress and events concerning their goals, (Essel and Owusu, 2017). Coping also depends on the social contexts and interpersonal relationships. According to Earnest and Dwyer (2010), Winerman (2017) and Kim (2018) University students who live complex lives with which they cannot cope with are therefore exposed to feelings of tension and stress.

However, Wasserman, Asch, Blustein and Putnam (2016) point out that the way that people fight life obstacles is dependent on one's physical and mental well-being, interpersonal relationships, commitments, and responsibilities. Kim (2018) posits that students may directly deal with the stress by confronting, controlling, or managing stressful tasks. On the other hand, students can embark on actions to get rid of the stressor or to better the effects of stress. According to Lazarus (1988), cited in Yazon, Ang-Manaig and Tesoro (2018:31) students can cope with the stressful environment by, "planful problem solving, seeking social support, confrontive coping, distancing, self-control, escape-avoidance, accepting responsibility, and positive reappraisal". The following section outlines and discusses the relevant types of coping mechanisms for university students. These coping mechanisms are based on studies conducted at global, regional, and national levels.

2.4.1 Social Networks and Social Capital

Social support is vital for survival, and Daza (2016) argues that universities are portals for socialization and social relationships where networks, norms, and relationships are developed, utilized, and maintained for the betterment of academic life. Drawing from the research conducted by Coleman (1988), cited in Daza (2016:68) emphasized the role of social capital in education, "the role of social capital in communicating the norms, trust, authority, and social controls that an individual must understand and adapt to succeed". It is vital to explore the frequency, quality, and composition of social capital at university. Familial social relationships are vital for a student to cope with life adversities. Singh (2016) believes that good friends and social networks increase resilience and decrease stress experienced at

university. Daza (2016) further argues that belonging to different groups, for example, based on age, sex, or social class, influences a student's social relationships.

The social capital theory posits that social relationships are platforms that can be used for the development and accumulation of human capital, for example, a stable family and social network can support educational attainment, (Nieman, 2006). A study by Shiri & Naderi (2016) utilised the social capital theory and it reveals that international students in Australia heavily invested in social capital and ultimately built up a circle of friends and became happier over time. Shiri & Naderi (2016:1) argue "International, university students arrive in their host country denuded of supporting social networks and confronting unfamiliar cultural and educational institutions, an experience that adversely impacts on their wellbeing and academic performance". Shiri & Naderi (2016) highlight that international students experience culture shock as they enter an unfamiliar environment with a different set of behavioural standards and rules, thus leading them to feel insomnia, anxiety, insecurity, unhappiness, loneliness, depression, isolated, and homesickness.

2.4.2 Regular Physical Exercise and Meditation

The first technique that can help with the management of stress is meditation. Meditation that cultivates mindfulness can be particularly effective at reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions. Mindfulness is the quality of being fully engaged in the present moment, without over-thinking or analysing the experience. Rather than worrying about the future or dwelling on the past, mindfulness meditation switches the focus to what is happening right now. Mindfulness meditation is not equal to zoning out, it takes an effort to maintain your concentration and to bring it back to the present moment when your mind wonders or you start to drift off. However, with regular practice, mindfulness strengthens the areas of the brain associated with joy and relaxation. Mindfulness provides a potentially powerful antidote to the common causes of daily stress such as time pressure, distraction, agitation, and interpersonal conflicts. (Clinic Community Health Centre, January 2010).

2.4.3 Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Mbajwa (2020) posits that tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and various allopathic drugs are widely abused by students for various reasons despite their known ill effects. Significantly, an estimated 20-40% of students globally abuse alcohol and drugs, (Trangenstein, 2018).

According to Hlomani-Nyawasha (2020), South Africa is listed amongst the top 20 countries that are abusing alcohol and the high consumption and abuse of alcohol are found among young people within the student age. According to Iconis (2014), there are several reasons students consume and abuse alcohol and other substance which include enhancing their mood and helping them to cope with stress, fitting in with their peers, family history of alcoholism, type of residence, college size, and availability of alcohol. Despite the perceived negative impact of Alcohol on academic success but Nyandu and Ross (2019) found that in the 88% of students that uses alcohol, about 78% of them reported no adverse performance on a test or exam due to alcohol consumption. However, despite several emotional, legal and physical penalties that ensue because of alcohol and substance abuse, universities have developed deterrent approaches and strategies (Nyandu and Ross, 2019; Iconis, 2014; Hlomani-Nyawasha, 2020). The severity of alcohol consumption and substance abuse on human development as a whole cannot be ignored or assumed that students are immune but the known effects warrant for universities to be vigilant to their detriment.

2.5 The Role of Academic Support and Development Programmes

ACP students are a vulnerable cohort that needs maximum academic and psychosocial support and development from the university and government. According to Sajienė & Tamulienė (2012), student support aims to enhance student academic performance. Van Zyl, Gravett, & De Bruin (2012) argue that student support improves student retention and success, specifically during the first year when high dropout rates are prevalent, especially during the first semester. Lack of academic support harms students' academic work and can cause premature exit from the programmes. Junio-Sabio (2012) further notes that academic support help students acquire excellence through either transition, excellence, self-or resources. However, Koris et al. (2015) posit that academic support needs to be student-oriented, meaning that it should meet the student's needs and wants, and where possible, should constantly update academic support policies. When students utilize academic support, academic support professionals should understand individual goals in support seeking and outline the basic needs and functions of support-seeking interactions with students. Unfortunately, Vanderberg (2013) observes that many students do not voluntary seek support. Instead, those who need help the most are often the least likely to seek it. It is therefore in the best interest of this research to highlight, in this segment, the extent to which

the ECPs have 'bridged' the 'gap' between students' socio-economic backgrounds and university.

2.5.1 Enhancing Student Equity

The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) view equity in education as fairness, whereby governments and educational institutions make sure that personal and social circumstance such as socioeconomic status should not be an obstacle to achieving educational access and potential. Equity entails academic inclusion, ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all who meet minimum admission requirements (Raola, 2010). As such, a fair and inclusive education system constitutes a more equitable society. Student equity programmes are an international phenomenon. According to Raola (2010:4), in 1992, California Community Colleges, in the USA, "adopted a Student Equity Policy to ensure that groups historically underrepresented in higher education have an equitable opportunity for first access and then success". The policy adopted a holistic approach to equity audits, which focused on access to academic programmes, funding distribution for ECPs, achievements and discipline.

In the mid-1980s, under the apartheid government in SA, there were calls from education scholars for systemic education reforms, including the implementation of alternative inclusive curriculum structures. According to Scott (2016), this was the marking point that gave birth to ECPs in 2004, recognized by SA governments as a key route for enhancing student success and equity. As such ECPs were, and are, grounded on academic access, academic support, and academic development policies. Chetty (2014) asserts that the founding mission of academic support and academic development in SA was to redress historical racial inequalities in Higher Education and enhance the equity of access and equity of outcomes. Augmented Programmes in SA target students from disadvantaged schools whose matric results are slightly below college entry requirements but have a full matriculation exemption. This indicates that Augmented Programmes help to promote student equity, thereby giving equal educational opportunities and promoting student success, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstance, (Chetty; 2014). Raolo and Meléndrez (2010) posit that student equity involves actions and principles where fairness and justice are expected in classrooms. However, equity should be understood in the context of equality, as distinguished by the University of Southern California (USC) Centre for Urban

Education (2016) "If equality means giving everyone the same resources, equity means giving each student access to the resources they need to learn and thrive to find individual success". Figure 3 below depicts equality versus equity, and this was used to explore the role of augmented curriculum in facilitating academic equity.
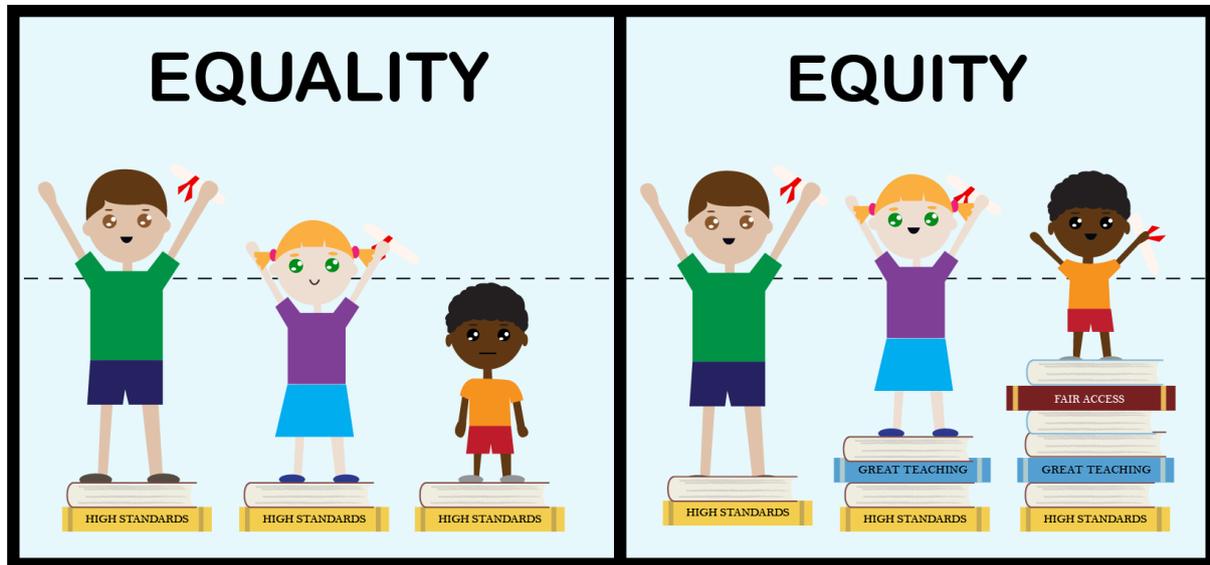
Figure 4. Academic Equality vs Academic Equity (USA Coast College, 2019).

