Factors that affect Accounting Students' Academic Success at Undergraduate level at Durban University of Technology

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DECLARATION

I, Tanya Felicia Thompson, state that the dissertation accurately represents my own contribution, and all relevant materials accessed during this study have been acknowledged in the text and in a reference list. In addition, this work has not been submitted for examination or degree at another University or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Numerous international and national studies have been conducted that have concentrated on factors that influenced and impacted on student success, where the specific focus was on undergraduate student success in academic programmes. A lack of research in this area had been highlighted both nationally and locally, especially with KwaZulu-Natal, and this gap in such literature justified further research in the province. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence and impact of various factors on students' undergraduate studies at a university of technology. The student success model that was created for this study was based on Bronferbrenner's bio-ecological model which recognised multiple systems that influence student success. In this study, these systems are referred to as student success factors, namely the first-year student experience programme, the tutor programme, the student success programme, family support, financial support, and institutional support.

The research was positioned in the Positivist Paradigm and consisted of an investigative study. The sample size was a minimum of 30 respondents. The study used a single method approach. The primary data collection tool was a survey questionnaire. The data were collected using an online questionnaire, and this being a quantitative study, the data collected were statistically analysed using both descriptive and correlation methods. The target population consisted of post-graduate students who had completed their three-year undergraduate academic programmes in the field of accounting in the Accounting and Informatics faculty at the Ritson Road campus of the Durban University of Technology.

As indicated in the results, a combined 71.9% correlation among the postgraduate students relating to factors in the questionnaire about specific programmes, namely first-year student experience, tutor, and student success that retrospectively, positively impacted and influenced their undergraduate studies. The research also found that students' reactions to various support factors varied. From the results, of the list of key student success factors, namely financial, institutional and family, more than 80 percent agreed that family support contributed to their student success, while more than half of the participants felt that support from the institution was a significant factor in their student success. It can be concluded that all factors investigated in the study, barring the financial factor, positively influenced and impacted these students' success at undergraduate level.

Results emanating from this research study are intended to be helpful to academics lecturing on the undergraduate level. The findings of this research would also assist in the development of programmes or initiatives by institutions of higher learning to enable greater academic success with undergraduate students.

Key Words: student success model, student success factors, undergraduate success, Durban University of Technology, Higher Education

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Student success is academic success, once students have participated in educationally meaningful activities, experienced fulfilment, acquired knowledge, developed skills, cultivated abilities and perseverance, achieved educational goals, and attained success after graduation (York, Gibson & Rankin, 2015). This success inculcates many achievements and skills and as such, several factors contribute to student success (Olivier & Burton, 2020). Students' success has been studied in relation to factors such as, *inter alia*, transition, student engagement, student satisfaction, and graduate employment (Coates & Matthews, 2018); these factors have been found to be not specific to any one country (Erasmus & Fourie, 2018).

1.2 Background to the Study

The subject of student retention and success is of concern on a global scale, as student populations have diversified and become less traditional, and students are, in general, not as prepared for higher education as they once were (Visser & Van Zyl, 2013). For decades there has been a major concern regarding students in higher education in that they are not completing their studies, and consequently, students now have access to a wider range of support services (Kimbark, Peters & Richardson, 2017). In South Africa, over the last forty years, access and success to higher education have been improved through several innovative and educationally sound interventions. In the sphere of academic development, according to Scott (2018), student support initiatives such as tutoring and personal counselling have been the primary means of achieving this.

A major theory that is relevant to this study is Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, as it explains how a person's life is affected by the environment/s within which that person lives. Even though Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is founded on children, the same would apply to adults, as Motsabi, Diale and Van Zyl (2020b) have used this theory in their studies on the effect of different environments on students at higher education institutions. The environment/s include the student, the family, the community, and the tertiary institutions.

Another theory that has impact is Tinto's 1993 theory of student integration. A positive social integration of students improves their commitment to the institution at which they have enrolled, and the drop-out rates of students will be minimised in the long run (Fincham, Rózemberczki, Kovanović, Joksimović, Jovanović & Gašević, 2021). There are many first-year student-level programmes that have been implemented by tertiary institutions around the world with the purpose of assisting these students to adapt to higher education. Bunney (2017) notes that many students who first enter tertiary education lack the necessary study methods, skills or attitudes to succeed, and as such, orientation programmes and transition activities for first-year students have been used to help students understand the expectations and systems of their institution of higher learning (Hays & Sharp, 2018). In their opinion in this regard, Motsabi, Diale and Van Zyl (2020a) state that these programmes should furnish students with skills, knowledge and values to help them with their studies.

Other programmes, such as the tutoring programme and various student success-related programmes, have been designed, developed and implemented by higher education institutions with the intention of assisting with student performance and success (Faroa, 2017, Morillas & Garrido, 2014). Tutor programmes are generally aimed at first-year students (CPUT, 2021b, Motsabi *et al.*, 2020a, SU, 2021), but other levels also have access to such programmes (Nyawo, 2021, UFS, 2021a). Participation in student success programmes has certainly helped students to persevere and engage more in their studies so that they have been able to achieve academic success (Faroa, 2017, Kimbark *et al.*, 2017, Nyar & Meyers, 2018).

According to Agherdien, Mey and Poisat (2018), Hadi and Muhammad (2019), and Tomul and Polat (2013), studies have indicated that parents' educational background, proper guidance, family income and self-motivation affect students' academic performance. Family support is crucial to student success, whether it be emotional, verbal, and/or financial support (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020a, Pather, Norodien-Fataar, Cupido & Mkonto, 2017, Zuma, 2020). The inability to afford to pay for tertiary education while at the institution and lack of financial assistance puts a strain on these students as they find it difficult to focus on their studies, thus hampering and probably prolonging their progress and affecting their student success (Lim, Heckman, Letkiewicz & Montalto, 2015, Long, 2008, Mngomezulu, Dhunpath & Munro, 2017, Widener, 2017, Young, 2016).

The justification for conducting this study at Durban University of Technology is that the researcher was a lecturer at that institution for many years, and for this reason, other universities

within KwaZulu-Natal were excluded from the study. The researcher lectured in Financial Accounting modules in the academic programmes within the faculty, specifically at senior level, hence the focus on the undergraduate programmes, where Financial Accounting was a major subject.

1.3 Problem Statement

Worldwide, student success factors at the tertiary level of study have been debated upon and discussed at length. Literature indicates that extensive studies have been undertaken on factors affecting success at undergraduate level (Thomas & Maree, 2021, Van Rooij, Jansen & Van de Grift, 2018). However, these studies have focused primarily on the first-year level of study and a gap exists in research relating to the later years of study (De Villiers & Werner, 2016, Jevons & Lindsay, 2018, Yorke, 2016). There is little research from a student postgraduate perspective on factors affecting these students' success at undergraduate level, and this study will close this gap. This study will aid academic staff in further improving student success.

1.4 The Purpose and Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact and influence of specific factors on students' undergraduate studies, where these students had completed their three-year undergraduate academic programmes in the field of accounting in the Accounting and Informatics faculty of the Ritson Road Campus located on the Durban campus of the Durban University of Technology.

1.4.2 Objectives of the Study

This study's objectives were as follows:

(1) To obtain postgraduate students' retrospective response to specific factors that impacted on their undergraduate success; and
(2) To establish the effect of certain factors on student academic success at undergraduate level.

1.5 Research Questions

This study strove to find answers to the following research questions, namely:

(1) “What impact did particular factors have on students’ undergraduate academic success?”; and
(2) “What effect did specific factors have on students’ undergraduate academic success?”

1.6 Significance of the Study

Both nationally and internationally, student success at undergraduate levels is researched well. As mentioned in the problem statement earlier in the chapter, while many studies have examined factors that influence student success, they have generally concentrated on first-year university level. There is also very little material available in the literature that focuses on particular elements that influence student success. This research looks at specific factors that affect student success from a different perspective, that of a postgraduate perspective. Until now, no study of this nature analysing factors at the Durban University of Technology has been undertaken. Results emanating from this study are intended to help to staff who lecture students at undergraduate level so that they are advised of the impact and influence of both academic and non-academic factors on student success.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The research was centred on a single Higher Education Institution in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, and therefore, these results would possibly not be applied to other institutions of Higher Education. In addition, to include other institutions of Higher Education would make the study too longitudinal.

1.8 Assumptions

Assumptions provide a basis for conducting research that would be meaningless without them (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The first assumption is that the inclusion criteria of the target group were suitable in that all participants taking part in the research have completed an undergraduate qualification in the accounting field in the Durban University of Technology’s Accounting and Informatics faculty. The second assumption is that respondents participating in this research study will not be biased. The third and final assumption is that not all participants will answer all the questions posed to them in the questionnaire, while some may not answer the questions at all.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was that this survey was administered at a single institution of Higher Education in KwaZulu-Natal, namely the Durban University of Technology. The second limitation was that there was only one (1) site of Durban University of Technology, that of the Ritson Road campus, which is in Durban. The third limitation was that the study would not include dropouts in undergraduate qualifications from this specific institution, where a major module, that of Financial Accounting, was part of the curriculum. A fourth limitation was that only students who had completed a national diploma/undergraduate qualification with Financial Accounting as a major subject at the Durban University of Technology, and who were currently enrolled for postgraduate accounting qualifications at Durban University of Technology, were allowed to take part in the study. A fifth limitation was that because of the use of the Central Limit Theorem, the results of the study could not be generalised. A sixth limitation was that the institution at which the study was conducted was one where accommodation was offered to students, and correspondence institutions were excluded from the study. The seventh and final limitation was that undergraduate students from other national universities of technology where Financial Accounting is a major subject were not included in the research.

1.10 Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter One: Introduction: This chapter provided a comprehensive synopsis of the study which included a discussion on the background, purpose and objectives, research questions, and overall methodology of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: This chapter reviewed literature relevant to factors that affect student academic success at the undergraduate level from both national and international perspectives.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology: This chapter focused on the research methodology used in the study, namely the research design and the data collection, as well as the data analysis method.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis: This chapter illustrated the analysis of the data which had been collected, and how this data related to the study's research objectives.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations: This chapter presented the conclusions reached from the analysis of the data and provided recommendations that could be used as a result of this study, as well as suggestions for further research.

1.11 Chapter Summary

In order to identify the research gap, this chapter highlighted the theories and empirical findings that were related to factors that impacted and influenced student success. The background of this study, its purpose, and its objectives, as well as its research questions, were explained. A detailed overview of the research methodology was given, and an outline of the dissertation was explained.

The following chapter, Chapter Two, will present the findings of other researchers who contributed to the literature relating to factors that affected student academic success at the undergraduate level both internationally and specifically, from a South African viewpoint.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Student retention and achievement are dependent on a strong sense of connection and loyalty to the institution (Moore, Sanders & Higham, 2013), while students who remain at university are more likely to have a better grasp of the university system as well as a positive relationship with their peers, and the opportunity to interact with tutors regularly and meaningfully (Richardson & Radloff, 2014). However, Zewotir, North & Murray (2011) state that the attitude of a student is the determining factor of academic success.

2.2 Theoretical Literature

Higher Education student success is a multifaceted and highly complex system to attempt to describe (José Sá, 2020). Mbuva (2011) notes that the success of a student occurs when the student registers at a tertiary institution and can finish the study programme through a variety of intrinsic motivation, mentoring and counselling interventions that are arranged by tertiary institutions. Historically, according to Jackson & Bridgstock (2018), student success in Higher Education has been linked to academic success, which is described as the attainment of aspired learning results (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2018, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh & Whitt, 2011).

The elements embodied in the definition of student success or attainment are quantifiable barometers and include *inter alia* Higher Education enrolment rates, the period within which a student finishes an academic programme as well as obtaining the related qualification (José Sá, 2020, Nyström, Jackson & Karlsson, 2019). The measurement of tertiary institutions' performance is student success (Alyahyan & Düştegör, 2020), while funding for tertiary institutions hinges on the students' academic achievement (Van der Zanden, Denessen & Cillessen, 2018).

The measurement of student success or academic performance is complicated and an almost futile exercise in that there are no commonly accepted definitions of the description and measurement thereof among tertiary institutions on the national and the global front (Letseka, Cosser, Breier & Visser, 2010). Most academic success has been measured as academic achievement (Alyahyan & Düştegör, 2020). As success of students is a priority of Higher Education Institutions, these institutions need to validate themselves continuously with regard

to this success, as education is a competitive environment (José Sá, 2020). The propagation of studies dealing with recognising concepts that encourage academic success is possibly linked to the total assessment effort and the growing burden for institutions to verify the learning and development of students (York *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, the sought-after results and measurement of tertiary institutions has been widely deliberated upon, and as such, it is difficult to come up with a consistent explanation of being successful (Schreiner, 2013, Van der Zanden *et al.*, 2018).

Both student retention and graduation rates have been key benchmarks or yardsticks to measure college and university progress and success, with student engagement and experiences having a positive impact (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie & Gonyea, 2008). Success and achievement are dependent on engagement that is positive in nature (De Carolis, D'Errico, Paciello & Palestra, 2018). Student attainment is a global concern as student populace have developed in such a way that they are more heterogeneous and in essence non-traditional and are by and large not ready for tertiary studies (Visser & Van Zyl, 2013).

Studies on student success where the attention has been on factors such as student experience, student engagement and transition were conducted in the United States of America, China and the United Kingdom, as well as the Netherlands (Coates & Matthews, 2018). Therefore, researchers and policymakers focus on a specific area such as educational achievement (Richardson, Abraham & Bond, 2012), or graduation skills development (Loes, Salisbury & Pascarella, 2015). Reports prepared by Higher Education institutions that include student grades, retention and qualification completion show student success (Picton, Kahu & Nelson, 2018), and it is not marked just by graduating from academic programmes (Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014).

In South Africa, according to Scott (2018), the successful achievement of tertiary studies is steered by graduates. The rate of success is referred to as the sum of the modules or subjects that a student has passed in a specific academic year based on the enrolment of those modules or subjects. The calculation of the success rate is made up of the division of the sum of the Full-Time Equivalent degree credits by the Full-Time Equivalent enrolment (CHE, 2017). As indicated by the Council of Higher Education, these calculations for academic programmes and/or institutions can be determined on a weighted average success rates basis (CHE, 2017).

A conceptual framework on student engagement exists, according to Kahu (2013), where student and institutional indicators of behaviour and cognition impact on this. Student involvement and learning can be depicted as all activities that students engage in academically, to pass (Biggs & Tang, 2011). The results of a South African study conducted by Gerber, Mans-Kemp & Schlechter (2013), with a focus on the engagement of students with customary academic tasks such as attending lectures and submitting homework, revealed that to achieve success, students were required to engage with study material, showing that with engagement with study material, there was an improvement in the performance of final summative assessments.

More so, it is stated by Gerber *et al.* (2013), the engagement by students is illustrated by their being prepared to take part in academic activities which form part of modules or subjects. Similarly, Biggs & Tang (2011) note that the more students engage with study material, the higher the probability of students passing a module or subject; and if students are more engaged in modules or subjects, the possibility of being successful is increased. To add to this, Kuh (2008) states that a combination of time and effort spent on academic and other tasks by a student contribute to both experience and outcomes, resulting in academic achievement.

First-Year engagement and achievement were affected by institutional conditions as well as the interaction between students and staff where student behaviour was concerned (De Villiers & Werner, 2016). In addition, it is more likely that students who feel attached to their academic journey will succeed (Baker & Robnett, 2012), and university management should be aware of what facets of both in-house outlays, financial and otherwise, as well as approaches, affect student success rates (Millea, Wills, Elder & Molina, 2018).

The latest cohorts from the Council on Higher Education in South Africa, in Table 2.1 below, illustrate the gradual throughput comparison of the 2011 to 2013 cohorts of students who completed their respective qualifications. The regulation periods consist of a minimum time plus two additional years for three- and four-year qualifications as well as the weighted average national rate, but exclude the University of South Africa, as it is a distance learning institution (DHET, 2017). Students, according to Young (2016), also view completing a tertiary qualification in the minimum period as important.

Table 2.1: 2011-2013: Cohorts by Qualification Types

Qualification	2011 Cohort			2012 Cohort			2013 Cohort		
	Minimum Time	Minimum Time +1	Minimum Time +2	Minimum time	Minimum Time +1	Minimum Time +2	Minimum time	Minimum Time +1	Minimum Time +2
Diploma	23%	40%	50%	23%	40%	50%	23%	41%	50%
3-Year degree	29%	47%	55%	29%	47%	55%	30%	49%	56%
4-Year degree	44%	59%	65%	46%	60%	65%	46%	61%	66%
Overall	30%	48%	56%	31%	48%	55%	32%	49%	57%

Source: Council on Higher Education (2017)

Fifty percent of each year's Diploma cohort completed in five (5) years, while fewer than twenty-five percent completed in the minimum time.

