



Title: First-Year Students' Experiences of Peer Groups and Peer Pressure in the Residences of a South African University

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KEY WORDS

FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

HIGHER EDUCATION

PEER GROUPS

PEER PRESSURE

RISK BEHAVIOUR

SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

TRANSITION

UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE

ABSTRACT

In general, peers have a tendency to influence others positively and negatively. In the main, transition from school to higher education causes some students to experience stress; to respond negatively to new conditions; and to engage in risk behaviour, which hinders epistemological access, negatively affects performance, and often delays graduation. Nonetheless, participation in peer group activities has advantages and potentialities, which are often neglected in popular scholarly discourse. The main research question of the study was to investigate the experiences of peer pressure among first-year students? This study adopted a mixed-method research design and presents findings for both quantitative data which was collected through an electronic survey and qualitative findings from focus group interviews with three different groups: females, males, and, mixed gender. The population comprised first-year students living in two residences of a selected South African university. The qualitative data was analysed through thematic analysis, while the quantitative data was analysed through descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as Spearman's Rank correlation was used in the study. In consideration with the transition theory, social learning theory, and student involvement theory. Findings reveal that first-year students join different groups and they encounter both positive and negative experiences. Positive experiences were observed in relation to academic performance and sense of belonging. Negative experiences indicate that peers influence others to adopt anti-social behaviour, experience undue materialistic pressure, have poor class attendance, and depend on peers for decisions. Overall, it is found that academic success depends on students' interconnectedness, sense of belonging, peer support, acceptance, and recognition. The findings can be utilized to inform practical strategies and policies to empower first-year students to deal productively and progressively with peer pressure within the higher education sector. The study recommends the implementation of a First-year Student orientation programme which is called University 101 that can assist first-year students with better transition to higher education and can increase retention output. The programme should address the crucial areas that will assist the first-year with better transitions

such as diversity, well-being, self-esteem, academic excellence and peer pressure.

Key words

First-year students, higher education, peer groups, peer pressure, risk behaviour, South Africa, university, student experiences, transition, university residence

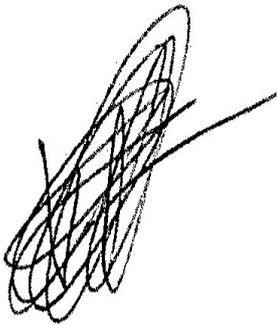
Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

(Mandela, 1994 p. 194).

DECLARATION

I, VUYOKAZI MNTUYEDWA, declare that *First-Year Students' Experiences of Peer Groups and Peer Pressure in the Residences of a South African university* is my own work, that, it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that, the entire source I have used or quoted has been indicated or acknowledged by complete references.

Sign...

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a dense, circular scribble with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Date...10 December 2019

DEDICATION

I dedicate this PhD thesis to my late grandmother and to my mother. Granny used to encourage and believe in me throughout my education journey. Her last words with me were, “Be patient in life, my granddaughter, everything is possible if you believe and dedicate your life to your dreams. God will grant you all heart desires at the right time, especially the doctoral degree you wish to have and one day you will have it.” My mother is the one who had seen me as a university graduate since I was young and she always embraced my passion for education. Kuni nobabini ndithi “enikutyale ebomini yam kuyakuvunwa zizizukulwana nomlisela nomthinjana welizwe lakowethu.

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ACRONYMS

CHE- Council for Higher Education report

DASO -Democratic Alliance Students Organization

DHET- Department of Higher Education and Training

EFF -Economic Freedom Fighters

EMS -Economic and Management Sciences

FYA -First-year Academy

FYE -First-year Experience

HELTASA-Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa

NRC- National Resource Centre

NSFAS-National Student Financial Aid Scheme

PASMA -Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania

SANRC -South African National Resource Centre

SASCO -South African Student Congress

SA-South Africa

SCO-Student Christian Organization

SES-Social economic status

SPSS- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UFS- University of the Free State

UWC- University of the Western Cape

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Peer pressure has over the years had an effect on first-year students in many universities globally. However, students are affected in various ways as they transit from high schools to a new university environment. Secuban argued (2012) that enrolling at a university institution can be seen as a very positive event, with great opportunities for the academic and social development of an individual. Studies have shown that first-year students enter institutions of higher education with many expectations (Kreig, 2013; Keup, 2007). Miller, Kuh and Pain (2006) argued further that first-year students who are living on campus commonly have higher expectations of the residential environment and their university experiences. This means that they need special attention regarding both their academic activities and their sense of belonging, so as to enable them cope with the university environment.

Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek (2006) stated that first-year students' general expectations of their experiences upon matriculating often shape their behaviour, specifically academic performance and social adjustment to university life. First-year students come to university with more "unrealistic or unrealized" expectations and perceptions of what it means to be university students (Kreig, 2013). The first-year level has long been known to be a critical time when it comes to the influences of peer pressure. It is a moment when the options of dropping out and the probability of transformative learning are greatest. For institutions of higher education, the first-year level is also a period during which academic programmes can have the greatest impact on students' development, resilience and persistence. In addition, the institutions of higher learning often provide support to help the first-year students to cope and grow in the new environment. The chapter then provides the problem statement, rationale and significance of this study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research methodology, definition of terms and the outline of the chapters.

1.2 Background of the study

The first-year entry has long been recognized as a critical moment in the lives of many university students globally. First-year entry is usually termed a transitional period in which students have first experience of a number of issues besides academic matters, and therefore

some of them have to make radical adjustments to meet new social and academic demands. The transition from high school to the university culture is often complex and difficult, with challenges for all parties involved (Briggs, Clark and Hall, 2012). Yaun (2010) observes that first-year university students need to be focused, despite the excitement of their new university environment with its overwhelming demands, which include academic work. During this transition, the university also faces the challenge of assisting first-year students to develop the resilience and the persistence needed to succeed. According Yam (2010) students come from various backgrounds, such as either directly from high school or from a working environment, or from differing social backgrounds.

However, many of these students come with high expectations, but with inadequate information about what is expected of them (Nelson, Kift, Humphrey, & Harper (2006). Many students are ill-prepared for these changes, partly because universities and high schools have different standards and expectations (Mundy, Delgado, Block, Venezia, Hogan & Seibert (2003) failure to understand the differences between the two settings sometimes impacts negatively on a student's academic motivation and achievement. Laing, Robinson and Johnston (2005) recommend that students' needs have to be understood before they can be assisted during the transition period and before useful strategies for inducting them into university life can be implemented.

Dennis, Phinney and Chuateco (2005) state that peer support during the transition to university is an important means of lowering anxiety levels and helping students to meet the academic demands in a classroom. For many first-year level students at a university, the first-year is usually seen as time for transition and adjustment in both social and academic demands (Tinto, 2009). Mattanah, Ayers, Brand, Brooks, Quimby & McNary (2010) assert that connecting students to a network of supportive peers can reduce feelings of loneliness, increase feelings of social support, and increase retention. The first-year of university is a challenging phase, for instance, separation from parents itself leads to loneliness and anxiety (Tinto, 2009). Students in this position would want to belong to or associate themselves with a peer group. Gordon (2010) states that despite recent developments, it is still the case that most first-year programmes focus either on the transition to university and the need for orientation that it engenders or on the acquisition of minimum learning skills required for participation in the regular curriculum. This study investigates first-year students who live in university residences.

1.3 Problem statement

The literature indicates that the transition from high school to university presents many challenges to first-year students (Bojuwoye, 2002; Tinto, 2009). Barefoot (2005) indicates that these challenges are related to student-to-student and student-to-faculty interactions; student time and involvement on campus outside of the classroom; the link between the curriculum and co-curriculum areas; and academic engagements, student participations and expectations. As students leave their families and move to the university, they are faced with many challenges such as academic and social performances as they try to adapt to the unfamiliar environment (Tinto, 2009). Some of the challenges in adapting to the university environment by first-year students revolve around academic demands, adjusting to physical environment, sharing rooms and other resources, managing independence, adjusting to technology, understanding new language and slang and adapting to financial demands (Krause, 2001). As the students interact with and seek support from their fellow students to cope with the challenges in the new university environment, they are compelled to associate with and or join groups of their peers. Boujlaleb (2006) emphasizes the fact that peers have a more powerful influence on young people as compared to their families. Some young people simply want to be recognized by choosing well known groups to make friends with (Kulaksizoglu, 2001). While Treynor (2009) notes that peer pressure does have many positive attributes, it is also associated with risk factors of adopting negative behaviour tendencies. This transitional stage can cause some of the peers to depend on their friends when they need to take a decision. Therefore, they join various peer groups as a means of adjusting to the new situation. The current study was designed to investigate issues related to peer groups and peer group experiences among first-year students living in the residences of a selected South African university.

Some of the challenges related to the experiences of peer pressure, whether positive or negative, are usually unknown to students before they come into the university. This makes it difficult for students to prepare for these experiences so that they can adjust quickly and well to the university environment. Academic and support strategies have been constructed by the University of the Western Cape with the intention of offering proactive assistance to first-year students. As a result of inadequate or total lack of preparedness to cope with the social and academic demands of the environment, many students are unable to respond appropriately to these demands and therefore perform poorly or drop out of the university prematurely (Krause,

2001). This notion is supported by Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot (2005), who hold that student success is largely determined by student experiences during the first-year.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the main research questions:

- (1) What do first-year University students living in the residences of a selected South African university perceive as their experiences of peer pressure?

The following secondary research questions arise:

- What types of peer groups do the first-year students living in the residences join?
- What are the reasons given by first-year students living in the residences for joining peer groups?
- What are the benefits of peer pressure as experienced by first-year students living in the residences?
- What are the challenges of peer pressure as experienced by first-year students living in the residences?

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate various experiences of peer groups and peer pressure among first-year students living in the residences of a selected South African university. The study focused on the following specific objectives:

- To ascertain the types of peer groups joined by first-year students living in the residences.
- To ascertain the reasons first-year students living in the residences gave for joining peer groups;
- To investigate the benefits of belonging to peer groups as reported by first-year students living in the residences.
- To investigate the challenges of belonging to peer groups as reported by first-year students living in the residences of a selected South African university.

1.6 Rationale and Motivation for the study

This study is about the experiences of first-year students and it is informed by my own experience of living in the residences during my undergraduate and postgraduate studies. During that time, I played a role in student leadership. I was a first-generation student so I had little or no knowledge of university life when I arrived to do my first degree. When I registered and was allocated a room in the residence, I made friends with fellow students in the residences and those in my study group after I joined the student leadership and student organization. The interaction between me and my peers was very successful because most of us were from the same province, spoke the same language and shared the same culture. I found it so difficult to communicate with the other members of peer groups, especially those who were from other ethnic groups because of the language and cultural barriers.

During my undergraduate studies as a student leader, I became aware of the effect of peer pressure on first-year student when they make the transition from high school to university level. I am aware that some students drop out of university because of the pressure exerted by their peers. The emphasis of this research was on understanding why first-years join certain groups and their experiences in those groups. I am eager to provide valuable insights about the transition into the higher education sector, and to contribute to making better policy practices.

Because of my experience of being a first-generation undergraduate, I decided to explore the experiences of first-year students living in residences through research. As a person who has served at various institutions, serving first-years as a part-time lecturer at African Languages and in the Student Affairs Office at Stellenbosch University (SU) and at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) as a residence manager and Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) as a part-time lecturer, I am aware of the importance of basing practice on well-grounded research. In all of the above mentioned jobs, my mandate was to teach and address the problems faced by first-year students in higher education. I also had an opportunity to serve on the committee of the National Association of Student Development Practitioners (NASDEV) at a national level. These aspects motivated me to do PhD research in the field of student affairs.

My extensive experiences of working with first-generation students in the Dean of Student's office at Stellenbosch University also meant I was ideally placed to explore the challenges first-year students are likely to face and to carry out the research.

1.7 Significance of the study

It is hoped that the study will assist universities to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence students' choice of peer group affiliation and how that peer group supports or detracts from first-year students' adjustment to and success at university. This study explores various aspects of peer group membership, including why students join peer groups, how they are influenced by peer pressure in their various peer groups, and what kind of impact peer pressure has on academic, social, religious and lifestyle choices. This information could enable the university in question to devise appropriate intervention initiatives to address the various challenges confronting first-year students. The study could assist universities to design better programmes to assist future students. It is likely to reveal information that can lead to better understanding of the various stages of transition as students become members of the university community and live in the residences, for the first time. The information generated by this study could assist students to adjust to the university environment and reduce the number of those who drop out of the institution because of their inadequate academic performance. The study, therefore, could be very important to provide information which can help first-year students prepare for university life and assist them to adjust quickly and well to the university environment.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study utilised the following theories as a framework.

Transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) explains the process of change in adolescents and youth, meaning that transition theory is created to examine the coping mechanisms of the individual in transition. Therefore, this theory is relevant to this study as it explains how first-year students adapt to transition when they find themselves in the new environment, namely the university residences.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) explains adaptation to the change through learning from peers. In addition, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling and observing others; one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed and on a later occasion this coded information serves as a guide to action. The theory is relevant to the current study because it addresses the issue of imitating others through peer pressure such as achieving

good marks and changing behaviour, or doing things for the sake of belonging, for example drinking alcohol and taking drugs.

Student involvement theory (Astin, 1975) explains the learning process and how it is reinforced to help in adaptation or adjustment to the environment. In addition, the theory explains how students change or develop and learn by becoming involved. Thus, the theory is relevant to the current study as it clarifies the learning process and how it is reinforced to help in adaptation or adjustment to the environment. Each of these theories is discussed in details in chapter 2.

1.9 Overview of research approach and methodology

Research design

The present study adopted a mixed-method research design in that it employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. Quantitative research gathers quantifiable data that can be used to examine the relationship among variables, and uses statistical methods of analysis and presentation forms such as charts and graphs (Creswell, 2018). As stated above (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2005), in qualitative research the collection of data involves participants and allows them to explore their perceptions of ideas, values and meanings.

Population and sampling procedure

In this study, the population was made up of first-year students living in two residences of a selected South African university (University of the Western Cape). They were selected using simple random sampling selection. At the time of the study there were a total of 190 first-year students living in two residences on campus who participated in the study. In each of the two residences males and females were housed in separate blocks.

Method of data collection

This study used two main data collection instruments: a demographic questionnaire and focus group interviews. Quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire so that the experiences of peer pressure could be measured. The use of questionnaires made it possible to reach a large

number of first-year students. The qualitative data was collected by use of focus groups interviews which were recorded to capture detailed information from the participants.

Setting of the study

Demographics of the residence community reveal that the residences include students of diverse ethnic backgrounds and different genders. The student population of the residences comprises mainly first-year students according to the residence policy. A few senior students provide mentorship or student governance, managing complaints and ensuring the well-being of the residents. The university campus boasts two residences for new first-year students. First-year students are allocated shared rooms according to their field of study or academic programmes, or just randomly.

1.10 Clarification of concepts

In most cases, different people do not necessarily mean the same thing when they use a particular word, and this can lead to confusion during discussion. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity and ensures a uniform interpretation of terms of clear understanding of this study, the following definitions are offered for clarification:

First-year students: students who have finished high school entering their first-year of the university and who are living away from home from the first time and mostly are eighteen years old (Ishler, 2005). This concept is relevant to the study because the targeted population is first-year students.

First-year experience: a term that has been widely used to discuss the experiences of first-year college students and the programme designated specifically for them (Tinto, 2009). In some institutions, the first-year experience is the title of a series of programmes, an office focusing on the needs of first-year students, or a seminar class designed specifically for first-year students. It has also been defined as a program is designed to adjust student to university life (Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013).

First-year Experience Programme (FYE): A programme designed to help first-year students prepare for the transition to higher education and explore academic, career, and co-curricular

opportunities. First-year programmes may include first-year seminars, student support services, academic success centers, and first-year orientations (National Resource Center, 2016).

Peer group: Members of a team who decided to form a group which in most cases have similar characteristics and age. Louw and Louw (2007) define “peer” as a collective of individuals who share the same stage of development and from whom the individual seeks acceptance or approval. Kulaksizoglu (2001) states that “peer group”, refers to a group formed by close friends who share the same age, learn from each other’s behaviour and interact on a regular basis because they have a strong desire to be accepted and to be appreciated by the members of that group.

Peer pressure: This is the influence of peers where individuals can act in different negative ways. However, Stuart (2001) defines peer pressure as the power exerted by a peer group in encouraging an individual to change his or her own attitude, values, or behaviour in order to conform to the group norms.

University residences: Students attending residential colleges are typically living on their own for the first time. They must simultaneously adapt to college academic rigor and new social responsibilities (Holmstrom, Karp, & Gray, 2002). For some, it may be the first time that they have the responsibility of waking themselves up for classes, getting along with roommates, making new friends, or confronting choices about drinking and dating.

Transition: The process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another. Student transition to university offers considerable challenges to all the parties involved. A study by Tinto (2009) views the notion of transition as one of the “rites of passage” to adulthood. Tinto (2009) argues that in order for first-years to make a successful transition from high school to university, students need to make their own adaptations and to be supported by the people and systems around them. Many university educational institutions have responded to the separation and transition difficulties faced by first-year students by introducing orientation and other support programmes (Hillman, 2005). The step denotes the movement from being dependent to becoming independent learners, from studying in a carefully monitored environment with a highly regulated timetable to learning to manage their own time and making decisions in a more adult and responsible manner.

1.11 Structure of this study

The thesis has been organized into chapters such as follows:

Chapter 1: *Introduction*

This chapter provides the introduction to the study. It presents the background that gave rise to the study problem, including statement of the study problem, the aim and objectives of the study as well as the research questions that guided the study. The chapter also features the discussions on the rationale and significance of the study. The concepts used in the study are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2: *The review of related literature*

This chapter provides an overview of the literature followed by the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The literature review includes descriptions or explanations of key concepts, peer group, types of groups, environment, peer pressure, gender, socioeconomic status and students related to first-year students' transition from school to the university. The theoretical framework critically discusses the three theories that underpin the study: These are transition, Social Learning and Student Involvement theories. Transition theory explores the key features of the transition from high school to university; the Social Learning theory is used to explain the role of interactions among students during their transition from high school to the university period; and the Student Involvement theory explains the importance of participating in the university activities by which means students joined peer groups and are influenced by the peer groups.

Chapter 3: *Research Methodology*

The chapter provides the methodological framework for the study. The study adopted the mixed method design. On the one hand the quantitative aspect focuses on the differences among population groups of participants with regard to experiences of peer groups and peer pressure. The qualitative aspect, on the other hand, explores first-year students' opinions and behaviour tendencies regarding experiences of peer groups and peer pressure. The chapter also presents information on the sample size and sampling procedures, data gathering instruments, data collection procedures (including the ethical considerations), and the methods for quantitative and qualitative analysis of data.

Chapter 4: *Quantitative Analysis of Data Results*

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis of the quantitative data collected for the study. The research hypotheses for the study were tested by using the Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS). The findings are presented using descriptive statistics. The implications of each finding are discussed.

Chapter 5: *Qualitative Analysis of Data Results*

The chapter presents the findings of the analysis of qualitative data collected for the study, which include verbatim quotations or excerpts from transcriptions of the focus group interviews. The focus group interview transcriptions were summarized and organized into patterns, categories or basic descriptive meaning units common to all the participants. These themes capture the essence of various aspects of participants' experiences of peer groups and peer pressure.

Chapter 6: *Discussions, Conclusion and Recommendations*

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. It discusses the significant relationships among population groups of participants regarding experiences of peer groups and peer pressure. The discussions are directly related to the research objectives that are highlighted in earlier chapters. The chapter concludes with the main findings of this study. The recommendations provided are aligned with the experiences of first-year students. The aim that incorporate best practice for helping first-year students' transition.

2 CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the introductory background to the study as well as the aims and objectives and theoretical framework of the study. This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on peer groups and peer pressure. According to Council for Higher Education report (CHE, 2013) most first-year university students drop-out because of many factors such as field of study, financial difficulties, complicated academic curricula and an inability to adapt to the institutions of choice that are highlighted in p.18 of the study. Those factors can lead to high first-year dropout rates as a finding they take long to graduate (Van Zyl 2017). The discussions presented in this chapter have been organized into two sections. The first section presents the literature review that underpinned the study. The second section of the chapter presents the theoretical frameworks. The theories are reviewed based on the phenomenon investigated.

2.2 Literature review

In other parts of the world, the first-year experience has been highlighted in different ways and at different times. United States, Canada, Japan, South Africa, and many European countries (such as Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of Ireland, and Spain) have begun to explore strategies for engaging their first-years as their own demographics have changed, albeit for differing reasons. How students are funded, the impact of increase in the number of young people in a country, and government agendas for participation and for funding higher education are some of the factors that play a part in creating a climate where the interests of first-years are seen as important.

The international research on in first-year student experience focuses on a diversity of topics. An international conference on first-year experience was held in Groningen in the Netherlands in 2009. The countries that presented during the conference included contributions from the Republic of Ireland, Spain, and Hong Kong, and previous conferences have had presentations from the Netherlands and the Caribbean. The European First-year Experience Conference entertained contributions from Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway as well as the Republic of Ireland. Another Conference held in Groningen in the Netherlands (2009) had a

particular focus on researching the first-year experience. The issues addressed at these international gatherings were varied such as student support services collaborating with academic staff, pre-entry work to better prepare students for their studies, skills development for students in the first-year, institutional first-year strategies, and first-year assessment. Below the international and South African history of first-year experience is discussed.

2.3 International history of the first-year university students' experience

Present studies provide an excellent overview concerning the effectiveness of first-year experience initiatives. Originally, Boston College was where the first Freshman Orientation class was offered in the year 1888. Reed College, based in Portland, Oregon, was the first institution to offer a course for credit when, in 1911, they offered a course that was divided into men-only and women-only sections that met for 2 hours per week for the year. (Association of College Research Libraries, 2007) The Freshman Year Experience was developed at the University of Carolina during the 1960s. The University of South Carolina in the United States has a course called University 101 which was meant for first-year seminars in the 1970s. The aim of the programme was to increase success for first-year students. The outcomes of University 101 showed that first-year students who took the course were better informed about the university environment, made more frequent use of the university's resources and services, and participated in extracurricular activities to a greater extent than non-participants (University of South Carolina, 2015). Gardner (1986) founded The National Resource Center (NRC) in the United States of America, and organized the popular and influential conferences on the First-year Experience, Students in Transition, and also disseminated information through an extensive series of scholarly publications, videos, national and international conferences, workshops, seminars, and teleconferences.

Since 1988, the Teesside University has been co-host for the National Resource Center's International Conferences on the First-year Experience, and as such they have had an interest in the development of first-year initiatives beyond the USA (*The Saudi Journal of Higher Education* (2014). In 1995, Queensland University of Technology hosted the first Pacific Rim Conference on the First-year in Higher Education, and the European First-year Experience Conference was launched in 2005 (*The Saudi Journal of Higher Education*, 2014). The inaugural Southern African Conference on the First-year Experience in September 2008 was

met with great success. These meetings also highlight the growing number of initiatives being developed to support first-years and the increase in research on their particular experiences and needs. National Resource Centre at the University of South Carolina (2009), has highlighted the central importance of the first-year experience to higher education based on the initiative of its conferences, publications, and research efforts. According to the outcomes, many institutions around the world have come to recognize the value of focusing on first-year students and other students in transition and have begun to explore ways to better support their own first-years. This is supported by Gardner, Upcraft, and Barefoot (2005 p. 524) who claim that "first-year students can and will do better when placed in intentional intellectual and social campus environments that challenge and support their efforts to succeed".

Krause, Hartley, James and McInnis (2005) argue that in Australia since 1994, the Centre for the Study of Higher Education of the University of Melbourne has conducted national studies into the experience of first-year undergraduate students at Australian universities at five-year intervals. The original 1994 study was commissioned by the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT) at a time of growing awareness about the impact of student diversity in a mass higher education system, and the important formative role of the first-year experience in shaping student attitudes and approaches to learning. There were 37 universities in Australia at that time, and seven were selected as representative of the system and invited to participate in the project.

In the introduction to their book, *Challenging & Supporting the First-year Student* (Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot, 2004) the exact components of a first-year experience programme vary depending on the structure of the university and the unique needs of its students. Common areas of emphasis include new student orientation, the first-year curriculum, academic advice, student support services (academic and non-academic), and administrative policies and practices that pertain to the first-year. In addition, Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot's (2004) findings suggest that student success is strongly influenced by the experiences that students encounter during their first-year at the university. These experiences in and out of the classroom serve as a foundation from which the rest of the student's experiences are built.

2.4 South African history of the first-year university students' experience

Ryan (2016) states that in South Africa the First-year Experience (FYE) programme was initiated around 2011 and the objectives of that were to develop a national (FYE) discussion group through the formation of a First-year Success Special Interest Group (SIG) under the auspices of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA). This group met annually and a follow-up FYE conference was hosted at the University of Johannesburg in 2013. The South African National Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) created an opportunity to apply for collaborative teaching innovation grants and a grant application involving a number of South African institutions was submitted. The South African National Resource Centre (SANRC) grant application was successful and as a result the SANRC was created during the last quarter of 2014.

Fourie (2009.p 1) claims that “The importance of the first-year experience and the need for urgent attention to this matter has long been noted in South African as well as international popular media and scholarly publications”. Stellenbosch University initiated in 2006 the First-year Academy and it was launch in 2007. The First-year Academy (FYA) is a comprehensive university initiative that focuses on promoting the success of first-year students and improving the quality of student learning. The First-year Academy was meant to improve first-year students' academic success with the aid of a variety of research activities, programs and projects. During the first six weeks of the academic year, students do Early Assessment tests as an early gauge of their academic progress. When students who are most likely to need additional support are identified early on in the academic year, assistance can be provided in time and their chances of long-term success can be improved. In the second term extra tutorials are introduced which are compulsory for students who failed subjects in their Early Assessment. Students can participate in the teaching and learning process by approaching their class representatives or lecturers about academic challenges they might experience. Student feedback at the end of a subject module can also be used constructively to communicate with lecturers about their teaching strengths and weaknesses (Stellenbosch University, 2013).

In addition, the University of the Free State has similar program, called UFS101 which was implemented in 2015. Its objective is to enable students to thrive in a higher education environment by developing computer literacy skills so they are able to use technology to

support their academic success. However, UFS101 also enables students to formulate an education plan that links with their career aspirations and helps them to understand the benefits of a higher education, and enhances critical thinking skills to engage with academic knowledge (Oosthuizen, Malan and Combrink, 2017).

2.5 History of Higher Education before 1994

According to Bunting (2006) the South African higher education system was divided into two mutually exclusive types of institutions: universities and technikons. The National Party government believed that it had been able to identify the essence of each of the two types of institutions into which it divided the South African higher education system: the essence of a university was *science* and the essence of a technikon was *technology*. It used the term ‘science’ to designate all scholarly activities in which knowledge for the sake of knowledge is studied, and the term ‘technology’ to designate activities concerned with the applications of knowledge. During the time of apartheid different institutions were categorised according to their medium of instruction while the others were categorised according to the ethnic groups. Those in which the main medium of communication and instruction was Afrikaans were the University of the Orange Free State, Potchefstroom University, the University of Pretoria, the Rand Afrikaans University and the University of Stellenbosch. Those in which the main medium of communication and instruction was English were the University of Cape Town, the University of Natal, Rhodes University and the University of the Witwatersrand (Bunting, 2006).

Bunting (2006) stated that the University of the Western Cape and the University of Durban-Westville were different. In their early years they were virtually ‘universities for Africans’, institutions that supported the basic ideology of the National Party government. Bunting (2006) claimed that by 1990, however, the tight government control of these two universities had begun to slip. During the 1980s, both had rejected their founding apartheid principles with the effect that Durban-Westville (which was supposed to be an Indian ‘own affairs’ university) had an Indian enrolment of 59% in 1990 and only 53% in 1993, while Western Cape (which was supposed to be a coloured ‘own affairs’ university) had a coloured enrolment of 68% in 1990 and only 55% in 1993. In addition, the apartheid government made every effort to ensure that the councils and the executive managers of these institutions supported the basic ideology of the National Party government. For example, the leadership and most of the academic staff of these universities were white Afrikaners who had been trained at one of the six historically

white Afrikaans-medium universities. The apartheid regime created segregation because political agendas came to the fore, and many months of teaching and learning were lost at these institutions as a result of students boycotting classes and authorities responding by closing institutions.

Leibowitz, van der Merwe and van Schalkwyk (2009) state that the design of the first-year experience must be based on understanding of the student learning experiences. Slavin (2012) suggests that groups should be formed randomly or by students themselves according to the criteria of their choice and should be small, at most four members, and made up of students with different level of knowledge. Martin and Paredes (2004) suggests that it is crucial to look at the learning style in group composition. Henrich, Blatt, Kuperminc, Zohar and Leadbeatern (2001) argue that forming a peer affiliation is a human tendency.

2.6 The benefits of First-year University Students' Experience programme

Upcraft and Gardner (2005) claim that First-year Experience programmes are designed for undergraduate students to enhance their academic and social integration into higher education. First-year programme courses are meant to assist first-year students with their academic and social transition. Schrader, & Brown (2008) state that First-year Experience programmes have been implemented in universities and colleges to address the emergent needs of recently matriculated students. It is well documented that many students are not prepared for the rigors of post-secondary education and FYE programme are designed to supplement the necessary academic and life skills. These academic and life skills range from knowing the location of the library to seeking out appropriate personnel when personal issues arise. Evaluating programme developed to address such a wide range of knowledge and skills is an obvious challenge, especially when each FYE is customized for each university or college.

According to Fox and Martin (2017) the first-year of university is a crucial time for most students whereby they are faced with various challenges that require them to learn and develop the skills needed to negotiate their new environment and discover a major that fits their talents and needs. Goodman and Pascarella (2006, p. 26) state that first-year seminar programmes “can be found at 95 percent of four-year institutions in the United States”; many share “the common goal of increasing academic performance and persistence through academic and social integration”. Padgett, Keup, and Pascarella (2013) state that “the first-year seminar may be the

most researched course in the undergraduate curriculum and research has established the first-year seminar as one of the most important instructional vehicles for achieving the learning and developmental objective of undergraduate courses in the United States” (p. 134). In addition, Goodman and Pascarella (2006, p. 47) establish that “first-year seminar participants were more likely to graduate within four years than non-participants”. Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van der Merwe (2009) in their book chapter *Perspective on the First – Year Experiences* claim that “The international focus on the first-year experience represents a strong and well-established movement in higher education” (p. 3). Researchers perceive and define first-year experience very differently. Habley, Bloom, and Robbins (2012, p. 330) state that “the first-year experience programme is an umbrella term for a complex and wide variety of practices and approaches our response to this challenge was to categorically define first-year experience programme using the terms orientation, learning communities, and first-year seminar”.

Kuh (2008) and Kuo, Hagie and Miller (2004), Terenzini, Pascarella and Blimling, (1996) and Zhao (2008) observe that the First-year Experience (FYE) programme has been in place at a large North-Eastern university for more than 10 years and is designed to facilitate the acquisition of traditional academic and social skills. These skills vary widely but include study skills (e.g., note taking, library research), time management skills, institutional awareness (location of the library), and appropriate interpersonal behaviour. However, Miller and Pope (2003) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) state that early efforts took the form of increased institutional resources such as libraries, writing centres, computer labs, or personal computers. In addition, universities and colleges also have offered courses and seminars focused on the development of academic skills and social skills.

The dropout rates of first-year students entering South Africa’s higher education has long been an issue. Letseka and Maile (2008) show that about 30% of the undergraduate intake drop out or are excluded by the end of their first-year. Van Zyl (2017) claims that in South Africa the first-year of study is a time of exceptionally high drop-out rates at 18% every year. Letseka, Breier, and Visser (2010) state that some of the causes of dropping out include poor choice of field of study, financial difficulties, complicated academic curricula and an inability to adapt to the institutions of choice. Moja, Luescher and Schreiber (2016) support the notion of FYE by stating that “the emerging notion that the first-year experience is crucial to academic success in higher education has given rise to a focus in student affairs and higher education on the first-year experience (FYE)” (p. vii-x). Based on the above conception there is a need for first-year experience programmes to be implemented in all institutions of higher learning. Astin (1999)

also recognizes areas of further consideration such as exceptions to the rule of involvement, i.e. students who are actively involved in the classroom and positions of leadership still drop out.

2.7 **First-year university student's experience and peer group pressure**

Studies indicate that peer pressure is a common phenomenon among first-year students in different universities globally. The review of previous studies is critical to this study as it helped the researcher to identify different approaches, particularly the conceptualisation of variables that underpin the findings and interpretation of this study. The importance of literature review of previous studies is that it demonstrates where the researcher fits in the existing body of knowledge and exemplifies the researcher understanding about what has been studied before (Boote & Belie, 2005). It relates the current study to the larger and ongoing dialogue in the literature, filling in gaps and extending previous studies (Cooper, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Much research has been conducted locally and nationally as discussed below. Extensive international and national literature on first-year students' experience, is explored below.

2.7.1 *First-year university students experience and peer groups*

As the literature on the first-year experience is quite extensive, I have chosen to focus on the existing literature. The aim of this section is to explore the first-year experience. The literature review used in this study examines the constructs associated with the types of groups, peer pressure, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of peer pressure and factors that influence peer groups and their formations.

Henrich et al. (2001) argue that forming a peer affiliation is human tendency. Louw and Louw (2007) and Astin (1993) define "peer" as a collective of individuals who share the same stage of development and from whom the individual seeks acceptance or approval. This notion is supported by Kang (2006), Castrogiovanni (2002), Kulaksizoglu (2001) and Kircler, Palmonari and Pombeni (1993) who state that "peer group", refers to a group formed by close friends who share the same age, and who learn from each other's behaviour and interact on a regular basis because they have a strong desire to be accepted and to be appreciated by the members of that group. While Botto (2006) argues that teenagers join a peer group because they need to satisfy their social and emotional needs, they want to boost their low self-esteem, associate themselves with social groups, want to fit in or belong and do not want to be seen as

“losers”. Black, Dikolli and Hofmann (2011) state that peer groups provide a forum where young people construct and reconstruct their identities. As stated by Eibner and Evans (2005), group formation findings in identity development. The concept of identity can be understood from many perspectives based on student environment or culture. Santor et al. (2002) argue that participating in peer group activities is a primary stage of developing identities, especially among students.

The above notion suggests that a peer group is composed of individuals who are approximately of the same age and who are still forming new identities. This is to suggest that a peer group consists of those who are of roughly equal status, but this does not mean that all social networks necessarily constitute a peer group. The peer group provides many things for a first-year student, including support in developing abilities and interests, the chance to learn how to interact with others, independence from adults, a way to learn how to deal with problems, emotional support, and opportunities to develop friendships (Brown, 1990). Students typically identify their peer groups according to their preferred clothing styles, music, activities, and drug use and hangout locations (Brown, and Engle, 2009; Pruitt, 1999). Berndt (1990) points out that belonging to a peer group or having a group of friends is an important social achievement for adolescents and an indicator of social competence. On the other hand, Laibson (2001) argues that seeing their peers consume an addictive substance could act as a cue for them or stimulate a desire for that substance. Pilgrim and Lawrence (2001) note that “most likely the strongest influence on students is their peer groups, friends and siblings”. In this case I would point out that peer influence is sometimes determined by the environment or space in which students find themselves. For example, some students who use drugs while at the university do not do so when they return home and are influenced by family values (Wang, Peterson and Morpheu, 2007).

According to Osarenren (2005) the main values of the peers are social participation, group loyalty and individual achievement. The peer group has several essential functions such as acting as a replacement for family, especially in gaining a sense of belonging; a stabilising influence; a source of self-esteem; a source of behavioural standards; a source of security; and an opportunity for practicing new behaviours. Peer relationships can be a powerfully good influence. However, they can also be a bad influence. Peer group members select each other based on similar characteristics, but sometimes can be totally different (Stone et al., 1999). The reason is that peer groups associate themselves with those who have similar status to theirs. Incentive, engagement and accomplishment have been found to be significant variables in the

peer group selection (Berndt et al., 1995). Being a member of a group is less of an outcome and more a part of everyday existence (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). According to Asher and Coie (1990), being accepted in a peer group is crucial to successful adaptation in a new environment. Being a member of a peer group gives a sense of identity and personal autonomy (Brown & Lohr, 1987). Moreover, Caffray and Schneider (2000) state that “young people choose particular behaviours based on how much they can satisfy their individual desires for emotional experiences”. For that reason, the types of peer groups in a classroom may be different from those in the student centre during lunch time. For example, classroom groups may relate to study while those of the student in the centre are more likely to relate to social or student leadership activity.

Gardner and Steinberg (2005) argue that individuals are particularly susceptible to peer and friend influences of appearance, attitudes, values, and illicit activities. This assertion is relevant to the present study as it addresses the characteristics of the first-year students at the university in terms of peer influence and how this influence is likely to shape their behaviours, attitudes and values. Furthermore, the argument above underscores the understanding of the challenges first-year university students experience in their transition from high school to university. A transition stage is usually characterized by a transfer of dependency (Tinto, 2008). Jackson (2010) describe transition as a period in which series of developmental tasks are confronted and, therefore, generally construed as a period of uncertainty resulting in a distinctive psychological dependence upon peers. This is to suggest that during the transition period peer group members have a tendency to transfer their dependency to their peers.

Following the preceding viewpoint, it can be argued that the transition from one environment to another can be a complex process in which first-year university students who have been dependent on parents throughout childhood start taking steps towards financial, residential, and emotional independence. This transition can be a period of growth and accomplishment, especially when students have the resources they need to navigate this process, such as community connections and a stable family that can provide guidance and financial assistance if needed, and access to education and experiences that provide a foundation for learning, life skills, and credentials (Jekielek & Brown, 2005). Holmbeck, Crossman, Wandrei, & Gasiewski (1994) focus on the development of social roles at university. During this period, students have a greater opportunity to make their own decisions and develop their own identities with regard, independence, autonomy and detachment (Garber & Little, 2001). One characteristic usually linked with first-year students relates to the concept of self-esteem. Louw and Louw (2007)

argue that first-year students develop self-esteem when they feel that they receive acceptance, support and encouragement from others. In this respect Citron, Westaway, Xia, Carlson, Diehl, Levesque and Selkoe (1997) further elaborate on the notion of self-esteem in terms of stability when they argue that some first-year students show high levels of stability in self-esteem, whereas others do not and that self-esteem varies according to ethnicity and gender. On their part, Phinney, Cantu, and Kurtz (1997) focus on the relationship between ethnicity and self-esteem when they argue a strong ethnic identity is associated with higher self-esteem and self-efficacy among students.

In summary, there is every reason to believe that most young people join peer groups to get a sense of belonging and to boost their self-esteem. Groups, as revealed by the definitions, are of different types and this has implications for different reasons for joining the groups. Peer pressure means being influenced by peers or friends to do or not to do something against one's wish (Hale, 2010). This notion is supported by Ryan (2016) who argues that peer pressure occurs when people of one's own age encourage or urge their peers to do something or to keep from doing something else, no matter whether the person personally wants to or not to do it. In addition, Oni (2010) claims that peer pressure can be described as the influence exerted by a peer group in encouraging a person to change his or her attitudes, values, or behaviours to conform to the group. Peer pressure also refers to influence exerted by a peer group in encouraging a person to adapt or shift his or her attitudes or values in order to conform to group norms (Kirk 2000). Burns and Darling (2002) state that a subtler form of peer pressure is known as peer influence, and it involves changing one's behaviour to meet the perceived expectation of the others. As such, peer pressure may be described as an emotional or mental force from people belonging to the same social group.

They are also influenced by social influences in their peer groups. Social influence is the effect others have on individual and group attitudes and behaviour (Berkman 2000). Young people, especially students, are susceptible to it during their formative years as they develop new interests and evolve new behaviours (Reproduction Health Outlook, 2005). According to Chemiss and Sluke (2002), Gresham and Elliot (1987) and Hawley and Vaughn (2003), these influence the individual's social life in different ways, for example to become a smoker or to pass with good marks. Reynolds and Kamphaus (2003) describe "adaptive behaviour" as age-appropriate behaviour, and it is necessary for people, especially university students to live independently and function safely and appropriately in daily life such as dressing, making friends, social skills and ability to work. Owens, Daly and Slee (2002) state that first-year

students easily conform to the behaviour patterns of their peers because they want to belong. Franzoi and Klaiber (2007) assert that peer pressure is the influence on the decision of others as it causes them to conform to what peers or society desires and it can have both negative and positive results. According to a study conducted by Barber, Eccles and Stone (2001), students who identify themselves with high risk from peer groups were more likely to use alcohol and other drugs, to be depressed and to have low self-esteem and they were less likely to have graduated from college by the age of 24. Aziz, Akhitar, and Hassan (2011, p. 36) elaborate however on the advantage of peer pressure when they state that it is a social phenomenon in which members of one's peer group take a certain action, adapt certain values or otherwise conform in order to be accepted. It seems that the degree of peer influence differs from one person to another and may have positive or negative effects.

