

**Employment and employability profiles of psychology graduates from the  
University of KwaZulu-Natal's professional psychology master's  
programmes: A graduate tracer study**

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(Counselling Psychology) in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities,  
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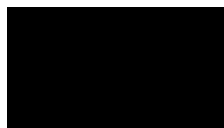
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## Declaration

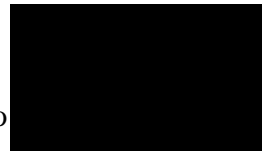
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## **Abstract**

This dissertation reports on a graduate tracer study of professional psychology master's programme graduates from one South African university (i.e., the University of KwaZulu-Natal). Since its inception in 2004, the University of KwaZulu-Natal has offered professional psychology training in clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, and research psychology. This tracer study aimed to identify these graduates' employment patterns and employability and to provide a retrospective evaluation of the professional training programmes that the graduates underwent. The study is also linked to current debates of relevance around South African psychology and higher education, and whether South African psychologists are appropriately trained to meet the demands of the specific South African labour market and the complex mental health needs of the population. Between 2005 and 2020, the University of KwaZulu-Natal produced close to 500 professional psychology graduates. Drawing on this sampling frame, this tracer study managed to survey 112 of these graduates (i.e., 25.28% response rate) via an online questionnaire designed specifically for the purposes of the study. The findings indicate that the University of KwaZulu-Natal professional psychology graduates who participated in the study are employed in a variety of fields, but most predominantly in private practice (36,6%) and public higher education (21,8%). Moreover, graduates possess a wide variety of skills that can be applied to the working environment, implying good employability skills. Qualitative findings show an overall positive view towards the institution and the training received. The study importantly indicates the University of KwaZulu-Natal is training students who are able to secure employment and contribute towards the profession of psychology within the South African context.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

During Apartheid, higher education, like most other elements in South African society, found itself succumbing to the racial segregation implemented by the state (Badat, 2016). Specifically, the Apartheid government controlled higher education institutions' admission of Black students. Many institutions were only able to secure state funding if Black students' entrance to institutions was restricted or tightly controlled (Badat, 2016). Under Apartheid, the term Black comprised of Black African, Coloured and Indian people (Bunting, 2006).

Moreover, policies such as The Bantu Education Act of 1953 highlighted the connection between education policy and the control of Black African, Coloured, and Indian people in South Africa, whereby institutions excluded and restricted students from enrolling in scientific and technical fields (Badat, 2016). Black students mainly were restricted to studies within the humanities and liberal arts (Badat, 2016). Consequently, the higher education system's aim during the years of Apartheid was to promote white supremacy and enforce division. By doing this, higher education aimed to control and confine Black people generally and to only certain jobs within society. As a result, the state sought to control Black people with the intention that these restrictions would not "undermine the existing racial division of labour" (Badat, 2016, p. 53) and maintain a sense of separation. Furthermore, much of what was taught was "rooted in colonial, apartheid and Western worldviews and epistemological traditions" (Heleta, 2016, p. 1).

The training of psychologists and the field of psychology followed in similar footsteps and was considered complicit in the enforcement of Apartheid, with psychologists often referred to as 'agents of the state' (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). The profession was deeply rooted in

Westernised and European-orientated thought with little relevance or support towards Black people (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). During this time, many psychologists chose to overlook the discrimination and oppression that dominated the country (Stead, 2002). However, the profession of psychology saw a significant transformation in 1994. As a result, the profession started to question its role in providing mental health interventions that resonated with South African citizens' everyday realities and experiences (i.e., poverty, violence, and HIV/AIDS) (Stead, 2002). Ultimately, the profession aimed to move away from supporting discrimination and oppression and change its focus by taking a closer look at the everyday realities experienced in South Africa. The change in direction aimed to address the inequalities of the past with the hope of integrating a more context-appropriate profession (Stead, 2002).

Psychology was not the only profession to seek out a change. In 2002, the National Plan on Education was proposed as a tool to transform the previously divided higher education system (Mzangwa, 2019). Part of the transformation included new policies and frameworks that aimed to bring equality to higher education institutions in the country (Heleta, 2016). Furthermore, the transformation hoped to break down barriers so that higher education institutions become “more inclusive, achieving widening access, improved throughput rates and participatory outcomes” (Mzangwa, 2019, p. 9). Although the democratic era in South Africa should have seen change and transformation, criticism has been levied regarding a lack of application and translation into practice. “Today, the reality is still far removed from the post-apartheid vision of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist higher education system” (Suransky & Van Der Merwe, 2016, p. 578), with many Black students from a lower socio-economic background still having limited access to higher education institutions (Mzangwa, 2019) and psychological services.

The effects are also evident in current employment patterns, with a higher concentration of graduate unemployment arising from historically disadvantaged higher education institutions (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Furthermore, poor integration and transformation could be attributed to the supposed deterioration of the graduate labour market in South Africa (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). The South African economy has taken on a structural change, with a shift towards favouring highly skilled workers (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). Despite these changes, there appears to be an increase in graduate unemployment. Although graduate unemployment rates are much smaller than the overall population, it is crucial to understand and identify patterns and the necessary skills graduates need to find employment (Oluwajodu et al., 2015).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

In South Africa, to register for a professional master's degree in psychology, a minimum of four years of studying is required for admission (Stead, 2002). After completing one year in the master's programme, often referred to as the 'M1 year', students must complete an internship programme based on their category of professional training (Stead, 2002). Furthermore, clinical psychology students are required to complete a third year of training after the internship called community service.

Given the transformation and expansion psychology has aimed to take, the number of newly registered psychologists every year is increasing. According to The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), in 1995, there were only 27 newly-registered clinical psychologists (Mashigo, 2017). Psychology in South Africa has seen a considerable amount of growth in recent years, with a reported 130 new clinical psychologists registering each year during the period 2001 to 2014 (Mashigo, 2017). However, comparing this number to the South African

population, i.e., 56 million, there is a clear gap between the number of HPCSA registered psychologists and the demand and need for psychological services. Despite efforts, mental health is still a relatively low priority in South Africa's healthcare system, and there is a clear gap between the population's needs and services provided (Burns, 2011).

The Apartheid era saw the profession of psychology directly aiming to serve the state (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). This was evident in the types of services that psychologists offered (i.e., primarily individual interventions), the types of clients that psychologists mostly provided services to (i.e., White people) and how psychometric testing was developed and implemented. In particular, psychometric testing was only possible in either English or Afrikaans; moreover, psychometric tests were not normed appropriately for Black people (Laher & Cockcroft, 2014). When Black people were psychometrically assessed, their relatively lower performance on cognitive and aptitude assessments were then used as 'evidence' to enforce racist beliefs around differences between Black and White people (Laher & Cockcroft, 2014). With the assumption that they had lower levels of intelligence when compared to White people (Laher & Cockcroft, 2014).

In 1994, at the Psychology and Transformation Conference, the Psychological Association of South Africa acknowledged the complicit role of psychology in Apartheid and highlighted the importance of a transformational agenda (Stead, 2002). Since 1994, the profession of psychology has aimed to correct wrongdoings from the past and, in doing so, has attempted to decolonise the profession (Stead, 2002). The new era of democracy in South Africa saw psychology change direction with the hopes of addressing some of the significant issues that have riddled the South African population with a specific focus on bringing greater equality between previously divided population groups (Stead, 2002). With the help of institutional transformation,

psychology aims to become more relevant and more contextualised discipline (S.R. Pillay, 2016). With the hope of meeting the needs of the South African population (S. R. Pillay, 2016). The field of psychology intends to play an essential role in the “understanding of SA [South African] social problems” (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012, p. 90). Therefore, professional psychologists should be instrumental in society by engaging in critical social issues the country faces, and in doing so, redress past inequalities (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012).

### **1.3 Research rationale**

The University of Natal aimed to be a part of the proposed transformation of higher education institutions. During the Apartheid years, the University of Natal’s Howard College Campus had students and staff actively protesting against the government-imposed segregation (Badat, 2016). On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004, the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville merged to become what is known today as the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) (<https://ukzn.ac.za/about-ukzn/history/>). UKZN aimed to be part of South Africa's transformation by attempting to become socially and demographically representative, readdress inequalities and wider societal issues (Makgoba, 2007). The institution aims to produce employable graduates equipped with the key skills and attributes to meet the demands of the labour market (Makgoba, 2007). UKZN’s Discipline of Psychology aims to emerge areas within the socio-psychological scholarship, more specifically focusing on African psychology (<https://psychology.ukzn.ac.za/>). By doing so, address challenges faced nationally, regionally and internationally through critically informed and reflective teaching and research and community responsiveness. (<https://psychology.ukzn.ac.za/>).

The role of psychology has seen a dramatic shift within a South African context. Given this, it becomes essential to research and understand whether the country's current mental health demands are being met and assess the employment patterns and destinations of professionally trained master's psychology graduates.

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

The aim of the research reported in this dissertation was to determine the employment patterns and employability profiles of the UKZN's five professional psychology master's programme graduates. The study also aimed to evaluate the graduate's thoughts and opinions of the programme and the overall institution.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study were:

- To determine the employment patterns of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates.
- To determine the employability of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates.
- To evaluate the UKZN professional psychology master's degree programmes.

#### **1.6 Research questions of the study**

- What are the employment patterns of professional psychology master's degree graduates from UKZN?
- What is the employability of professional psychology master's degree graduates from UKZN?

- How do professional psychology master's degree graduates from UKZN evaluate their professional psychology master's degree programmes?



## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The following chapter outlines the history of psychology in South Africa and the nature and extent of transformation that the higher education system has undergone. The chapter also explores the socio-political role that psychology plays in 21<sup>st</sup> Century South Africa while also exploring its role and position in terms of the employment and labour market context.

### **2.2 The past, present, and future role of psychology in and for South Africa**

Psychology is one of the most popular disciplines of study in South African universities (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Every year a large number of students enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in psychology. In 2008 psychology boasted one of the highest enrolment rates in humanities and social sciences at 11.9% (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Furthermore, 10.3% of student enrolment in doctoral studies was attributed to psychology (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). The study of psychology is currently offered at all seventeen traditional and comprehensive universities in South Africa at both an undergraduate or postgraduate level (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). As of 2012, fifteen universities offer accredited training programmes that result in the possibility of its graduates registering as a professional psychologist with the HPCSA (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Given its popularity, psychology has established itself into a well-known and recognised profession, playing an essential role in policy and addressing human issues challenging South Africa into the broader society (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012).

However, South African psychology has its roots in a dark and sombre history of racial discrimination and white supremacy (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Consequently, given the profession's history in South Africa, most of the knowledge and research that has been imported

and replicated is heavily dominated by Western literature. Psychology in South Africa is still considered a Euro-American orientated profession (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Many actions taken by the profession in the past have highlighted the segregation of race and the complicit relationship with the state during the years of Apartheid (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). In 1948, the South African Psychological Association (SAPA) was introduced as the first national association of psychology in South Africa (Long, 2014). Black psychologists were not explicitly prohibited from being a part of this organisation; however, the association's discriminatory and racist nature came to light when a qualified Black psychologist attempted to join and was rejected from the association based on race (Long, 2014). Heated debates sparked during this time, and after five years, SAPA eventually agreed to accept qualified Black psychologists into their organisation (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Consequently, this led to many White psychologists resigning, and in 1962, the Psychological Institute of the Republic of South Africa (PIRSA) was established and confined to White psychologists only (Nicholas, 2014).

As previously mentioned, the relationship between psychology and Apartheid has been considered complicit with many psychologists choosing to overlook or ignore the issues of discrimination and remaining silent during the years of Apartheid South Africa faced (Stead, 2002). Moreover, very little attention was paid to mental health issues during Apartheid in the schooling system. Instead, school guidance's primary goal was focused on conforming to the values of Apartheid (Stead, 2002). During the Apartheid era, the official languages in South Africa were English and Afrikaans. Because of this, all psychometric testing and assessments were developed with only the White population in mind (Stead, 2002). Consequently, the assessments were specifically normed for the White population. Considering psychometric tests were

developed without appropriate population norms, assessing Black people would be considered discriminatory, unfair and unethical (Laher & Cockcroft, 2014). As previously mentioned, this did not stop researchers from making use of intellectual assessments on Black children and using their lower scores as ‘evidence’ for their inferiority and low intelligence (Laher & Cockcroft, 2014). The aforementioned circumstances paint a picture of the unjust racism that shaped the beginnings of South African psychology and the complicit role the profession played.

In 1994, after the general elections, South Africa became a constitutional democracy ending Apartheid and segregation (Badat, 2016). As a result, the (higher) education system of the country was gradually reconstructed in an attempt to ensure a higher education system that is “nonracist and more responsive to demands of the labour market” (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012, p. 91). International pressure of exclusion put pressure on both the higher education system and the profession of psychology to be more inclusive (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). As a result, eventually, the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) was formed. The development of PsySSA aimed to transform South African psychology to fit within a new post-Apartheid era (The Psychology Society of South Africa [PsySSA], 2019). To achieve this, several changes had to be made, such as re-evaluating the scope and roles of psychologists, broadening demographic profiles, and reconnecting with the international world of psychology (PsySSA, 2019) that South Africa had previously been excluded from (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). The shift psychology has seen in South Africa raises issues surrounding the changing role and training of psychologists to fit within the new era and meet the new demands and needs of the post-Apartheid South Africa.

South African psychology has seen a significant transformation since the end of Apartheid. As of 2010, the number of Black registered psychologists doubled since the 1990s

(Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). While this represents a positive and definite trend towards a more equally distributed demographic of psychologists, the field is still highly dominated by White Females (Bantjes et al., 2016). A reason behind this could be attributed to the small number of master's students permitted entry into professional training each year and the length of time it takes to complete professional training and register as a psychologist (Young & Young, 2019). Given this, it may take time to see a more evenly distributed profession in terms of race.

There is much debate surrounding the relevance a European-originated discipline has in South Africa. Knowledge of psychology has been heavily dominated by Westernised literature and research (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Subsequently, South African psychology has dramatically increased publishing relevant psychology textbooks to combat this issue (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Furthermore, the South African Journal of Psychology (SAJP) introduction allowed South Africa to direct its attention towards psychology relevant to its unique context and attempt to address the concerns surrounding Westernised roots (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). To ensure psychology in South Africa remains relevant, research suggests having a more significant focus on alleviating poverty and oppression in the population (Stead, 2002).

According to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), one in six South Africans suffers from anxiety, depression or substance use disorders. A further estimated 40% of those infected with HIV suffering from some form of mental illness (Bateman, 2014). Furthermore, stressors such as racial discrimination, criminal and political violence, gender inequality, poverty (Stein et al., 2008), and high unemployment rates (Statistics South Africa, 2020) are thought to contribute significantly to these high rates of mental illness in South Africa. Studies show a strong correlation between poverty, oppression, and mental health illness (Lund et

al., 2011). However, the direction South African psychology has taken points towards largely private-based practices; thus, excluding a significantly large portion of the population, predominately those in need of psychological interventions due to life-long oppression. A lack of professional state positions could be a reason behind these patterns (Goodyear et al., 2016); many psychologists have had to turn to private practice to make a living (Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], 2017). In doing so, psychological interventions are substantially limited, with many of South Africa's most vulnerable population having limited access to mental health services. According to Statistics South Africa (2017), 47 million South Africans do not have a medical aid scheme relying solely on the public health care sector. Furthermore, it is estimated that for every 100 000 South Africans, there are only 0.32 psychologists (Bateman, 2014). The high number of individuals reliant on public health care and the low number of psychologists show a significant discrepancy.

Since psychology's transformation post-Apartheid, the field aims to better understand South Africa's wider social problems (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Professional psychologists should, therefore, play an instrumental role in society by engaging in critical social issues the country faces, and in doing so, redress past inequalities (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). In this regard, psychologists aim to advance their position in South Africa and the discipline of psychology as a whole (A. Pillay, 2016). Currently, the HPCSA has five established professional psychology training categories, including clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, and research psychology (Stead, 2002). As of 2020, a new category in neuropsychology was introduced (HPCSA, 2019).

As of June 2017, the number of registered professional psychologists in South Africa was reportedly less than 13 000, suggesting a shortage of professionally trained psychologists (Mashigo, 2017) in comparison to the broader population.

Given that South Africa is considered high risk for the development of mental illness among its population (Williams et al., 2008) it becomes necessary to know the distribution of professionally trained psychologists post-graduation. Furthermore, it is important to understand whether their training at a higher education institution is adequately preparing them for the working world's demands within the field of study.

Having discussed the role psychology has played in South Africa and its movement toward a transformation in the new democratic era, it is now essential to explore the dynamics surrounding the current and historical higher education system, which has trained professional psychologists in South Africa.

### **2.3 The past, present, and future role of higher education in and for South Africa**

Whereas there is now a unified higher education system, during Apartheid, this was not the case. Under Apartheid policies, South Africa's higher education system was extremely divided and disjointed (Bunting, 2006). Reluctantly basic primary education was provided to Black South Africans; however, it took much longer to implement a higher education system (Reddy, 2004; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). In 1916, The University of Fort Hare was established, the first historically Black university, almost 100 years after the first historically White university was established in South Africa (Reddy, 2004). However, the majority of institutions that permitted Black students were governed by Apartheid policies which meant they were primarily limited in the programmes offered (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). As previously stated, Black students were

predominately confined to studies within the humanities and arts (Badat, 2016). The development of Bantu Education by Hendrik Verwoerd ensured historically Black universities and institutions remained in rural, native areas of South Africa with the aim of guaranteeing Black students were steered away from White universities and further contained to their communities (Reddy, 2004). Consequently, this created a significant distinction between the education and training that people of different race groups in South Africa received. Since the end of Apartheid, the higher education system has aimed to transform itself and institutions with the hopes of meeting the new demands of South Africa and produce a wider range of well-rounded graduates (Reddy, 2004). The transformation also aimed to eradicate barriers to access for students, thereby providing higher education to all South Africans regardless of race (Badat, 2016). The idea behind widening the higher education system aimed to strengthen the economy and engage with problems in the wider society, with the idea that higher education institutions implement training and programmes that are appropriate to the new context (Reddy, 2004).

The end of Apartheid brought about many challenges of building a democratic society from a mostly poverty-stricken, deeply divided population (Ensor, 2004). While the country as a whole required substantial transformation, education was particularly important. Education is viewed as a critical tool in improving South Africans' lives and “the means to secure sound social and economic development into the new millennium” (Ensor, 2004, p. 340). Using education as a tool to develop a country is not unique to South Africa, nor is it something completely new with many countries embracing higher education as the key to improving economic growth and country development (Brown & Lauder, 1996). More recent studies show that higher education plays a vital role in both the private and public sector of a country (Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2014),

further highlighting the importance of the relationship between the economy and higher education in South Africa.

Part of the transformation process of higher education in South Africa entailed the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/service/national-qualifications-framework-nqf-qualifications-and-unit-standards>). The framework aims to break down the boundaries that previously existed between a racially divided higher education system. The NQF primarily sought to address the social injustices instilled by Apartheid but also aimed to boost the skills and productivity of the country, with the hopes of leading to economic growth (Ensor, 2003). Part of this transformation insists higher education institutions deliver appropriate teaching and training to create graduates that have the knowledge and skills to engage in the modern South African economy (Baldry, 2016).

A newly formed democratic South Africa sought to find a place in the global market which is achievable and sustainable through the development of highly skilled workers (Ensor, 2003) including professional psychologists. A large body of research suggests a strong link between developing higher education and economic growth (Kruss, 2004; Bridgestock, 2009). A higher education institution's ability to produce graduates with employability skills is seen as a measurement of the institution's quality (Maharasoja & Hay, 2001). Employability skills are considered to be transferable and can range from problem-solving techniques and adaptability to good communication skills (Fajaryati et al., 2020).