The student success model used in this study was adapted from the Bio-Ecological Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979), as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

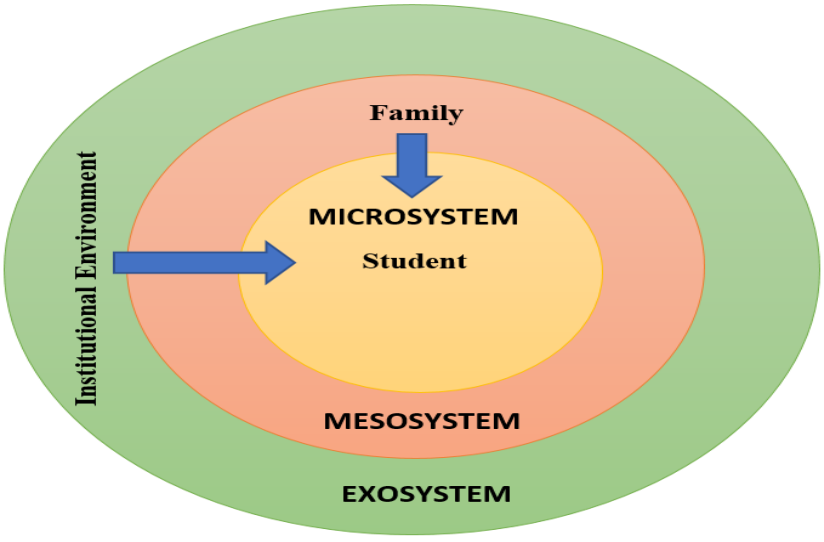


Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Theory

Source: Adapted from Lewthwaite (2006), Motsabi et al. (2020a)

The revised theory in Figure 2.1 above is based on the Bio-ecological Theory expounded by Bronfenbrenner (1979), where most of the factors in the study are depicted in the theory and are therefore crucial to the study, in that these factors fall under an umbrella of social support,

which includes support from family, community, Higher Education institutions and finance. As explained by Motsabi *et al.* (2020b), the Microsystem includes the student's strengths which would certainly influence his/her success, while the Mesosystem includes both the family and the community from which the student comes, with the Exosystem, which involves institutions of Higher Learning, including lecturers and support staff, peers and senior students.

Figure 2.2 below illustrates the student success model on which this research study was based.

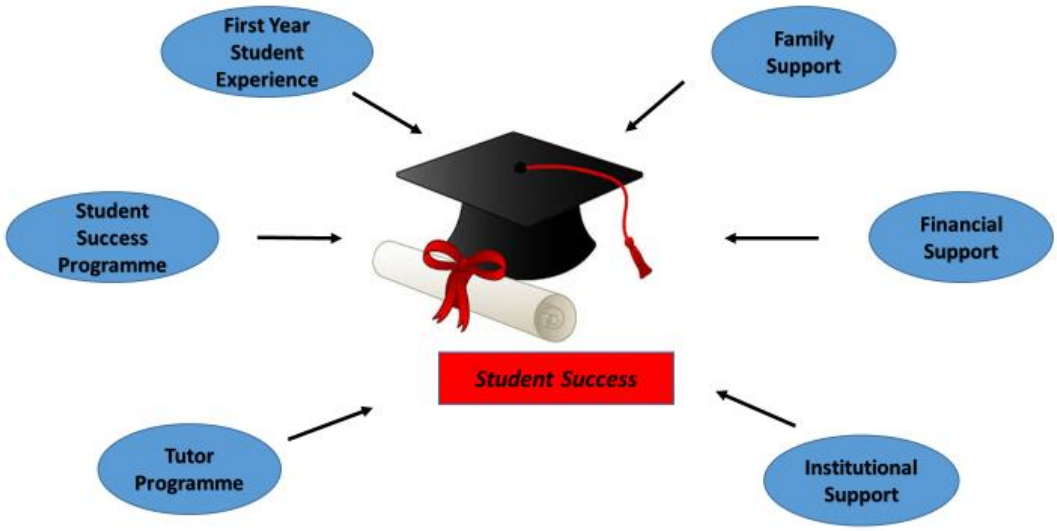


Figure 2.2: Student Success Model

(Source: Self-generated)

The self-generated Student Success model, Figure 2.2, depicts the six factors that have been selected for this study in order to determine how they impact on student success. These factors are deemed to contribute to student success. The decision to choose only six factors, namely first-year student experience, the student success programme, the tutor programme, institutional support, financial support and family support was based on the fact that the inclusion of any other factors such as lecturer qualification and experience, language of instruction and, student self-efficacy would have made the study too lengthy.

2.3 Empirical Literature

All aspects of Higher Education institutions are concerned with assisting students to complete their qualifications (Tight, 2019), while Le Roux (2018) also noted that procrastination, known better as dilly-dallying, is viewed as a problem that has an impact on students' academic performance, so coaching programmes have proved effective for the academic performance of first-year students, and are slowly being regarded as a way to improve the academic performance, development and welfare of students. Student attrition at first-year tertiary level has been extensively investigated; however, a gap in subsequent levels is evident (Jevons & Lindsay, 2018). There are, according to Hays & Sharp (2018), numerous examples of undergraduate orientation programmes and transition activities for first-year students that can be used to assist students to grasp both the expectations and the systems of Higher Education.

Motsabi *et al.* (2020a), who are of the opinion that an orientation programme at the beginning of the academic year should equip students with values, skills and knowledge that will assist with their studies and provide them with the necessary armour to tackle obstacles and challenges they may encounter at the university, endorse this.

Bunney (2017) stated that a considerable number of students who start tertiary education do not possess the necessary study methods, skills and attitudes to achieve academic success; and it has been determined through international research that student identity, motivation and engagement are firmly driven by the extent to which they feel they part of the class, programme and institution (Matheson & Sutcliffe, 2018). In addition, Hadi & Muhammad (2019) noted that it was determined in studies that the educational background of parents, self-motivation, family income, age, strong culture, and proper guidance were critical factors that affected academic performance.

The link or correlation between student engagement and achievement has been well documented in the United States of America, and a minimal number of studies have been conducted in South Africa to serve as examples (Wawrzynski, Heck & Remley, 2012). Over the last four decades, according to Scott (2018), many scholastic interventions have been exercised in South Africa to promote student access and student success, and a few of these interventions include tutorial support. Van Zyl (2013) posits that in the last ten years, student success, especially the passage from secondary school to university, has become a topic of growing critical academic examination in South Africa.

Sondlo (2016) is of the view that on the African continent, shoddy preparation for tertiary study; student lack of commitment; academic experience that has proved to be disappointing; institutions unsuccessfully matching students with academic programmes; the absence of social blending; and financial concerns, as well as personal situations, are some of the factors that add to the polarisation of students in Higher Education. According to Fincham *et al.* (2021), Tinto's 1993 theory of student integration was, and still is, of great importance for the tertiary education sector in that the positive social integration of students improves their commitment to the institution and will in the long run minimise the drop-out rates of students. Coates & McCormick (2014) posit that a considerable amount of research has been undertaken to identify the reasons for students dropping out from Higher Education. Moreover, Coates & McCormick (2014) postulate a discord between the expectation and experience of students; academic programmes being unsuitable; limited choices on the combination of teaching, learning and assessment styles; the preparedness of students; finances; familial responsibilities; and academic and social aid from the university community at large.

Agherdien *et al.* (2018), as well as Tomul & Polat (2013), elucidate that a family's socioeconomic position includes the educational standing of the parents, the educational background of the student, the medium of language, ethnic traits,; and finances, which are regarded as crucial elements in the academic success of a student. Furthermore, Agherdien *et al.* (2018) discovered that formerly deprived and underprivileged students were given a substandard basic education, which caused these students to be ill-prepared for tertiary education.

In contrast, a study conducted by Vasileiou, Barnett, Barreto, Vines, Atkinson, Long, Bakewell, Lawson & Wilson (2019) found that loneliness was a notable indication of psychological affliction in a representative sample (34%) of undergraduate students in the United Kingdom. Loneliness, according to Wohn & Larose (2014), affects academic and social adjustment of students to the new tertiary environment in a negative way, and has been depicted to be a profound predictor of student mental suffering (McIntyre, Worsley, Corcoran, Harrison Woods & Bentall, 2018).

2.3.1 First-Year Student Experience

First-year students succeed when they advance to fostering intellectual and academic proficiencies; setting up interpersonal relationships and sustaining them; determining a career path; looking after their wellness and health; dealing with diversity; and developing civic

accountability (Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot, 2005). Surveys conducted on first-year students have shown that students around the world study less, which could affect their success (Marshall, 2018).

2.3.1.1 First-Year Student Experience in an International Context

Newman (2016) noted that seminars for first-year students are now universal in that many college campuses around the United States have in the last two decades implemented some type of a first-year experience programme to fulfil the needs of their first-year students. Students highlighted four areas in need of advice and support in a study conducted in Australia. These were (1) the requirement for academic help to foster student well-being; (2) alleviating anxiety related to registration; (3) explaining the relationship between units of study, courses and learning; and (4) reducing uncertainty caused by a timetable and an online learning system that are new to the students (Rickard, Bramble, Maxwell, Einboden, Farrington, Say, Beh, Stankiewicz, Campbell & Yeh, 2019).

2.3.1.2 First-Year Student Experience in a South African Context

Most South African Higher Education institutions have similar first-year student experience programmes. The University of the Witwatersrand has such a programme that offers a support framework geared at enabling and preparing university first-year students, thus making the transition from high school to university easier. There are mentors for first-year students, a chosen group of student leaders who are committed to helping others in the institution in the position of being supporters of new students by nurturing scholastic performance and achievement, as well as social development assistance. These mentors are equipped with personal leadership and mastery abilities, financial literacy (including financial assistance awareness), presenting skills, management of diversity, and academic excellence (WITS, 2021).

At the North-West University, there is an initiative that is deliberate and inclusive in its approach in that it comprises various components that work together to improve academic achievement, student perseverance and the transition to university, and encourage a sense of dedication to the institution, as well as boost personal development. This initiative is a site that provides, *inter alia*, information on all services such as peer mentoring in academia, extra education and tutoring, development of reading skills, workshops for students, and academic advice (NWU, 2021). On the other hand, the University of Cape Town has a shared-value

system that concentrates on first-year students' overall wellbeing, with a collaborative determination to assist these students in adjusting to life at university and developing a strong feeling of belonging at the institution. The support supplied also includes orientation, early assessment, talks and workshops (UCT, 2021). Motsabi *et al.* (2020b) suggest that institutions of Higher Education ought to have residences for students in their first year so that integration is easier, and these students gain a sense of belonging and being part of the community.

Similarly, at the Durban University of Technology, its orientation programme is a shared initiative by numerous departments and sectors that are directly involved with students, which was created to present to and familiarise students in their first year to the variety of services and facilities, and features of life exclusive to the institution. “Sikusekele” (We Got You) is the name of the project, and it has the aim of facilitating the transition between high-school life and university life and strives to adopt integration among all departments to guarantee smooth and invigorated support for students. Traditionally, orientation has been a combination of contact get-togethers; however, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, orientation has shifted to remote learning (DUT, 2021a). There is also a student success task team that deals with the First-Year-Student Experience at the institution.

In assessing the First-Year-Student Experience initiative in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at the Durban University of Technology in 2018, the following findings and conclusions were determined: the initiative (1) provides vital information that is imperative to student success and assists in the change from secondary education to tertiary education; (2) is adaptable and reactive to students’ needs; (3) aids students in cultivating abilities, knowledge, values and attitudes which are important for success; and (4) develops graduate competencies that are required for success (Govender & Xaba, 2019).

More recently, a cohort analysis for faculty throughput for three-year degrees and diplomas was presented to the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics. The statistics in Table 2.2 on the following page reveal that the faculty has been on a par with the throughput rates compared with those of the institution from 2017 to 2021.

Surveys conducted at Durban University of Technology in 2017 and 2019 under the umbrella of “Engagement Surveys” included a survey called The Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement, which measured the pre-university experiences of entering first-year students and their expectations relating to participating in educationally determined tasks

during that period of study. This type of survey is conducted as soon as students arrive on campus (UFS, 2021a). The results of the survey showed that 29 percent of students felt that it was very important that the university provides a challenging academic experience, while 69 percent also felt that it was very important for the university to provide support to help students to succeed academically. Another result revealed that 60 percent of the students felt that provision of learning support services such as tutoring, peer mentoring, writing centres and libraries were very important (UFS, 2021a).

Table 2.2: Cohort Analysis of Faculty of Accounting and Informatics throughput

	2017 (2015 cohort)			**2018 (2016 cohort)**			**2019 (2017 cohort)**		**2020 (2018 cohort)**	**2021 (2019 cohort)**
	FTEn[1]	Minimum Time	Minimum Time and Minimum Time +1	FTEn	Minimum Time	Minimum Time and Minimum Time +1	FTEn	Minimum Time	FTEn	FTEn
Durban University of Technology	5919	34.0%	51%	5595	36.6%	53%	5954	38.6%	5957	6312
Accounting and Informatics	1557	37%	53%	1470	42%	58%	1641	39%	1654	1717

Source: Durban University of Technology (2021c)

In 2020, at the Durban University of Technology, the First-Year Student Survey was administered at orientation as well as within the faculties. The focus was on student experience during the intake-and-registration process; and the survey asked what support these students would consider important for their success. One result from the survey, pertinent to this study, revealed that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme remained the predominant source of funding for students entering for the first time. Another result from the survey revealed that there were still requests for support for tutors and/or tutorials.

1 First-time Entering Students (FTEn)

2.3.2 Tutor programme

Guerra, Lima & Lima (2017) assert that a tutor programme should be pre-planned and should be able to adapt to the context, needs and interests of the students at the institution. As tutor programmes are designed with specific goals in mind, making them exclusive, it is then difficult to arrive at a universally accepted definition (Lotriet, Erasmus & Mostert, 2016). Mentoring, according to Tight (2019), is a process where a relationship is formed between a veteran with years of experience and a new staff member or student with fewer years of experience, where information and more guidance is provided. Mentoring can also provide students with necessary information on academics and institutional resources and can help with integrating into the institution and its community, and can reduce drop-out rates (Tight, 2019).

The international and South African contexts are discussed below.

2.3.2.1 Tutor Programme in an International Context

The results of a study undertaken in Australia indicated that students recognised four characteristics of a tutor being classified as good. These characteristics were being helpful, being caring, being likeable, and being direct. Students also mentioned numerous advantages of having a good tutor, including improved wellbeing and a sense of belonging, increased help-seeking, and making a more concerted effort with their studies, together with increased interest in lectures. The importance of a tutor's role is understated, and tertiary institutions need to give the best support to these staff (Kahu & Picton, 2019).

2.3.2.2 Tutor Programme in a South African Context

In addition to the First-Year-Student Experience being a high impact practice, tutorials are also regarded as one, as tutorials assist with first-year student performance (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020a). Tutoring, according to Faroa (2017), is acknowledged as one of the instruments that expedites engagement and endorses success, while Morillas and Garrido (2014) state that tutors play a fundamental role in teaching and learning at institutions, and form part of critical approaches to improving student success.

Historically, according to Nyawo (2021), many universities have offered tutorial sessions directly to students, with some students choosing not to attend or attending only a few sessions. This kind of behaviour undermines the goal of the tutorial system, which is to assist students

in becoming autonomous learners and expand their knowledge (Nyawo, 2021). McKay (2016) believes that tutorials need to be compulsory to be effective for success, and tutors need to be well trained as well as have the necessary proficiencies to facilitate learning.

The Stellenbosch University's faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences offers a tutor-and-mentor programme which is in nature a student-driven peer–academic support programme that focuses on helping their students at first-year level navigate the academic migration from basic to tertiary education, as well as second years in preparing for the increased workload and exposure to the clinical environment (SU, 2021). The Unit for Tutor Development at the University of Johannesburg gives academic departments support in that this unit develops and trains tutors. According to the unit, these tutorials supply students with chances to obtain subject-specific counsel and senior student support, as well as offering secure locations where students can engage actively with their fellow students and tutors. Besides this, tutors give on-the-spot prompt feedback to the students they are assisting. These tutors can also provide personalised academic support and can frequently refer students to other suitable support services within the institution (UJ, 2021).

Similarly, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology established a mentoring programme with the aim of assisting to acclimatise first-year students at the university as well as enabling them to obtain the required skills and courage to be responsible for their own academic future (CPUT, 2021a). This institution also has a tutor programme that offers students opportunities to teach and learn from one another and look for academic assistance from a similarly aged peer. This programme helps students who encounter difficult areas of a syllabus, which may not have been thoroughly understood during lectures (CPUT, 2021b). Likewise, at the Durban University of Technology, the institution has a student success task team that deals with peer mentorship and tutoring.

The South African Survey of Student Engagement in 2018 collected information from undergraduate students to point out the degree to which students in these respective years participated in productive educational behaviours, as well the extent to which these students regarded the institutional environment as being supportive and engaging (UFS, 2021c). From the 2018 survey, results relating to Campus Environment, namely Quality of Interaction, relating specifically to peer learning support provided by tutors, where the responses from first year and senior students alike were 'Excellent' or 'Good'. The results are illustrated in Table 2.3 on the following page.