2.7.2 *Types of peer groups*

Aziz, Akhitar and Hassan (2011, p. 36) describe peer groups as a source of affection, sympathy and understanding; a place for experimentation where an attempt to discover the self can be made because here persons are separated and independent from their parents. Groups can be classified into two: formal and informal groups. In broad terms, informal groups provide opportunities for social interactions in the university residences, while the formal groups largely serve academic or more serious purposes. Examples of informal groups are entertainment groups and dance groups, while formal groups can be study groups, religious groups and student organization affiliations. However, most of the time, first-year student peer groups are formed on an informal basis for a small period of time to serve interaction during the transition period in the new environment. Undergraduate peer groups may be described as formal or informal groups by reason of personal identity; affiliation and sense of belonging are formed over a period of time (Kuh, 2008).

There are various kinds of groups which can be classified as primary and secondary groups. Primary groups include families, close friends and neighbours who are regarded as having a high level of interdependence among their members and who share beliefs, values, and norms about areas of common interest (Beck, 1992). I would argue that the values and beliefs some students enjoy at home are carried with them to the university environment simply because they cannot operate without being in a group of some sort. This notion suggests that family has

a key role in promoting primary groups extending beyond the home environment. Benson (2009) argues that a primary group works as a collective and on the basis of agreed mutual decisions, for example, partying and tutorials, among others.

Benson (2001) contends that a secondary group is a group that interacts on a professional level, for example, trade unions and membership organizations. However, he does not provide a clear description of the membership organizations he has in mind. Forsyth (2006) argues that there are groups specifically created for certain goals and they are formed either by members or external individuals, groups and organizations. There are various characteristics making each group unique (Baron, Kerr & Miller, 1992). For example, in primary groups (small groups) such as families or close friends the participants have time to meet face-to-face and there is control during group discussions as compared to large groups. This is usually based on the level of argument or issues at hand. The characteristic of control gives such groups a unique feature of easy handling of issues being discussed. Another characteristic that makes small groups attractive is that they often have similar religious beliefs, are from the same ethnic background, race, geographic location, social class, or economic level, or have the same lifestyle or educational level (Barker, Wahlers, Watson, & Kibler, 1987). Members of the group can readily share life experiences and feelings and learn more about partnerships and teamwork. However, secondary groups or larger groups are characterised by bringing members with specialised skills together (Baron & Kerr, 2003). For example, students to some extent associate themselves with groups from which they would benefit academically (assignments, tutorials, debates, and writing skills among others). In addition, Baron et al. (1992) argue that larger groups have benefits in terms of gaining experience such as academic achievements. Ryan (2001) states that secondary groups are related with respect to many school adjustment variables such as academic achievement, school engagement and intrinsic learning motivation. Groups often simultaneously refer to a member of a family, a neighbourhood, a church, and an office team. However, this study confines itself to peer groups which first-year students form while in university residences.

There are many types of peer groups as the literature indicates. However, the types relevant to this study are the four which Adewuyi (2011) lists as friendship groups, cliques, cohorts and crowds. Friendship groups are also known as 'closed associates' (Adewuyi, 2011). Berndt (2002) points out that friendship is typically characterized by the affection, intimacy, reliable alliance, and instrumental and emotional support it offers. As a type of group, friendship is a notion that can be understood when two individuals are brought together because of their

proximity, interest or other characteristics. Ueno (2010) elaborates on the above notion by stating that psychological well-being is associated with friendship. It may thus be argued that first-year students make friends to cope with some challenges they face during transition from high school to university. A clique is smaller in number than a friendship group and it consists of two to twelve members, with an average of five or six. A clique, according to Ellis and Zarbany (2007) is a group where three or more peers work together frequently, share a common background and have developed a similar set of norms. Louw and Louw (2007) contend that a clique may be made up of friends who share interests, attitudes and values. Brown (1990), however, considers that the degree of intimacy is key, arguing that a clique is a small group in which members feel they know each other well and appreciate each other better than do people outside the clique. Example of this group can be a study groups, which is formed by students who share similar interest such as academic achievement.

Another group according to Adewuyi (2011) is a called cohort and is a dynamic social group that is formed among peers in university education institutions for the purpose of working on a specific activity or sharing common interests. Clarifying this description of the term, Phillips et al. (2001) argue that youths who are in the same groups tend to share similar socio-demographic behaviour and interpersonal characteristics. Like other groups, cohorts can be formally or informally constituted. Informal peer groups are those that have been created and maintained by peers themselves. A formal cohort, on the other hand, comprises people who are involved in improving moral behaviour, academic excellence and progressive activities for self-development, family upliftment and community improvement (Barnes et al. (2001). Lastly, another type of peer structure is the “crowd”, according to Brown (1990). This term refers to larger, reputation-based groups of teens or youths who spend time together in or out of class. Brown (1990) elucidates that a crowd can define the various parts of the social structure within a learning environment based, in part, on interests, abilities, and values. One crowd usually identified in most university residences is the “popular” crowd. Some students may want to be seen as excelling in academic studies while others may want a reputation for substance abuse or abnormal behaviour. It seems there are different ways to look at or define popularity. One perspective that comes to mind immediately is the view of popularity often portrayed in the public domain. An example of the popular crowd usually consists of students who purportedly have power and so can influence or manipulate others in terms of things like material possessions. However, Brown (1990) argues that the power exists in part because others do not challenge it because they are envious of or intimidated by their position. It seems

that those who are not part of the popular crowd may have their own goals in terms of popularity in the university.

Hogg (2005) like Brown (1990) sees some groups as “prototypes”. These groups associate membership with high status, and the duty of each member is to maintain the norms and power of the group. Scholars such as Aziz, Akhitar and Hassan (2011) argue that the group influences the behaviour of its members. Their argument contradicts that of Brown (1990). Aziz et al. (2011) argue that some groups influence behaviour and attitudes, whereas others are more concerned with status and visibility so they can increase their power to influence others. The highly visible groups enjoy high status regardless of their prosocial or antisocial behaviours. The benefits of these high status groups include social attention, access to resources, trend-setting power and inclusive relationships with their membership (Ellis & Zarbany, 2007).

Svenson, Stattin and Kerr (2011) at Orebro University, Orebro, Sweden investigated in and out of school peer groups of immigrant youths. The study aimed to explore the patterns of peer formation of immigrant youth in school and out of school. The sample consisted of 174 immigrant junior high school students (mean age 14.39) living in a segregated neighbourhood. Using a questionnaire to collect data, a person-oriented approach and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to analyse them, the findings indicated that these youths mostly have the same kind of relationship formations in both settings, regardless of the ethnic composition of each setting. In terms of adaptation, the findings consistently showed that males having only immigrant friends demonstrated problematic adaptation in both settings. The findings further indicated that there was no relationship between peer formations and adaptation. This study provides evidence that regardless of the ethnic background, peer formation is the same across universities. However, the participants in the above study were reflective of a narrow sample, so the findings were not representative enough to be generalized. The following section discusses the advantages and disadvantages of peer pressure.

2.7.3 Advantages of peer pressure

The advantages of peer pressure can be seen as a key to assist the peer groups to do better in their academic work and in personal behaviours, as the current study intended to investigate. Understanding both negative and positive influence of university peer groups is critical for this study. Hale, (2014) describes peer pressure as being influenced or pushed by peers/friends to

do things against one's wish. According to Lockwood and Kunda (2002) individuals who have achieved outstanding success are widely expected to influence others to pursue similar experiences. In other words, spending more time with peers does not always translate into trouble. Elliot and McGregor (2001) assert that peer pressure can be advantageous when it encourages positive attitudes, healthy values, respect and hard work. Positive role models can inspire one by illustrating an ideal, desirable possible achievement that one can strive for and the route to achieving it.

According to Gay (1992) being accepted by a peer group is the most influential and strongest force implementing change, and it is a very important aspect of university life for many students. For example, being accepted to become a member of a student organization can present opportunities to be known by the members within and outside the organization. Peer study groups can increase first-year students' levels of academic performance (Altermant & Pomerantz, 2003) and peers can influence each other's future (Akerlof, 1997). Lahelma (2002) states that peer groups play a crucial role in helping first-years to create informal networks and in creating a supportive environment in which individuals feel able to talk about very intimate and personal dilemmas.

Johnson and Johnson (1987) point out that well-planned group work projects align student achievement more than individual tasks. Furthermore, Tubbs (2006) point out that group work is likely to lead to better soft skills such as the ability to negotiate, compromise and communicate effectively and engage in teamwork. It also helps process information and knowledge during the course. Students become conscious of the dynamics necessary for task achievement and success in a team environment (Joseph & Payne 2003). Groups that comprise members with complementary skill sets are most likely to perform well (Katzenbach & Smith 1993). Based on McGinnis and Goldstein (1997) one of the essential bases of operating a positive peer group is to have group leaders who model caring and facilitative behaviours.

Korir and Kipkemboi (2014) investigated the impact of the university environment and peer influences on students' academic performance in Vihiga County, Kenya. The study assessed university environment factors such as school structure, school composition, school climate and peer influences in terms of the level of psychological impact they have on students. The study was based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which considers learning as an interaction between environment, behaviour, and one's psychological processes. The

respondents were selected using simple random sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to collect data, which were analysed by multiple regressions. The study established that school environment and peer influence made significant contribution to the students' academic performance. A university, as a learning institution and as a second home, has a strong relationship with students' academic performance. In a sense, the lecturer through their specific roles, might have negative or positive influence on students' academic performance. The findings of Korir and Kipkemboi (2014) are useful to management and researchers to gain more insight into the psychosocial factors such as financial situation, career orientation, and social support that affect students' academic performance and therefore help improve their academic performance. However, the study does not discuss in detail how peer influence affects or impact on the academic performance as alluded to by Lockwood and Kunda (2002).

In a study carried out at Mersin University in Turkey, Kiran-Esen (2012) investigated peer pressure and self-efficacy expectations among students. The instrument consisted of a Self-Efficacy Expectation Scale for Adolescents (SEES-A) and Peer Pressure Scale (PP) administered to 546 (313 females and 233 males) adolescent students aged between 17-21 years, randomly selected from six high schools. The analyses consisted of determining (i) the relationships between peer pressure and self-efficacy expectations using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and (ii) using an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether or not the self-efficacy expectation differed according to the level of peer pressure. The findings showed (a) a significant negative relationship between peer pressure and academic self-efficacy expectations; (b) no relationships between peer and social and emotional self-efficacy expectations; (c) however, general and academic self-efficacy expectations were higher in students who were at adolescent age and experiencing lower levels of peer pressure in relation to academic self-efficacy; (d) moreover, no significant differences were observed in terms of social and emotional self-efficacy expectations. This study also lacked the component of qualitative data that could probably have better explained the results. Kiran-Esan (2012) investigated the same topic which is peer pressure that makes it to be relevant to the current study, not least because the population age group is the same as that of the current study.

2.7.4 *Disadvantages of peer pressure*

Peer pressure is a complex phenomenon associated not only with positive attributes, but also negative ones in terms of human behaviour tendencies. As Lockwood et al. (2002) argue that peer pressure can be associated with negative role models, although this can sometimes inspire one by illustrating disasters and highlighting mistakes that must be avoided. In addition, peer pressure has been associated with risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse and unprotected sexual activities that have been shown to affect academic performance in a negative way (Santor et al., 2000; Gest, Graham-Bermann & Hartup, 2001).

Peer pressure can be exercised by peers who regularly appear as team leaders or those who like to be recognized because of the degree of their behaviours which is different from the others. In this context, peer pressure may sometimes push students to demonstrate many unwanted habits such as smoking, stealing, drug abuse and much antisocial or unacceptable behaviour (Ogden, 1997). If the other members of the age group smoke, this is usually sufficient reason for a student who has joined the group to start smoking, making behaviour changes therefore an important manifestation of peer pressure (Ogden, 1997). This view is corroborated by Newcomb, Bukowski and Hartup (1996) who argue that not all peer interactions and influences are positive, as members of peer groups influence each other to engage in risky behaviours such as drug abuse, prostitution, vandalism and various other negative activities. First-year students succumb to peer pressure in many areas of their lives and thus this can play a role in how their belonging to peer groups can negatively affect their motive to learn (Clasen and Brown, 1995). Maxwell (2002) links the negative aspect of peer pressure to biological and physical changes in students. This may be simply because students sometimes share a stressful biological event within a short space of time as the physical changes makes them to think differently. Lezear (2001) and Bulduk et al. (1990) have similar views to that of Maxwell when he argues that the kind of behaviour from peer influence can also be destructive in a classroom as students can be influenced by friends to start negative habits such as smoking as they want to imitate the members of the group. The same view is corroborated by Scott (1997) who argues that negative peer pressure is often dangerous and against institutional or home and even personal values, and is often responsible for skipping or dropping out of school, vandalism, unexcused absence or sneaking out of the house, bullying, disrespect to legally constituted authorities and sexual and substance abuse. According to the diverse views of these authors, it is evident that some peer groups are very influential on young persons' behaviours. In other

words, peer pressure can influence first-year students in their way of conduct in the new university environment. This argument is supported by Hawkins et al. (1999) and Battistich and Hom (1997) who stated that when students find their university environment to be supportive and caring, they are less likely to become involved in substance abuse, violence, and other problem behaviours.

Several research studies by Yavuzer, Karatas, Civilidag & Gundogdu (2014) and Monaci, Scacchi, Posa & Trentin (2013) have investigated whether or not peer pressure has an impact on first-year students' experiences in the university residences. The studies presented below focused on studies that investigated whether peer pressure played a role amongst first-year students. Ailes, Alvarado, Amundson, Bruchey, & Wheeler. (2015). studied expectations versus reality, with regard to first-year students' transition into residential living. The study examined first-year residential students' expectations regarding the residential experience prior to entering Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), an urban, largely commuter campus. Based upon a qualitative study of nine first-year students, the researchers explored how students navigated differences between their expectations and lived experiences. The findings of Ailes et al. (2015) revealed that each participant experienced a similar transition process. The research team developed an original model, the First-year Residential Student Transition (FYRST) model to describe the transition process, which offers a number of implications for higher education professionals. The study failed to mention the various experiences first-year students go through during transition. However, it only used one data method and failed to quantify the experiences of transition that the findings identified. It focused on residence first-year student as the current study has done.

Yavuzer, Karatas, Civilidag and Gundogdu (2014) studied the role of peer pressure, automatic thoughts and self-esteem on adolescents' aggression. The study examined the effects of peer pressure, automatic thoughts and self-esteem variables on the aggression levels of male and female adolescents, using relational and quantitative research. The sample consisted of 411 volunteer students who were chosen through random sampling from a total of 720 9th grade students from various high schools in Antalya, Turkey. Participants completed the Aggression Questionnaire, Peer Pressure Scale, Automatic Thoughts Scale and Self-Esteem Scale in their classrooms during counselling sessions. Data were analysed using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Yavuzer et al. (2014) found that, in the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for female and male adolescents, peer pressure and automatic thoughts were effective

predictors in explaining adolescent aggression levels. Furthermore, it was found that automatic thoughts fully mediated the relationship between self-esteem and aggression for both male and the female adolescents. The study concluded that peer pressure and automatic thoughts have a significant effect on adolescent aggression. The study investigated the phenomenon of peer pressure in a negative form. The current study is planning to investigate the concept in both negative and positive terms.

Shepherd and Lane (2011) investigated susceptibility to social influence, with regard to risky driving in response to peer pressure. In two studies conducted by Shepherd and Lane (2011) college students were socially influenced to be risky or not in a driving simulation. In both studies, confederate peers posing as passengers used verbal persuasion to affect driving behaviour. In Study 1, participants encouraged to drive riskily had more accidents and drove faster than those who were encouraged to drive slowly or not encouraged at all. In Study 2, participants were influenced normatively or informationally to drive safely or riskily. As in Study 1, influences to drive riskily increased risk-taking behaviour. Additionally, informational influence to drive safely resulted in the least risk-taking. Together, the studies highlight the substantial influence of peers in a risk-related situation; in real life, peer influence to be risky could contribute to automobile accidents.

A study conducted by Mechtenberg and Petersen (2014) investigated peer effects and students' self-control at the University of Hamburg, Buechel. They conducted a multi-wave field experiment to investigate the interaction of peer effects and self-control among undergraduate students. As instrument, they used a behavioural measure of self-control based on whether students achieve study-related goals they have set for themselves. They found that both self-control and the number of talented friends increase students' performance. These researchers set out to test the theoretical prediction of Battaglini, Bénabou and Tirole (2005) that only sufficiently self-controlled individuals profit from interactions with peers. They found that peers with high self-control are more likely to connect with others; they have a higher overall number of friends and have a higher number of talented friends. Moreover, positive news about self-controlled behaviour of their peer's increases students' own perseverance. In addition, they found that female students were more likely to have high self-control, but did not outperform male students. One reason they give for this is that female students had a lower number of talented friends than their male counterparts, thereby profiting less from positive peer effects.

2.7.5 *First-year-student's experiences and university transition*

Chester, Burton, Xenos and Elgar (2013) researched the transition support offered to first-year undergraduate students based on the hypothesis that support at the beginning and end of semesters would facilitate change in five areas (capability, connectedness, resourcefulness, purpose, and culture) related to success, learning approaches and psychological literacy. The study used self-reported surveys that consisted of 73 items measuring capability, connectedness, purpose, resourcefulness and culture. These were administered to 231 first-year students, living in a university residence, 166 females and 65 males. All the first-year students were given third-year mentors who led tutorial discussions for about 12 weeks. The findings indicate that 70% of the sampled students enjoyed the mentoring programme. Only 20% were not in favour of the programme, 57% percent of students indicated that it had improved their academic work, while 61% of students felt that it influenced their sense of connectedness. Chester et al. (2013) elucidate that practical interventions in the first semester of first-year students can be part of a package that enhances significant aspects of learning and encouragement. Pomerantz et al. (2005) postulate that while students improved as in the study cited above, the fact remains that peer pressure influences individual students either towards seeing the mentorship programme as a way of improving their academic work, or not.

Mudhovozi (2012) studied the social and academic adjustments of first-year university students at the University of Zimbabwe. The study used a phenomenological research design to explore essential features that characterize the experiences of first-year university students. The participants were seven first-year students purposively selected, three males and four females with a mean age of 24.4 years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather the data that were analysed using thematic content analysis. Mudhovozi (2012) found that the students faced a myriad of social problems at the university, revolving around issues of culture, separation from family, disengaging high school friends, and finances, dress and food issues. It is essential to highlight that Mudhovozi (2012) study used a phenomenological qualitative approach through a convenience sampling and this could not expect to generalize the findings of the first-year university in Zimbabwe.

Another study by Modipe (2011) investigated the initial experiences of first entering students at the University of Limpopo, with regard to implications for coping with academic

work/studies. The study used a qualitative design to collect the data. The data were collected through open-ended questionnaires administered to 120 students and 2 focus group interviews of 8 to 10 students each. The findings show that (1) personal and related to thoughts and feelings (2) related to the academic context (3) and related to social interactions, all of which may have far-reaching effects in higher education. The study does not seek to generalise the findings but draws from them for the development of strategies to support systems for first entering students. The study only focused on one variable which is academic first-year experiences, while the other aspects were not been considered. The current study covers different variables that measure the experiences of first-year students. Modipe (2011) focused on the experiences of first-year students as well, which is the main target of the current study.

Kiuru, Auzola, Vuori and Nurmi (2007) investigated the role of peer groups in adolescents' educational expectations and adjustment in two universities in western and southern Finland. There were 394 participants (196 girls and 198 boys) whose mother tongue was Finnish or other language. A total of 74% of participants lived with both of their biological parents, 12.3% lived in families consisting of the mother or father living with her/his new spouse, 11.5% lived with their lone mother, 1.3% with their lone father and 0.3% with their older siblings. 25% of the fathers and 16.9% of the mothers of the participants were higher white-collar workers (for example physicians, teachers, lawyers, managers); 8.9% and 45.9 respectively were lower white-collar workers (for example secretaries, salespersons, nurses); 35.5% and 15.6% were blue-collar workers (for example welders, construction workers, mechanics); 6.4% and 1.8% were private entrepreneurs; 0.3% and 2.1% were students; 2.0% and 1.3% were retired, and 21.9% and 16.4% were unemployed. As instrument, a questionnaire was administered to the participants in their classrooms during regular school hours. The findings showed that a total of 87 peer groups (48 girls' group and 39 boys' groups) were identified in the sample; no cross-sex peer groups were identified. Girls' groups were more cohesive than boys' groups: girls were more likely than boys to belong to peer cliques with close ties between the group members. Boys were more likely than girls to belong to those peer groups. Lastly, significant gender similarities were found in the level of educational expectations because in the adjustment variables girls performed better at school than boys and showed more problem behaviours than boys. The above study considered the socioeconomic status of the participants. In addition, the findings were analysed for gender difference in performance.

In a study carried out at the University of Brighton; UK, with the aim of understanding higher education student retention and successful integration into the social and academic worlds of

the university, Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld (2005) employed a qualitative approach to explore students' experiences of university life and, for those who withdrew, the process they went through in deciding to leave. A sample consisting of 22 students who completed their first-year and 12 students who withdrew were drawn from the first-year undergraduate programme in Applied Social Science at the University of Brighton. Findings from this study shows that peer influences on retention are complex and multifaceted. The study also reveals the importance for first-year students' integration into the university of making compatible friends, and illustrates some of the processes by which social and academic integration is achieved. This means that academic setting often challenges the first-year students during transition which is why they spend time and make friends with various groups. These findings confirm the findings of earlier studies that it is crucial for students to join peer groups when they are first-year university students.

2.5.3 First-year students experience in substance abuse

A study carried out by Adewuyi and Akinsola (2013) indicated that there are significant peer influences on substance abuse among undergraduate students at Lagos State University in Nigeria: (1) there is a relationship between peer influence and substance abuse among undergraduates; (2) male undergraduates are more inclined to substance abuse than their female counterparts; (3) gender has an effect on peer pressure among undergraduates. The researchers used the Age and Peer Influence on Substance Abuse and Inventory (APISAI) to collect data from the respondents. Using a sample of 513 undergraduate students to whom they administered the Gender and Peer Influence on Substance Abuse Inventory (GAPISAI) questionnaire, the findings indicated that (1) there is significant relationship between peer influence and substance abuse among undergraduates; (2) male undergraduates are more inclined to substance abuse than their female counterparts (3) gender had effect on peer influence among undergraduates. However, the study lacked the requisite qualitative approach to make the findings more understandable. This would have provided a very extensive information if interviews on the influences of alcohol abuse for instance were considered. Additionally, the study used few variables to measure the influences. Hence, the current study has used a mixed method to capture the influences of peer pressure.

Ukwayi, Eja and Unwanede (2012) studied peer pressure and tobacco smoking among undergraduate students from the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was guided with the hypotheses that (1) there is significant difference in the frequency of tobacco use between sexes; and (2) peer pressure has significant influence on undergraduate students' tobacco use. Data was obtained through the administration of a structured

questionnaire to 120 respondents in two well-known and patronized restaurants and bars. Findings indicated that 46% of tobacco use among undergraduate students resulted from peer pressure, while the ANOVA findings indicated that peer pressure had significant influence on undergraduate students' tobacco use ($F=4.069$, $p<0.05$); the model suggests that a unit increase in peer influence factor would result in 62% unit rise in the percentage of undergraduates that make use of tobacco products. The result of independent tests showed that the frequency of tobacco use differs between sexes ($t=3.100$, $p<0.05$). From the findings, Ukwayi et al. (2012) concluded that the majority of the respondents are introduced to tobacco use by their peers/friends. This indicated that the frequency of tobacco use among undergraduate student in Nigeria's university environment was on the increase. The above study focused on negative peer pressure as the current study intended to do. But this study used only quantitative data methods to collect the data but lacked the qualitative method to comprehend the results. Ukwayi, Eja and Unwanede (2012) only focused on tobacco smoking as influences of peer pressure and did not consider other aspects.

Borsari and Carey (2001) reviewed studies that investigated peer influences on college drinking. The main hypothesis was that peer pressure is consistently implicated in the excessive drinking of college students. However, both theory and empirical findings suggest that peer pressure is a combination of three distinct influences: overt offers of alcohol, modelling, and social norms. Overt offers of alcohol can range from polite gestures to intense goading or commands to drink. Modelling occurs when the student's behaviour corresponds to another student's concurrent drinking behaviour. Perceived social norms can serve to make excessive alcohol use appear common and acceptable to the student. This review critically examines the literature on each form of peer influence and provides suggestions for future research.

Govender, Nel and Mogotsi (2015) studied experiences and opinions of first-year students at a previously disadvantaged medical University of Limpopo, Medunsa Campus in South Africa about alcohol consumption. The Medunsa Campus is meant to train medical doctors, dentists and other health professionals only. The sample size consisted of 217 first-year students, to whom a questionnaire was administered and it included open-ended questions which were formulated from discussions with a focus group of eight first-year students. The open-ended questions were formulated in a manner that allowed participants to give an account of their experience and opinions related to the drinking of alcohol. The study used thematic content analysis to analyse qualitative data. The study reports that the participants comprised 90 (41.5%) females, 13 (6%) White, 196 (90.3%) Black, 4 (1.8%) Asian and 4 (1.8%) Coloured

students. The findings show that substantive views relating to first-year students' opinions and experiences of alcohol consumption. Themes gleaned from the interpretation were awareness, physical location of the campus, economic opportunities, health considerations, identity, belief in alcohol use, and interventions. The findings concluded that first-year students have varying opinions and experiences concerning alcohol consumption at the University of Limpopo (Medunsa campus). Social identity and peer pressure are motivating factors in students' use of alcohol. This was an indication that experiences of first-year student differ from student to student as indicated by Modipe (2011) and Bojuwoye (2002). These authors have noted that the new university environment is very challenging to all first-year students and they cannot resist peer pressure.

Monaci, Scacchi, Posa, and Trentin (2013) investigated peer pressure and alcohol consumption among university students. The study was carried out in the northern part of Italy, and aimed at examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and alcohol consumption. The study used a non-clinical sample of 198 university students between the ages of 19 to 30 recruited from different faculties to whom they administered a questionnaire which included a measure of emotional intelligence, personality characteristics and their drinking habits. The data were analysed using the t-test. The main findings were: (a) in intensity sub-scale of sensation seeking, male students had higher scores in alcohol abuse than female students; (b) female students relied more on social support, coping styles; (c) the t-test showed gender similarities in drinking habits, the main relationship between gender and the criterion variable was statistically significant while the interaction was not; (d) female students consumed less alcohol, but gender did not moderate the relationship between peer pressure and consumption. This study only employed the questionnaire as a tool for data collection and thus lacked qualitative data analysis that could have resulted in more comprehensive findings. In addition, the study showed various behaviours among the phenomenon of pressure which is the main objective of the current study.

2.7.6 First-year university student's experience and behaviour

Tome and de Matos (2012) investigated how peer groups can influence the behaviour of adolescents with a specific aim to study both the peer group and family influence on adolescent behaviour. The sample used was a group of adolescents who participated in the Portuguese

survey of the European Study Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC). The Portuguese survey included students from grades 6, 8 and 10 within the public education system, with an average age of 14 years old. The total sample of the HBSC study carried out in 2006 was 4,877; however, with the use of the Structural Equations Modelling (SEM), 1,238 participants were lost out of the total sample. Findings show that peers have a direct influence in adolescents' risk behaviours. The relationship with parents did not demonstrate the expected mediation effect, with the exception of the following elements: relation between type of friends and risk behaviour; and communication with parent and lesser involvement in violent behaviours and increased well-being. The negative influence of the peer group was more connected to the involvement in risk behaviours, whilst the positive influence was more connected with protective behaviours. However, the study lacked a qualitative component which would have made the findings more comprehensive.

Denault and Poulin (2012) investigated peer group deviancy in organized activities and youth problem behaviours. The study was carried out in Quebec, Canada. The sample consisted of Grades 8 and 9 learners of different socio-economic status and ethnic backgrounds, including Europeans, Canadians, Haitians, Asians and Latino Canadians who were selected from eight elementary schools in four separate districts. As instrument, a survey questionnaire and telephone interviews were used. Using the t-test and one-way analyses of variances ANOVA as indices to analyse data, the main finding shows no statistically significant differences in level of deviancy in the activity of peer group with respect to participants' gender, activity type, degree of supervision in the activity and age and gender composition of the activity peer group. It is crucial to mention here that, participants in the above study were convenience sampling, so, the findings were not very representative enough to be generalized.

In a study that was carried out in Atlanta, GA, USA, Mrug, Madan and Windle (2012) studied how temperament alters susceptibility to negative peer influence in early adolescence. The sample included 704 early adolescents who were recruited from the community. The findings showed that flexibility increased susceptibility to negative peer influence only for males, but not for females. In addition, the study showed that adolescents are always being influenced through peer pressure. The study investigated the influences of peer pressure but only used one method of quantitative data collection. The limitation of this study is that all of these peer pressure influences were quantified, while if there had been in-depth data collection the findings could be better understood. Mrug, Madan and Windle's findings are evidence that peer pressure always influences young people's decisions.

Yunus, Mushtaq and Qaiser (2012) studied the influences of peer pressure on adaptive behaviour learning among adolescents in Gujrat. Two scales, the Adaptive Behaviour Scale (ABS) and the Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) were developed to measure adaptive behaviour and peer pressure respectively. The sampling of the study was purposive in nature and comprised late adolescents composed of 60 males and 60 females, from Gujrat. Cronbach's alpha was calculated and found to be significant for Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) and its subscales, namely, Belongingness Subscale, Influential Learning Subscale and Influential Consequences Subscale. Cronbach's alpha was also found significant for Adaptive Behaviour Scale (ABS) and its sub-scales, that is, Interpersonal Skills Scale and Self Discipline Scale. Factor analysis was applied for the reduction of items. A significant correlation was found between ABS total and its sub-scale scores, and with PPS total scores and its sub-scale scores. Intercorrelation between PPS and its subscales revealed that Peer Pressure scale scores were highly significantly correlated with its four sub-scales. Intercorrelation of ABS and its sub-scales showed that total ABS scale scores are highly correlated with its all sub-scale scores. The findings show that peer pressure has a positive influence as those who showed high amount of peer pressure have better adaptive abilities. This means that students who experienced high peer pressure become more self-disciplined or develop better interpersonal skills. The study investigated the phenomenon of peer pressure as did Shepherd and Lane (2011).

A study carried out by Berger and Rodkin (2012) investigated group influences on aggression and prosociality in early adolescents who change peer affiliations. The study hypothesized that for early adolescents who change their peer group affiliation, the characteristics of the group they are leaving (departing-group influence) are not as influential as those of the group that they are joining (attracting-group influence). The sample consisted of 576 fifth to sixth grade children recruited from four elementary schools. Findings show that there was significant attracting but not departing-group influences on aggression and prosociality. Expected associations between aggression, prosocial behaviour and social status were confirmed. This study shows that the influences of peer groups vary between participants.

Yaun (2010) investigated first-year residential experiences at the University of Miami with a view to analysing students' housing strategy, learning and academic success. Yuan's study focused on the university and paid greater attention to learning outside the classroom in relation to students who can have a successful transition from high school to university life and achieve academic success. Thus, the author did pay attention to internal peer influences that take place in the university residences. Yuan's research suggested that there must be institutional support

at all levels for this type of programme (learning outside the classroom) to be successful, purposive and effective. The relevance of Yaun research is that it was carried out in the university's residential setting and therefore provides a greater understanding of transition in the new environment. In particular, Yaun proposed a strategic plan do deal with transitions as first-year students by providing academic support and caring environment.

Maxwell and Chase (2008) studied the various forms and sources of pressure young people experience in relation to sex and pregnancy. The instrument consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted among 63 young people (47 females and 16 males) of whom 51 were already parents while 12 had pregnant partners. They also carried out other in-depth semi-structured interviews among 78 participants from various professional sectors like health, education and social care. These data were supplemented with focus group interviews and discussions. The findings demonstrated (1) pressure to find love to replace that lost from their own parenting experiences; (2) pressure to be sexually active due to a lack of boundaries set in the residential care homes in which they lived; (3) pressure in relation to the decision as to whether or not to continue with or terminate the pregnancy; and (4) pressure due to the stigma associated with being a care leaver on what life aspirations were accepted and realistic.

The following study aimed to investigate whether shame plays a role in adolescent conformity in the face of perceived peer pressure. Lashbrook (2000) used a snowball technique to interview twelve students aged between 19 and 23 years from a small public college in rural central Appalachia. Larger campus groups were targeted in the study such as fraternities, sororities, athletic team and the college band. The findings show that negative emotions accompanied peer influence and respondents frequently felt isolated, ridiculed and inadequate when they perceived they were being subjected to peer pressure. This study raised the issue of transitions where peer joins the group. But the study did not use quantitative approaches that would have made the result more explicit. Another limitation of this study is that it only focuses on one gender rather than comparing different genders for better results.

2.7.6.1 *Factors influencing peer group formation*

There are several factors that influence peer groups and their formations. These factors sketched are also discussed below.

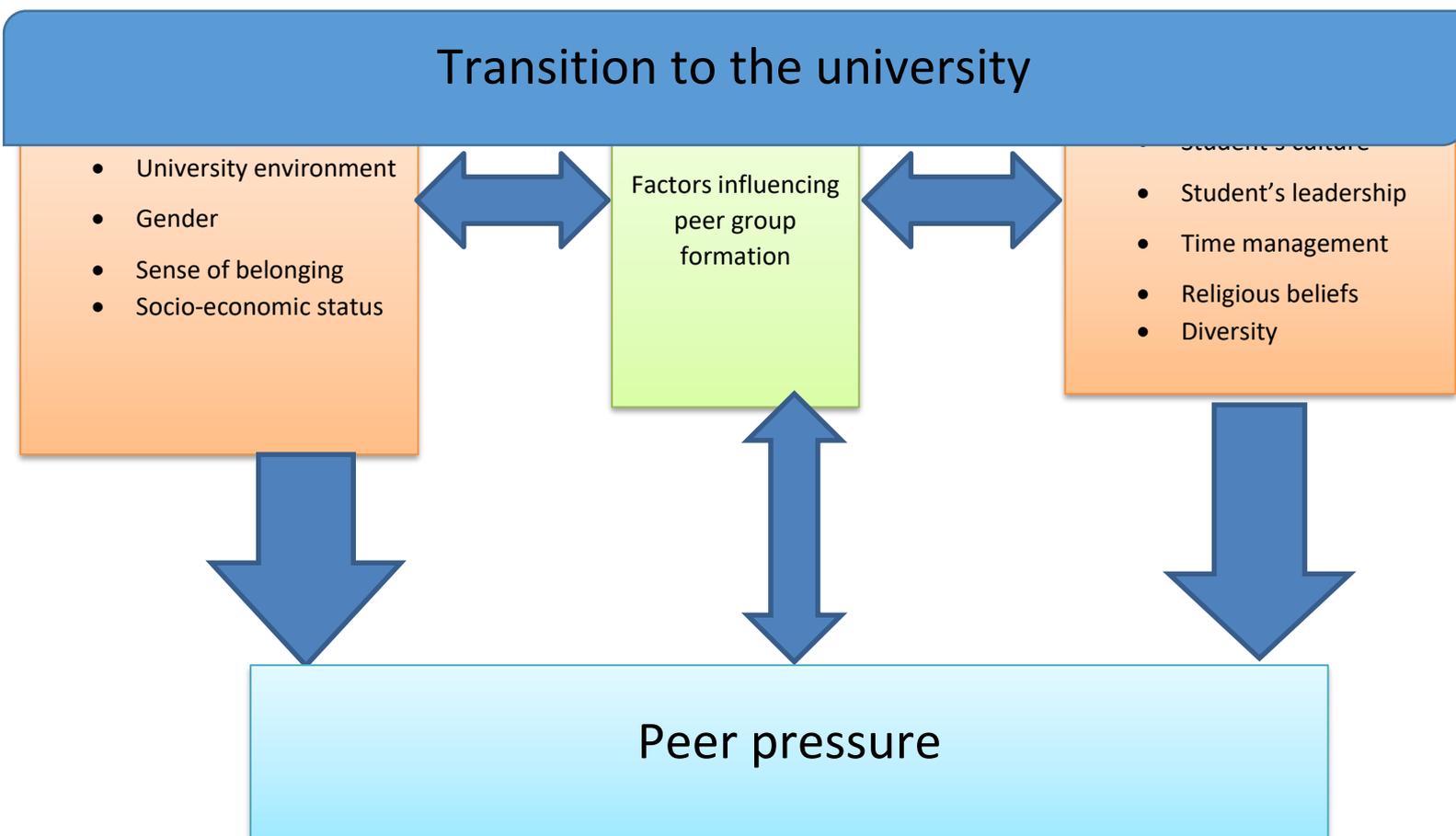


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for factors that influence peer groups and their formation

2.7.6.2 Age

Age is an important influential factor in peer groups, and it determines whether an individual will be influenced through peer pressure as most of the students joining universities are by and large teens. According to Langholt (2012) some of the causes of peer pressure are related to age-appropriate behaviours as the student's developmental ages may create needs to belong, to be accepted and several other needs, including protection or enhancement of one's self-esteem. Students between the ages of 18- 22 are typically the traditional group studied on campuses as mentioned by Morgan (2001). This notion is supported by Dishion, Poulin and Burraston (2001) who argue that generally the development of adaptive behaviour always takes place during childhood; for example, social responsibility, self-help skills, community self-sufficiency and social adjustment are experienced. This is to argue that the development of adaptive behaviours takes place with age and experiences and these behaviours become

complex as age increases. Gardner and Steinberg (2005) describe adolescence as a stage where individuals are particularly susceptible to peer's and friend's influences regarding appearance, attitudes, values, and illicit activities. Brown and Stone (2011) observe that adolescents associate themselves with a crowd who have similar status to theirs – for example, age and self-esteem. Brown (2011) argues that there is little doubt that peers actually influence each other at a younger age than in adulthood. This study therefore intended to investigate the age differences among the university peer groups.

Steinberg and Monahan (2007) investigated age differences and developmental change in resistance to peer influence using a self-report instrument that separates susceptibility to peer pressure from willingness to engage in antisocial activities. The study adopted a quantitative approach that included four ethnically and socioeconomically diverse groups and that included more than 3,600 males and females between 14 and 18 years old. Findings revealed little evidence of growth in susceptibility to peer pressure and the capacity to engage in antisocial activities between ages 10 and 14 or between 18 and 30. Steinberg and Monahan concluded that middle adolescence is an especially significant period for the development of the capacity to stand up for what one believes and resist the pressures of one's peers to do otherwise. The study only focused on the negative aspects of peer pressure. However, the study did not investigate the influence of other variables such as gender and socioeconomic status based on the influences of peer pressure. Moreover, qualitative data related to the participants' willingness to engage in antisocial activities was not collected.

2.7.6.3 *Co-curricular activities*

There are a variety of social benefits to co-curricular involvement. According to Dewey, (2013) the term co-curricular refers to “activities, programmes, and learning experiences that complement, in some way, what students are learning at university that is experiences which are connected to or mirror the academic curriculum. While Shulruf (2010, p.594) states that co-curricular activities relate to activities that are “external to the core curriculum”. However, Bartkus, Nemelka, Nemelka, Gardner (2012, p.698) defined co-curricular activities as “academic or non-academic activities that are conducted under the auspices of the university but occur outside of normal classroom time and are not part of the curriculum and co-curricular activities do not involve a grade or academic credit and participation is optional on the part of the student”.

Participation in co-curricular programme is widely recognized and promoted as an integral part of the student life experience (Kuh, 2013). In addition, students who were involved in co-curricular activities often did better academically and there are a multitude of other benefits students gain from being involved on campus. This statement is supported by Lang (2002) who argued that students benefited from being involved because they felt socially attached to their university. Furthermore, Magolda's (1992) found that students' involvement in organizations gave them access to peers who then provided friendship, support, and knowledge. Kuh and Umbach (2004) concluded that institutions should organize both in-class and out-of-class experiences to expose students to a variety of opportunities. The above definitions show that co-curricular activities have become an important component of university student's life. Zhao and Kuh (2004) found that student participation in a learning community was positively linked to self-reported gains and academic satisfaction. This can imply that co-curricular activities are very important for the development of first-year students. Co-curricular involvement is one of the best tools students have to set themselves apart from their peers and be competitive in the running for internships, cooperative education opportunities and jobs.