Particularly in South Africa, it is crucial to ensure that knowledge being distributed and skills are taught and a great deal of emphasis is placed on the development and growth of the individual (Maharasoja & Hay, 2001). Education policy in South Africa has seen a shift towards



building a knowledge-based society since 1994 that aims to be “more responsive to societal and economic needs, globally and in South Africa” (Kruss, 2004, p. 674). As a result, the relationship between higher education and the economy should be significantly strengthened (Kruss, 2004). A case study revealed that the majority of students felt “employability is one of the greatest factors influencing their choices of courses of study” (Maharasoja & Hay, 2001, p. 145). Therefore, higher education institutions should pay closer attention to the development of employability skills. In more recent studies, the formal integration of employability skills into the curriculum seems to be favoured (Pitan & Muller, 2020). Better practical experience and development of employability skills could be achieved through work placements and internship training through higher education institutions. By doing this, students can be made aware of the skills they need to develop and have the opportunity to engage more in the workplace environment prior to graduation (Pitan & Muller, 2020).

Unfortunately, there appears to be a lack of agreement in the implementation. The changes that have taken place do not seem to have resulted in enhanced employability skills by graduates entering the workplace (Pitan & Muller, 2020). Employers have noted that graduates tend to lack the important soft skills required in the work environment and are not work-ready due to limited work experience and real-world activities (Pitan & Muller, 2020).

The discrepancy between what is being taught in higher education institutions and the demands of the workplace emphasises the need for further research and study into the relationship between the two. Furthermore, it becomes important to track employment patterns post-graduation with the hopes of determining the extent to which graduates been successful in developing these

employability skills. Determining a graduate's employment patterns post-graduation can assist higher education institutions in better understanding the demands of the workplace.

### ***2.3.1 Employability in South Africa as an outcome of higher education***

With an unemployment rate of 30.1% in South Africa as of March 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2020) many individuals seek out higher education training as a means to enhance their skills and increase their chances of employment (Archer & Chetty, 2013).

Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly clear that a higher education institution's qualification is not sufficient to ensure employment post-graduation (Archer & Chetty, 2013). Graduate unemployment rates raise concerns about the quality and functionality of higher education institutions in South Africa (Berg & Broekhuizen, 2012) and the capacity of the South African and global labour markets to absorb graduates. This capacity is linked to the current socio-economic crisis.

Unemployment rates bring attention to higher education institutions' need to close the gap between study and work transitions and ensure well-rounded (Archer & Chetty, 2013), capable graduates are produced. To close the gap that exists, it becomes essential for graduates to be well equipped with suitable training and skills that will appropriately prepare them for the ever-changing, fast-paced, and highly dynamic labour market (Archer & Chetty, 2013).

The Human Science Research Council (2000) conducted a study on graduates from 1991 to 1995. The results showed that while more than half the participants successfully found employment, not all groups were successful. The study also highlighted the participants' racial group and higher education institution significantly impacted their employment (The Human Science Research Council [HSRC], 2000). Graduates who studied at historically Black universities

had a 28% employment rate post-graduation, while graduates from historically White universities had more than double (HSRC, 2000). Apartheid policies and laws have greatly oppressed individuals which are evident even today when looking at employment patterns. Racial group, gender, education, and location are all current significant determinants of unemployment patterns in South Africa (McCord & Bhorat, 2003). Information and research surrounding more recent levels of graduate unemployment have been inconsistent. Debates have sparked regarding the high and rising graduate unemployment in South Africa (Centre for Development and Enterprise [CDE], 2013). However, a study conducted in 2013 revealed that there appears to be a major misconception with graduate unemployment being much lower than previously thought. Additionally, since 2011, the labour market has seen a drastic growth in graduate degree holders. Due to the high labour market demand of skilled and educated workers, less than 5% of graduates are unemployed (CDE, 2013).

Given graduate employment can be considered a key influence on economic growth (Oluwajodu et al., 2015) an emphasis has been placed on researching and understanding employability and the skills surrounding employment in an attempt to develop the economy better. However, employability has been seen as quite a controversial topic, with various conflicting definitions. The conversation and debate around employability have a long-standing history. From the perspective of Harvey (2001), employability is viewed as an individual factor. Whereas Knight and Yorke (2002) regard it more holistically. This being said, employability cannot be defined in a singular term. Instead, employability is a complex construct with various meanings and definitions depending on the context. Employability's complexity is evident when looking at the wide range of determinants of unemployment patterns in South Africa. Yorke and Knight (2006)

argue that the most straightforward definition of graduate employability refers to the skills, attributes and understandings obtained by graduates. Yorke and Knight (2006) therefore imply employability is a tool that will allow continuous activity in the labour market and ongoing learning, improvement and adaption. A more contextually sensitive approach would also incorporate external conditions – including race, gender, location (McCord & Bhorat, 2003) – suggesting that employability is a combination of various factors – individual and socio-political characteristics and labour market conditions (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). With various interacting factors, a holistic approach implies a ‘demand and supply’ understanding of employability. The interaction of these factors speaks to the complexity of employability and why it may be so challenging to implement in higher education institutions, as many individuals have suggested (Yorke & Knight, 2006; Archer & Chetty, 2013). While there are a significant range of theories and understandings, most can agree on the complex interaction of various factors surrounding employability and the employment process (Knight & Yorke, 2002; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). The reputation of one’s alma mater may influence potential employers’ decisions, as well as previous work experience, social class, age, gender, and ethnicity (McCord & Bhorat, 2003). In South Africa, more recent studies have shown that a poor socio-economic status can influence a graduate’s ability to find employment as well as the choice of higher education institution, the standard and curriculum offered (Harry et al., 2018). This further supports the idea that employment process post-graduation is a complicated procedure that is always influenced by a large number of factors and highlights the vital role employability can play in a graduate’s career.

Due to the complex nature of employability and employment processes, it can be difficult to measure these phenomena. A straightforward way to measure employability is comparing

current un/employment rates (Harvey, 2001). This straight forward ‘magic bullet’ understanding of employability suggests a higher education institution provides employability development opportunities through education and training curriculum. Graduates develop these skills and, from there, find employment (Harvey, 2001). However, this simplistic form of measuring employability neglects the various factors that could influence a graduate’s employability. Previous work experience, extracurricular activities, career ambitions, social skills and networking affect a graduate’s ability to find employment (Harvey, 2001), and therefore, employability skills provided by an institution or training programme may only contribute to a certain extent. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, there is also a strong influence of social and economic context (Tomlinson & Holmes, 2016).

Furthermore, although graduate unemployment rates are considered relatively low compared to the wider population, there appears to be still a high concentration of graduate unemployment in historically disadvantaged higher education institutions within South Africa (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Rogan and Reynolds (2016) proposed that research and policy should take a closer look at the match between the labour market and graduates and pay close attention to labour demands, employer preferences, and employment practices.

A common problem throughout the discussion of employability is the meaning behind the term ‘key attributes’. This broad, somewhat imprecise term is vague with no set, clear definitions behind the key attributes’ graduates should possess. Rather than a focus on specific qualities, an exploration into the relationship that exists, where employers’ needs and individuals’ attributes meet, should be studied (Boden, 2010). Under these circumstances, for graduates to attain and sustain employment throughout their careers, they must be prepared for a dynamic

working environment where conditions are continuously changing (Yorke & Knight, 2006). Therefore, it could be argued that an overarching skill in maintaining employment throughout one's career is the ability to be adaptable and respond to rapid change within the working world.

Training graduates to be adaptive and to have the capacity to perform ongoing self-assessment will allow long-term performance and sustainable employment no matter the changing job market demands (Yorke & Knight, 2006). While difficult to pinpoint, graduate tracer studies may determine various attributes and skills the labour market is seeking, thereby contributing to the research on employability and key attributes. Since the profession of psychology took on a role of transformation post-Apartheid, there is a need to understand the attributes and skills required of professional psychology master's graduates to fit within the new South African context and meet the demands of the labour market. In turn, information collected from graduate tracer studies can assist higher education institutions in developing educated, well-rounded, and employable individuals.

Conducting a graduate tracer study from the theoretical framework of employability allows the study to take a holistic approach rather than focusing on specific factors. Furthermore, it take into account the various influences that can affect employability post-graduation, as discussed above.

### ***2.3.2 Professional psychologists' employment patterns***

A recent study conducted by the HPCSA in 2017 revealed that psychologists in South Africa tend to spend most of their time carrying out assessment, diagnosis, and interventions whereas, only 41% take part in developmental and preventative work. The study further determined that most professional psychologists in the survey were white, English speaking

females (HPCSA, 2017). The results are in line with reports of the profession still being highly dominated by White psychologists (Traub & Swartz, 2013).

Understanding the demographics and employment patterns of professional psychologists in South Africa is important. It can assess whether psychologists are contributing to their role in society by redressing past inequalities (A. Pillay, 2016) and providing relevant services to the majority of the population. Regarding income, around 50% of the participants in the study reported working in private contexts hence earning the majority of their income from private medical aids (HPCSA, 2017). As previously mentioned, around 47 million South African's do not have private medical aid, relying only on public health care (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Furthermore, many South Africans are unable to access adequate public mental health services due to government underfunding and poor distribution of services across the country, which significantly disadvantages those who solely rely on the public health care system (Department of Health, 2013). Carrying out graduate tracer studies on psychologist's post-graduation will allow the government, higher education institutions, and employers to understand the distribution and successes of professional psychologists after training. Given the mental health gap South Africa currently faces, it becomes important to establish employment patterns surrounding professional psychology master's graduates.

As of 2020, there are six professional psychology registration categories with the HPCSA. Within each category, the trained professionals are permitted to engage in work activities in their scope of practice.

### **2.3.2.1 Clinical psychologists**

According to the HPCSA, clinical psychology can be defined as a specialist category that plays an important part in the “assessment, diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of psychological and mental health disorders that range from mild to severe and complex” (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2018, p. 22).

Given the training and areas of practice in clinical psychology, clinical psychologists ideally work within settings where patients are considered to have more severe psychopathology forms (Young & Young, 2019) as predominantly seen in psychiatric hospital settings (Pretorius, 2012). According to a study conducted by the HPCSA (2017), the clinical psychologist respondents reported predominately working in intervention activities, followed by assessment and diagnosis. Furthermore, almost half of their time was spent in private practice (48.9%).

### **2.3.2.2 Counselling psychologists**

The role of counselling psychology in South Africa is a heavily debated topic (Bantjes et al., 2016; Young & Young, 2019). However, there are three major overlapping areas of interest in counselling psychology: practices surrounding promoting well-being, enhancing human development, and alleviating emotional distress (Young et al., 2016). Clinical and counselling psychology are often thought to cross over; however, a common distinction between clinical and counselling psychologists is the focus on psychopathology requiring more severe psychiatric interventions for the former (Young & Young, 2019). Professional training for counselling psychologists to address the concerns mentioned above has led to many registered counselling psychologists working in private practice and university counselling centres throughout the country (Young et al., 2016). The emphasis placed on humanistic values, development, and



prevention ideally equips counselling psychologists to turn their focus to wider community and social justice issues (Young et al., 2016) and, in doing so, focus on individuals who have suffered years of oppression and discrimination. However, funding for these kinds of interventions has been limited. Research shows that the majority of registered counselling psychologists seek employment in private practices (Goodyear et al., 2016; HPCSA, 2017; Young & Young, 2019) due to a limited number of job opportunities within the public sector. By engaging in predominately private practice, counselling psychologists are limited to working within a certain socio-economic group, consequently excluding individuals who are adequately and appropriately trained to intervene.

In terms of employment patterns, registered counselling psychologists typically work in areas of intervention, followed by assessment, diagnosis, prevention, and development activities (HPCSA, 2017).

### **2.3.2.3 Educational psychologists**

Educational psychologists typically focus their work on learning and academic performance as well as the emotional, social and behavioural development of individuals (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2018). Because learning and academic performance are central activities in childhood and adolescence, most educational psychologists are found to work with children in educational settings, for example, schools (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2018). Educational psychologists, like other professional psychology categories, have had to rethink the nature and goals of the profession (Engelbrecht, 2004). Apartheid policies left many South Africans without adequate basic education, therefore when rethinking the role of educational

psychologists an important part of this could be focusing on assessment and intervention in those individuals previously excluded and oppressed (Engelbrecht, 2004).

Similarly, to the clinical and counselling psychology respondents in the HPCSA (2017) study, educational psychologists reported spending more than half their time working privately. In relation to the other professional psychology categories of registration, educational psychologists reportedly spent the majority of their time conducting assessments and diagnoses.

#### **2.3.2.4 Industrial psychologists**

The role of industrial psychologists can be defined as finding a match between the workforce and workplace through the use of understanding human behaviour (van Vuuren, 2010). Industrial psychologists predominately focus their work in larger organisations in private and parastatal sectors; however, there is a question around their societal role and contribution to the country (van Vuuren, 2010). A study on the employment patterns and work activities of industrial psychologists revealed that most partake in a wide variety of tasks annually, with the most time being spent on interventions and consulting activities (34%) and psychological testing and assessment (22%) (Benjamin & Louw-Potgieter, 2008). Furthermore, according to the HPCSA (2017) study, registered industrial psychologists worked predominantly in assessment, diagnosis, and intervention.

#### **2.3.2.5 Research psychologists**

Research psychologists are concerned with the “advancement of psychological knowledge” (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2018, p. 23) as well as the expansion and implementation of research methodologies. Unfortunately, research psychology has been sidelined in South Africa with little attention being paid to the field (Laher, 2005). A reason behind

this could be attributed to the HPCSA neglecting the professional category resulting in many professionally trained research psychologists deciding not to pursue registration with the HPCSA (Laher, 2005). However, what is known, is the diverse range of employment research psychologists tend to have, with many working in the industrial psychology field, in research organisations (e.g., Human Sciences Research Council) and even outside the general psychology field (Laher, 2005).

Unsurprisingly, according to the HPCSA (2017) study, the registered research psychologists spent the majority of their time in research-related activities, followed by mentoring and supervision. The main work activity reported was engaging in the higher education sector.

The role of a psychologist outlined by the HPCSA informs institutions' curriculum and ensures graduates are meeting the minimum required competencies and skills. However, current research brings to the light that a degree, or completion of any training programme, is not sufficient in securing employment. While this may prepare graduates to do their job, it neglects to properly educate and train graduates to find employment and further remain employable throughout their career (Støren & Aamodt, 2010).

## **2.4 Graduate tracer studies**

Simply put, a graduate tracer study can be defined as a standardised survey that is administered to graduates to track their activities post-graduation (Schomburg, 2016). Graduate tracer studies are a critical tool in collecting data and understanding the patterns of graduate's work patterns, including unemployment (Cape Higher Education Consortium [CHEC], 2013). Ideally, administering these studies regularly should be part of a country's data collection on the current labour market. By doing so, issues surrounding high graduate unemployment can be identified

(CHEC, 2013). Unfortunately, research covering graduate destinations is lacking in South Africa, (CHEC, 2013). That being said, the employment patterns and employability of graduates are widely unknown. With a particular look at psychology, understanding and researching the employment patterns of professional psychology master's programme graduates can assist in the mental health gap (Burns, 2011).

An instrument gaining popularity is an 'exit survey'. In contrast, the survey provides a brief look at graduate's opinions and evaluations of their alma mater (CHEC, 2013). It lacks the ability to provide in-depth, comprehensive information on employment patterns post-graduation. Graduate tracer studies aim to collect a broad range of data on graduates and their careers post-graduation (Schomburg, 2016), thereby providing a better view of graduate's post-graduation.

#### ***2.4.1 Aims and objectives of graduate tracer studies***

A graduate tracer study aims to collect data on various aspects of a graduate's professional life post-graduation (Schomburg, 2016). Collecting information about a graduate's job search, the methods they used to search for a job, their income, and the economic sector they currently work in can provide data on a graduate's transition from school (professional training) to the workforce (Schomburg, 2016). A graduate tracer study aims to provide feedback to the institution, thereby allowing curricula improvements and programme reform (Schomburg, 2016). Monitoring education programme changes is of particular importance in South Africa since the higher education transformation began post-apartheid (Ensor, 2003). Graduate feedback can be used to assess higher education institution's success in transformation and development. Furthermore, it allows graduates an opportunity to provide their opinion and evaluation of the training programme they completed and will allow institutions to make the necessary changes. In doing so, data

collected from graduates can also be used as a marketing tool for prospective students who can make informed decisions regarding their choice of career (Mubuuke et al., 2014). The employment patterns and employability of particular choices of study can significantly influence a student's enrollment in higher education institutions (Maharasoja & Hay, 2001).

#### ***2.4.2 Graduate skills and attributes***

Learned skills and competencies play an essential role in the career of graduates; these skills will determine whether or not they can meet labour market demands and sustain employment long-term (Harvey, 2001). Employability may refer to graduates possessing specific basic, key skills sought out by employers, and a graduate tracer study aims to determine whether the skills taught by an institution match those required by the current labour market (Harvey, 2001). A graduate tracer study may also determine which commonly taught skills are adequately addressing a graduate's ability to maintain and sustain employment.

There is a noticeable increase in pressure on universities and higher education institutions to produce employable graduates for the workplace with common, 'generic' skills no longer being sufficient (Bridgstock, 2009). Instead, an emphasis on a graduate's ability to "proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process" (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 31) is essential. To do so, would suggest students need to obtain a wide range of skills during their tertiary training that are beyond generic skills. The term 'generic skills' is very vague and centres around key human activities (Hager & Holland, 2006). Generic attributes are transferable skills, for example, written and verbal communication, ability to work with technology, teamwork, numeracy and information literacy (Bridgstock, 2009), critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and creativity (Hager & Holland, 2006). Generic skills can be considered a "range of diverse and

fundamentally different kinds of entities such as skill components, attitudes, values and dispositions” (Hager & Holland, 2006, p. 18). Due to the diverse nature of generic skills and abilities, there are difficulties in correctly and accurately identifying these particular skills. While generic skills and abilities are important in finding employment; it is essential to ensure graduates also have appropriate continuous training and development, related to their career field, as well as career- and self-management skills (Bridgstock, 2009).

*Self-management skills* are important in the creation of career identity; this includes good self-awareness and perception of self. Research shows individuals that know their values, goals, interests, strengths, and weaknesses had higher levels of employment post-graduation (Eby et al., 2003). *Career-building skills* show individuals have ‘realistic expectations’ of the labour market, which further assists in locating, securing, and further maintaining employment (Bridgstock, 2009). Knowledge and familiarity of one’s career, being able to effectively identify the best opportunities, knowing the current labour market trends, and unemployment rates in a particular field or location, can all equip individuals to better-use their self-management skills to search for new alternatives or career paths (Bridgstock, 2009). *Career-management skills* closely relate to career-building skills and are essential to a graduate’s ability to navigate the working world as well as abilities to build a career, manage work-related interactions and continuously develop knowledge (Bridgstock, 2009). A graduate’s ability to maintain and continually develop skills and knowledge related to their discipline or career field is vital for preserving employment throughout their lifetime (Bridgstock, 2009). For example, the HPCSA requires all professionally registered psychologists, and other health professionals, to obtain Continually Professional Development points, more commonly referred to as CPD points, throughout the year

(<https://www.hpcs.co.za/?contentId=0&menuSubId=18&actionName=Core%20Operations>). As evidence shows, a wide range of competencies and skills, on top of generic skills, can better prepare graduates to find employment and further contribute to the economy (Bridgstock, 2009). Yorke and Knight (2006) discuss similar skills required for employability, including skilful practices such as problem-solving and continuous, life-long learning, as well as a thorough understanding of one's specialised field and a good understanding of personal identity and self-awareness.