Table 2.3: Students' responses to Campus Environment: Quality of Interaction – Tutors

Quality of Interaction	First Year Students	Senior Students
Peer learning support (tutors, mentors, facilitators)	66%	66%

Source: University of Free State (2021c)

In relation to the same 2018 survey, statements regarding a Supportive Environment, on how much the institution emphasised using learning support services with the mention of tutor services, results from both first year and senior students' responses were 'Very Much' or 'Quite a bit' and are shown in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4: Students' responses to Campus Environment: Supportive Environment – Tutor services

Supportive Environment	First Year Students	Senior Students
Using learning support services (libraries, writing centres, tutor services, peer mentoring)	80%	76%

Source: University of Free State (2021c)

A Classroom Survey on Student Engagement in 2017 and 2018 consisted of two survey instruments, which furnished statistics about modules relating to solitary application of participation. These surveys were conducted among students and lecturers of individual modules (UFS, 2021b). The modules surveyed were Financial Accounting 1 in 2017 and Financial Accounting 2 in 2018. The results yielded by these two surveys are relevant in that the surveys revealed that 83% attended tutorial sessions three or more times for the module Financial Accounting 1 in 2017 (UFS, 2017), while 86% attended tutorial sessions three or more times for the module Financial Accounting 2 in 2018 (UFS, 2018). Likewise, in a study conducted with students registered for Financial Accounting 1 at the Durban University of Technology in 2017, results revealed that more than half (56.4%) attended tutorials for this module very often (Dix, 2018). Oddly enough, in interviews conducted, reasons given for not attending tutorials regularly varied from logistics difficulties to timetable clashes, time management, and transport problems (Dix, 2018).

Relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, Omodan and Ige (2021) examined in a study at a selected university in South Africa, the relationships arising from the new norm of Supplemental Instruction, better known as tutorial sessions, with students' performance. Conclusions reached

were that the major challenges facing tutor–tutee relationships were a lack of proficiency with technology, as well as unstructured schedules between the two individuals. However, according to Omodan and Ige (2021), it was pertinent to point out that providing adequate knowledge and training in Communication Technology for students, as well as motivation, were important aspects of the tutor–tutee relationship to ensure the success of supplemental instruction during the COVID-19 new normal period. Similarly, Nyawo (2021) studied the students' perceptions of tutorial sessions under normal and severe conditions in a specific academic programme, as occurred during COVID-19 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The abridged summary of extracted results relating to students' tutorial experiences revealed the following responses, which are illustrated in Table 2.5 below.

Table 2.5: Students' tutorial experiences

Statement	**Strongly Agree**	
	Before COVID-19	During COVID-19
My critical and analytical thinking skills were improved through the tutorials	24.1%	9.4%
Learning materials and activities used in tutorials helped me to learn effectively	32.4%	7.6%
Overall, I was satisfied with my learning experience in the tutorials	34.7%	8.2%

Source: Nyawo (2021) (abridged summary)

As seen from these results, the students preferred the tutorial experience prior to COVID-19, and also preferred the university's use of the conventional face-to-face tutorial system instead of an online remote one (Nyawo, 2021). Nyawo (2021) also mentioned that poor internet connectivity, poor information and communications technology skills, and problematic network coverage made it difficult for online tutorials to yield the best results.

Likewise, an abridged summary of extracted responses relating to the usefulness of tutorial support by the same students in the study by Nyawo (2021) are shown below in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Usefulness of tutorials support

Statement	**Agree**
Support offered by the tutors during the tutorial sessions was important	41.8%
Tutorials had a positive effect on my academic performance	38.8%
Tutor was available and helpful	38.8%

Source: Nyawo (2021) (abridged summary)

From the review of the literature on the use of a tutor programme in higher education, it is clear that this programme definitely had a positive impact and influence on students as they pursued their academic journeys. The set-up of this type of programme certainly affected student success at undergraduate level.

2.3.3 Student Success Programme

Enrolment in any student success course by first-year students increases the possibility of qualifications being completed (Cho & Karp, 2012). Kwan, Brown, MacKillop, Beaudette, Van Koughnett and Munn (2021) posit that first-year students entering tertiary education have complex and new academic and social habitats to steer.

2.3.3.1 Student Success Programme in an International Context

In the United States of America, universities applied a student success course concept to deal with student retention and graduation rates. The purpose of this course was to furnish students with information about the respective institutions and their services, to help with academic and career design as well arm students with the necessary instruments to succeed at university. A range of student support services can be provided in this way (Gardner & Barefoot, 2011, Kimbark *et al.,* 2017). The aim of an exploratory study in the United States of America by Kimbark *et al.* (2017) was to examine any relationships between a student success course, student retention, student engagement, and academic achievement. Their study revealed that students who had taken part in this course persisted in their studies and enrolled in the following semester or level of study, compared to those who had not taken part in the study. In the United Kingdom, a programme called ‘What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme’ exists that assesses how tertiary institutions can enhance the retention and attainment of their students (Thomas, Hill, O'Mahony & Yorke, 2017).

2.3.3.2 Student Success Programme in a South African Context

The University of Johannesburg implemented the Student Success Course where the objectives of the initiative were to promote academic success and excellence in that the minimum time completion and module completion issues were addressed (Nyar & Meyers, 2018). As an intervention, a faculty at the University of the Western Cape has its own student success project, the purpose of which is to scrutinise and deal with any difficulties connected to engagement and to seek continued success (Faroa, 2017).

The Siyaphumelela “we succeed” Programme was established in 2014 and is funded by the Kresge Foundation. This programme strives to build capacity of tertiary institutions to gather and analyse data from students to ascertain the reasons as well as the timing for students being unable to succeed, enabling these institutions to concentrate on the most credible actions to counter the inability for students to succeed. The South African Institute for Distance Education oversees this programme, which began operating in 2015. The University of the Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria, University of the Free State, Nelson Mandela University and Durban University of Technology were among the universities in South Africa that were chosen, as existing work in support of improving student success was to be found at their respective institutions (Siyaphumelela, 2020).

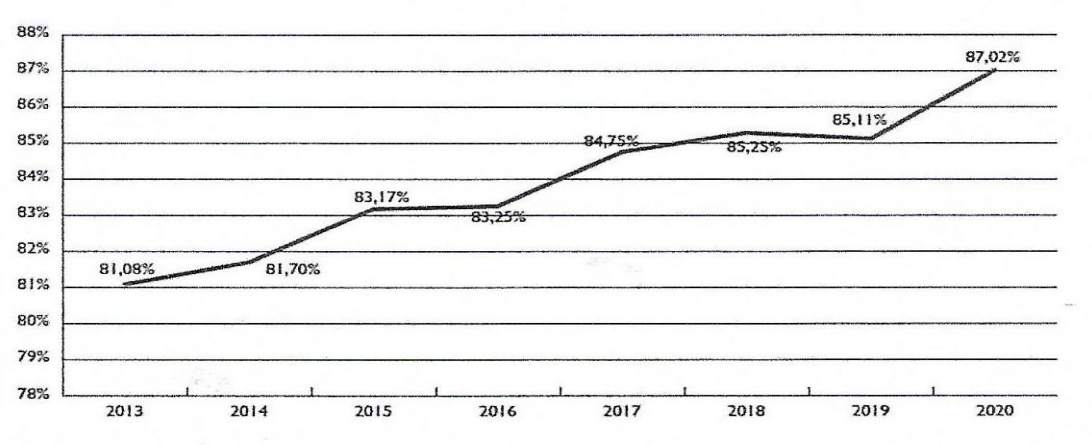
Phase 1 of the Siyaphumelela Project ended at the Durban University of Technology in 2019. Even though Phase 1 ended, the cohort of students who participated in this study also participated in Phase 1 of the Siyaphumelela Project during their undergraduate studies. Towards the end of the same year, the institution submitted a proposal to take part in the project’s second phase, called Siyaphumelela Network 2.0. This second project at the institution, called Moving the Middle, will concentrate on comprehending the numerous challenges that influence the success of students which result in a huge number of students who find it difficult to advance in academic programmes. The project should detect and apply approaches that will boost success (DUT, 2021b).

Besides running the First-Year-Student Experience initiative, Durban University of Technology also has a Second-Year Experience initiative that has the purpose of providing a more co-ordinated and intentional experience for students at this level to enhance their success, retention and ultimately their graduation from the institution (DUT, 2019). The institution was also awarded ‘partners status’ and a challenge grant to continue implementing the Project until 2023.

According to Durban University of Technology’s 2020 annual report, the institution continues to match the approved success rates benchmark of 80% set by the Department of Higher Education and Training. Table 2.7 on page 23 illustrates the percentage success rates throughout the institution for the period 2013 to 2020.

Interventions or initiatives that were implemented at the institution included First-Year-Student Experience, mentoring and tutoring, and a Residence Education Programme. The aim of these interventions or initiatives was to help undergraduates succeed.

Table 2.7: Success Rates Percentages 2013–2020



Source: Durban University of Technology (2020)

2.3.4 Financial Support

The financial burden, according to Widener (2017), exacerbates the challenge to students, and as a result, some students are unable to afford the tuition, and many of them must put up with problems encountered with low income, little financial literacy, addictive spending propensities, as well as high levels of debt; and students who are struggling both financially and academically are likely to be placed into the group of those least likely to graduate. Lim *et al.* (2015) state that financial stress has an adverse impact on students' academic performance, and they are usually helped by their families, thereby lowering the need to borrow money (Houle, 2014). Despite many barriers to college success, a major impediment is cost (Long, 2008), and the cost of being registered at university is a serious feature of students' lives, irrespective of whether these students are the ones who are footing their fee accounts at the institution (Widener, 2017), while, according to Long (2008), researchers have long believed that financial aid is critical to supporting institutional success.

2.3.4.1 Financial Support in an International Context

In the United States of America, college students can get access to federal aid for their studies by applying for free Student Federal Aid. Kofoed (2017) notes that the application form itself is complex, which affects the actual completion of the form and application submission by

prospective college students, which in turn affects the budget allocation to applicants. In an Australian study on how students adapt to academic failure, it was noted that most students went in search for support from peers, family and friends. These students made adaptations by listing their priorities, adjusting their study habits, and pursuing support. Fewer students utilised institutional support services, while there was limited support from teaching staff (Ajjawi, Boud, Zacharias, Dracup & Bennett, 2019).

In the United Kingdom, the government has a student maintenance loans system in place, where students are means tested against their birth or legally adopted parents' household income, where it is assumed that there is reliance on this household by the student. It compels parents to contribute to a student's living expenses while he or she is enrolled in Higher Education (Ellet, 2017).

2.3.4.2 Financial Support in a South African Context

There is a financial aid scheme called the National Student Financial Aid Scheme that offers undergraduate students financial aid to assist paying their tertiary education fees and is sponsored by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2021). There is an increasing number of requests by students for funding, and universities are now under pressure to assist their student population who are unable to pay their fees. This practice is reported as being untenable and unviable for the institutions of higher learning (Jansen, 2017). This scheme, according to De Klerk, Spark, Jones and Maleswena (2017), covers other expenses in addition to tuition, and attempts to fund as many students as possible, which results in students not being granted full funding. Therefore, the current funding model, according to Badat (2016), and Walker and Mkwananzi (2015), together with its challenges, needs to be examined. In saying that, student-funding models must prudently deliberate what other factors are to be considered when assigning funding (Mngomezulu *et al.*, 2017, Naidoo & McKay, 2018).

Mngomezulu *et al.* (2017) suggest that the lack of sufficient funding and student poverty have consistently been recognised as main reasons for students failing and not being able to progress in their academic endeavours. Minimum time to complete tertiary qualifications relates to less money spent on tuition and other related expenses, and the longer time spent studying at Higher Education institutions to obtain qualifications incurs more debt and financial stress for students and their families (Young, 2016).

It was established in a study conducted in higher education institutions in Northern Gauteng that students dropped out as a result of factors such as personal and socioeconomic problems, health, and institutional issues; while it was also observed that the reason for the larger number was the ineffectual functioning of the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (Mabuza, 2020). This research study also found that short supply of funding; inadequate and late fund allocation; strict National Students Financial Aid Scheme requirements; communication issues with students and applicants; and a combination of allowance payments being made late, or zero payments of these allowances, added to students dropping out of tertiary institutions (Mabuza, 2020).

In another study conducted to clarify how the link between bursary funds for students and their academic achievement works, the results revealed that there was no correlation between receiving a bursary and graduating. In other words, no relationship existed between students being granted a bursary and their graduation (Naidoo & McKay, 2018). Besides the National Students Financial Aid Scheme, institutions should have financial aid offices on site to assist students with information on finance in the form of bursaries and scholarships (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020a).

In the Durban University of Technology's 2018 annual report, the results of the South African Survey of Student Engagement revealed that since 2016 there had been an increase of 35% in the use of the National Students Financial Aid Scheme, and strangely enough, although tuition costs were causing stress, 55% of students considered dropping out because of food insecurity (DUT, 2018).

A study by Wagner, Kaneli and Masango (2021) targeted the complete cohort of 2019 first-year students, where the focus was on acknowledging the link between food insecurity and student success. Thirty percent of respondents responded where food insecurity and hunger were reported to affect a quarter of the students, and five percent of them had severe hunger (Wagner *et al.*, 2021). Compared with those who did experience hunger, food-insecure students who did not experience hunger were significantly expected to advance to the next year of study (Wagner *et al.*, 2021). A negative correlation was found between food insecurity and academic advancement in this study, where approximately 94 percent of participants remained enrolled, and a little over 70 percent advanced to the second year (Wagner *et al.*, 2021). Higher Education institutions should have student support programmes where students with food

insecurity and hunger are prioritised, and by implementing such food security measures, student success should improve (Wagner *et al.*, 2021).

This is supported by the various financial support sectors that are available, where, according to the 2020 Durban University of Technology annual report, the National Students Financial Aid Scheme still provides the biggest amount of funding (DUT, 2020). Table 2.8 illustrates the financial support at the institution for 2019 and 2020.

Table 2.8: Financial support to students in 2019 and 2020

Source	2019		2020	
	No. of students	Amount	No. of students	Amount
University's assistance	385 Master's	R6 003 793.00	286 Master's	R4 742 450.00
	125 Doctoral	R3 226 643.00	84 Doctoral	R2 198 880.00
USAS	579	R7 234 149.40	382	R3 906 511.00
NSFAS	20 879	R1 093 017 728.84	21 999	R1 553 146 511.00
Business and industry	236	R6 883 000.00	626	R38 927 050.00
SRC-administered assistance for registration	159	R618 268.00	121	R512 400.00
SETAs, third-stream income and DUT bursaries	694	R19 044.00	124	R9 588 881.00
NRF and South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO)	401	R24 432 642.53	232	R15 412 500.00
SETAs for WIL and graduate stipends	4 150	R22 264 500.00	3 308	R20 780 600.00

Source: Durban University of Technology (2020)

2.3.5 Institutional Support

It is important to create an overall environment within which enrolled students can feel both academically and socially assisted as well as have a sense of belonging (Larkin, Rowan, Garrick & Beavis, 2016). Student learning and success is an institution-wide responsibility. The aim of support programmes that have been established and put into place by institutions is to influence their students' academic lives positively. However, the kind of support programmes or initiatives, in conjunction with the individual characteristics of students pertinent to their culture, may play a crucial role in such a way that these types of support programmes affect the success of minority students (Giraldo-Garcia, Gailetta & Bagaka's, 2019). Li, Han, Wang, Sun and Cheng (2018), and Brouwer, Jansen, Flache and Hofman (2016), posit that the Social Capital Theory states that social networks' fixed reserves boost individuals or students, in achieving several goals. Students who have a secure socially supportive system are more rooted in such a system and are more included socially in their respective university setting, therefore making them better equipped to perform academically.

2.3.5.1 Institutional Support in an International Context

An entire institution methodology to the dedication of retention and success of students is achieved by a combination of culture, which includes ideals, viewpoints, and habits of both staff and students, as well as structure, which encompasses strategies, procedures and arranging of financial resources and staff (Thomas, 2019). The ability to predict student performance early can help universities plan for appropriate training to improve the success rates of students and obtaining desired educational outcomes can definitely be achieved by exploring educational data (Alyahyan & Düştegör, 2020). By having a strong institutional management and co-ordination system in place, a large number of universities in the United Kingdom found that they were able to give their students the necessary support to succeed (Thomas *et al.*, 2017). Studies at a New York University indicated that first-generation students' success in college is heavily influenced by institutional agents, specifically the college faculty, who provides students with intellectual capital, and institutional resources that are crucial to success in college (McCallen & Johnson, 2020).