The above figure asserts that for universities to achieve parity in academic performance for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, academic staff should critically assess and change their practices to advance student equity, (University of Southern California (USC) Centre for Urban Education, 2019). Despite playing a redress role in higher education, Scott (2016) further advance that the programmes have widened access, especially in historically advantaged universities, and fostered success for many graduates from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, many of whom would not otherwise have been accepted and enrolled at university. However, the success of equity depends on a shared understanding that underperforming students have been grossly affected by inadequate and poor resources, thus there should be the provision of more resources and support to such students. On the other hand, Chetty (2014:8) argues, "What happens in the classroom obviously affects equity, but the relationships between schools, parents and communities also matter. Student learning benefits from an effective school-home relationship, but weak support at home can hold back children from deprived backgrounds".

2.5.2 Access to Academic and Career Epistemologies

Morrow (2009) defines epistemological access as access to the norms of doing and thinking at the university in different academic programmes so that students can operate more confidently and independently. Epistemological access promotes student self-esteem and confidence. Slabbert & Friedrich-Nel (2015) assert that ECP help to develop academically under-prepared students and gives them opportunities to access their preferred academic epistemologies and careers because in ECP the level of support given to students' learning processes is tailor-made. Morrow (2009) further explains that epistemological access gives ECP students the ability to own the academic content matter and ways of being associated with preferred academic programmes. Gee (2005), cited in Arbee and Thomson (2014:26) highlights the benefits of epistemological access presented by ECPs,

"Having full epistemological access means, therefore, that students can 'pull off' the appropriate disciplinary identity and participate effectively in the discipline's 'Discourse', that is the "socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting and interacting, in the 'right' places and at the 'right' times with the 'right' objects (associations that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network)".

However, one needs to note that each cohort of students admitted in ECPs every year has its unique personalities, learning styles and needs which must be accommodated in the ACP's model, (Slabbert and Friedrich-Nel, 2015). ECP students may feel that they can fully participate in academic work and consequently believe that the world is a more beneficial place, (Garraway& Bozalek , 2019).

However, the responsibility of ECPs lecturers, counsellors, and coordinators to eradicate the stigma associated with ECPs and to build self-esteem and confidence, is one element that determines success in implementing epistemological access. In their analysis of ECPs at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Central University of Technology (CUT), Bloemfontein, South Africa, Slabbert & Friedrich-Nel (2015) find that the success stories of previous ECP students are discussed to ECP students as role models, to stir their aspirations to succeed.

2.5.3 Social Justice and Stability

In SA, the new democracy in 1994 brought hope for resources redistribution and this happened in the form of enhanced access to bursaries for Black students as well as open access for all students to universities, (Garraway & Bozalek, 2019). This is further highlighted by Waghid (2014:1451), "(Higher) education for social justice is an encounter as it involves both the capacities and cultural stock of people (individuals and groups) in enhancing their responsiveness to need dessert and equality". Furthermore, Waghid (2014) argues that higher education for social justice builds sustainable and harmonious communities and promotes development that does not compromise the stock of human and social resources, but rather contributes to the enhancement of their potential. However, Scott, Yeld & Hendry (2007) argue that SA's redress on resource redistribution was insufficient and there were government-funded interventions to provide an extended and enriched degree programme for students from previously disadvantaged students. Garraway & Bozalek (2019) argues that ECPs are therefore viewed as redistributive social justice within the university. However, according to Cooper (2015), this redistributive attempt did not fully achieve its desired goals, as graduation remains strongly racially skewed. It is therefore prudent to understand that ECPs attempt to dismantle exclusionary policies in the academic field, especially on access.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed an overview of ECPs. This chapter presents the research methodology that was used in this study in exploring academic support of university students on ECPs their perception, or misperception thereof, of ECPs, and challenges they face and how they cope up with adversities in the quest for academic pursuit. This chapter presents the research method, sampling, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and the limitation encountered during the research. The chapter will critically discuss the process of data collection used in this research by discussing how qualitative research techniques were used and how data was analysed. Lastly, the chapter will present some of the ethical issues encountered during this research.

3.2 Research Design and Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was employed throughout the study in exploring the students' (mis)perception and persistence in Extended Curriculum Programme. The study will used qualitative methodologies. The methodology explored how students on the UKZN Extended Curriculum Programme experience the interventions that are aimed at facilitating their Academic English and Communication skills. The researcher used this methodology to gain a holistic overview of different BSS4 (Extended Programme) contexts. Punch (2013) notes that qualitative research methodology is vital because it expounds on research phenomenon in a logical explicit manner elaborates. Furthermore, the study employed the interpretive analysis method as adopted by Brocki & Wearden, (2007). Mtikrakra (2009) asserts that qualitative research entails discovering information that you did not intend on finding and an in-depth interview allows the participant to be comfortable in answering personal questions. This chapter highlighted the research method, sampling, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and the limitation encountered during the study. According to Brocki & Wearden, (2007), the interpretative approach is useful to interpret, create, give meaning, define, justify, and rationalize daily actions in the context. According to Punch (2013), qualitative research methodology is the main platform where a

researcher captures data from within, through a process of deep attentiveness, hence taking away preconceptions held by the researcher. For example, the researcher had an opportunity to create meaning of how the Academic English and Communication Programme enhance students' comprehension and communication skills in their academic life at UKZN. The researcher thus drawn comparisons of different academic programmes based on the research findings.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College in Durban, South Africa. Howard College is one of the five campuses under the University of KwaZulu-Natal and is located on King George V Ave, Glenwood. The University was established in 2004 after the merger of the University of Durban Westville and the former University of Natal. Howard College was chosen as a study area because of its cultural and racial diversity among students there. Figure 3 below provides a map of the study area:

Figure 5. UKZN Howard College Campus Map (UKZN, 2018).

3.4 Research Design

According to Akhtar (2016:68), "A research design is the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure". A research design is a frame wherein the study is conducted. It guides the researcher in the various stages of research. Furthermore, Sarantakos (2012) asserts that a research design gives order on how to conduct a research process, where openness and accountability for research purposes are presented, to assess the validity and reliability of the study. The research utilised both exploratory and descriptive approaches to explore and describe the academic challenges experienced by ECP students, coping mechanisms, and their perception of the ECPs. Exploratory research design helped the researcher to be familiar with ECP matters, explored, and discovered new descriptive information about ECPs.

3.5 Research Setting

The study is a qualitative study that employed in-depth interviews as a way of gathering data. Qualitative research explores and discovers information that research did not intend on finding According to Stanley (2014) a research design is an overall strategy that the researcher uses to integrate the different components of the study coherently and logically. This research adopted a qualitative exploratory-descriptive methodology to gain an insight into the perceptions and persistence of students admitted into the BSS4 Extended Programme. Qualitative research methodology gives a holistic overview of the concept of alternative university access programmes. Qualitative methodology enables the researcher to compare research results based on the outcome of the research data as it allows a researcher to view and record research data from the inside deep attentiveness, thereby eradicating preconceptions and biases previously held by the researcher, (Taylor, 2015). According to Hennink et al. (2020), the research design cycle is the first component of the overall qualitative study where deductive reasoning is explored. Myers (2019) posits that research design is the gap between the research questions and the data to be collected whereby one explores the research strategy adopted to collect information that informs the research questions posed in the study. It is the plan, for selecting respondents for a specified study, (Hennink et al., 2020). In this study, the research design enabled the researcher to have a systematic guide to plan and structure the research from start to finish. The research also allowed participants to use informal languages and code-switching to vernacular in some

instances to elicit more experiences and perceptions of the research phenomenon. The researcher did not limit the participants on how much time to spend answering questions.