Due to the ever-changing world, flexibility and adaptability are skills graduates need to master. Necessarily, to achieve this, graduates need to focus on self-managing their careers and can do so by continually developing knowledge, capabilities, and new skills that will allow individuals to meet the ever-changing labour market demands. Therefore, it could be argued that higher education institutions should pay close attention to assisting in the development of self-managed and self-aware graduates, which will allow individuals to adapt themselves.

#### ***2.4.3 Graduate tracer studies in a South African context***

Higher education in South Africa is seen as a vital tool for addressing the country's high levels of socio-economic inequality and unequal access to employment opportunities attributed to the history of colonisation and Apartheid (Ensor, 2003; Bunting, 2006; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). For this reason, conducting a graduate tracer study will contribute to the growing body of literature surrounding employment and employability (Goldwyn-Simpkins, 2015), an area of research that is severely lacking in South Africa (CHEC, 2013).

A graduate tracer study conducted by Senekal (2018) noted that professional psychology master's graduates emphasised the importance of work experience and continued professional

development even with a programme that taught necessary and relevant skills for the workplace. A graduate tracer study may aim to identify the skills and competencies required to further integrate within higher education institution's teaching curriculum.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, conducting a graduate tracer study on graduates from the five professional psychology master's programmes provides an opportunity to evaluate the standard of training graduates are receiving and whether their learned competencies are equipping them for South Africa's labour market. Furthermore, assessing employment patterns and work destinations can provide information on the context professional psychology master's graduates are able to work in.



### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The following chapter aims to outline the procedures used to conduct the graduate tracer study on the five professional psychology master's programmes offered at UKZN. A quantitative research design was used whereby data could be collected by means of an online questionnaire. The design aimed to maximise the number of graduates that could be reached within a short period of time. The data collected were analysed quantitatively using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Thematic analysis was used to qualitatively analysis data with NVivo Version 12.

#### **3.2 Aim of study**

The present research study aimed to collect information from graduates who have completed one of the five professional psychology master's degree programmes (clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, and research) offered at UKZN. In doing so, information surrounding employment patterns, employability and an evaluation of the professional master's programmes was collected. Employment patterns included questions surrounding alumni's professional careers, their job search, current employment, and job satisfaction. Moreover, evaluating the professional skills and competencies graduates acquired through the study programme was assessed and whether these skills have helped graduates meet their career demands. Graduates were also asked to evaluate their satisfaction with the training programme and their experience at the institution.

### **3.3 Objectives of study**

The objectives of the study were:

- To determine the employment patterns of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates.
- To determine the employability of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates.
- To evaluate the UKZN professional psychology master's degree programmes.

### **3.4 Research questions of study**

- What are the employment patterns of professional psychology master's degree graduates from UKZN?
- What is the employability of professional psychology master's degree graduates from UKZN?
- How do professional psychology master's degree graduates from UKZN evaluate their professional psychology master's degree programmes?

### **3.5 Research setting**

The study was conducted online by administering questionnaires to graduates from the professional psychology master's programme from the UKZN Howard College and Pietermaritzburg Campuses. The study was "located" at UKZN Durban and Pietermaritzburg despite the fact that graduates were no longer necessarily associated with the University, either as a student or lecturer. Both Howard College and Pietermaritzburg Campuses are situated in Urban cities located in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In 2004, the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal merged and formed UKZN (<https://www.ukzn.ac.za/about-ukzn/history/>).

UKZN's mission is to provide an educational institution that aims to be representative of the provincial demographics and the racial and socio-economic inequalities from South Africa's history (<https://www.ukzn.ac.za/about-ukzn/history/>). At present, UKZN is made up of four Colleges and 19 Schools. Psychology as a professional field of study is offered within the School of Applied Human Sciences, which is structurally located in the College of Humanities. In 2018, UKZN had close to 50 000 registered students, 78% of whom were Black. The percentage of students admitted from quintile one to three schools at UKZN is just below 50% (University of KwaZulu-Natal [UKZN], 2018).

The professional psychology master's programme was chosen for the study for two reasons. UKZN aims to train psychologists to work within the South Africa context, and transform students into accomplished graduates (UKZN, 2017). The reason the professional psychology master's programme at UKZN was chosen was to determine whether the professionally trained graduates are fulfilling both South Africa and UKZN's aims and objectives. Secondly, due to the shortage of registered psychologists (Mashigo, 2017) and the high demand for psychological interventions in the South African population, it is crucial to know where psychologists are finding employment and work after graduating (Burns, 2011). A graduate tracer study was chosen as it can assess the quality of education and training offered at UKZN as well as the employment patterns of their former students. Furthermore, a specific focus on professional psychology master's programmes informs stakeholders of the career paths professional psychologists are taking, their employability (Schomburg, 2016), and whether this aligns with the social demands of the country (Mubuke et al., 2014) and the institution.

### **3.6 Research design**

A graduate tracer design was used for the research study as it is an effective way to collect information from university alumni (Schomburg, 2016). Graduate tracer studies aim to collect data on a graduate's employment destinations – their job search, methods they used to search for a job, income, and the economic sector they currently work in. Additionally, graduates' employability – including skills and abilities that assisted graduates in finding employment can be assessed (Schomburg, 2016). A graduate tracer study can also be used to evaluate the professional programme graduates completed, including their opinion on the higher education institution and their specific training programme (Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Schomburg, 2016). Graduate tracer studies allow higher education institutions to gain a unique perspective of a graduate's learning experiences throughout their training programme and their transition into the working world (Dumford & Miller, 2015).

A survey design was used for the present study. A survey design allows for a larger group of participants to be targeted (Wagner et al., 2012), and the design choice is popular for graduate tracer studies (Schomburg, 2016). This empirical research study used a structured online questionnaire (via Google Forms) to collect data online. The data collected were captured and stored on the researcher's Google drive, later cleaned, organised, and analysed. The research design chosen was intended to maximise the sample size from the larger population within a short time frame (Wagner et al., 2012). An online questionnaire is considered one of the most cost-effective methods to collect large volumes of data and can be distributed much faster than other forms of data collection (Gosling et al., 2004; Wagner et al., 2012). The online survey allowed a much larger sample size to be reached (Gosling et al., 2004) through the use of the World Wide Web and social media platforms than other, more traditional methods of data collection (e.g.,

manual survey administration). Administering a survey online allowed data to be computerised more efficiently, thus reducing administration for the researcher and reducing error in transferring data (Wagner et al., 2012). On the other hand, a disadvantage with online surveys is less control over responses (Gosling et al., 2004). The questionnaire was online and therefore, respondents were able to answer the questions at any time, however, because of this, the opportunity for respondents to ask for clarification on questions was not possible, which could potentially increase the chance of respondents discontinuing or incorrectly answering a question. To control the number of times a person could respond, the Google Form was set up only to allow each participant to respond once. Furthermore, participants were asked to provide their names and email addresses to track responses, and this allowed the researcher to exclude any participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria. An additional disadvantage with online surveys is that they are restricted to a specialised portion of the population who have access to an internet connection (Fricker & Schonlau, 2002; Gosling et al., 2004). However, due to the nature of the programme completed – a professional psychology master’s degree – at a postgraduate level, it was assumed that the majority of participants would use the internet for their work and have some form of professional online presence.

The present study was cross-sectional, collecting information from participants at one point in time, based on inclusion and exclusion criteria (Setia, 2016). To participate, individuals had to have completed and graduated from one of the five professional psychology programmes – clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, or research – at UKZN between 2005 and 2020. As previously mentioned, a graduate tracer study differs from an alumni survey by collecting data from graduates sometime after graduation. However, in this study, individuals who graduated in

2020 were also recruited for participation to increase the number of participants and collect data on more recent conditions of the university and their employability. Further research may also be done to determine differences between graduates' experiences, employment patterns and employability in relation to their graduation year.

Registration with the HPCSA was not an inclusion criterion for participation in the study because some professional psychology graduates may have chosen not to pursue registration or may have not yet registered with the HPCSA due to stage of training (e.g., internship, preparing for board exam).

### **3.7 Participants and sampling**

The population sample comprised of graduates from five different professional psychology master's degree programmes offered at UKZN. Individuals who have graduated from the clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, or research professional psychology master's programmes from Howard College Campus, or Pietermaritzburg Campus were eligible to participate in the research. On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004, the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville merged to become UKZN. Given the study looked at UKZN graduates, an inclusion criterion was added. Participants had to have graduated between 2005 and 2020 from one of the professional psychology master's programmes.

The estimated target population was approximately 400 to 500 graduates. A sampling frame (a list of all the individuals forming the population for this study) was developed from the class lists of students who registered for the UKZN professional psychology master's degree programmes from 2004 onwards. Permission was granted by the Academic Leaders of Psychology on both the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg Campus (see Appendix 2a and 2b respectively)

to access these class lists. In addition to this, given that the study was concerned with graduates, the UKZN graduation programmes were used to verify which members of the professional psychology master's degree programmes had graduated from UKZN with the relevant professional psychology master's degrees. The UKZN graduation programmes were available from UKZN Archives, and permission was granted by the UKZN Registrar to the project supervisor to access these programmes for the intended purposes (see Appendix 2c). Furthermore, although registration with the HPCSA was not a requirement, the researcher also used iRegister (HPCSA's online system), which allowed the researcher to verify the registration status of the graduates who are currently registered (<http://isystems.hpcsa.co.za/iregister/>).

Access to the graduation programmes and class lists still proved to have limitations in creating a sampling frame. The 2009 and 2015 graduation programmes were not available from the UKZN Archives. Eventually, digital copies of two draft April 2015 graduation programmes were obtained from the supervisor's records; however, all attempts were unsuccessful in obtaining the outstanding 2009 and 2015 graduation programmes. Further efforts were made to make use of snowball sampling. In this regard, several participants offered to provide email addresses or forward the questionnaire onto colleagues or past classmates they knew.

### ***3.7.1 Response Rates***

All target population members were targeted for sampling; however, a response rate between 30 – 50% was predicted (Schomburg, 2016). The accuracy of the participants' contact details, the questionnaire format, and reminders can affect the response rate. The sampling frame that the researcher was able to construct consisted of 142 clinical, 100 counselling, 39 educational, 91 industrial, and 73 research professional psychology master's graduates, with a total of 443

graduates on the sampling frame list. The sampling frame excluded the graduation programmes that were inaccessible. Those individuals with no online presence proved challenging to contact. Unfortunately, a standard, rather significant limitation of graduate tracer studies is poor response rates. Outdated, or lack of, reliable contact information proves to impact the response rate (Schomburg, 2016) and other factors including a decreased loyalty for their alma mater and suspicion surrounding questionnaires for monetary exploitation (Dumford & Miller, 2015). A difficulty arises when comparing response rates for graduate tracer studies, as they vary depending on research design. Schomburg (2016) suggests, for a graduate tracer study to be feasible, reliable contact information and willingness to participate are vital in influencing response rates. Schomburg (2016) further suggests a response rate of 30 – 50% is typical and appropriate for this particular research design.

In the present study, the sampling frame consisted of 443 graduates, with a total of 112 graduates participating. Therefore, the response rate was 25.28%.

### ***3.7.2 Recruitment***

An online search was used to identify publicly available contact details (e.g., email addresses) of potential study participants after ethical approval had been granted by the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) (see Appendix 3). Various social media platforms were used, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google search to identify contact details of the graduates. An information letter (see Appendix 4) outlining the details of the study with the link to the questionnaire (see Appendix 5) were sent to those who expressed interest. The research supervisor also assisted with participant recruitment by sending emails to potential participants (in his professional network), inviting them to participate in the



study. Participants received an incentive of being entered into a lucky draw to encourage participation in the research study. The names of participants were required when completing the online survey; however, after the initial data clean, names and identities were delinked and therefore, no personal or identifying details were reported. The names of participants were kept confidential, with only the researcher having access to these details initially.

### **3.8 Instrument**

The questionnaire (see Appendix 5) comprised of 10 sections which were based on Schomburg's graduate tracer study questionnaire and modified to the South African context. The questionnaire used in a previous graduate tracer study conducted by Senekal (2018) was also used.

Schomburg (2016) provides a 'minimum version' questionnaire that can be used and adapted for various higher education tracer studies. The minimum version questionnaire provided by Schomburg (2016) was used as a basis, and further adaptations were made by the project supervisor (Dr Nicholas Munro) and the principal investigator (Kelly Wurzel). Specific contextual information was also included in the questionnaire to ensure it addressed the professional psychology master's programme offered at UKZN. For example, demographic questions from the General Household Survey of South Africa (GHS) were incorporated into the questionnaire (e.g., pertaining to the various population groups of South Africa) (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

The questionnaire initially began with 12 sections, but adjustments were made to shorten the questionnaire and only include relevant questions that would answer the research questions being investigated. While a shorter questionnaire may be quicker to complete, possibly resulting in a higher response rate, it does not allow an in-depth understanding of graduate's employment destinations, employability, and evaluation of the training programme. Schomburg (2016)

proposes a questionnaire between 12 to 16 pages is an appropriate length; this is in line with the survey used for this research study.

The minimum specimen version of the questionnaire outlined by Schomburg (2016) had to fit into the South African context and adequately address the research questions of the present study surrounding professional psychology training. To do so, the following occurred. The first was adapting the questionnaire to address the research questions. Keeping the research questions in mind, any questions that did not relate directly to the research were excluded. For example, questions regarding post-secondary education or vocational training prior to the completion of the master's degree were excluded as they did not directly answer the research question.

Secondly, the questionnaire had to be adapted to the national context of South Africa. All adaptations are noted in italics on the questionnaire (see Appendix 5). The General Household Survey of South Africa (GHS) was used to determine the different population groups (question A5) used in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Furthermore, the use of the HPCSA information regarding home languages and practising languages were used to adapt question A6 and A7 (HPCSA, 2017).

Finally, the questionnaire was adapted to fit with the specific study programme's being investigated – the five professional psychology master's programme offered at UKZN. To do so, the relevant training categories and campuses were included. Relevant questions surrounding HPCSA registration (question B10 and B11) and main work activities (question F13) were also included.

### ***3.8.1 Final instrument***

The final instrument consisted of 10 sections labelled Part A to Part J. Before the questionnaire began, participants were informed that starting the questionnaire signified their consent (as outlined in the information letter and consent form, see Appendix 3).

The first section, Part A (Personal Details), included 12 questions that aimed to determine the demographic profiles of the graduates. Questions surrounding gender, proficient languages, age, relationship status, nationality and their current residence as suggested by Schomburg (2016) were asked.

Part B (Your professional psychology programme of study) of the questionnaire provided details on the respondent's specific training programme and experiences. Including their professional training category, UKZN campus, and as well as the reasoning behind their university choice. Further questions were asked about graduate's experiences after the completion of their first Masters year, providing information on their internship training or work transition.

The next section, Part C (Evaluation of study conditions and study provisions while you were studying the professional psychology master's degree at UKZN), directly aimed to ask questions surrounding the graduate's experience of the university, including quality of resources, study conditions and provisions. The section aimed to evaluate the graduate's opinions and experiences of the university, the quality of education as well as the professional training received. Question C1 addressed study conditions and provisions, while question C2 addressed the practical side of professional training (including teaching content, practical experiences of teaching staff, and opportunities to acquire key competencies). Participants were asked to rate their responses on a five-point scale. The use of a five-point scale is appropriate for this questionnaire because it is

an uneven scale, allowing a normal curve to be reached and further ease of interpretation (Schomburg, 2016).

Part D (Competencies and satisfaction with study) aimed to address the research question surrounding the employability of graduates and key competencies that were believed to have been taught. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which UKZN contributed to the teaching of various competencies on a five-point scale, from a very low extent to a very high extent.

The next section of the survey was Part E (The first six months after you graduated from the professional psychology master's degree programme at UKZN) which looked at the first six months post-graduation. The section included questions surrounding graduate's job search, including the time-frame between graduation and employment as well as the most successful method used to secure employment.

Graduates' current employment was then addressed in Part F (Current employment and work). The section had questions relating to the current job destinations of graduates, including their annual tax income bracket, current work context and hours worked per week. Furthermore, question F12 aimed to assess which professionally trained psychologists were contributing to their communities through the use of pro bono or unpaid community work.

In Part G (Relationship between study and current employment) graduates were asked to determine to what extent their learned skills and competencies were used in their current work environment, looking at the relationship between study and work. The skills listed were those from Part D.

Part H (Current work orientation) asked participants which aspects related to their current work orientation. This included their job security, work atmosphere, employment benefits and more. Participants were also asked how satisfied they are with their current situation.

In Part I (Further study) participants were asked whether they had continued any further studying at UKZN or a different higher education institution after their master's degree.

Due to the majority of the questionnaire having closed questions, Part J (Your comments and recommendations) was included to provide an opportunity for respondents to give a more detailed idea of their experience at UKZN and their professional psychology programme. Respondents were asked to offer any recommendations for UKZN to improve the quality of education provided. The reliability and validity of the final instrument are discussed later (see sub-section 3.12).

### **3.9 Procedure**

Gatekeeper's permission was granted by the Registrar of UKZN for the use of graduation programmes and class lists in compiling a sampling frame (see Appendix 2c). Permission was also granted by the Academic Leaders of Psychology on both the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg Campus for the use of class lists (see Appendix 2a and 2b respectively). Permission to conduct the survey was granted by the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (see Appendix 3a). On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, the document was further amended (Appendix 3b).

The graduation programmes from 2004 to 2020 were then used to compile a list of all professional psychology master's graduates. In this way, the research involved accessing and processing confidential information (names on class lists) without prior consent from the participants. However, it was argued that this process was minimally invasive to the potential

participants' confidentiality and was only to form a starting point for compiling the sampling frame. From there, the class lists were used to verify a graduate's category, his/her first year of the programme, and his/her campus of study.

Google forms collected the data and the captured answers were accessible to the researcher electronically. The Google Forms survey went live on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020, and participants were then sought out through the use of various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google search. Graduates were approached with a message explaining the reason for contact, the information and consent forms, as well as the link to the questionnaire. The survey remained live for two months until the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020. Reminders were sent to those graduates who had not responded after four weeks, and a final reminder was sent out on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020, stating the last day the survey would be available. Graduates who participated were sent a message thanking them for their responses.

After the survey closed, the data was extracted from Google Forms, and the initial data clean was done. The initial data clean excluded those participants who had not graduated from one of the five professional psychology programmes. All personal identifying details were removed, each graduate was allocated a number and their name removed from the spreadsheet of data. Data were imported into, managed, and quantitatively analysed in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 26 (SPSS).

### **3.10 Data analysis**

The data collected was first cleaned. This entailed addressing any inconsistencies, missing data or false values (Wagner et al., 2012). The numerical data were analysed using descriptive and statistics, while the responses to the open-ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis.

Descriptive statistics allowed the raw data to be summarised into a visual pattern (Wagner et al., 2012), giving an overview of the respondents' demographics, education, and employment patterns (Schomburg, 2016). This was achieved by using measures of central tendency and measures of variability (Wagner et al., 2012). Finally, the data was represented visually by constructing frequency distribution tables.