2.3.5.2 Institutional Support in a South African Context

To support students in their studies, tertiary institutions are communities that include academic departments and other sectors (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020b). Even though enrolled students are the clients of the institution, it is possible that the parents of these students do not know how tertiary institutions function. This is especially true, as stated by Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges and Hayek (2006), that there are parents who do not hold a higher education qualification, and it is therefore necessary for institutions to inform parents of the functions of these tertiary institutions (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020b). This is endorsed by Pather and Dorasamy (2018), in that the tertiary institution should be in a setting and have an atmosphere that has provided for their students' presuppositions and subsequent encounters so that success is achieved. With academic support facilities like libraries, laboratories and computer centres on campus, there can be an improvement in perseverance and success (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020a).

In terms of non-academic support, this type of support entails services that are centralised and are supplied by the institution where the services are indirectly related to academic issues but are essential for giving students suitable and relevant conditions to study, such as accommodation services, psychological counselling, legal counselling, and financial support (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020b). Educationalists have established initiatives that will offer suitable

support both on the curricular and non-curricular bases, the purpose of which is to assist students during crucial various places of transition in tertiary education such as entry to higher education, first-year experience, and senior-year experiences, as well as when students graduate (Young, 2016).

From the 2018 South African Survey of Student Engagement, results relating to Campus Environment, namely Quality of Interaction, factors relating specifically to student support and other administration services as part of Institutional Support, where the responses from first year and senior students alike were 'Excellent' or 'Good', were analysed, and the results are illustrated below in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9: Students' responses to Campus Environment: Quality of Interaction – Institutional Support

Quality of Interaction	First Year Students	Senior Students
Student support services (counselling, health, and career)	47%	50%
Other administration services (registration, financial aid)	50%	51%

Source: University of Free State (2021c)

In relation to the same 2018 survey, with regard to statements regarding a Supportive Environment, on how much the institution emphasised various support structures to students, the results from both first-year and senior students' responses were 'Very Much' or 'Quite a bit' and are shown in Table 2.10 below.

Table 2.10: Students' responses to Campus Environment: Supportive Environment – Institutional Support

Supportive Environment	First Year Students	Senior Students
Providing support to help students succeed academically	74%	71%
Using learning support services (libraries, writing centres, tutor services, peer mentoring)	80%	76%
Providing support for overall well-being (health, counselling)	63%	58%

Source: University of Free State (2021c)

According to Nyar (2021), for all students in South Africa, the move to online teaching and learning has been sudden and unprecedented. Even though South Africa's universities have some experience with online instruction, including blended learning, they are not equipped to

support large-scale online learning. Online learning has been hastily implemented, with limited educator training. Despite the availability of learning materials and zero-rated applications, students have had difficulty in making the transition to online teaching and learning (Nyar, 2021). South African students must have access to teaching, learning, and counselling services. This access is needed so that students can adjust to the current living and learning situation, and so that academic studies can continue (Naidoo & Cartwright, 2020).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as institutions of higher learning increasingly use platforms for virtual education and learning, foundational changes in student counselling services are required (Naidoo & Cartwright, 2020). Schreiber, Luescher, Perozzi and Moscaritolo (2021) conducted a study aimed at gathering and analysing the responses of Student Affairs and Services practitioners and professionals about how the pandemic affected their abilities at their respective institutions to support and assist students' learning and development during this time. Results showed that counselling (62%), academic support (58%) and health-related services (56%) were the top three essential services provided by Student Affairs in Africa (Schreiber *et al.*, 2021).

Also as a result of the pandemic, student counselling services, according to Naidoo and Cartwright (2020), must diversify their approach to be able to serve students who are still studying online as well as those who are still studying on campus, as remaining cohorts gradually return to campus. The necessity of employing a blended approach, which consists of face-to-face and online counselling interactions, cannot be ignored. In their same study of student affairs and services' practitioners and professionals, Schreiber *et al.* (2021), it was also ascertained that African universities gave support to increased access to remote online learning during the pandemic, in ways where 72% of these universities increased institutional Internet bandwidth; 84% mediated for data-free access to their websites and learning platforms; 79% provided data; and 74% provided rentals of laptops (Schreiber *et al.*, 2021).

Two selected universities in the Eastern Cape Province collaborated to establish a plan to continue offering education throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In the responses to the survey conducted by Landa, Zhou and Marongwe (2021), both academics and students indicated that there was an overall inability to use Internet resources as a result of a lack of readiness and preparation. Despite utilising various online resources, the pandemic's rapid shift to entirely online learning presented several problems relating to flexibility, concentration, and tempo. Challenges that were experienced included the ability to access the internet, as well as

learning how to negotiate the online learning environment. According to the study, issues related to online teaching and learning included readiness training, as well as resources associated with digital literacy, *inter alia*, which were identified (Landa *et al.*, 2021).

In an emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, in education, another important aspect is that of digital literacy. To make the transition from conventional to virtual classrooms seamless and successful, educators and students need to be trained. Fellow students also assist other students in offering support and encouragement so that adaptation to tertiary studies is easier and students can develop a feeling of belonging and a sense of being a part of that institution (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020b).

According to Parker, Alcock and Cavanagh (2016), Higher Education research studies show that the best way to take on student success and engagement is by adopting a holistic approach. During 2019, the Durban University of Technology collaborated with an organisation called Achieving the Dream. The aim of this collaboration was to design as well as pilot a model for holistic student support that can be utilised by all South African tertiary institutions (Achieving the Dream, 2021). Extensive planning and conceptualisation of this model has taken place and implementation will be piloted on the Midlands campus of the Durban University of Technology during 2021 (Achieving the Dream, 2021).

With specific reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Durban University of Technology provided additional support to students and staff in that data was provided to enable remote teaching and learning; technical support was offered by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching; other faculties offered other support to their students such as creating WhatsApp learning groups; learning material was saved onto memory sticks; and printed learning material was sent via courier (DUT, 2020).

2.3.6 Family Support

Dole (2014) notes that the support from family is regarded as one of the crucial factors for students to succeed, and as such it is important that family members show commitment. When young adults progress to higher education, these institutions generally do not have the means for families to keep on being influential and in so doing prevent a strong source of motivation for students (Sneyers & De Witte, 2018).

2.3.6.1 Family Support in an International Context

Roksa and Kinsley (2019) and Mishra (2020) state that differences in family resources can be blamed in part for the disparity between students from wealthy and low socioeconomic backgrounds. In an Australian study on how students adapt to academic failure, it was ascertained that those affected responsibly requested help from friends and fellow students as well as family and adapted their study practices, styles and concentration on their studies (Ajjawi *et al.*, 2019). In a combined study in Belgium and the United States of America, it was found that the majority of students from families with a high conversation orientation perceived more family support and more quality advice from their parents in both countries; however, the influence of these factors on college adjustment differed between cultures (Dorrance Hall, McNallie, Custers, Timmermans, Wilson & Van den Bulck, 2017). According to Román, Cuestas and Fenollar (2008), the vast majority of university students in Spain reside at home with their families. In their study of the relationship between family support and approaches to learning, it was noted that the emphasis on family ties is another characteristic of Spanish culture, and that the favourable influence that family support has on students' learning strategies serves as further evidence of how highly valued families are in Spanish culture (Román *et al.*, 2008).

2.3.6.2 Family Support in a South African Context

Families impress on children the advantages and significance of higher education (Wang, 2014), and send encouragement that is tangible and intangible in nature (Pather *et al.*, 2017).

For children to succeed at tertiary institutions, families have a vital part to play in being supportive and reassuring, as students want to improve their family and social situation by getting employment through obtaining qualifications (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020b). By talking to parents and other family members, students are more motivated in their pursuit of a qualification at tertiary level (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020a). The importance of university attendance was often instilled in the children of many parents. When times were tough, many students found that their parents encouraged them and reminded them that they were resilient (Motsabi *et al.*, 2020a).

In a study related to parental support conducted by Zuma (2020) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the findings revealed that students were found to be more motivated to put more effort into academic study when their parents provided emotional support, by encouraging their

children to study. Furthermore, parental emotional support supported persistence and resilience in times of difficulty, such as when a student was facing exams or thought of throwing in the towel; thus, parental support was found to aid students in their ability to cope with stress associated to academic work (Zuma, 2020).

2.4 Post-graduate context

In a qualitative study of physiotherapy postgraduate students in the United Kingdom by Cassidy, Norris and Williams (2018), where the aim was to explore these specific students' perceptions about their undergraduate degree programme and to understand what was considered by them to be important to their success collaborative and cooperative learning, strong relationships between students and tutors, peer support were listed as interconnected factors that aided in success (Cassidy *et al.*, 2018). This is supportive of the view by Thomas (2012) and Tinto (2012) that learning is inherently a social activity, and academic achievement is linked to environments that actively engage students in learning, both inside and outside the lecture room, with other students.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This literature review examined existing literature on several factors that affected student success, internationally and in the context of South Africa. There have been numerous international and national studies carried out that focused on factors that impacted on student success. However, there appears to be a lack of research conducted locally within Kwazulu-Natal relating to factors affecting student success from the viewpoint of a post-graduate qualification, which justifies further research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined current literature relevant to factors affecting student academic success specifically at under-graduate level, both on the international and national front. The focus of this chapter is on the research methodology that was used in the study; will discuss the various aspects relating to research design; target population; the instrument used to collect data; the analysis of this data; the ethical considerations taken into account; and the study's reliability and validity; as well as any limitations to the study.

3.2 Research Design and Paradigm

Using the study's research questions as a guide, research design, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2019), is an outline for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. This study used a design that incorporated the research questions, as discussed earlier, so that the questions in the study would be addressed. A single method design with the quantitative approach as the main method was chosen for this study. The single method quantitative research approach is explained below.

Methods of research can be divided into two categories. First, there is the positivist or quantitative approach. The foundation for this method is observing and measuring subject matter objectively. The second method is the anti-positivist method, also known as the qualitative approach. Unlike the positivist approach, this one rejects the scientific element. The study uses a quantitative research design, which is in a positivist paradigm.

A paradigm can be conceptualised as a way of looking at the world. A paradigm, according to Bryman and Bell (2015), is described as the belief system that surrounds a phenomenon. Quantitative research is the study of relationships between variables, using numerical and statistical methods to analyse, and most commonly involves using questionnaires to collect data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). In a quantitative approach, numbers are used to define, describe and resolve a range of problems (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Research on factors affecting tertiary student success used quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as a combination of the two, known as a hybrid. There was a high proportion of quantitative studies and surveys among the studies reviewed in the literature review.

Quantitative research is defined by Saunders *et al.* (2019) as that which identifies relationships between variables, quantifies those relationships, and analyses them statistically using a range of statistical methods. It is mostly associated with survey strategies, which use questionnaires to gather the required data.

The researcher employed a questionnaire with closed-ended questions to analyse and report on data collected from respondents. In addition to obtaining standard biographical data – such as age, gender, race, undergraduate qualification, and length of time taken to complete undergraduate qualification – the researcher asked twenty questions with standard responses on a Likert scale.

3.3 Target Population

The term 'target population' refers to a collection of individuals or objects that can be questioned or observed to develop the necessary data structures and information (Rahi, 2017). The Durban University of Technology has campuses in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. There is, however, a focus on only the Ritson Road campus, as at the time of the study, the target population was present only on this campus, as this campus was the only one where post-graduate students who had previously completed a national diploma/undergraduate qualification with Financial Accounting as a major subject at the institution were at this point enrolled in post-graduate qualifications in accounting. Because of the study's nature and topic, and for convenience and accessibility reasons, the Ritson Road campus was selected. The choice of tertiary institution was also based on the fact that the researcher was at the time an academic staff member at the same institution, which made the research study easier to conduct. The post-graduate academic programmes were chosen for the study based on the researcher's involvement in the undergraduate academic programmes where Financial Accounting was a major subject.

3.4 Research Sample

The population of the study consisted of a minimum of 30 postgraduate students, as per the definition of the Central Limit Theorem (Brussolo, 2018). According to the Central Limit Theorem, the size of the sample, that of thirty, is appropriate for a statistical examination, and on this basis, the sample mean has a normal distribution (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). There was no pilot study, as the study did not directly compare the national diploma programme, where Financial Accounting was a major subject, to another academic programme or university. This

questionnaire was a once-off questionnaire. It was anticipated that the responses from this group would provide pertinent feedback for this study.

3.5 Research Procedure

In this study, a quantitative approach was used based on a positivist paradigm. Usually, a person other than the researcher physically administers questionnaires to the target group. This is the preferred method of administering the questionnaire, but because of the outbreak of the Coronavirus, a national lockdown was implemented. This meant that no lectures were taught; students were not allowed on campus and had to live at home, making the physical administration of the questionnaire impossible. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a survey that is conducted online will include only those participants who have access to the online survey and could, if circumstances allowed, bias the results. The non-representation within this sample is noted. The questionnaire was distributed to students through a Google form link with the assistance of lecturers in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics. Once completed, the responses were collected on the Google form. The data were then sent via email to the statistician, who performed the analysis.

Student personal information was not collected in this study; the researcher complied with the Protection of Personal Information Act. All participants were informed of their privacy status and assured confidentiality. The survey was undertaken purely to address the research objective concerning factors that affected student academic success at the undergraduate level at a university of technology, namely Durban University of Technology.

3.6 Data collection method and Instrument

Data include pieces of truthfulness that are in an unprocessed form; and it is through research methodology that researchers can draw out anything significant from the data so that the research problem can be solved (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The purpose of surveys is typically to describe current conditions with the objective of creating links between specific events or establishing criteria against which actual conditions can be compared (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017).

This study was conducted with the use of a questionnaire where closed-ended questions were applied (see Appendix B). A predefined set of questions was used for the questionnaire. A selection of limited options was offered in response to questions. All questions were closed-

ended. Closed-ended questions call on the respondents to choose from a selection of options provided by the researcher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

A Likert scale is a grading system that determines how strongly people agree with a proposition, a statement or a question and/or rate its importance (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The questionnaire comprised of twenty-five (25) questions that were structured in two distinctive sections. Section 1 had five statements relating to respondents' biographical information, while Section 2 had twenty statements, to which a response on a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree was required. Section 2 was designed to meet the two research objectives, namely:

- Research objective 1: to obtain postgraduate students' retrospective responses to specific factors that impacted on their undergraduate success; and
- Research objective 2: to establish the effect of certain factors on student success at Undergraduate level.

The dependent variable (student success) and the independent variables (impact of factors and effect of specific factors) had been determined in the theoretical framework in the previous chapter. Surveys usually collect data at a precise time with the purpose of reporting the type of current circumstances, recognise criteria against which present conditions can be measured, or establish associations which occur between occurrences (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). The information was collected from the target group and descriptive statistics were used to analyse these data.

There were two (2) sections making up the questionnaire:

Section	**Category**	**Types of Questions/Statements**
1	Biographical information	Respondent's age, race, gender, undergraduate qualification, time to complete undergraduate qualification
2	Factors impacting on success	First-Year-Student-Experience, tutor programme, student success programme, financial support, institutional support and family support

For this study, the choice of a questionnaire was made because a questionnaire is useful and handy for sizeable populace. The respondents are asked the same clear questions (Quinlan, Babin, Griffin & Zikmund, 2019). An application for ethical clearance from the institution at

which the researcher is registered and a letter from the institution where the questionnaire was to be undertaken, Durban University of Technology, had to be secured before data could be collected.

3.7 Data Reliability and Validity

The principal technique used was the quantitative method. Both reliability and validity are explained below.

3.7.1 Reliability

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2019), reliability verifies the measuring instrument's solidity and steadiness. The questionnaire was conducted in such a way that if there were different circumstances or situations, the results would not be affected. The analysis of the data that were collected from the questionnaire showed that the reliability results or scores exceed Cronbach's Alpha suggested scores, which suggests appropriate and steady scores (Bryman & Bell, 2015). There are two scales of acceptability where the first scale is where Acceptable is a result between 0.6 and 0.8; Excellent is a result between 0.8 and 0.95; and finally, there is Unreliable, where there is a result of less than 0.6 (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The second scale of acceptability is one where Acceptable is a result between 0.5 and 0.7; Excellent is a result between 0.7 and 0.95; and finally Unreliable, where the result is anything less than 0.5 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

3.7.2 Validity

Validity is an illustration of a specific tool that quantifies what is intended to be quantified (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Face validity is regarded as whether the items on the questionnaire read as if they did determine what was to be determined (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The questionnaire, at face value, which was used in this study, dealt with measuring the impact and extent of certain factors on student undergraduate success.