3.5.1 Advantages of Qualitative Research

Six advantages of qualitative data are presented in this segment, to justify why the researcher opted for the methodology. According to Rahman (2020:104), the "qualitative research approach produces the thick (detailed) description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences; and interprets the meanings of their actions". As a result, the qualitative method helps researchers to explore and understand phenomena in detail. Secondly, the qualitative research approach holistically explores and understands the human experience in a specific environment. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2002), qualitative research uses a wider range of epistemological viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques to understand human experiences. Rahman (2020) further believes that the third advantage of qualitative research is that it has abilities to explore and understand different people's sentiments about a research phenomenon, meaning, and events. According to Myers (2019), this is ideographic research, where individual cases or events are explored. The fourth advantage of qualitative research methodology is that it allows researchers to explore and discover the participants' inner experiences about a research phenomenon, (Rahman, 2020). For example, the methodology derives meanings through the culture of the research participants. The fifth advantage is that the methodology allows the researchers to interact with the participants directly, during data collection, such as through face-to-face interviews. As such, the researcher can elicit the feelings, perceptions, and views of participants about the research topic. Lastly, the qualitative research method is flexible and can be designed and redesigned largely, (Maxwell (2012), cited in Rahman, 2020).

However, there are some disadvantages to qualitative research methodology. Silverman (2010), cited in Rahman (2020) argues that qualitative research methodology may leave out contextual sensitivities, and concentrate more on meanings and experiences. Furthermore, results from this methodology cannot be generalized to a larger population sample.

3.6 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is research that entails the collation of textual collected data from interview transcripts, audio, video, and field notes to explore, comprehend and interpret the

perceptions and experiences of participants, (Hennink et al., 2020). Data transcription was done within 24 hours of each interview to begin the process of thematic analysis, defined by Maguire & Delahunt (2017) as the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), transcription involves the process of converting spoken words to written words. The thematic analysis method allows the researcher to extract descriptive information concerning the experiences of research participants, enabling the researcher to study the research phenomenon in detail. The research followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six processes of thematic analysis whereby the researcher became familiar with data, generated initial codes, searched for themes, reviewing themes, defined themes, and produced a report. The researcher read the transcribed data several times for familiarization, whilst noting down original ideas. Thereafter, transcribed data was coded into related themes and this allowed the researcher to create and come up with a thematic map. According to Myers (2020) coding helps the researcher to identify the main themes, problems, relationships, and differences as narrated by participants and interpreted by the researcher. The final data analysis report represented vivid perceptions of BSS4 Extended Programme students.

3.7 Data Collection

The research conducted 45-minute in-depth interviews with the study sample. As such, an in-depth interview allows the participant to feel more comfortable in answering personal questions. Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick (2008) argue that in-depth interviews highlight the underlying perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of the interviewee on the research issues. More so, the qualitative approach allows detailed information to be collected through open-ended questionnaires, (Hennink et al., 2020). The research utilized structured questions to gain requisite information about the research participants, for example, demographic profiles of participants. According to Richie, et al. (2013), such interviews allow openness for clarifications and create a good rapport between the researcher and the participants. These interviews were tape-recorded. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic research method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns. Data will be transcribed and categorized into different themes under different codes. The interview guide comprised twelve in-depth questions that explored the participants' perceptions and persistence of the BSS4 Extended Programme. Participants had an opportunity to comment and describe their perceptions of the phenomenon of access

programmes. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, responses were tape-recorded and field notes were used. All recorded data was transcribed, non-verbatim, and coded within 24 hours and this, according to Richie, et al. (2013) guards against losing collected data thereby enabling the researcher to commence data analysis as soon as possible. Research participants chose interview venues at the Howard campus, where they felt comfortable answering interview questions. Richie, et al. (2013) believe that interviews should be carried out at a venue where the participant is as comfortable as possible.

3.8 Sampling and Sampling Strategy

Sampling is the selection of a specific population group to represent the entire set of populations. The study adopted a purposive sampling of 15 UKZN BSS4 Augmented Programme first, second, third- and fourth-year students from different demographic groups at Howard College Campus. More so, the researcher will use his networks to identify and select research participants. This is supported by Hennink et al. (2020:48) who note *"Studies of sensitive subjects have employed individuals' social networks to access hard to reach and 'sensitive' populations"*. More so, according to Tongco (2007), purposive sampling can be defined as a non-probability method where research participants' relevancy for the sample is specifically based on the judgment made by the researcher. The purposive sampling method is time-efficient, effective and does not require any theory before undertaking the research, (Tongco, 2007).

The researcher also used the snowball sampling technique to select research participants. Snowball or chain referral sampling is a method that is commonly used in qualitative research. According to Cohen & Arieli (2011), snowball sampling entails identifying research participants who are then used to refer the researcher on to other participants with similar characteristics. This method yields a study sample through referrals made by participants who know of others who possess some knowledge or characteristics that are of interest, (Khan, 2014). Snowball sampling was employed in this study, which focuses on a sensitive issue, concerning academic issues of ECP university students.

3.9 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

According to Garg (2016:640), "Inclusion and exclusion criteria define who can be included or excluded from the study sample". He further points out that the inclusion criteria identify

the participants in a consistent, reliable, uniform, and objective manner. In this research, participants were UKZN full-time BSS4 students studying at Howard Campus and should be in either the first, second, third or fourth year of their studies. On the other hand, Garg (2016) explains that the exclusion criteria include factors or characteristics that make the recruited population ineligible for the study. In this study, any other UKZN student at Howard campus who is not enrolled in BSS4 is not part of the research population.

3.10 Reasons for Choosing UKZN Students as Research Participants

UKZN students were used because the university has had ECPs since 2004, hence a bigger pool to choose from first-year students to fourth-year students, who could bring in different perspectives about the research phenomenon. Secondly, UKZN students were readily available, especially after lectures, or in between lecture breaks, which made it easy to set up interviews. More so, students were easier to locate where a further follow-up was needed. Thirdly, there are minimal studies on ECPs that focus on students' perceptions and persistence.

3.11 Validity, Reliability, and Rigor

Validity is a measure of what is intended whereby a degree of fit between the conceptual and operational definition of the construct is identified, (Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2007). On the other hand, Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2007:152) argue that "reliability refers to the dependability of measurement instruments, the extent to which the instrument yields the same result on repeated trials". Reliability and validity focus on the data that is consistent and reliable.

 According to Cohen & Arieli (2011:425) validity should seek to address the following questions:

"How credible are the particular findings of the study, and by what criteria can we judge them? How transferable and applicable are these findings to another setting or group of people? How can we be reasonably sure that the findings will be replicated if the study were conducted with the same participants in the same context? How can we be sure that the findings are the reflection of the subjects and the inquiry itself, rather than a creation of the researcher's biases or prejudices?"

To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher used more than one research tools for data collection so that more accurate findings and conclusions may be drawn.

3.12 Credibility

According to Guba & Lincoln (2005), credibility asks the researcher to link the research study's findings with reality to demonstrate the truth of the research study's findings. Thus, the researcher used multiple sources to link research findings with the realities of South African Augmented Programmes in education to demonstrate the truth.

3.13 Dependability

Dependability is the ability to provide services that are defensibly trusted within a period, (Morrow, 2009). In this study, the researcher used a variety of literature on alternative university access programmes at global, regional, and national levels. This research aims to provide its audience with similar evidence if it were to be created with similar respondents in the same contexts.

3.14 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are important in scientific and academic research and according to Guba & Lincoln (2005), these are moral principles that guide an individual or group and are widely accepted, and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects. This researcher applied for ethical clearance and gatekeepers' letters from the relevant University of Kwa-Zulu Natal's Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee departments, and both aforementioned applications were approved.

3.14.1 Informed Consent

According to Guba & Lincoln (2005), participants must agree to participate, voluntarily, in research and must be psychologically and legally competent. They must be aware that they are free to withdraw from the study at any given time. In this study, the researcher fully disclosed facts needed that enabled participants to choose whether to participate or not, and all participants got and signed a written informed consent letter before the interview session.

Each participant's autonomy was protected. The researcher made sure that the informed consent form was written in a language that the participants understood. Participants were made aware of what the study involved and how it would affect them. It is important to note that all participants were above 18 years of age, hence, there was no need for parental consent.

3.14.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality highlights the right of access to the research data disclosed by participants, (Denzin, N.K. and Giardina (2016). As a researcher, the researcher is obliged not to discuss the views of participants with any third party. In this study, all soft data was secured by an encrypted password and could only be accessed by either the study supervisor or researcher.

3.14.3 Anonymity

According to Madzamba (2017:43), "anonymity entails concealing of identities in all documents resulting from the research". In this research, participants were not identified by their names but by codes. This ensured would not be traced and personally linked to research findings.

3.15 Limitations of the Study

Qualitative research enabled this researcher to gather and analyse information on the Augmented Curriculum Programme. However, the researcher used a limited number of UKZN students from one campus, Howard, due to financial and time constraints. The study sample is therefore not a true representation of all UKZN BSS4 students. Furthermore, it was difficult to schedule interviews within a convenient time framework, considering that most participants were busy with end-of-year examinations and submissions. However, participants were interviewed in their free time in different places based on their choices.

