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Title: Psychosocial factors predicting academic performance of first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa

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Abstract

Academic performance of students is influenced by a combination of several psychosocial factors which include seeking academic help, use of various sources for academic learning, extent of the student seeking academic help, seeing academic help-seeking as a threat to self-esteem, interest in a subject, self-motivation and stress related to academic workload. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate psychosocial factors predicting the academic performance of first-year college nursing students, using a quantitative research method with a descriptive survey design. The population for this study was all first-year nursing students registered at a college of nursing in 2019. An inclusive sampling technique was used to include all 171 members of the student population in the study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data after class time. Completing the questionnaire took 15–20 minutes. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences program version 24, with the assistance of a statistician. Results show that 66 (50.8%) respondents never used friends as a source for academic learning. A statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 22.076$, $p = 0.001$) was found between home language and the use of friends as a source for academic learning. About 56 (43%) often used the course instructor to help with academic learning, 53 (40.8%) often made use of the course manual, and 70 (53.8%) and 74 (56.9%) never used computer tutorials or YouTube videos respectively for academic learning. A significant association ($\chi^2 = 17.176$, $p = 0.046$) was found between marital status and use of YouTube videos as a source for academic learning. Regarding seeking academic help because of difficulty in understanding the subject, 69 (53.1%) agreed that they ask the teacher to go over the material when they are having difficulty in understanding. A statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 9.720$, $p = 0.021$) was found between home language and difficulty in understanding the subject. In terms of academic help-seeking as a threat to self-esteem, when they are not doing well in school, 82 (63.5%) reported that they do not stay away from people,

and 117 (90%) disagreed with the statement that they do not want to see anyone. Regarding perceived stress, 56 (43.1%) reported that there was no stress due to peer competition for grades, 51 (39.2%) agreed that teachers were critical of them academically, 87 (66.9%) reported that the teachers had no unrealistic expectations. In terms of stress related to academic workload, 91 (70%) disagreed with the statement that the time allocated for class and academic work is not enough. Regarding academic self-expectations, 64 (49.2%) agreed with the statement that they were not confident that they would be successful academically. A statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 11.987$, $p = 0.007$) association was found between home language and academic self-expectations. A statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5.102$, $p=0.024$) association was also found between gender and academic self-expectations.

Ethics approval to conduct the study was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of the Western Cape, permission to conduct the study was granted from the head of the selected nursing college in the Western Cape, and consent was obtained from all respondents after explanation of the purpose of the study. Principles of ethical research involving human subjects, which include anonymity and confidentiality, were adhered to, no personal details of respondent were revealed, and respondents' identities were kept confidential during and after the study. In conclusion, the majority of respondents reported seeking academic assistance from various sources, such as the instructor/teacher, and course manuals/books. Respondents used more informal sources such as friends for academic assistance, and did not see help-seeking as a threat to their self-esteem. There was a significant association between home language and the use of various sources for academic learning, which implies that language is the prominent psychosocial factor predicting academic performance in this study. The recommendations that emerge from the findings of this study are that as there were more students utilizing the course instructor for academic assistance, there should be a consultation

timetable made available for all students who need academic consultation and support. It is recommended that students are encouraged to utilize various academic sources, including computer tutorials, YouTube videos and independent learning, rather than depending more on the assistance of the course instructor, and that a mechanism be created whereby students are connected with peers and the academic network for efficient utilization of academic resources. The availability of counselling services to manage student stresses related to academic workload and examinations needs to be ensured, and a language and writing support centre for those students struggling with language for academic learning needs to be established.

Keywords: academic performance, academic workload, college nursing students, help-seeking, motivation, perceived stress, psychosocial predicting factors, self-esteem,

DECLARATION

I declare that the study on "*Psychosocial factors predicting academic performance of first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa"*, is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

John Paul Arendse

Signed 

This 16th day of November 2020

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to:

First of all, to Our Almighty God, who gave me strength and knowledge for my everyday life.

My biological mother, the late Ms Sanna Johanna Arendse, who raised and inspired me to be strong despite the many obstacles in life, for her understanding and overwhelming support morally and financially.

To my sisters, and children for their eternal love, patience and support.

To all the first-year nursing students from Cape Peninsula University of Technology, and the Western Cape College of Nursing.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter the researcher highlights the focus of the study / research, describes the background and rationale, states the problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives and research question, defines the key concepts and gives an overview of the research method used.

1.2. Background

South Africa has undergone educational transformation since 1994 when it became a democratic state. The educational reformers attempted to build an educational system that could build on democracy, equality, dignity and social justice. According to Dube and Mlotshwa, (2018), the success of any educational institution is measured by its academic performance or how well students meet the standards which are set out. The authors further state that the failure of nursing students is a phenomenon which is of international interest due to its economic impact, which impedes the availability of future nurses in different healthcare systems.

Tertiary institutions in South Africa experienced an impressive growth in student numbers, with the result that historically white universities experienced a dramatic shift in the demographics of the students (Steyn, Harris, & Hartell, 2014). The four factors that had an impact on their transition and student performance academically are situation, self, support and strategies (Steyn et al., 2014). Intrapersonal characteristics or self refers to students' self-esteem, strengths, weaknesses and resilience (Steyn et al., 2014). The situation refers to the context in which transition takes place, and the support strategies that are in place to assist

students to overcome academic barriers and manage the transition in order to reach their goals (Steyn et al., 2014).