3.8 Primary and Secondary Data

The researcher's primary data is what he or she collects for the study, while a secondary data set is that which is extracted from existing sources such as journals, other articles, and books (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). This research project used both primary and secondary data. As part of Chapter Two, the literature review, the researcher gathered relevant secondary data from

related articles and books. The researcher also gathered primary data from the questionnaire that was administered.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

Consent, according to Roberts and Allen (2015), is considered an ethical approval, and respondents have the right to decide whether to participate in an online survey. The consent letter needs to be the first thing that respondents see when they open the link to the online survey. In this way respondents will learn to read and comprehend the process, as well as consent to participating in the study. A link to the questionnaire (Appendix B) was created. Once the link was opened by the participants, the following was included, namely the Information Sheet and Consent to participate in the research (Appendix A). Embedded in this sheet were further links to the ethical clearance letter (Appendix E) as well as the gatekeeper's letter (Appendix C). Participants were then asked to participate in the study. They were given the option to accept to participate. If the participants clicked on the square to participate, then the questionnaire would appear.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

Data analysis through statistics examines the information to ascertain if the research questions have been maintained or upheld (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The quantitative data in this study was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics included the use of graphs and tables to illustrate the data, while for Inferential statistics correlations were interpreted using the data.

Once the data collection was done, it was analysed by the statistician, where the information was coded. To review the analysis and interpret the participants' responses, the relevant backdrop is that the questionnaire was sent via email to students who are registered for postgraduate lectures at the Durban University of Technology Ritson Road campus and who had completed a national diploma where Financial Accounting was one of the major subjects, and who had participated in the Siyaphumelela Project, Phase 1.

3.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter explained the research design as well as its methodology. To achieve the study objectives, a quantitative method was applied by developing closed-ended questions in a

questionnaire. Validation and reliability of the data collection instrument were demonstrated. Furthermore, the process of obtaining permission to conduct the study was discussed, along with the ethical clearance process. In the next chapter, the findings resulting from the collected and analysed data will be given.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. The questionnaire was used as the primary tool for collecting data and was sent to all students registered for an advanced diploma in the field of accounting at the Durban University of Technology's Faculty of Accounting and Informatics. The information presents findings regarding students' responses to factors that affected their academic success at undergraduate level. These data were collected through an online survey on Google Forms. Using the information presented, the study's objective and purpose were discussed. This study's objectives are listed below:

- To obtain postgraduate students' retrospective response to specific factors that impacted on their undergraduate success; and
- To establish the effect of certain factors on student academic success at Undergraduate level.

The software used for graphs and tables was Microsoft Excel, and Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to conduct the Reliability Statistics. Descriptive statistics will be presented in graphs and other figures for the quantitative data, while correlations will be used for the inferential data.

4.2 Response Rate

As per the definition of Central Limit Theory, mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, a sample size of at least thirty (30) is necessary for statistical analysis. As previously mentioned, the survey was administered though Google Forms and a chance to participate online was available to all prospective participants. It was expected that the minimum number of responses necessary to conduct this study would be thirty. There were thirty-six responses in total. A 120% response rate was therefore achieved when questionnaires were distributed to respondents.

4.3 Research Instrument

The research tool was made up of twenty-five statements. The questionnaire first requested students to state their age, race, gender, and undergraduate qualification, as well as the length of time taken to complete the undergraduate qualification. The next section of the questionnaire

consisted of 20 statements that employed a Likert scale with Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree as the options.

Students were invited to rate their postgraduate retrospective responses to specific factors that impacted their undergraduate level studies, as well as the effect of certain factors on student success at the undergraduate level.

4.4 Reliability

It is critical to establish the study's integrity by ensuring the data's reliability and validity. One of the most popular is Cronbach's Alpha. Testing the reliability and validity of a research instrument can demonstrate consistency in the interpretation of statements by participants, as well as measure the intended outcome of the instrument. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0 to 1 represents an acceptable level of reliability. In Cronbach's Alpha, the correlation between items is measured, and the higher the correlation, the better the reliability. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure how consistent the results were and whether they were reliable, and to see whether they would remain exactly the same if the sample size was increased. With a value of 0.70 or higher, it is highly likely that sampling of a larger size would produce the identical results. All statements, with the same scales in Section 2, twenty (20) in total, were calculated using Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha statistics for all twenty statements is shown in Table 4.1. Cronbach's Alpha has a value of 0.804, which was higher than the acceptable value of 0.70. This indicates that the questionnaire was reliable in measuring the information; thus, the results from this study are valid and reliable.

Table 4.1: General Score: Reliability Statistics

Reliability	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.804	20

Source: Self-generated

The twenty statements were broken down further, for the first objective, B1–B9; and for the second objective, B10–B20, as coded.

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 on page 42 show the results.

Table 4.2: Reliability Statistics of Objective 1

Reliability	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.719	9

Source: Self-generated

Table 4.3: Reliability Statistics of Objective 2

Reliability	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.708	11

Source: Self-generated

4.5 Data Analysis

An examination of the study's findings was conducted using both a descriptive method and a correlation method. Graphs, tables, and correlations were used to present the data. The findings were used to assess whether the objectives of the study had been met. As stated in Chapter One, these were: to obtain postgraduate students' retrospective responses to specific factors that impacted on their undergraduate success; and to establish the effect of certain factors on student success at undergraduate level. An appropriate research question was formed for each of the objectives listed above.

The findings were collected from the students registered for Advanced Diploma academic programmes in the field of accounting in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at the Ritson Road Campus of the Durban University of Technology. These data were presented using graphs, figures, and correlation tests. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, to measure the responses, the questionnaire was divided into sections, which were categorised as follows:

- Biographical Information (Section 1)
- Factors impacting on success (Section 2).

4.6 Biographical Information

The results relating to the background of the respondents who participated in the study will be presented in this section. The purpose of the biographical information section was to obtain as much information as possible on the study's participants, as well as better understand the

distribution of age, race, gender, undergraduate qualification, and length of time taken to complete the undergraduate qualification of each of the respondents. Based on the characteristics of the participants in the study, the following results were derived. Table 4.4 presents biographical frequency and percentages of the respondents.

Table 4.4: Biographical information of respondents

Age		
	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	27	75.0%
31-40	7	19.4%
41-50	2	5.6%
51-60	0	0.0%
Over 61	0	0.0%
Total	36	100.0%
Race		
African	31	86.1%
Indian	2	5.6%
Coloured	2	5.6%
White	1	2.8%
Other	0	0.0%
Total	36	100.0%
Gender		
Male	9	25.0%
Female	27	75.0%
Total	36	100.0%
Undergraduate qualification		
National Diploma in Accounting	16	44.4%
National Diploma in Cost and Management Accounting	9	25.0%
National Diploma in Internal Auditing	6	16.7%
National Diploma in Taxation	3	8.3%
National Diploma in Financial Information Systems	2	5.6%
Total	36	100.0%
Length of time to complete undergraduate qualification		
3 Years	21	58.3%
4 Years	13	36.1%
5 Years	1	2.8%
More than 5 Years	1	2.8%
Total	36	100.0%

Source: Self-generated

The information presented in Table 4.4 above is displayed in Figures 4.1 to 4.5 that follow.

Figure 4.1 on page 44 describes the Distribution of Age categories.

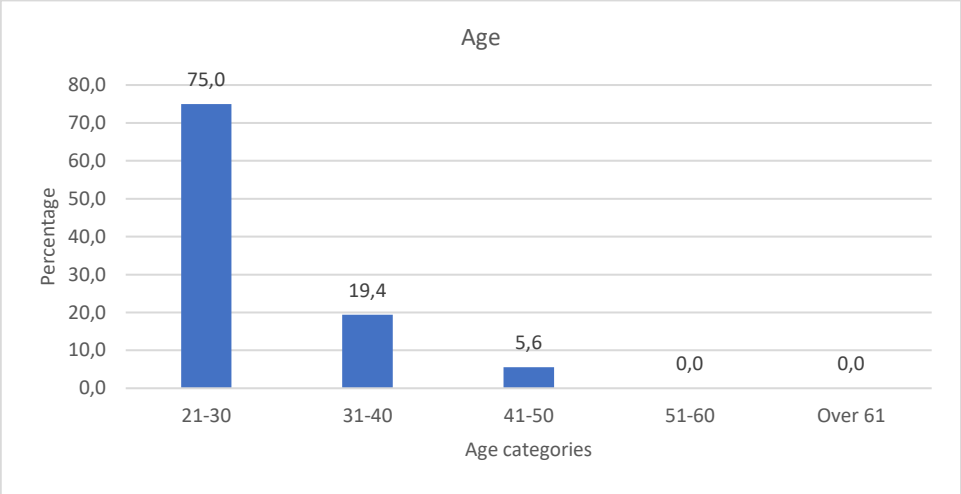


Figure 4.1: Age categories

Source: Self-generated

The majority (75.0%) of the participants fell into the age group of 21 to 30 years, followed by 19.4% who were between 31 and 40 years, and 5.6% who were between 41 and 50 years.

The figure on page 45 illustrates the Race distribution.

In the distribution of Race, African students contributed 86.1%, while Indians, Coloureds and Whites contributed 5.6%, 5.6% and 2.8% respectively.

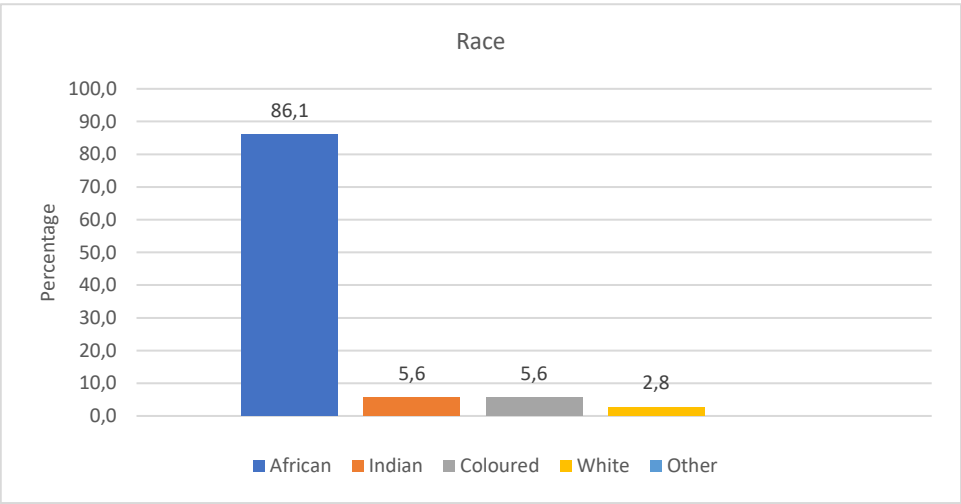


Figure 4.2: Race distribution

Source: Self-generated

The Gender distribution is described in Figure 4.3 below.

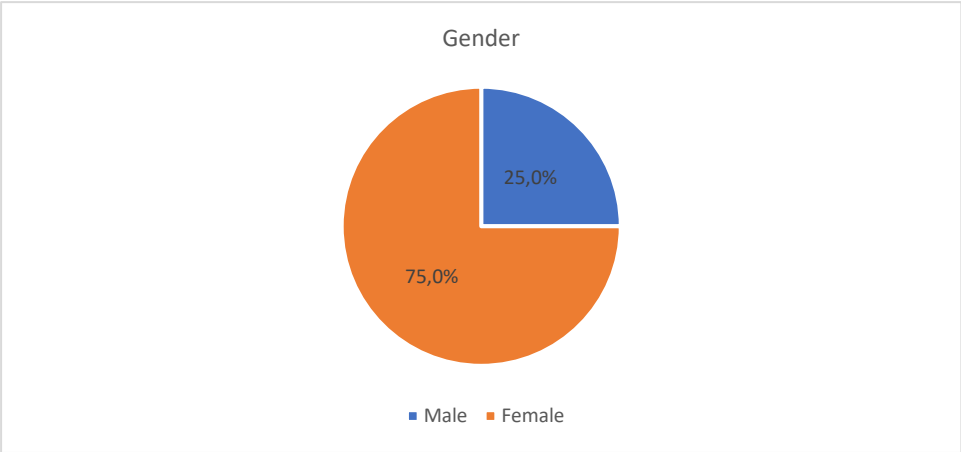


Figure 4.3: Gender distribution

Source: Self-generated

There were more female respondents in the study than male respondents. Thirty-six (36) students comprising 75.0% females and 25.0% males participated in this study. Results indicate that the gender distribution among respondents favoured females.

Figure 4.4 below illustrates the respondents' Undergraduate qualification.

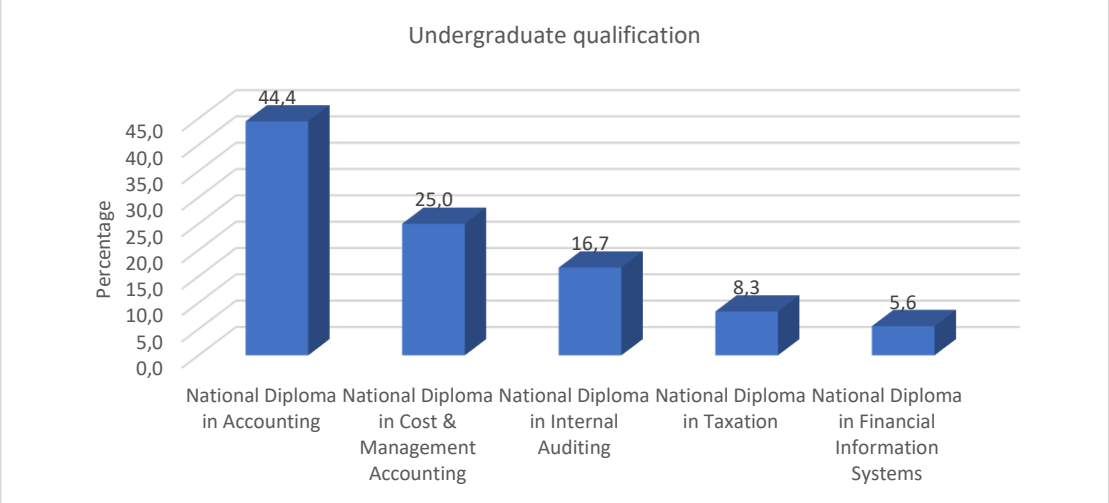


Figure 4.4: Undergraduate qualification

Source: Self-generated

Figure 4.4 above illustrates that 44.4% of the respondents hold a National Diploma in Accounting and 25.0% a National Diploma in Cost and Management Accounting, while 16.7% hold a National Diploma in Internal Auditing, 8.3% hold a National diploma in Taxation, and only 5.6% hold a National Diploma in Financial Information Systems.

Based on all the Accounting-related advanced diploma programmes that are offered in the faculty, all the programmes are represented.

Figure 4.5 below describes the length of time it took the respondents to obtain their undergraduate qualification.

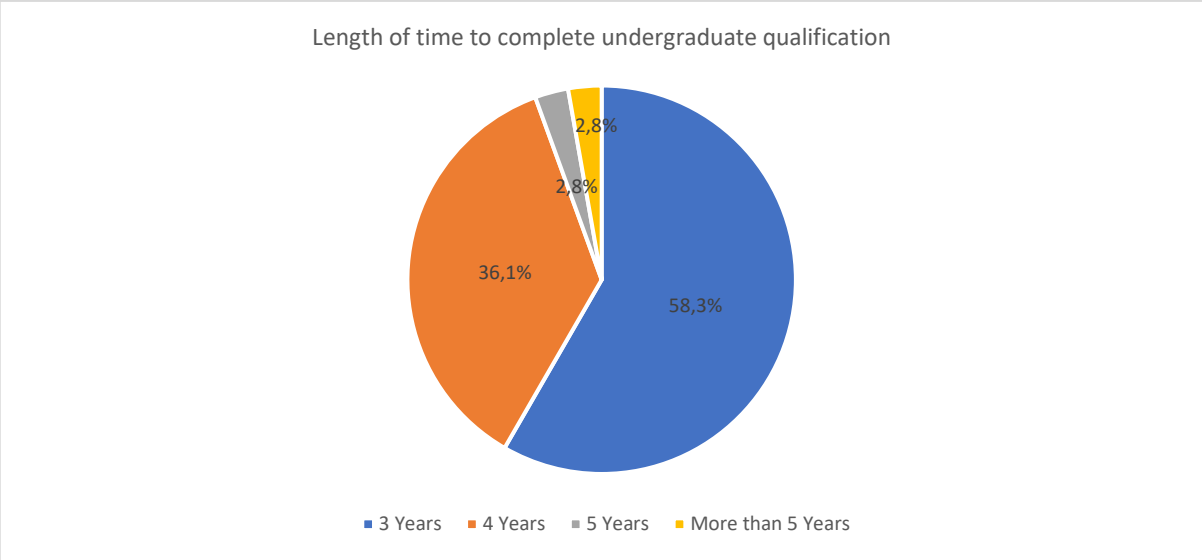


Figure 4.5: Length of time to complete undergraduate qualification

Source: Self-generated

A majority (58.3%) of the respondents completed their undergraduate qualifications in three (3) years, while 36.1% completed in four (4) years, 2.8% completed in five (5) years, and the rest completed in more than five (5) years.

4.7 Descriptive and Correlation Analysis

The statements in Section 2 of the questionnaire were coded according to the factors illustrated in Table 4.5 on the following page.