3.16 Conclusion

This chapter explored the research methods and research design that were used for the study. The chapter also presented the sampling technique used and purposive sampling and snowball sampling were discussed in detail. The chapter also discussed how in-depth

interviews were conducted. It also highlighted how data was analyzed and presented. Furthermore, research ethical considerations that were adhered to were also presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of gathering data was to find out how the university academic support of students on ECP assists students with the realization of their academic goals. In this regard, the qualitative approach was utilized to produce data that has substance and reflects detailed information. Therefore, individual interviews and group discussions with 15 ECP students were conducted. Under this chapter, the collected data and findings were descriptively analysed under various themes that emanated from the interviewee's verbal responses.

4.2 Themes

The results from the collected data will be presented in a narrative form under the following themes:

1. Students' Perceptions and Attitudes in determining the relevance of the Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs)
2. Challenges faced by the ECP students.
3. Coping Mechanisms by the ECP students.
4. The role of academic, social, and psychological support and development programmes.
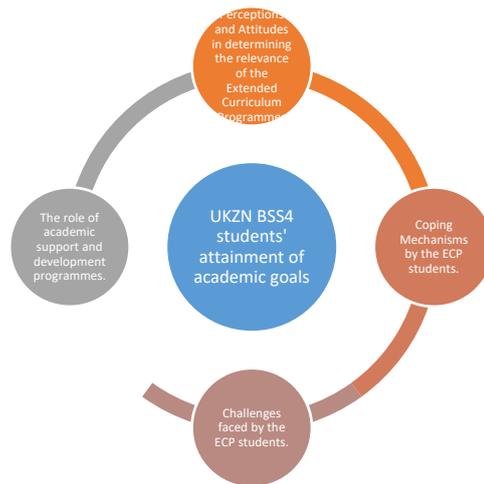
Figure 6. Themes to be Analysed Concerning the Central Idea (Author, 2020).

4.2.1 Students' Perceptions and Attitudes in Determining the Relevance of the Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECP's)

Generally, when students apply to study at the university, they apply for programmes that are of interest to them or have received guidance on. However, the participant's responses in this study suggest contrary to the norm. All the participants of this study expressed that the BSS4 programme was never their choice, and some indicated that they did not have prior knowledge of what the programme was about besides the fact that it was going to afford them a space in the university.

"I had no idea what it was in the beginning as I was only happy that there is a programme I qualify to do but as I heard more students talk about it so I perceived it to be the last resort if in all that you wanted to do you were rejected or didn't qualify. I perceived it as means of getting your foot on the door of better opportunities".

Most of the participants expressed that they learnt what the programme was about through friends and other students after they had accepted offers or registered for it. They further expressed that the perception they had of the programme was that it was a "bridging course" because that is how it was defined and explained to them. When asked how this made them feel about the BSS4 programme, the participants unanimously agreed that the programme is relevant and beneficial to many, and it must continue to provide opportunities and platforms for other students from similar backgrounds and circumstances as they are.

"If this programme was not operational, many students including me, would not have gotten a chance to study towards their career of choice. Therefore, it is very relevant."

Furthermore, the participants further commended the programme for providing support structures and mechanisms to assist students to deal with academic and social stress and pressure that is accompanied by the new university environment thus making their academic journey easier and more bearable. Despite playing a redress role in higher education, Scott (2016) further advance that the programmes have widening access, especially in historically advantaged universities, and fostered success for many graduates from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, many of whom would not otherwise have been accepted and enrolled at university.

However, even though the participants acknowledged the relevance of the programme but were contradictory, they posited that they were not entirely happy or eager to be part of the programme. These feelings were based on different reasons, mainly, the duration of the programme and intellectual inferiority. Most participants felt that their dreams will be delayed by an extra year and some who noted poor circumstances back at home felt as if the programme will delay their opportunities and consequently prolong the suffering back at home. On the other hand, other participants believed going through a "bridging course" means, you are "not clever enough" for the university thus the university is doing you a favour.

"I later understood this programme [BSS4] to be a bridging course and I didn't want to be part of it but hey [shrugging her shoulders] I had no choice because I wanted to study. It was better than seating at home".

"… and being in the bridging course… It's like I don't deserve to be here but the university iyangizama (doing me a favour or feeling sorry for me)".

"Bridging course ithathelakude and ekhaya kulanjiwe and nami izinto zami ziyadileya nje (…delays things while at home they are hungry, and my things are also delayed)".

Furthermore, there were also mixed initial perceptions about the extent of how manageable the programme will be for the participants. These perceptions were informed by the

preconceived ideas that participants associated with the "bridging course". For example, some participants thought the programme was going to be difficult because *"bridging courses is when you are made to go through strenuous tasks just to prove your worth"*. On the other side, other participants expressed that they expected the programme to be *"...less strenuous and easy because it is understood that students from the bridging course are not that intelligent thus the teachers [tutors and lecturers] go easy on students and the content will be easy"*. These seemed to be the two central bases for the different initial perceptions participants had of the BSS4 programme.

Nevertheless, the perceptions of the programme for most participants seemed to change when they started the programme. This was expressed when asked if their prior perceptions had changed towards the programme.

"Yes, it has changed in a major way. I now see that the programme serves as a bridging gap between the previously disadvantaged for instance pupils from deep rural areas who have no exposure to using the English language as means of communication, and those who have never set their eyes on the computer let alone to touch and operate it for basics such as typing an assignment and those that have been given a head start in means of better education and better opportunities".

"Yes, I now understand and feel like the programme is necessary to provide access for students who are hindered by their backgrounds [under-resourced schools and poor education], which are beyond their control to qualify for their career choices".

"The programme is more about equity than equality and of great help to us [BSS4 students]".

Even though there was a change in perception, the change almost did not happen overnight in all the participants. Most participants indicated that it took them at least the whole of the first semester and others almost a year to change their perceptions about the BSS4 programme. The change in perception was mainly attributed to the curriculum content and its relevance, which most participants realized when they started seeing improvement in their mainstream modules.

"My perceptions about the programme changed towards the end of the first semester when I realized my marks for Political Science had improved and I started having confidence in my writing and studying abilities [smiles]. It is then that I felt that the programme was needed, and it is not a waste of my time".

Lastly, the participants were asked to give their insight on how they think their prior and present perceptions have attributed to their academic success or failure. Most of the responses to this question revealed that most participants within the programme, even though venturing into the unknown, were not deterred from pursuing their dreams. However, their spirits, attitudes, and commitment were not as they would have been had they enrolled on the programmes of their choice. Consequently, they claimed to have regularly bunked classes or only attended for the sake of signing a register, only start to do assignments when the due date is near, did not consult, did not afford adequate time to study and did not participate in class engagements, discussions, and exercises.

On the other hand, other participants claim that by the virtue of perceiving the bridging course to be something difficult, they felt intimidated and anxious but that served as an impetus for some to apply themselves and fully commit to their studies. However, others claim that the intimidation and anxiety made them feel depressed and hopeless. They were always worried about failing and that somehow demotivated them to try, which was adversely reflected on their marks and academic progress. The participants unanimously agreed that over time, they have vastly improved due to the support and assurance they receive from the lecturers, administrators and everyone involved in the programme.

These findings are representative of a rather negative perception that most students' within the programme often display and its consequences. Frick et al. (2009) best describe this often-displayed attitude and perception as a response to a lack of justification why students are spending a considerable amount of time and effort on a course which is not their preference and does not see value in. The findings concur with the literature (Tessema, 2012; Frick et al. (200) in that, students seem to suggest that BSS4 falls short of their expectations and thus perceive the course as unrewarding and irrelevant.

4.2.2 Challenges Faced by the ECP Students.

The South African university environment presents diverse and somehow unique problems for students from under-resourced schools and communities, particularly, the students from the augmented programmes. The conducted interviews and group discussions revealed some of these commonly shared and intertwined challenges.

(a) Copying with the New Academic Demands

During the discussions and interviews, most participants expressed that one of their significant concerns and challenges was the difficulties they have experienced copying with the academic demands at the university. Most participants alluded to the fact that there is a vast difference between high school and university in terms of workload, teaching, academic expectations, and demands. Most participants felt as if high school did not sufficiently prepare them for university, hence they expressed that they experienced moments of being overwhelmed, demoralized, anxious and doubt of their intellectual abilities.

"...at high school, they were "given a space to breathe" but here [university] we are bombarded with assessments, assignments, seminars, tutorials and tests one after the other there is hardly time to catch a breath".

"My biggest challenge, when I first came here [University] was how we were being taught in class it was different, the workload was and is still too much, and referencing is still an issue for me and many of the people I know".