2.7.6.4 *University environment*

Moving from high school to university can influence first-year students' behaviour either positively or negatively. Salami (2011) stated that the new environment in which the students find themselves with new processes, procedures and people can create emotional problems. Astin (1999) acknowledges that "it is easier to become involved when one can identify with the university environment" (p. 524). For the first-year students, university is a new environment where they encounter various new experiences like being taught in a lecture hall, or having to do assignments, to use technology (computer labs), to make new friends and to meet high profile university people like the rector and his or her management team. Farris (2010) claims that a student who finds himself or herself isolated during their first-year at university faces a difficult adjustment process. Funding of private schools leads to better academic performance and more access to resources such as computers, which have been shown to enhance academic achievement (Crosnoe Johnson and Elder 2004, Eamon 2005). Universities play a role by providing a safe environment for students where they feel enthusiastic and confident about their future endeavours. Barry (2005) states that a university environment can either open or close the doors, and this can directly impact on the academic

performance of the student. Crosnoe et al. (2004) argue that university policies and programmes often dictate the demanding nature of the university environment. Students shape their own identity in the new environment to fit in with their peers. Behaviour changes in response to peer pressure may include changes in dress codes, hairstyles, changes in relationships (new friends or associates), changes in time and financial management and changes in interests as well as lifestyle. Muldoon and MacDonald (2009), suggest that lack of social integration into the university environment is one of the key causes of attrition, and student drop out. This notion is supported by Roux and Brier (2014) who stated that it is commonly known that the highest rate of dropping out occurs in the first-year of study at higher education institutions.

2.7.6.5 *Gender*

Gender is a complex phenomenon. Olademo (2009) argues that the term ‘gender’ is seen as a social category that is not rigid but culturally undertaken and is known as a productive division of people into male and female”. Butler (1995) emphasizes the fact that understanding gender is very important because it helps to understand how societies are pre-arranged in different ways. However, Wiklund (1998) states that gender is a social phenomenon with a fundamental social and structural ordering of men and women in society. Louw and Louw (2007) and Benenson, Hodgson, Welch and Heath (2006) make generalisations about males and females. They do not explain why males are more aggressive than females, or why some females are very aggressive. Furthermore, they contradict themes as they found that females are better interpreters based on social messages from nonverbal cues and that they are less talkative and emotional than males. Benenson (1993) and Benenson et al. (2006) report that males engage with each other less than females do in a dyad setting. However, boys express more positive affect and are more cooperative in problem solving than girls in a group setting. Interactions among males are more likely to be competitive and organized than interactions among females. Archer and Yamashita (2003) paid particular attention to male constructions of “bad boy” masculinities that are positioned in opposition to education, and are related to hegemony, patriarchy and racial/class inequalities in inner cities. Some empirical evidence from Archer and Yamashita (2003) supports the proposition that males are more influenced by peers than are females. Although girls are seen by Mac and Ghail (1994) as having less influential peer groups, this is not to say that peer groups do not influence their decisions to do post-compulsory education. Muthovozi (2017) reported that both female and male students have challenges of adjusting with roommates and accommodation.

As Gardner, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2009) point out, association among males participating in sports and nonviolent delinquency might be explained in usual youth friendship networks. Moreover, Denault and Poulin (2008) argue that when males become more socially integrated in their collective team they are likely to behave better than females. However, male-only deviancy in peer group activities is greater as compared to female-only, but it is better in mixed gender than in exclusively female groups. Students, who are female, from high socioeconomic status families, or with strong academic backgrounds, were more likely to have friends who cared about school learning and were less likely to associate with peers who were interested in engaging in delinquent activities (Landau, 2002). To Aronson (2008) and Prinstein (2007) females are seen to be more vulnerable to conformity as compared to males. Females are likely to have fewer closer friendships and they are strongly attached to them while males are the opposite, as they maintain more diffuse peer network and it helps them to be less emotionally involved (Giordano, 2003; Van Houtte, 2004). However, females are seen as placing more emphasis than boys in developing and keeping peer relationship while in males their status is their concern when it involves larger social hierarchies (Giordano, 2003; Van Houtte, 2004). In addition, males have been observed to be involved in drinking earlier more regularly and with more problems compared to females (Robbins and Martin, 1993). However, Yamaguchi and Kandel (1997) state that men have important roles to play in women's substance use patterns while older boyfriends tended to pressurise girls to use drugs and engage in risky sexual behaviours.

Due to cases of behavioural personal factors like stress, self-esteem and depression, there is a substantial gap between women and men when it comes to smoking (Oakley, Brannen & Dodd, 1992). According to Snow and Bruce (2003), some young females who smoke play a crucial role and recognition in their particular social groups and smoking to them can be a symbol of higher status than inferiors in female self-esteem. Moreover, as Plano et al. (2002) argue, peers are an important factor in smoking among adolescents and this is seen as influence from their affiliations with particular peer groups rather than peer pressure. According to Nolen-Hoeksem (2004), when it comes to drinking and its consequences, female and male students are found to behave differently. For example, females drink less and have fewer alcohol related problems compared to males. According to Inderbitzen-Nolan and Walters (2000) and La Greca and Lopez (1998), adolescent females are affected more with symptoms of depression and social anxiety compared to adolescent males. Moreover, females have more close friends and

intimacy in their friendship compared to males and that can create internal distress (Berndt, 1982; Urberg, Degirmencioglu, Tolson & Halliday-Scher, 1995). However, Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) claim that adolescent females are more autonomous than males and they are more resistant to peer pressure both in antisocial and neutral situations. Females are significantly more likely than males to resist the influence of their friends in both antisocial and neutral situations and there are no socioeconomic differences in resistance to peer pressure (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Ngee and Koh (2003) stated that males are more susceptible to peer groups whereas females appear to be more 'bonded' to typical social institutions. The current study also took into account the above differences between male and female first-year students in relation to the incidence of peer pressure.

2.7.6.6 *Sense of belonging*

The sense of belonging in university students has been the focus of a considerable number of studies in recent years. Strayhorn (2012, p. 87) described belonging as a "basic human need and fundamental motivation that drives student behaviours, and facilitates educational success". Sedgwick and Yonge (2008) argue that sense of belonging can be understood as a fundamental human need, as is to be respected and valued members of a group or community of people. Tovar, Simon and Lee (2009) state that the sense of belonging is a contract that can be defined as a need or desire to be connected through formal and informal interactions. Maslow (1968) identified "belonging" as a psychological concept. Maslow's theory suggesting that a sense of belonging is an important human need is generally accepted. Young people who belong to peer groups do so because they do experience a sense of belonging or they want to be accepted by their peers. Strayhorn (2012) argued that students must feel like they matter in order to feel a sense of belonging in a campus environment, and they may seek out social support in the form of student organizations or relationships with others to feel that they matter. In addition, O'Keeffe (2013) stated that developing a sense of belonging is crucial to the success of college students and particularly for students who are considered at risk of attrition.

Meeuwisse, Severiens, and Born (2010) found that students who come from backgrounds where there is little history of participation in higher education may find academic culture particularly bewildering and may lack the support and guidance that comes from having friends or family who have been through the experience of attending university. This notion is supported by Harper and Hurtado (2007) who stated that students with underrepresented

identities at public research universities more often encounter a non-welcoming campus climate than their majority peers, in turn affecting their sense of belonging. Sense of belonging to a peer group is a natural part of children's social development and the approval motive becomes useful automatically as it is a need for psychological satisfaction (Jim & Olley, 2003). This means that first-year students join groups at the university to gain a sense of belonging and uplift their self-esteem.

The sense of belonging by university students has been the focus of a considerable number of studies in recent years. It is crucial that students feel a sense of belonging in their transition to university, for example being welcomed during orientation time by various student groups on campus. Sense of belonging in this case could mean being accepted in a particular group or environment regardless of their values, beliefs and cultural norms. Marshall, Anderson and Champagne (2007) state that people need to accept themselves before they can expect others to do so. Studying a sense of belonging allowed the researchers to assess which forms of social interaction (academic and social) further enhances students' affiliation and identity with their colleagues. Johnson, Soldner, Leonard and Alvarez (2007) state that positive peer and faculty interaction influences students' sense of belonging by making complex environments feel more socially and academically supportive. Furthermore, Hurtado and Carter (1997) posit that a sense of belonging plays influential roles in, among others, participating in extramural activities and becoming a member of a campus sub-environment.

In institutions of higher education, the concept of belonging has been analysed from many perspectives. Sense of belonging is important to all students but it may be particularly important for those who continue to be marginalized in universities due to their race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status (Strayhorns, 2012). Zepke and Leach (2005) argue that these students often experience "a lack of socialization," "alienation," "difficulty making friends," and "feeling homesick," which causes them to feel that they do not belong. The conclusion from this area of research is that ethnic minority students appear to feel less at home in their educational programme compared to majority students, and that this feeling may result in negative student outcomes, such as poor study progress and early withdrawal. Thomas (2015) suggested that a strong sense of belonging is an important factor in students' completion of their courses; and that student belonging is associated with academic and social engagement, encompassing students' sense of being accepted, valued, included and encouraged by others (teachers and peers), and feeling part of classroom life and activity. This study sought to

understand the distinct aspects of belonging, as they are related to building relationships with peer belonging, and second, to feeling accepted by members of the institution such as residence administrators and peer groups, all of which affects students differently. The focus was mainly on first-year students.

2.7.6.7 *Ethnicity*

Schneider, Mori, Lambert, and Wong, (2009) stated that minority students often face discrimination and prejudice at university and the value system within their institutions are more likely to conflict with their family and ethnic subculture values. A strong ethnic identity may help individuals cope with negative societal messages about their ethnic groups, as they connect with positive aspects of their own ethnic group (Smith & Silva, 2011). According to Phinney (1996), ethnic identity refers to the extent of one's sense of commitment and belonging to his or her ethnic group. Hamm (2005) argues that adolescents are most likely to nominate cross-ethnic friends in schools with many students of different backgrounds. Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham (2009) justified these findings by pointing out that ethnic discrimination from adults and peers in educational settings is associated with increased negative perceptions of one's ethnic group. Bobo (1999) further argues that racial prejudice is a group attitude or orientation about the position of different racial groups within the social order. However, racial discrimination includes direct or indirect, overt or subtle action(s) by the majority group that limit the economic, political, educational, and social opportunities of a minority group. Cultural stereotypes about specific races have resulted in discriminatory practices with devastating impacts on the academic achievement of children of colour (Bobo & Fox, 2003). Davis, Aronson, and Salinas (2006) noted that stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies resulting in lower academic achievement and negative outcomes. The presence of racism in educational settings harms everyone, but has the most negative and lasting impact on racial minority groups (Pollock, 2008).

2.7.6.8 *Socio-economic status*

Social economic status (SES) has been regarded as one of the influential factors in peer formation. Sledge (2012) claims that an essential aspect of the decision to go to a higher education institution is whether a student is able to afford it or not. Ellis & Zarbatany (2007) state that high-status group always have power to influence and control the members of their

groups. Louw and Louw (2007, p.226) argue that “socio-economic status may be a powerful factor in educational achievement, not in and of itself, but through its influence on the family atmosphere, the choice of neighbourhood and the quality of school”. The socio-economic status (SES) of a child is most commonly determined by combining parents’ educational level, occupational status, and income level (Jeynes 2002). It is believed that low SES negatively affects academic achievement because it prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home (Eamon 2005). Rothman’s (1993) analysis revealed that within the same school, a student who comes from a higher socio-economic group will achieve better test findings than a student from a lower socio-economic group. The socio-economic status of parents does not only affect the academic performance, but also makes it possible for children from low background to compete with their counterparts from high socio-economic backgrounds in the same academic environment (Rothstein, 2004). Suleman, Aslam, Shakir, Akhtar and Akhtar (2012) found that children with strong socioeconomic status show better academic performance in comparison to those with poor socioeconomic status, who showed poor and unsatisfactory academic performance.

In addition, Gest et al. (2001) argue that individual social status can be measured by assessing the centrality of individuals inside their peer group. There are benefits and rewards by virtue of belonging to a particular social peer groups such of having many friends and knowing different places. It is more socially advantageous to belong to a high-status group than a low-status group simply because of social recognition, relationships and general resources. Fredricks and Eccles (2006) and McNeal (1998) found that university students from high socioeconomic status families are likely to participate more in organized activities compared to those from low socioeconomic status. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who attend poorly funded schools do not perform as well as students from higher social classes (Eamon 2005). Overall, Zeijl, te Poel, du Bois-Reymond, Ravesloot, and Meulman (2000) found that children and teens from families with higher social status spend more time with peer groups than those from families of lower social status. In addition, Moore (1990) raises another issue of composition of an individual personal support network that can affect socioeconomic status, as privileged people get more emotional support from friends compared to the disadvantaged (Liebler & Sannderfur, 2002). Further, high socio-economic status is associated with lower susceptibility to negative peer influence because of better access, quality of social resources like organized sport, recreation and play groups that make the participant members to be less vulnerable compared to the influence of deviant groups (Boxer, Guerra, Huesmann

& Morales, 2005). Kindermann (2007) stated that groups with members of high academic status encourage on-task efforts while low academic status groups do not do so. Sussman, Pokhrel, Ashmore and Brown (2007) state that “high-status groups tend to include youth recognized for their social or athletic prowess (for example: popular, jocks), and low-status groups typically feature crowds that are at odds with conventional social norms or the norms of the adolescent peer system (e.g. nerds, outcasts, burnouts, druggies)”. On the other hand, teenagers who are associated with low-status peers experience more depression effects and lower self-esteem as compared to ones with higher status (Brown & Lohr, 1987; Prinstein & La Greca, 2002). According to Letseka, Cosser, Breier and Visser (2010) the most common reason for dropping out of university by Black African students is financial problems. This characteristic of the peer groups based on socioeconomic status the current study also intended to investigate.

2.7.6.9 *Social skills*

Social skills, according to Anderson (2001) enable students to interact with others and to exert influence on others. As stated by Steedly et al. (2008) social skills are components of behaviour that help an individual to understand and adapt across a variety of social settings. Walker (1983) defines social skills as “a set of competencies that (a) allow an individual to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, (b) contribute to peer acceptance and to a satisfactory school adjustment, and (c) allow an individual to cope effectively with the larger social environment” (p. 27). On their part, Zins, Weissbert, Wang and Walberg (2004) argue that social skills can also be defined within the context of social and emotional learning, recognizing and managing emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively so as to enable students succeed. This notion is evident that interactions are learned through social skills.

According to Kuh (2008) student engagement is crucial for academic success. Nonetheless, Kuh (2008) mentions a crucial aspect where interaction can be achieved through engagement. The simplest order of complexity of peer experience involves interactions. Interaction refers to the social exchange of some duration between two individuals. Astin (1993) stated that peer-to-peer interactions have the greatest influence, positive or negative, especially regarding students living in the university environment. Social skill essentially helps people, particularly

first-year students, to take turns, share, be patient, be respectful, listen, talk positively about others and be friendly (Steadly et al., 2008). With this understanding, researchers and educators seek to evaluate and build students' social skills within a variety of social contexts. Successful learning requires first-year students to interact closely with lecturers and peers. Investigating the social skills, first-year students show when they are among their diverse fellow students was one of the interests of this study.

2.7.6.10 *Students' Culture*

Student culture is part of life experiences for first-year students since they are likely to be exposed to different cultural backgrounds in residences. This study explores how student culture relates to peer pressure. Zhou and Zhang (2014) argue that university culture is different for all students. Student culture is about behaviour patterns, beliefs and values as well as about distinguishing characteristics of a group (Matsumoto 1996, p. 16). According to Kuh (2008), student culture is the degree of grooming an individual about general campus life in terms of identity, group membership, acceptable discourse and desirable behaviour. The literature on student culture reveals important information on peer group formation, group power and influence on values and behaviour, and the need to understand the dynamics of student culture in the university environment (Person, 1990). Student culture in university residences is where first-years are encouraged by the residence management and student governance to show good behaviour through the values and beliefs of fellow students. Student culture in this case is reflected in residence policy where house events are conducted and first-year students are expected to participate. First-year students acquire the student culture in their peer groups by influencing each other. Some students adopt behaviour patterns such as beliefs and values which in other words expose them to peer pressure influences. Referring to Bronfenbrenner's (1993) systems theory, student culture benefits the environment where students need to develop. This is to suggest that the theory helps to understand the nature and characteristics of the behaviour patterns, beliefs and values which students develop or are characteristic of them; and how these result from or are promoted by peer pressure. As Kuh (2008, p. 564) notes, "student culture is processes and norms that guide the formation of peer groups and their influence on members' behaviours and interpretive frameworks and campus peer culture encompasses the forces and processes that shape individual and collective life on campus in terms of identity, group membership, acceptable discourse and desirable behaviours."

There is extensive literature addressing the issues of student culture in higher education. Mbeki (1997) reflects on the benefits of establishing student culture and proposed that educational institutions and teachers must implement it. Some of the factors influencing students' behaviours are caused by student culture as they transit to the new university environment (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). For example, students are allowed to join various clubs where they imitate new behaviours. The concept of student culture is relevant to the present study since the behaviours of first-year students are likely to be influenced by peer group culture where new values and attitudes are established in the new university environment.

2.7.6.11 *Students' leadership*

At the university level, various challenges may occur that demand more proactive skills such as leadership. Stephens and Beatty (2015, p. 119) stated that "Leadership knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students learn in leadership studies courses have the potential to dramatically shape students' trajectory in college and beyond". Dugan and Komives (2007) describe leadership as a purposeful, collaborative, values-driven process. Foubert and Grainger (2006) observe that leadership responsibilities foster growth in planning, organizing, managing, and decision-making in students. According to Lizzio and Wilson (2009) student representation on committees is widely viewed as a key mechanism for involving students in educational improvement. It is the view of the present study that first-year students join student leadership to develop themselves and acquire good interpersonal skills. Ward, Yates and Song (2014, p. 282) claim that "Students in leadership positions often need to plan, organize and execute events, work with multiple offices on campus, develop budgets, and motivate members to become engaged". According to the Higher Education Research Institutes (1996) students who involve themselves in education leadership have the potential to increase their skills and knowledge. The study conducted by Tinto (2008) suggests that first-year university students who participate in a great number of university activities have greater interpersonal skills and higher popularity. Yukl (2006) defines leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 8). Northouse (2010) defines leadership as "a process in which an individual influences a group of others to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). The above definitions suggest that leadership is about influence and the ability to influence subordinates or peers in a work or organizational context. Debate about whether leaders are born or made seems increasingly to have been resolved in favour of

the position that much of what we think of as leadership can be taught and learned. Cillessen and Sandstrom (2006) assert that students who are classified as popular student leaders typically display characteristics of cooperation, sociability, kindness, and leadership.

Students may also seek out popularity in order to increase self-esteem. Lopes et al. (2012) determined that students who display socially appropriate behaviours are more likely to share, uphold positive interactions with their peers, have higher self-esteem, and show greater social competence. Knowledge on how to be a successful leader and role model helps in supporting students' individual peer acceptance, inclusion, and self-esteem. Aladag and Tezer (2009) point out those students who obtain higher self-acceptance might display a greater acceptance of others. Leadership skills at university are gained through student organizations and other social organizations where members learn how to make decisions and changes that lead to substantial growth in the organizations concerned. Student organization groups are a crucial part of university life, some of which are organized to serve political issues. They represent the most visible and accessible avenue to student involvement. Leadership experiences allow students to develop interpersonal, organizational, and leadership skills that can contribute to their marketability. Student organizations usually encourage first-year students to join any group besides the leadership training. McGannon et al. (2005) argue that peer helping is accomplished during one-to-one approaches while group leadership, discussion leadership, or tutoring activities are different. For example, Dolan (2003) asserts that student leaders can inspire students who have been followers. Involvement in student leadership is an effective way to connect to the campus, build leadership skills, meet people and have fun. Gardner (2004) concludes that a requirement of leadership is "interpersonal intelligence" which includes understanding of how to communicate with others and building on those relationships within one's collaborative culture (p. 108).

2.7.6.12 *Time management*

Many scholars have written about time management, which affects first-year students during transition with regard to their academic work. Liamputtong (2011) found among other factors that the first-year of university is a time to adjust and is often stressful for the majority of students. Kaushar (2013) defined time management as a set of principles, practices, skills, tools and systems that work together to help students get more value out of their time, with the aim of improving their quality of life. In addition, Argarwal (2008) emphasized that time

management is usually a personal problem and if one instinctively knows what is right, then there is no need to worry. Omolola (2010) stated that both male and female undergraduates are affected by time management. Adebayo (2015) claimed that time management is the art of arranging, organizing, scheduling and budgeting one's time for the purpose of generating more effective work and productivity. Balduf (2009) recognized that poor time management can contribute to academic failure and effective time management can contribute to higher levels of college achievement. Sevari and Kandy (2011) showed that the training of time management skills to increase academic performance and self-efficacy is important and can play a vital role in improving academic performance. The findings of these abovementioned studies suggest that first-year students should have time management ability that involves setting goals and priorities by means of time management tools.

2.7.6.13 *Religious beliefs*

Religion is an important factor in the development and well-being of a student (Bowman & Small, 2012). First-year students who participate in religious groups have made a choice about social commitments. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) found that eighty percent of university students are interested in spirituality. The notion of student religion is supported by the Policy on Religion and Education which was approved by the Council of Education Ministers on 4th August 2003. The policy on religion was meant to serve the following objectives: (1) In all aspects of the relationship between religion and education, the practice must flow directly from the constitutional values of citizenship, human rights, equality, freedom from discrimination, and freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion; (2) Public institutions have a responsibility to teach about religion and religions in ways that reflect a profound appreciation of the spiritual, non-material aspects of life, but which are different from the religious education, religious instruction, or religious nurture provided by the home, family, and religious community; (3) Religious education should contribute to creating an integrated and informed religion and education policy community that affirms unity in diversity Mooney (2005) stated that several studies have shown that religious students do better on critical indicators of academic success. According to Regnerus (2000) religious participation and personal religiosity can help lower rates of substance abuse, and limit activities that undermine college careers. In addition, Pascarella, Pierson, Terenzini, and Wolniak (2004) argued that they should applaud organizations which provide a positive influence on students. However, it is notable that other types of extra-curricular activities can have similar positive effects. Wilson

and Janoski (1995) claimed that religious students can also be expected to devote time and energy to a variety of prosocial causes. Higher education professionals focus on the many dimensions of student development, but they do not actively promote this aspect of the spiritual or religious identity development for students (Eboo, Montero, Love, and Giess 2016). Bowman and Small (2012) said that religion cannot simply be ignored and needs to be recognized as an important identity, too. Religion has a large impact on students. Everyone, in some way or another, possesses some sort of world view (Glanzer, 2011).

2.7.6.14 *Diversity*

Van Vught (2008, p. 154) argues that “diversity has been identified in the higher education literature as one of the major factors associated with the positive performance of higher education systems”. In addition, commitment to diversity and inclusion are in fact, the essential ingredients of academic excellence. Antonio et al. (2004) argue that diverse learning environments help students sharpen their critical thinking and analytical skills; prepare students to succeed in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world; break down stereotypes and reduce bias; and enable universities to fulfil their role in opening doors for students of all backgrounds.

The next section presents the discussions on the theoretical framework of the study.

2.8 **Theoretical Framework**

2.8.1 *Introduction*

The previous section presented the conceptual frameworks for the study. Thus, this section discusses the main theories that underpin the study. The term 'theory' has been defined as structured concepts and principles planned to describe a specific phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Doherty et al. (1993) and Kerlinger (1979) describe theory as a set of interconnected information that emerges from a process of systematically formulating and organizing facts to understand the phenomenon studied. This study utilised the following theories as a framework: transition theory, which explains the process of change in adolescents and youth; social learning theory, which explains adaptation to change through learning from peers; and student involvement theory, which explains the learning process and how it is

reinforced to help in the adaptation or the adjustment to the environment. Each of these theories is discussed below in detail.

Theoretical frameworks are explanations about a phenomenon (Camp, 2001). Merriam (2001) provides additional clarity in stating that a theoretical framework provides the researcher a lens through which to view the world. Similarly, Hoy and Miskel (1987) elaborate on the role of theory in research by stating that a theory aims to describe, explain and predict the knowledge of previous scholars on related topics the study intends to investigate. White and Klein (2008) argue that the role of a theory is to give explanation which helps to answer the why and how questions posed by researchers, and can be connected to method where linkages between ideas and data can be organized in different ways. The theories that ground this study, namely transition theory, social learning theory and student involvement theory are discussed below.

2.7.2 Transition Theory

The literature on higher education transition is often implicitly held assumptions about and definitions of what transition means. The transition approach was first discussed in 1981 by Schlossberg, a counselling psychologist. This theory was developed to create a framework in which practitioners would be able to understand why people react and adapt so differently to transition and why the same person can react and adapt so differently at different points of life (Schlossberg, 1981). Anderson, Godman and Schlossberg (2012) explain transition as any event or non-event that findings in changed relationships, routine, assumptions and roles of oneself and the world and requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships. This means that transition theory is created to examine the coping mechanisms of the individual in transition. The term 'transition' is both a psychological and a physical process that leads to change (Berline & Eaton, 2012; Bridges, 1991). Emiley (2014) argues that student transition impacts on relationship routine life, academic expectations, needs and experience and roles.



Figure 1: Transition theory Schlossberg, Miller-Tiedeman, and Liptak, (2015).

The process of transition from high school to university comes with challenges, according to Scholssberg (1997) as stipulated in the figure 4 which are also known as the 4 S's. Schlossberg (1981) identified four major sets of factors that influence a person's ability to cope with a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. According to McManus, Pollack, Cooley, McAllister, Lotstein, Strickland & Mann (2013) the 4 S's are meant to assist the individual to look at how he or she processes transition, what did or didn't occur during transition, how he or she responded to the transition, and what resources of support are available for that person. Schlossberg mentions three phases in relation to the process of transition: (1) 'moving in' process where one has to be familiar with the new environment for orientation to facilities, such as the library, student center and new technology; (2) 'moving through' process means survival mode (balance of academic life); and (3) 'moving out' process that occurs in a stage of giving up in life (managing the challenges). Meanwhile, Tinto (1993) considers transition to university in three distinct stages: (1) the separation stage, where students have to disassociate from their family backgrounds and communities (students first go through a separation stage

in which they move away from their home environment); (2) the establishment of new relationship stage, where students have to interact with people and make new friends. During these stages students are torn between their old environment and the new one; they may not feel they belong in their old environments but have yet to find their places in the new one). Finally, (3) the incorporation stage, where students struggle to adapt to university settings including its social life and academic, financial and physical demands as well as new relationships with others. This means that students move into incorporation when they have achieved full membership into the social and academic communities of the institution.

Thus this theory is relevant to this study as it explains how first-year students adapt to transition when they find themselves in the new environment, in particular the university residences. Associating and joining peer groups offers opportunities for first-year students in transition to learn new things by imitating the behaviours of their peers. Therefore, learning becomes possible and is strengthened through social reinforcement as peer group members socialize with each other by receiving praise, recognition or admiration of their peers or friends. According to Schlossberg's theory, student-peer interaction is imperative if participating in campus activities and student organizations is to be meaningful. This study therefore investigates how transition to university offers considerable challenges to all the parties involved, including peer groups. The above viewpoint is an indication that peer group transitions takes longer and sometimes motivates students to be involved in peer pressure activities such as change in behaviour patterns or the adoption of a new lifestyle. In fact, that transition is interpreted differently by individuals depending on their contexts and the impact of change from high school to university.

Transition theory is an addition to Erikson's identity and intimacy aspect with great emphasis on the formation of identity throughout a student's years in college (Evans, 1995). Chickering and Reisser (1993) clarify this point in stating that discovering emotions, feelings, independence, and achievement usually become part of a university student's transition and exploration in establishing identity and developing characteristics. According to Reay, Davies, David and Ball (2002), transition to university can sometimes be more complex because it involves many things such as racial differences, gender, socio-economic class or background. This notion is supported by Donnel, Kean and Steven, (2016) who argue that these involve transition to a different educational and institutional context. Fisher (2003) further developed the transition model to encompass some of the emotional perspectives; the types of things

people might say or feel at each stage; while Schlossberg (1981) views transition as “any event or non-event that findings in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles”. The notion is an indication that transition involves learners creating for themselves a new identity as first-year students characterized by a major shift in relationships, routines, assumptions and roles. Schlossberg (2006) argues that students need to use strategies to apply themselves to react and behave in the situation with the support of parents, peers and academicians, in other words to develop coping resources in transition.

Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998) argue that transition theory provides a framework that facilitates an understanding of adults in transition, including first-year university students and the ordinary and extraordinary processes of living. These authors contend that if this transition is not recognized by the individual based on relationships, routines, assumptions and roles, it is not considered as transition, but as change. Although transition may lead to growth, decline can also be expected. Transition can be viewed with ambivalence by the individuals experiencing it. As Schlossberg (1997) argues, transition comes with challenges; for instance, first-year students have to be prepared in order to see the change of the new environment. However, Tinto (1988) elaborates more on the challenges of transition by pointing out that it is a physical process moving from high school to university where everything is totally different and students have to learn to adjust in a social process of change. According to Anderson et al. (2012, p. 38) transition adaptation depends on whether one is moving in, through or out of the process.

The purpose of the use of transition theory in this study is to provide a framework that can help to understand how first-year students can grow and develop psychologically, intellectually, physically and socially in their new environment through the development of various programme. Support networks must be in place so first-year students can begin to make the important connections that will help them to cope with the pressure of their peer groups. This theory also helps to understand the kind of assistance the practitioners of student affairs can put into place in dealing with different reactions to transition among first-year students when adjusting to the new environment. This study explores challenges in ensuring effective student transition from high school to university.

2.8.2 *Social Learning Theory*

This theory also explains what happens during the second phase of transition - the moving through phase of Schlossberg (1981) or the establishment phase of Tinto (1988). According to Bandura (1977) most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling and observing others; one thereby forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed and on a later occasion this coded information serves as a guide to action.

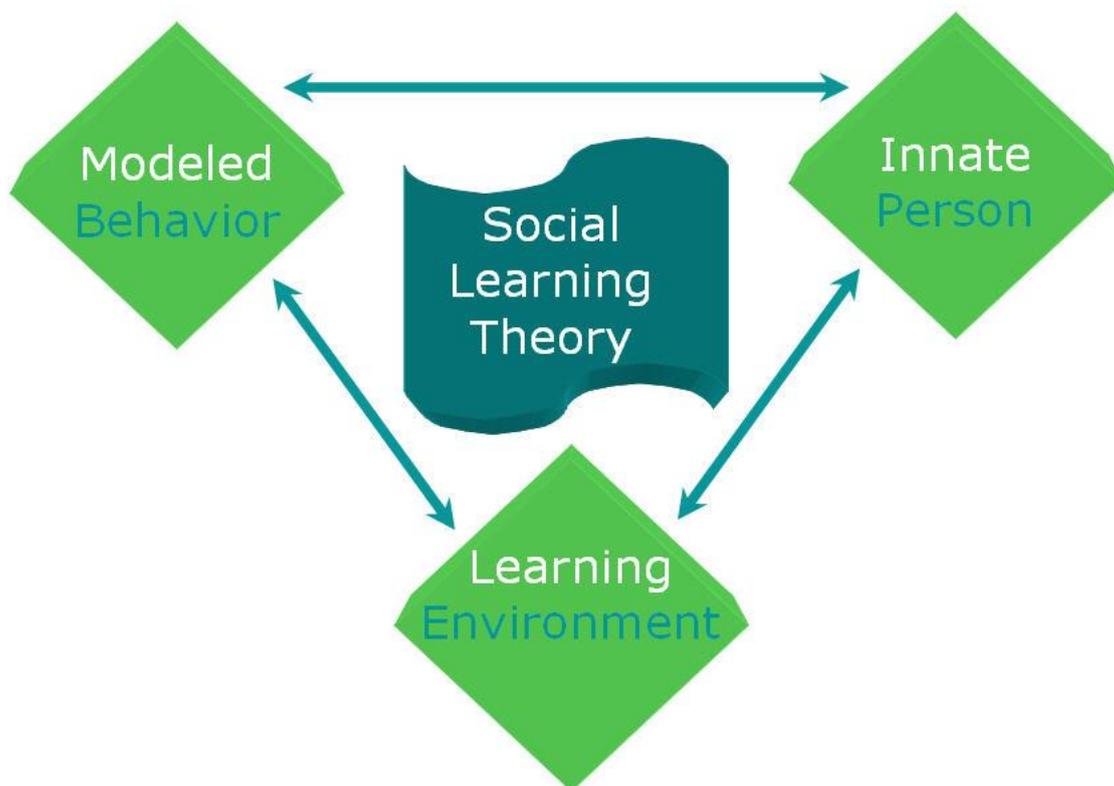


Figure 2: Social Learning theory (McLeod, 2015)

In addition, Shaffer (2008) states that people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling. This theory explains human behaviour in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognition and behavioural and environmental influences. Bandura demonstrated that children learn and imitate behaviours they have observed in other people. For example, children imitate aggressive actions they have previously observed. In addition, Kandel (1986) states that social learning theory is used to explain why people join peer groups and how they are influenced in the process. This theory is based on four key

psychological constructs, namely differential association, imitation, definition and differential reinforcement. The current study will dwell more on the following components of the theory: imitation and modelling behaviours; differential association that is related to group formation; and differential association that relate to peer pressure. This study investigates the behaviour of first-year students and how they tend to imitate their peers while joining groups.

The four key psychological constructs of this theory are briefly discussed below.

Differential association (Bandura,1977) is based on direct interaction through significant others and exposure to normative definitions. Differential association tries to explain the significance of exposure to norms and values when connecting with the others. An example of differential association is when first-year students mingle with peers who are using substances and they can be influenced by such behaviour, compared to students who do not mingle with any peer substance user.

Imitation or modelling (Bandura,1977) suggests that, if an individual exhibits a certain behaviour or attitude that the focal adolescence likes, accepts and values, then the adolescent will eventually imitate the observed or similar behaviour. This notion is supported by Ryan (2000), who states that modelling refers to individual changes in cognition, behaviour, or effects that result from the observation of others.

Definition (Bandura,1977) is about the attitudes and meaning individuals attach to behaviours. This component explains adolescents who define substance use in a positive way and who are tempted to use drugs as compared to those adolescents who define substance use in an unfavourable manner.

Differential reinforcement (Bandura,1977) is based on the anticipated and actual consequences of behaviour. This explains how support and motivation facilitate the acquisition of behaviours. The other aspects are socialization, on the other hand, which suggests a different explanation. From this perspective, the focal adolescent goes along with the behavioural suggestions of friends or peers for the sake of the social reinforcement received in return. For example, an individual may attain some status, praise, recognition or peer group admiration upon joining a particular group of friends.

This theory explains the reasons for imitating peer behaviours among first-year university students because, as has been indicated, students do certain things because they want to belong to peer groups and they may seek recognition in the new environment. Social theory is one of the theories that explains adaptation to change through the influence of peers. According to social learning theory, modelling of behavioural, personal, environmental factors influences individual behaviour (Connors, Bednar & Klammer, 2001).

This theory addresses the issue of changing of behaviour or doing things for the sake of belonging which is caused by peer pressure in many instances. Most first-year university students like any other youths do not want to be left behind when it comes to group behaviour. This is why youths especially first-year university students are so influential towards each other because of the power of their peer groups. Thus, once a student establishes a positive relationship with a role model, he or she tends to imitate the behaviours of the role model to the extreme (Bandura, 1986).

The theory further explains that underlying peer pressure among university students is the desire of students to do certain things, like changing behaviour because they want to belong or because they are seeking recognition in the new environment. They tend to do anything to be accepted by their peer groups. The peer group helps them to meet their emotional needs, especially through social support. This explains how students are influenced by the members of peer groups he or she belongs to. Social learning theory also confirms that modelling and imitation are vital features in this context. For example, those who are disadvantaged will go after and imitate the positive modelling of some leaders (Goldstein & McGinnis, 1997). Some friends like to model each other's career-related behaviour, as Bandura (1986) states, and equally strengthen their characteristics like effective support and approval (Wentzel & Looney, 2007).

2.8.3 *Student Involvement Theory*

Student involvement is one of the theories that explains how students actively learn when they are involved in university activities. Thomas (2012) argues that student involvement can enhance retention. Schlossberg's theory (1981) holds that student-peer interaction is imperative if participating in campus activities and student organizations is to be meaningful. Astin (1975) states that the theory of student involvement has its roots in a longitudinal study of university

dropouts that endeavoured to identify factors in the university environment that significantly affect the student's persistence. It explains how students change or develop and learn by becoming involved. Dugan and Komives, (2007) state that research has examined the role of quantitative involvement features related to extracurricular experiences, including the number of clubs and meetings in which students participate. Astin (1985, p.133) summarises the theory in a simple statement: "Students learn by becoming involved". This means that students must be actively engaged in their university surroundings in order to learn and grow in the new environment. Students on campuses participate in a wide range of activities that contribute in meaningful ways to their learning and personal development. Fischer (2007) found that formal involvement in organizations and activities, and informal social ties, led to an increase in college satisfaction and decreased attrition. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) argue that involvement in diversity experiences enhances student learning and that the level of student body diversity predicts the degree of student involvement in diversity experiences.

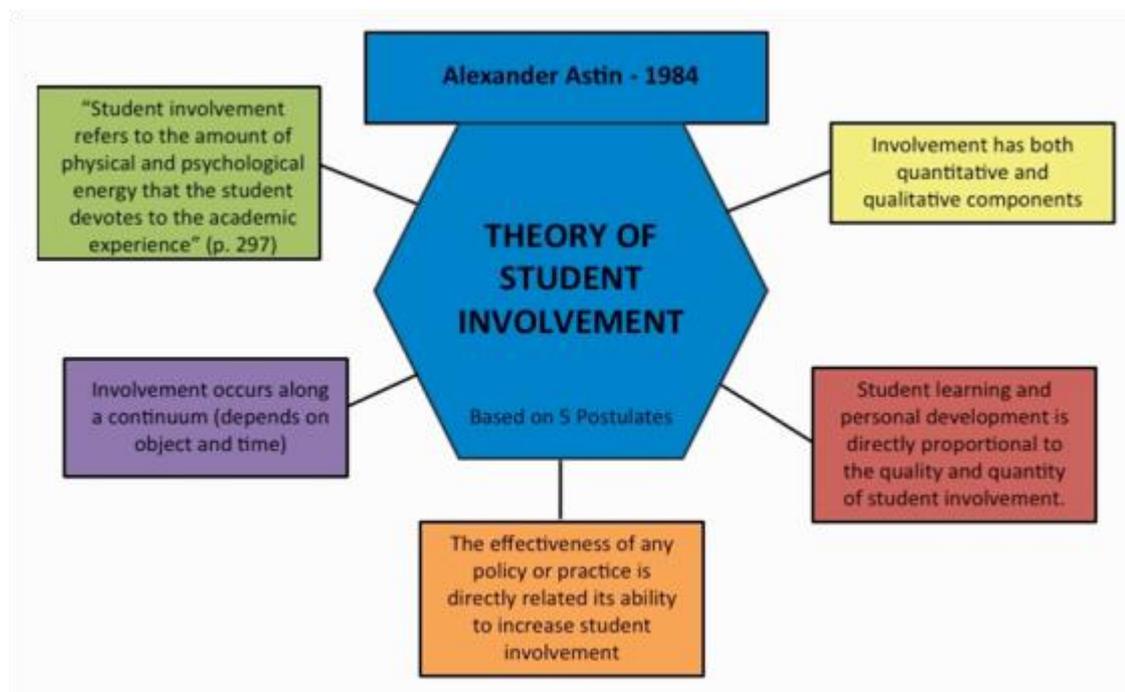


Figure 3: Student Involvement Theory (Oregon State University, 2019)

A key concept of student involvement theory is "the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984, p. 297). According to this theory, a highly motivated student would for example (1) spend much time on campus experience; (2) participate actively in student organizations; (3) interact frequently with

academic staff and (4) interact frequently with other students; and (5) have energy to study (Astin,1985: 518). According to Kuh (2007) involved students are more apt to learn and succeed. The first step in becoming engaged and involved on campuses is for students to interact with their peers. The exchange between the institution and student involvement can lead to growth and change within the students. Student involvement theory explains how desirable outcomes for institutions of higher education are viewed. Since the student spends a considerable amount of time and energy on non-academic activities that are usually unrelated to student life, full-time work off campus decreases the time and energy that the student can devote to studies and other campus activities.

The above argument concurs with Tinto's view (1997), who argues that when students are involved in academic and social learning experiences, they increase their knowledge cooperatively with their peers and they become motivated in learning on their own. Keup and Barefoot (2005, p. 11) indicated how student participation in seminars and workshops can sustain this socialisation process during the first-year. This theory further emphasizes the fact that the greater the amount of student involvement and learning, the greater the opportunities for personal development. However, according Tinto (1993), "it is entirely possible for a first-year student to achieve integration in the academic system of the university without doing so in the social domain" (p. 120). Student involvement theory can however, be linked to student culture and how this transforms and make students what they are by the time they leave the university. Student involvement theory suggests that different forms of involvement lead to different developmental outcomes. This means, therefore, that for student's growth to take place, students need to actively engage in their new university environment. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and Astin's (1970, p. 1993) input-environment-output model, attending college shapes students' outcomes directly and indirectly through the ways in which they engage within the academic environment. Inputs include the student's demographic characteristics such as family backgrounds, and academic and social experiences prior to college. The environment consists of the different aspects within the institution that may affect the student. Therefore, failure to become involved in campus activities, organizations, and extracurricular activities, which promote involvement and integration of university life, can lead to higher chances of attrition for some students.