Among the statistics to be considered are the mode, median, sample standard deviation, and sample standard deviation. The mean is the sum of all the values divided by the sample size. The most common answer provided by the respondents is called the mode. The median is the

middle value in a list of values listed from highest to lowest. Sample variance describes the degree or amount of difference between each observation, and the standard deviation of a sample is represented by the sample variance's square root. The standard deviations, as depicted in Table 4.6 on page 47, are consistent around 1, which indicates there is little variability between the observations. The median and modal values are the same. The frequency tables are verified using descriptive statistics.

Table 4.5: Coding of Factors Impacting on Success

FACTORS IMPACTING ON SUCCESS		
FACTOR	**STATEMENT**	**CODE**
First Year Student Experience Programme	The First Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with the transition from high school to university.	B1
	The First Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with adjusting to student life at university.	B2
	Attending lectures and tutorials contributed to my first-year success at university.	B3
	Consistent studying contributed to my first-year success at university.	B4
Tutor Programme	Participating in the tutor programme contributed to my success.	B5
	Tutors provided effective tutoring.	B6
	I recommend the use of the tutor programme to other students.	B7
Student Success Programme	The Siyaphumelela Project contributed to my success.	B8
	I recommend participation in the Siyaphumelela Project to other students.	B9
Financial Support	I did not register for the required number of modules in some years due to financial difficulties.	B10
	I was compelled to withdraw from the institution and re-enroll at a later stage due to financial difficulties.	B11
	I could not afford to purchase academic material like books, course packs, printing.	B12
	I was compelled to borrow money to pay for fees and other academic expenses.	B13
Institutional Support	The services offered by Information Communication Technology (ICT) contributed to my success.	B14
	The services offered by Student Housing contributed to my success.	B15
	The services offered by Guidance and Counselling contributed to my success.	B16
	The services offered by Financial Aid contributed to my success.	B17
	The services offered by Office of the Dean of Students contributed to my success.	B18
Family Support	Financial support from my family contributed to my success.	B19
	Emotional support from my family contributed to my success.	B20

Source: Self-generated

Table 4.6: Responses to each statement in Section 2 in terms of Mode, Median, Standard Deviation (STD) and Variance

FACTORS IMPACTING ON SUCCESS						
FACTOR	**STATEMENT**	**CODE**	**MODE**	**MEDIAN**	**STD**	**VARIANCE**
First Year Student Experience Programme	The First Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with the transition from high school to university.	B1	4	4	0.78	0.60
	The First Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with adjusting to student life at university.	B2	4	4	0.79	0.62
	Attending lectures and tutorials contributed to my first-year success at university.	B3	5	5	0.40	0.16
	Consistent studying contributed to my first-year success at university.	B4	5	5	0.96	0.92
Tutor Programme	Participating in the tutor programme contributed to my success.	B5	5	5	0.55	0.30
	Tutors provided effective tutoring.	B6	5	5	0.53	0.28
	I recommend the use of the tutor programme to other students.	B7	5	5	0.40	0.16
Student Success Programme	The Siyaphumelela Project contributed to my success.	B8	4	4	1.14	1.30
	I recommend participation in the Siyaphumelela Project to other students.	B9	4	4	0.86	0.74
Financial Support	I did not register for the required number of modules in some years due to financial difficulties.	B10	2	2	1.13	1.28
	I was compelled to withdraw from the institution and re-enroll at a later stage due to financial difficulties.	B11	2	2	0.98	0.97
	I could not afford to purchase academic material like books, course packs, printing.	B12	2	2	1.34	1.80
	I was compelled to borrow money to pay for fees and other academic expenses.	B13	2	2	1.42	2.01
Institutional Support	The services offered by Information Communication Technology (ICT) contributed to my success.	B14	4	4	1.02	1.05
	The services offered by Student Housing contributed to my success.	B15	4	4	1.06	1.12
	The services offered by Guidance and Counselling contributed to my success.	B16	4	4	1.15	1.33
	The services offered by Financial Aid contributed to my success.	B17	5	4	1.32	1.75
	The services offered by Office of the Dean of Students contributed to my success.	B18	4	4	1.03	1.06
Family Support	Financial support from my family contributed to my success.	B19	5	5	1.20	1.45
	Emotional support from my family contributed to my success.	B20	5	5	1.11	1.22

Source: Self-generated

Section 2 of the questionnaire was drafted to address the objectives of this study. Twenty statements, which were aligned to these factors, were listed and postgraduate students were asked to read them and rate them using a scale of Strongly agree to Strongly disagree.

Objective 1 was to obtain postgraduate students' retrospective responses to specific factors that impacted on their undergraduate success.

Parts 2.1 to 2.3 in Section 2 of the questionnaire were used to address the abovementioned objective. The findings are discussed below.

Figure 4.6 below illustrates students' retrospective responses to First Year Student Experience Programme as a factor that impacted on their undergraduate level studies.

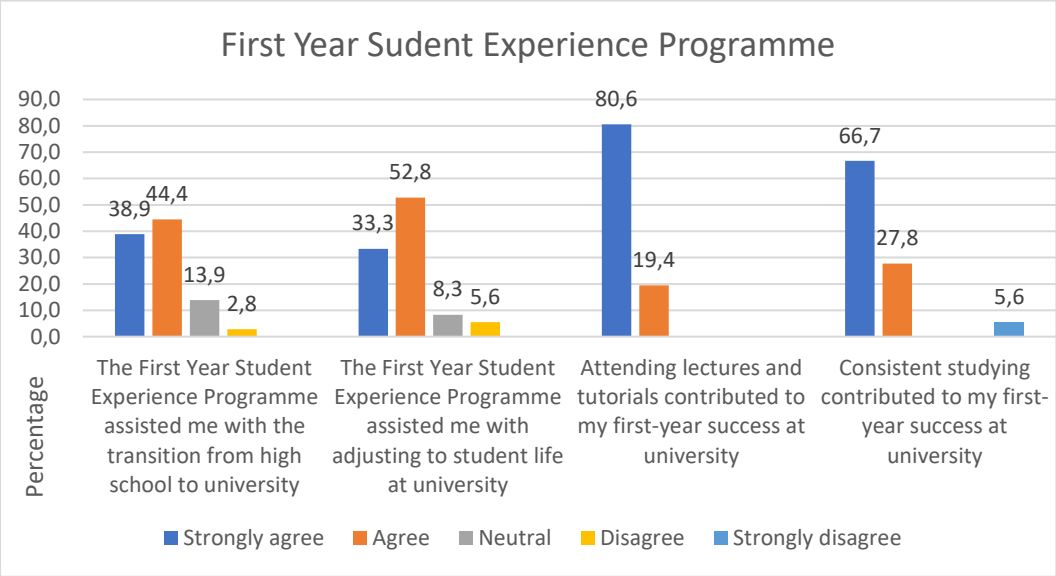


Figure 4.6: First Year Student Experience Programme

Source: Self-generated

There is a changeover from high school to university period, and in Figure 4.6 above, these respondents (83.3%) agreed that the first-year student experience programme did aid in this transition. Only 13.9% of respondents gave neutral responses, while 2.8% indicated that they disagreed with this statement. 33.3% of respondents strongly agreed that this programme assisted them with adjusting to student life at the university; similarly, 52.8% agreed. However, 8.3% were neutral and 5.6% disagreed. The findings agree with Govender and Xaba (2019), in that this initiative offers essential information both for the success of students and for the transition from secondary to tertiary education. Similarly, there are other initiatives offered by other universities in South Africa to provide similar services (CPUT, 2021a, NWU, 2021, UCT, 2021, WITS, 2021).

Hays and Sharp (2018) state that first year students can become familiar with expectations of higher education and its systems by participating in a variety of undergraduate transition activities.

Regarding attending lectures and tutorials during first year, all respondents were in total agreement that attendance during this time did contribute to their success. This is in line with Motsabi *et al.* (2020a), where tutorials do assist with first-year student performance, and tutors in their tutorials are helpful and increase the students' interest in lectures (Kahu & Picton, 2019).

Relating to consistent studying, the large majority (94.5%) of postgraduate students responded highly positively ('strongly agree' and 'agree'), while a few (5.6%) strongly disagreed that this contributed to their first-year success at university. The findings agree with Motsabi *et al.* (2020a), who state that orientation programmes run at the start of the academic year furnish students with the necessary skills to assist with their studies. However, these findings disagree with Marshall (2018), where it is stated that globally, students are spending less time studying.

Figure 4.7 on the following page illustrates students' retrospective responses to the Tutor Programme offered at their institution, as a factor that impacted on their undergraduate level studies. In Figure 4.7, it is shown that most postgraduate students (97.2%) responded that they agreed that both participating in the tutor programme contributed to their success and that tutors did provide effective tutoring. Only a few (2.8%) were neutral in responses. These findings correlate with those of Faroa (2017), where tutoring is regarded as being an important tool that advocates success. Coincidentally, students choosing not to attend tutorials undermined the purpose of the programme (McKay, 2016, Nyawo, 2021).

All respondents (100%) indicated that they agreed with recommending the tutor programme to other students. This finding is supported by the South African Survey of Student Engagement in 2018, where 66% of both first-year and senior students indicated that the quality of interaction with tutors was either excellent or good (UFS, 2021c).

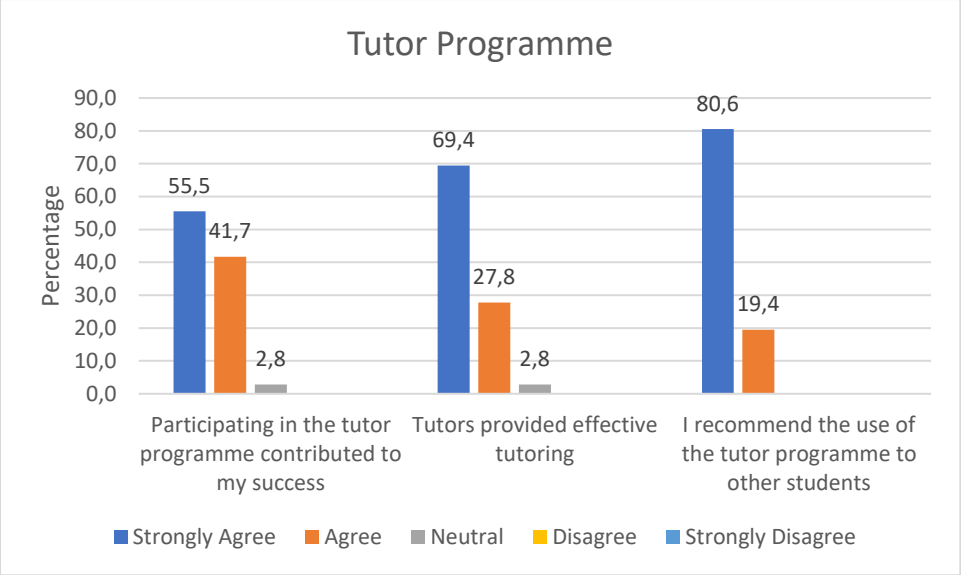


Figure 4.7: Tutor Programme

Source: Self-generated

Figure 4.8 below illustrates students' retrospective responses to the Student Success Programme at Durban University of Technology as a factor that impacted on their undergraduate level studies.

As reflected in Figure 4.8 on page 52, just over half of the postgraduate students (55.5%) responded that they agreed that the Siyaphumelela Project contributed to their success, while a quarter (25%) gave a neutral response. The remaining (19.5%) disagreed that the project contributed to their success. These findings agree with Kimbark *et al.* (2017), where participation in a similar success programme encouraged students to continue with their studies. A similar programme promotes academic success and excellence so that students are urged to complete their qualifications in the minimum time (Nyar & Meyers, 2018).

The large majority (69.5%) of respondents agreed that they would recommend participating in the Siyaphumelela Project to other students. However, 25% were neutral in their response, while 5.5% of respondents disagreed. The purpose of this project is for institutions to determine the reasons for students not being successful academically, and then to find suitable solutions (Siyaphumelela, 2020).

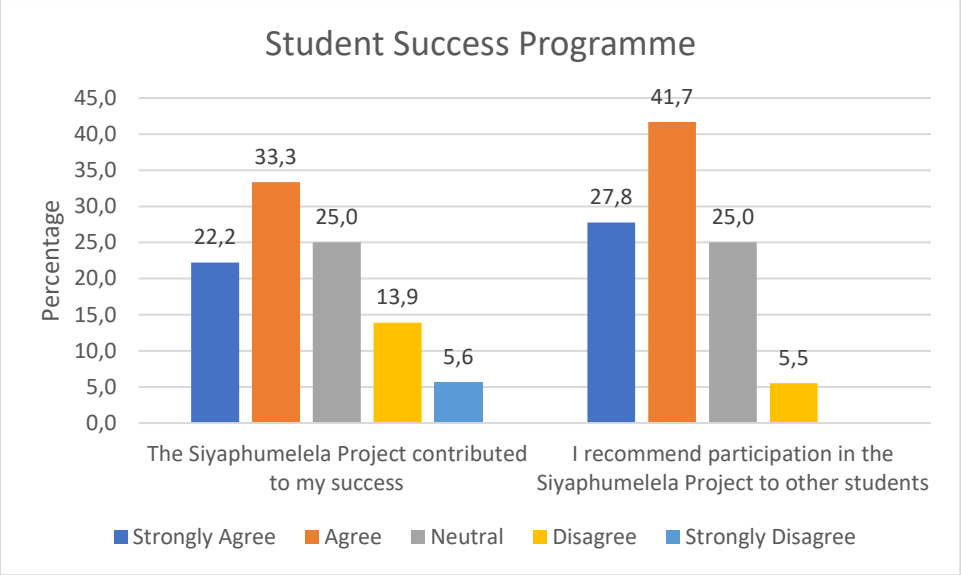


Figure 4.8: Student Success Programme

Source: Self-generated

Correlations provide a metric for determining the degree to which two variables are related. Spearman's correlation measured the monotonic strength between two variables. An indication of the strength of the relationship or link is given by a value between –1 and 1. Zero signifies no correlation, and 1 signifies a perfect correlation. An inverse relationship means that two variables are negatively related. As the correlation strength increases from 0 to +1, so it increases from 0 to −1. A strong correlation between the online questionnaire responses will increase confidence in the data collected (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

Each research variable's results were correlated with the other Likert-scale research variables in this study, as illustrated in Table 4.5 earlier in the chapter. The results that are presented in Table 4.7 on page 55 exclude the participants' biographical information as this information did not form part of the study but was needed to gain an overview of the background of the participants. Several directly proportional and negative relationships were identified and are discussed below.

In terms of the First-Year Student Experience Programme, the correlation between the two variables "The First-Year Student Experience programme assisted me with the transition from high school to university" and "The First- Year Student Experience programme assisted me with adjusting to student life at university" is 0.734. The correlation value between variables "The First- Year Student Experience programme assisted me with the transition from high school to university" and "The Siyaphumelela Project contributed to my success" is 0.511.

Similarly, comparing the same variable with "The services offered by Student Housing contributed to my success", the correlation value is 0.621. Positively proportional relationships also existed for "The First-Year Student Experience programme assisted me with adjusting to student life at university" identified such as:

- "The Siyaphumelela Project contributed to my success"
- "The services offered by Student Housing contributed to my success"
- "The services offered by Guidance and Counselling contributed to my success".

There were negative correlation values found between "Consistent studying contributed to my first-year success at university" and "The First-Year Student Experience programme assisted me with the transition from high school to university" of –0.018, and "The First-Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with adjusting to student life at university" of –0.056.

Similar negative proportional relationships with this variable and "Attending lectures and tutorials contributed to my first-year success at university" exist for the Siyaphumelela Project. All aspects relating to "Consistent studying contributed to my first-year success at university" to financial support had negative correlation values.

Regarding the Tutor Programme, "Participating in the tutor programme contributed to my success" and "Tutors provided effective tutoring" had a positive correlation value of 0.648. Conversely, an aspect relating to the tutor programme had negative correlation values regarding financial support.

Correlation values relating to Student Success programmes, specifically that of the Siyaphumelela Project having had contributed to success and recommending participation to other students had positive values of 0.664 and 0.587 respectively with regard to "The First-Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with adjusting to student life at university". Other positive values were found to be related to institutional support. However, there were negative correlation values relating to statements "Attending lectures and tutorials contributed to my first-year success at university" and "Consistent studying contributed to my first-year success at university" of –0.102 and –0.102 respectively.

These correlation values indicate that most of the programmes offered at the university and other support were instrumental in these students' success.