Furthermore, most participants expressed that, initially, they found it difficult to adjust to both the new social and academic environment. According to Johnson (2017), Ramphele (2012) and Van De Heyde and Siebrit (2019) all have found similar concerns from students in their studies. They have all argued that at the centre of these concerns exists the legacy of apartheid, which has subjected students from the poor and neglected schools to inferior education. This has left them underprepared and lacking the necessary to cope with both the new social and academic demands they encounter at the university level. This is a challenge that has been noted even by the Council for Higher Education (CHE, 2013) as one of the fundamental challenges that not only students need to overcome but institutions of higher

learning as well. According to Ramphele (2012), the urgency to resolve these challenges lies in the fact that if it is left unattended it manifests in the lack of mastery of study materials, poor examination coping mechanisms and deficiencies in understanding core study material.

(b) Poverty, Inequality and Educational Outcomes

The study found that most of its participants came from humble backgrounds characterized by a lack of basic services, proper schooling, and access to opportunities and information. A significant number of the participants expressed that they use their NSFAS funds to assist back at home with the day-to-day expenses. They further expressed that being around students who come from good families, who can afford beyond basic food, clothes, phones, and other amenities; somehow depresses them and taint their confidence.

"I worry about my sister back at home. I know how difficult life is at home. I always make sure that when I receive NSFAS I send at least half of it back home. It put me at the disadvantage here but what can I say [painfully shrugging her shoulders]".

"I have two new jeans that I normally wear, not that I don't have other trousers, but I feel embarrassed to wear them looking at what other students normally wear, they are just not ON! [Laughs and the rest of the participant's laugh]".

Even though some participants come from well of families but attested to the experiences shared by other participants because some have either assisted a student with food, clothes, sanitary towels, or cosmetics. This suggested that the poverty burden is shared amongst the participants irrespective of their socio-economic status. When asked about how these experiences affect their studies many argued that it has adverse effects.

"I know that some of our work to compensate the NSFAS money and I am selling Avon products and my friend sells cigarettes during Res League games. All these activities take time from our studies".

"Mina (Me), the constant worry about the situation at how and that puts pressure on me to perform so that I can go change the situation back at home but ngiyagqilazeka (burdens me) sometimes and together with schoolwork, it becomes too much for me to handle so sometimes

ngazuthi ngingalala (relax and sleep) and do nothing and I feel that way most of the time. I even cry in my room when my roommate is not around just ukwehlisa ulaka (to let off steam). So, sir ngiyathikamezeka emqondweni kugcine kungafundeki nakahle (…I get disturbed even mentally and that adversely affects my studies as well)".

The background of the participants was expected since the programme allows students who are predominately underprivileged (UKZN, 2018). Like most students from poor families, the participants in this study do allude to the fact that they too lack confidence and self-esteem, which is what Kopp (2014) and Pather & Chetty (2016) have also noted in their studies. They, together with Norodien-Fataar (2016) and Van der Berg (2008), argue that poor students' circumstances play a role in influencing how students learn and achieve desired university educational outcomes, which are also alluded to by findings in this study.

(c) Stigma

The participants expressed that the perceptions that the BBS4 is an easy programme and the fact that it caters for students with 27 points and below, mainly from rural and poor backgrounds, have resulted in discriminatory preconceptions against them.

"The admission point score for BSS4 programme is lesser when compared to other programmes and as a result, the students within this programme are looked down and disrespected".

In agreement with Pingani et al. (2016), the participants did allude to how stigmatization has affected them. The participants claim that they have felt that students from the mainstream treat them as less intelligent and not deserving to be at the university. They further claim that this has harmed how they socialize with other students outside the programme and as a result, they have formed tight-knit groups among themselves for socialization and support.

"Mainstream students think we are stupid. They [are] always making fun of us…"

"I feel like students from other programmes do not take us seriously and they do not respect us and that is why most of us befriend one another so that we can assist each other".

According to Pingani et al. (2016), what has perpetuated stigmatization that most students within the foundation programmes are subjected to is mainly because the mainstream students are well aware of their social background and thus treat these students as outcasts. Thus, Pingani et al. (2016) argue that this needs to be arrested because students enrolled in Augmenting Programme are most likely to succumb to stigmatization and labelling which could hamper their academic performance significantly.

(d) Language

All participants were second English language speakers and they all expressed that they did not have difficulties with understanding the content when delivered in English. However, a significant majority expressed that the issue they have is when they need to respond in English. The main difficulty was that they did not feel comfortable among their peers when they need to express themselves in English.

"I don't have a problem with being taught in English the problem is when I have to respond in English in front of the class [laughs]. That is so scary and it's something that even makes me not enjoy coming to class sometimes".

"I and some of my friends even come late to classes hoping that the lecturer will not ask us questions coz [because] even though we are allowed to respond in IsiZulu, but students look at you funny or sometimes even laugh at you when you can't express yourself in English".

The participants asserted that the use of both languages creates a comfortable learning environment for those who are not able to speak English and communication barriers are eliminated. However, the participants felt that there was a stigma attached to the use of IsiZulu at the university. They acknowledged that being allowed to use IsiZulu to articulate their responses allows them to express themselves with confidence. However, the participants expressed that they rather not engage in class discussions for fear of being laughed at if they use IsiZulu, which dents their confidence. Furthermore, the use of IsiZulu goes as far as verbal engagements in class but do not extend to written assessments and assignments where they continue to struggle in articulating themselves in English.

"Yazi (You know) sir sometimes angazi (I don't know) but I find it difficult to write assignments in English sometimes and the tests are worse ngoba umuntu usuke e-under pressure futhi enokutatazela (...because one is under pressure and panicking). I even wish we could use the mixture of the two [English and IsiZulu]".

These findings from the participants emphasize the need, as alluded to by Mbembe (2016) and Nyika (2015), to decolonial curriculum and create a new one that is centred on indigenous knowledge and indigenous languages as central to scholarly engagements. Both Mbembe (2016) and Nyika (2015) argue that this will put students on an equal footing because the status quo gives an advantage to students whose mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction in the university and prejudice those whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction. As suggested by the findings and supported by literature (Mbmbe, 2016; Nyika, 2015) the use of vernacular language improves engagement and thus success. Even though this is noble idea and supported these findings and literature, the practicality of it may prove tricky in other institutions who have multicultural diversity than those that are not as diversified.

(e) Technology Efficacy

One of the major issues most of the participants noted was the challenges they experienced in the use of computers to access online learning tools such as Moodle, conducting research and writing assignments. Many participants claimed to have never used the computer device before and the few that have used it before claimed it was not for learning purposes but to watch movies and play games. However, to address this deficiency the programme has offered a compulsory module on basic computer skills (Basic Computer Literacy), but participants claim to have faced challenges, nevertheless. One of the commonly cited premises for the experienced issues was that the computer module ran concurrently with other modules that might have demanded the participants to perform certain tasks not yet covered in the computer module.

In this regard, the participants claimed this compromised their submissions in terms of content, formatting, and time.

"...I take too long to write an assignment and even when I started well before time, I will end up submitting late because I take too long to type and do the appropriate research. Sometimes I had to wait for other students to finish their work so that they could assist me with mines. Some instructions were foreign to me, like how to justify my assignment and spacing. I struggled with those two things for a very long time".

Looking at the various attempts by institutions of higher learning to go "paperless", these challenges in technology efficacy pose a challenge. As the evidence suggests from the findings and confirmed by the Henson (2013) computer skills have become an utmost necessity for submissions, accessing student material, library, etc. Thus, this suggests that the success of students is to a certain extent, linked to their effective use of technology and Chima (2015) and Henson (2015) concur.

4.2.3 Coping Mechanisms by the ECP Students

(a) Alcohol and drugs

Winerman (2017) and Kim (2018) University students live complex lives in which they cannot cope with; therefore, exposed to feelings of tension and stress. According to Lazarus (1988), cited in Yazon, Ang-Manaig and Tesoro (2018:31) Kim students normally use different mechanisms of coping such as "planful problem solving, seeking social support, confrontive coping, distancing, self-control, escape-avoidance, accepting responsibility, and positive reappraisal". The findings from this study resemble all the aforementioned mechanisms. Some participants noted the use of alcohol and drugs as one of their coping mechanisms in dealing with the stresses and pressures they must endure at the university.

"Every Friday and Saturday I make sure that I go out to drink with friends just to relax my mind after a very stressful week. This works for me, even though sometimes I get sick after drinking but it is still something that I most prefer".

The findings of the study also revealed that for most of the participants, even though they do have other coping mechanisms, alcohol and drugs (marijuana) are commonly preferred and used extensively. Even though some of the participants continue to be dependent on drugs,

they alluded to a concern that it is slowly becoming addictive and taking time away from their studies, putting them more under pressure and stress.