The environment can shape the student perception because of its design incorporating faculty, peers, curriculum, programme, policies, cultures and knowledge. According to Astin (1970),

all these findings are measures of student's achievements, knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, aspirations, interests, and daily activities. Kuh (1993) found that students' experiences beyond the classroom, such as working with classmates outside the classroom on projects or homework or being involved in campus life activities, made significant contributions to student learning and personal development. The author states that interacting in educationally purposeful ways with faculty, staff, and peers, and that investing a high degree of effort in academic studies are the two most important influences on student learning. Kuh (2005) furthermore adds that the institution's culture, policies, and practices indirectly shape a student's expectations and performance.

Researchers in one study noted that students who partake in official student clubs and organizations exhibit a greater likelihood of completion of their chosen major at both two-year and four-year colleges (Frost et al., 2010). Athletics, clubs, organizations, and other extracurricular activities create advantages outside of the gratification they afford to students, and these recreational involvements contribute to students' individual involvement, both in social groups and academically (Lawhorn, 2008). They may influence students in the advancement of their educational and professional objectives. Student clubs and organizations are means that allow the forming of interpersonal relationships (Lawhorn, 2008; Tinto, 2012b). Research done at four-year colleges indicated that students who do not have formal extracurricular and informal social interactions do not acquire a sense of connection, resulting in many students' choice to leave college (Baker, 2008; Fischer, 2007; Tinto, 2012b). Foubert and Grainger (2006) noted that the more students were involved in clubs and organizations, the greater their psychosocial development. Webber, Krylow, & Zhang (2013) noted that students involved in academic and social activities had higher grades than students who were not involved.

The student involvement theory as articulated by Astin (1985) is relevant to the current study because it emphasizes the importance of students' engagement. This theory implies that students have to accomplish particular goals, and emphasizes active participation of the student in the learning process. In addition, development as active involvement contributes to a better adaptation to the university environment and to the demands of the new environment when they become active in college experience by involving themselves academically, socially and psychologically in various aspect of student life. According to this theory the more students are involved in campus experiences and the more they are engaged and motivated, the more

they enrich themselves and their peers. It is thus evident that students should become engaged in experiences which promote both academic and social reinforcement.

2.8.4 *Justification of the theoretical framework of the study*

Each of the three theories discussed above addresses important aspects related to the topic under investigation, namely the phenomenon of peer pressure. After all, these theories complement one another on the following aspects. The contention of transition is that transition is a learning process which in turn is a process of change and development. The social learning and student involvement theories explain how this learning takes place, especially as one transits from one environment to the next. Both the social learning and student involvement theories explain circumstances that facilitate students' learning or change and development through peer group associations and involvement in various experiences with campus activities that promote learning through interactions with peers and environment. Transition theory is about change, social learning theory is about adaptation to change through learning from peers, and student involvement theory is also about the learning and how it is reinforced to help in adaptation or adjustment to the environment. In this sense, all the above theories are relevant to the present study.

2.8.5 *Summary of the chapter*

This chapter has discussed the history of first-year experiences which includes local and international perception and conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guided the current study. This chapter discussed previous studies on peer group and peer pressure among first-year students. The key concepts related to issues discussed include the concept of group, types of peer groups, peer pressure, advantages and disadvantages of peer pressure, factors that influence peer group formation (age, gender, socio-economic status, sense of belonging, etc.). The three theories that underpin the current study were discussed. They include transition theory, which explains how people adapt to transition; social learning theory, which has to do with why people model and imitate each other when joining groups, and student involvement theory, which holds that becoming being involved in campus activities brings personal development to the students. In conclusion, the perspectives discussed above provide a basis for discussing the review of literature related to the current study. The next chapter provides the methodological framework for the study. This includes presentations on the research design, participants, and data gathering methods adopted.

3 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature review including conceptual and theoretical frameworks in order to identify gaps in the literature which the current study intends to fill. This chapter presents the methodology adopted for the study. Firstly, the research design is discussed, including population, sample size and demographic composition of participants, data collection instruments, procedures for data collection, ethical issues and methods of data analysis. A mixed-method research design was used, in that it employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. Quantitative research gathers quantifiable data that can be used to examine the relationship among variables and use statistical methods of analysis (Creswell, 2018) or presentation forms such as charts and graphs. As noted by Babbie and Mouton (2011) in qualitative research the collection of data involves participants which allows them to explore their perceptions of ideas, values and meanings. They represent their experiences of the world in various possible forms, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Table 3.1: Overview of research methodology

Research methodology	Mixed Method: Qualitative Quantitative
Research Design	Concurrent triangulation model-case study
Selection of Participants procedure	Qualitative: Quantitative
Method for data collection	Qualitative: Focus groups interviews Quantitative: Questionnaires
Data analysis and interpretation	Qualitative: Thematic analysis Quantitative: Descriptive and inferential statistics
Trustworthiness of Data	Credibility – Transferability

	Dependability – Conformability
Ethical Considerations	Permission from University of the Western Cape Senate Research Ethics Committee and University of the Western Cape Senate Research Ethics Committee - voluntary participation -confidentiality of information -and the anonymity of participants

3.2 Mixed method approach

The study used a mixed methods approach. Creswell (2018) and Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) viewed mixed methods research as a research that involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. In addition, it provides a more complete understanding of the research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone (Creswell, 2018). Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) focus on the value of a mixed methods approach which makes it possible for the researcher to combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches to arrive at deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question.

3.2.1 *Mixed-methods research design*

Creswell (2018) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define a mixed method as a method that involves the collection and “mixing” or integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in a study. In addition, Creswell (2018) describe mixed methods as:

The collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given priority and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research.

Moreover, in this perspective, Creswell and Clark (2018:p.4) explain the mixed methods approach as:

An approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study. Thus, it is more than simply collecting and analysing both kinds of

data; it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p. 123) define mixed method as:

the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

Creswell, Clark, Gutman and Handson (2011) argue that mixed-methods research has certain advantages. For instance, findings obtained through the use of one method can assist to recognize participants of the study (see also Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). In this regard, Cresswell (2018) argues that the mixed-methods approach has several advantages as the qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis of the research problem. Firstly, it provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone. Secondly, researchers are able to use all of the data collection instruments available rather than being restricted to either quantitative or qualitative research instruments in isolation. Lastly, mixed methods research will help the researcher to integrate the two forms of data which will provide more complete understanding of the research problem (Cresswell & Clark 2018).

As noted by Mertens (2003) other strengths of the mixed methods design include:

- (1) Better understanding of a research problem by converging numeric trends from quantitative data and specific details from qualitative data;
- (2) Identifying variables /constructs that may be measured subsequently through the use of existing instruments or the development of new ones;
- (3) Obtaining statistical quantitative data and findings from a sample of a population and using them to identify individuals who may expand on the findings through qualitative data and results;
- (4) Conveying the needs of individuals or groups of individuals who are marginalized or underrepresented.

One of the weaknesses of mixed method design is that, it can force researchers to reduce sample size, which can limit the value of statistical procedures. Moreover, mixed method research is not easy to undertake if the researchers are not familiar with both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques (Cresswell, 2018). The researcher has to learn about multiple methods and approaches and understand how to mix them appropriately. Cresswell (2018) states that researchers need complex skills to analyse qualitative data, text, coding, developing themes, and descriptions based on these codes. The researcher should also be familiar with qualitative data analysis software.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) focus on the value of a mixed methods approach which makes it possible for the researcher to combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches to arrive at deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question. Within the mixed methods design there are two models, namely, the concurrent or sequential models. The current study adopted the concurrent triangulation model as defined below.

3.3 Concurrent triangulation model

This study used the concurrent triangulation model to collect the data. This involved collecting the quantitative and qualitative data at the same time (Creswell, 2018). This allows the researcher to compare the two forms of data in the search for congruent findings. Thereafter, it enables the researcher to study all domains or dimensions of the phenomenon studied. Both sets of data are brought together using triangulation so as to comprehensively answer the research questions of the study.

The advantage of using concurrent triangulation is that “the researcher collects both forms of data at the same time and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results. The researcher may embed one smaller form of data within another larger data collection in order to analyse different types of questions” (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2018, p 145). The Concurrent Triangulation Model is displayed in the figure below.

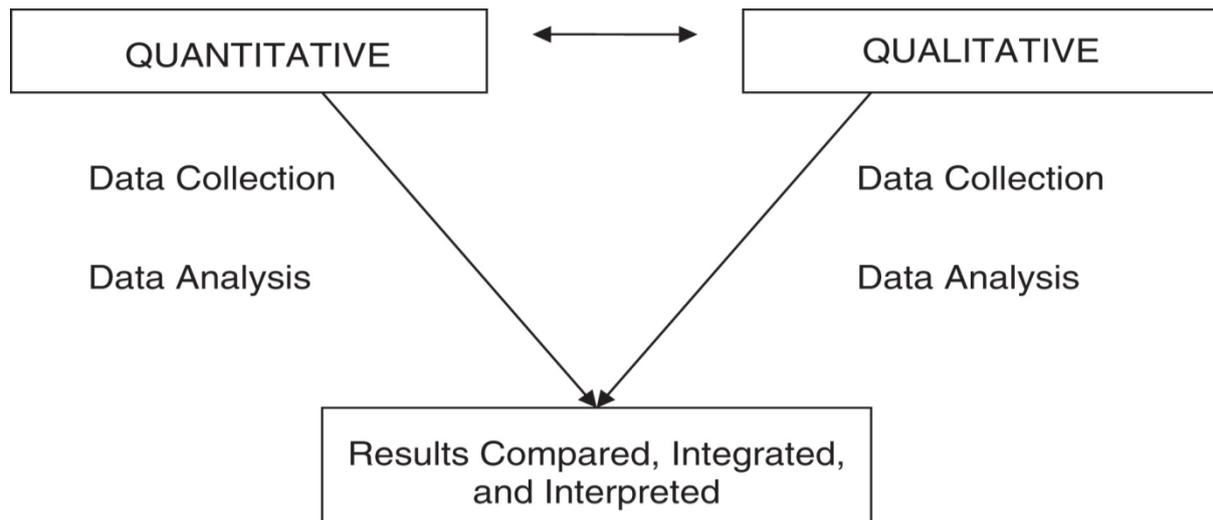


Figure 4: The concurrent triangulation model

Creswell, (2018) stated that in the concurrent triangulation model the researcher collected survey data and interview data at the same time and compared the results. In this study the triangulation model has been implemented to give better understating on the results.

3.3.1 *The paradigmatic location*

My research study explores the philosophical underpinnings the interpretivism paradigm. The components of the research paradigm are: **Ontology** which ask the question ‘what is reality’. Therefore, ontology addresses the reality of my research study. **epistemology** addresses the question ‘How do I know something or reality and methodology answers ‘How do I go about finding it out – which is in this study; the qualitative research **methodology**.

3.4 **Research setting**

The study was conducted in the residences of a selected South African university in the Western Cape Province. The mission of these residences is to accommodate diverse students in learning environments that are conducive to academic success. Demographics of the residence community reveal that the residences include students of diverse ethnic backgrounds and different genders. The student population of the residences comprises mainly first-year students (90%), according to the residence policy. A few senior students (10%) provide mentorship or student governance, managing complaints and ensuring the well-being of the residents.

The campus in question boasts two residences for new first-year students. First-year students are allocated shared rooms according to their field of study or academic program, or randomly. In the interests of student success, there are wireless connectivity, computer laboratories, and access to free student support services. Academic support is provided in the form of individual consultation with professionals at the writing centre. The support includes academic writing, English support, and help with examination preparation strategies. Some of the students are assigned to mentors, who are senior students from their various faculties.

All the residences on campus share common sports facilities for extramural activities such as netball, soccer, hockey, cricket, tennis and rugby. These fields are situated in the university campus, close to the residences. There are also facilities such as a swimming pool and squash courts, as well as a bar known as the Barn where students meet and socialize with their peers. These facilities provide opportunities to meet, interact, and socialize with their peers. During the orientation week at the beginning of the year, all students who have been allocated a room in university residence are encouraged to join groups meant to support student success and student development. These include study, sports, religious and social groups, and student organizations (political and religious organizations). During orientation time, representatives from these groups are invited to give formal presentation to the first-year students.

At the residences, every attempt is made to establish a residence culture where first-year students are introduced to different activities that are performed in the residence. Student culture, in this case, attempts to familiarise students with behaviour patterns that are appropriate to university life. This residence culture is facilitated by residence management and student leaders and is expected to be strongly maintained by the student community in the interests of student success. The Central House Committee (CHC) which is a sub-structure of the Student Representative Council (SRC) liaises with the house committees of the residences to encourage participation in extramural activities. The residence leadership has a mandate to encourage students' involvement by emphasising the value of being part of peer groups, especially for students living in residences. Their mandate is supported by those responsible for running these groups, who work closely with the student leaders responsible for marketing. Posters and flyers are used to advertise the activities and the objectives of each of the groups. These groups are meant to motivate and develop students so that they can adjust easily to the new environment and thrive in it.

3.5 Population and sample size

In research, 'population' refers to objects, human subjects (individuals, groups or organisations), phenomena or activities which the researcher wishes to investigate in order to establish new knowledge (Brynard, Hanekom & Brynard, 2014; Polit & Hungler, 2013). Simply, population comprises all the elements that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study (Burns & Grove, 2003). A sample on the other hand is a small group or portion selected from the population (Brynard & Hanekom, 2014). A sample can be defined as a group of relatively smaller number of people selected from a population for investigation purpose (Alvi, 2016). According to LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2014) and Polit and Hungler (2013), the process of selecting part of the population to stand for the entire population is referred to as sampling. In other words, it is a subset of a population selected to participate in the study and it is a fraction of the whole population of the research project (Polit & Hungler, 2013). In this study, the population was made up of all first-year students living in two residences at the University of the Western Cape. At the time of the study there were a total of 545 first-year students living in two residences on campus. Both residences had separate blocks for females and males and mixed gender blocks.

3.5.1 *Sampling procedures for quantitative study*

The researcher visited the residences before the data was collected. In this study, the sample consisted of 190 first-year students. They were selected using simple random sampling selection. Neuman (2014) explains that simple random sampling requires the researcher to develop an accurate sampling frame and then select elements from the sampling frame according to a mathematically random procedure. Random sampling means that every element in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Babbie, 2013). The participants granted permission to be interviewed and recorded it by signing the consent form. According to Babbie (2013) the participants must fully understand the signing consent form so that they can be aware of the purpose of the research. The researcher also emphasized that the information would only be used for research purposes.

3.6 Procedures for quantitative and qualitative data collection

3.6.1 *Quantitative data collection*

The survey was distributed electronically using Google Forms online software among the first-year students in residences on the campus of the university. Babbie (2013) argues that “the purpose of the survey is to generalize from the sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitude, or behaviour of the participants.” Students were informed in writing about the objectives of the study and the conditions for participation. Out of 545 first-year student population only 190 (35%) participated in the survey. The structure and content of the questionnaires, which were expected to take 10 to 15 minutes to complete, are described in Section 4.5.1 (also see Appendix 4).

3.7 Research Instruments

This study used two main instruments: a questionnaire, and focus group interviews. A demographic questionnaire, sometimes termed a demographic survey, was included in main questionnaire. This was developed by the researcher in order to obtain information on the participants’ biographical information such as gender, age, ethnicity or race, marital status, study programme, and socioeconomic status. The purpose of these questions was to describe sub-groups of respondents. Quantitative data was collected using the questionnaire so that the types of groups, reasons for joining the groups and experiences of peer pressure could be compared and experiences of peer pressure could be measured. In addition, qualitative data were collected by use of focus groups. Each of these two data collection instruments is described in detail below.

3.8 The questionnaire

A questionnaire is the basic data-gathering instrument to conduct research on a large scale (Creswell, 2018). It is crucial to design a questionnaire well in order to generate data conducive to the goals of the research (Creswell, 2018). A questionnaire is a data collection instrument consistent of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Creswell, 2018). It is mainly made up of a list of questions, but should also include clear instructions and space for answers or administrative details. The use of questionnaires made it possible to reach a large number of first-year students. The

questionnaire for this study was designed to capture the demographics and objectives of the study, and consisted of five sections.

3.8.1 *Section A: Demographic information*

A demographic questionnaire, also termed a demographic survey, was used. This section solicited demographic information from the participants. It asked about gender, age, ethnicity or race, nationality, home language, faculties, socioeconomic status and financial support. The purpose of these questions is to describe subgroups of participants (see Appendix 6).

3.8.2 *Sections B: Types of peer groups students join*

This section focused on the type of groups which participants joined. They were required to tick one of the options presented to them on the questionnaire. This section consisted of five statements of types peer groups, for example, faculty study groups, sports and recreation group, political group, co-curricular activities and religious groups. The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions. Open ended questions allow the participant to answer the question in their own words while closed-ended questions are easier to analyse. The responses to the statements in this section of the questionnaire were coded using thematic analysis.

3.8.3 *Section C: Reasons for joining peer groups*

This section consisted of six sections on the reasons why first-year students join peer groups, for example, sense of belonging, developing well-being, receiving spiritual support, developing critical thinking skills, developing leadership skills and co-curriculum group activities. The responses to the statements in this section of the questionnaire were coded using a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neutral (N); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD). The test result is presented in the Appendix 5 of the thesis. The Cronbach's Alpha in this section shows an acceptable reliability test score (0.938).

3.8.3.1 *Reliability and validity of reasons for joining peer groups*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.938	41

3.8.4 *Section D: Benefits of joining peer groups*

This section focused on the participants' benefits of joining peer groups. It consisted of four sections, namely integration with student culture, provision of networking spaces, improving leadership skills, and library information and resources. The responses to the statements in this section of the questionnaire were coded using a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neutral (N); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses were scored as follows: SA = 1; A = 2; U = 3; D = 4; and SD = 5. The test result is presented in the Appendix section of the thesis. The Cronbach's Alpha in this section shows an acceptable reliability test score (0.965).

3.8.4.1 *Reliability and validity of benefits of joining peer groups*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.965	26

3.8.5 *Section E: Challenges of joining peer groups*

This section focused on the participants' benefits of joining peer groups. It consisted of four sections, namely failure of time management, socio-economic status, dealing with transition to campus life challenges, and negative behaviour through peer pressure. The responses to the statements in this section of the questionnaire were coded using a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neutral (N); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses were scored as follows: SA = 1; A = 2; U = 3; D = 4; and SD = 5. The Cronbach's

Alpha in this section shows an acceptable reliability test score (0.949). The test result is presented in the Appendix section of the thesis.

3.8.5.1 *Reliability and validity of challenges for joining peer groups*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.949	21

3.8.6 *Reliability and validity analysis of reasons for joining peer groups*

This section deals with the reliability analysis or internal consistency and validity analysis of reasons for joining peer groups.

3.8.6.1 *Reliability analysis of sense of belonging*

In this study, the reliability analysis for sense of belonging with 6 items scored a very reliable (.857) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was indicated in the table below.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.857	.860	6

3.8.6.2 *Reliability analysis developing well-being*

In this study, the reliability analysis for developing well-being with 7 items was very reliable (.818) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was presented in the table below.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
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.818	7
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3.8.6.3 *Reliability analysis receiving spiritual support*

The reliability analysis for the level of receiving spiritual support with seven (7) items was very reliable (.932) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.932	7

3.8.6.4 *Reliability analysis of developing critical thinking skills*

The reliability analysis for developing critical thinking skills with seven (7) items was very reliable (.920) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.920	7

3.8.6.5 *Reliability analysis of developing leadership skills*

The reliability analysis for developing leadership skills with seven (7) items showed a very reliable score (.931) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.931	7

3.8.6.6 *Reliability analysis of co-curriculum group activities*

The reliability analysis for co-curriculum group activities with seven (7) items was very reliable (.908) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.908	7

3.8.7 *Reliability and validity analysis of benefits of joining peer groups*

3.8.7.1 *Reliability analysis of integration with student culture*

The reliability analysis for integration with student culture with four (4) items was showed a very reliable (.867) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.867	4

3.8.7.2 *Reliability analysis on provision of networking spaces*

In this study, the reliability analysis for provision of networking spaces with five (9) items was very reliable (.927) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.927	9

3.8.7.3 *Reliability analysis of improves leadership skills*

In this study, the reliability analysis for improves leadership skills with nine (9) items was showed a very reliable (.930) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.930	9

3.8.7.4 *Reliability analysis of library information and resources*

In this study, the reliability analysis for library information and resources with four (4) items was showed a very reliable (.911) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.911	4

3.8.8 *Reliability and validity analysis of challenges for joining peer groups*

3.8.8.1 *Reliability analysis of failure of time management*

In this study, the reliability analysis for the level of failure of time management with five (5) items showed a very reliable (.902) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.902	5

3.8.8.2 *Reliability analysis of socio-economic status*

In this study, the reliability analysis for socio-economic status with five (5) items was showed a very reliable (.654) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.654	4

3.8.8.3 *Reliability analysis of dealing with transition to campus life challenges*

In this study, the reliability analysis for transition to campus life challenges with six (6) items showed a very reliable (.944) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.944	6

3.8.8.4 *Reliability analysis of negative behaviour through peer pressure*

In this study, the reliability analysis for negative behaviour through peer pressure with six (6) items showed a very reliable (.989) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was demonstrated in the table below:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.989	6

3.8.9 *Qualitative data collection*

3.8.9.1 *Focus groups interviews*

According to Babbie (2013) a focus group is a group interview of approximately six to twelve individuals who share similar characteristics or common interests. A focus group interview is a good qualitative method of learning about a population especially with regard to conscious, semi-conscious and unconscious psychological and sociological characteristics and processes (Basch, 1987). Babbie and Mouton (2011) argue that the focus group interview has the advantage of involving group members in interactions and exchanges of information, ideas and experiences. The purpose of focus group interviews is to obtain qualitative data. The purpose of qualitative studies is to gain insight into the participants' view of the phenomenon investigated (Babbie & Mouton, 2011) through interviews and observations. Qualitative data

were collected through focus group interviews with three different groups, i.e. a female-only group (8 members), a male-only group (7 members) and a mixed group (10 members).

An important part of a focus group in the research is the opportunity to observe a large number of interactions on a topic in a limited period of time, based on the researcher's ability to assemble and direct the focus group sessions (Gamson, 1992). Firstly, the main reason for conducting focus groups was to supplement information obtained from the questionnaire. Secondly, to have face-to-face interactions with the participants in which the researcher could get their different views. During the focus group interview, the researcher interacts with the participants and use observation as instruments to study their behaviour while answering the various questions. In this study, the participants were given a chance to respect each other and took turns to answer the questions of the interview.

3.8.9.2 *Procedure for focus group data collection*

On the day of the focus group interview, the researcher was introduced to the participants by the chairperson, a team leader of the residences. Afterwards, group discussions took place in the residence hall. Each of the three groups consisted of 7 to 10 participants. Participants were asked to move the chairs to form a circle and then to sit next to each other. The discussions took between 40 to 50 minutes; after that, the participants were given a chance to ask follow-up questions. The meeting was scheduled three days ahead of time. Communication took place with student leaders of the residences before the interview. They volunteered to assist in getting the students into groups in preparation for the day of the focus group interviews

3.8.9.3 *Data coding*

Coding is the starting point for most qualitative research studies, which is done by means of reviewing transcripts and field notes and giving labels. Saldaña (2015) argues that coding consists of short phrases that summarises the languages based on the visual data. According to Boyatzis (2011) codes classify a feature of the data that seems interesting to the expert, and refer to the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be evaluated in a meaningful way concerning the phenomenon investigated. Coding can be done either manually or through a software program (Kelle, 2004). In this study, to answer the research questions, the coding was done manually by writing notes on the texts, and analysing, using

highlighters and coloured pens to indicate potential patterns to identify segments of data. Creswell (2018) emphasises that the process of coding is a preliminary form of analysis, which helps the researcher to organize the data into meaningful groups.

3.8.9.4 *Identification of themes*

Emerging patterns of participants' responses were identified and these patterns were clustered into themes. These themes serve as preliminary patterns or skeletons before developing a structured initial template (King, 2012). In this process, the participants' responses were sorted into the different themes bringing together the ideas or concepts that were discovered (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These themes were then reduced again in order to write a final narrative (Creswell, 2018; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The merging of themes was done in order to give interpretations of the participants based on their experiences of peer pressure that influenced their behaviour. Each phenomenon was described from the participant's point of view; an important form of attaining verification in qualitative research (Creswell, 2018). Procedures were taken to ensure that these themes captured the accurate objectives of the proposed study. Boyatzis (2009) explains that the themes the researcher starts to develop as the next phase are a precursor of the interpretative analysis of the data in which arguments about the phenomenon being examined are made.

3.8.10 *Data analysis*

This section presents the methods used to analyse the quantitative as well as the qualitative data. The purpose of analysing data is to obtain usable and useful information (Creswell, 2017). Since the research used a mixed methods design, the data analyses entailed both quantitative and qualitative data processing. The quantitative data analysis is discussed in Section 3.12.1 and qualitative data in 3.12. 2

3.8.10.1 *Quantitative data analysis*

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 25) was used to analyse the quantitative data. The quantitative analyses were made up of both descriptive statistics for demographics using frequencies. The descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to compare the groups of participants on the basis of the variables studied (for example, demographic

information). The findings of the analysis of data for each section of the questionnaire were used to answer corresponding research questions.

Creswell (2017) states that correlation can be defined as the statistical test used to determine the tendency or pattern for two or more variables or sets of data to vary consistently. In addition, the chi-square test (χ^2) (a test for assessing the statistical significance of cross-tabulated variables (Welman & Kruger, 2001)) was performed in the study in order to determine the associations between the variables describing demographics. The chi-square indicates whether or not a relationship exists between or among variables. Generally, the smaller the significance level reported, the more conclusive the results. Furthermore, the Spearman correlation was performed in order to determine the associations between the benefits and challenges of belonging to a peer group and the reasons for joining the peer group. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was used to study correlations in the present study between independent variables such as reasons for joining peer groups and benefits and challenges of joining peer groups.

3.8.10.2 *Qualitative data analysis*

The qualitative data for this study was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. This study used the procedure of interpretive analysis as set out by Terre, Kelly and Durrheim (2014). The principle of this analysis is to stay close to the data and interpret it from an empathic understanding. The purpose is to attain a rich description of the phenomenon under study by describing its characteristics, transactions, processes and contexts. It involves backward and forward movement between description and interpretation, foreground and background, part and whole (Terre, Kelly & Durrheim, 2014). This method entails coding the material, identifying themes, constructing the networks, describing and exploring the thematic networks, and summarizing and interpreting patterns (Atride-Stirling, 2001). In this study, in answering the research questions, all the interview data were transcribed and analysed. During the initial stages of the analysis, the researcher became familiar with and gained an overview of the data. This process was done by reading and re-reading the focus group transcriptions. The transcripts were organized according to key quotations during the process of data analysis; the transcripts were then analysed, using open-ended coding, and summarized.

3.8.10.2.1 *Thematic analysis*

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2013 p.175), it is “possibly the most widely used method of data analysis, but not ‘branded’ as a specific method until recently”. Thematic data analysis procedures are related to qualitative methods such as grounded theory, framework analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis, critical ethnography and template analysis (Madill & Gough, 2008). Thematic analysis is considered to be the foundational approach to qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Williamson et al., 2014). According to Namey et al. (2008, p. 138),

Thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence, or graphically displaying code relationships.

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. In this study, in answering the research questions, all the interview data were transcribed and analysed by the researcher using thematic analysis principles such as becoming familiar with the data, data coding, and identification of themes.

3.8.10.2.2 *Becoming familiar with the data*

During the initial stages of the analysis, the researcher became familiar with and gained an overview of the data. This process was done by reading and re-reading the focus group transcriptions. The transcripts were organized according to key quotations during the process of data analysis; the transcripts were analysed, coded and summarized. While reading the individual protocols the researcher made note of the ways in which the participants constructed the meaning of the concepts that were being investigated. Each of the individual protocols was read several times to ensure that the constructions of the concepts were fully documented and to ensure that no new interpretations emerged from each successive re-reading. The individual

protocols were therefore read and re-read until the researcher was convinced that there was no evidence of any new trends or interpretations from the text. During the initial analysis of the different protocols, the researcher also noted similarities in terms of how the participants constructed ideas and attached meaning to their constructions.

3.8.10.2.3 *Data coding*

In this phase the the data was organised in a meaningful and systematic way. Liamputtong (2013) and Saldaña (2009) claim that data analysis in various qualitative research approaches begins with coding. Coding plays a key role in category identification in qualitative data analysis (Williamson et al., 2014). According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007, p. 565), coding is a term used to refer to the method of constant comparison analysis. Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning. The aim of coding is to “break down and understand a text and to attach and develop categories and put them into an order in the course of time” (Flick, 2004, p. 178). The coding process involves the grouping and labelling of segments of data. In this study, to answer the research questions, the coding was done manually by writing notes on the texts, analysing, using highlighters and coloured pens to indicate potential patterns in order to identify segments of data.

3.8.10.2.4 *Identification of themes*

After familiarization and coding, the researcher organised the data findings according to themes. A common pitfall is to use the main interview questions as the themes (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Procedures were taken to ensure that these themes captured the accurate objectives of the proposed study. The findings obtained from the qualitative focus group interview data was categorised according to themes and sub-themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2013) a theme is characterised by its significance, though there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme.

3.9 **Validity and reliability of the quantitative and qualitative instruments**

3.9.1 *Validity of the questionnaires*

The word 'validity' can be defined as a measure of truth or falsity of the data obtained through using the research instrument; this is classified as internal and external validity of the measuring instrument (Burns & Grove, 2010). In other words, validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and performs as it is designed to perform. Neuman (2014) on the other hand, relates validity to a specific purpose. A questionnaire might be valid for a particular purpose but less valid or even invalid for other purposes. Joppe (2000) argue that validity is the degree to which a questionnaire reflects reality. This means that 'validity' is more a term to apply to quantitative than qualitative approaches.

There are a number of different facets to validity, such as internal validity or the degree of consistency with which the questions are answered. The internal validity of the data relates to whether similar questions are answered similarly, which affects the probability of producing false positives and false negatives. Neuman (2014) argues that external validity is the ability to make generalizations about a population beyond that of the sample tested. Joppe (2000, p. 1) argues that validity reflects whether:

the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure of how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit 'the bull's eye' on your research object? Researchers generally determine the validity by asking a series of questions and often look for the answers in the research of others.

Face and content validity was done for the research instruments. Face validity was ascertained by sending the research instruments to experts in the field; specifically, certain research professors and the thesis supervisors who all reported back with suggestions to improve the research tools. The questionnaire was also evaluated by the statistician who checked the accuracy of the suggested statements. Content validity, on the other hand, was determined in the questionnaire through operationalising the theoretical and conceptual framework to include all of the domains of the frameworks. To ensure this, the different criteria features that explain the content of study were clearly explained and included in the questionnaire.

3.9.2 *Reliability of the questionnaires*

According to Neuman (2014) reliability is simply the dependability or consistency of a measure. Joppe (2000: p.1) defines reliability as:

...the degree in which the findings are reliable over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability, and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.

Kirk and Miller (1986) identify three types of reliability in quantitative research which are as follows: test-retest reliability (the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly remains the same, or the stability of a measurement over time), concurrent reliability (the similarity of measurements within a given time period) and (thirdly split-half or internal consistency reliability.)

Mytton (2012) argues that reliability can be tested in various ways and some of them are very complex. The reliability of this questionnaire was tested and retested through a pilot study in which the responses to each of the items were gathered using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. In qualitative study, however, reliability is viewed differently. Its purpose is to generate understanding (Stenbacka, 2001).

3.9.3 *Trustworthiness of qualitative data*

The trustworthiness of the qualitative data in this study was ensured by identifying the objectives of qualitative data. Trustworthiness refers to the truth value of a research piece (Holloway 2016). A research project is trustworthy when it reflects the reality and ideas of the participants (Krefting, 1991). It is thus essential that the research should investigate the participants' actual experience (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). According to Krefting (1991) there are four elements of research trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. These are discussed below.

3.9.3.1 *Credibility*

In research the word ‘credibility’ refers to the confidence one may have in the data and it is similar to internal validity in quantitative research (Polit et al., 2001). Credibility requires that the research results reflect the perceptions of the people under investigation. The researcher visited the target residences several times to build the trust of the participants. This helped the students to be more comfortable about sharing their views during the data collection process (Robson, 2007). The researcher’s role as a student leader and residence administrators in the residence environment made it possible to observe the types of group students formed and the peer pressure that they experienced.

3.9.3.2 *Dependability*

This concept of ‘dependability’ refers to constancy of data over time (Polit et al., 2001) and is associated with reliability in quantitative research. Guba and Lincoln (2005) argue that a research study should be accurate and consistent. The current study addressed the dependability issue by providing a detailed report of the study process; in this way the dependability allows future researchers to replicate the research and obtain comparable results.

3.9.3.3 *Confirmability*

Confirmability refers to the lack of bias in data and focuses on characteristics of the data that are trustworthy (Polit et al., 2001). The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator’s comparable concern to objectivity. Research findings should be the result of the study, not the researcher’s assumptions and preconceptions. Holloway and Wheeler (2002) argue that in confirmability, themes and their interpretation can be tracked. In this study, the researcher made sure that the findings are supported by the analysed data.

3.9.3.4 *Transferability*

Transferability means that the findings of the research project can be applied to similar situations or participants (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). The findings of this research could, in other words, be applicable to a similar context. It would also mean that similar research could be conducted in a different setting. To enhance the possibility of transferability, a broad

description of the setting and participants has been provided and the methods of data collection and analysis have been detailed.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the proposal for this study was approved by the University of the Western Cape Senate Research Ethics Committee. Next, permission to carry out the study within university residences was obtained from the Department of Student Development and the Residential and Catering Services manager. The study was at all times conducted in an ethical manner in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the University of the Western Cape Senate Research Ethics Committee. In a study which involves human subjects the rights of the targets of the research need to be protected (Polit & Hungler, 2013). Accordingly, in this study ethical considerations were taken into account such as voluntary participation, confidentiality of information, and the anonymity of the participants. Both survey and focus group participants were fully informed about the nature and objectives of the research and the conditions for participation, and that the interview was going to be recorded.

3.10.1 *Anonymity and confidentiality*

Participants were given assurance that any information provided would be treated in the strictest confidence. In addition, they were informed that they would receive feedback on the findings of the study once it was completed. During the focus group interviews, participants were treated with respect and given an opportunity to ask questions or express comments. The participants were given the assurance that the recorded information would be destroyed as soon as the research report had been accepted. They were promised that the report would provide facts, figures, graphs and tables but their identity would not be revealed. They were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they felt uncomfortable or choose not to answer any questions if they were uncomfortable doing so.

3.10.2 *Informed consent*

Before each interview, an informed consent form for research participants was signed by each participant. All consent forms were in English as it is the medium of instruction of the university. The form stated explicitly that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and participants could terminate their involvement at any time.

3.11 Delimitation of the study

Due to time and financial constraints, the study was limited to the first-years at one South African university. Only students living in residences and enrolled for their first-year were sampled. The investigation was limited to types of groups, reasons for joining peer groups and experiences of peer pressure.

3.12 Limitation of the study

Since this study was only carried out at the University of the Western Cape, it was limited to first-year students of UWC only. Future research could be extended to surrounding institutions and could include a larger sample of first-year students. This would also be helpful to involve other regional residence management policies in appraising the issue of peer pressure.

A number of factors may have constituted limitations to the outcomes of this study and some of these are briefly discussed. I tried unsuccessfully to send the electronic survey to the University of the Western Cape first-year students. Another instrument that might have been useful would have been to have used Survey Monkey to collect information at other institutions.

Despite the above study limitations, the findings are trustworthy as the groups approached for the pilot study, the end of year group and the next year group were not the same cohort. At the very least, the first-year students provide useful baseline information for future research and policy decisions for residences. The study certainly indicates possible ways in which peer groups could benefit students and suggests ways of how to manage peer pressure behaviour especially for first-year students of the University of the Western Cape who live in the residences.

3.13 Challenges in collecting data

Certain challenges were experienced in collecting the data for both quantitative and qualitative components of the study. Some participants were reluctant to give certain information when answering the questionnaire, and even during the focus group interviews. This was experienced during the focus group interviews where some participants were too shy to talk about their

experiences of peer pressure in the presence of their peers. This could have affected the amount of detail that was gathered.

Some of the participants however did not complete the survey at all because of time constraints. These participants could not also be asked to complete the questionnaire the next year as they were no longer first-year students. Therefore, the researcher could not reach her target. The researcher initiated the process of data collection again the following year and the participants were given enough time to complete the online questionnaire and they were requested to read all the given questions without any undue pressure.

3.14 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter presented a description of the methodology adopted for the study and the theoretical views that underpin the study. More specifically, the Concurrent Triangulation model was applied, with the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study taken at the same time, and equal weights given to both approaches. The chapter also provides information with regard to the various stages of the research process such as sample size and sampling methods, data gathering instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis. The study used mixed method research to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon investigated and to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. The following chapter presents an analysis of the quantitative results.

4 CHAPTER 4: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the methodology. This chapter presents the quantitative results of the study and critically examines the objectives of the study. It explores the reasons why first-year university students join peer groups, benefits of belonging to peer groups, and challenges presented by peer pressure. This chapter also focuses on analysis of the quantitative data, collected by means of an electronic survey questionnaire. The results of the data analysis, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 are presented in the form of tables that provide descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics provide the frequencies of responses to particular variables studied in the research.

4.2 Demographic variables of participants

The demographic variables of the 190 participants (N=190) is displayed in Figure 4.2.1 to 4.2.6.

4.2.1 *Ethnicity/race*

Target population, as indicated in Chapter 3, was Blacks, Indians, Coloureds and Whites. These are general categories of race in the Republic of South Africa (See Figure 6 below).

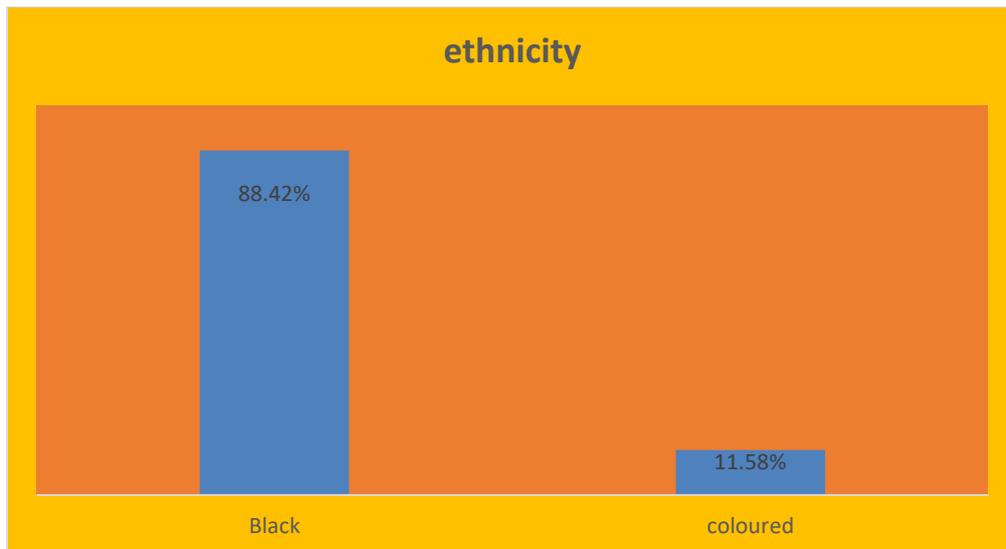


Figure 5: Ethnicity/race

The figure 6 above demonstrates the distribution of participants in terms of ethnicity/race. The descriptive results show that there were more Blacks participants as compared to their counterpart. Out of the 190 participants, (88.42%) participants were Blacks, (11.6%) participants were coloureds

4.2.2 Gender Distribution

Categories of gender considered for this study are male and female. Gender distribution is illustrated in Figure 7 below.