Table 4.7: Correlation table of variables

Spearman's Correlation																						
			First Year Student Experience Programme				Tutor Programme			Student Success Programme		Financial Support				Institutional Support					Family Support	
			B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13	B14	B15	B16	B17	B18	B19	B20
Spearman's Rho	B1	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	.734**	0,062	-0,018	0,228	0,213	0,062	.511**	.528**	0,240	0,174	0,045	0,310	.455**	.621**	.469**	0,163	.339*	0,097	0,102
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000	0,718	0,916	0,181	0,212	0,718	0,001	0,001	0,158	0,309	0,795	0,066	0,005	0,000	0,004	0,341	0,043	0,573	0,554
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B2	Correlation Coefficient	.734**	1,000	0,284	-0,056	0,133	0,131	0,067	.664**	.587**	-0,065	0,186	0,118	0,149	.426**	.481**	.507**	.365*	.390*	0,004	0,017
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000		0,093	0,747	0,441	0,447	0,696	0,000	0,000	0,706	0,278	0,493	0,385	0,010	0,003	0,002	0,029	0,019	0,981	0,921
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B3	Correlation Coefficient	0,062	0,284	1,000	.401*	0,109	0,118	0,291	-0,066	-0,208	-0,059	0,052	0,011	0,073	0,040	0,004	0,120	.337*	0,231	.383*	0,304
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,718	0,093		0,015	0,528	0,494	0,085	0,700	0,224	0,733	0,763	0,952	0,673	0,818	0,983	0,487	0,045	0,174	0,021	0,071
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B4	Correlation Coefficient	-0,018	-0,056	.401*	1,000	.378*	0,232	0,074	-0,102	-0,109	-0,215	-0,296	-0,181	-0,052	-0,011	0,162	0,074	0,244	0,182	.645**	.679**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,916	0,747	0,015		0,023	0,174	0,670	0,554	0,528	0,207	0,080	0,290	0,762	0,949	0,345	0,669	0,151	0,287	0,000	0,000
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B5	Correlation Coefficient	0,228	0,133	0,109	.378*	1,000	.648**	0,245	0,254	0,139	-0,217	-0,220	-0,121	0,057	0,237	0,192	0,283	0,192	0,220	.369*	0,324
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,181	0,441	0,528	0,023		0,000	0,150	0,134	0,420	0,203	0,197	0,484	0,743	0,165	0,261	0,095	0,261	0,197	0,027	0,054
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B6	Correlation Coefficient	0,213	0,131	0,118	0,232	.648**	1,000	.412*	0,305	.378*	-0,151	-0,224	-0,090	-0,114	.392*	0,299	.461**	0,315	.425**	.416*	0,295
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,212	0,447	0,494	0,174	0,000		0,012	0,070	0,023	0,381	0,190	0,600	0,509	0,018	0,077	0,005	0,062	0,010	0,012	0,081
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B7	Correlation Coefficient	0,062	0,067	0,291	0,074	0,245	.412*	1,000	0,196	0,143	-0,177	-0,078	-0,147	-0,219	0,202	0,249	0,162	0,219	0,158	0,290	0,288
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,718	0,696	0,085	0,670	0,150	0,012		0,253	0,405	0,303	0,651	0,392	0,200	0,237	0,143	0,346	0,200	0,358	0,086	0,088
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B8	Correlation Coefficient	.511**	.664**	-0,066	-0,102	0,254	0,305	0,196	1,000	.824**	-0,094	0,188	0,043	0,062	.417*	.525**	.472**	0,270	0,258	0,015	0,031
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,001	0,000	0,700	0,554	0,134	0,070	0,253		0,000	0,587	0,271	0,803	0,721	0,011	0,001	0,004	0,111	0,129	0,931	0,858
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B9	Correlation Coefficient	.528**	.587**	-0,208	-0,109	0,139	.378*	0,143	.824**	1,000	-0,061	0,160	0,082	0,009	.530**	.702**	.652**	.334*	.475**	0,018	0,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,001	0,000	0,224	0,528	0,420	0,023	0,405	0,000		0,723	0,350	0,636	0,960	0,001	0,000	0,000	0,046	0,003	0,917	1,000
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36

**. CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED).

*. CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.05 LEVEL (2-TAILED).

Source: Self-generated

Objective 2 was to establish the effect of certain factors on student success at undergraduate level.

Parts 2.4 to 2.6 in Section 2 of the questionnaire were used to address the abovementioned objective. The findings are discussed below.

Figure 4.9 below illustrates students' retrospective responses to the effect of financial support on student success at undergraduate level.

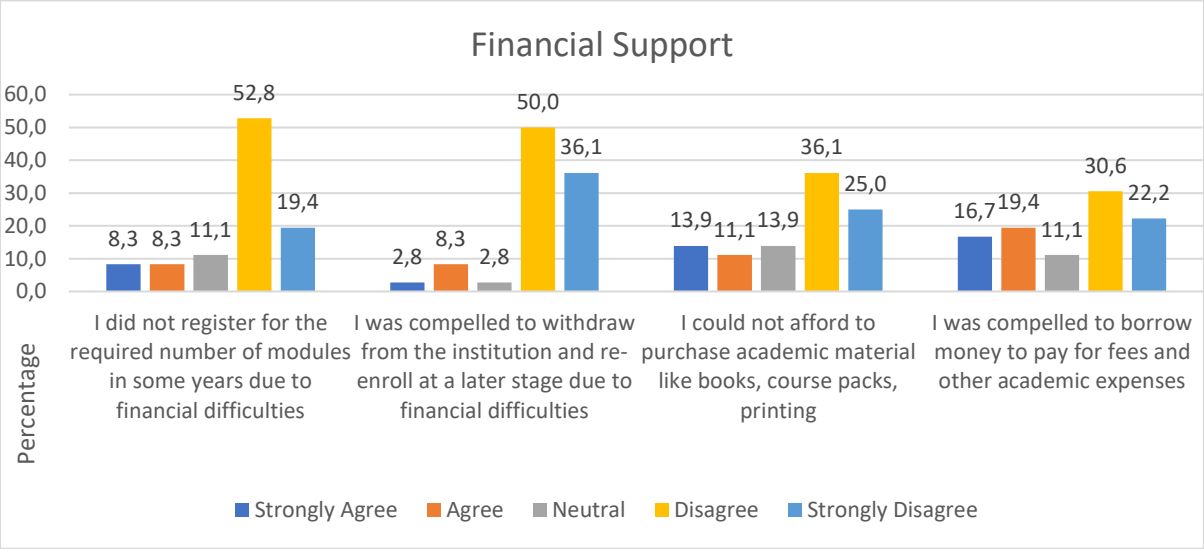


Figure 4.9: Financial Support

Source: Self-generated

It is clear from Figure 4.9 above that all the statements relating to Financial Support had a strong negative ('Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree') rating response of between 52.8% and 86.1%. This indicated that postgraduate students disagreed and strongly disagreed that they did not register for the required number of modules in some years as a result of financial difficulties; they disagreed that they were compelled to withdraw from the institution and re-enrol at a later stage as a result of financial difficulties, that they could not purchase or pay for academic material such as books, course packs and printing, and that they were compelled to borrow money to pay for fees and other academic expenses. These findings correlate with Young (2016), who notes that the less time spent at institutions to complete qualifications, the less money is needed to be spent on fees and other related expenses. However, Mngomezulu *et al.* (2017) suggest that insufficient funding and student poverty have been regarded as crucial

reasons for students failing. Figure 4.10 below illustrates students' retrospective responses to the effect of institutional support on student success at undergraduate level.

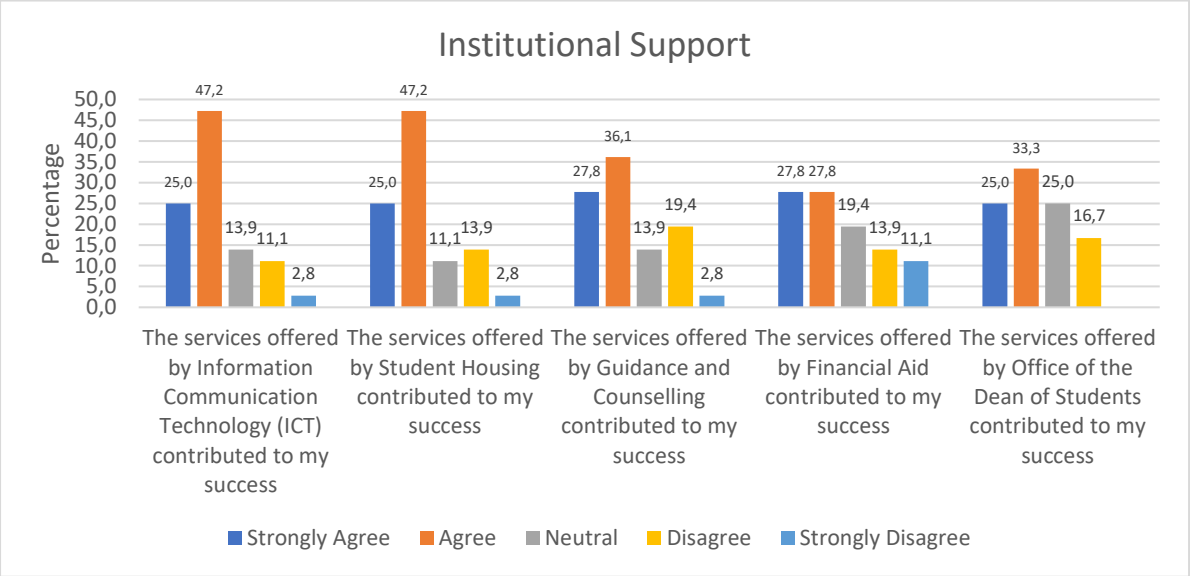


Figure 4.10: Institutional Support

Source: Self-generated

On the contrary, as reflected in Figure 4.10 above, between 55.5% and 72.3% of the postgraduate students responded positively to all statements relating to Institutional Support. This means that more than half of those who took part in the survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that services offered by Information Communication Technology, Student Housing, Guidance and Counselling, Financial Aid, and services offered by the Office of the Dean of students contributed to their success. Between 13.9% and 22.2% of the postgraduate students responded negatively to all statements relating to Institutional Support, while 11.1% and 25% of the respondents were neutral in their responses. In a 2018 South African Survey of Student Engagement, senior students responded with 71% selecting 'very much' or 'quite a bit', 76% 'very much' or 'quite a bit', and 58% 'very much' or 'quite a bit' to questions relating to a supportive environment, where institutions provided assistance to students in their quest in achieving academic success and use of services to help students learn, such as libraries and centres for writing, as well as promoting overall health and wellbeing (UFS, 2021c). According to Larkin *et al.* (2016), the environment at a tertiary institution should be such that the students feel as if they belong there, and that they are assisted both academically and socially. Motsabi *et al.* (2020b) endorse this, where all sectors in the institution are meant to work together to support students in their studies and create atmospheres that are conducive to success (Pather

& Dorasamy, 2018). Conversely, in the 2018 South African Survey of Student Engagement, 47% of first year and 50% of senior students indicated that the quality of interaction with Counselling, Health and Career were rated 'excellent' or 'good' (UFS, 2021c).

Figure 4.11 below illustrates students' retrospective responses to the effect of Family Support in respect of student success at undergraduate level.

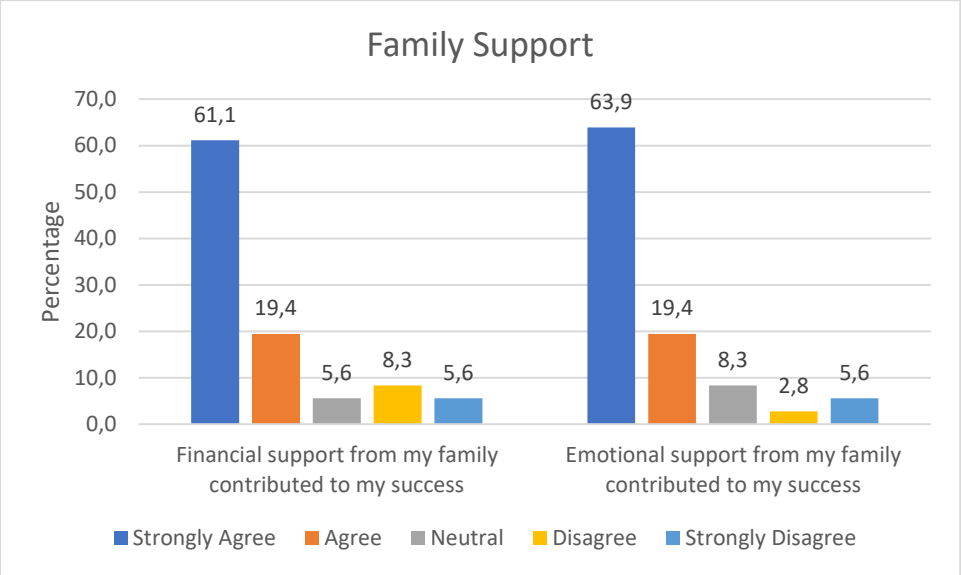


Figure 4.11: Family Support

Source: Self-generated

As reflected in Figure 4.11 above, postgraduate students, (80.5%) and (83.3%) respectively, indicated that they 'Agreed' and 'Strongly Agreed' that both financial and emotional support from family contributed to their success. A small percentage of respondents, (5.6%) and (8.3%) respectively, gave a neutral response to whether both financial and emotional support from their families contributed to their success. 11.1% and 11.2% of postgraduate students disagreed and strongly disagreed that family did not contribute to their success in terms of financial and emotional support. According to Dole (2014), family support is a critical factor in student success. Differences in family resources, such as finances and involvement, can affect student success (Mishra, 2020, Roksa & Kinsley, 2019). Motsabi *et al.* (2020b) state that families play an important role in the lives of students, especially relating to succeeding at institutions of higher learning. Similarly, Pather *et al.* (2017) note that families send students encouragement of both a tangible and an intangible nature. In particular, according to Zuma (2020), parents play a crucial role in encouraging their children to succeed.

This study used Likert-scale variables to correlate the results of each research variable, as illustrated in Table 4.5 earlier in the chapter. In Table 4.8 on page 60, the results exclude the participants' biographical information as this information was not part of the study but wa used to gain an overview of the participants' background. Below are some of the identified directly proportional and adverse correlations.

There were very few positive correlation values relating to Financial support in that these values were statements about financial support. The statement "I did not register for the required number of modules in some years due to financial difficulties" had a correlation of 0.568 with that of "I was compelled to withdraw from the institution and re-enroll at a later stage due to financial difficulties". Similarly, there were positive correlation values regarding the statement "I was compelled to borrow money to pay for fees and other academic expenses". In contrast, first-year student experience programme, tutor programme, family and institutional support all had negative correlation values, with statements relating to student success programme having had the least number of negative correlation values of -0.094 and -0.061 on "The Siyaphumelela Project contributed to my success" and "I recommend participation in the Siyaphumelela Project to other students" respectively. These correlation values show that financial support, in relation to the other aspects of the study, were, as determined by Spearman's correlation coefficients, not significant.

Institutional support statements had in general overwhelmingly positive correlation values; however, family support statements yielded no positive nor negative correlation values. Added to this, the majority of statements relating to financial support generated negative correlation values. The statements "The services offered by Information Communication Technology (ICT) contributed to my success" and "The First Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with the transition from high school to university" had a correlation value of 0.455. Further, a positive correlation is identified between the statement "The services offered by Guidance and Counselling contributed to my success" and the following statements:

- "The First Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with the transition from high school to university"
- "The First Year Student Experience Programme assisted me with adjusting to student life at university"
- "Tutors provided effective learning"
- "The Siyaphumelela Project contributed to my success"

- “The services offered by Information Communication Technology (ICT) contributed to my success”
- “The services offered by Financial Aid contributed to my success”
- “The services offered by Office of the Dean of Students contributed to my success”.

With regard to Family support, the statements “Financial support from my family contributed to my success” and “Emotional support from my family contributed to my success” showed a positive correlation value of 0.853. The statement “Consistent studying contributed to my first-year success at university” relating to First Year Student Experience Programme also yielded positive correlation values to the specific Family support-related statements of 0.645 and 0.679 respectively. Institutional support, Tutor Programme, and Student Success Programme statements generated neither positive nor negative correlation values. However, Financial support statements showed negative correlation values.

It is clear from the correlation values that the Financial Support factor played an insignificant part in these students’ success at university while the other factors did play significant parts in one form or another.