Thematic analysis was used to identify and name different themes that best present participants' responses to the open-ended questions. Thematic analysis is a data analysis method used for “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). The open-ended questions (see Appendix 5 – Part J: Your comments and Recommendations: J1, J2, J3) prompted respondents to reflect upon their experiences of UKZN and the professional training programme they completed. The data were analysed qualitatively by extracting patterned responses in participants answers that captured an important theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **3.11 Strengths and limitations of design**

#### ***3.11.1 Strengths***

A graduate tracer design using quantitative data analysis methods (and some qualitative thematic analysis) proved to be the most appropriate design for this research study (Schomburg, 2016). A quantitative research design allowed a large sample of the target population to be reached within a relatively short time frame (Wagner et al., 2012). Thus, results could be more appropriately related to the larger population of professional psychology master's graduates (Rahman, 2016). However, because the final sample was not necessarily representative of the population (e.g., in terms of race, gender, category, campus, year of study), the findings cannot be

reliably generalised to the population of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates. Senekal (2018) suggested that conducting similar studies at various institutions will provide a better overall picture of professional psychology master's graduate's employment patterns and employability post-graduation. Lastly, the study design's advantage is that less time is spent on capturing and transferring the quantitative data and data analysis (Rahman, 2016).

### **3.11.2 Limitations**

As previously discussed, graduate tracer studies prove to be very helpful and insightful to the world of graduates and their experiences during and after their higher education training. However, a major concern and limitation is the ability to implement a graduate tracer study with a lack of accurate and updated contact details for participants. Unfortunately, most higher education institutions may no longer have reliable or valid contact details making it difficult to contact participants. This may be a reason exit surveys are becoming so popular. An exit survey provides a brief look at graduate's opinions and evaluations of their alma mater immediately after graduation (CHEC, 2013); however, this form of survey lacks the ability to provide an in-depth look at graduates' employment post-graduation. Fortunately, with the modern age of social media and the World Wide Web, a large portion of the target population were found to have some form of online presence which made it possible to contact a large portion of the graduates.

### **3.12 Reliability and validity**

Reliability of a study suggests the results are replicable and consistent (Wagner et al., 2012). In terms of the questionnaire used, the present study used the "minimum version" questionnaire created by Schomburg (2016) for conducting graduate tracer studies at higher educational institutions. The questions provided have been used and tested in a large variety of



surveys to assure quality measurement (Schomburg, 2016). The highly standardised questionnaire has good measures of reliability and can be used to develop context relevant questionnaires for various graduate tracer studies (Schomburg, 2016). In terms of internal consistency, in the current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficients (for Parts C, D, and H of the questionnaire) were .88, .92, and .85 respectively. These coefficients imply high levels of internal consistency (reliability) for sections of the questionnaire that targeted respondents' evaluation of their study conditions, satisfaction with what they had been taught in relation to competencies required in the workplace (employability), and satisfaction with their current employment/work activities.

Validity can be defined as the extent to which “you are measuring what you are supposed to” (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 80). The questionnaire used in the present research study was adapted followed Schomburg's (2016) three suggestions for contextual and national adaption of the minimum version he provided to ensure reliability and validity were not compromised. Adaptions were made by the project supervisor (Dr Nicholas Munro) and the principal investigator (Kelly Wurzel). In order to enhance the face validity of the questionnaire (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013) a version of the questionnaire was sent to two experts (one research psychologist and one counselling psychologist). These experts provided comments on the questions and feel of the questionnaire and further relevant adjustments were made by the researcher.

### **3.13 Ethics**

Gatekeeper's permission was obtained and granted by the UKZN Academic Leaders of Psychology on the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg Campuses (see Appendix 2a and 2b respectively) to the project supervisor (Dr Nicholas Munro) for the relevant class lists to be used. The UKZN Registrar granted gatekeeper's permission to the project supervisor for the class lists

and graduation programmes to be used to generate the sampling frame (see Appendix 2c). Ethical approval was granted by the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (see Appendix 3a), which was further amended on the 15<sup>th</sup> April (see Appendix 3b).

An information and consent form was sent to all participants outlining the details of the research, the survey, and what was expected of them. Both the primary investigator and the project supervisor's contact details were made available. Furthermore, the HSSREC contact details were made clear if participants had any further enquiries. Participants were asked to click on the link to the survey on Google Forms to begin; this signified the participant agrees to consent. From there, the first question again requested participants consent and agreement to participate before beginning the survey. Participants were informed of the benefits of the research as well as their right to withdraw at any moment without any consequences. In order to encourage participation a minimal incentive (in the form of being eligible to win a R500 Takealot voucher) was offered to those who participated in the study. Respondents' names were placed into a lucky draw and three were selected to win a Takealot voucher to the value of R500.

Due to the nature of the study, it was important to ensure participants had graduated from one of the professional psychology degree programmes and therefore, it was important to cross-reference their details with the graduation programmes and class lists. Because of this, participants were asked to fill in their full name and email address. Participants were informed that this process was merely to verify responses, ensure no participants had mistakenly responded more than once, and contact the winners of the lucky draw, and their confidentiality would be kept by the

researcher. After the initial data clean, participants were given a number, and all personal identifying details were removed.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The following chapter outlines the quantitative results and qualitative findings from the graduate tracer survey. Descriptive statistics surrounding the demographic details, employment patterns, employability, and evaluation of the professional psychology programme completed are first discussed. Following this, qualitative findings from the thematic analysis are outlined. Including the respondents' responses to prompts about what they liked and disliked about the professional programme they completed and if they had any recommendations for the programme they completed and the overall institution (UKZN).

### **4.2 Descriptive statistics**

#### ***4.2.1 Demographic profile of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates***

Since its commencement in 2004, UKZN graduation records between 2005 and 2020 indicate that the institution has produced 443 professional psychology master's degree graduates. This amounts to an average of 27.7 professional psychology graduates (across the categories of clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, and research psychology) each year over the past 16 years. However, as mentioned in Chapter 3 (see sub-section 3.7) graduation records from 2009 and 2015 could not be sourced; therefore UKZN is likely to have produced close to 500 professional psychology master's degree graduates since 2005.

##### **4.2.1.1 Sampling frame demographics**

A total of 443 graduates formed part of the sampling frame. The biggest group, clinical psychology, consisted of 142 graduates. Counselling psychology had a total of 100 graduates, followed by 90 graduates for industrial psychology, 74 for research psychology, and 37 for

educational psychology. Table 4.1 below summarises the percentages of professional psychology master's degree graduates according to category of training, campus, population group, and gender.

Table 4.1: Sampling frame demographics

		Count	Percent
Race	African	195	44,0%
	Coloured	10	2,3%
	Indian	62	14,0%
	White	176	39,7%
	Other	0	0,0%
	Total		100,0%
Gender	Female	382	86,2%
	Male	60	13,5%
	Other	1	0,2%
	Total		100,0%
Campus	Howard College	219	49,4%
	Pietermaritzburg	218	49,2%
	Westville	6	1,4%
	Total		100,0%
Category	Clinical	142	32,1%
	Counselling	100	22,6%
	Educational	37	8,4%
	Industrial	90	20,3%
	Research	74	16,7%
	Total		100,0%

African graduates made up the majority of the sampling frame with 44.0%, closely followed by White graduates with 39.7% (see Table 4.1). The sampling frame was predominately female with 86.2%. The graduates were almost evenly divided between Howard College campus (49.4%), and Pietermaritzburg campus (49.2%). Westville campus only produced six professional psychology master's degree graduates. This is because all teaching in psychology was phased out of the Westville campus in 2004 as a result of the mergers between the Universities of Durban-

Westville and Natal, and relocated to either the Howard College or Pietermaritzburg Campuses (<https://psychology.ukzn.ac.za/>).

#### 4.2.1.2 Demographic profile of the study sample (i.e., the survey respondents)

##### 4.2.1.2.1 *Race, gender, and campus demographics of respondents*

The participants in this study (i.e., the questionnaire respondents) provided demographic information on their gender, population group, home language, relationship status, nationality, current area of residence and age at the start of their masters training programme. Table 4.2 below outlines the race, gender, campus, and category demographics of the survey respondents.

Table 4.2: Respondents' demographics

		Count	Percent
Race	Black African	33	29.5%
	Coloured	6	5.4%
	Indian/Asian	10	8.9%
	White	60	53.6%
	Namibian	2	1.8%
	Biracial	0	0.0%
	Do not identify	1	0.9%
	Total	112	100.0%
Gender	Female	97	86.6%
	Male	14	12.5%
	Trans masculine	1	0.9%
	Total	112	100.0%
Campus	Howard College	34	30.4%
	Pietermaritzburg	78	69.6%
	Total	112	100.0%
Category	Clinical	29	25.9%
	Counselling	35	31.3%
	Educational	17	15.2%
	Industrial	9	8.0%
	Research	22	19.6%
	Total	112	100.0%

The results documented in Table 4.2 indicate that respondents across all five categories of training in professional psychology were predominately female (86.6%). A total of 12.5% respondents were male. The respondents were predominately White (53.6%) followed by Black African respondents (29.5%). The majority of respondents were from the Pietermaritzburg campus (69.6%) with the remaining respondents hailing from the Howard College campus (30.4%).

#### ***4.2.1.2.2 Languages***

The majority of participants reported their home language is English (68.8%), followed by isiZulu with 16.1%. Shona, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, Setswana, and Siswati were less commonly reported. Respondents were also asked to report which languages they are proficient to practice in. English was predominately reported (95.5%) as the language that respondents were proficient to practice in, followed by isiZulu with 20.7%, and Afrikaans with 18.9%.

#### ***4.2.1.2.3 Relationship status***

Based on the respondents' answers, 42.0% reported they were married followed by 28.6% being single. A further 3.6% reported being currently separated or divorced.

#### ***4.2.1.2.4 Nationality***

Based on the results, South African was the most commonly reported nationality (83%). The second and third most commonly reported nationalities were Zimbabwean (3.6%) and Namibian (2.7%).

#### ***4.2.1.2.5 Residence***

Respondents were asked for their current country of residence. Results showed 88.0% of the respondents currently reside in South African, followed by the United Kingdom (2.0%),

Australia (2.0%), and Namibia (2.0%). From the 88.0% of South African residents, the participants were then asked which province they reside in. KwaZulu-Natal was reported to be the most popular province with 66.0% of participants residing. This was followed by Gauteng with 14.0%.

#### **4.2.1.2.6 Age**

Respondents were asked for their date of birth and class lists were used to calculate their estimated age at the start of their M1 training year. Based on the results, the average age participants were at the start of their professional psychology master's training programme was 28 years old.

#### **4.2.2 Descriptive statistics around employment patterns**

Respondents were asked to select their main work activities after completing their first master's year.

Table 4.3: Main work activities post M1 year

	Frequency	Percent
Extended M1	3	2,7
Internship	62	55,4
Dissertation	4	3,6
Internship and dissertation	34	30,4
Other	9	8,0
Total	112	100,0

The majority of respondents reported starting their internship in the year following their M1 training (55.4%), with 30.4% of participants also continuing their dissertation into the internship year. A small portion of students reported being required to extend their M1 year (2.7%).



#### 4.2.2.1 Six months following graduation

Table 4.4 contains the activities the respondents reportedly engaged in following the first six months after graduation (i.e., completion of the M1 year and dissertation). Respondents were able to select multiple answers and therefore the final column of the table exceeds a total of 100%.

Table 4.4: Graduates activities in the first six months after graduating

	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Internship in my professional category of study	40	23,7%	35,7%
Community internship in my professional category of study	13	7,7%	11,6%
Permanent employment in my professional category of study	19	11,2%	17,0%
Permanent employment unrelated to my professional category of study	2	1,2%	1,8%
Self-employed in private practice	6	3,6%	5,4%
Entrepreneurial activities related to my professional field of study	1	0,6%	0,9%
Entrepreneurial activities unrelated to my professional field of study	1	0,6%	0,9%
Casual employment related to my field of study	21	12,4%	18,8%
Casual employment unrelated to my field of study	4	2,4%	3,6%
Further academic education	8	4,7%	7,1%
Housewife/Househusband	3	1,8%	2,7%
Unemployed, but searching for work	7	4,1%	6,3%
Unemployed, but doing volunteer work	2	1,2%	1,8%
Preparing to write HPCSA board examination	40	23,7%	35,7%
Other	2	1,2%	1,8%
Total	169	100,0%	150,9%

Based on the results reported in the above table, the majority of respondents were undertaking professional internship training (35.7%) as well as preparing to write HPCSA board examinations (35.7) six months after they graduated with the professional psychology master's degree. Less commonly, 18.8% of graduates had casual employment within their field, with 17.0% being permanently employed in their field six months after graduating.

#### 4.2.2.2 Full-time employment

Respondents were asked to report the time frame between graduation and their first full-time employment. According to the results, 27.7% of graduates were able to secure full-time employment less than six months after graduation. A further 30.4% took six months or longer. A smaller portion of 12.5% of respondents have not been employed since graduation. Respondents were then asked for the length of time they searched for their first job after graduation. If they did not search for employment, they were advised to skip this section and move on to the next relevant question (i.e., F1). The table below documents the results pertaining to the length of time graduates searched for their first job after graduation.

Table 4.5: Length of time graduates searched for first job after graduation

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 month	24	21.4
1 to less than 3 months	12	10.7
3 to less than 6 months	15	13.4
6 to less than 9 months	1	.9
9 to less than 12 months	4	3.6
More than one year	4	3.6
Total	60	53.6
Missing System	52	46.4
Total	112	100.0

Respondents were asked the length of time they searched for their first job after graduation. This excluded internship or community service year. Based on the results, 46.4% of respondents did not search for a job after graduation because they were still completing their internship or community training year. 21.4% of respondents were able to secure employment in less than one month, which was followed by 13.4% searching for three to less than six months.

#### 4.2.2.3 Methods for finding employment

As mentioned above, respondents who did not search for employment did not complete the question pertaining to employment search methods. Table 4.6 (see below) outlines the respondents' most successful methods for finding employment.

Table 4.6: Most successful method for finding employment

	Frequency	Percent
Replied to a job advert	19	17,0
With help of personal contacts of friends, fellow students etc.	10	8,9
Speculative application	1	0,9
Through internship	14	12,5
I was contact by an employer	3	2,7
Through internet (social) networks	1	0,9
Through the careers service at UKZN	1	0,9
Through teaching staff at UKZN	8	7,1
Not applicable, I have not found a job	4	3,6
Other	1	0,9
Total	62	55,4
Missing System	50	44,6
Total	112	100,0

The most successful method (17.0%) for finding employment was reportedly replying to a job advertisement. The next most successful method was through internship (12.5%) followed by the help of personal contacts including family, friends, and fellow students (8.9%). A total of 7.1% of respondents found the most successful method of finding employment was through the teaching staff at UKZN. Only one questionnaire respondent (0.9%) reported securing employment through the career services offices at UKZN.

#### **4.2.2.4 Current employment situation**

Respondents were asked to identify their current employment situation. Multiple answers were possible and therefore the third column (percent of cases) exceeds 100%. Table 4.7 (below) outlines the results.

Table 4.7: Current employment situation

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
<sup>a</sup>	Internship in my professional category of study	11	6,6%	9,8%
	Community internship in my professional category of study	2	1,2%	1,8%
	Permanent employment in my professional category of study	51	30,7%	45,5%
	Permanent employment unrelated to my professional category of study	8	4,8%	7,1%
	Self-employed in private practice	38	22,9%	33,9%
	Entrepreneurial activities related to my professional field of study	8	4,8%	7,1%
	Entrepreneurial activities unrelated to my professional field of study	4	2,4%	3,6%
	Casual employment related to my field of study	15	9,0%	13,4%
	Casual employment unrelated to my field of study	1	0,6%	0,9%
	Further Academic education	8	4,8%	7,1%
	Housewife/househusband	5	3,0%	4,5%
	Unemployed, but searching for work	3	1,8%	2,7%
	Unemployed, but doing volunteer work	1	0,6%	0,9%
	Preparing to write HPCSA board examination	7	4,2%	6,3%
	Other	4	2,4%	3,6%
	Total	166	100,0%	148,2%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Respondents were asked about their current employment situation and 45.5% of participants reported being permanently employed within their professional training category. A further 33.9% were self-employed in private practice. A smaller portion of respondents were unemployed and currently searching for employment (2.7%), followed by 0.9% of respondents also unemployment but currently partaking in volunteer work.

#### 4.2.2.5 Income tax bracket

The table below outlines which tax bracket the graduates are placed.

Table 4.8: Income tax bracket

	Frequency	Percent
I choose not to disclose this information	20	17,9
Unemployed	9	8,0
R1 - R195 850	16	14,3
R195 851 - R305 850	14	12,5
R305 851 - R423 300	12	10,7
R423 301 - R555 600	13	11,6
R555 601 - R708 310	12	10,7
R708 311 - R1 500 000	15	13,4
R1 500 000 and above	1	0,9
Total	112	100,0

Based on the responses, 17.9% of respondents chose not to disclose this information. Followed by 14.3% falling into the first income tax bracket (R1 - R195 850). A smaller percent of 9.0% reported unemployment.

#### 4.2.2.6 Permanently employed graduates

Respondents were asked to comment on whether they were currently permanently employed, unemployed, self-employed or on contract. If respondents were not currently employed, they were asked to leave out this question and move on to the next section. Table 4.9 below documents the results.

Table 4.9: Graduates permanently employed

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	49	43.8
No	11	9.8
Not applicable, I am self-employed or employed on contract	43	38.4
Total	103	92.0
Missing System	9	8.0
Total	112	100.0

A total of 43.8% of respondents reported being permanently employed, with a further 38.4% being self-employed or undertaking contract work. A smaller portion of respondents (9.8%) reported not being permanently employed.

#### **4.2.2.7 Current work context**

Respondents were asked to report which of the following apply to their current work context or environment. Table 4.10 (below) outlines the results. Given the fact that respondents could select multiple answers, the last column in the table (percent of cases) exceeds a total of 100%.

Table 4.10: Current work context or environment

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Basic education (public school)	6	5,0%	5,9%
Basic education (private school)	6	5,0%	5,9%
Employee assistance programme (private sector)	1	0,8%	1,0%
Employee assistance programme (public sector)	1	0,8%	1,0%
Higher education (private)	3	2,5%	3,0%
Higher education (Public)	22	18,2%	21,8%
Research organisation	9	7,4%	8,9%
Other	3	2,5%	3,0%
Public service: Other	1	0,8%	1,0%
Public service: Correctional Services	1	0,8%	1,0%
Private organisation	2	1,7%	2,0%
Private practice	37	30,6%	36,6%
Private consulting firm	2	1,7%	2,0%
Hospital (private sector)	7	5,8%	6,9%
Parastatal	1	0,8%	1,0%
Non-government organisation	5	4,1%	5,0%
Human resources (private sector)	5	4,1%	5,0%
Hospital (public sector)	9	7,4%	8,9%
Total	121	100,0%	119,8%

Based on the above table (4.10), a large portion of respondents (36.6%) reported working in private practice. This was followed by employment in public higher education institutions (21.8%). A smaller portion of respondents reported they worked in a public hospital setting (8.9%) and a private hospital setting (6.9%).



#### 4.2.2.8 Community work

Respondents were asked how much time they spent in unpaid community or pro bono work setting. Based on the responses, a total of 33.0% reported not partaking in any pro bono or community work. 27.7% of respondents reported spending 1 – 5 % of their employment time in an unpaid or community setting, followed by 14.3% spending 6 – 10% of their time. A smaller portion of 8.0% reported spending more than 15.0% of their time working in an unpaid or community setting.

#### 4.2.2.9 Main work activities

Respondents were asked to report which of the following were their three main work activities. Multiple answers were possible and therefore the last column in the table exceeds 100%.

Table 4.11: Main work activities

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Assessment	61	21.9%	60.4%
Intervention	79	28.4%	78.2%
Prevention and Development	48	17.3%	47.5%
Mentoring and supervision	34	12.2%	33.7%
Research	30	10.8%	29.7%
Other	26	9.4%	25.7%
Total	278	100.0%	275.2%

Based on the table above, intervention (28.0%) was reported to be the most common, followed by assessment (22.0%) and prevention and development (17.0%). A smaller portion of respondents reported research as one of their main work activities (10.8%).