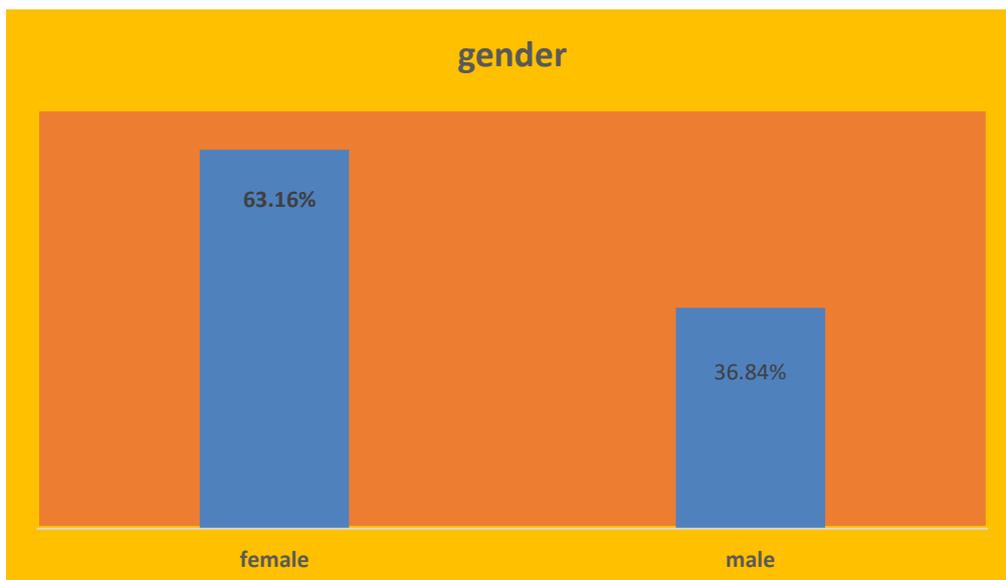


Figure 6: Gender

The results of gender variables displayed in the table above are more females (63.16 %) than males (36; 84%).

4.2.3 Home languages

Eleven official languages of the Republic of South Africa have been considered. Another variable of “other” has been included to accommodate speakers of non-South African languages (see Figure 8 below).

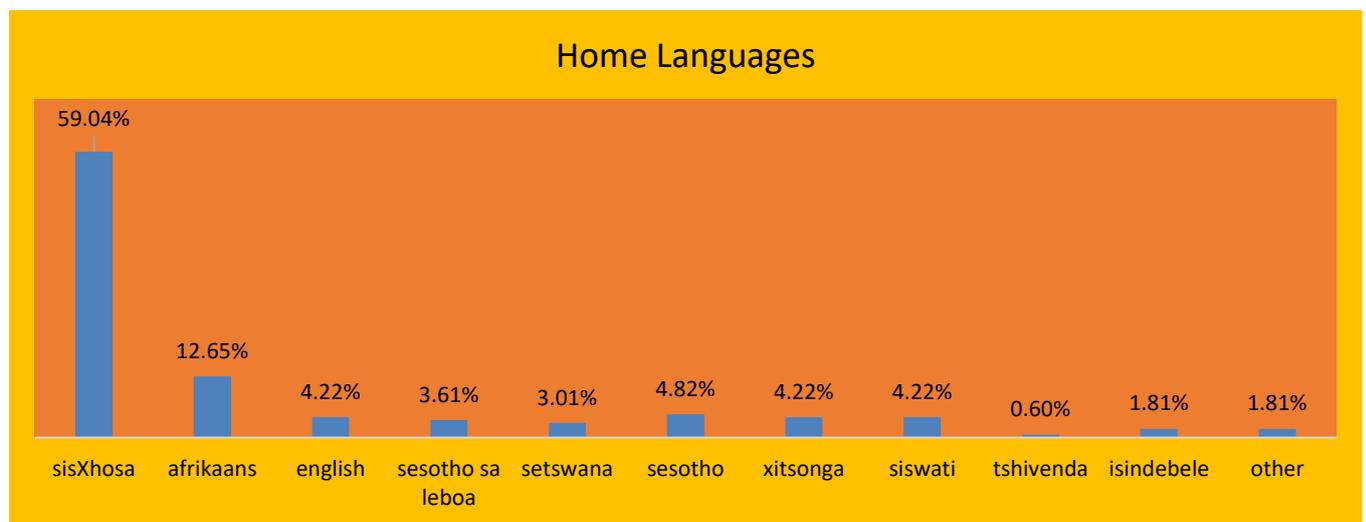


Figure 7: Home languages

The above figure reveals that out of 190 participants, (59.04 %) were isiXhosa speakers; (12.65 %) participants were Afrikaans speakers, followed (4.82%) Sesotho speakers, and the lowest was Tshivenda speakers, (0.60%).

4.2.3 Nationality

Nationality in this context refers to South African or non-South African citizens. Figure 9 below illustrates distribution in terms of nationality.

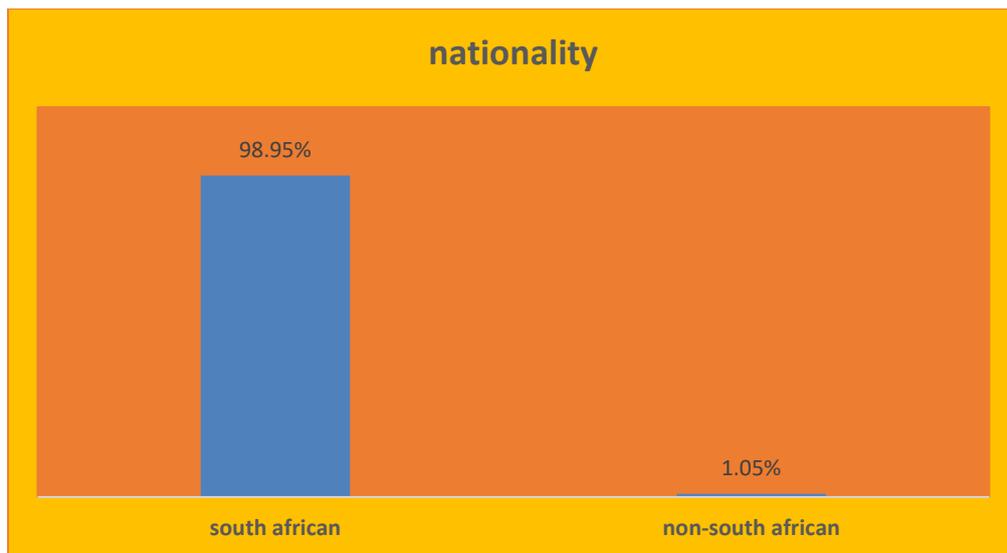


Figure 8: Nationality

The descriptive results displayed in Figure 9 above reveal that (98.95%) of participants were South African and (1.1%) were not.

4.2.4 Faculty representation

There are six faculties represented in this study, namely: Arts, Natural Science, Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Law and Community and Health Sciences (See Figure 10).

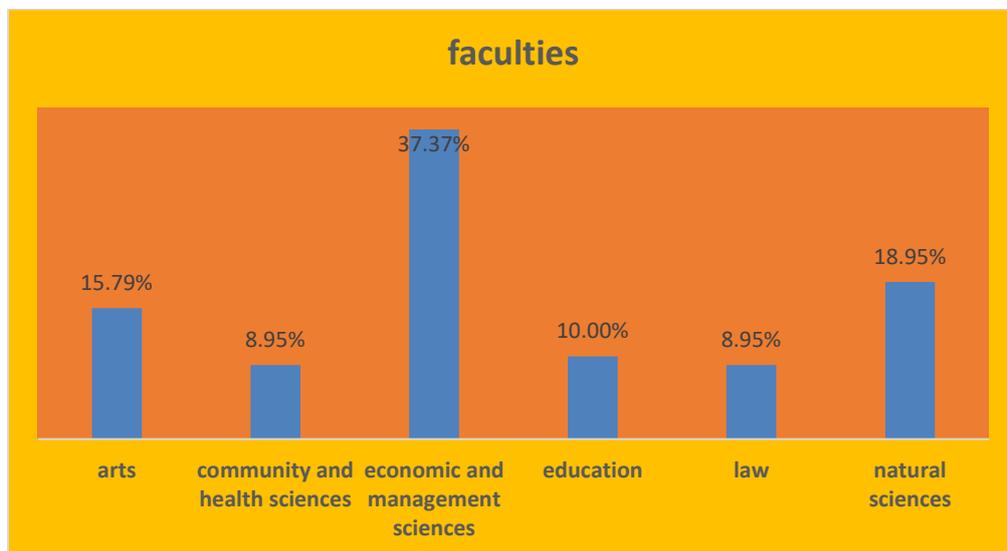


Figure 9: Faculties

The descriptive results displayed in Figure 10 demonstrate that out of 190 participants, (37.37%) were from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences; (18.95%) were from the Faculty of Natural Sciences; (15.79%) were from the Faculty of Arts) and 10.0%) were

from the faculty of were from the Faculty of Education; (8.95%) were from the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences; and (8.95%) from the Faculty of Law.

4.2.5 *Ages*

Age distribution is illustrated in Figure 11 below.

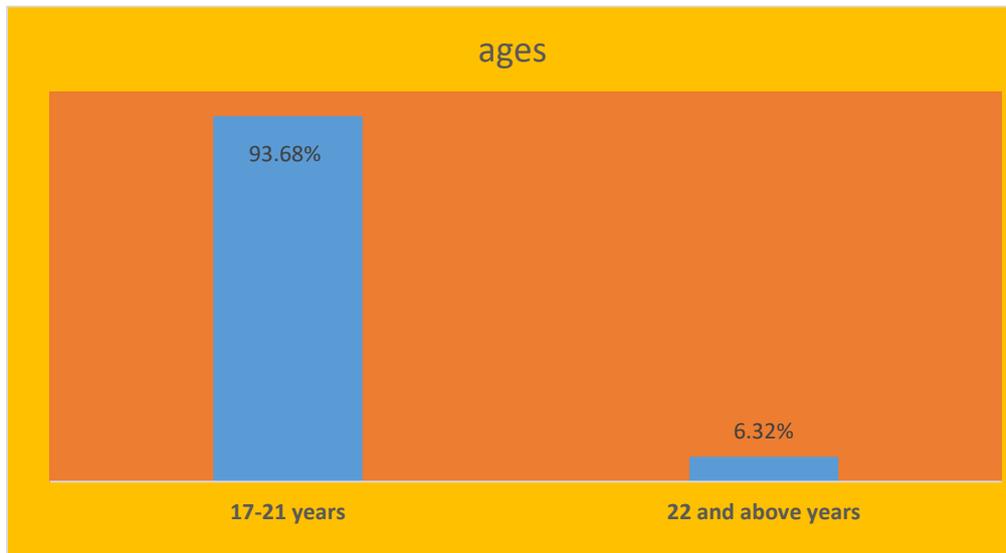


Figure 10: Ages

The results of age variables displayed in the table above shows that they are more 17-21 years (93.68 %) than 22 and above years (6.32%).

4.2.6 *Financial support*

Figure 12 below illustrates the distribution in terms of source of support.

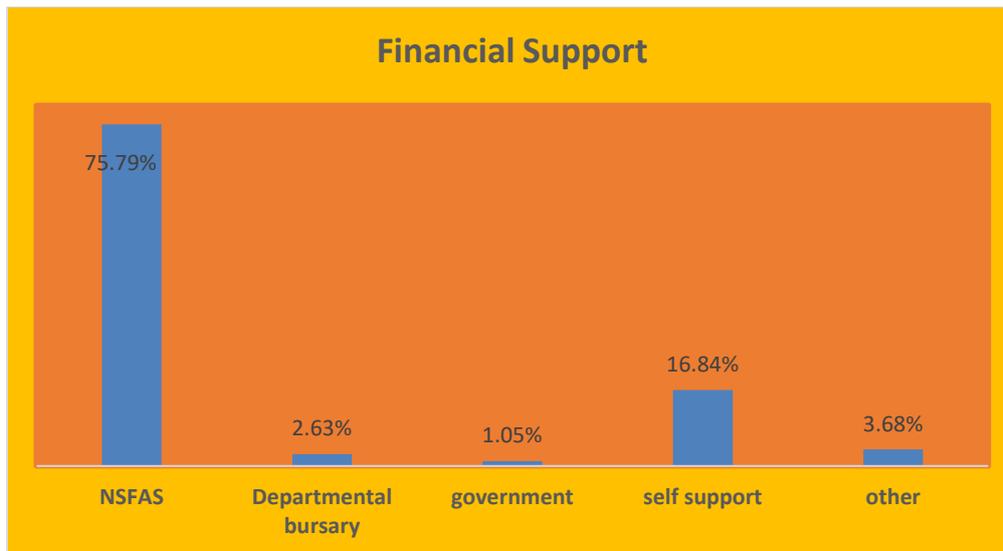


Figure 11: Financial support

The descriptive results displayed in Figure 12 demonstrate that out of (75.79%) were supported by National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS); (16.84%) were self-supported; (2.63%) received departmental bursaries; and (1.05%) received government support.

4.2.7 *Socio-economic status*

Socio-economic status in this context refers to the income the participants depend on for their study support. Figure 13 below illustrates distribution in terms socio-economic status.

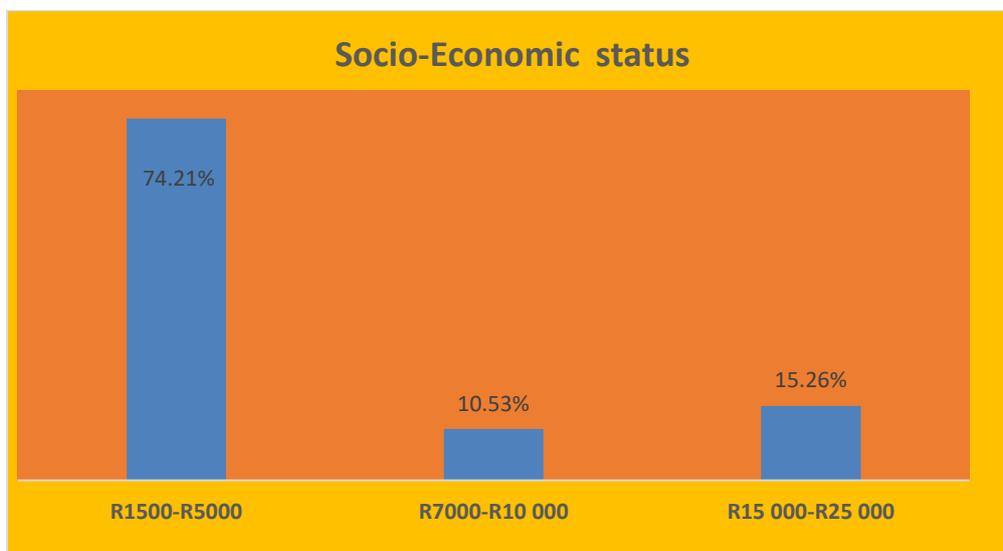


Figure 12 Socio-economic status (per month)

The descriptive results displayed in Figure 13 demonstrate that out of (74.21%) were in the R15000-R5000 range; (15.26%) were in the R15 000-R25 000 range; and (10.53%) were in the R7 000-R10 000 band.

4.3 Reasons for joining peer groups

4.3.1 Sense of belonging

The descriptive of the Likert scale was done to check if the objectives of the study were answered. Reasons, benefits and challenges for joining peer groups were assessed by means of a Likert scale, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Table 1: Sense of belonging

Reasons for joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I feel accommodated when joining a peer group.	-	-	84	44.2	53	27.9	-	-	4	2.1	49	25.8	190
I feel a sense of belonging when joining in peer group.	-	-	80	42.2	63	33.2	-	-	5	2.6	42	22.1	190
I feel motivated when listening to friends.	-	-	91	47.9	46	24.2	-	-	4	2.1	49	25.8	190
I joined the group because we share the same life style.	-	-	65	34.2	64	33.7	-	-	8	4.2	53	27.9	190
I feel important in the classroom when I am involved in the activities	-	-	74	38.9	57	30.0	-	-	4	2.1	55	28.9	190
I feel a sense of belonging in my group because we speak the same languages	-	-	68	35.8	49	25.8	-	-	11	5.8	62	32.6	190

Note: Missing values indicate that the item was skipped by all participants.

The descriptive results displayed in Table 2 shows that the highest percentage of the participants agreed with the statements, “I feel motivated when listening to friends” (91 or 47.9%), followed by “I join the group because we share the same lifestyle” (65 or 34.2%)”. The results of the study show that the participants agreed that motivation is a strong influence as a reason for joining a peer group.

4.3.2 *Developing well-being*

Table 2: *Developing well-being*

Reasons for joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
I am dedicated as a member of my team.	-	-	111	58.4	36	18.9	-	-	40	21.1	3	1.6	190
I participate actively at competition practices in order to win.	-	-	93	48.9	46	24.2	-	-	39	20.5	12	6.3	190
I have grown my teamwork skills since I joined the team.	-	-	97	51.1	50	26.3	-	-	34	17.9	9	4.7	190
I feel good when we win a match.	-	-	98	51.6	37	19.5	-	-	52	27.4	3	1.6	190
I cooperate when working as part of the team.	-	-	105	55.3	30	15.8	-	-	53	27.9	2	1.1	190
I feel motivated when I exercise in the morning.	-	-	93	48.9	36	18.9	-	-	48	25.3	13	6.8	190

I eat healthy to keep my body healthy.	-	-	76	40.0	59	31.1	-	-	40	21.1	15	7.9	190
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Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

Table 3 shows that the highest percentage of respondents agreed with the statements “I am dedicated as a member of my team” (111 or 58.2%); and, “I eat healthy to keep my body healthy” (76 or 40%) s. This shows that dedication has is a strong reason for joining peer groups.

4.3.3 Receiving spiritual support

Table 3: Receiving spiritual support

Reasons for joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I attend evening prayer services to grow my faith.	-	-	56	29.5	52	27.4	-	-	45	23.7	37	19.5	190
I join the religious group to share the scriptures of the bible.	-	-	63	33.2	57	30.0	-	-	41	21.6	29	15.3	190
I feel spiritual empowerment after prayer.	-	-	84	44.2	34	17.9	-	-	61	32.1	11	5.8	190
I enjoy exchanging ideas during bible study.	-	-	72	37.9	57	30.0	-	-	43	22.6	18	9.5	190

I join the peer group to strengthen my beliefs.	-	-	65	34.2	58	30.5	-	-	45	23.7	22	11.6	190
I join the peer group to keep spiritual values.	-	-	74	38.9	50	26.3	-	-	46	24.2	20	11.6	190
I join the peer group to fear God.	-	-	62	32.6	50	26.3	-	-	49	25.8	29	15.3	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

Table 4 shows that the highest percentage of participants showed agreement to receiving spiritual support as their reasons for joining peer groups, as indicated by the statement, “I feel the spiritual empowerment after the prayer” (84 or 44.2%); followed by, “I attend evening prayer services to grow my faith” (56/29.5%). The results show that spiritual empowerment is a strong motivation for joining peer groups.

4.3.4 *Developing critical thinking*

Table 4: *Developing critical thinking*

Reasons for joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D	SD		Missing		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
I join the study group to share ideas with my peers.	-	-	112	58.9	38	20.0	-	-	36	18.9	4	2.1	190
I join a study group to discuss the course subjects.	-	-	101	53.2	41	21.6	-	-	41	21.6	7	3.7	190

I like to express my opinions to develop myself.	-	-	108	56.8	36	18.9	-	-	41	21.6	5	2.6	190
I like to assist the others when they are in need of help.	-	-	116	61.1	14	7.4	-	-	59	31.1	1	.5	190
I like to share my experiences in my leadership team.	-	-	99	52.1	46	24.2	-	-	38	20.0	7	3.7	190
I have developed listening and communication skills through my leadership.	-	-	108	56.8	32	16.8	-	-	43	22.6	7	3.7	190
I like to suggest solutions to problems during our debate.	-	-	105	55.3	44	23.2	-	-	36	18.9	5	2.6	190
I like to share my leadership activities skills.	-	-	105	55.3	39	20.5	-	-	40	21.1	6	3.2	190
I learn how to organise projects with my group.	-	-	106	55.8	36	18.9	-	-	43	22.6	5	2.6	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

Table 6 shows that the highest percentage agreed with the statement, “I like to assist the others when they are in need of help” (116/61.1%); followed by “I like to share my experiences in my leadership team” (99/52.1%). The results indicate that kindness is a strong motivator for joining peer groups.

4.3.6 *Co-curriculum group activities***Table 6: Co-curriculum group activities**

Reasons for joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I join the peer group to receive mentorship from my peers when needed.	-	-	99	52.1	41	21.6	-	-	36	20.0	12	6.3	190
I feel good when I get positive feedback.	-	-	112	58.9	24	12.6	-	-	49	25.8	5	2.6	190
I feel good when the activities I am involved in impact positively on my work.	-	-	102	53.7	27	14.2	-	-	54	28.4	7	3.7	190
I join the group so that I can be motivated.	-	-	91	47.9	44	23.2	-	-	47	24.7	8	4.2	190
I join the group in order to enhance my communication skills.	-	-	103	54.2	34	17.9	-	-	46	24.2	7	3.7	190

I join the group so I do not feel lonely in residences.	-	-	76	40.0	58	30.5	-	-	37	19.5	19	10.0	190
I join the group so that I can be recognized by my peers.	-	-	65	34.2	61	32.1	-	-	33	17.4	31	16.3	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

The results displayed in Table 7 show that the highest percentage of participants expressed their reasons for joining peer groups in the statements, “I feel good when I get positive feedback” (112/58.9 %); followed by “I join the group so that I can be recognized by my peers” (65/34.2%). The results reveal that positive feedback has high impact as a reason for joining the group.

4.4 Benefits of joining peer groups

4.4.1 Emotional support

Table 7: Emotional support

Benefits of joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I felt good when I was welcomed and introduced to the residence culture.	-	-	103	54.2	35	18.4	-	-	40	21.1	12	6.3	190
I have been assisted with good academic choices.	-	-	97	51.1	50	26.3	-	-	32	16.8	11	5.8	190

I received good support from the tutors regarding academic and social guidance.	-	-	105	55.3	36	18.9	-	-	38	20.0	11	5.8	190
I have been assisted with career choices.	-	-	86	45.3	48	25.3			29	15.3	27	14.2	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

Table 8 shows that the highest percentage of participants agreed with the statement the statement, “I received good support from the tutors regarding academic and social guidance” (105/55.3%); followed by, “I have been assisted with career choices” (86/45.3%). Support from tutoring is thus a great benefit of joining peer groups.

4.4.2 Academic success

Table 8: Academic success

Benefits of joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Feedback on my academic work has assists me in my learning abilities.	-	-	126	66.3	20	10.5	-	-	38	20.0	6	3.2	190
I have received good support services from student leaders.	-	-	96	50.5	46	24.2	-	-	29	15.3	19	10.0	190
Joining a peer group enables me to work	-	-	115	60.5	34	17.9	-	-	29	15.3	12	6.3	190

collaboratively with other students.													
Use of social media to interact with my peers and staff.	-	-	102	53.7	38	20.0	-	-	39	20.5	7	3.7	190
The availability of assessment methods regarding studies (assignments, tests and exams).	-	-	116	61.1	40	21.1	-	-	29	15.3	6	3.2	190
Peer groups allow me to develop writing and social skills.	-	-	109	57.4	40	21.1			30	15.8	11	5.2.6	190
Peer groups allow working corroborations with my peers.	-	-	113	59.5	42	22.1	-	-	29	15.3	5	2.6	190
I have the ability to access computer resources when needed.	-	-	110	60.1	28	15.3	-	-	45	24.6	7	3.7	190
It is a privilege to meet with other students outside classroom to discuss academic work and other activities.	-	-	113	61.4	30	15.8	-	-	41	22.3	6	3.2	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

Table 9 shows that the highest percentage of participants agreed on Academic success as a benefit of joining peer groups, as indicated in the statement, “Feedback on my academic work has assisted me in my learning abilities” (126/66.3%); followed by, “I have received good support services from student leaders” (96/50.5%). Good feedback therefore serves as a strong motivator for joining peer groups.

4.4.3 *Positive influences of peer pressure***Table 9: Positive influences of peer pressure**

Benefits of joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I like to be identified by peers through providing help to them.	-	-	101	53.2	39	20.5	-	-	38	20.0	12	6.3	190
I like to seek help from my team members when challenging questions arise.	-	-	114	60.0	25	13.2	-	-	44	23.3	7	3.7	190
Joining a peer group enables me to work collaboratively with other students.	-	-	110	57.9	26	13.7	-	-	49	25.8	5	2.6	190
I enjoy working with my group to facilitate a winning spirit.	-	-	111	58.4	27	14.2	-	-	44	23.2	8	4.2	190
I am comfortable letting others take my ideas and put them into action.	-	-	93	48.9	35	18.4	-	-	40	21.1	22	11.6	190
I play the role of a chairperson to help others improve their skills.	-	-	83	43.7	60	31.6	-	-	22	11.6	25	13.2	190

I like opportunities to celebrate others' success.	-	-	109	57.4	33	17.4	-	-	42	22.1	6	3.2	190
I use consultation skills when others don't agree with me.	-	-	92	48.4	57	30.0	-	-	31	16.3	10	5.3	190
I like to generate ideas and share them with my group.	-	-	118	62.1	34	17.9	-	-	32	16.8	6	3.2	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

The highest percentage of participants agreed with the statement, "I like to generate ideas and share them with my group" (118/62.1%); followed by, "I play a role of a chairperson to help others improve their skills" (83/43.7%). The results reveal that generating ideas has high impact as a benefit of joining peer groups.

4.4.4 Information support

Table 10: Information support

Benefits of joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I feel good accessing the library anytime when I need it.	-	-	107	56.3	21	11.1			55	28.9	7	3.7	190
I feel good because the library resources and services are shared.	-	-	103	54.2	32	16.8	-	-	51	26.8	4	2.1	190

The induction program of the library helped to enlighten me about the university.	-	-	92	48.4	46	24.2	-	-	39	20.5	13	6.8	190
I enjoy the programme of the library because of its well-organized nature.	-	-	97	51.1	41	21.6	-	-	44	23.2	8	4.2	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

Table 11 shows that the highest percentage of participants agreed with the statement, “I feel good accessing the library anytime when I need it” (107/56.3%); followed by “The induction program of the library helped to enlighten me about the university” (92/48.4%). Information support therefore has an impact as a benefit of joining a group.

4.5 Challenges of joining peer groups

The results showed varied responses regarding the challenges of joining peer groups. These included failure of time management, socio-economic status, dealing with transition to campus, and adopting negative behaviour through peer pressure.

4.5.1 Failure of time management

Table 11: Failure of time management

Challenges for joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
I missed some of the formal organized sessions in my study group.	-	-	57	30.0	55	28.9	-	-	16	8.4	62	32.6	190

I struggle to maintain the lifestyle choices of my peers.	-	-	52	26.8	54	28.4	-	-	23	12.1	62	32.6	190
I do not always have money to pay for my social events.	-	-	79	41.6	37	19.5	-	-	5	2.6	69	36.3	190
In need to get paid employment in order to co-fund my studies.	-	-	54	28.4	49	25.9	-	-	10	5.3	77	40.5	190
Part-time job affects my academic performance.	-	-	28	14.7	55	28.9	-	-	44	23.2	63	33.2	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

Table 13 shows that the highest percentage of participants showed agreement with the statement, “I do not always have money to pay for my social events” (79/41.6%); followed by, “Part-time job affects my academic performance” (28/14.7%). Financial constraints are thus a challenge when joining peer groups.

4.5.3 *Dealing with transition to campus life challenges*

Table 13: Dealing with transition to campus life challenges

Challenges for joining peer groups	SA		A		N		D		SD		Missing		Total
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
I am unable to cope with the style of	-	-	27	14.4	60	31.6	-	-	25	13.2	78	41.1	190

Adopting Negative behaviour through peer pressure	n	%	n										
I started to drink alcohol when I joined the residences with my peers.	-	-	12	6.3	15	7.9	-	-	111	58.4	52	27.4	190
I smoke because of the influence from my peers.	-	-	9	4.7	20	10.5	-	-	116	61.1	45	23.7	190
I started dating due pressure exerted by my peers.	-	-	10	5.3	20	10.5	-	-	112	58.9	48	25.3	190
I sometimes skip classes because I want to stay at residences with my friends.	-	-	12	6.3	22	11.6			111	58.4	45	23.7	190
I often do not submit my assignments on time in solidarity with my friends.	-	-	9	4.7	19	10.0	-	-	124	65.3	38	20.0	152
I have been in trouble with residence authorities with my peers.	-	-	10	5.3	19	10.0	-	-	120	63.2	41	21	190

Note: Missing values indicate the total number of the participants who skipped the specific categories of the question.

Table 15 shows that the highest percentage agree with the statement, “I often do not submit my assignments on time in solidarity with my friends” (124/65.3%); followed by, “I started to drink alcohol when I join the residences with my peers” (111/58.4%).

4.5.5 Faculty study groups joined

The participants were asked to choose one peer group which they belong to. Their responses were statistically analysed. The participants were asked about the faculty study groups that they belonged to. The results displayed in Figure 5 demonstrate that EMS (Economic and Management Sciences) respondents (72, 37.89%) joined in the highest number, followed by Sciences (30, 15.79%), and Arts (29, 15.26%). The lowest figure among the faculties was Education and Law (18, 9.47%).

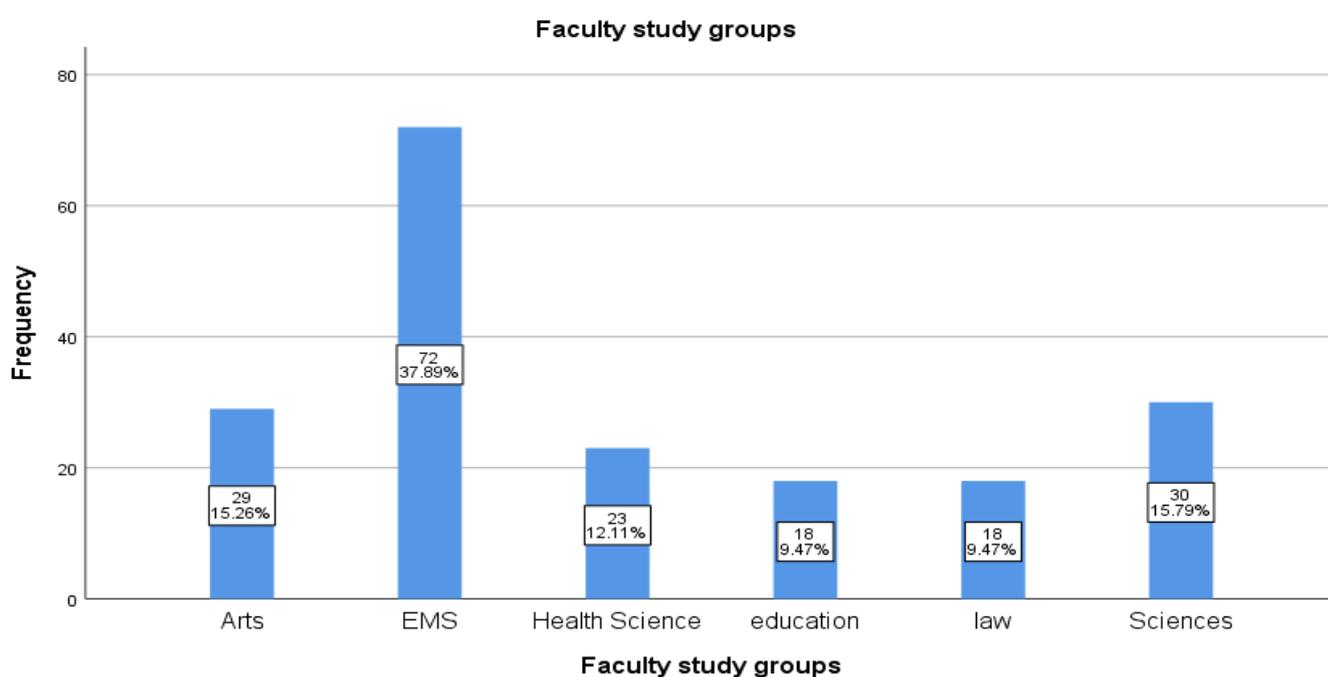


Figure 13: Sports and Recreation groups

4.6 Sports and Recreation groups

The participants were asked about the sports and recreation groups that they belonged to. The results displayed in Figure 6 demonstrate that the sport and recreation group mostly joined was soccer (45, 23.68%), followed by netball (35, 23.68%), and tennis (16, 8.42%). The smallest of the sport and recreation groups were basketball (5, 2.63%) and hockey (3, 1.58%).

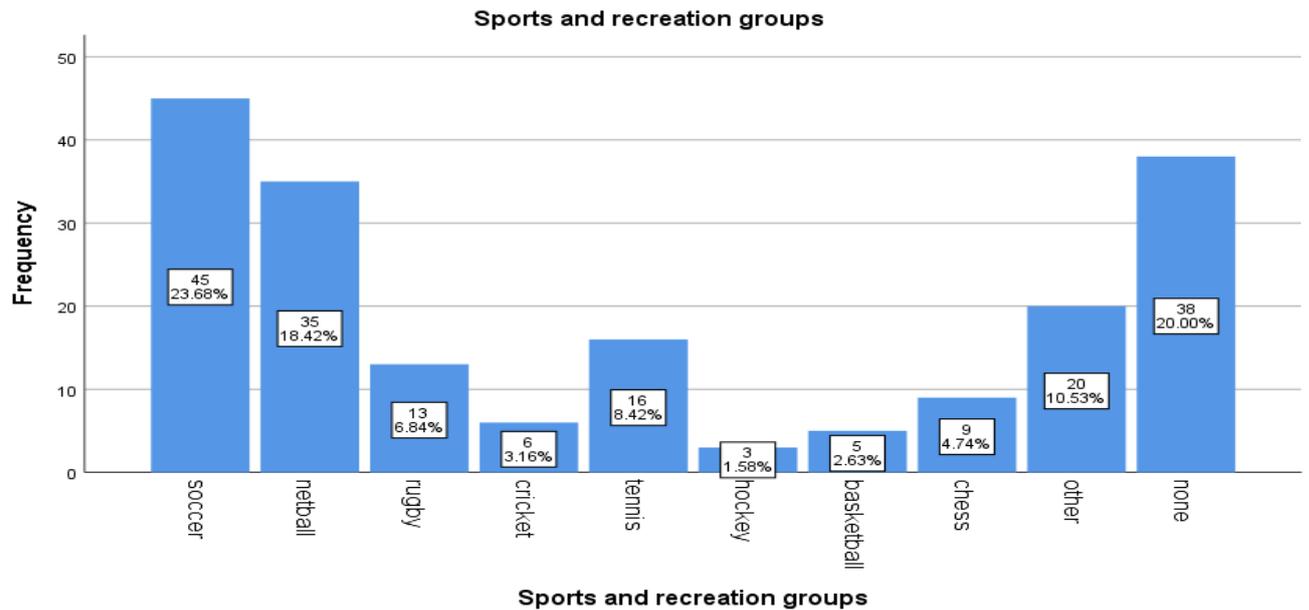


Figure 14: Student political organization groups

4.7 Student political organization groups

The participants were asked which political organizations that they belonged to. The results displayed in figure 7 show that the political organisation groups most joined were SASCO (South African Student Congress) (104, 54.74%) followed by EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters) (36, 18.95%) and PASMA (Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania) (16,8.42%). The smallest student political group was DASO (Democratic Alliance Students Organization) (7, 3.68%).

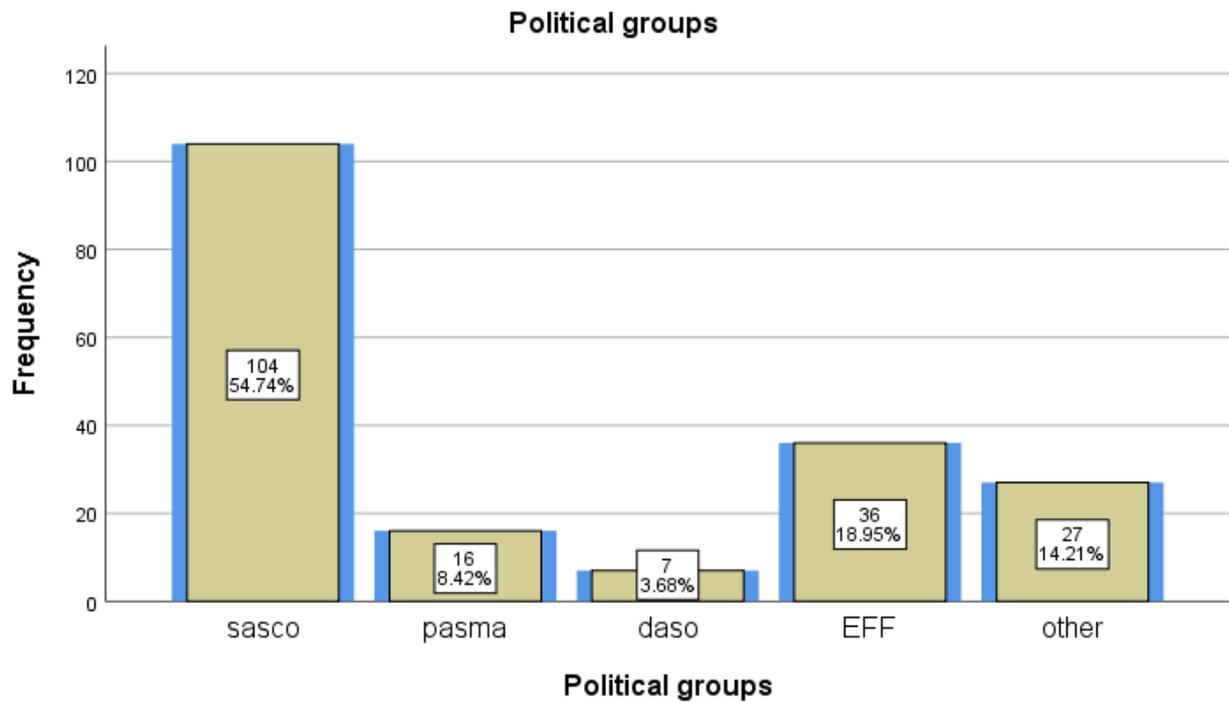


Figure 15: Cultural and recreation peer groups

4.8 Cultural and recreation peer groups

The participants were asked which cultural and recreation groups they belonged to. The results displayed in Figure 8 demonstrate that the groups joined the most were dance (22, 11.42%) and cultural activities (15, 26.29%), followed by debate (13, 16.25%). The smallest were arts history (2, 4.11%) and theatre (5, 11.79%).

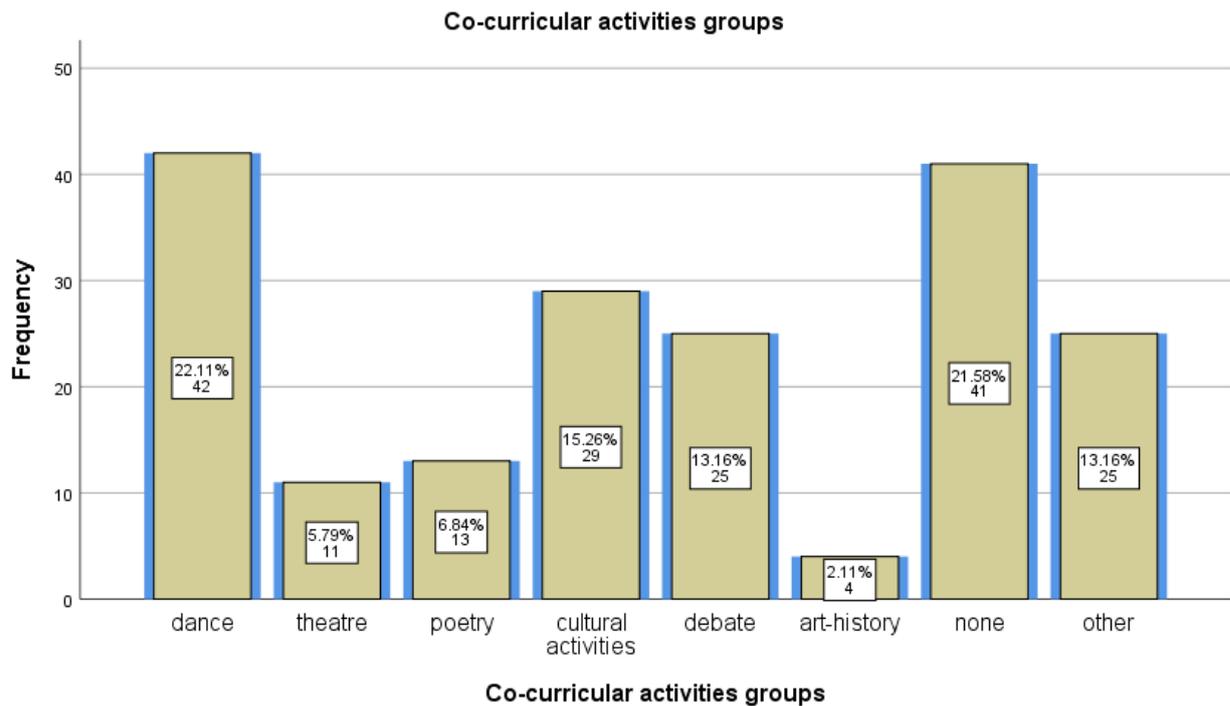


Figure 16: Religious groups

4.9 Religious groups

The participants were asked which religious groups they belonged to. The results displayed in figure 9 demonstrate that the largest religious groups group joined were Student Christian Organization (SCO) (25, 47.68%) and Catholic Church (9, 17.29%.) and Anglican Church (7,14.65%). The smallest religious groups were Ralpa (1, 3.64%) and Muslim (1, 2.09 %).