"I wish I could stop drinking because it is now disturbing me from what I came here for (studying). You know even when I am trying to study and my friends call and say let's go out to grab a beer or two, I can't say no and it is never a beer or two but it becomes a whole weekend of drinking and sometimes even on weekdays"

These findings reflect and confirm the global trends in the abuse of drugs and alcohol amongst students in the institutions of higher learning. Trangenstein (2028) argues that 20-40% of students globally have admitted that they abuse alcohol and drugs. In addition, within the South African context where youth constitute a significant proportion of heavy drinkers, it is no surprise that most students in this study find solace in alcohol in coping with stress.

(b) Counselling

Some participants expressed that they have found consultations with the programme's counsellor to be one of the most assistive ways of dealing with academic and social pressure.
"The counsellor offers advice and allows us not only to talk about our academic issues but family issues and relationship issue as well. That makes it the most appropriate way of coping with my issues all at once".

Even though several participants claimed to have used the counsellor as their copping mechanism but many of them hardly attend the follow-up consultation meetings. Amongst the reasons cited were that participants thought they were now better and stigma from friends if one is seen going to counselling consistently. Even though participants in this study claimed to have used counselling, however, according to Kim (2018) students in South Africa this is not the culture like is the case in America with about 40% of students claim to have been to counselling. The fact that most of participants in this study hardly follow up on their subsequent consultations seems to reflect, amongst other things, passive culture to counselling as suggested by Kim (2018).

(c) Social Engagements and Networks

The findings of this study affirmed Singh's (2016) and Daza's (2016) assertions that good friends and social networks increases resilience and decrease stress experienced at university. Daza (2016) further argues that belonging to different groups, for example, based on age, sex, or social class, influences a student's social relationships and creates networks from which students can rely in their times of need or cope with stressful academic life. In this regard, this study further found that some of the participants affiliated with sport, church, and political organizations on campus use all the associated clubs and entities within and beyond the university premises to distress and cope with their academic and social stresses and pressures. During the group discussion, it was also expressed, as a caution that too much devotion to these clubs and entities has led to adverse academic performance.

"When I was doing my first year, I became too involved with my residence soccer team. I will go to training almost every day after classes, come back cook and I would feel tired and sleep. I could not do my schoolwork and even when I tried, I will fall asleep. I loved going to play soccer coz [because] it made me forget about my stress, but I realized it was affecting my studies".

"I quit being in an organizing committee in my church last year it kept me distracted from stress, but I realized it was taking too much of my time. We would have to organize and prepare for Tuesdays and Thursdays Bible studies, Sisters in Jesus meetings twice a month every Wednesday, Prayers every day from 12 mid-night and then getting to church two hours early on Sundays. It was too much! Even when I tried to limit my involvement it was still too much, so I ended up quitting giving myself time to deal with my studies".

The destruction that these social engagements may cause in students' academic performance may be attributed to over-commitment that is mainly encouraged by the escapism that these social engagements and networks offer. The study revealed that most of the participants have formed tight-knit groups that offer solace on academic and social-related issues. Most of the participants expressed that they alternatively consult with their trusted friends to share and ease their academic and social stresses and pressures. They find this to be therapeutic and to a certain extent useful and easy to do than consulting a counsellor. However, some participants

alluded to the cons of such a practice. They asserted, *"The risk is to have your issues all over campus"*, which further causes stress, conflict, and depression.

Most participants also claimed that being involved in a love relationship helps them cope with their academic and social stresses and pressures. However, they also alluded that; such relationships may become a source of depression and stress as well if they are laced with problems or unpleasant endings. Some participants even posited that with their partners, they have formed study groups and they assist each other financially to cope with relative stresses and pressures.

4.2.4 The Role of Academic, Social and Psychological Support and Development Programmes

(a) Lectures and Tutors

Most participants highlighted that there is a close relationship between students and the facilitators and a high level of access, which makes it easier for participants to adapt to new university teaching and learning approaches. The relationship and access cushion the overwhelming university experience and make it more adaptable. Another point the participants alluded to was that the commitment, empathy, enthusiasm, patience, and efforts displayed by lecturers and tutors have motivated them to improve their academic performance.

"The way the facilitators have shown enthusiasm and love for what they do when they teach us, motivated me to do better. I feel like I don't want to disappoint them and their efforts".

Most participants expressed that the personal approach to teaching and engagement in class assists them not only because they feel but also see their concerns and deficiencies being patiently and promptly attended to in class and during consultation times. These findings highlight the role of and the responsibility of lecturers, counsellors, and coordinators within the BSS4 programme or any other alike programme. These assertions by the participants in this study are similar to what Slabbert & Friedrich-Nel (2015) found in their study at CUT where students attributed their success to CUTs ECP staff who they perceived as role models, to stir their aspirations to succeed.

(b) Writing Place

The prevalent trend amongst the participants regarding the Writing Place was that they started utilizing the services of the Writing Place from the second year and beyond. Most of the participants who are in their second year and beyond in the BSS4 programme expressed that they did not utilize the Writing Place facilities when they were still doing their first year. This was tacitly affirmed by the fact that all first-year participants in the study have never used the Writing Place. However, the participants justified this trend by pointing out that they felt ELDV and ACLT were sufficient to help them navigate through the academic writing principles and philosophy for different genres of writing. However, in their second year when they were no longer enrolled on those modules, it was then that the Writing Place facilities became relevant.

"During my first year, I was told about the Writing Place and what it offers by I thought it was similar to what they were offering in the EDLV and ACLT, so I never bordered".

The participants unanimously agreed that even though they feel the Writing Place offers similar assistance as the ELDV and ACLT, the one-on-one consultations make it more personal and thus more effective. The participants also assert that the Writing Place offers more, including research writing. They also unanimously agreed that the Writing Place is a relevant and most required facility to enhance their writing within an academic environment.

"I think the Writing Place is one of the most important student support facilities that must forever be available to assist students coz (because) it is very relevant not only for BBS4 students but mainstream students as well".

(c) NSFAS Funding

The dire impact of lack of funding for students in the university cannot be overemphasized. Harding (2011) in his study found that lack of funding negatively affected students' academic performance, and physical and mental health. Considering the humble background of most participants within the programme, it came as no surprise that most participants were funded by NSFAS. Those who were not funded, were still on either waiting list or intend to apply for it the following year. The participants acknowledged and appreciated the positive social and academic impact because of the funding. They appreciated that NSFAS has assisted them by

providing access to the university for students, like themselves, who are hindered by financial difficulties beyond their control.

"NSFAS has allowed me to study at the university with fewer problems to think about. I can buy groceries, clothes, books and a laptop. You know the basics".

The participants further acknowledged that NSFAS has lessened the gap between the students coming from humble backgrounds and those from well of backgrounds. They assert, *"...coming to class full, wearing comfortable clothes and looking the same as other students, has given [them] dignity"*. Over and above NSFAS support students also alluded to the contribution that has been made by various organizations, clubs and societies within the university in offering them food parcels and vouchers. This confirms what Sabi et al. (2019) as commended about UKZN as being one of the many institutions that have complimented NSFAS by providing meal vouchers and food hampers since 2012.

(d) Conducive Accommodation

In this regard, the study found that the participants were divided on the quality and conduciveness of accommodation provided by the university. The other divide expressed that there were not happy with the dilapidated, noisy, unsafe, and untidy conditions of their residences. They found this to be unacceptable because they expected the university to provide an environment that is conducive to studying which they claim the university has failed to provide. According to Erasmus et al. (2019), for the same reasons eluded to by the participants in this study, in 2018, UKZN students protested about poor conditions at residences, under the hashtag #Kwazekwanzima, whereby students demanded humane conditions at residences, which leaked when it rained, had bed bugs and no hot water for showers.

"I and some friends have been going up and down to student housing to request a transfer to another better res [residence] because if we continue to stay here, we will fail!"
"...I have been looking for an NSFAS-approved commune that I will be moving into next semester. My residence is too noisy, and my clothes have been stolen so many times. If I continue staying there, I will fail coz you can't study and even when you report the [Residence Assistance] RA does nothing to assist."

According to these findings, some students are even considering off-campus residence as alternatives. However, according to Mudau (2017), off-campus accommodation may sound ideal but it has its associated problems such as high rentals, long distances from the university, inability to access library and internet services and more alarmingly, lack of security on their way to university as they risk being mugged by criminals. Thus, conducive accommodation must be provided.

However, the other group of participants was satisfied with their residences, and they found them conducive to studying. Even though they did concur with the dissenting group that there is noise, they claimed that it is not as distractive as they claim. Furthermore, they claimed that the shuttle services transporting students to campus are available for those who want to move away from the residence disturbances as an alternative. The conflicting perceptions might be attributed to preconceived expectations or standard differences between the participants.

Unanimously, the participants acknowledged different educational programmes that are normally conducted by RA's in different residences as supportive to their academic progress. According to the participants, the topics covered range from "assignment and test writing strategies", "time management", "and study tips", "financial literacy" to "coping with stress and anxiety pits". The programmes are a deliberate effort by the Department of Student Residence Affairs (DSRA) to enhance the profile of residences as an academic support structure beyond just accommodation.