### 4.2.3 Employability

#### 4.2.3.1 The extent UKZN contributed to the following competencies at time of completing the M1 training year

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which UKZN contributed to them acquiring certain competencies at the time of completing their M1 year. Respondents answered this question on a five-point scale, however for ease of interpretation, responses were clustered as low (1 and 2), medium (3), and high (4 and 5) (Senekal, 2018). Figure 4.1 documents the results below.

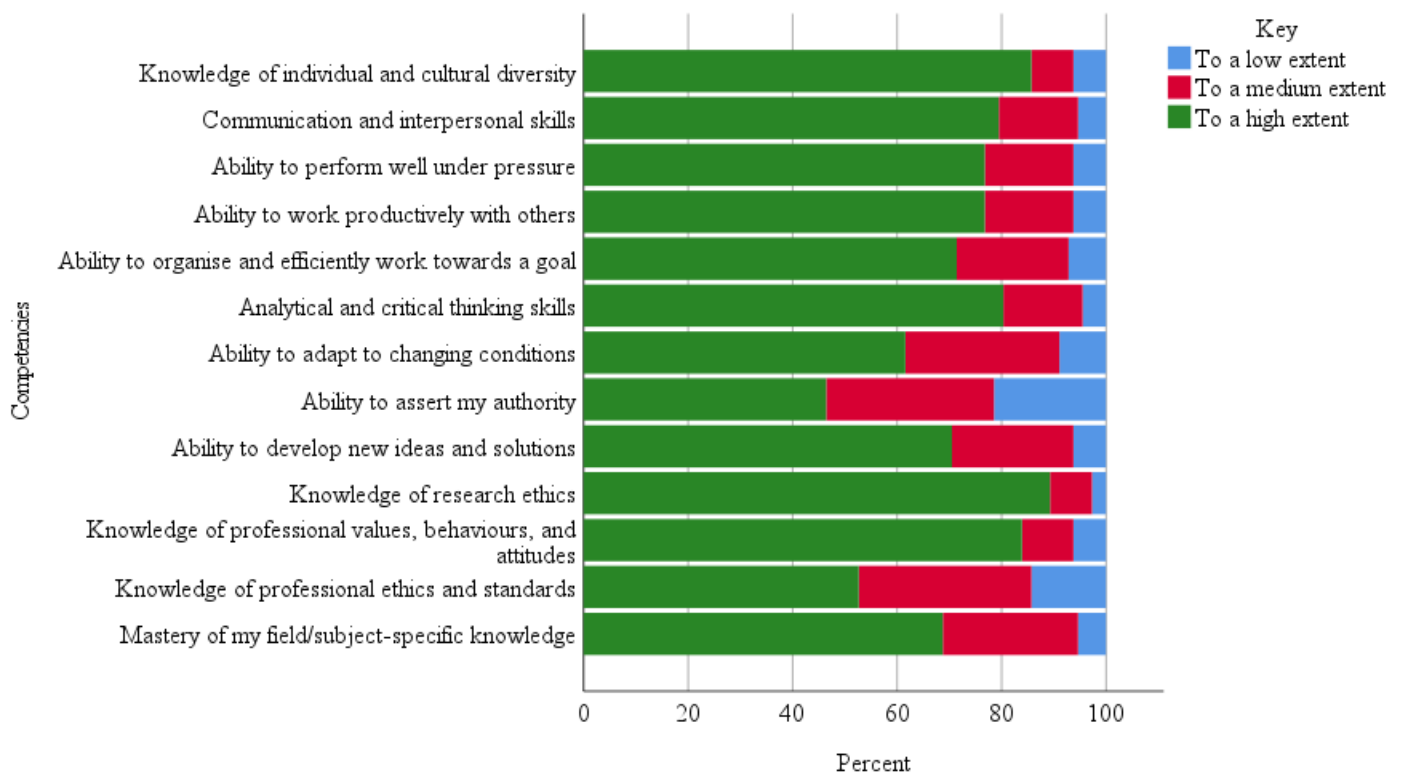


Figure 4.1: The extent UKZN contributed to the following competencies at time of completing M1 training year

Based on the figure above, most respondents reported that UKZN contributed to the attainment of most of the listed competencies to a high extent. In particular, the respondents

identified that UKZN contributed highly to them attaining competencies in the knowledge of research ethics (89.7%), knowledge of individual and cultural diversity (85.7%), and knowledge of professional values, behaviours, and attitudes (83.9%). In contrast, 21.4% of the respondents suggested that their ability to assert their authority was only developed to a low extent by UKZN. In terms of developing competency in knowledge of professional ethics and standards 14.3% of respondents identified that UKZN only contributed to this competency to a low to medium extent.

#### 4.2.3.2 Competencies at current employment

Respondents were asked to report which of the following competencies are required in their current employment environment on a five-point scale. The answers were grouped for ease of interpretation as stated above.

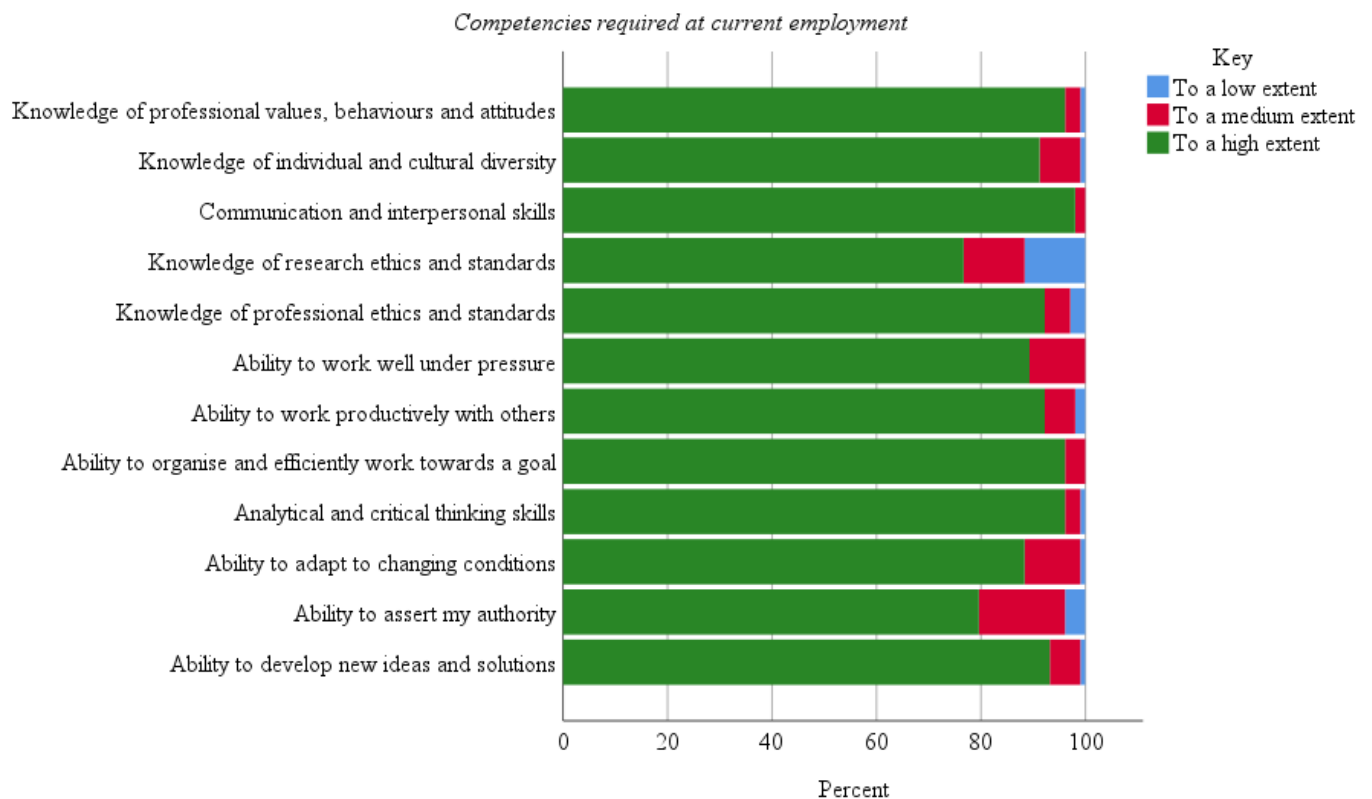


Figure 4.2: Competencies required at current employment

Based on the interpretation of Figure 4.2, 98.1% of the respondents rated competencies in communication and interpersonal skills as being required to a high extent for their current employment. Analytical and critical thinking skills, ability to organise and efficiently work towards a goal, and knowledge of professional values, behaviours, and attitudes were endorsed by 96.1% of the respondents as being required to a high extent for their current employment.

#### 4.2.3.3 Usefulness of studies

Respondents were asked to rate the overall usefulness of their studies in relation to five different domains. The figure below (4.3) documents the results.

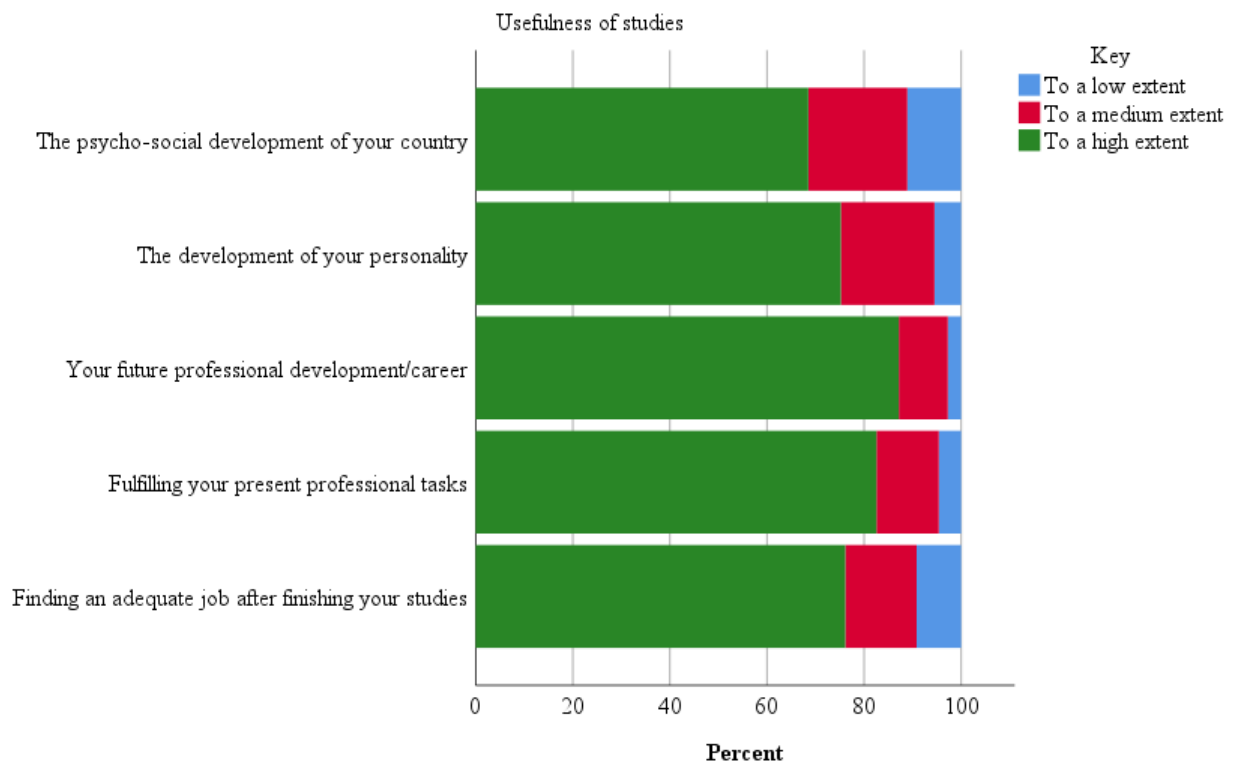


Figure 4.3: Usefulness of studies

As evidenced above, the majority of respondents reported their professional psychology master's degrees as being useful to a high extent for all five domains. When comparing the five

domains, the respondents found their studies as being most useful for their future professional development and careers (87.2%), followed by finding an adequate job after completing their studies (76.1%). Interestingly, 11.1% of respondents regarded their studies as not being very useful for the psycho-social development of the country.

#### 4.2.3.4 Current work situation

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which certain aspects apply to their current job situation. The figure below documents the results.

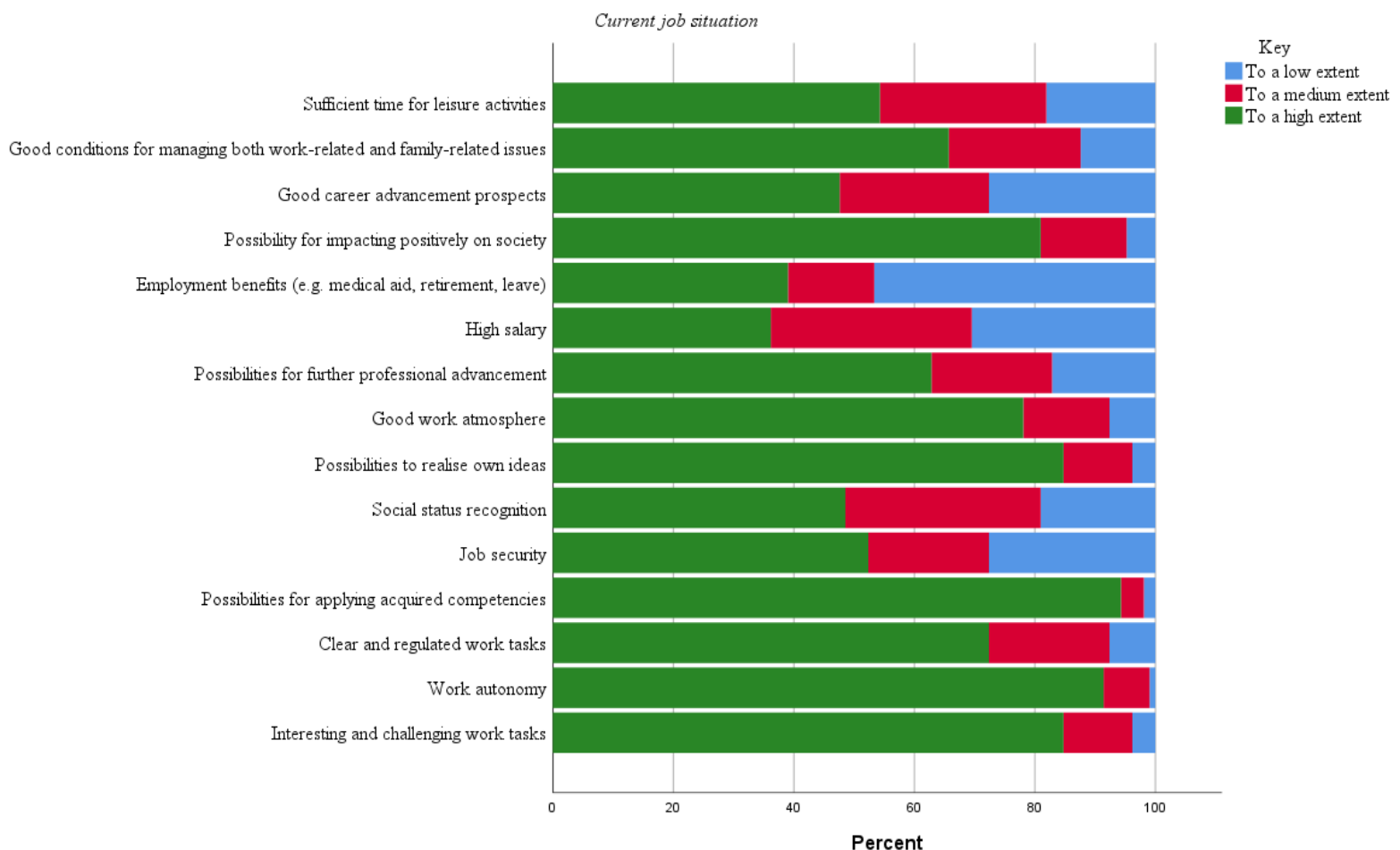


Figure 4.4: Current work situation

Based on the above results, 94.3% of respondent's reported that their current employment situation provides the possibility for applying their acquired competencies to a high extent. In addition, 81.0% of respondents stated their current employment provides the possibility for impacting positively on society to a high extent. The results also revealed that only 52.4% of respondents reported job security to a high extent for their current employment. As for the aspect of high salary, 30.5% of respondents indicated that their current job situation offered a high salary to a low extent, 33.3% rated to a medium extent, and 30.5% rated a high extent.

#### ***4.2.4 Programme Evaluation***

Respondents were asked to evaluate the professional psychology master's programme completed at UKZN.

##### **4.2.4.1 Decision to study at UKZN**

Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which the several factors contributed to their decision to complete their professional psychology master's training at UKZN. The table below documents the results.

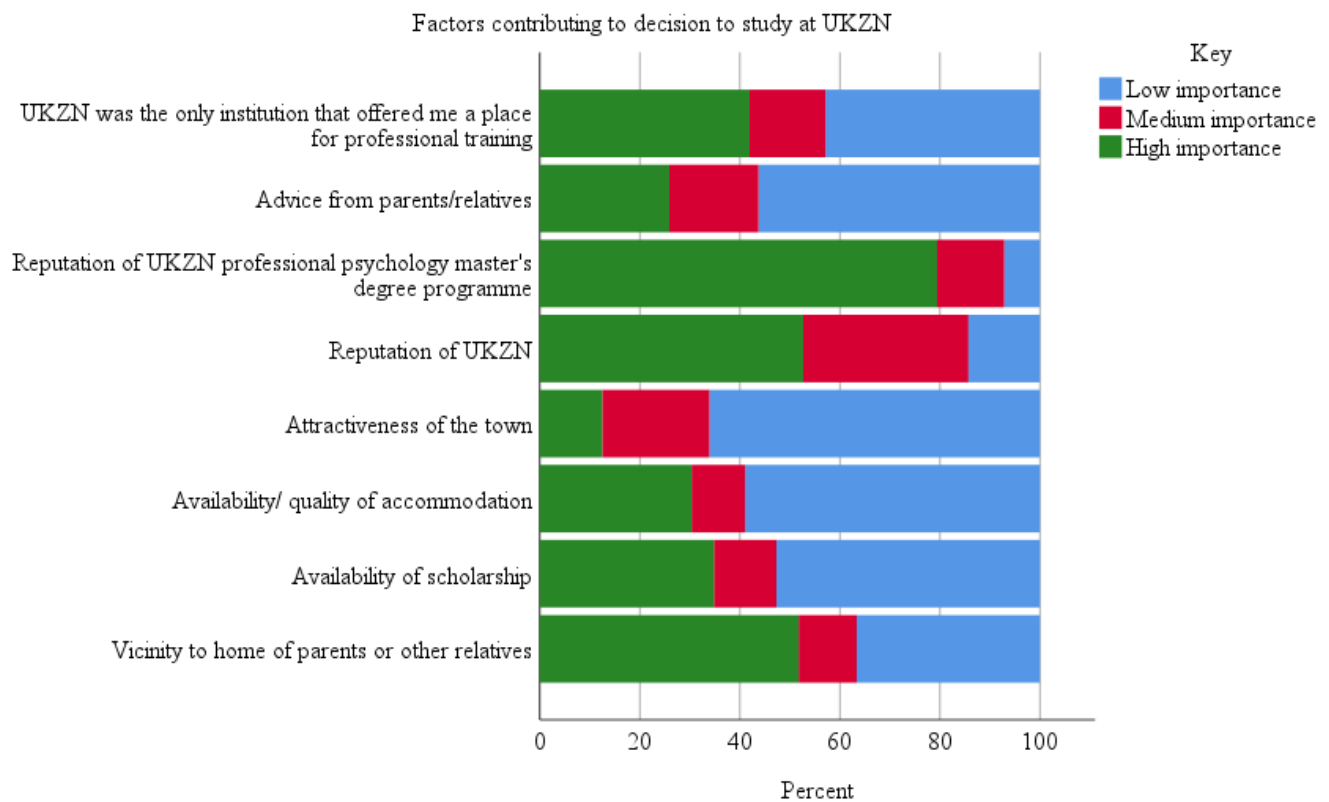


Figure 4.5: Factors contributing to the decision to study at UKZN

Based on the table above, 52.7% of respondents reported UKZN's reputation was of high importance to their decision to pursue their professional psychology master's degree programme at UKZN. Furthermore, 79.5% of respondents reported the reputation of UKZN's professional psychology master's degree programmes as being a highly important contributor to their decision to study at UKZN.