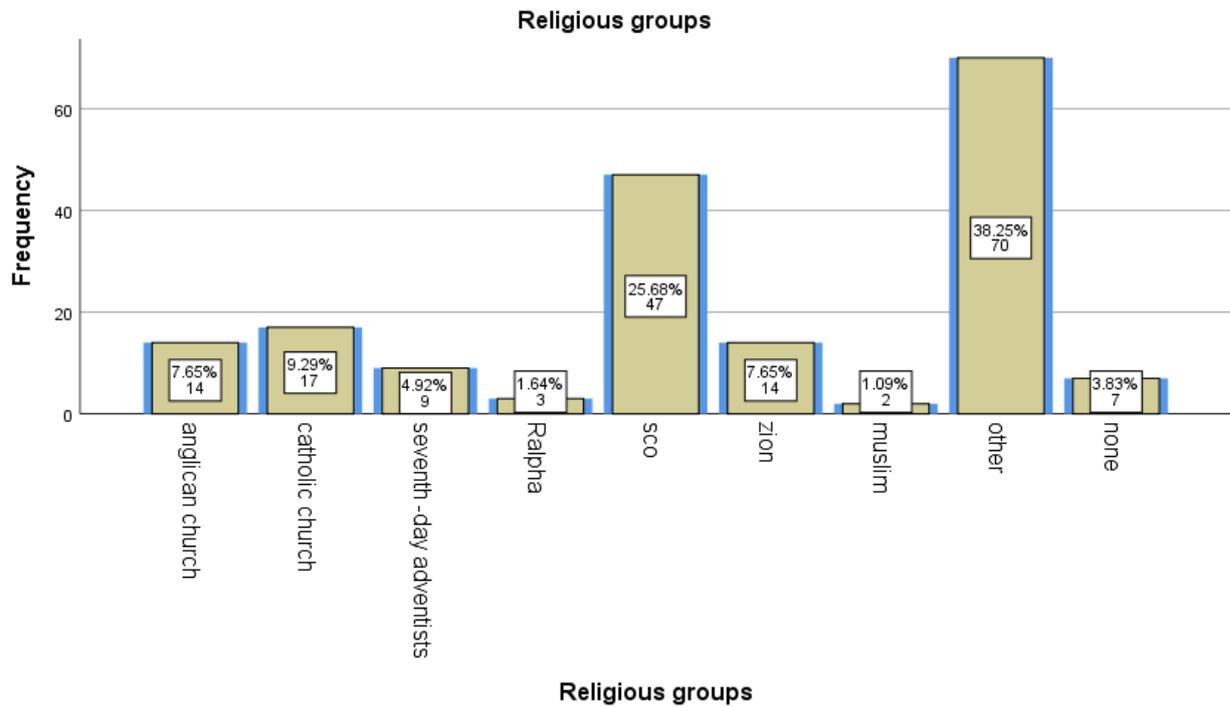


Figure 17: Chi-square test (χ^2)

4.10 Chi-square test (χ^2)

The chi-square test (χ^2) was performed in the study in order to determine the associations between the variables describing demographics (ethnicity, gender, home language, financial support, socio-economic status) characteristic of first-year students with the faculty of the study group they joined. A 5% level of significance was considered for this analysis.

4.10.1 Association between demographic information with faculty groups

Table 15: Association between demographic information with faculty groups

Demographic information		Faculty study groups												x ²
		Arts		EMS		Health Sciences		Education		Law		Sciences		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Gender	Females	23	19.2	41	34.2	15	12.5	11	9.2	10	8.3	20	16.7	.041
	Males	6	8.6	31	44.3	8	11.4	7	10.0	8	11.4	10	14.3	
Age	17-21	26	14.6	67	37.6	21	11.8	18	10.1	17	9.6	29	16.3	.739
	22 & above	3	25.0	5	41.7	2	16.7	0	0.0	1	8.3	1	8.3	
Ethnicity	Blacks	27	16.1	69	41.1	18	10.7	10	6.0	15	8.9	29	17.3	0.00
	Coloured	2	9.1	3	13.6	5	22.7	8	36.4	3	13.6	1	4.5	
Home language	isiXhosa	18	18.4	45	45.9	10	10.2	5	5.1	8	8.2	12	12.2	.027
	Afrikaans	3	14.3	2	9.5	5	23.8	7	33.3	3	14.3	1	4.8	
	English	2	28.6	2	28.6	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0.0	
	Sesotho Leboe sa	0	0.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7	2	33.3	
	Setswana	1	20.5	1	20.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	2	40.0	
	Sesotho	0	0.0	5	62.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	2	25.0	
	Xitsonga	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	1	14.3	
	Siswati	1	14.3	0	0.0	3	42.9	1	14.3	0	0.0	2	28.6	
	Tshivenda	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0	
	isiNdebele	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	2	66.7	
	Other	0	0.0	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	

Socio-economic	Low	23	16.3	59	41.8	19	13.5	11	7.8	12	8.5	17	12.1	0.14
	Middle	2	10.0	4	20.0	1	5.0	6	30.0	1	5.0	6	30.0	
	High	4	13.9	9	31.0	3	10.3	1	3.4	5	17.2	7	24.1	
	NSFAS	24	17.4	49	34.0	19	13.2	16	11.1	12	8.3	23	16.0	
Financial support	Departmental bursary	0	0.0	0	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	4	80.4	.044
	Government	0	0.00	2	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	Self support	4	12.5	16	71.4	3	9.4	2	6.3	5	15.6	2	6.3	
	Other	0	0.0	5		1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	

The data presented in Table 16 shows the chi-square results used to determine the association between faculty study groups joined and gender. The result indicates that there is a statistically significant association between faculty study groups and gender ($\chi^2 = .041$, $p < .05$ (5% level of significance)).

The table also indicates that there is a significant association between faculty study groups and ethnicity ($\chi^2 = 0.00$, $p < .05$)

The results presented in the same table reveal that there is a significant difference between faculty study groups and financial support ($\chi^2 .044$ $p < .05$, $\chi^2 .027$ $p < .05$). The results show that there is a significant difference between faculty study groups and home languages ($\chi^2 .027$ $p < .05$). There was no statistical significance between age ($\chi^2 .739$ $p > .05$) and socio-economic status ($\chi^2 .014$ $p > .05$).

The above table shows that gender, ethnicity, home languages and financial support of the participant’s demographic information are statistically significant with faculty study groups. The above mention variables have influence on joining faculty study groups.

4.10.2 Association between demographic information with sports and recreation groups

Table 16: Association between demographic information with sports and recreation groups

Demographic information		Sports and recreation groups																				X ²
		Soccer		Netball		Rugby		Cric ket		tennis		hockey		Basketbal		chess		other		none		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Gender	Females	12	10.0	34	28.3	4	0	0	0.0	14	11.7	2	1.7	1	0.8	5	4.2	13	10.8	35	29.2	.000
	Males	33	47.1	1	1.4	9	12.9	6	8.6	2	2.9	1	1.4	4	5.7	4	4.7	7	10.0	3	4.3	
Age	17-21	44	24.7	33	18.5		6.7	5	2.8	14	7.9	2	1.1	5	2.8	7	3.9	20	11.2	36	20.2	.174
	22 & above	1	8.3	2	16.7	1	8.3	1	8.3	2	16.7	1	8.3	0	0.0	2	16.7	0	0.0	2	16.7	
	Blacks	43	25.6	34	20.2	7	4.2	5	3.0	13	7.7	3	1.8	5	3.0	6	3.6	19	11.3	33	19.6	.001

Ethnicity	Coloured	2	9.1	1	4.5	6	27.3	1	4.5	3	13.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	13.6	1	4.5	5	22.7	
Home language	isiXhosa	29	29.6	18	18.4	5	5.1	5	5.1	8	8.2	1	1.0	2	2.0	4	4.1	7	7.1	19	19.4	.744
	Afrikaans	2	9.5	1	4.8	4	19.0	1	4.8	3	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	14.3	1	4.8	6	28.6	
	English	1	14.3	1	14.3	2	28.6	0	0.0	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	0	0.0	
	Sesotho sa Leboe	1	16.7	1	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	50.0	
	Setswana	3	60.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	
	Sesotho	2	25.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	3	37.5	
	Xitsonga	2	28.6	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	0	0.0	2	28.6	1	14.3	
	Siswati	3	42.9	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	28.6	
	Tshivenda	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	isiNdebele	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	

	other	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	1	33.3	
Socio-economic	Low	36	25.5	29	19.9	8	5.7	3	2.1	11	7.8	2	1.4	2	1.4	7	5.0	12	8.5	32	22.7	.135
	Middle	2	10.0	4	20.0	2	10.0	3	15.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	5.0	4	20.0	2	10.0	
	High	7	24.1	3	10.3	3	10.3	0	0.0	4	13.8	1	3.4	2	6.9	1	3.4	4	13.8	4	13.8	
	NSFAS	33	22.9	31	21.5	8	5.6	5	3.5	12	8.3	2	1.4	4	2.8	9	6.3	13	9.0	27	18.8	
Financial support	Departmental bursary	3	60.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	.669
	Government	0	0.00	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	Self support	8	25.0	3	9.4	4	12.5	1	3.1	2	6.3	1	3.1	1	3.1	0	0.0	5	15.6	7	21.9	
	Other	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	28.6	3	42.9	

Chi-square results showed that there is less statistically association between demographic variables with sports and recreation groups. The results indicate that sports and recreation groups have a statistically significant association with gender ($\chi^2 = .000$, $p < .05$ (5% level of significance) as

well as ethnicity ($\chi^2 = .001$, $p < .05$). The other variables such as age ($\chi^2 = .174$, $p > .05$), home language ($\chi^2 = .744$, $p > .05$), socio-economic status ($\chi^2 = .135$, $p > .05$), and financial support ($\chi^2 = .699$, $p > .05$) showed no statistically significant association between the sports and recreation groups.

The finding of the above table has showed that gender, ethnicity is statistically significant with sports and recreation groups. The results showed that only gender and ethnicity variables have on influence on joining sports and recreation groups.

4.10.3 Association between demographic information with co-curricular activities

Table 17: Association between demographic information with co-curricular activities

Demographic information		Co-curricular activities groups																X ²
		Dance		Theatre		Poerty		cultural activities		debate		arts		None		other		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Gender	Females	27	22.5	8	6.5	9	7.5	20	16.7	14	11.7	3	2.5	31	25.8	8	6.7	.036
	Males	15	21.4	3	4.3	4	5.7	9	12.9	11	15.7	1	1.4	10	14.3	17	24.3	
Age	17-21	40	22.5	11	6.2	12	6.7	28	15.7	23	12.9	2	1.1	40	22.5	22	12.4	.019
	22 & above	2	16.7	0	0.0	1	8.3	1	8.3	2	16.7	2	16.7	1	8.3	3	25.0	
Ethnicity	Blacks	36	21.4	11	6.5	11	6.5	28	16.7	24	14.3	3	1.8	33	19.6	22	13.1	.296
	Coloured	6	27.3	0	0.0	2	9.1	1	4.5	1	1.5	1	4.5	8	36.4	3	13.6	
Home language	isiXhosa	23	23.5	6	6.1	5	5.1	17	17.3	14	14.3	1	1.0	22	22.4	10	10.2	.014
	Afrikaans	6	28.6	0	0.0	2	9.5	2	9.5	1	4.8	0	0.0	8	38.1	2	9.5	
	English	1	14.3	2	28.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	
	Sesotho sa Leboe	2	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	0	0.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	
	Setswana	0	0.0	2	40.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	60.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	

	Sesotho	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	4	50.0	1	12.5	
	Xitsonga	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	28.6	4	57.1	
	Siswati	1	14.3	0	0.0	2	28.6	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	2	28.6	
	Tshivenda	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	isiNdebele	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	
Socio-economic	Low	32	22.7	7	5.0	12	8.5	23	16.3	16	11.3	2	1.4	32	22.7	17	12.1	.200
	Middle	4	20.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	4	20.0	4	20.0	1	5.0	4	20.0	2	10.0	
	High	6	20.7	3	10.3	1	3.4	2	6.9	5	17.2	1	3.4	5	17.2	6	20.7	
Financial support	NSFAS	32	22.2	6	4.2	10	6.9	24	16.7	20	13.9	4	2.8	28	19.4	20	13.9	.044
	Departmental bursary	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	60.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	1	20.0	
	Government	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	Self-support	7	21.9	5	15.6	1	3.1	1	3.1	4	12.5	0	0.0	11	34.4	3	9.4	
	Other	2	28.6	0	0.0	2	28.6	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	1	14.3	

Chi-square results showed there is a significant association between the demographic information and co-curricular activities groups. There is a statistically significant association between co-curricular activities groups and gender ($\chi^2 = .036$, $p < .05$ (5% level of significance)), as well as age ($\chi^2 = .019$, $p < .05$) and home languages ($\chi^2 = .014$, $p < .05$) and financial support ($\chi^2 = .044$, $p < .05$).

The chi-square test indicates that there is no statistical significant relationship between ethnicity ($\chi^2 = .296$, $p > .05$) and socio-economic status ($\chi^2 = .200$, $p > .05$). Only gender, age, home languages and financial support variables that have an influence on joining co-curricular groups.

4.10.4 Association between demographic information with religious groups

Table 18: Association between demographic information with religious groups

Demographic information		Religious group																		X2
		Anglican church		Catholic		seventh-day adventist		Ralpha		SCO		Zion		Muslim		other		None		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Gender	Females	7	6.0	13	11.2	6	5.2	3	2.6	28	24.1	10	8.6	0	0.0	44	37.9	5	4.3	.390
	Males	7	10.4	4	6.0	3	4.5	0	0.0	19	28.4	4	6.0	2	3.0	26	38.8	2	3.0	
Age	17-21	13	7.6	16	9.4	9	5.3	3	1.8	43	25.1	13	7.6	2	1.2	66	38.6	6	3.5	.979
	22 & above	1	8.3	1	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	33.3	1	8.3	0	0.0	4	33.3	1	8.3	
Ethnicity	Blacks	11	6.7	15	9.2	6	3.7	3	1.8	46	28.2	13	8.0	1	0.6	62	38.0	6	3.7	.087
	Coloured	3	15.0	2	10.0	3	15.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	5.0	1	5.0	8	40.0	1	5.0	
Home language	isiXhosa	9	9.4	10	10.4	6	6.3	0	0.0	22	22.9	7	7.3	0	0.0	39	40.6	3	3.1	.002
	Afrikaans	2	10.5	2	10.5	3	15.8	0	0.0	1	5.3	1	5.3	0	0.0	9	47.4	1	5.3	
	English	1	20.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	2	40.0	0	0.0	

	Sesotho sa Leboe	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	4	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	
	Setswana	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	80.0	0	0.0	
	Sesotho	0	0.0	2	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	50.0	1	12.5	
	Xitsonga	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	85.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	0	0.0	0		
	Siswati	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	71.4	0	0.0	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0.0	
	Tshivenda	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	isiNdebele	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	
	other	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	
Socio-economic	Low	12	8.8	10	7.4	5	3.7	1	0.7	36	26.5	14	10.3	1	0.7	50	36.8	7	5.1	.087
	Middle	0	0.0	3	15.8	3	15.8	1	5.3	5	26.3	0	0.0	1	5.3	6	31.6	0	0.0	
	High	2	7.1	4	14.3	1	3.6	1	3.6	6	21.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	50.0	0	0.0	
	NSFAS	11	7.9	14	10.1	8	5.8	2	1.4	33	23.7	13	9.4	2	1.4	50	36.0	6	4.3	
Financial support	Departmental bursary	1	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	60.0	0	0.0	.575
	Government	0	0.00	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.00	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	Self support	2	6.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	0	0.0	7	23.3	1	3.3	0	0.0	16	53.3	0	0.0	
	Other	0	0.0	5	71.4	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	7	100					

Chi-square results showed that there is less statistical association between demographic variables with religious groups. There is only a statistically significant association between religious groups and home languages ($\chi^2 = .002$, $p < .05$ (5% level of significance)). The chi-square test indicates

that gender ($\chi^2 = .390$, $p > .05$), age ($\chi^2 = .979$, $p > .05$) ethnicity ($\chi^2 = .087$, $p > .05$), socio-economic status ($\chi^2 = .087$, $p > .05$), and financial support ($\chi^2 = .575$, $p > .05$) had no statistical significant relationship with religious groups. Only home language variables have an influence on joining religious groups.

4.10.5 Association between demographic information with political groups

Table 19: Association between demographic information with political groups

Demographic information		Political groups										X2
		SASCO		PASMA		DASO		EFF		OTHER		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Gender	Females	68	56.7	10	8.3	3	2.5	17	14.2	22	18.3	.054
	Males	36	51.4	6	8.6	4	5.7	19	27.1	5	7.1	
Age	17-21	95	53.4	14	7.9	7	3.9	36	20.2	26	14.6	.267
	22 & above	9	75.0	2	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	8.3	
Ethnicity	Blacks	95	54.8	15	8.9	3	1.8	33	19.6	25	14.9	.004
	Coloured	12	54.5	1	4.5	4	18.2	3	13.6	2	9.1	
Home language	isiXhosa	55	56.1	9	9.2	2	2.0	24	24.5	8	8.2	.230
	Afrikaans	11	52.4	2	9.5	4	19.0	2	9.5	2	9.5	
	English	4	57.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	28.6	1	14.3	
	Sesotho sa Leboe	2	33.3	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7	
	Setswana	3	60.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	40.0	
	Sesotho	5	62.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	2	25.0	
	Xitsonga	4	57.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	2	28.6	

	Siswati	4	57.1	1	14.3	0	0.0	2	28.6	0	0.0	
	Tshivenda	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	isiNdebele	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	
	other	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	
Socio-economic	Low	77	54.6	13	9.2	6	4.3	27	19.1	18	12.8	.507
	Middle	12	60.0	3	15.0	0	0.0	3	15.0	2	10.0	
	High	15	51.7	0	0.0	1	3.4	6	20.7	7	24.1	
NSFAS		78	54.2	15	10.4	6	4.2	25	17.4	20	13.9	.496
Departmental bursary		4	80.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	0.0	0	0	0.0	
Government		2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Self-support		17	53.1	1	3.1	0	0.0	8	25.0	6	18.8	
Other		3	42.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	42.9	1	14.3	

Chi-square results showed that there is less statistical association between demographic variables with political groups. There is only a statistically significant association between political groups and ethnicity ($\chi^2 = .004$, $p < .05$ (5% level of significance)). 54.8% of blacks and 54.5% of coloureds belongs to SASCO. This shows that black and coloured people who belongs to SASCO are almost the same compared to other groups. 8.9 % of black and 4.5% of coloured belongs to Pasma.

The chi-square test indicates that gender ($\chi^2 = .053, p > 0.05$), age ($\chi^2 = 267, p > 0.05$), home languages ($\chi^2 = .230, p > 0.05$), socio-economic status ($\chi^2 = .507, p > 0.05$), and financial support ($\chi^2 = .496, p > 0.05$) had no statistically significant relationship with political groups. Only home language variables have an influence on joining political groups.

4.11 Spearman correlation results

The Spearman correlations was performed in order to determine the associations between the benefits of belonging to a peer group and the reasons for join the peer groups.

4.11.1 *Correlations between benefits of joining peer groups and reasons for joining peer groups*

Table 20: Spearman correlations between benefits of joining peer groups and reasons for joining peer groups

		integration with student culture	provision network spaces	on improves leadership skills	score library information and resources
sense of belonging	<i>r</i>	0,201	-0,034	0,024	-0,024
	<i>Sig</i>	<i>0,141</i>	<i>0,803</i>	<i>0,867</i>	<i>0,861</i>
score developing well-being	<i>r</i>	0,021	-0,001	0,055	-0,033
	<i>Sig</i>	<i>0,809</i>	<i>0,992</i>	<i>0,543</i>	<i>0,696</i>
score receiving spiritual support	<i>r</i>	0,005	0,001	0,026	-0,038
	<i>Sig</i>	<i>0,958</i>	<i>0,993</i>	<i>0,788</i>	<i>0,670</i>
score developing critical thinking	<i>r</i>	0,084	0,041	0,090	-0,033
	<i>Sig</i>	<i>0,320</i>	<i>0,624</i>	<i>0,303</i>	<i>0,681</i>
score developing leadership skills	<i>r</i>	0,067	0,050	0,156	0,101
	<i>Sig</i>	<i>0,426</i>	<i>0,555</i>	<i>0,073</i>	<i>0,209</i>
score co-curricular group activities	<i>r</i>	<i>.565**</i>	<i>.603**</i>	<i>.642**</i>	<i>.599**</i>
	<i>Sig</i>	<i>0,000</i>	<i>0,000</i>	<i>0,000</i>	<i>0,000</i>

A Spearman's correlation determined the relationship between the benefits and reasons for joining peer groups. The table in 4.6.1 shows there is no positive relations between the reasons below and benefits of joining groups. The Spearman's correlation coefficient is not statistically significant, where $p > .05$.

The results presented in the tables 4.6.1 showed no positive correlation between sense of belonging and integration with student culture ($r_s = 0,201$ $p = . >.05$), provision of networking spaces ($r_s = -0,034$ $p = . >.05$), improves leadership skills ($r_s = 0,024$ $p = . >.05$), library information and resources ($r_s = -0,024$ $p = . >.05$).

The results further demonstrated in the same table that there is no positive correlation between developing well-being and integration with student culture ($r_s = 0,021$ $p = . >.05$), provision of networking spaces ($r_s = -0,001$ $p = . >.05$), Improves leadership skills ($r_s = 0,055$ $p = . >.05$), Library information and resources ($r_s = -0,033$ $p = . >.05$).

The results presented in the same table further indicate there is no positive correlation between receiving spiritual support and integration with student culture ($r_s = 0,005$ $p = . >.05$), Provision of networking spaces ($r_s = 0,001$ $p = . >.05$), Improves leadership skills ($r_s = 0,026$ $p = . >.05$), Library information and resources ($r_s = -0,038$ $p = . >.05$).

The results further demonstrated in the same table show that there is no positive correlation between developing critical thinking and integration with student culture ($r_s = 0,084$ $p = . >.05$), provision of networking spaces ($r_s = 0,041$ $p = . >.05$), improves leadership skills ($r_s = 0,090$ $p = . >.05$), library information and resources ($r_s = -0,033$ $p = . >.05$).

The results presented in the same table further indicate there is no positive correlation between developing leadership skills and integration with student culture ($r_s = 0,067$ $p = . >.05$), provision of networking spaces ($r_s = 0,050$ $p = . >.05$), improves leadership skills ($r_s = 0,156$ $p = . >.05$), Library information and resources ($r_s = -0,101$ $p = . >.05$).

However, there appears to be a strong positive correlation between two variables (benefits and reasons for joining peer groups). The Spearman's correlation coefficient is statistically significant because $p = <0.001$ which is less than $p < .05$ in all the variables between benefits and one reason for joining peer groups (curricular group activities). The Spearman correlations report that the p-value for this test is <0.001 indicates that there is very strong evidence to believe that benefits and reasons for joining peer groups are correlated. There is a strong positive correlation between integration with student culture and co-curricular activities, which

was statistically significant, $r_s = 0.565$ $p = . <0.001$. There was a strong positive correlation between provision of networking spaces and co-curricular activities, which was statistically significant, $r_s = 0.603$ $p = . <0.001$. There was also a strong positive correlation between improves leadership skills and co-curricular activities, which was statistically significant, $r_s = 0.642$ $p = . <0.001$. There was a strong positive correlation between and Library information and resources co-curricular activities, which was statistically significant, $r_s = 0.599$ $p = . <0.001$. The results suggest that co-curricular activities have an effect on joining peer groups

4.11.2 *Correlations between challenges of joining peer groups and reasons for joining peer groups*

Table 21: Spearman correlations between challenges of joining peer groups and reasons for joining peer groups

Reasons for joining peer groups		Challenges of joining peer groups			
		failure of time management	socio-economic status	dealing with transition on campus	negative behaviour
sense of belonging	R	0,063	-0,009	0,087	-0,076
	Sig	0,799	0,969	0,671	0,616
developing well-being	R	-0,187	0,038	0,131	-0,057
	Sig	0,224	0,815	0,368	0,561
receiving spiritual support	R	-0,143	-0,207	-0,044	-0,029
	Sig	0,348	0,2	0,773	0,779
developing critical thinking	R	-0,105	-0,219	0,055	0,041
	Sig	0,451	0,148	0,702	0,666
developing leadership skills	R	.269*	-0,024	-0,079	-0,025
	Sig	0,047	0,876	0,587	0,79

co-curricular group activities	R	0,119	.423**	0,167	-0,089
	Sig	0,411	0,006	0,256	0,374

A Spearman's correlation was run to determine the relationship between the challenges and reasons for joining peer groups. Table 4.6.2 shows there is no positive relations between the reasons below and challenges of joining groups. The Spearman's correlation coefficient is not statistically significant, because $p > .05$.

The results presented in Table 4.6. show no positive correlation between sense of belonging and failure of time management ($r_s = 0,063$ $p = . >.05$), socio-economic status ($r_s = 0,009$ $p = . >.05$), dealing with transition on campus ($r_s = 0,131$ $p = . >.05$), and negative behaviour ($r_s = -0,076$ $p = . >.05$).

The results further demonstrated in the same table show that there is no positive correlation between developing well-being and failure of time management ($r_s = -0,187$ $p = . >.05$), socio-economic status ($r_s = 0,038$ $p = . >.05$), dealing with transition on campus ($r_s = 0,087$ $p = . >.05$), or negative behaviour ($r_s = -0,057$ $p = . >.05$).

The results presented in the same table further indicate there is no positive correlation between receiving spiritual support and failure of time management ($r_s = -0,143$ $p = . >.05$), socio-economic status ($r_s = -0,207$ $p = . >.05$), dealing with transition on campus ($r_s = -0,044$ $p = . >.05$), or negative behaviour ($r_s = -0,038$ $p = . >.05$).

The results further show that there is no negative correlation between developing critical thinking and failure of time management ($r_s = -0,105$ $p = . >.05$), socio-economic status ($r_s = -0,219$ $p = . >.05$), dealing with transition on campus ($r_s = 0,055$ $p = . >.05$), and negative behaviour ($r_s = -0,041$ $p = . >.05$).

The table further indicates there is a positive correlation between developing leadership skills and failure of time management ($r_s = 0,269^*$ $p = . <.05$). There is no positive correlation between socio-economic status ($r_s = 0,024$ $p = . >.05$), improves leadership skills ($r_s = -0,079$ $p = . >.05$), and negative behaviour ($r_s = -0,025$ $p = . >.05$).

In summary, there is a positive and some negative correlations between co-curricular activities and failure of time management ($r_s = 0,119$ $p = . <.05$). However, there is a positive correlation between socio-economic status ($r_s = 0,423^{**}$ $p = . <.05$), and negative correlations between dealing with transition on campus ($r_s = -0,079$ $p = . >.05$) and negative behaviour ($r_s = -0,089$ $p = . >.05$). It can be concluded there are various challenges associated with reasons for joining peer groups.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the analysis of the quantitative data collected for this study. The descriptive statistical analyses were performed to test the research questions of this study. The results showed that participants joined various groups because they served different interests relating to academic and socialization purposes and gender. The Chi chi-square test (χ^2) was performed in the study in order to determine the associations between the variables describing demographics. Spearman correlations were performed in order to determine the associations between the benefits of belonging to a peer group and the reasons for joining the peer group. In addition, a linear regression was performed to determine the associations between the challenges of joining types of groups.

The next chapter presents the results of the qualitative component of the study. The results of the current chapter and the next chapter are integrated and discussed in chapter 5.

5 CHAPTER 5: QUALITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, data collected from quantitative results was presented. This chapter presents qualitative data relevant to the research questions of this study.

Qualitative data were collected by use of focus group interviews with three different groups: females only (8 members), males only (7 members) and a mixed gender or coeducational group (10 members). The main theme during the focus group interviews participants' experiences of peer group and peer pressure in their university residences. The participants shared their opinions on peer pressure and described their lived experiences related to the topic. Participants expressed their opinions regarding the reasons for joining peer groups as well as the benefits and challenges of the peer pressure. The reasons for joining peer groups are discussed in Section A, the benefits of joining peer group in Section B and challenges of peer pressure are elaborated in Section C. Each focus group is coded differently; the female focus group is coded FG1, the male focus group is coded FG2 and the mixed gender group is coded FG3 in the excerpts below.

5.2 Data organization

This chapter will discuss the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data as stipulated in Chapter 3. Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007) state that qualitative data analysis is one of the most important steps in the qualitative research process because it assists researchers to make sense of their data. Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006, p.196) argue that the processes of qualitative data analysis are "labour intensive and time consuming". Braun & Clarke (2013) suggest that it is the first qualitative method that should be learned as "...it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis" (p.78). According to Divan et al. (2017), qualitative methods are widely used in learning and teaching research and scholarship. In addition, Clarke & Braun (2013) claim that clear guidance is needed on the practical aspects of qualitative analysis. They suggest (p.78) that it is the first qualitative method that should be learned as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis.

5.2.1 *Thematic analysis*

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a thematic approach to qualitative data analysis was employed in this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2012) thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. In this study, in answering the research questions, all the interview data were transcribed and analysed by the researcher using thematic analysis principles such as becoming familiar with the data, data coding, and identification of themes.

5.2.2 *Becoming familiar with the data*

During the initial stages of the analysis, the researcher became familiar with and gained an overview of the data. This process was done by reading and re-reading the focus group transcriptions. The transcripts were organized according to key quotations during the process of data analysis; the transcripts were analysed, coded and summarized.

5.2.3 *Data coding*

The coding process involves the grouping and labelling of segments of data. In this study, the coding was done manually by writing notes on the texts, analysing, using highlighters and coloured pens to indicate potential patterns in order to identify segments of data.

5.2.4 *Identification of themes*

The results obtained from the qualitative focus group interview data are categorised according to themes and sub-themes. The data obtained is presented according to major themes and sub-themes of the research questions. The major themes include:

5.3 Overview of the chapter

Section A Reasons for joining peer groups Themes	Section B Benefits of joining peer groups Themes	Section C Challenges of joining peer groups Themes
Academic support	Acquisition of new skills	Adopting negative behavior
Sense of belonging	Positive influences of peers	Difficulty to embrace diversity
Social interaction	Receiving of peer support <i>Sub-themes</i> Emotional support Financial support Information support	Financial challenges
Acceptance and recognition	Promoting healthy lifestyle	Time management
Embracing diversity		
Material incentive		
Leadership and development		
Sport and exercise		
Religious beliefs		

5.4 Section A: Reasons for joining peer groups

The participants reported that being involved with various groups in the residences takes away their loneliness and the anxiety of the new university environment. Various reasons were given in the three focus groups for their involvement in peer groups. Some participants reported that by being involved with various groups they wanted to adapt more easily to the new environment. However, many participants claimed to join groups to receive support and guidance in the preparation for the academic process. Some of the participants stated that they were also motivated to join peer groups just to be surrounded by people who have similar interests and goals for the future. Besides, participants mentioned that mentorship programmes were not compulsory and they were motivated to join the mentorship groups because of the academic benefits it provided.

The presentation of the focus group interview a transcriptions revealed that the participants joined peer groups for the following main reasons: (a) academic support; (b) sense of belonging; (c) social interaction; (d) acceptance and recognition; (e) embracing diversity; (f) material incentives; (g) leadership development; (h) sports and exercise; and (i) religious beliefs. These reasons are discussed below.

5.4.1 *Theme 1: Academic support*

The results of the focus group presentation indicated that some participants (from Focus Group1, Focus Group 2, and Focus Group 3) joined peer groups for the purpose of improving their academic performance. They met formally or informally to assist one another during their study meetings. They gave each other advice or tips and helped one another to complete assignments and prepare for assessments. In most cases, participants acknowledged that they joined academic study groups with their peers who were doing the study groups. These participants explained that the different study groups helped them to adapt more easily to the academic demands of the university. Furthermore, participants from the various groups declared that they joined the academic peer groups to imitate the behaviours of their study leaders, including studying hard and getting good marks. The following excerpts illustrate these ideas.

(FG1): *I joined the study group with the goal of attaining excellent marks...., the assistance you get when you don't understand and there is someone next to you whom you can ask to assist. It becomes easier to study and know your work*

(FG1): *I want to learn more ideas from my fellow study mates during our meeting as we assist each other [with] tutorials do stuff that we actually do in lectures. So when we don't understand something in class, you can ask question in the tuts. It's much easier when you have to write test and stuff... we download information from the internet and share what we have learned as a group*

(FG2): *For me, my study group or my peer group that I study with. When I am studying with them my marks get up high than studying alone because I can study and ask for help if I don't understand....*

(FG2): *We all are all South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) students... Sometimes one won't do well in a certain module and we will help each other. We will be there for each other through thick and thin*

The focus groups transcripts revealed that the participants believed the university study support program benefited them. According to these participants, the study support was designed to empower all first-year students in order to succeed in their studies and to achieve their full potential marks. It assisted those who faced academic challenges. The following excerpts from some participants reflect these sentiments:

(FG1): *in residences, we have access to study groups because we are allocated according to our faculty various courses that assist us as first-year students to enhance our academic challenges more easy.*

(FG2): *In my corridor we are from the same department doing the same course and we find no difficulties to reach each other for our assignments and tests.*

(FG3): *My peers assist me in translating my academic writing because I am Afrikaans speaker and my academic work is expected to be written in English and I struggle with my writing and sometimes I go to Language Centre for further assistance.*

These participants revealed that the majority of students in residences came from disadvantaged schools where the learning infrastructure was inadequate. Therefore, they need to be assisted in all aspects of learning, given the fact that the environment and expectations at the university level were quite high.

5.4.2 Theme 2: Sense of belonging

A sense of belonging is very crucial to the participants because they felt accepted and valued by their peers at the university. Furthermore, these participants reported that some joined peer groups to feel a sense of belonging and uplift their self-esteem. They claimed that the sense of belonging is an essential element for joining a peer group, because it influences decisions to engage in academic and social activities. Participants further reported that they felt a sense of belonging in expanding their networks across the university. As one participant stated in the following extract:

(FG1): Before I had joined the entertainment group..., I was confined in my room by myself every time I came back from classes..., but since I joined the poetry society, I felt my loneliness was no more as I had the company of other friends.

(FG2): I think, I got a sense of belonging. Since I am away from home and luckily for me my peer group we are in the same programme. We support each other no matter what...

(FG1): So yes, from your peers you can get a sense of belonging..., I quite got a lot of support, you know as a first-year, you are new, you don't know much so it was good that for instance, I had somebody who was from Cape Town because I am not from Cape Town but I frequently come on holidays. So having someone who lives here, they got me know the area a bit and then knowing places, where to go for shopping, places to go out at night and a day time

(FG1): I have developed a sense of belonging through daily interactions with my peers in the University Student Centre where I made many friends..., by interacting with diverse students this took away my anxiety and fear of being rejected.

The participants stated that belonging to a peer group gave them specific identity characteristics related to the group members. Belonging to these groups it makes their lives easier as some of them are first generation students. The groups have also assists them to connect with more groups as the university spaces are allocated for different purposes such as the students centre when they have to mingle with various peer groups and learn more about them.

5.4.3 Theme 3: Social interaction

Social interaction was an important component in joining groups for social integration at the university. However, some participants acknowledged that it helps them to embrace diversity at the university. Furthermore, it allowed them to engage with their peers from different

backgrounds and diverse communities. These participants stated that the university provided a social space, the social interaction helped them extend their networks and construct new identities in the residences. With regard to social interaction, most of participants indicated that it assisted them to feel appreciated in the new environment with their peers. It further assisted them in adapting the campus life through academic and student development programme, and enhanced their capacity to lead among students from diverse cultural groups. The participants find the campus environment very challenging and some of them become members of peer groups because they need to interact with their peers. Therefore, joining peer groups helps them to make the transition from high school to university more easily. The following excerpt from focus group (FG 2, 3) serves to illustrate this:

(FG3) It is important to interact with our peers in residences. Since we are coming from different backgrounds and diverse communities, it is vital for us to know the values of difference cultures and communicate with each other in a proper manner. This results in a mutual respect and it helps everybody to feel to belong to the university space.

(FG2): There are other formally instituted social spaces like the pub inside the university, where alcohol is sold. It is popularly known as the Barn. This place is where we go to drink and meet for networking and being entertained by music.

The data showed that participants affiliated with the different networks such as sports groups, platforms of discussion, and sharing new life experiences. This affiliation helped them to improve their confidence levels and participation in community development. It also created opportunities to develop their social skills such as listening and communication, which helped them to become better university students. According to participants, these groups emerged as spaces of social dialogue and it helped them to not isolate themselves from others, and enabled them to discuss their daily life issues and experiences in the residences. The following excerpts from the participant's transcripts (FG 1, 2, and 3) illustrates this.

(FG3): On campus, there are various occasions and events where we socialize with our friends... such activities are for example the poetry performances, bashes etc....

(FG1): I have made lots of friends by being a member of various social groups on residence.

(FG1): I joined the group because most of us share the same age, we are like peers and we learn each other the social skills of learning a second or third language by practicing and making fun of each other...

(FG2): In my social group, I gain social skills because we chat about everything about the university especially the student politics which is as interesting topic to us as first-year students.

(FG3): I am getting general skills in working together, managing and organizing certain events (bashes, poetry performances), stuff like that...

These participants further mentioned that the interactions with their peers became a social space that could help them understand the different behaviours and cultural values of their peers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

5.4.4 Theme 4: Acceptance and recognition

The focus group interviews revealed that participants joined peer groups in order to feel accepted and recognized. The data further revealed that in joining the groups, participants simultaneously experienced the fear of being rejected and the excitement of being accepted at the same time. With regards to the procedure of joining house committees, some participants mentioned that they were required to present a high intelligence profile in order to qualify for acceptance and recognition in this peer group. Participants indicated that they were expected to write letters, provide their qualifications, and prepare speeches that set out their reasons for membership to the group. The following excerpts from some participants illustrate this.

(FG2): My involvements with the social groups have made me to have more friends in residences as compared to those who belong to one group or who do not belong to any group. I am a friendly person and I like to socialize with random people.

(FG1): I have realise that we from boarding schools we were more exposed to peer groups and peer pressure and our fellow students from residences noticed and accepted us as vibrant and we are extrovert students too.

(FG3): Since I have joining house committee everybody knew me as from the day of manifestos. In deciding to become part of House Committee, I became influenced by other student leaders who had been in the same committee.

(FG1): I was always sitting in my room being shy but the friends have accepted me as I am, As a netball player during the mini-Olympics people recognize me from the tournaments

(FG2): Since we are ruby players especially playing for the Varsity Cup, girls recognise us the most because we are fit and have strong muscles from the trainings (laugher).

(FG3): Serving in a leadership role gave me more recognition in the residences

Most of the participants acknowledged that they were accepted in the religious groups without any motivational letter. Participants mentioned that by joining peer groups they hoped to fit into an overwhelming environment and feel accepted and appreciated by their peers.

5.4.5 *Theme 5: Embracing diversity*

The focus group participants indicated that embracing diversity was an essential reason for joining peer groups. Further, participants stated that residence life embraces, appreciates and celebrates students regardless of their races, ethnicities, languages, nationalities, backgrounds and gender differences. These participants claimed that the university campus embraced different ethnic groups as students coming from across the world. Participants stated that they experienced diversity across the university residences through learning good values regarding norms, mutual respect, and cooperation and belief systems. Some participants reported that diversity involved understanding, accepting and valuing differences among others and treating them with mutual respect. Participants stated that it was important to live in a diverse community because it made their adjustment to the new university environment much easier. They acknowledged that diversity required education, training, and acceptance at all levels of services, including policymaking, administration, and practice. According to the participants, achieving cultural competence, embracing diversity, and successfully managing issues across diverse populations is a dynamic, ongoing, developmental process that requires long term commitment. The extracts below illustrate this.

(FG1): To me, value diversity is to respect human worth and by experiencing diversity at the university, you are laying the groundwork to be comfortable working and interacting with a variety of individuals of all nationalities.

(FG2): We live in a society that is increasingly diverse. And it is very important for us as young people to seek diverse representation within our universities.