(e) Health Facilities

The study noted that most participants who use campus health facilities, and clinics, were females. The participants asserted that the clinic on campus provided for most of their needs. However, the clinic is small and understaffed resulting in prolonged and delayed access to healthcare services. Consequently, they contend that this means they bunk classes to stand in long queues and sometimes they are not assisted.

"When you are going to get headache tablets you stand in the long lines and you end up not being served and you decide to go to res to sleep instead, losing the whole day of lectures".

4.3 Conclusion

The results presented under diverse but intertwined themes that emerge from the collected data revealed among other things that the participants' perceptions of the BSS4 programme, before the commencement of classes, were significantly negative. The negative perceptions, however, had been influenced by the lack of interest in the programme, ignorance, and misinformation about what the programme is about. The results further revealed that towards the course of the programme more participants, however, started to acknowledge the importance of the programme. This realization was based on access to proper information about the programme and support, which consequently resulted in noticeable academic improvement. However, even though their perceptions towards the programme had improved and consequently their academic progress but the participants further alluded to other challenges that continued to hinder their academic progress.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The main aim of this exploratory and descriptive qualitative study is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the university's academic support services offered to students on the Extended Curriculum Programme. This chapter presents the discussion, identified study limitations, and recommendations derived from the reviewed literature and study findings on the experiences and persistence of UKZN BSS4 students. The discussion that ensues is based on the five common themes that were extracted from the participant's responses in the previous chapter. These themes include students' perceptions and attitudes in determining the relevance of the Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs), challenges faced by the ECP students, coping mechanisms by the ECP students, and the role of academic support and development programmes. The dynamics of these themes will be further discussed concerning the theoretical framework underpinning this study and relevant reviewed literature.

5.2 Discussion

Students' Perceptions and Attitudes in determining the Relevance of the Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs)

Generally, the relevance of ECPs is highly dependent on the quality and proximity in which university supporting services and efforts are producing the intended goals and aspirations of the programme. In this regard, evidence suggests that the perceptions and attitudes of students who have gone through the programme appreciate and see the relevance and impact of the programme but equally expressed negative attitudes based on the duration of the programme and attached intellectual inferiority stigma. According to Tinto (2017), positive student perceptions and attitudes about the curriculum and programmes are derived from how students are taught, institutional quality, and their preferred learning style and values. On the contrary, if the institutions through their student support services fail to address the implicit

existence of stereotypes, and academic and socio-psychological challenges there is usually an adverse effect on their motivation and persistence (Perin et al, 2017).

This is also reflected by the evidence from this study. For instance, in the first semester, the findings suggest that lack of career guidance and misinformation form the premises for students' perceptions and attitudes about the BSS4 programme and have manifested feelings of intimidation, anxiousness, depression, and hopelessness. These manifestations, potentially, result in high levels of attrition rate and low retention rate within universities particularly augmented curriculum programmes during the first semester (Gallie,2005; Scott 2012). This concurs with Pather & Dorasamy (2016), Sajiene & Tamuliene, 2012; Norodien-Fataar (2016), and Van Zyl et al. (2012) assertions that lack of proper academic guidance and support have an adverse influence on how a student learns and achieve desired university educational outcomes. This is further confirmed by how students have despondently responded with bunking classes, not diligently committing to doing assignments, not allotting adequate time to studies and even participating in class. This behaviour signifies a lack of motivation, which diminishes persistence (Tinto, 2017; Graham et. al. 2013). According to Tinto (2017), persistence is the manifestation of motivation that can be diminished by university experience.

It will seem that it is upon these premises that ECPs in South Africa, including the UKZN BSS4, have prioritized epistemological access to create a tailor-made university experience for students within these programmes to operate and perform with high motivation, self-esteem, and confidence (Morrow, 2009). In this regard, the University of KwaZulu-Natal has over the years made use of lecturers who are former students of the BSS4 programme to provide living testimonies of success, dispel misconceptions, present themselves as role models, and provide inspiration to students, almost like what has been successfully demonstrated by Central University of Technology (CUT) (Slabbert and Friedrch-Nel, 2015). To a certain extent, this serves as a successful intervention; however, this intervention may be a process that takes a semester to yield intended results from which time other students may not feel motivated enough to persist and ultimately be saved. For instance, in this study students started appreciating the syllabus, institutional quality, and their preferred learning style and values later in the first semester or second semester. By this time, the initial

misguided perceptions, attitudes, effects of stigma, low sense of belonging and self-efficacy, socio-economic and psychological, and other challenges had already interfered with their studies and their academic performance and outcomes. The absence of efficient support services provided space for all types of issues to flourish unabated resulting in a diminished sense of motivation, persistency, sense of efficacy and belonging with adverse academic consequences.

Challenges Faced by the ECP Students

The evidence presented through the findings of this study indicates that challenges faced by ECP students are multifaceted, intricately intertwined, and commonly shared. These challenges could be loosely categorized into three; socio-economic, socio-psychological, and socio-political challenges (Scott, 2016). These challenges include pressure of new academic demands, poverty, inequality, stigma, language, and lack of technical efficiency. The ECPs students, including the UKZN BSS4 students, all have these common challenges. The universality of these challenges emanates from the fact that students catered for by ECPs share the same history of disadvantaged background and legacy of apartheid (Van De Heyde & Siebrits, 2019; Nudelman, 2015; Thobejane, 2013; Hofmeyr & Buckland, 1992). The history of disadvantaged backgrounds and apartheid is characterized by inequality (Pather, 2018), poverty (Gwacela, 2013) marginalization of African languages within higher education (Nyika, 2015; Mbembe 2016), and inferior education for Blacks (Borg, 2010). Consequently, students in the ECPs have suffered from under-preparedness (Ramphele (2012), psychosocial issues (Johnson, 2017) and alarmingly high attrition and retention rate (Adusei-Asente and Doh, 2016; Letseka and Maile, 2008). This has fundamentally undermined the primary motive behind the establishment of the ECPs which is to provide alternative access to university for students, who otherwise would not have had an opportunity to study at the university. Not only provide access to university but also equip themselves with tailor-made academic knowledge and skills required to meet desired academic outcomes (Wood and Lithauer, 2005).

Coping Mechanisms by the ECP student

Furthermore, evidence from this study suggests that students within the ECP's have over and above the university offered support services that are meant to assist them to cope, efficiently, and deal with university-induced stress and have employed their coping mechanisms. Mainly, students are subjected to academic work pressure, poor integration into the academic system, fear of failure, classroom interactions, and economic issues (Yazon et al. 2018; Matthew, 2017; Daud, 2018). As observed from evidence in this study, in coping with stress, most students have relied on social networks and escape avoidance. This is resembled by the prevalent coping mechanisms such as reliance on alcohol and drugs; over-commitment to sport, church, and political organizations; love relationships as a support structure and confiding to friends for advice and support. In support of the literature (Stebleton et al., 2014; Yazon et al., 2018) most students attest that they have developed, utilized, and maintained various social networks and effectively used them for the betterment of their own academic life.

Thus, these coping mechanisms have provided students with an ability to confront unfamiliar university culture and experience that has the potential to adversely affect their well-being and academic performance (Daza, 2016). However, Signh (2016) posit those social networks need not just exist in any form, but can only be of value if their frequency, quality, and composition are of appreciated standard. These sentiments reverberate in this study through evidence. For instance, most participants alluded to the fact that too much devotion to social networks such as clubs and entities, sourer friendships, and love relation problems may themselves be sources of depression and stress that consequently lead to adverse academic performance. This means that even though, social networks are commended for students to use as a coping mechanism with their stressful university environment, if they are not properly cultivated, they might themselves become sources of adversity.

Moreover, evidence suggests that the use of drugs and alcohol as coping mechanisms is the most common and popular amongst students, which is supported by (Deb, 2015; Kadhiravan & Kumar, 2012) findings. The use of alcohol and drugs by students is usually justified by students as tools to get rid of the stressor or to better the effects of stress (Deb, 2015). However, the use of drugs and alcohol has only provided a cosmetic solution and numbed the impact of psychological and emotional challenges they face but do not provide real resolve. Instead, drugs and alcohol have the potential of compounding stress issues. According to the

evidence gathered in this study, alcohol and drugs have become more than just an escape-avoidance copying mechanism to something that potentially adversely affects academic performance. For instance, students have reported how alcohol has become a distraction in their daily academic lives and has resembled addiction behaviour. The dangers associated with alcohol and drug use by students far exceed the gains in dealing with academic stress (Owusu & Essel, 2017).