#### 4.2.4.2 Study conditions and provisions

Respondents were also asked to rate the study conditions and provisions they experienced while undertaking their professional psychology master's degree at UKZN. The figure below documents the results.

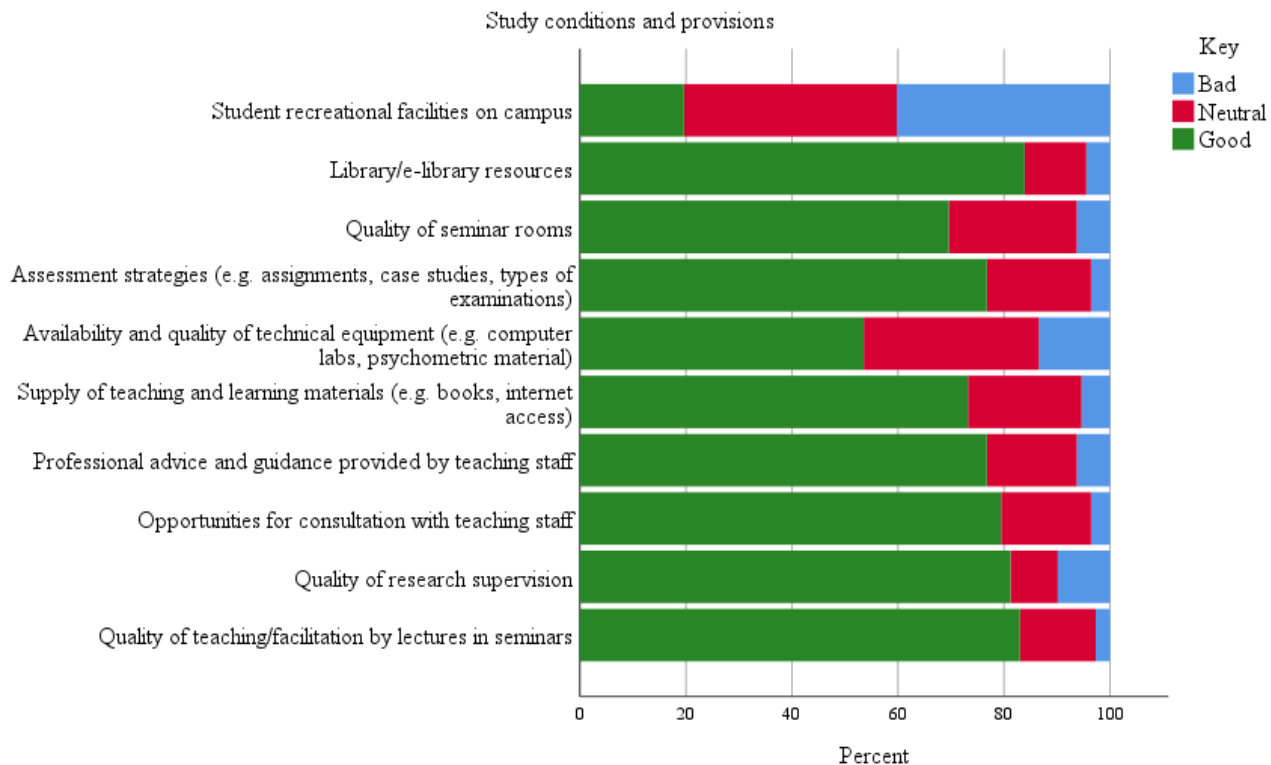


Figure 4.6: Study conditions and provisions

The majority of respondents rated the library/e-library resources as good with 83.9%, followed by the quality of teaching/facilitation by lectures in seminars (83.0%), and the quality of research supervision with 81.3%. Student recreational facilities on campus were rated as bad (40.2% of the sample). Regarding the availability and quality of technical equipment, 13.4% of respondents rated these conditions as bad and 33.0% rated these as neutral.



#### 4.2.4.3 Practical elements

Respondents were asked to rate the practical elements of the programme (e.g., working with clients, patients, communities; undertaking research for research psychology students). The table below documents the results.

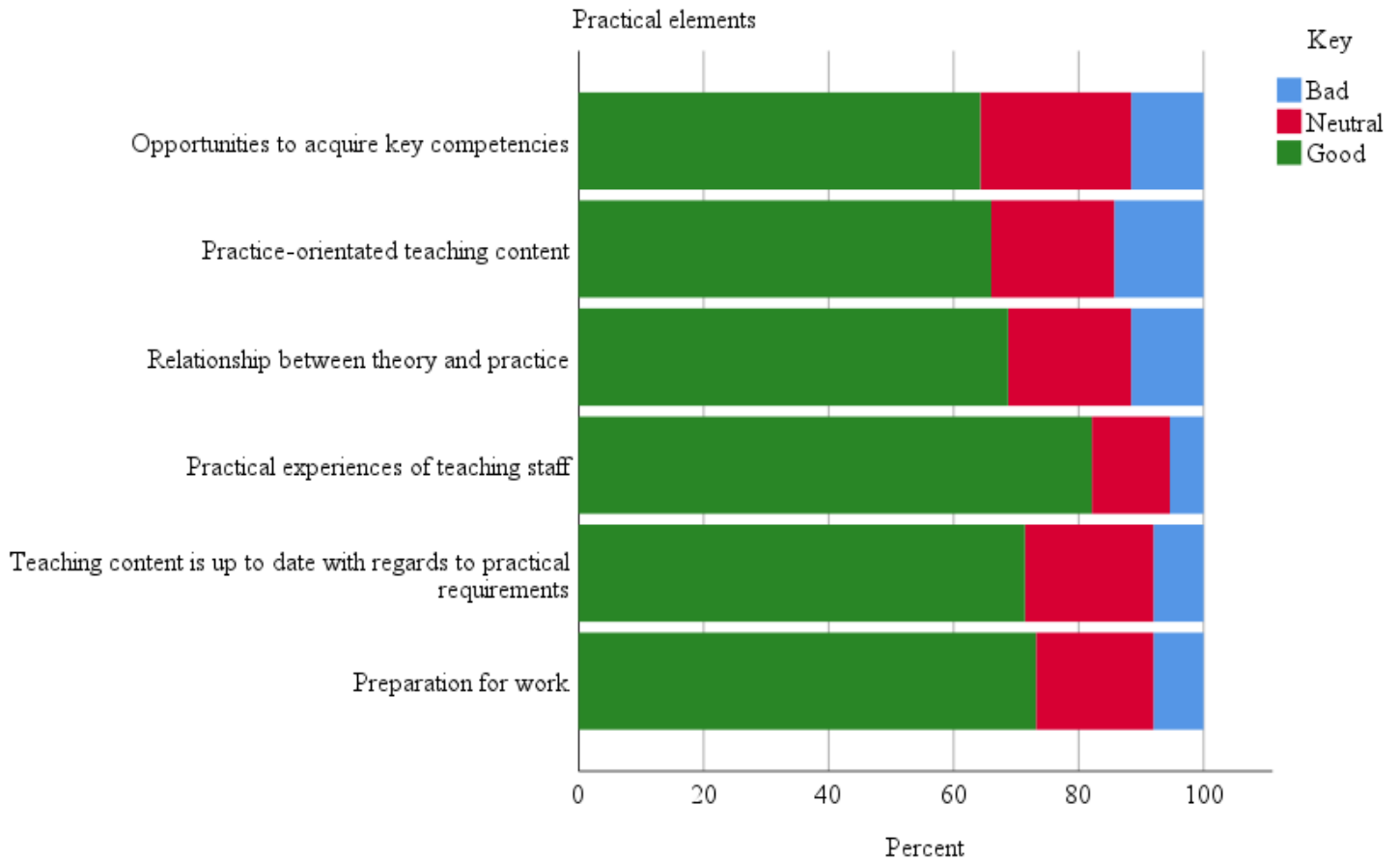


Figure 4.6: Practical elements

Regarding practical elements, 82.1% of respondents reported the practical experiences of teaching staff as good, followed by 73.2% for the preparation of the work field.

#### **4.2.4.4 Extent to which graduates would choose UKZN again**

Respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which they would choose UKZN for their professional training if given another chance. Based on the results, the majority of the graduates from the sample reported (34.8% reported to a high extent and 25.9% reported to a very high extent) that they would select to study towards their professional psychology training at UKZN if given another chance.

#### **4.2.4.5 Overall satisfaction**

Respondents were further asked to comment on the extent to which they were satisfied with their training programme. A large portion of graduates rated their satisfaction as high (47.3%) followed by satisfied to a very high extent (29.5%). A smaller portion reported satisfaction to a small extent (4.5%) with no graduates reporting they were not satisfied at all with their professional training programme.

#### **4.2.4.6 Recommend UKZN**

Respondents were asked to rate the extent of which they would recommend UKZN and the professional psychology master's programme on a five-point scale. The majority of participants reported they would recommend UKZN to a moderate extent (30.4%), followed by a high extent (27.7%). A small portion of graduates noted they would not recommend UKZN and the training programme at all (3.6%).

### **4.3 Qualitative Analysis**

In Part J of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to comment on their likes and dislikes of the overall professional psychology master's programme they completed and UKZN as

an institution. Respondents were also asked to comment on any important changes they would like to see from UKZN.

#### ***4.3.1 What respondents liked about their professional training programme and UKZN***

Based on the respondents' written answers for question J1, one predominant theme pertaining to what the respondents liked about their professional training programme was the good quality of staff, lecturers and overall psychology department. Lecturers were reported as competent and "approachable" with a wide range of knowledge, experience, and skills to teach. Lecturers were also reported as "passionate" and dedicated to educating students. External lecturers who brought in outside knowledge to the programme were regarded as being good for "aligning theory with practice". A strong level of connectivity between staff and students was also noted, with comments like "supportive" and "caring" lecturers being commonly noted.

A second theme pertained to the practical placements of the master's students with these placements seemingly being enjoyed. Respondents reported they enjoyed the weekly hospital rotations (within clinical psychology) as this provided a wide range of exposure and experience. Furthermore, placements provided diverse opportunities to put theoretical understandings into practice which was appreciated.

Respondents also reported having good experiences with supervision, both for clinical cases and research purposes. Respondents felt that supervisors challenged them professionally to improve their academic skills. Additionally, supervisors were also labelled as "supportive and encouraging".

The size and diversity of the M1 class was liked and respondents felt that good relationships were formed with their peers and a sense of "solidarity" was established.

Furthermore, respondents noted that discussions were easier to facilitate given the small number of students per class and the opportunity to engage during seminars was enjoyed.

#### ***4.3.2 What respondents disliked about their professional training programme and UKZN***

In Question J2, respondents were asked to comment on what they did not like about their professional training programme. An overarching theme reported were difficulties with research supervision. Research supervision was noted to be poor with delays in receiving feedback on the research thesis. Moreover, it was suggested that completing the research thesis within M1 and doing well was highly dependent on the research supervisor and topic chosen. This was due to the availability of a supervisor being able to provide support and insightful feedback throughout the research project. The ratio of supervisors to students was noted as poor, with supervisors having a heavy workload and limited availability to see students. One respondent reported having a great supervisor however, the poor student to supervisor ratio resulted in difficulties scheduling appointments and receiving feedback as often as needed. There were also some difficulties with clinical case supervision reported specifically surrounding a lack of support. Furthermore, external supervisors who may not have been practicing in the field at the time were allocated to students and at times were unable to assist with test scoring and interpretation of particular assessments administered.

Another common theme evident in the responses were difficulties with lecturers and staff. This included some lecturers showing up late to class or cancelling seminars at late notice and/or without sufficient warning. One respondent reported that there was a “lack of support from academic staff” and the environment felt cold, with very little encouragement and care for students. A second respondent reported the environment felt “intense and hostile”, while students were

encouraged to participate in discussions and seminars, they felt it was an intimidating environment making it challenging to express views or opinions. Communication was reportedly difficult from lecturers, with some never responding to emails or showing up for scheduled appointments.

Research methods and design was an area of the course that respondents felt needed more attention. Respondents reported that they were “disappointed” with the teaching of research methods and felt “unprepared” in terms of practical qualitative and quantitative techniques for analysing data.

The workload and pressure felt in M1 year proved to be very difficult and was disliked by a number of the respondents. The M1 year was described as “tightly packed”, which led to a lot of stress and pressure on the students. Furthermore, the workload was described as “excessive” with minimal time to “master all the concepts and learning that takes place”.

#### ***4.3.3 Recommended changes***

In Question J3, respondents were asked to comment on any recommended changes for the professional programme they completed. Based on the respondents’ comments a number of themes were identified. Firstly, the improvement of lecturers’ competencies and to effectively manage their time. This includes the last-minute cancelation of lectures, starting seminars late and running over time allocated. It was also noted that students are asked to provide feedback and evaluation of the lecturers and it was recommended that the department follow through and listen to the feedback in order to make the necessary changes.

A second theme identified was around the coursework. Respondents reported that being exposed to a better range of therapeutic modalities is necessary. Less emphasis on psychodynamic theory and more in-depth training of other theories including cognitive-behaviour therapy, play

therapy, and mindfulness-based therapy were a few named. A closer look at more evidence-based theories was also noted as an important change. Furthermore, thorough training in the applications of theories is needed.

Adequate training with quantitative and qualitative data analysis software was also recommended. Training in software programmes like SPSS, NVivo, and Atlas would assist students in the research module and thesis.

An increase surrounding practical work was a common recommendation from respondents. Practical work could include more weekly practical hours as well as role playing where theory can be applied in scenarios during seminars. This could also respond to the need for more understanding on the applications of learned modalities and theories. It was also noted that more seminars should be given relating to case management. An integration of practical elements that are “in line with work realities and challenges” and allow students to “prepare for their profession”.

Lastly, based on the responses, it appears that the relationship between internship placements and the university needs further attention and improvement. Respondents reported difficulties finding placements for internship and would have liked “more support and guidance” from the institution. It was suggested that UKZN could play more of an active role in the placement of students for both internship year and community service for the clinical psychology students.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the discussion chapter is to interpret and align the significance of the research findings pertaining to the responding graduates' employment patterns, employability, and overall evaluation of the professional psychology master's programme completed, along with the current literature surrounding the research problem. The chapter also aims to outline areas of recommendation for future studies.

### **5.2 Descriptive demographics**

The sampling frame demographics revealed that the majority of professional psychology graduates from UKZN have been Black African. This is an important finding in itself as it signifies the institution's alignment with the aim of higher education transformation by becoming more inclusive and representative of the South Africa population (Mzangwa, 2019). Furthermore, the sampling frame signifies UKZN's growing attainment of the aim to become more representative of provincial demographics (<https://ukzn.ac.za/about-ukzn/history/>). The sampling frame demographics also aligns well with the transformation the profession of psychology in South Africa took on to be more representative and broaden demographic profiles (PsySSA, 2019).

In addition, female graduates made up the majority of the sampling frame. This finding is consistent with studies suggesting (White) Females heavily dominate the profession of psychology in South Africa (Bantjes et al., 2016). The questionnaire respondents' demographics are consistent with these findings as well, with the majority of respondents being White Females. Both the sampling frame and respondents' genders were aligned with the recent HPCSA (2017) survey that was conducted. Although the results from the study still show White Females as

dominating the profession, there is evidence that a shift has happened and the profession has started to become more representative of the wider population when viewing the sampling frame of graduates.

Based on the sampling frame, the clinical psychology programme had the most graduates however, in terms of respondents to the questionnaire, graduates in counselling psychology were dominant. Furthermore, the Pietermaritzburg campus had more respondents than the Howard College campus. It is important to note that clinical and counselling psychology graduates were more likely to have some form of online professional presence (due to being in private practice) and may therefore have been easier to locate and contact online when compared to the industrial psychology graduates. However, the research supervisor's assistance with potential participant recruitment (i.e., emailing potential participants in his professional network; see Chapter 3, subsection 3.7.2) is likely to have skewed the type of graduate who responded to the invitation to participate in the study. The research supervisor is a HPCSA registered counselling psychologist and teaches psychology on the UKZN, Pietermaritzburg Campus in the Discipline of Psychology. This probably contributed to the overrepresentation of counselling psychology and Pietermaritzburg campus graduates in the sample.

With regards to languages, the majority of respondents reported their home language was English and this is in line with results seen in the HPCSA (2017) study. The most commonly reported language proficient to practice in was English, followed by a smaller portion of respondents reporting isiZulu. Given the predominant language spoken in KwaZulu-Natal is isiZulu, it appears that only a relatively small number of study participants are able to proficiently practice in the language.



Most of the respondents reported residing in South Africa. These results indicate the respondents were likely to search for employment and work within the South African labour market rather than seeking employment opportunities outside the country. Importantly, as previously discussed, graduate employment can heavily influence economic growth, particularly given the structural change the South African economy has taken on with a demand for highly skilled workers (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). Therefore, respondents affirming that they are staying within South Africa is an important finding in that it suggests professional psychology master's graduates are able to find employment and contribute to the South African labour market and economy.

Within South Africa, more than half the respondents reported residing in KwaZulu-Natal, which aligns with the location of the institution but suggests that some graduates may move out of the province when completing their studies. It may also be indicative of the number of students UKZN accepts into the programme who originate from outside the KwaZulu-Natal province.

Based on the responses, the average age to start the professional psychology master's programme among the questionnaire respondents was 28 years old. Given the previous years of studies required (i.e., Bachelors and Honours degrees) required and experience often needed to gain acceptance into one of the professional psychology master's degrees, a relatively older average start age for the programme is not unexpected.

### **5.3 Employment patterns**

After completing their master's year at UKZN, the majority of respondents reported continuing with their internship training programme in the following year with only a few

respondents being required to extend their M1 year. The results indicate a positive trend towards students completing their training within the recommended time frame.

The most successful method for finding employment (i.e., not internship) proved to be through job advertisements and internship training programmes. A much smaller portion of respondents reported UKZN played a role in finding employment. Although universities do not typically play a major role in facilitating employment for their graduates, one possible reason for the limited role that UKZN reportedly played in assisting professional psychology master's graduates with finding employment is the difficulties some respondents reported with the department and overall institution. A number of respondents reported having difficulties with the staff and lecturers and found the overall environment relatively cold with a lack of communication. Consequently, a recommendation could be to strengthen the relationship between the employment market and the institution or increase engagement in the UKZN career services.

After graduating (i.e., completing the coursework and dissertation components of the degree), the majority of the respondents were able to secure employment within one year with a large portion securing employment within one month, showing a positive result toward professional psychology graduates securing employment.