(FG3): Interacting with peers from a variety of groups extends your social circle by increasing the network of students with whom you can associate and develop relationships. Its like having friends in one racial group can be very boring and diversity makes the conversation interesting.

(FG1): The good part is there are always things that are happening here at the university, like functions especially for first-years you got people to talk to and stuff so like, I don't think they should have any reason to be like an introvert and not talk and be shy and plus I like talking you know, I got along well.

Participants further mentioned that diversity referred to the ability to respect the interpersonal styles and behaviours of individuals and families.

5.4.6 *Theme 6: Material incentives through leadership*

The presentation of participants from the focus group indicated that material incentives by house committees can motivate them to be involved in residence activities. Furthermore, some participants stated that they had embraced leadership groups in order to gain material rewards. The participants claimed that the residence management distributed the material incentives including the privilege of single rooms, personalised T-shirts, cap books, pens, bags, lunch boxes, and free food during training sessions and workshops in order to increase their confidence and attract them to join peer groups.. They stated that sometimes trainees are taken to historic sites, including Parliament to observe the national leadership debate. The following excerpts from three participants can demonstrate these arguments:

(FG3): If I had not been offered a T-shirt, a room of my own, and free food during different house committee training sessions, I would have not accepted to be part of the House Committee. I don't regret my decision of becoming part of this group at all...

(FG3): I have joined the house committee because I want to get a single room and a T-shirt with my name written on it...sharing a room was a tough thing to be part of because I didn't have my own privacy. So now I will be on my own, having my own independency so excited....

(FG3): If I was at home, I was going to miss breakfast and I love my hot breakfast [laughter] am glad for such privilege and to be part of the house committee team...I think I deserve this because I have work so hard during my first semester to get good marks in order to qualify for the student leader position...

The participants declared that these material incentives were tangible or intangible rewards used to motivate them to behave in a certain manner. Participants mentioned that they obtained information about the material incentives through their senior students who had previously

been part of the house committee. Most of the participants mentioned that they were privileged to participate to various leadership events in and outside the university during their term of office.

5.4.7 *Theme 7: Leadership skill development*

The focus groups showed that leadership skill development was an essential reason for joining peer groups on university residences. Some participants reported that student involvement in student leadership trainings begins when students nominate themselves or are nominated by their peers to become house committee members. Most of the participants reported that in the house committee trainings workshops, critical aspects such as leadership, communication, assertiveness, project management and conflict resolution skills were debated. Such discussions developed their knowledge and understanding of these aspects both as individuals and as leaders. The participants reported that they joined house committee meetings to discuss the residence issues and other tasks for future implementation. Participants stated that they were drawn into leadership roles in order to give them a privileged position in the residences. The following excerpts from the participants from the focus group 3 (FG3) can illustrate these.

(FG3): I learn more about teamwork, how to work with other people, how to handle stressful situations. There were tasks we were allocated to do at some point. It was challenging because all of us, we wanted to do the task and we could give each other a chance. I have learned more about team building and communication....

(FG3): Before I was elected as a House Committee, I was a corridor representative in my block. A corridor representative is a kind of a leadership role on residences but in a low scale

(FG3): The house committee was mainly to develop my leadership skills which I think can play a role in working environment in future you have to know how to deal with a certain group of people because I think it's a very useful skill that one can have, to know how to work with different type of people and problem solving skills

(FG3): Single room, nah joking its basically about developing you and finding yourself also. You know like ja man it's just developing yourself and doing something new, something you haven't done before. It's an experience.

In respect with the statements mentioned above, some participants mentioned that they were involved in the leadership roles to make new friends and establish new contacts. One participant from the focus group (FG3) mentioned the following:

(FG3): Leadership roles go beyond designing projects which create and sustain a residential environment. The platforms expect us to be good communicators by holding house meeting as leaders of the house...

(FG3): For me, serving as a house committee in my residence ... was a dream which came true as I had the opportunity to gain expertise and work alongside residence administrators. This has helped me to get interest in joining other leadership groups where I can be elected to become a member of the Central House Committee (CHC) and Student Representative Council (SRC).

(FG3): I want to become a public speaker so I am starting to practise my skills now by becoming a House Committee member... I am sure that joining the house committees in the residences helps to equip me with leadership skills and be responsible leaders in future outside the university, why not in the Parliament (laughter)...

Some participants reported that leadership workshops were beneficial to them to develop their leadership skills and their political portfolios as future members of parliament. In regard to this thought, these participants emphasised that it was important to acquire communication and team building skills for future reference. Some participants reported that serving in the house committee gave the experience of being in a leadership position. Others identified the benefit of being in leadership roles as the opportunity to develop personal credentials; and yet others described getting promotion from lower leadership roles to higher leadership roles as an achievement.

5.4.8 *Theme 8: Sport and exercise*

The focus groups revealed that participants joined peer groups for sport and exercise to maintain their physical and mental health, and to develop their competitive and teamwork spirit. They declared that joining sport and exercise groups helped them to gain more in social and academic spaces. Some participants expressed enthusiasm about the various student extramural activities offered by the residences. They reported that during the orientation, they were introduced to various sports codes activities by the Department of Sport Administration such as netball, soccer, rugby and cricket. Participants benefited in their physical and mental

health and confidence, and the sense of being part of a team helped them to socialise with their peers. The following excerpts from the participants can illustrate these:

(FG2): I want to be healthy and good looking by going to the gym everyday

(FG1): My involvement with the sport team develops my skills

(FG2): Belonging to soccer team has made me to gain leadership skills as a coach of the team

(FG3): I have joined the rugby team because I want to stand better chances to enter varsity cup competition

The participants reported that during the academic year they became involved in numerous competitions. This shows that by participating in those sports activities they also benefit as they get exposure to play on the national teams and gaining some leadership roles by coaches the others. Some of them they are joining the groups for health purpose just to be fit and active.

5.4.9 *Theme 9: Religious beliefs*

The presentation of focus group interviews further revealed that some participants joined bible study group in order to strengthen their religious beliefs. These participants stated that they joined groups to maintain their religious families' background. The participants reported that they connected with God through their respectively churches rather than going to other places. They indicated that the religious groups in the residence help them to know and learn more about God. The following extracts from the participants can explain this:

(FG3): Back at home I belong to religious family, I am holding to family religious' values

(FG1): We fear God; hence there is a need for us to be members of religious groups in addition to being members of academic and sports groups...

(FG 2): I have a religious roommate; he is a kind of influence to me to go to church on Sundays. My family, they are also religious people and my friends in the first floor they are also religious people. I get that influence of going to church, yhaaa...

(FG1) My friends are good in terms of religious beliefs. I suppose to be at church like today, we go to church on Saturdays. They always told me we should go to church,

you must wake up. My problem is waking up they go there; they understand you have to go to church on Saturday.

Some participants stated that they had been affiliated with religious groups since their high school days. They acknowledged that the university offered them the spaces to pray, share the word of God and religious values with peers, and continued practising their religious belief.

The following sections will discuss the benefits and challenges of joining peer groups.

5.5 Section B: Benefits of joining peer groups

In this section, the experiences of peer pressure are discussed according to the focus group report. Some participants reported that belonging to different peer groups on campus influenced their behaviour. It was found that the influences of peer pressure varied from participant to participant. Participants explained that these numerous influences are likely to be adopted behaviour because they wanted to fit in the new environment. Participants defined their experiences of peer pressure as the influence that they feel from a friend or peer group to do something that they might not have otherwise considered doing, such as smoking and taking drugs. Some of them mentioned that they were less experienced than the friends or peers that made them curious to explore certain actions. Participants revealed that their experiences of peer pressure often happened when they did not want to be left behind or be alone or left out. They confirmed that their experiences of peer pressure were not always negative; it could motivate them to overcome challenges or excel in life. They did express some regrets concerning exposure to different behaviour from their peers. Participants mentioned that university life made it harder to avoid peer pressure since they were on their own as young adults, and since they were away from home. They stated that they had to be responsible for their decisions where they were no longer under the supervision of parents. The benefits (influences to changes for the better) included acquiring new skills, being motivated to achieve high academic results, receiving peer support (emotional, financial, material and information), acceptance and recognition. The experiences of peer pressure regarding benefits and challenges of joining peer groups are discussed below.

5.5.1 *Theme1: Acquisition of new skills*

Some participants mentioned that they had been positively influenced by their peer groups in the university residences. For some participants, their peers served as a source to enhance their understanding of the world around them, provide them with more and better opportunities and improve their quality of life. Having new information on any skill kept them up to date about academic campus events. Participants reported that learning new skills in any area helped them to improve their verbal intelligence and gave them a better mind set. The following are some excerpts from participants who acknowledged the benefit of joining a study group and acquiring computer literacy skills:

(FG1): I did not know that my academic work was supposed to be typed because all my assignments were handwritten. My friend motivated me to use the computer...

(FG3): Since I have become I member of house committee member, I have learned of how to conduct meetings, meaning knowledge of meeting procedure...

(FG1): I have learned ... how to create networking with the members through the social networks like Facebook and WhatsApp

(FG3): The group has [taught] me how to campaign to run for House Committee member

(FG1): For me I would say that you should be open to new experiences because like I mentioned I wasn't computer literate at all and you know that even your tut you have to type it out, everything that you do, you have to be on the keyboard and know what you doing. So I was open to new experiences and I told myself that I had to finish this year and I don't know much about this computer thing and that's what I did actually because now there is nothing that I cannot do that needs to be done in a computer and also I think joining groups and being interactive helps because you can't just ok let me not say you can't just join academics and just go. I think that you should come with a mindset that you're gonna do you academics yes but you should be involved in other societies as well just to grow yourself

Through these skills participants boost their confidence and self-esteem as part of their daily personal development. These cause the participants to have a relaxed mind and enjoy the learning of new skills. Other participants, especially those coming from disadvantaged background, revealed that their peers helped them to learn computer skills that they lacked when they were in high schools. This means joining this groups has benefited them with more skills.

5.5.2 *Theme 2: Positive influences of peer pressure*

Participants mentioned that they experienced peer influences on their academic work. As they are allocated according to their study discipline on residences, each study group had to compete with the other students from different faculties. Some participants mentioned that in the peer groups they joined academic achievement was encouraged. They stated that during the semester examination, the religious peer groups organised a prayer meeting for all residence students who would be writing examinations. Participants stated that during their assignments and term tests, they were pressured to get good marks because the residences acknowledge those who excel academically. Some participants mentioned that most of their time they spent on studying hard so that they could qualify for departmental bursaries and social activities. Other participants were motivated by their peer group to study hard to achieve good academic marks. According to the participants, the bullies in their peer groups were the one who facilitated the programme and forced everyone to cooperate in their own way. The excerpts below illustrate participants' perception of the positive influence of peer group pressure on first-year students living in the residences.

(FG1): Experiences of peer pressure, I was actually fortunate to get friends with good influence. I was never really pressured to do badly, except the influence to go to the library and study.

(FG2): For me, my study group that I study with. When I am studying with them my marks get up high than studying alone because I can study and ask for support if I don't understand

(FG3): My friends were always support me not to be discouraged when I did not understand in the classroom, they always support me by availing themselves and explain where I was lacking with my academic work

(FG2): From my peers or because I don't just get influence from campus I also have peers out of campus. So they would say "its weekend lets go to Long Street". But I know what to do on Monday maybe a class or test. I would not say, No I am studying...

(FG1) I have experience this year is where my roommate influencing each other not to go to class in the morning. Even if she want too, if I don't she won't go. That is how we have influence each other

The participants described the effective support they received from various university support groups that made it easier to cope with their academic work. According to participants the peer support services that encouraged academic achievement in the residences include a peer mentorship programme and study groups. The data suggest that the peer support services helped them to improve their computer skills and raised their self-esteem. In other cases, the peer support services helped participants to do better in their tests and assignments and achieve better results at the end of the academic year. Those who received support from mentee study groups reported that this improved their academic performance. These study groups also offered students personal advice and gave them moral support when necessary.

5.5.3 *Theme 3: Receiving peer support*

Receiving support from peers was one of the various positive experiences of joining peer groups which participants mentioned. According to respondents, peer groups have the ability to offer a great deal of support during a time of individual need. This includes emotional support when participants need a shoulder to cry on; material support in the form of food or books; information support such as having access to notes and other information necessary to academic success; and financial assistance from peers in the form of cash or payments. The following excerpts illustrate these types of support: emotional, financial and information support.

5.5.3.1 *Sub-theme1: Emotional support*

(FG1): My friend lost his close family member and he wanted to drop the Law course and he was stressing a lot, I encouraged him not to lose focus

(FG3): Prayer group helps me to go through my academic life because when I pray a lot, my academic life goes very well

(FG2): In the study group, we learn from each other, academically and personally and the mentors are very helpful

(FG3): I'm saying in terms of emotional support because I am part of the study group and he also happened to be close to me, friendship. So at some point I think I did offer emotional support to one of my friends who felt like law wasn't for him, I convinced him and I told that look you're going to pursue another career but there will always

be difficulties as long it's a career. So in that's sense I think there was emotional support.

The presentation of participants from focus groups shows that they were struggling to deal with the peer pressure of the university. There are extracts from the various groups based on material and financial support below:

5.5.3.2 *Sub-theme 2: Financial support*

The analyses of participants showed some vast experiences of transition. For most of them, finance was a crucial challenged since they were coming from disadvantages backgrounds. Staying in residences has assisted them to help each other as roommates and peer groups.

(FG2): We as friends we borrow each other money to buy food and we cook together toward the end of the month and we alternate for cooking sometime

(FG3): Sometime I become stranded and ask my group for support but if it's the mid-month, we go to Residence Life and ask for financial support because they have marketed their departmental assistance during the orientation exhibition.

(FG1): We assist each by printing for each especially those who have bursaries they are always willing to assist with material things.

(FG3): Me and my peers we exchange books and articles because we are doing the same course

(FG3): And then just in terms of financial support definitely like I said, we all come from different background, we all get money from different intervals so when I'm short my friends pull through and when they are short I pull though for instance they want to go in the Barn in the middle of the month, I would try to give them.

5.5.3.3 *Sub-theme 3: Information support*

Another form of support which was mentioned by the participants was information support. The participants mentioned that some of them did not previously serve in a study group, as they were used to be independent learners. Being in residences has assisted them to work collaboratively as they were allocated to groups according to their various faculties.

(FG1) Me and my study group we alternate with the groups discussions where we share ideas and give each other more explanation and understanding about the task on hand

(FG3): During our meetings we share knowledge and opinions in doing our projects and house committee members, we learn and advice each other

(FG2): The senior students are always complaining about their marks it's either second or third years and encourages us to work hard. That's the influence you get from them.... Plus we are looking up to them if they are failing we get scared, we do work hard....

(FG3): Yes, most definitely. With law there a lot of cases you find that you delegate that somebody must do a certain number of cases and the bring information in once as a group. Definitely it's information sharing.

Participants mentioned that the transition challenged them in different ways as they had sudden demands to be independent as they entered the new environment. Sometimes their peer groups they have better understanding of the subject in formation and by being a member of this group participants are gaining more knowledge that can assists them in their academic work.

5.5.3.4 **Theme 6: Promoting healthy life style**

Another positive experience participant gets from joining peer groups is the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The analysis of focus group transcriptions reveals that some participants joined sports group in order to remain healthy, as sport offered them the opportunity to exercise regularly.

(FG2): Every day we go for jogging and some body exercise by the gym as a group in the morning or in the afternoon after classes just to keep our bodies in a good shape

(FG1): I eat healthy food like vegetable and fruit and tried to balance my meals sometimes

(FG3): Me and my peer we like to wake up and [go] jogging

These participants mentioned that the training during practices helped them to be physically and even mentally healthy. Some of these participants mentioned that they went to gym with

their peers in order to exercise and therefore to keep their bodies healthy. The following are some excerpts from three participants who acknowledged the positive experience of exercising:

5.6 Section C: Challenges of joining peer groups

This section explores the challenges the participants experienced when they joined peer groups. In other words, the section deals with the difficulties they experienced and the shortcomings in themselves they became aware of as a result of peer pressure. The presentation of participants' group discussions reveals challenges relating to cultural differences, socio-economic difficulty, and time management.

5.6.1 *Theme 1: Adopting negative behaviour from peers*

From the participants' perspective, joining university groups has made them become aware of and want to explore different lifestyles. Participants reported that there were positive or negative challenges associated with belonging to peer groups in the university residence and some of these challenges had led them to change in the way they lived such as smoking and drinking alcohol. Some participants also mentioned that they were brought up in a different way and the new experiences and challenges had left them with regrets. Among the challenges some participants mentioned were that peer pressure was responsible for their uninformed decisions which have had negative consequences. Participants felt that more activities in residences could help to prevent negative behaviour and contribute to their success. They stated that after classes, they soon became bored and decided to visit their friends because there was not as much to do as there was during class time. According to the focus group report, participants depended on their peers for advice, which led them to change their attitudes and behaviour and make negative changes. Despite the fact that participants were socialized in a particularly traditional way by their parents, some reported that they had no intention of returning to their roots. A number of participants mentioned that this negative attitude was the result of peer pressure. Their need to belong in a group made them susceptible to the influence of their peers.

Other participants insisted on the need to offer sexual education that was not part of their family experience as illustrated in this extract:

(FG3): Since our parents see talking about sex with us as taboo; we now feel more comfortable talking about sex, drugs with our friends on residences. However, there is a pressure on those who did not seem to know anything about getting drunk, sex and other behaviours. In talking about those things, some of us get encouraged to engage in sexual intercourse and use drugs. In some instances, some of us do not use condoms when having sex and we smoke dagga [cannabis] in the university premises.

The participants reported that use of alcohol and other substances makes the university environment unsafe for all the university community. One participant commented:

(FG2): The drunken students have a tendency of oversleeping and missing classes. Therefore, they fail some courses at the end of the year. Some of them become confident by swearing to others and make noise in the corridors with friends and distract their roommates in the process.

(FG3): The smoking side, I enjoyed smoking dagga [cannabis], I don't regret it because I know how I feel when I am high and I love the feeling, I won't lie...

According to the participants the university has a policy which prohibits all students from taking drugs on campus. It reserves the right to expel any student who takes drugs or fails to consider the interests of their fellow students. They reported that despite this stern warning, participants take drugs and alcohol off campus which their peers make available to them. Below are some other excerpts in which participants acknowledged that their behaviours, values and lifestyles had taken a turn for the worse since they joined peer groups:

(FG1): What I have noticed about the peer pressure is that, it's like we are moving into a transition where you have to be independent or interdependent in a way. You are mostly told about what you must or must not do. Like drinking, drugs warn not to do that at all but at times those things do drugs, sex, drinking after hours. There are no activities one can do during those times to make up for this time dysfunctional time.

(FG2): Yhaaa, like sometimes you will find out all of your friends got girlfriends and you don't have. You will happen to be pressured to get a girlfriend, whether you like it or not (laughter). You just want to show that you are not afraid of girls or whatever; there is that kind of pressure...

(FG3): I have never had sex like in high school because I was scared of doing it. But once I come to varsity my friends, I mean me and my friends actually we are not doing the same course but we just friends. Most of the times we spend time talking about boyfriends and sexing and all that, telling how to do that and stuff (blushing). So, I felt like I am old now and still feel stupid like I don't do sex. So, I thought as I am dating I have to do it. Sometimes the boys have influence, especially on sex and you will end up doing it, but if is not the time you wanted it. But for me sex is something like (blushing)...my friends push me to do it, but it was not their choice my choice...

(FG3): Honestly speaking, yes, I do regret of having sex at this age that was not my plan. My plan was to have sex when I am 21 years old, but because of the influence I got from my friends but I don't blame them. I was supposed to control myself, that's what has happened...

(FG1): Yes, I got low marks, but then because I got 50% and stuff. I just said its fine because I passed. So yeah, I just wish I could practice more maybe I could get 'B' or something

(FG3): Like again in peer pressure sometimes you get pressure without being aware because your friends used things that they know you are weak in, like if...

The participants reported that peer pressure is very strong in the university residence and this is the reason why they adopt new lifestyle behaviours. They believe that since peer group pressure is to be found in most university spaces, it is difficult for them to escape it. The majority of participants attributed all the negative actions and behaviours they experienced or adopted to peer pressure. They saw this (peer pressure) as explaining poor performance at university. These behaviours and actions include excessive alcohol drinking, skipping lectures, having unprotected sex, and using drugs.

5.6.2 *Theme 2: Difficulty in embracing diversity*

One of the main challenges participants experienced relates to the plurality of cultures among their peers. Most participants admitted that joining a peer group consisting of students from different and diverse linguistic, cultural and racial backgrounds was the most serious challenge they had ever experienced. When they joined peer groups, they had to construct new interpersonal relationships based on factors not just of age but also culture, ethnicity and

language. One participant explained how she could not make a new friend in her peer group based on her different racial and linguistic background.

(FG1): When I joined the poetry group, I was first impressed by the speaking skills of one of my peers. But because she was not of my race, I started developing a negative attitude because I could not make friendship with that student because of the language barrier.

(FG3): For me personally it was quite like a problem because English wise I was not well and obviously I cannot speak my language here since there is no Setswane here it's only Xhosa and English and for me to speak with my roommate I was trying but honestly speaking I was not communicating in most cases with her, we were not talking. My roommate is from, I think she's from Worcester so she's a Coloured so for us to communicate we had to say hi bye-bye goodnight and all that because of the language barrier.

(FG1): I was very much of an extrovert and he was an introvert I don't know if I threatened him or something so he was from Eastern Cape in particular in Lusikisiki which is I think a rural area, quite deep rural so you know I, we had the same relationship, we engaged when we wanted to you know, yes he tried to but I don't know what threatened him about me but you know because we got along for the sake of getting along, he didn't have any bad blood between me and neither did I but we never were never really like you're gonna buy groceries and you buy this and that. No, we were just two people who happened to share a room together.

(FG3): the challenges is first of all get along with people, sometimes you want to get along with people but maybe they, you don't see eye to eye. In terms of house comm the challenge is being elected to belong to that group because now if you're a shy person you need to get out of your comfort zone ad become somebody you are not just to make sure you are liked by the other person that the challenge because you change who you are to build this person who you want them to see you as you are.

Other participants explained how they felt uncomfortable being in the same group with students of other ethnic groups:

(FG1): We are free to join any of the residence groups. However, I was surprised of joining a diverse group with fellow students speaking with strange accents, study group.

(FG2): It was a huge challenge for me to have a roommate who was from different ethnic group and sharing totally different backgrounds like the food, language and up-bringing values (discipline).

(FG3): Where we are coming from, the Zulu people are stubborn, most people are afraid to come out and talk about their sexuality. Most people are in a closet about being gay and stuff. When you came to Cape Town, surprised everyone is just free, especially here at the university, some of our fellow students confuse us about their gender identity. It is scary, here there are more gays and in KZN there are more lesbians. So you can see guys wearing their miniskirts, everything is ok, they are free, wow [laughter]

Participants' new motives were based on the skills the peers had like writing skills and public speaking skills, the habits shared like smoking and drinking. More specifically, they reported that they found it "weird" to stay with people of different ethnicity, age and languages from theirs. On the other hand, some participants reported that the objective of accommodating diverse participants in residences is to give them awareness of the Rainbow Nation where different cultures and their norms and values are celebrated and respected

5.6.3 *Theme 3: Financial challenges*

Another challenge revealed by the analysis of participants' focus group had to do with socio-economic status of their peers. The report revealed that participants from a poor socio-economic background found it difficult to cope up with the lifestyles of the members from affluent families. One participant who quit a peer group because he associated his peers with a relatively richer economic background and bad behaviour had this to say:

(FG2): It was not easy for me to go for social gathering because I did not have money all of the time, sometime I would act as if am busy with my school work while knowing that I don't always have cash like my peers. I am not like my peers who spend a great deal of money on alcohol and other luxuries because they can afford.

Another participant explained why he could not be comfortable with his peers because of the difference in economic status:

(FG3): The main challenge is to fit in with people that we are meeting for the first time. I could not be part of that group because I do not have money to go for movies and I expect to be treated with respect and dignity when I join a group. This is not always the case.

Some participants indicated that in some cases it was difficult to maintain the friendship with their peer group due to financial constraints. Participants indicated their background can determine the future of their peer groups. Some participants are struggle with financials that is why they decide to join the group that have the same standard with them.

5.6.4 *Theme 4: Time management*

Another challenge relates to time management. Some participants who belonged to other groups like sport and religious groups explained that it was difficult for them to fully participate in the group activities because of the amount of time they had to spend on academic activities like background research for essays and preparing for tests and examinations. The following are some reports on how some participants found it challenging to be involved in peer group activities and efficiently manage their time:

(FG1): Me the peer pressure I have experienced this year. Is when my roommate influencing each other not to go to class in the morning, missing first period. Even if she wants to, if I don't she won't go. That is how we have influenced each other....

(FG2): As a group we decided not to wake up early for first periods, missing classes and we check on each other through the social networks (WhatsApp) for confirmation, even if you are willing but because of the group you must sleep as well...

(FG3): As a house committee time management is a priority because we have to be punctual for our meeting, social event and for classes. Its really a challenge to balance time at the beginning of the office term but by the time goes by you get used, time management.

(FG1): I always attend to my class work in the very last minutes. I am [a] person who cannot say no to adventures for instance, say no to a night out. So, basically, I would cut down when my friends say let's go to the bar even [when] time doesn't allow [study time], I don't say no because they say we must go ... I don't think twice because I don't want to lose my friends. I'm afraid my results will not be good enough.

(FG1): The challenges I have experience, it's when we have to participate on something at church and on the meantime, I have to study for a test. Its whereby I have to choose my priorities like my academic life comes first because that is why I come to study at the university. I have to compromise my religious life to my academic life.

Some participants also revealed that they began missing classes because of the pressure from their social and academic groups. They found it difficult to adjust to the environment that they found themselves in when they made the transition from high school to the university. It seems that they experienced peer pressure in all of the groups to which they belonged. Some of these participants perceived peer pressure as operating in most university spaces.

5.7 Conclusion

The chapter has presented the results of thematic analysis of the transcriptions of interviews with participants on their experiences of peer pressure from the various peer groups in the residences which are meant to serve various interests of the participants. The findings showed the types of groups they joined such as study, student leadership, religion, etc. The chapter also presented the reasons for joining peer groups as mentioned by participants, such as sense of belonging and for material incentives. Participants experienced peer pressure in many and various ways such as benefits and challenges. Benefits include encouragement in academic excellence and obtaining various forms of peer supports. The study revealed that there were challenges such as socio-economic status as barriers to joining some peer groups, and challenges of coping with the new environment which resulted into adopting new forms of behaviour. Another negative form of peer pressure resulted in a failure to balance time, and difficulty of embracing diversity.

The next chapter presents the discussion and conclusions that can be drawn from these findings and makes certain recommendations.

6 CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1.1 *INTRODUCTION*

In the previous chapter, the researcher presented qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis and interpretation. This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative and quantitative analyses and discusses them in relation to the research questions of the study. The discussion of the findings is supported by the literature presented in Chapter 2. The thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the qualitative results. The discussion is informed by the current literature which is relevant to the various themes. The qualitative findings largely inform this study, as the experiences of peer pressure are clearly presented and articulated. The quantitative findings are used as additional information to verify some of the research questions. It was established that the qualitative and quantitative findings show some significant similarities. Furthermore, diverse composition of the focus groups enriched the findings based on the experiences of peer pressure. This last chapter presents a summary of the findings, the conclusions drawn from the findings and then makes recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies. Finally, the chapter presents the limitations and reflections of the study.

6.1.2 *SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS*

This section is dedicated to the summary of the findings with respect to experience of peer pressure. This current section summarises the findings of qualitative and quantitative findings in response to research questions.

6.2 **Types of peer groups first-year students join**

The findings of the study showed that first-year students join various groups when they are living in residences. These findings are supported by Adewuyi (2011) who stated that there are various groups such as friendship groups, cliques, cohorts and crowds who are meant to serve different interests of peer groups. According to Kuh (2008) undergraduate peer groups may be described as formal or informal groups by means of personal identity; affiliation and sense of belonging and are formed over a period of time. It is suggested that groups should be formed randomly or by students themselves according to the criteria of their choice, and are usually

small, up to four members, and composed of students with different levels of knowledge (Slavin,2012). These groups are meant to cater for the various interests of first-year students and to enhance the chances of academic success. The study revealed that the size of these peer groups varied according to the demand and purpose they serve in student life.

It was found that in the qualitative findings from the focus groups, first-year students join different groups to serve their interests. Focus groups consisted of females and males and mixed gender groups. The participants belonged to various groups such as sports (soccer, netball, rugby, etc), academic (study groups), student political groups (house committees), religious groups and co-curriculum as well as cultural and recreation (poetry). While the findings of the quantitative study displayed some similar results. It is evident that according to faculty study groups, EMS (Economic and Management Sciences) here takes the lead with most respondents (72, 37.89%) followed by Sciences (30, 15.79%). The findings showed that in the sports and recreation soccer (45, 23.68%) was most favoured, followed by netball (35, 23.68%) while tennis was next (16, 8.42%). The findings of the study also showed that the largest student political group joined was SASCO (South African Student Congress) (104,54.74%), followed by EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters) (36, 18.95%) and PASMA (Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania) (16 ,8.42%). In the cultural and recreation category, dance (22, 11.42%) was most popular (15, 26.29%) followed by the debating group (13, 16.25%). Lastly, with regard to religious groups, the largest was SCO (25, 47.68%), the Catholic Church (9, 17.29%.) and the Anglican Church (7, 14.65%).

The findings are relevant to the theories that inform the study, namely student learning theory, student involvement theory and transition theory. Student learning theory talks about imitation and modelling. According to Bandura (1977) most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling and observing others; one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed and on a later occasion this coded information serves as a guide to action. This notion is supported by Shaffer (2005) who stated that people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling. This theory explains human behaviour in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognition, behavioural and environmental influences. Student involvement theory encourages the physical involvement of students in campus activities. Findings of the study and the transition theory provide evidence that transition to university can be critical to first-year student in their first time of enrolment.

Interaction in peer groups helps individual members to understand the particular behaviour of the group as a whole better and to become more involved.

The study showed that first-year student generally joined common types of groups when they are living in residences. This is in line with the findings of Svenson, Stattin and Kerr (2011) and Foster (2006), whose study aimed at exploring the patterns of peer formation. The finding of this study showed that first-year students join these various groups for different purposes as the percentages from the findings vary from group to group. It is therefore, necessary that the residences show support to those peer groups. Findings of the study are more in line with student involvement and student learning theories because the majority of participants claimed that they are involved in various groups which served their different interests. This shows therefore that they belong to those groups where they imitate the behaviour patterns of the group members.

6.2.1 *The reasons given by first-year students for joining peer groups*

First-year students gave various reasons for joining peer groups. The reasons are discussed below.

6.2.1.1 *Sense of belonging*

The finding that participants mentioned to join the group was the desire for sense of belonging at the university. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) and Tinto (1993), social integration offered by groups helps individual members to understand each other better and their role as first-year students. Furthermore, Louw and Louw (2007) found that peer group interaction promotes interpersonal skills, which play a vital role in adolescent psycho-social development. It is clear that first-years have an opportunity to integrate in different ways when they join the peer groups.

The social interactions in residences assist the students through participation and involvement in co-curricular activities to gain a sense of belonging. These findings are consistent with the findings of Sedgwick and Yonge (2008) who argue that sense of belonging can be understood as a fundamental human need for individuals to belong to, and to be respected and valued members of a group or community of people. In addition, Kulaksizoglu (2001) as well as Olley

and Rotimi (2003) whose work focused on young adults, found that members of the peer groups had a strong desire to be accepted, appreciated and approved by other members of that group. This is in line with Maslow's (2005) hierarchy of needs which stated that seeking acceptance from others is among the most important needs for survival and happiness. Berndt (1990) points out that being a member of a peer group or gaining more friends is an important social achievement and it is an indicator of social competence. Tierney, Corwin and Colyar (2005) confirms that identify within and seeking acceptance from a peer group often go hand in hand with affiliation and acceptance. Belonging to peer groups seems to have played a vital role in helping first-year students adjust to the new demands they faced in the new environment.

The study indicated that first-year students join different social peer groups for different social interactions. Participants used their social networks, and enlarged group of friends and acquaintances as a way of establishing themselves on campus. This is consistent with the view of Boujlaleb (2006) who reported that peers have more powerful influence on young people than their families do. Participants said that they had joined social groups for social entertainment and to participate more fully in campus activities. This is closely linked to the need for a sense of belonging discussed above. Botto (2006) found teenagers join a peer group because they need to satisfy their social needs and to fit in as they do not want to be seen as "losers". As Wageman (2001) argues, most groups generate a state of interdependence, for members' outcomes, actions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences are determined in part by other members of the group. These groups reflect the social lifestyle of the first-year students in the residence community.

The findings of the study indicate that in these social gatherings, participants talk about their personal backgrounds, share ideas and interests and find out about the different faculties. Student involvement theory unpacks the fact that students should be more involved with campus life activities in order for them to adapt easily to the environment and become more personally developed. The above views are supported by the quantitative findings showing that sense of belonging was highly favoured through the responses of the suggested statements on sense of belonging. On that note, response 91 scored (47.9%,) for instance "I feel motivated when listening to friends" followed by the response 65, which scored (34.2 %), for instance "I join the group because we share the same life style." According to the findings we can conclude that social integration gives first-year students a sense of belonging on campus.

6.2.1.2 *Role of religious beliefs*

The study also established that participants benefited spiritually from belonging to various religious groups. This finding is supported by Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) who confirmed that eighty percent of university students are interested in spirituality. Some participants found their faith through being introduced to the religious beliefs of their peers. This finding on religious beliefs is supported by Mooney (2005) who contends that many studies have shown that religious students do better on critical indicators of academic success. These findings are in line with the student involvement theory where involvement is recommended as a primary objective. In addition, the findings from quantitative revealed that religious beliefs were observed as another reason for joining peer groups. Quantitative findings supporting this notion of religious beliefs: of the 184 participants to the religious beliefs category, 44.2% responded “I feel spiritual empowerment after prayer” followed by the response 56, which scored (29.5%) answered “I attend evening prayer services to grow my faith”. This confirms that religious beliefs play a crucial role in joining peer groups.

6.2.1.3 *The importance of co-curricular involvement*

According to Shulruf (2010, p.594) co-curricular activities relate to activities that are “external to the core curriculum”. Another finding of this study is that some participants joined peer groups to participate in co-curricular activities as a means of social integration. First-year students like to join the co-curricular activities groups during the orientation period and throughout the year. These findings are in line with Kuh (2013) who stated that co-curricular programme are widely recognized and promoted as an integral part of the student life experience. The findings suggest that co-curricular activities have an effect on joining peer groups. These findings are in line with student involvement theory that holds that students should be more involved with campus life activities in order for them to adapt easily to the environment and become more personally developed. Some participants claimed that they were strongly involved in residence co-curricular activities. Some noted with regard to the entertainment group that some first-year students stand the chance to enter national university competitions through these peer groups in order to develop their talents and be recognized in and out of the university community for their talents (student leaders, sports stars). These findings are supported by the White Paper on Sport and Recreation for the Republic of South

Africa (2012) which notes that there should be time for daily physical exercise to become fit at the university.

During the orientation week on residences, these various co-curricular activities are introduced to the residence community so that all those who are interested can join freely and be accommodated. This is an indication that these various co-curricular activities are recognised and accommodated in the first-year period. In order for the new young adults to adjust to the new university environment, they have a one-week orientation programme which is meant to give them an awareness of the university setting and the tools they need to succeed at the university. The central message is that to achieve academic success, first-year students must be able to function independently in this new environment. Malina et al. (2004) found that co-curricular activities can encourage personal growth and make social interaction easier. During this time, the groups on offer are promoted to the first-year students by different stakeholders who use posters and flyers to communicate the objectives of each of the groups. These co-curricular activities are meant to motivate and support students so that they can adjust easily to the new environment and operate successfully during the academic year. This is done every year and it is regarded as part of the residence culture of the university, as outlined in chapter 2. The quantitative findings show that the participants mainly joined co-curricular groups for these reasons. The quantitative findings showed similar agreement from the suggested statements on co-curricular activities. 112 (58.9 % of the total respondents) responded to the co-curricular activities section as follows: “I feel good to when I get positive feedback”, followed by 65 (34.2%) who agreed with the statement, “I join the group so that I can be recognized by my peers”. This means that first-year students joined the same co-curricular activities to adjust easily to residence life.

6.2.1.4 *Role of student leadership*

Some participants indicated that beside the co-curricular activities, they joined leadership groups such as the house committees and student organizations to boost their self-esteem. Nevertheless, there were participants who were genuinely interested in leadership development and were personally ambitious. Their interactions with other leadership group members helped them to make new friends and build their confidence in public speaking. The findings also indicated that participants were interested in serving on the house committee so they could host meetings and assist their fellow students in residence during the transition period. They were

also part of the team to attend management meetings in debating residence policy planning. These findings are in line with student involvement theory which states that students learn better when they are involved. Yukl (2006:p.8) found that leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. This finding supports Astin's (1993) observation that student participation in campus sports activities, whether in terms of competition or leisure, is positively associated with self-esteem and leadership development, academic fulfilment, and physical and emotional health. However, participants indicated that they joined these leadership group most of the time because of the incentives. This finding is supported by the finding of Berndt et. al. (1995), who argue that incentive, engagement and accomplishment have been found to be significant variables for peer group selection. It seems that participants in this study benefited equally from being in peer groups, regardless of whether they were introverts or extraverts.

Lizzio and Wilson (2009) stated that student representation on committees is widely viewed as a key mechanism for involving students in educational improvement. In addition, Louw and Louw (2007) found that the youth develop self-esteem when they feel that they receive acceptance, support and encouragement from others. This leadership platform helped them to become public speakers and gain skills of project management and other developmental skills. It seems that students' involvement in co-curricular activities such as leadership in student organizations or in campus residence halls has a positive correlation with leadership skills. Opportunities for students with leadership potential to develop, refine, and practise their skills enable students to experience their power to effect change by exercising leadership in their environment through formal and informal interventions intended to create future societal leaders. The quantitative findings are in support of student leadership by showing agreement on the suggested statements. It was found in this study that 116 (61.1%) of the participants in the student leadership category responded "I like to assist the others when they are in need of help," followed by 99 (52.1%) who agreed "I like to share my experiences in my leadership team". As the respondent opinions show, it can be concluded that first-year students like to work as a team. This is in line with the finding of Kuh and Pike (2005) that students benefit from participating in student leadership programmes. These findings are also supported by Schlossberg's (1995) transition theory, which states that students' support structures play a vital role in their ability to adjust.

6.2.2 *Benefits of joining peer groups*

6.2.2.1 *Chances of increasing success through peer pressure*

First-year students mentioned various benefits of joining peer groups. The benefits are discussed below.

6.2.2.1.1 *Academic success*

The study also reveals that in the residences the participants join groups to improve academic performance. This finding is also consistent with the studies done by York, Gibson, & Rankin (2015) & Wentzel and Asher (1995) that suggest that students who feel accepted by their peers are better able to meet academic challenges. The groups also provide opportunities for revising and preparing for tests. These findings are supported by social learning theory and student involvement theory. Social learning that talks about modelling and imitation are vital features within the peer groups, either positive or negative. Student involvement encourages physical involvement in order for the students to learn better and understand their tasks. This study found that some participants imitated the academic achievement of their peers. This notion is supported by Pomerantz, Grolnick and Price (2005), who found that being a member of a peer group can have a positive influence on academic grades. It must be acknowledged, however, that students who are resident on campus have more access to university resources such as the library and computer laboratories so their academic success cannot be ascribed to the peer groups alone. The participants from who are studying unpopular courses reported that they found difficulties in getting mentorship and study mates. These findings are in line with Louw and Louw (2007) who found that the students who do not belong to study peer groups have difficulty in meeting academic demands, while those belonging to study peer groups perform well. Participants interact with various peers from different backgrounds where they share different views. Also, the platform gives participants a chance to ask questions of clarity and allows them to interact with their peers. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) supported these findings in stating that peer interactions improve students' academic performance and enhance leadership skills during the first-year. The study done by Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) also supports these findings. The quantitative findings revealed that academic support does assist the first-year student learning. The findings showed that 126 (66.3%) of the participants in the academic support category responded, "Feedback on my academic work has assisted me in my

learning abilities;” followed by 96 (50.5%) who replied “I have received good support services from student leaders”. This shows that first-year students benefit when they work with others to improve their academic work. This finding is supported by Lockwood and Kunda (2002), who note that individuals who have achieved outstanding success can be expected to influence others to pursue similar excellence.