Counselling remains the best and safest option in dealing with the most stress and psychological impediments that students encounter and evidence from this study concur. However, even though most participants highlighted that counselling has been the most assistive avenue in dealing with their university environment-induced stress, they also indicated that they do not honour their follow-up sessions. This is worrisome and contrary to international trends as presented through international studies (Winerman, 2017; Bean & Eaton, 200; Deb et al. 2015) which suggests a different attitude and culture towards seeking and following up on counselling for university and college students in other countries. For instance, Winerman (2017) asserts that about 45% of college and university students went for counselling for stress-related issues according to the American Psychological Association in America. This may be attributed to the social and cultural background but as well as the lack of university awareness campaigns on the detriments of stress and psychological issues and the usefulness of counselling in dealing with them. The difference in behaviour between international and local students points to a fundamental need within South African universities to focus on strategies and mechanisms that encourage and develop a culture among South African students to seek counselling to deal with stress and psychological issues. This will reduce reliance on detrimental mechanisms such as alcohol and drug abuse.

The Role of Academic, Social, and Psychological Support and Development Programmes

The aforesaid challenges generally manifest in a sundry of adverse consequences for students and this regard, most ECPs have especially adopted and have been provided with several academic, social, and psychological student support initiatives from which the impact of these challenges have cushioned ECP students and enhance their academic performance (Sajienė and Tamulienė, 2012). This grand focus is derived from the insight that ECP students are a vulnerable cohort in need of special attention. For instance, most ECPs provide first-year core modules meant to equip the students with a solid foundation from which their entire student careers will be premised. Over and above that, there are designated counsellors

to attend to the psychosocial needs of the students. There are life skills classes provided to constantly guide the transition and self-efficiency of students into the university environment. There are tutoring programmes that students are assigned to and in the UKZN BSS4 programme; there are even extra augmented classes for compulsory modules from the mainstream. There are also computer classes in appreciation of the technological inefficiencies based on the poor and disadvantaged background that many of the ECP students come from (UKZN, 2017). This focused attention is made efficiently possible by the fact that most ECPs enrol limited and manageable numbers of students in a particular year.

Even though all these strategies, including prioritizing these students for NSFAS funding, project a certain level of success, due to the nature of issues and challenges those students face; attrition rate, dropout, and prolonged stay at the university have been prevalent in most institutions across the country including in the ECPs (Garraway & Bozalek, 2019). However, comparatively speaking, students from the ECPs have been less affected by these challenges than mainstream students. This is mainly because the support services provided are tailor-made for the type of students that the ECPs cater for. For instance, there are no extra augmented classes, no designated psychologist, and no life skills classes for mainstream students. Koris et al. (2015) argue in support of the tailor-made student support services, positing that academic support should meet the students' needs and wants, and where possible, should constantly update academic support policies. Over and above, the literature argues that mere tailor-made support will amount to nothing if, firstly, academic support professionals lack the understanding of individual goals in support-seeking and thus fail to outline the basic needs and functions of support-seeking interactions with students (Koris et al., 2015). Secondly, if students, mainly those who need the help and support the most, do not voluntary seek it as observed by Vanderberg (2013).

In this regard, evidence shows a strong indication that the change of attitude of lecturers, tutors, and administrators in how they relate to students has the potential to redefine the university experience and make it manageable for students. The role of lecturers, tutors, and administrators goes beyond the class but also assists in enhancing self-esteem, and confidence, and eradicating stigma (Koris et al., 2015). This is necessary for equitable and effective academic participation and success and the relevance of the programme. Also, there is a need not only to design tailor-made support services for students within the ECPs and develop relationships between students and the facilitators for a high level of access but also a fundamental need to encourage students to seek student service support, consult with

facilitators and administrators freely, without fear. Moreover, even though classroom and university support system relations that foster equity for ECP students are highlighted and emphasized, student-university-home relations are not given the attention they deserve. Most ECPs hardly have initiatives that seek to strengthen the ties between the students and their homes so they could be afforded necessary support. This seems to be the case even though weak support at home is posited to hold back students from deprived backgrounds.

Drawing from Tinto (2017) and Graham et al. (2013), all these efforts need to enhance the overall university experience that promotes the intertwined relationship between the sense of belonging and self-efficacy for students. For example, the evidence from the study suggests that students started improving their academic performance when they started being self-efficient, motivated by their enhanced sense of belonging, because of guidance and support from the lecturers, administrators, and the programme's counsellor redefining the students' interaction with the programme and the university environment. Considering that most ECPs cater to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, epitomized by inequality, poverty, and inferior education; there is a need to reinforce efforts to enhance a strong sense of belonging and self-efficacy so that students will engage more readily in a task, expend more effort, and persist longer in the completion of that task and attainment of goals (Graham et al, 2013; Tinto, 2017).

Tinto (2017) argues that among other things if the effects of bad past socio-economic, academic, and political experiences are not addressed students are likely to have a weak self-efficacy that may lead to poor academic performance (Tinto, 2017; Stebleton et al., 2014). This supports Firfirey & Carolissen, (2010), Dweck (2002) and Exner (2003) who had previously argued that students who have a low sense of belonging develop withdrawal syndrome, which ultimately affects their self-efficacy, motivation, and willingness to persist. This diminished sense of self-efficacy is also derived from the diminished sense of belonging. Therefore, it is paramount that student support services comprehensively deal with not only academic and psychological challenges but also financial, accommodation and health issues because all these aspects of university life determine how students relate to other students and the university environment at large. It determines their sense of belonging which according to Tinto (2017) has consequences of enhancing self-efficacy, motivation, and willingness to engage others in ways that further promote persistence. Furthermore, emphasises must be placed on the quality of student support services and initiatives that seek to support the

enhancement of the sense of belonging and self-efficacy as well as reinforcement and maintenance of such services throughout students' university careers (Dweck, 2002).

5.3 Conclusion

The main aim of this exploratory and descriptive qualitative study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the university's academic support services offered to students on the Extended Curriculum Programme. Therefore, the study interrogated how university academic support strategies, initiatives, mechanisms, and services assisted ECP students in attaining their academic goals. In this regard, three objectives of the study were developed, namely; (a) To explore (mis) perceptions and persistence of students towards UKZN BSS4's academic, social, and psychological support services; (b) To determine the scope of academic, social, and psychological challenges faced by students within the UKZN BSS4 Extended Curriculum Programme on realizing their academic goals; and (c) To explore the role of Extended Curriculum Programme in facilitating academic equity. Using qualitative methods of data collection, several themes emerged which were thematically analysed. This study found that misperceptions about the BSS4 emanated from the lack of proper academic guidance and misinformation. This study also found that challenges faced by ECP students are multifaceted, intricately intertwined, and commonly shared. Even though responsive measures in a form of several university academic support strategies, initiatives, mechanisms, and services are reasonably efficient but there is still a need to improve and maintain their quality to more appreciated standards. This is fundamental because the failure of student support services to address the implicit existence of stereotypes and academic and socio-psychological challenges have the potential of diminishing the sense of belonging, motivation, persistency, and self-efficacy with adverse academic consequences. The evaluation of this research's objectives shows that the research objectives have been achieved.

5.4 Recommendations

From the research findings, the researcher accordingly makes the following recommendations:

1. Constant and consistent update of academic, social, and psychological student support policies to develop comprehensive models and strategies that are cognisant of the intricate nature of the challenges students face and that offer practical mitigations.

2. The consistent and persistent implementation of the UKZN Language policy implementation. This needs to be emphasised and cultivated in the learning environment especially in the mainstream to allow all the students to express themselves freely in speech and writing using the language that they are comfortable with. If the language policy is not equally embraced and implemented across the disciplines, it will do more harm than good to the ECP students in their mainstream courses.

3. Design support programmes that will strengthen the student-university-home relations to supplement all other university support initiatives. This will allow parents, guardians, and families an opportunity and responsibility to be practically involved in providing necessary support to students.

4. The early registration process for BSS4 students will allow students to commence their academic calendar a month before mainstream classes commence. During this period, a month-long orientation programme involving different stakeholders such as SRC, UKZN Sport, Residence Affairs, Writing Place, Mentorship Programme, and others must be affected to properly integrate students academically, socially, and psychologically.

5. Moreover, basic computer classes must be part of the proposed orientation process in appreciation of the students' disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, to equip them with the necessary skills and put them on an equal footing with the mainstream students when the mainstream classes commence.

6. Effectively encourage and acknowledge the significant role played by lecturers, tutors, and administrators in redefining the university experience and making it manageable for students thus encouraging an enhanced sense of belonging. This will maintain the system that will disseminate positive and impactful stories to change the narrative about the programme and inspire students to achieve their educational goals. Furthermore, this will inspire positive perceptions associated with positive behaviours and reduce negative behavioural practices such as bunking classes, poor attendance, lack of participation, not consulting and not making use of the available amenities for maximum benefit.

7. Marketing of the BSS4 needs to be improved to challenge negative perceptions and project a positive image. This could be affected through awareness campaigns and effective information dissemination that will promote positive identity and association with the programme. This will eliminate the negative perceptions identified in the study such as being perceived as merely a bridging course or the last resort.

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