Responses to questions pertaining to their current employment situation show that the majority of respondents are permanently employed, with the largest number being self-employed in private practice. There are a number of reasons why this may be, many pointing towards the lack of employment opportunities within the public sector (Bantjes et al., 2016). Furthermore, the analysis supports the findings found in the HPCSA (2017) study whereby the majority of respondents reported their work taking place in the private sector. A large number of the surveyed

UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates working in private practice may also be indicative of the entrepreneurial skills gained within the professional training programme. Future studies into understanding why there is a higher concentration of professional psychology master's graduates within the private sector could prove valuable. For example, it might be useful to identify the extent to which professional psychology graduates elect to work privately and/or are compelled to do so because of limited employment opportunities in the public sector. Moreover, the advantages and disadvantages working within the public or private sector and comparisons between demographics. Additionally, more than one third of respondents reported not partaking in any community or pro bono work. Given the above, a large number of respondents find themselves earning their income through the means of privately funds and or medical aids. The large concentration of graduates working in the private sector raises questions about the extent to which individuals who are not on privately funded medical aids can access mental health care services. It further raises concerns about the extent to which professionally trained psychology master's graduates are able to engage in the profession's transformative aims of redressing past inequalities by providing relevant services to the majority of the population (A. Pillay, 2016). It may be useful to engage in future studies surrounding the profession's engagement in the public sector and the reason graduates turn towards the private sector for employment.

With regards to the questionnaire respondents' main work activities, the most commonly reported activity was intervention, followed by assessment, and then prevention and development. These results align with previous studies (HPCSA, 2017) whereby the most commonly reported activity was intervention, assessment and diagnosis within all categories except for research

psychology. Comparisons across categories may prove useful for future graduate tracer studies, whereby employment patterns could be explored with specific reference to the category.

The findings surrounding graduates' activities six months after graduating show only a small portion of graduates unemployed with the largest number of respondents completing their internship training within their professional category of study. The same number of respondents were preparing to write their HPCSA board exams. Although registration with the HPCSA was not a requirement for participation, it is evident that the majority of respondents sought out professional registration after graduation. Almost half the respondents reported being involved in some form of casual employment within their field of study or permanent employment. These results indicate the majority of respondents were able to continue with their training after graduation (i.e., through internship training, community service, or preparation for HPCSA board exams) or find employment within their field of study.

In terms of current employment destinations, respondents were employed in a variety of fields and this could be indicative on the transferability of learned and acquired skills. As mentioned above, a large number of respondents reported employment in private practice which supports results seen in the HPCSA (2017) study. A high concentration of graduates working within private practice may be indicative of acquired entrepreneurial skills but may also indicate a lack of opportunities for public employment (Bantjes et al., 2016). Closely following private practice, a large number of respondents reported employment within the public higher education system followed by a research organisation. These employment patterns are of particular importance given the transformation the higher education system and the profession of psychology aimed to take on. Professional psychology graduates employed in the higher education system is

an important finding. Whether the graduates are engaging in academics or student counselling and support, their work supports the transformation agenda of higher education through the academic or personal support of students. Literature suggests that it is crucial to ensure that not only is knowledge being distributed and skills taught, but also emphasis is placed on the overall development of students (i.e., personal development) to in turn facilitate throughput rates and employment into the labour market (Maharaso & Hay, 2001).

Graduates finding employment within research organisations could be indicative of the further development of the profession. This is of particular importance given the direction psychology in South Africa has taken with the aim of moving away from its Westernised roots towards a more culturally relevant and appropriate discipline. In previous years, the profession of psychology has used inappropriate norms to assess the Black population (Laher & Cockcroft, 2014), finding graduates in the research sector points towards fulfilling the agenda the profession took on to become more inclusive and relevant. Furthermore, research within the profession of psychology may point towards the contribution of literature relevant to the South African context, with the focus on the inclusion of African psychology (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012).

With regards to basic education, a similar number of respondents reported working in the public and private schooling sector. A much smaller portion of respondents reported working within a non-governmental organisation.

The overall employment patterns point towards respondents securing employment within a reasonable time-frame in a wide range of sectors within the economy. A future recommendation could be to explore inferential statistics and compare across categories if there are any significant differences in employment patterns.

## **5.4 Employability**

The respondents' reported competencies required at their current employment destinations appear to be aligned with those achieved during their professional psychology master's degree training. However, the extent to which UKZN contributed to having the ability to assert one's authority was relatively much lower (as was knowledge of professional ethics and standards) when compared to other competencies. It could be that asserting one's authority in a professional context and developing practice-based knowledge and competencies in professional ethics and standards takes some time to develop in the workplace. As professional psychology graduates gain more workplace experience and confidence related to this experience, it is possible that their professional authoritativeness does too.

The majority of respondents reported their studies being useful in finding employment after graduation, fulfilling their current professional tasks, and assisting in their future professional development and career. However, with regards to the respondents' current work situation, the results seem to suggest low career advancement prospects and low job security. A possible reason may be because a higher number of respondents engage in private practices, working as entrepreneurs, there may be limited advancement. This could also point towards limitations in the South African labour market and economy. Respondents' did not elaborate on the reasoning behind this and further research into the topic may be worth exploring.

A significant component of the agenda to transform psychology in South Africa aims to engage in critical social issues and readdress inequalities (Stead, 2002). Importantly, more than half of the respondents reported that they felt their studies have been useful towards addressing South African psycho-social development. Presumably, the study respondents regard the work that they were trained to do and the resultant contributions they are making to people's lives as an

outcome of this work links positively to South African psycho-social development. These results point towards professional psychology master's graduates engaging in and responding to the psychological and social problems experienced by South Africans.

Given that the respondents reported securing employment in a variety of work environments, this could be indicative of a training programme offering good levels of transferable skills. However, according to Archer and Chetty (2013), graduates need to be able to adapt and grow with the ever-changing and highly dynamic labour market. Although the majority of respondents were able to secure employment, and believe their learned competencies and training through the professional psychology master's programme contributed greatly, respondents regarded their current work situations as having limited possibilities for career advancement and professional advancement. Therefore, research into this topic should be further explored because as literature around employability suggests, the need for working individual to participate in continuous learning, improvement, and adaption is considerably important (Bridgstock, 2009).

### **5.5 Evaluation of the professional psychology master's programme**

The results suggest that the reputation of the five professional psychology master's degree programmes and the institution were considerably important in respondents selecting a higher education institution for their training. Many respondents' felt that the environment within the department was supportive and caring and the knowledge received during training aligned well within practice. Showing a good link between the training received and the demands placed on graduates within the working field of the profession. Respondents also noted they enjoyed the practical experience gained during the master's year, with particular reference to the hospital rotations clinical psychology students were exposed to. As previously discussed, employers have

noted that work experience and real-world activities within the work environment seem to be lacking in graduates (Pitan & Muller, 2020). Given the respondents' reported practical experiences within settings they are most likely to further work in (i.e. hospital settings for clinical students), and the strong link highlighted between the theory and practical work, the institution, with particular reference to the professional psychology master's programmes, seems to be providing students with good opportunities to gain experience and prepare them for the working world. Consequently, it is possible that from the perspective of graduates anyway, the UKZN professional psychology programmes are adequately preparing its graduates through practical training for the work experience. However, the study did not survey employers of professional psychology master's graduates from UKZN, and this might be one future area of research and inquiry.

Furthermore, the diverse learning opportunities offered by the UKZN professional psychology programmes seem to have been appreciated by the questionnaire respondents. The majority of respondents reported they would recommend UKZN to a high or very high extent. Only a small number of respondents would not recommend the institution at all. However, all respondents were satisfied with their training to some extent. On the other hand, a number of graduates reported differing experiences regarding the warm and encouraging environment described above, relating the environment as "intense" and "quite hostile". Difficulties were also reported with regards to communicating with staff and lecturers and that it was challenging to communicate thoughts and opinions across. Because of the experienced environment, a number of respondent's they reported that they felt they could not express themselves in seminars or engage with discussions because of the atmosphere.



Views on the supervision throughout the programme for both clinical cases and research were mixed. A number of respondents reported good experiences, whereby they felt supported, encouraged, and challenged professionally. However, a number of respondents reported difficulties with supervision. A common theme was the reported discrepancies between the number of available research supervisors and the number of students. Often leading to delays in receiving feedback or scheduling meetings. A recommendation made by the questionnaire respondents was to place a bigger focus on students' feedback throughout training and to take into consideration the suggested changes. The results of the study indicate that more than one third of respondents were still completing their research dissertation during their internship year. Both the limited opportunities to engage with one's supervisor as well as the heavily loaded programme, may be a reason graduates carried their research dissertation past their M1 year.

The results from the study also highlighted that the relationship between UKZN and internship placements needs further attention. Respondents reported a gap and strengthening the relationships could potentially assist graduates in securing internship placements after their M1 year. Given a limited number of internship sites, a few respondents reported they were unable to secure internship placements following their M1 year. A better-established communicative relationship or liaison between UKZN and internship sites may provide students will more support transitioning from the M1 year to internship training. Further gaps reported were a lack of preparation in compiling internship applications and reports. According to the HPCSA Form 160, the policy outlines that psychology departments need to maintain relationships with internship sites. Institutions should act in an overarching supervisory capacity for the internship programmes (HPCSA, 2014). Importantly, the HPCSA have recently released a notice outlining the relinking

of internships with the M1 training year. This could assist with closing the gap between institution and internship placement site (HPCSA, 2020). According to the results, a large number of respondents' found employment through their internship training sites; therefore, it should be a priority to ensure students are supported throughout their internship process.

The overall evaluation results suggest an overall positive view of the five professional psychology master's programmes and the institution with the majority of respondents reporting the institution having prepared them well for work and in acquiring key competencies. This is of particular importance given the relationship seen between graduates and the quality of education provided by an institution is considered an indicative factor for finding employment (Maharasoia & Hay, 2001).

## **5.6 Conclusion and recommendations**

The study aimed to determine the employment patterns and employability of graduates and evaluate the five professional psychology master's programmes offered at UKZN. The institution aims to produce employable graduates who are equipped with the key skills and attributes to meet the demands of the labour market. Overall, the results from the study place UKZN and its five professional psychology master's programmes in a positive light and point to the institution making contributions to the South African psychology and social transformation agenda. The three objectives of the study were first and second to determine the employment patterns and employability of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates, and third to evaluate the UKZN professional psychology master's degree programmes.

With regards to employment patterns, the main findings suggest that the questionnaire respondents were able to secure employment in a wide range of work contexts. Furthermore, the

findings suggest that the competencies acquired by the graduates through the professional psychology master's programme contributed to their securing employment and having the ability to meet current work demands. In terms of employability, the study findings suggest the professional training adequately equip graduates for the labour market and working world. However, as previously mentioned, employability is a complex phenomenon. Because of this, many other factors play a role in a graduate finding employment post-graduation, as stated by Yorke and Knight (2006). A graduate's previous work experience, social skills, personal and professional network, and well as their social and economic background all contribute to a person's employability.

With regards to the evaluation of the programme, the findings are a positive attitude. The quality of the programme and the institution were rated positively with a few lower rated facilities, including the quality of recreational facilities and the availability and quality of technical equipment (i.e., computer labs, psychometric assessment material). Although there were mixed reviews regarding the staff, lecturers and overall environment the results in sub-section 4.3.1 indicate the majority of respondents had an overall positive experience and were satisfied with the training they received. The respondents recommended aligning the coursework with more up to date theories and modalities that are evidence-based and that further training was received on research methods and data analysis.

In terms of further areas of research, a qualitative study whereby more detail pertaining to graduates' training experience and employment patterns post-graduation could be studied. A qualitative study would provide greater insight into the reasons behind many graduates having found employment predominately in the private sector. Furthermore, the use of inferential statistics

whereby respondents' categories and campus' experiences could be compared may provide good insight into differences across categories and campuses. In addition, further research could also explore in more detail the potential relationships between a psychologist's personal background in relation to their employment patterns and career.

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## Appendix 1: Turnitin report

### Kelly Wurzel final dissertation

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## Appendix 2: Gatekeeper's permission

### Appendix 2a: Letter/email from Academic Leader of Psychology, Howard College campus and master's degree coordinator

FW: Request for permission to use professional psychology master's degree programme class lists from the UKZN Howard College Campus for research purposes

Duncan James Cartwright

Tue 2019/11/05 14:43

To: Nicholas Munro <MunroN@ukzn.ac.za>

Dear Dr Munro

Permission is granted for you to use student lists from the UKZN Howard College Campus (Masters).

Prof Cartwright

---

**From:** Steven Collings

**Sent:** 05 November 2019 02:26 PM

**To:** Duncan James Cartwright <Cartwrightd@ukzn.ac.za>

**Subject:** FW: Request for permission to use professional psychology master's degree programme class lists from the UKZN Howard College Campus for research purposes

Hi Duncan

Could you deal with this request

Steve

## School of Applied Human Sciences

**Postal Address:** Private Bag X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg 3209, South Africa

**Telephone:** +27 (0)33 260 5166 **Facsimile:** +27 (0)33 260 5363 **Email:** beneckea@ukzn.ac.za **Website:** psychology.ukzn.ac.za



**From:** Nicholas Munro

**Sent:** Tuesday, 05 November 2019 14:23

**To:** Steven Collings <[COLLINGS@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:COLLINGS@ukzn.ac.za)>

**Subject:** Request for permission to use professional psychology master's degree programme class lists from the UKZN Howard College Campus for research purposes

Dear Steve

I am preparing an ethics application for HSSREC wherein I will seek permission to conduct a tracer study of UKZN professional psychology master's degree programme graduates. The study intends to survey professional psychology graduates in clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, and research psychology from UKZN (i.e., from 2004 onwards). The study aims to explore the employability and employment patterns of these graduates and to explore the perceived social and labour market relevance of UKZN's professional psychology training programmes.

I intend to seek gatekeeper's permission (i.e., from the UKZN Registrar) to use the class lists of the UKZN professional psychology training programmes (since 2004) to generate a sampling frame. Once I have generated the sampling frame, I will search on the internet and/or social media (e.g., Google search, LinkedIn, Facebook/Instagram/Twitter accounts) for potential participants. Potential participants (i.e., professional psychology graduates from UKZN) who have an online presence will then be invited through a relevant online forum (e.g., Facebook message, website query) to participate in the study by completing an online questionnaire.

Please would you consider granting me permission to use the professional psychology training programme class lists from the Howard College Campus for the abovementioned purpose? I will only be using the lists to identify names. No other personal information (e.g., email addresses, phone numbers etc) will be needed and/or used.

If you grant this permission, I will include it in the request I send to the UKZN Registrar for gatekeeper's permission, and in the HSSREC application I submit.

Sincerely

Nicholas Munro, PhD

Lecturer: Discipline of Psychology

School of Applied Human Sciences

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus

Tel: +27 33 260 5371

Email: [munron@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:munron@ukzn.ac.za)



## Appendix 2b: Letter from Academic Leader of Psychology, Pietermaritzburg Campus



6 November 2019

Dr Nicholas Munro  
Discipline of Psychology, Pietermaritzburg Campus  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

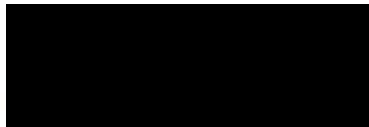
Dear Dr Munro

Re: Request for permission to use professional psychology master's degree programme class lists from the UKZN Pietermaritzburg Campus for research purposes

In response to your email dated 5 November 2019, permission is hereby granted for you to use the class lists from the professional psychology master's degree programmes from the UKZN Pietermaritzburg Campus (dating back to 2004) for research purposes.

It is noted that you will use the lists to generate a sampling frame for a proposed tracer study on professional psychology master's degree programme students.

Sincerely



Prof Kevin Durrheim  
Academic Leader: Discipline of Psychology  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus  
Tel: [+27 33 260 5348](tel:+27332605348)  
Email: [durrheim@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:durrheim@ukzn.ac.za)

## Appendix 2c: Registrar's permission



10 January 2020

Dr Nicholas Munro  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
College of Humanities  
Pietermaritzburg Campus  
UKZN  
Email: [munron@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:munron@ukzn.ac.za)

Dear Dr Munro

### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

*"A tracer study of professional psychology master's degree graduates from the University of Natal"*

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample as follows:

- Obtain a class list of psychology master's degree students who first registered for and graduated from the qualification in 2004;
- List of graduates from the graduation programmes available from UKZN archives;
- Contact these students to complete an online questionnaire.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

**DR KE CLELAND**  
**REGISTRAR (ACTING)**

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: [registrar@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:registrar@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

## Appendix 3a: Ethical clearance



27 February 2020

Dr Nicholas Munro (316183)  
School Of Applied Human Sc  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Dr Munro,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001063/2020

Project title: A tracer study of professional psychology master s degree graduates from the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Non-Degree

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 25 February 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

This approval is valid until 27 February 2021.

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

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

Yours sincerely,

  
Dr Shiyimila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

## Appendix 3b: Ethical clearance



15 April 2020

**Dr Nicholas Munro (316183)**  
School Of Applied Human Sc  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Dr Munro,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00001063/2020

**Project title:** A tracer study of professional psychology master's degree graduates from the University of KwaZulu-Natal

**Non-Degree**

### Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 15 April 2020 has now been approved as follows:

- **Additional student investigator (Ms Kelly Jade Wurzel 220058235 )**

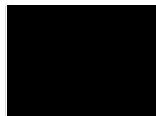
Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the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

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

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

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



.....  
**Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)**

/dd

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

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

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

#### **Appendix 4: Information sheet and consent to participate in research**

Date:

Dear potential participant

**Re: Invitation to consider participating in a tracer study of professional psychology master's degree graduates from the University of KwaZulu-Natal**

My name is Kelly Wurzel and I am counselling psychology student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal currently studying towards my Master's degree. I have decided to conduct a graduate tracer study on professional psychology master's graduates from UKZN. This research study is being supervised by Dr Nicholas Munro, who is currently employed as a senior lecturer and researcher in the Discipline of Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus).

You are being invited to consider participating in a study titled, "Employment and employability profiles of psychology graduates from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's professional psychology master's programmes: A graduate tracer study". The study aims to explore what happened to you in terms of your career and employment activities, and to explore your retrospective evaluations of the professional training you underwent. The study is expected to enroll all students who graduated from one of the professional psychology master's degree programmes offered by UKZN from 2004 onwards.

The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll in the study is expected to be at most 35 minutes. Participating in the study will involve completing an online questionnaire by clicking on the link ( <https://forms.gle/zkqNDK8PKdqQABhy8> )

##### Confidentiality and anonymity in reporting of study findings

Your responses to the questionnaire will be treated with strict confidentiality, and results from the study will be published in such a way that the identification of individual persons will not be possible. However, if you choose to participate in the study, please include your name and email address when prompted to do so at the beginning of the questionnaire. Respondents' names and email addresses will only be used to verify respondents as graduates from the UKZN professional psychology master's degree programmes, and to verify that respondents only respond to the questionnaire once. Respondents' names and email addresses will be delinked from their responses to the actual questions in the questionnaire, and will not be reported in any study findings.

##### Voluntary participation and discontinuation of participation

If you consent to participate in the research project, you will do so voluntarily. You can also opt to participate, and then discontinue your participation at any point in the questionnaire without facing any negative consequences. Or, if you complete the questionnaire, and then later decide to withdraw your participation, you simply need to notify myself, and I will remove your responses

to the questionnaire from the database. In the event of withdrawal of participation, you will not incur any penalty or loss.

#### Risks and benefits of (and incentives for) participating in the study

Participating in the study will not involve any risks for you.