6.2.2.1.2 *Positive influences of peer pressure*

This study found that the participants learned positive aspects from their peer group through the influences of peer pressure. The study also found that participants had become interested in participating in various events so that they could be recognized by others through their skills. These findings are supported by Elliot and McGregor (2001) who assert that peer pressure can be advantageous when it encourages positive attitudes, healthy values, respect and hard work. However, the same participants mentioned that they joined these groups because of the incentives that were offered. The finding on incentive is similar to that of Berndt et al. (1995) who observed that incentive, engagement and accomplishment were significant variables in peer group selection. The findings of the quantitative section are in support of this notion by showing agreement of with suggested statements on the positive influence of peer pressure. It was shown that 118 (62.1%) participants in the positive influences of peer pressure category were answered “I like to generate ideas and share them with my group,” followed by 83 (43.7%), who responded “I play a role of a chairperson to help others improve their skills. It can be concluded that respondent is sometimes ambitious when they join various peer groups.

6.2.3 *Challenges of joining peer groups*

First-year students gave various challenges related to joining peer groups, which are discussed below.

The study found clear evidence of not only positive but also the negative aspects of peer group pressure. The findings indicate that participants adopt new behaviours such as abusing drugs (smoking cannabis), alcohol and getting involved in sexual activities. These findings are in line with student learning theory and student involvement theory. These two theories unpack the notions of imitation and involvement either positive or negative. This finding is supported by Ryan (2016), Hale (2010) and Ogden (1997) who argue that peer pressure may sometimes push

youths to adopt undesirable habits such as smoking and drug abuse, as well as antisocial behaviour. These findings address the negative aspect of experiences of peer pressure among first-year student such as socio-economic status, failure of time management, and the difficulty of embracing diversity.

6.2.3.1 *Socio-economic status*

The study showed that some participants find that socio-economic status was a barrier for some of them in joining groups. These findings are supported by Sledge (2012) who claims that an essential aspect of the decision to go to a higher education institution is whether a student is able to afford it or not. In addition, Louw and Louw (2007, p.26) reported that “socio-economic status may be a powerful factor in educational achievement, not in and of itself, but through its influence on the family atmosphere, the choice of neighbourhood and the quality of the school”. Transition theory was relevant to the findings of this study as it explains how people adapt to transition, that is, how they adjust to the new environment of the university. However, the issue of financial constraint is supported by Bojuwoye (2002) who came to a similar conclusion, for instance that first-year students face financial difficulties or a lack of adequate financial support, which contribute to the stress of their situation. Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) found that students in the low socio-economic bracket have a difficult time making friends with students in a higher socio-economic bracket. It should not be forgotten that their socio-economic status has shaped the opportunities that were open to them during their school years. Students in the high socio-economic bracket continue to enjoy advantages when they come to university. Some of the participants indicated that first-year students from privileged backgrounds stand a better chance of having resources than their counterparts. Furthermore, Stanton-Salazar (2004), argues that peer networks have the potential to serve as either mediating or moderating influences. The quantitative findings from the suggested statements showed that socio-economic status is a challenge: 79 (41.6%) in socio-economic status responded as follows: “I do not always have money to pay for my social events,” followed by 28 (14.7%) who replied that “part-time job affects my academic performance”. This means that socio-economic status is a challenge to first-year’s student in various ways. This finding is supported by Ellis and Zarbatany (2007), who reported that Social Economic Status (SES) seems to be the most influential factor in peer groups; high status members of a group always have the power to influence and control the members of their groups.

6.2.3.2 *Time management*

Besides socio-economic status, most participants acknowledged that time management was a huge challenge to them since they were used to having their parents' guidance. These findings are relevant to transition theory as it explains how people adapt to transition, and how they adjust to the new environment and university. Peer group influence can also encourage the acquisition of discipline-specific and generic competencies (Meng and Heijke, 2005). It seems that peer group pressure can also result in students' adopting a culture of not attending classes. This chimes in with a study conducted by Person (1990), who argues that student culture reveals important information on peer group formation and power and the influence of the group on values and behaviour, as well as the need to understand the dynamics of student culture in the college environment. Johnson et al. (1987) found that planned group work projects encourage student achievement more than individual assignments. This finding is corroborated by Mutch and Tubbs (1998), who indicate that group work is better at developing students' soft skills such as the ability to negotiate, to reach a compromise, to communicate and also to process information during the course. Most young adults want to keep pace with the group. They will do anything to gain and retain the acceptance of their peers, according to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), and imitate each other's behaviour. Quantitative findings showed strong agreement with the suggested statements based on time management: 57 (30.0%) in the time management category responded as follows: "I missed some of the formal organized sessions in my study group," followed by 27 (14.2%) who replied, "I am unable to prioritize between academics and co-curriculum activities." From the findings it can be concluded that first-year students have a serious issue when it comes to time management. These findings are in line with the findings of Macan et al. (1990) and Yorke and Longden (2007) that the ability to manage time is a crucial factor in successful transition from high school to university.

6.2.3.3 *Difficulty of embracing diversity*

The study also found that some participants were not very keen to learn about diversity from the members of their peer groups. Participants mentioned the issue of diversity which involves language policy. Some of the participants mentioned that the language of instruction at the

university was a huge problem for first-year students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds who were not fluent in English. This implication of multilingualism is reflected in the South African Constitution of 1996, Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 and Language Policy for Higher Education Institutions (LPHE) of 2002. The study revealed that participants had gone the extra mile to seek help in order to master English more proficiently and to improve their academic work. The issue of promoting multilingualism in higher education began to be negotiated from 1994 onwards, when the democratic government of South Africa requested that indigenous African languages be introduced to university institutions. The aim of multilingualism is a policy that allows a situation in which learners and students would be entitled to be educated in the language of their choice, for example their mother tongue. It is therefore imperative to critically address the implications of the language policy. The quantitative findings are in line with the proposed suggested statements based on difficulty of embracing diversity. The findings showed that 75 (39.5%) responded to the difficulty of embracing diversity category as follows: "I just realized my choice of the institution expected me to work with the others," followed by 45 (23.1%) who replied "I am unable to work independently without my peers". This means that first-year students were not exposed to diverse community.

6.2.3.4 *Negative influence of peer pressure*

Participants reported that they could not withstand peer pressure. The study also found that participants had become interested in dating and using substances such as drugs and alcohol as a result of peer pressure. Santor et al. (2000) as well as Gest, Graham-Bermann and Hartup (2000) found that peer pressure was associated with risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse and sexual activities that negatively affected academic performance. This study found that some participants imitated their peers based on the various experiences of peer pressure. This finding suggests that first-year students struggle to balance their lifestyles as young independent learners which lead them to adopt peer behaviour. But just as they are able to gain acceptance into a peer group, they can be excluded from peer activities and have no friends to encourage them. Aziz, Akhitar and Hassan (2011) found that peer pressure varies as some can be more influential on behaviour and attitudes. In some cases, groups shape participants' way of thinking (Aziz et al., 2011). These findings are supported by social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) which confirms that modelling and imitation are vital features within the peer groups. In addition, the finding is supported by Yunus, Mushtaq and Qaiser (2010), who found

that peer pressure has a positive influence on those who experience a high degree of peer pressure if they are better able to adapt. In the twenty first century, university students are more interested in participating in the hook-up culture than on forming serious romantic relationships (Bogle, 2008). 'Hooking-up' is a term to describe a social system in which young adults seek to engage in a casual sexual encounter with a partner and have no expectations of future commitment.

During the previous century, relationships were taken more seriously and had long term implications such as marriage. Men were supposed to be financially stable before getting married and they avoided producing children out of wedlock (Bogle, 2008). The findings revealed that many of the participant's date just for fun. Men date women just to have sex while women are more interested in money and expensive gifts. On-campus relationships are based on socio-economic status and peer approval. As the study participants indicated during the focus group interview, some first-year students date more than one partner as a result of peer pressure and because they are away from the supervision of their parents. In doing so, these participants put themselves at risk by having sex without condoms or sleeping with various partners without knowing their HIV/AIDS status. This finding is consistent with the finding of Boujlaleb (2006) who reported that peers have more powerful influence on young people as compared to their families. Indeed, behaviour changes in response to peer pressure can lead to changes in dress codes, hairstyles, relationships (new friends or associates), time and financial management, interests and lifestyle choices. This finding is supported by the literature. The findings of the quantitative study showed strong disagreement with the suggested statements: 124 (65.3%) on the negative influence of peer pressure category responded "I often do not submit my assignments on time in solidarity with my friends," followed by 111 (58.4%) who answered "I started to drink alcohol when I join the residences with my peers". We can conclude that peer pressure is a huge factor in peer groups. These findings are supported by the findings of Aziz, Akhitar and Hassan (2011) that peer pressure varies as some can be more influential on behaviour and attitudes and in some cases, groups shape participants' way of thinking.

6.3 Limitations of the study

Since this study was only carried out at the University of the Western Cape, it was limited to first-year students of UWC only. Future research could be extended to other surrounding institutions and this will include a larger sample of university first-year students. This would

also be helpful to involve other regional residence management policies in appraising the issue of peer pressure. A number of factors may have constituted limitations to the outcomes of this study and some of these are briefly discussed. The responses were very slow because I had to send a reminder to the participant's several time but the target was not reached at the expected time. Another challenge of the survey is that it was time-consuming; the targeted time sometime passed and the research had to be extended after due date. The questionnaire was sent out for data collection, and participants were approached in the second semester. Some of the participants however did not complete the survey at all because of time constraints. The researcher initiated the process of data collection and the participants were given enough time to complete the online questionnaire: they were expected to read all the given questions without any undue pressure

The researcher experienced some challenges in collecting the data for both quantitative and qualitative research. Some participants were reluctant to give certain information when answering the questionnaire, and even during the focus group interviews, where some participants were too shy to talk about their experiences of peer pressure in the presence of their peers. This could have affected the amount of detail I was able to gather on the phenomenon I was investigating.

Despite the above study limitations, the findings are trustworthy. At the very least, the first-year students provide useful baseline information for future research and policy decisions for residences. The study certainly indicates possible ways in which peer groups could benefit first-year students and suggests ways of how to manage peer pressure behaviour especially for first-year students of the University of the Western Cape who are living in residences. The study also has made recommendation for better policy practices in the residences.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

There have been limited studies conducted on the phenomenon of peer group and peer pressure on the experiences of first-year students in residence settings of a South African university. The majority of research on the first-year experiences is always based on a single programme of study. This study recommends that a great deal of information and critical skills are needed to ensure that appropriate decisions are made for effective management of student behaviours by the Student Affairs Office. First-year students need various meaningful programme such as

orientation programme is based on transition and first-year experiences programme that would teach them about the experiences in the universities in order to develop behaviours, attitudes and values and to experience a sense of self-esteem and completion. They should be designed in such a way that their adoption will translate into understanding the types of peer pressure first-year students are confronted with, as well as identifying the best practices of addressing it. Further recommendations are highlighted below.

6.4.1 *Development of best orientation programme for university first-year students*

The orientation and enrolment requirement is to ensure that all students received the same information that will equip them to be successful during the academic year. The objective of most orientation courses is to assist in students' adjustments to life on the university campus and in most institutions was found to be more about academic than social issues (Shupp, 2014). These kinds of programme involvement can increase student retention and graduation rates and promote student success on university residences.

- This programme should be made compulsory for all first-year students to attend and should strongly encourage students in the transition phase, as this will benefit them both socially and academically.
- In response to the findings of this study, the residence policy should be written in all of the eleven official languages, so that those who want to access higher education will not be confused and limited to one language.
- Academics such as doctors and professors should be employed as part of the strategic plan regarding first-year residences as this would enhance student success and encourage more extramural activities. These academics should play a role by presenting the challenges first-year students face during their transition from high school to university.
- In fighting differences among student community, the residence management should develop policies that combat racial discrimination, as well as maintain cultural differences and embrace diversity by encouraging participation in extramural activities. The university should accommodate all different religions so as to avoid discrimination. Besides, the residence management should give a platform to students with different cultures in order to express their backgrounds and cultural practices. This keeping of

cultural roots should be done through dialogue where students introduce themselves to their cultural upbringing practices.

- Furthermore, the university residences should invite the relevant departments that teach the importance of cultural backgrounds on campus to organise workshops on this. This is relevant to the scope of this study and the university should accommodate students from disadvantaged backgrounds such as the majority black students. This needs to be done by the university management to attract more diverse students by providing resources to maintain the standard of first-years. The residence standards should try to meet the standards of the minority groups and run more workshops in implementing diversity on campus.
- There should be more groups introduced to first-year students so that they can have a variety of choice when they need to join co-curricular activities. After working hours, the departments that are responsible for running student life must introduce and implement more student activities by getting suggestions from the first-year students.
- Activities targeted at first-year students and organised by departments should address the issues of transition, discipline, influences of behaviour, time management, set academic goals and expectation of the new environment. The groups' activities should be run throughout the academic year so that students do not feel isolated from their peers.

6.4.2 *Transition programme*

This kind of programme can afford the first-year students a chance to build relationships among their fellow students and create a sense of belonging. The facilitators of the programme could also encourage first-year students to build relationships with staff and faculty by considering the consultation times of their lectures. Traditionally it has been the domain of Student Affairs to assist new students in making the social and academic transitions to university, but that focus frequently has delayed them in integrating these programme into the mainstream of campus life (Fincher, 1985). In interpretation of this argument, the following recommendations originating from the findings of this study are made:

- It would be important to list the existing peer groups that are meant to serve student interests in the policy of the residences based on their advantages.
- Create programme that will make the first-year students understand why they are at the university

- Create programme that will teach them about residence life especially those who will be staying on residences for the first time, particularly topics such as language and food.
- Inform students about challenges of living on their own for the first-time where they need to learn to be self-sufficient because they will be surrounded by a large number of diverse peer groups.
- This can increase students' interactions and influence their success as they transition from high school to university.

6.4.3 *Academic support programme*

According to the first-year students, academic support on residences is voluntary but if it made compulsory it can enhance their academic achievement. The success rate of the first-year students may increase and this can enhance student retention. This programme on residences is usually known as the mentoring programme, which is created to support and motivate the skills of disadvantaged students to cover various objectives such as the following:

- Build individual confidence;
- Show more interest in their studies;
- Identify students who are at risk earlier;
- Encourage the first-year students to develop personal objectives and shape new identities;
- Teach first-year students time management;
- Encourage social interaction for informal opportunities from class conversations.

6.4.4 *Living and learning communities*

Living-learning communities in higher education play a critical role in the success of students. These communities are created for first-year students who are studying the same course so that they can be closer to each other. Expanding the living and learning communities will provide the following advantages:

- First-year students who live and learn together will be able to adapt easily;
- Living-Learning programmes will make the social and academic transition to residences life easier for first-year students;

- These programme will introduce first-year students to the university, and enrich the academic experience with learning that occurs outside the classroom on campus, and in the community;
- It will provide a supportive community and foster friendships that can last a lifetime;
- Programme are designed to create a sense of community that allows for greater faculty and peer interaction, and increased opportunities for co-ordinated activities.

6.4.5 *Best practices on extramural activities*

Since the policy serves as a motivation for learners who take part in extramural activities in their high schools, it is recommended that extramural activities should continue as a practice on residences throughout the year and should be compulsory for all first-year students.

- a) Since these activities are part of student life, first-year students should be compelled to join extramural groups, and not give them the option to join as it appears now.
- b) The residence policy should not focus only on the placement of the students but they should also focus on the actual residence practices; including student societies, extramural activities, role of student leaders and any existing programme such as sports and recreation.
- c) Furthermore, the office of sports administration should give training to the first-year students in implementing more sports codes. This may be interpreted as constituting a strong positive impact on academic success.
- d) The sport administration should motivate students to join all extramural activities on campus for their health and fitness purposes. It is also important that the department of sport science give trainings to residence administrators so that they can recruit first-year students to play all sports codes.
- e) Furthermore, the residence should supply first-year students with consistent evening programmes in order to provide options for interactions that can help assist students with managing loneliness and lessen self-destructive behaviours such as playing of cards and pool table competitions after university operation hours.
- f) The management of residences should plan events and programme which are compulsory for all first-year students so that they can learn from each other. There should be cooperation between structures who run student life on residences and the

student leaders. The residences should connect the first-years with the faculty staff so they can be motivated and have role models within the institution.

- g) There should also be continuous communication among the stakeholders who are responsible for running student life after the orientation programme so that first-year students can internalize programme and support systems that can assist them in their academic year.
- h) The institution should establish a platform for living and learning spaces in preparation for first-year students' success in all aspects of life. The residence management with the student governance should give support systems to the student community and equip them with skills so that they could become lifelong leaders and responsible future leadership citizens. They should create more dialogue for first-year students on how to debate with the other surrounding residences on the current issues that affect them.
- i) They must benchmark their programme with other institutions in order to uplift their students' learning environment. However, the duties of residence directors must be linked to the students' academic performance. There should be proper evaluation of residence staff's performance on student projects, preferably by first-year students.
- j)

6.4.6 *In addition to the existing first-year experience programme at UWC (recommendation of University 101)*

The university should implement the University 101 course and make it compulsory for all first-year students. As stated in the literature, first-year students who took the course are better informed about the university environment and they participate better in extramural activities than their counterparts (University of South Carolina, 2015). This recommendation is supported by Yaun (2010) who investigated the First-year Residential Experiences (FYRE) at the university of Miami, which is a housing strategy for student learning and success. This argument finds support in the findings of the present study that have indicated that there must be institutional support at all levels for this type of programme to be successful, purposive and effective.

- The programme should be compulsory or be a required course to all first-year students who are registered at the University of the Western Cape.

- The programme should be facilitated by the office of Student Affairs as the focus is on the first-year students' needs and should support a holistic approach to first-year student development
- The programme should introduce all the policies that are meant to serve first-year student interests.
- The practitioners who will be running the programme should be trained or discipline specialists.
- The programme should address the crucial areas that will assist the first-year students with better transitions such as diversity, well-being, self-esteem, academic excellence and dealing with peer pressure.
- The first-year programme can be run throughout the academic year in residences by implementing different topics such as time management, note taking, study skills and peer pressure.
- The programme should address all the stages that a first-year student goes through like the academic stress that can cause depression.
- The programme should assist first-year students with a smooth transition from high school to university.
- The programme should ensure that first-year students become active so that they can be responsible members of the university community and society.
- The course should be one to two hours per week for all first-year students.
- First-year students should be required to pass the course as they are required to pass their academic courses.
- There should be enough therapists around the campus to help the students to cope with psychological issues.

6.5 Potential contribution of the study

First-year experiences have been researched predominantly from an academic perspective and with regard to student behaviour (use of alcohol and drugs). This research contributes by extending the research to explore first-year experiences from a student residence perspective. Exploring their first-year in residences using mixed methods has resulted in rich and interesting findings.

The findings of the study confirm the relevance of the theories used in the study. Student

learning theory by Bandura (1997) stated human behaviour is learned through modelling and observing others. The findings of this study confirm that in academic success the participants join the study groups to achieve good academic grades. Another finding that is addressing the theory from the findings is time management, where participants were modelling their peers by missing classes. Lastly but not least, the aspect of negative behaviour where participants confirmed that they were taking drugs and drinking alcohol just to imitate their peers and seeking a sense of belonging. The second theory that talks to findings of the study is student involvement theory by Astin (1975) which stated that students learned better when they are involved on campus activities. The findings from the study showed agreement with theory because participants joined leadership and religious groups for them to be involved in co-curricular activities on campus. Bandura (1977) and Astin (1975) do cover some of the findings of the current study.

These findings outline implications for policy and practice. This study has the potential to ignite inquiry and discussion within the university management and administrative policy spaces where decisions about first-year students are deliberated. Key discussion points that have been highlighted by the study include advantages and disadvantages of peer pressure. The study can also contribute some aspects on the findings on the current already existing First Year Student Experience programme at UWC. The implementation of the first-year programme has been supported by National Resource Centre for First-year Experience (2016). The empirical research done in this study could also benefit not only first-year students programme at the selected university, but policy makers in the higher education sector especially to the Student Affairs Office. This study has potential of assisting the directors of residences in their daily operations and when they have to implement policy for the first-year residences. I feel that my work will assist the first-years with better transition programmes and reduce first-year students drop out.

6.6 Reflection of the study

The study is influence by my own experience as a first generation student who experienced transition difficulty without the support of the parents or university. After reviewing the literature and researching the success surrounding the first-year experience programme, it was appropriate to begin my Phd journey. As a first generation student who was staying at the residences academic life was not easy because there were no tutors or mentors to assist first-

year students. During my first-year there were no formal structures to support academic life in residences. As a result, peers who were doing the same course depended on each other as peers in doing our academic work and as compared to the current first-years. There were obstacles and challenges through my PhD journey when my first supervisor retired and there were delays that I encountered. While I was still in the mist, the second supervisor was assigned to me. While in the process of bonding with my second new supervisor, he relocated abroad; however, he was determined to continue with his supervision responsibilities. It was however challenging as I did not have one-on-one sessions with him but only communicated via e-mails. As time progressed, I was more devastated when I received the news that my second supervisor had passed away. I was shocked and felt helpless but told myself that I would not quit. I was even more determined to pursue my dream. Despite those draining experiences which affected my academic progress, as a resilient student I could not give up on my dream to finish my PhD. I have encouraged myself by the idiom that says, “Never give up”. This idiom has kept me going and has encouraged me to complete my PhD. I am however grateful to my current supervisors who took me through this challenging journey until completion of my study. They understood what I had been through and supported me during my PhD studies.

6.7 Suggestions for future research

It is clear that first-year students have unique needs. The residences should provide essential support to these first-year students through programme development and resource allocation. It is crucial when implementing these programme not only to consider issues around first-year student retention but also about overall persistence within the universities. This section presents the limitations and conclusions, based on the study along with suggestions for future research. Since this study was only carried out at the University of the Western Cape, it was limited to first-year students of UWC only. Future research could be extended to other surrounding institutions and this will include a larger sample of university first-year students. This would also be helpful to involve other regional residence management policies in conducting the issue of peer pressure. The following are also suggested:

- Future research should investigate the programme that are meant to address transition on residences in enhancing student success throughout the year.
- Other research could investigate the training that empowers the residence administrators and student leaders in implementing educational peer group programme

in residences. This should include among others, the investigation of the contents of the training programme organised for the residence administrators. Further studies should investigate gender in relation to peer pressure.

- Apart from gender differences in peer pressure, future studies should investigate the methods used by peer groups to attract students to join them.
- Future studies could focus on the behaviour of peer group affiliation that is formed by South African first-year students similar to student culture studies.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The study found evidence of peer pressure as influencing students and in changing their behaviour especially when students join some specific peer groups. Findings of this study provide information to university residences in order for them to make informed decisions about the allocations of First-year Experience courses. The purpose of this empirical study was to investigate the phenomenon of peer pressure among First-year students. To help address these issues many institutions have implemented a first-year experience programme which is called University 101. As suggested by Peterkin (2012), universities have an opportunity to improve student success and retention through the implementation of a First-year Experience program. This study examined qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the first-year residences using full-time first-year students. The findings of this study have the potential to assist upcoming full-time first-year students who are entering the university for the first time. The study also adds to the body of literature regarding first-year experience. The findings indicate that participants join various groups because they serve their various interests. In addition, they join the groups for various reasons such as sense of belonging and benefiting from the co-curricular activities. Moreover, the findings indicated that some participants benefitted from the groups by improving their academic success. Furthermore, the findings indicated that participants have challenges such as socio-economic status and embracing diversity when they join peer groups. The findings of this study relate to student involvement theory which stated that students learn better when they are involved in campus activities (Astin, 1985). In addition, the findings also relate to social learning theory because the participants claimed to belong to various peer groups for them to imitate the behaviours of those groups either positively or negatively.

Some students in the study showed that, first-year students can experience academic difficulty and failure while transitioning to the university environment. Academic and social integrations were found to contribute as factors that influence first-year students to join peer groups. This study finding affirms that the faculty and student interaction can have a positive impact and influence on students learning and motivation. The study also found that through academic support, participants were managing to get good marks. Sense of belonging was the most crucial part for students in joining the groups. The implication is that by creating a sense of belonging and supportive environment through orientation and residence hall programme, in which first-year students are likely to find others encountering similar challenges, they are more likely to build a support network of peers who will be able to help them with future transitions. It is clear that first-year students join various groups to fulfil their unique needs. Some first-year students in this study showed that they were underprepared when entering the university and that is why some of them were struggling to settle down. Furthermore, there are also negative elements of peer pressure that influence students to change behaviour based on drug and alcohol abuse. This change of behaviour was effected through the influences of peer pressure and they were curious to explore new things. Finally, the phenomenon of peer pressure has been found as a critical influence among the entire first-year cohort living in residences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1



OFFICE OF THE DEAN
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

25 July 2013

To Whom It May Concern

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape has approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:
Ms V Mntuyedwa (Education)

Research Project: First-year students' experiences of peer groups and peer pressure in the residence of a South African University.

Registration no: 13/5/30

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

APPENDIX 2

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY:

To:
The Director,
Residential and Catering Services,

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Vuyo Mntuyedwa, a PhD student in the Department of Educational Psychology, I am conducting a research study on 'First-year students' experiences of peer groups and peer pressure in the residences of a South African University'. The main objective of this study is to investigate the types of peer groups first-year students join, the reasons for joining peer groups and the experiences of peer pressure by first year students just transiting into the university. Major reason for the study is to understand difficulties first-year university students experience as they transition into the university.

The study will involve first-year students living in the university residences to complete questionnaire forms and participate in focus group interviews. The study will be conducted in an ethical manner and ethical clearance will first be sought from the University, Research Ethics Committee. Participating in the research will be voluntary and all information provided for the study will be kept strictly confidential. Participation will also be anonymous and students will not be identified by the information they provide. Participants will be free to withdraw from participation at any time without explaining the reasons for their withdrawal to the researcher. No participant will be forced to answer any question he or she does not wish to answer.

By this letter, therefore, I will like to request your permission to involve the first-year students in the residences under your supervision in the conduct of this research study. I have attached the proposal of my study to this letter and in case you need further information you can contact me at: vuyo.mtuyedwa@gmail.com, (or 0736434836) My supervisor, Prof. M.Moletsane, can also be contacted at: mmoletsane@uwc.ac.za (or 021 959 2429)

Thank you.

Yours truly

Ms .Vuyo Mntuyedwa



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Appendix 3

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participants

My name is Vuyokazi Mntuyedwa. I am a PhD student at the Department of Educational Psychology, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

I am conducting a research on “First-year students’ experiences of peer groups and peer pressure in the residences of a South African University”. The study will investigate the types of peer groups first-year students join, the reasons for joining peer groups and the experiences of peer pressure by first-year students just transiting into the university. A major reason for the study is to understand difficulties first-year university students experience as they transition into the university.

The participants in the study will be first-year students living in the university residences. Participants will be involved in completing a survey questionnaire. Participation will be voluntary and participants will be free to withdraw from participation at any time or any stage of the study without having to explain the reasons for their withdrawal to the researcher. No participant will be forced to answer any question he or she does not wish to answer. All information provided for the study will be kept strictly confidential. Participation will also be anonymous and students will not be identified by the information they provide. The focus group interviews will be audio-tape recorded and participants will be asked to sign consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study.

If you have any query about the study or your participation please contact me at: vuyo.mntuyedwa@gmail.com or 0736434836; or my Supervisor, Professor M. Moletsane, at: mmoletsane@uwc.ac.za (or 021 959 2429)

Thank you.

Yours truly

Ms .Vuyo Mntuyedwa

A place of quality, a place to grow, from hope to action through knowledge



UNIVERSITY of the
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Appendix 4

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS (FOCUS GROUP)

Dear Participants

My name is Vuyokazi Mntuyedwa. I am a PhD student at the Department of Educational Psychology, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

I am conducting a research on “First-year students’ experiences of peer groups and peer pressure in the residences of a South African University”. The study will investigate the types of peer groups first-year students join, the reasons for joining peer groups and the experiences of peer pressure by first-year students just transiting into the university. A major reason for the study is to understand difficulties first-year university students experience as they transition into the university.

The participants in the study will be first-year students living in the university residences. Participants will be involved in focus group interviews. Participation will be voluntary and participants will be free to withdraw from participation at any time or any stage of the study without having to explain the reasons for their withdrawal to the researcher. No participant will be forced to answer any question he or she does not wish to answer. All information provided for the study will be kept strictly confidential. Participation will also be anonymous and students will not be identified by the information they provide. The focus group interviews will be audio-tape recorded and participants will be asked to sign consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study.

If you have any query about the study or your participation please contact me at: vuyo.mntuyedwa@gmail.com or 0736434836; or my Supervisor, Professor M. Moletsane, at: mmoletsane@uwc.ac.za (or 021 959 2429)

Thank you.

Yours truly

Ms .Vuyo Mntuyedwa

Appendix 5

Focus groups protocols Questions

1. What is your understanding about peer pressure?
2. Tell me more about your experiences of peer pressure?
3. Why did you join the peer groups?
4. What motivates first year students to join peer groups?
5. How many peer groups do you belong to?
6. What is the specific reason why you joined your peer group?
7. How did you benefit from the peer groups interactions?
8. Explain to me the benefits for belonging to academic groups?
9. What have you benefited for joining the peer group?
10. How does this peer groups benefit you in terms of beliefs, values, behaviours, lifestyle choices?
11. What were your challenges for joining the peer groups?
12. Explain how does those challenge affected you as a first-year students?

Appendix 6

Questionnaire for First Year Students Experiences 2018

Part A: Demographic information

Read and answer all the below statements. Please tick on the appropriate box (s) to each SUGGESTED TERM

Ethnicity

Black		Colored		Indian		White	
-------	--	---------	--	--------	--	-------	--

Gender

Female		Male	
--------	--	------	--

Age

17-21	22 above
-------	----------

Nationality

South african		Non- South african	
---------------	--	--------------------	--

Home languages

isiZulu		isiXhosa		Afrikaans		English		Sesotho sa Leboa	
Setswana		Sesotho		Xitsonga		siSwati		Tshivenda	
isiNdebele		Other, specify							

Faculties

Arts	Community and Health Sciences	Dentistry	Economic and Management Sciences	Education	Law	Natural Science
------	-------------------------------	-----------	----------------------------------	-----------	-----	-----------------

Financial support

NSFAS	Departmental bursary	Government	Self-support	Other, specify
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Socio-economic background

R1500-R5000	R7000-R10 000	R15 000-R25 000
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B. TYPES OF PEER GROUP'S FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS JOIN

Instruction

Read the items and pick the appropriate answer in the box(s) below. Which group(s) do you belong to? (Choose all that apply to you by ticking a box)

1. Faculty Study group

Arts	EMC	Law	Sciences	Education	Dentistry	Health Science
------	-----	-----	----------	-----------	-----------	----------------

2. Sports and recreation group

Soccer	Netball	Rugby	Cricket	Tennis	Hockey	Basketball	Chess	Other, specify
--------	---------	-------	---------	--------	--------	------------	-------	----------------

3. Political group

SASCO	PASMA	DASO	EFF	Other, specify
-------	-------	------	-----	----------------

4. Co-curricular activities (group)

Dance	Theatre	Poetry	Cultural activities	Debate	Art-history	Other, specify
-------	---------	--------	---------------------	--------	-------------	----------------

5. Religious group

Anglican church	Catholic church	Seven Days Adventist	Ralpa	Methodist
His People	SCO	Zion	Muslim	Bahai
Other, specify				

C. REASONS FOR JOINING PEER GROUPS

Instruction: Please read each item or question, and rate how often each statement is understandable and adequate for you. The scale starts from 5 to 1. (5= *totally agree*, 4= *agree*, 3= *Neutral*, 2= *Disagree*, 1= *Totally disagree*). Please circle one of the numbers below:

Totally agree	5	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Totally disagree	1
---------------	---	-------	---	---------	---	----------	---	------------------	---

Reasons for joining peer groups	Scales				
	5	4	3	2	1
I. Sense of belonging					
I feel accommodated when joining a peer group.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel a sense of belonging when joining in peer group.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel motivated when listening to friends.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the group because we share the same life style.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel important in the classroom when am involved in the activities.					
I feel a sense of belonging in my group because we spoke the same language.					
II. Developing wellbeing					
I am dedicated as a member of my team.	5	4	3	2	1
I participate actively at competition practices in order to win.	5	4	3	2	1
I have grown my teamwork skills since I joined the team.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel good when we won the match.	5	4	3	2	1
I cooperate when working as part of the team.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel motivated when I excise in the morning.	5	4	3	2	1
I eat healthy to keep my body healthy.	5	4	3	2	1
III. Receiving spiritual support					
I attend evening prayer services to grow my faith.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the religious group to share the scriptures of the bible.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel the spiritual empowerment after the prayer.	5	4	3	2	1
I enjoy exchanging ideas during bible study.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the peer group to strengthen my beliefs.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the peer group to keep the spiritual values.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the peer group to fear God.	5	4	3	2	1
IV. Developing critical thinking skills					
I join the study group to share ideas with my peers.	5	4	3	2	1
I join study group to discuss about the course subject.	5	4	3	2	1

I join study group to improve my academic performance.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the study group to prepare for the examinations.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the study group to strengthen my writing skills.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the study group to develop my intellectual thinking abilities.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the study group to pass (attained) with good marks.	5	4	3	2	1
	5	4	3	2	1
	5	4	3	2	
V. Developing leadership skills					
I like to express my opinions to develop myself.	5	4	3	2	1
I like to assist the others when they are in need of help.	5	4	3	2	1
I like to share my experiences in my leadership team.	5	4	3	2	1
I have develop listening and communication skills through my leadership.	5	4	3	2	1
I like to suggest solutions to problems during our debate.	5	4	3	2	1
I like to share my leadership activities skills.	5	4	3	2	1
I learn how to organise projects with my group.					
VII. co-curriculum group activities					
I join the peer group to receive mentorship from my peers when needed.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel good to when I get positive feedback.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel good when the activities I am involved in impact positively on my work.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the group so that I can be motivated.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the group in order to enhance my communication skills.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the group so I that do not feel lonely in residences.	5	4	3	2	1
I join the group so that I can be recognized by my peers.	5	4	3	2	1

D. Benefits of joining peer groups and Challenges of joining peer groups

Instruction: Please read each item or question, and rate how often each statement is understandable and adequate for you. The scale starts from 5 to 1. (5= *totally agree*, 4= *agree*, 3= *Neutral*, 2= *Disagree*, 1= *Totally disagree*). Please circle one of the numbers below:

Benefits for joining peer groups	Scales				
	5	4	3	2	1
Emotional support					
I feel good when I was welcomed and introduced to the residence culture.					
I have been assisted with good academic choices.					
I received good support from the tutors regarding academic- and social guidance.					
I have been assisted with careers choices.					
Academic success	5	4	3	2	1
Feedback on my academic work has assists me in my learning abilities.					
I have received good support services from student leaders.					
Joining peer group enables me to work collaboratively with other students.					
I have ability to access computer resources when needed.					
It is privilege to meet with other students outside classroom to discuss academic work and other activities.					
Use of social media to interact with my peers and staff.					
The availability of assessment methods regarding studies (assignments, tests and exams).					
Peer group allow me develop writing, skills, social skills.					
Peer group allow working corroborations with my peers.					
Positive influences of peers	5	4	3	2	1
I like to be identified by peers through providing help to them.					
I like to seek help from my team members when challenging questions arise.					
I like to support others on my team.					
I enjoy working with my group to facilitate a winning spirit.					
I am comfortable letting others take my ideas and put them into action.					
I play a role of a chairperson to help others improve their skills.					
I like opportunities to celebrate others success.					
I use of consultation skills when others don't agree with me.					
I like to generate ideas and sharing them with my group.					
Information support	5	4	3	2	1
I feel good to access the library anytime when I needed it.					
I feel good because the library resources and services are shared.					
The induction programme of the library helped me to enlighten about the university.					
I enjoy the programme of the library because of its well-organized nature.					
Challenges for joining peer groups					
Instruction: Please read each item or question, and rate how often each statement is understandable and adequate for you. The scale starts from 5 to 1. (5= totally agree, 4= agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, 1= Totally disagree). Please circle one of the numbers below:					
	Scales				
	5	4	3	2	1

Failure of time management					
I missed some of the formal organized sessions in my study group.					
I am unable to consult mentors regarding a specific modules.					
I am unable to priorities between academics and co-curriculum activities.					
The layout of the time table causes pressure or delays in full my participation.					
I am unable to balance between academic and social lifestyle.					
Socio-economic status	5	4	3	2	1
I struggle to maintain the lifestyle choices of my peers.					
I do not always have money to pay for my social events.					
In need to get paid employment in order to co-fund my studies.					
Part-time job affects my academic performance.					
Difficulty to embracing diversity	5	4	3	2	1
I am unable to cope with the style of teaching at this institution.					
I am unable to adjusting with the volume of work in programme.					
I am unable to engage to my career choices.					
I just realized the institution expects me to work independently.					
I am unable to balance academic activities and other commitments.					
I am unable to work independently without my peers .					
Negative behavior through peer pressure	5	4	3	2	1
I started to drink alcohol when I join the residences with my peers.					
I smoke because of the influence from my peers.					
I started dating due pressure exerted by my peers.					
I sometimes skip classes because I want to stay at residences with my friends.					
I often do not submit my assignments on time in solidarity with my friends.					
I have been in trouble with residence authorities with my peers.					

Appendix 7

Focus group 3 Transcriptions notes**(House Committee)**

Q: what were the benefits of joining a social group?	A: the benefits is transition, like I said, personally I'm not straight from high school but then friends are from high school. So it's transition o how to adapt back to university, like I said I have experiences.	Transition Adaptation University Experiences
Q: besides the social group, what are the benefits of joining a house comm?	B: the house comm was mainly to develop my leadership skills which I think can play a role in working environment in future you have to know how to deal with a certain group of people because I think it's a very useful skill that one can have, to know how to work with different type of people and problem solving skills, ja. C: well for me basically it's about not being alone because I know that with my friends who also happen to be in my study group we share everything, so if I say month end, I know I have someone who I can knock up to and make myself at home and as I said for house comm maybe it was just to get involved and work with people and not be isolated and also to develop myself as a person.	Skill development Working environment Dealing with diversity Problems solving skills Company of friends Embracing diversity
Q:okay, what are you benefits of joining house comm?	c: single room, nah joking its basically about developing you and finding yourself also. You know like ja man it's just developing yourself and doing something new something you	Single rooms Self-development New ideas New experiences

	haven't done before. It's and experience.	
Q: what are the challenges of house comm?	A: the challenges is first tpo get along with people, sometimes you want to get along with people but maybe they, you don't see eye to eye. In terms of house comm the challenge is being elected to belong to that group because now if you're a shy person you need to get out of your comfort zone ad become somebody you are not just to make sure you are liked by the other person that the challenge because you change who you are to build this person who you want them to see you as you are.	Conflict resolutions skills Public speaking skills Independence Freedom
Q: can you mention another experience of social group, you say it's communication and then what else? Q: okay lets go to another participants Q: what are the challenges of belonging to that group?	B: ooh let me see, can't think of any at the moment. C: yes in terms of this question, when you say challenge when you have friends or when you belong to a social group are you asking what ere the challenges then? D: the I would say they take away your time you tend to delay because you used to staying with these people and sometimes balancing what you need to do and being with them is also a task because its a challenge, that's all. Maybe delay and time management is a challenge. E: and adding to that, when it comes to time sometime when they want to have fun and you don't wanna have fun that's a challenge. It's not easy to say no to have fun when fun l s there.	Time management Delays Time management Compromise
Q: and the leadership challenges?	C: leadership challenges, I would say maybe, we are o given a lot of support as house comm but we're expected to do things. Support from management, res life in particular. I think also monitoring as well, the	No supervision Independent decision No monitoring

	<p>monitoring is not really on tune with what we are doing as house comm basically if you do an event you support your documents they don't come and supervise to where there these guys are doing it, it's sort of like there is no monitoring.</p>	
<p>Q: your challenges from your two groups?</p>	<p>B: socially is time constraint and another thing is adjusting to certain personalities like there's are, you find that in different groups there are so many different personalities and uh trying to get along with everyone and even when not getting along with everyone don't just get away like stay and find a common ground with each other and in terms of leadership it's not like I said earlier its not something that I have done before. This is just to you know staying out of my comfort zone and leading people its very scary but working with a group of ten people you help each other out. It's very challenging to do it alone but you know when we come together as a group we get better results.</p>	<p>Time management Difficult to embrace diversity</p>
<p>Q: the challenges of going to church, you don't have any experience?</p>	<p>A: uh challenges of going to church uhm when it comes to assignments and doing things like that sometimes its very hard to put things aside and go to church so ja.</p>	<p>Time management</p>

Ken Barris, PhD

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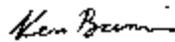
1 November 2019

To whom it may concern:

This is to certify that the following doctoral thesis by Ms Vuyo Mntuyedwa to has been edited to professional standards:

First-Year Students' Experiences of Peer Groups and Peer Pressure in the Residences of a South African University

Best regards



KEN BARRIS