Table 4.8: Correlation table of variables

Spearman's Correlation																					
			First Year Student Experience Programme				Tutor Programme			Student Success Programme		Financial Support				Institutional Support					Family Support	
			B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13	B14	B15	B16	B17	B18	B19	B20
Spearman's Rho	B10	Correlation Coefficient	0,240	-0,065	-0,059	-0,215	-0,217	-0,151	-0,177	-0,094	-0,061	1,000	.568**	0,248	.428**	-0,183	-0,060	-0,240	-0,315	-.350*	-0,124	-0,224
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,158	0,706	0,733	0,207	0,203	0,381	0,303	0,587	0,723		0,000	0,144	0,009	0,284	0,726	0,158	0,061	0,036	0,473	0,190
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B11	Correlation Coefficient	0,174	0,186	0,052	-0,296	-0,220	-0,224	-0,078	0,188	0,160	.568**	1,000	.344*	.472**	-0,026	0,080	-0,118	-0,096	-0,231	-0,074	-0,135
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,309	0,278	0,763	0,080	0,197	0,190	0,651	0,271	0,350	0,000		0,040	0,004	0,880	0,644	0,492	0,577	0,176	0,668	0,433
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B12	Correlation Coefficient	0,045	0,118	0,011	-0,181	-0,121	-0,090	-0,147	0,043	0,082	0,248	.344*	1,000	.527**	0,070	-0,100	0,129	0,113	-0,124	-0,299	-.382*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,795	0,493	0,952	0,290	0,484	0,600	0,392	0,803	0,636	0,144	0,040		0,001	0,687	0,562	0,452	0,511	0,473	0,077	0,022
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B13	Correlation Coefficient	0,310	0,149	0,073	-0,052	0,057	-0,114	-0,219	0,062	0,009	.428**	.472**	.527**	1,000	0,260	-0,015	0,054	0,003	-0,092	-0,051	-0,157
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,066	0,385	0,673	0,762	0,743	0,509	0,200	0,721	0,960	0,009	0,004	0,001		0,125	0,931	0,756	0,987	0,594	0,766	0,361
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B14	Correlation Coefficient	.455**	.426**	0,040	-0,011	0,237	.392*	0,202	.417*	.530**	-0,183	-0,026	0,070	0,260	1,000	.560**	.825**	.517**	.750**	0,150	0,012
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,005	0,010	0,818	0,949	0,165	0,018	0,237	0,011	0,001	0,284	0,880	0,687	0,125		0,000	0,000	0,001	0,000	0,381	0,943
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B15	Correlation Coefficient	.621**	.481**	0,004	0,162	0,192	0,299	0,249	.525**	.702**	-0,060	0,080	-0,100	-0,015	.560**	1,000	.679**	.475**	.672**	0,294	0,273
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,003	0,983	0,345	0,261	0,077	0,143	0,001	0,000	0,726	0,644	0,562	0,931	0,000		0,000	0,003	0,000	0,081	0,107
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B16	Correlation Coefficient	.469**	.507**	0,120	0,074	0,283	.461**	0,162	.472**	.652**	-0,240	-0,118	0,129	0,054	.825**	.679**	1,000	.670**	.864**	0,200	0,101
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,004	0,002	0,487	0,669	0,095	0,005	0,346	0,004	0,000	0,158	0,492	0,452	0,756	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,242	0,556
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B17	Correlation Coefficient	0,163	.365*	.337*	0,244	0,192	0,315	0,219	0,270	.334*	-0,315	-0,096	0,113	0,003	.517**	.475**	.670**	1,000	.733**	0,234	0,122
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,341	0,029	0,045	0,151	0,261	0,062	0,200	0,111	0,046	0,061	0,577	0,511	0,987	0,001	0,003	0,000		0,000	0,169	0,478
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B18	Correlation Coefficient	.339*	.390*	0,231	0,182	0,220	.425**	0,158	0,258	.475**	-.350*	-0,231	-0,124	-0,092	.750**	.672**	.864**	.733**	1,000	0,276	0,136
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,043	0,019	0,174	0,287	0,197	0,010	0,358	0,129	0,003	0,036	0,176	0,473	0,594	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,104	0,430
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B19	Correlation Coefficient	0,097	0,004	.383*	.645**	.369*	.416*	0,290	0,015	0,018	-0,124	-0,074	-0,299	-0,051	0,150	0,294	0,200	0,234	0,276	1,000	.853**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,573	0,981	0,021	0,000	0,027	0,012	0,086	0,931	0,917	0,473	0,668	0,077	0,766	0,381	0,081	0,242	0,169	0,104		0,000
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	B20	Correlation Coefficient	0,102	0,017	0,304	.679**	0,324	0,295	0,288	0,031	0,000	-0,224	-0,135	-.382*	-0,157	0,012	0,273	0,101	0,122	0,136	.853**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,554	0,921	0,071	0,000	0,054	0,081	0,088	0,858	1,000	0,190	0,433	0,022	0,361	0,943	0,107	0,556	0,478	0,430	0,000	
		N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36

**. CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED).
*. CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.05 LEVEL (2-TAILED)

Source: Self-generated

4.8 Chapter Summary

The results that are presented here are based on the research study findings. When applicable, the results were organised according to the questions in the research instrument, which were analysed and presented using SPSS software. Frequency tables, bar charts and pie charts were used to illustrate the data. This chapter presents the results of the research questionnaire. A descriptive analysis was conducted of the questionnaire completed by students who are enrolled in post-graduate accounting qualifications in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics on the Ritson Road campus at the Durban University of Technology. According to the results of the Likert scale statements, a discussion took place with regard to what the data indicated and how it was interpreted, and how it relates to the Chapter 2 literature review.

It is imperative to note that the findings presented here are applicable to this population and only to populations that are fundamentally like the characteristics of this group of university students. It appears from the results of the study that five of the six factors identified in this study impacted and affected student academic success positively at the undergraduate level. The factors deemed to exert the greatest impact were the first-year student experience programme and the tutor programme, as well as the Siyaphumelela project. Similarly, other factors such as institutional support and family support positively affected their academic success. Notably financial support did not have a positive effect on these students' academic success at undergraduate level.

Chapter Five will summarise the study's findings and explore how the findings met the study's objectives. Furthermore, by observing the patterns in the data, it will be possible to identify practices that have a high degree of impact on improving student academic success programmes with undergraduate students at the Durban University of Technology and other tertiary institutions.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

A quantitative analysis of the questionnaire in Chapter 4 was conducted on factors that affected student academic success at undergraduate level at Durban University of Technology. An overview of the study and conclusions are presented in the dissertation's final chapter. In addition, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies to be conducted.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The Ritson Road Campus of the Durban University of Technology, located in Durban, was the location of the study. The intention of the study was to obtain postgraduate students' retrospective response to specific factors that impacted on their undergraduate level studies, and to establish the effect of certain factors on student academic success at undergraduate level. Several factors were investigated using a questionnaire distributed via Google forms. The importance of this quantitative research is that it could offer insight into the factors that had had a huge effect on the academic success of students at undergraduate level. This study was motivated by the need to gain a clearer understanding of how these factors affected student academic success. The results show that postgraduate students perceive five of the six factors in the study, namely the first-year student experience programme, the tutor programme, the student success programme, institutional support, and family support, to be positive influences on their undergraduate studies. This chapter concludes by recommending further studies in this field by universities of technology and traditional universities.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the two study objectives, conclusions reached are discussed below.

5.3.1 Objective One: To obtain postgraduate students' retrospective response to specific factors that impacted on their undergraduate success

The Cronbach's Alpha test showed a combined 71.9% correlation or agreement amongst the postgraduate students (respondents) relating to factors in the questionnaire about specific programmes, namely the first-year student experience, tutor, and student success that retrospectively impacted on their undergraduate level of study. These factors had a positive

impact on their undergraduate level of study, which is in line with the Chapter 2 examination of the literature.

5.3.2 Objective Two: To establish the effect of certain factors on student academic success at undergraduate level

The Cronbach's Alpha test showed a combined 70.8% correlation or agreement amongst the postgraduate students (respondents) relating to factors in the questionnaire about certain factors namely financial support, institutional support, and family support, that affected their academic success at undergraduate level. Barring one factor, that of financial support, the remaining factors did have a favourable impact on the academic success of students at undergraduate level, which is in accordance with the literature discussed in the second chapter.

5.4 Recommendations from the Study

The data's findings indicate that students' perceptions are very significant in providing this institution with information about reactions to the services offered, to enable them to improve student academic success at the undergraduate level. Based on the quantitative analysis, the variable (financial factor) justifies further investigation into student academic success at undergraduate level. For the first year of university study, the first-year student experience programme should be compulsory as this programme will positively affect students' overall performance once they understand the usefulness and effortless use of such a programme. Studies show that students respond overwhelmingly positively to blended learning-teaching environments so tutor programmes should be expanded to assist students in their studies and ultimately succeed. Support systems for working with families should be established so that undergraduate university students can achieve student success.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Study

A larger sample size than thirty for a similar study can be used, and the study's sample size is a constraint. The sample size of 30 used in this study is a limitation in the broader context to other universities in South Africa. However, extending this type of study to other universities of technologies and traditional universities in other regions of South Africa could provide invaluable insight to those institutions into how students perceive certain factors impacted their student academic success at the undergraduate level. This research study used a quantitative approach. Because of this, a mixed-method approach may prove to be more beneficial. For

further studies, a multi-method approach which is made up of quantitative and qualitative research may be able to better quantify such research areas. Together, these two research approaches could provide a deeper understanding of postgraduate students' perceptions of specific factors that affected their academic success at the undergraduate level.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 16 March 2022

Dear Student

My name is Tanya Felicia Thompson and I am a Masters student in the School of Accounting, Economics and Finance on the Westville Campus at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

A requirement for the degree is a dissertation and I have chosen the following topic:

"Factors that affect Accounting students' academic success at undergraduate level at Durban University of Technology."

I can be reached on 895157289@stu.ukzn.ac.za.

My main academic supervisor is Professor Rajendra Rajaram, based in the School of Accounting, Economics and Finance on the Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He can be contacted on Rajaramr@ukzn.ac.za or on 033 260 6267 during office hours.

My co- academic supervisor is Mr Shagaran Rathnasamy, based in the School of Accounting, Economics and Finance on the Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He can be contacted on RathnasamyS@ukzn.ac.za or on 033 260 6309 during office hours.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research to explore factors that assisted the success of students at their undergraduate level of study. The aim and purpose of the study is to obtain your retrospective response to specific factors that impacted on your undergraduate level studies, and, to establish the effect that certain factors had on your student academic success at that level.

The study is expected to enroll a *minimum of 30 post-graduate students* who are currently enrolled in postgraduate *qualifications in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at the*

Durban University of Technology Ritson Road campus, and who have completed a national diploma where Financial Accounting was one of the major subjects.

It will involve answering an online questionnaire which will take you approximately 30 minutes to complete. The duration of your participation, if you choose to enroll and remain in the study, is expected to be 2 weeks from the time that the invitation to participate in the study will be sent out to all the post-graduate students.

The study will not provide any direct benefits to participants. The benefits from the study will provide support to staff in assisting future enrolled undergraduate students in their tertiary experience, specifically helping senior students in their academic journey at the Durban University of Technology. The recommendations from the study should result in additional projects that would ultimately see an improvement in academic success at undergraduate level.

The research will not involve risk to the participants.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00002704/2021).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 895157289@stu.ukzn.ac.za or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The contact details are as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Please note that your participation is voluntary and a decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage to you. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage, and for any reason.

No costs will be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study. There are no incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study.

The questionnaire does not require any personal information. The information will only be viewed by my supervisors, examiner and myself. Your anonymity and confidentiality are of utmost importance and will be maintained throughout the study.

Your questionnaire will be kept in a safe space within the School of Accounting, Economics and Finance as per research requirements. At the end of five years the answered questionnaires will be destroyed by shredding.

CONSENT (Edit as required)

I _____ (Name) have been informed about the study entitled *"Factors affecting student academic success at undergraduate level at Durban University of Technology"* by Tanya Thompson.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 895157289@stu.ukzn.ac.za.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 – Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Witness **Date**

(Where applicable)

_____ _____

Signature of Translator **Date**

(Where applicable)

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT – QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Kindly indicate your response with an X in the space provided

1. Age:

21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 61

2. Race:

AFRICAN	INDIAN	COLOURED	WHITE	OTHER

3. Gender:

MALE	FEMALE

4. Undergraduate qualification:

NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN ACCOUNTING	NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN COST & MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING	NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN INTERNAL AUDITING	NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TAXATION	NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN FINANCIAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS

5. Length of time to complete undergraduate qualification:

3 Years	4 Years	5 Years	More than 5 Years

SECTION 2: FACTORS IMPACTING ON SUCCESS

2.1 FIRST YEAR STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

Please indicate (using an X) the extent that you agree/disagree with the following statements:

1. The First Year Student Experience programme assisted me with the transition from high school to university.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The First Year Student Experience programme assisted me with adjusting to student life at university.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. Attending lectures and tutorials contributed to my first-year success at university.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. Consistent studying contributed to my first-year success at university.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2.2 TUTOR PROGRAMME

Please indicate (using an X) the extent that you agree/disagree with the following statements:

1. Participating in the tutor programme contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Tutors provided effective tutoring.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I recommend the use of the tutor programme to other students.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2.3 STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAMME

Please indicate (using an X) the extent that you agree/disagree with the following statements:

1. The Siyaphumelela Project contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I recommend participation in the Siyaphumelela Project to other students

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Please indicate (using an X) the extent that you agree/disagree with the following statements:

1. I did not register for the required number of modules in some years due to financial difficulties.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I was compelled to withdraw from the institution and re-enrol at a later stage due to financial difficulties.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I could not afford to purchase academic material like books, course packs, printing.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I was compelled to borrow money to pay for fees and other academic expenses.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2.5 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Please indicate (using an X) the extent that you agree/disagree with the following statements:

1. The services offered by Information Communication Technology (ICT) contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The services offered by Student Housing contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The services offered by Guidance and Counselling contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. The services offered by Financial Aid contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. The services offered by Office of the Dean of Students contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2.6 FAMILY SUPPORT

Please indicate (using an X) the extent that you agree/disagree with the following statements:

1. Financial support from my family contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Emotional support from my family contributed to my success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C: GATEKEPERS LETTER

Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tromso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946

16th November 2020
Ms Tanya Thompson
c/o College of Law and Management Studies
School of Accounting, Economics and Finance (SAEF)
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Ms Thompson

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted **Provisional Permission** for you to conduct your research "Factors affecting student academic success at undergraduate level at Durban University of Technology" at the Durban University of Technology.

Data collection is prohibited until a **FULL ETHICAL** clearance has been provided.

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings would be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely

[redacted]

DR LINDA ZIKHONA LINGANISO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

APPENDIX D: TURNITIN REPORT

Factors that Affect

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%	9%	3%	3%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	mobt3ath.com Internet Source	1%
2	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	www.journals.ac.za Internet Source	1%
4	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	<1%
5	files.eric.ed.gov Internet Source	<1%
6	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
7	digitalcommons.andrews.edu Internet Source	<1%
8	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1%
9	eprints.ums.edu.my Internet Source	<1%

APPENDIX E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

29 August 2022

Tanya Felicia Thompson(895157289)
School of Acc, Economics and Finance
Westville

Dear Ms Thompson

System Nr: 00002704
Project title: Factors that affect accounting students' academic success at undergraduate level at Durban University of Technology.

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on Date 2020 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

[redacted] Date 29 Aug 2022

.....
ACADEMIC LEADER RESEARCH

/__Prof Josue Mbonigaba

APPENDIX F: PROFESSIONAL EDITOR'S REPORT

Gemini Editing Services
(Sole proprietor: Adrienne Pretorius)
082-937-8283 (cell, b & WhatsApp)
e-mail: pretorii@mweb.co.za

96 Sandown Village
27 Harvey Road
PINETOWN
3610

5 September 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

EDITING OF MASTER OF ACCOUNTANCY DISSERTATION (FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING) PREPARED BY TANYA FELICIA THOMPSON (SEPTEMBER 2022)

I, **Adrienne Mavis Pretorius**, a sole proprietor trading as **Gemini Editing Services**, hereby declare that I was asked by **TANYA FELICIA THOMPSON**, a student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (student number **895157289**), to edit and proofread Master of Accountancy in Financial Accounting dissertation as a third-party editor.

I am a professional editor with 35 years' experience in the field, and have the necessary qualifications and experience to carry out these tasks.

I confirm that in acting as a third-party editor for the dissertation submitted by the abovenamed student, **TANYA FELICIA THOMPSON**, I have complied with all professional requirements for editorial help for postgraduate research theses/dissertations. My work with regard to this thesis was confined to the following areas:

* Checking of the various elements of the tables of contents
* Formatting of the document
* Checking of spelling and punctuation
* Ensuring that the thesis/dissertation follows the conventions of grammar, spelling and syntax in written UK/South African English
* Shortening long sentences and editing long paragraphs to ensure easy reading and comprehension of the content

* Elimination of unnecessary repetition
* Checking tables and diagrams for clarity, grammar, spelling and punctuation of any text relating to the tables and diagrams
* Checking correct presentation of references in the applicable referencing convention, as well as full and accurate citation, and
* Ensuring consistency of page numbers, headers and footers.

I have advised the student that this completed form **must** accompany her thesis when she submits it for examination, and that **this declaration will be made available to the examiners**. I have further advised **TANYA FELICIA THOMPSON** to keep a copy for her records.

Yours faithfully

(Mrs) Adrienne Pretorius

(BA (*cum laude*)) (UNISA)
(Full Member of the Professional Editors' Group (PEG))

Signature: 

Signature: (See scanned image above.) Date: 5 September 2022

[Please note that I suffer from severe rheumatoid arthritis and am no longer able to sign individual documents. I therefore have to insert a scan.]