Your participation in the study will benefit UKZN and the UKZN Discipline of Psychology in two ways. First, your participation (responses to the questionnaire) will provide valuable information to UKZN on the employment patterns and employability of its professional psychology graduates. Second, your participation (responses to the questionnaire), will provide an evaluation of the UKZN professional psychology training programme you completed, which can in turn be used for improving the programme.

An incentive for participating is offered in the form of a lucky draw. Three participants' names will be randomly drawn at the end of the study, and these participants will win Takealot gift vouchers to the value of R500. Winners will be contacted via email.

You will also indirectly benefit from the study as you would be providing an evaluation of the professional psychology master's programme at UKZN which will allow programme improvements. This could potentially improve the standard of training for professional psychologists in South Africa contributing to the entirety of the profession as a psychologist. If you would like to receive feedback, an email will be sent with the final results on completion of the study.

#### Ethical review

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00001063/2020).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact myself at [220058235@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:220058235@stu.ukzn.ac.za). My supervisor, Dr Nicholas Munro, may also be contacted at 033 260 5371/[munron@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:munron@ukzn.ac.za) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details 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](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)



### Secondary use of data

Selected postgraduate students from the UKZN Discipline of Psychology may undertake secondary analysis of the data generated from this study. These students may use this data towards their degree studies (e.g., written up in the form of a dissertation). However, these postgraduate students will not have access to your names and email addresses.

### Storage of data

Hard copies of data collected during the research will be kept in a securely locked storage facility (i.e., a filing cabinet in my research supervisor's (Dr Nicholas Munro) university office) for five years following the study. Electronic data will be password protected and saved on an external hard drive which will be stored in the same facility as the hard copies of the data. Five years after the study has been completed, electronic data on the external hard drive will be deleted, and all hard copies of data will be incinerated.

---

## **CONSENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (insert name) have been informed about the study entitled "Employment and employability profiles of psychology graduates from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's professional psychology master's programmes: A graduate tracer study" by Kelly Wurzel.

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 my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact Kelly Wurzel (the principle investigator) at [220058235@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:220058235@stu.ukzn.ac.za) or Dr Nicholas Munro (the project supervisor) at 033 260 5371/ [munron@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:munron@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 researchers 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](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Clicking on (<https://forms.gle/zkqNDK8PKdqQABhy8>) and completing the online questionnaire signifies my informed consent to participate in the study.



## **Appendix 5: Questionnaire**

Dear UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduate

**Re: Tracer study of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates**

UKZN would like to find out what happened to you in terms of your career and employment activities after you completed your professional psychology master's degree programme. We are therefore undertaking a research study which firstly aims to explore the employment patterns of professional psychology master's degree graduates, and secondly aims to solicit graduates' retrospective evaluations of the professional training they underwent. Please consider participating in this study by completing the following questionnaire. Your responses to the questionnaire will be treated with strict confidentiality, and results will be published in such a way that the identification of individual persons will not be possible.

Please include your name and email address when prompted to do so at the beginning of the questionnaire. Respondents' names and email addresses will only be used to verify respondents as graduates from the UKZN professional psychology master's degree programmes, and to verify that respondents only respond to the questionnaire once. Respondents' names and email addresses will be delinked from their responses to the questions in the questionnaire. Three respondents will win Takealot gift vouchers to the value of R1000. Winners will be contacted via email.

The findings from the research study will help UKZN understand the employment and labour market patterns of its professional psychology graduates. The findings will also assist UKZN to better align their professional psychology master's degree curricula with labour market demands. If you would like to receive feedback, the results will be emailed to you after the completion of the research study.

Thank you in advance.

***Kelly Wurzel***

Counselling Psychology Student

Principle Investigator: Tracer study of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates

***Dr Nicholas Munro***

Research Supervisor: Tracer study of UKZN professional psychology master's degree graduates

Senior Lecturer: Discipline of Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal

### Frequently asked questions about this questionnaire:

How long does it take to fill in the questionnaire?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 – 35 minutes</li> </ul>
What is the format of the questionnaire?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The questionnaire is highly standardised. You will mostly need to select the answer that applies to you.</li> <li>• Most questions require a response on a 5-point scale (e.g., 1= very bad to 5 = very good).</li> <li>• Occasionally, you may need to provide some explanations in a few words.</li> </ul>

### Part A: Personal details

I provide informed consent and agree to participate		Yes
Respondents names and email addresses will only be used to verify respondents as professional psychology master's degree graduates from UKZN and to enter them into a lucky draw for a R500 gift voucher from Takealot. Your responses to Questions A1, A2, and A3 will be delinked from the rest of your responses.		
A1	Name	
A2	Surname	
A3	Email address	
A4	Gender identity (M1, note adaptation)	Female
		Male
		Gender non-conforming
		Other (please specify)
		Decline to answer
A5	Population group GHS	Black African
		Coloured
		Indian/Asian
		White
		Other (please specify)
A6	What is your home language? HPCSA	Afrikaans
		English
		IsiNdebele
		IsiXhosa
		IsiZulu
		Sepedi
		Sesotho
		Setswana
		Sign Language
		Siswati
		Tshivenda
		Xitsonga
		Other (please specify)
A7		Afrikaans

	What language/s is/are you proficient to practice/work in? Multiple answers possible <i>HPCSA</i>	English
		IsiNdebele
		IsiXhosa
		IsiZulu
		Sepedi
		Sesotho
		Setswana
		Sign Language
		Siswati
		Tshivenda
		Xitsonga
		Other (please specify)
A8	Date of birth ( <i>M2</i> )	
A9	Relationship status ( <i>UNITRACE, 2010, note adaptation</i> )	Single
		In a relationship
		Civil union
		Married
		Divorced
		Separated
		Widow(er)
		Other (please specify)
A10	Nationality ( <i>N4</i> )	South African
		Other (please specify)
A11	Where do you currently reside? ( <i>N5, note adaptation</i> )	South Africa
		Other (please specify)
A12	If you currently reside in South Africa, which province do you live in? ( <i>N6</i> )	KwaZulu-Natal
		Free State
		Eastern Cape
		Western Cape
		Northern Cape
		Mpumalanga
		Limpopo
		Gauteng
		North West
		Not applicable

**Part B: Your professional psychology programme of study**

B1	Which professional psychology master's degree programme did you complete at UKZN? ( <i>A4, note adaptation</i> )	Clinical psychology
		Counselling psychology
		Educational psychology
		Industrial psychology
		Research psychology
B2		Howard College campus

	On which campus did you complete your professional psychology master's degree on? (A1, A4, note adaptation)	Westville campus
		Pietermaritzburg campus
B3	What did you do in the year after your M1 year? Choose only one.	Extended M1
		Internship
		Dissertation
		Internship and dissertation
		Other (please specify)
B4	How important were the following reasons for your decision to study at UKZN for your professional psychology master's degree? Please respond to each reason on the five-point scale ( <i>not at all important to very important</i> ). (A7, note adaptation)	Vicinity to home of parents or other relatives
		Availability of a scholarship
		Availability/quality of accommodation
		Attractiveness of the town
		Reputation of UKZN
		Reputation of UKZN professional psychology master's degree programme
		Advice from parents/relatives
B5	During the course of your professional psychology master's degree (i.e., the M1 year or while completing the dissertation) did you ever seriously consider withdrawing from your studies? (A9)	Yes
		No
B6	If you answered "yes" to the above question, please specify why you considered cancelling your studies at UKZN. (A9)	
B7	Why were you not able to complete the dissertation during your M1 year? Multiple answer possible.	I completed the dissertation during my M1 year
		The requirements of the coursework prevented me from completing the dissertation
		I experienced delays in obtaining ethical clearance for my study
		Problems with supervision (e.g. supervisor delays in reviewing work)
		Other (please specify)

B8	Did you start an internship in the January of the year directly after your M1 year? (B, note adaptation)	Yes
		No
B9	If you did not start an internship in the January of the year directly after your M1 year, please explain why.	
B10	How many years have you been registered as an independent practitioner with the HPCSA? (HPCSA)	16 years or more
		11-15 years
		6-10 years
		3-5 years
		1-2 years
		I am not registered with the HPCSA
B11	If you are not registered with the HPCSA, why is this so?	

**Part C: Evaluation of study conditions and study provisions while you were studying the professional psychology master's degree at UKZN**

C1	Please rate the study conditions and provisions you experienced while undertaking the professional psychology master's degree at UKZN? Please respond to each factor on the five-point scale ( <i>very bad to very good</i> ) C2, and note "professional advice" from C3	Quality of teaching/facilitation by lecturers in seminars
		Quality of research supervision
		Opportunities for consultation with teaching staff
		Professional advice and guidance provided by teaching staff
		Supply of teaching and learning materials (e.g., books, internet access)
		Availability and quality of technical equipment (e.g., computer labs, psychometric material)
		Assessment strategies (e.g., assignments, case studies, types of examinations)
		Quality of seminar rooms
		Library/e-library resources
		Student recreational facilities on campus
C2	Please rate the following practical elements (e.g., working with clients, patients, communities; undertaking research for research psychology	Preparation for work
		Teaching content is up to date with regards to practical requirements
		Practical experiences of teaching staff
		Relationship between theory and practice
		Practice-oriented teaching content

	students) in the M1 year of your professional psychology master's degree at UKZN? Please respond to each factor on the five-point scale ( <i>very bad to very good</i> ). <i>C4, modified phrasing</i>	Opportunities to acquire key competencies
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**Part D: Competencies and satisfaction with study**

D1	At the time of completing your M1 year, to what extent did UKZN contribute to you have the following competencies? <i>D1</i>  ( <i>Not at all, to a very high extent</i> ) – five point scale	Mastery of my field/subject-specific knowledge
		Knowledge of professional ethics and standards
		Knowledge of professional values, behaviours, and attitudes
		Knowledge of research ethics
		Ability to develop new ideas and solutions
		Ability to assert my authority
		Ability to adapt to changing conditions
		Analytical and critical thinking skills
		Ability to organise and efficiently work towards a goal
		Ability to work productively with others
		Ability to perform well under pressure
		Communication and interpersonal skills
		Knowledge of individual and cultural diversity
D2	Looking back, if you were free to choose to study your professional psychology master's degree at any university in South Africa, to what extent would you choose UKZN again? <i>D3</i>	( <i>Not at all, to a very high extent</i> ) – five point scale
D3	Please provide a brief reason for your answer to the question above.	
D4	In retrospect, to what extent are you satisfied with the professional psychology master's degree programme you completed at UKZN? <i>D4</i>	( <i>Not at all, to a very high extent</i> ) – five point scale
D5	Please provide a brief reason for your answer to the question above.	

D6	How likely are you to recommend UKZN and the professional psychology master's programme to family/friends?	(Not at all, to a very high extent) – five point scale
D7	Please provide a brief reason for your answer to the question above.	

**Part E: The first six months after you graduated from the professional psychology master's degree programme at UKZN.**

E1	What were you doing in the first six months after graduating with the professional psychology master's degree (i.e., completed the coursework and dissertation components of the degree)? Multiple answers are possible <i>E1, note answer adaptations</i>	Internship in my professional category of study
		Community internship in my professional category of study
		Permanent employment in my professional category of study (i.e., clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, or research psychology)
		Permanent employment <u>unrelated</u> to my professional category of study (i.e., clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, or research psychology)
		Self-employed in private practice
		Entrepreneurial activities related to my professional field of study (e.g., setting up a psychology consultancy)
		Entrepreneurial activities <u>unrelated</u> to my professional field of study (e.g., setting up a business unrelated to psychology)
		Casual employment related to my field of study
		Casual employment <u>unrelated</u> to my field of study (just to earn money)
		Further academic education
		Housewife/househusband
		Unemployed, but searching for work
		Unemployed, but doing volunteer work
		Preparing to write HPCSA board examination
		Other (please specify)
E2	When did you start your first full-time or mostly full-time job (excluding the internship or community internship) after graduation? <i>E2, note adaptation</i>	Before graduation
		At the time of graduation
		Less than 1 month after graduation
		1 to less than 3 months after graduation
		3 to less than 6 months after graduation
		6 to less than 9 months after graduation
		9 to less than 12 months after graduation
		More than one year after graduation

		I have not been employed since graduation
E3	If you did not search for a job after graduation, what were your reasons? Multiple answers possible. <i>E4</i>	I continued studying
		I continued in a job I had prior to studying
		I found a job without searching
		I became self-employed
		I was still busy completing an internship/community internship
		Other (please specify):
		If you did not search for employment, please continue with Question F1
E4	How long did you search for your first job after graduation (excluding the internship or community internship)? <i>E6</i>	Less than 1 month
		1 to less than 3 months
		3 to less than 6 months
		6 to less than 9 months
		9 to less than 12 months
		More than one year
E5	What was the most successful method for finding your first job? Choose only one answer. <i>E7</i>	Replied to a job advert (e.g., in newspaper or internet)
		With the help of family contacts of parents, relatives
		With help of personal contacts of friends, fellow students etc.
		Speculative application (i.e., I approached prospective employers on my own initiative)
		Through internships
		I was contacted by an employer
		Job/careers fair
		Through a job agency
		Through internet (social) networks (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, ResearchGate)
		Through the careers service at UKZN
		Through teaching staff at UKZN
		Not applicable, I have not find a job yet
		Other (please specify)

#### Part F: Current employment and work

F1	What describes your current situation? Multiple answers possible. <i>F1</i>	Internship in my professional category of study
		Community internship in my professional category of study
		Permanent employment in my professional category of study (i.e., clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, or research psychology)
		Permanent employment <u>unrelated</u> to my professional category of study (i.e., clinical, counselling, educational, industrial, or research psychology)
		Self-employed in private practice



		Entrepreneurial activities related to my professional field of study (e.g., setting up a psychology consultancy)
		Entrepreneurial activities <u>unrelated</u> to my professional field of study (e.g., setting up a business unrelated to psychology)
		Casual employment related to my field of study
		Casual employment <u>unrelated</u> to my field of study (just to earn money)
		Further academic education
		Housewife/househusband
		Unemployed, but searching for work
		Unemployed, but doing volunteer work
		Preparing to write HPCSA board examination
		Other (please specify)
F2	In which tax income bracket does your current annual income fall? <i>F13</i>	I choose not to disclose this information
		Unemployed
		R1 – R195 850
		R195 851 – R305 850
		R305 851 – R423 300
		R423 301 – R555 600
		R555 601 – R708 310
		R708 311 – R1 500 000
		R1 500 001 and above
If you are currently unemployed, please continue with Question H2		
F3	How many hours do you work per week? <i>F4</i>	Less than 20 hours per week
		21 to 30 hours
		31 to 40 hours
		41 to 50 hours
		More than 50 hours
F4	Are you permanently employed? <i>F5</i>	Yes
		No
		Not applicable, I am self-employed or employed on a contract
F5	In which country are you currently employed? <i>F8</i>	
F6	In which province/state/region are you currently employed? <i>F8</i>	
F7	What type of employer/work context best	Basic education (public school)
		Basic education (private school)
		Employee assistance programme (private sector)

	describes your current employment? <i>F9, and HPCSA adaptation</i>	Employee assistance programme (public sector) Higher education (private) Higher education (public) Hospital (private sector) Hospital (public sector) Human resources (private sector) Human resources (public sector) Non-government organisation Parastatal Private consulting firm Private organisation Private practice Public service: Correctional services Public service: Labour Public service: Military Public service: Other (please specify) Public service: Police Research organisation Other (please specify)
F8	What is your occupation/job title? <i>F11</i>	
F9	In your current employment, what proportion of your practice/work is spent with the following client groups? (Should add up to 100%). <i>HPCSA</i>	Adults Adolescents Children Organisations Groups Families Communities Other (please specify)
F10	In your current employment, what proportion of your practice/work is spent with the following clients? (Should add up to 100%). <i>HPCSA</i>	Black African Coloured Indian/Asian White Other (please specify)
F11	In your current employment, what proportion of your practice/work is spent working in the following languages? (Should add up to 100%). <i>HPCSA</i>	Afrikaans English IsiNdebele IsiXhosa IsiZulu Sepedi Sesotho

		Setswana
		Sign Language
		Siswati
		Tshivenda
		Xitsonga
		Other (please specify)
F12	What percentage of your employment time is spent in unpaid community or pro bono work?	0%
		1-5%
		6-10%
		11-15%
		More than 15%
F13	Select your three main work activities. Choose at most three. <i>F12, and HPCSA survey adapt</i>	Assessment
		Intervention
		Prevention and development
		Mentoring and supervision
		Research
		Other (please specify)
		Other (please specify)
		Other (please specify)

**Part G: Relationship between study and current employment**

G1	To what extent are the following skills/competencies required in your current employment? <i>(Not at all, to a very high extent)</i> <i>G1</i>	Ability to develop new ideas and solutions
		Ability to assert my authority
		Ability to adapt to changing conditions
		Analytical and critical thinking skills
		Ability to organise and efficiently work towards a goal
		Ability to work productively with others
		Ability to perform well under pressure
		Knowledge of professional ethics and standards
		Knowledge of research ethics and standards
		Communication and interpersonal skills
		Knowledge of individual and cultural diversity
		Knowledge of professional values, behaviours, and attitudes
G2	If your job is not closely related to the professional psychology master's degree programme you completed, why did you choose this job? <i>H5</i>	Not applicable, my current job is closely related to the professional psychology master's degree programme I completed
		My current job is only a temporary stepping stone, I am still searching for a job related to the professional psychology master's degree programme I completed
		I receive a higher salary in my current job

		My current job offers more security
		My interests have changed
		My current job allows a flexible time schedule
		My current job allows me to work in a favoured geographical place
		My current job allows me to take into consideration the interests of my family/children
		Other (please specify):
G3	Overall, how do you rate the usefulness of your studies for the following? ( <i>Not at all, to a very high extent</i> ) H6 <i>Note adaptations</i>	Finding an adequate job after finishing your studies
		Fulfilling your present professional tasks, if applicable
		Your future professional development/career
		The development of your personality
		The psycho-social development of your country

#### **Part H: Current work orientation and job satisfaction**

H1	To what extent do the following aspects apply to your current job situation? ( <i>Not at all to a very high extent</i> ) I2	Interesting and challenging work tasks
		Work autonomy
		Clear and regulated work tasks
		Possibilities for applying acquired competencies
		Job security
		Social status and recognition
		Possibilities to realise own ideas
		Good work atmosphere
		Possibilities for further professional advancement
		High salary
		Employment benefits (e.g., medical aid, retirement, leave)
		Possibility for impacting positively on society
		Good career advancement prospects
		Good conditions for managing both work-related and family-related issues
		Sufficient time for leisure activities
H2	To what extent are you satisfied with your current job/situation? I4	( <i>Not at all, to a very high extent</i> ) – five point scale

#### **Part I: Further study**

I1	After your professional psychology master's degree at UKZN, did you start another programme of study	Yes, I have completed it successfully
		Yes, I am still studying
		Yes, but I have discontinued with these further studies
		No, I have not started another programme of study

	at UKZN or another higher education institution? <i>K1, note adaptation</i>	
I2	If you answered yes to the question above, please specify the programme of further study you undertook at UKZN or another higher education institution after your professional psychology master's degree <i>K2, note adaptation</i>	

**Part J: Your comments and recommendations**

Please share further comments and recommendations about your professional psychology master's degree programme and UKZN in this part.		
J1	What did you like about your professional psychology master's degree programme and/or UKZN? <i>O1, note adaptation</i>	
J2	What did you not like about your professional psychology master's degree programme and/or UKZN? <i>O2, note adaptation</i>	
J3	What important changes would you recommend for your professional psychology master's degree programme at UKZN? <i>O3, note adaptation</i>	

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.