In a similar study Petersen, Louw and Dumont (2009) identified that academic workload, self-esteem, and perceived stress have a negative impact on students' performance. Furthermore, psychological factors relating to life satisfaction, like stress, lack of skills for responding to stress and time pressures and managing academic demands, were highlighted (Petersen et al., 2009). The authors also revealed other psychosocial factors such as classroom communication, students not actively involved in discussions, their perception of the lecturer as authority of knowledge, fear of peers, and levels of confidence (Petersen et al., 2009).

Alos, Caranto and David (2015) noted that students' academic performance was influenced by several factors, such as drowsiness in class, lack of preparation for tests and exams, large classes, and teacher-related aspects. The authors further explain that students who live in crowded households find it difficult to study (Alos et al., 2015). It is evident that all of the aforementioned factors impact on students' performance. Petersen et al. (2009) show in their study that predictors of adjustment, like self-esteem, perceived stress and academic overload, can affect academic performance.

At the University of the West Indies, Mlambo (2011) did an analysis of factors affecting student academic performance in an introductory biochemistry course. The author aimed to establish the reason for the high failure rates, and the purpose of his report was to initiate a discussion of the possible causal factors and ways of addressing these factors so that academic performance could be improved. The results of his study raised a concern that about half of the students did not have a school history of chemistry and biology, or did not pass these subjects prior to admission to college (Mlambo, 2011). Bostwick (2014) concurred in a similar study

that it is important to identify psychosocial factors related to adjustment and academic performance, and to ascertain how to deal with them.

Nursing education involves both a theoretical and practical process. Buhat-Mendoza, Tianela and Fabella (2014) postulate that providing proper knowledge could increase nursing power and enhance nursing practice. However, a study on nursing science has shown that perceptions and associated anxiety of students related to the course were present in students starting the course, which results in low academic performance(Craft et al., 2013). Furthermore, as a result of inadequate understanding of the nursing courses, students find it difficult to perform well academically (Craft et al., 2013). A study conducted by Efstathiou and Bailey (2012, p. 91-95) pointed out that student nurses are not well grounded in science before entering higher education, and there are increasing numbers of mature students who have no science background. Moreover, students who entered the nursing programme via recognition of prior learning, who did not meet the minimum entry requirements but have at least 5 years of experience in nursing, are struggling with academic performance (Efstathiou & Bailey, 2012, p. 91-95). Braungart and Braungart (2007) revealed in their study that cognitive, social learning, psychodynamic and humanistic theories remind us to consider internal factors such as perceptions, thoughts, ways of processing information, feelings, and emotions. The authors further state that we cannot ignore these factors, because it is the learner who ultimately controls and regulates learning and how information is perceived, interpreted, and remembered, and whether the new knowledge is expressed or performed.

With the overloading of content in Nursing Science in a short period of time in preparation for tests and the final examination, poor student background of science subjects was identified as a factor contributing to poor academic performance (Makhoba, 2016). In a related earlier study

Mushtaq, Khan and Innah (2012) highlighted how communication skills, learning facilities, proper guidance and family stress could negatively affect students' academic performance.

Braungart and Braungart (2007) define learning as a relatively permanent change in mental processing, emotional functioning and behaviour as a result of experience. The authors further state that learning is a lifelong dynamic process. Individuals acquire new knowledge and skills which alter their thoughts, actions, feelings and attitudes. The authors add that most people appear to benefit from demonstration and example, which is seen as social learning. Fraser and Killen (2005) identify factors that have an influence on students' success in their university studies, as perceived by lecturers and students. Factors such as difference in genders, different years of study, different home languages, different languages of instruction, and different modes of study were among the factors considered to contribute to student failure. Most of these factors were strongly supported with recent literature evidences.

1.3. Problem statement

Many studies conducted globally and a few in South Africa have shown various predictors of poor academic performance, such as class attendance, academic support the use of academic course materials, and academic history (Makhoba, 2016; Mohudi, 2013; Sibanda, Iwu & Benedic, 2015). Similarly, Alos et al. (2015) and Magerman (2011) identified large classes and communication as factors contributing to academic failure, while Owen (2015) highlighted students' lack of ability to balance class time, assignments and life issues. It became evident that both student and institutional academic factors may influence student learning and therefore student performance (Ross, 2016)

Makhoba (2016) studied failure of students in nursing subjects from 2011 to 2014, with results showing that 51% in 2011, 37% in 2012, 56% in 2013 and 48% in 2014 weres unsuccessful. Many of the first-year college nursing students fail Nursing Science subjects every year. The anecdotal evidence has shown a more than 40% failure of first-year college nursing students in this subject every year. Despite the above observation, no study has previously been conducted to determine the factors contributing to this high failure rate of first-year nursing students in Nursing Science within the South African context. It is assumed that identifying the psychosocial factors involved could assist and support academic staff to reduce the poor academic performance of first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences. Thus, the researcher was interested to investigate the psychosocial factors predicting academic performance of first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa.

1.4. Aim

The aim of the study was to investigate the psychosocial factors as a predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape.

1.5. Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To measure the use of various academic help available among first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences.
2. To measure seeking academic help as predictor of academic performance of first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences.
3. To determine help seeking as a threat to self-esteem among first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences.

4. To determine perceived stress related to academic expectation, academic workload, and academic self-perception as a predictor of academic performance of first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences.

1.6. Research questions

The following research questions were asked in this study:

1. What is the use of various academic help available among first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences?
2. What is the academic help seeking behaviour of first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences?
3. What is the academic help seeking behaviour considered as a threat to self-esteem among first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences?
4. What is the perceived stress of first-year college nursing students in natural Nursing Sciences?

1.7. Significance of this study

The findings of the study will highlight the factors predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape. The findings of the study will provide relevant information for the school management to improve the academic achievement of first-year College nursing students. The findings will also provide nurse educators with information on how to adapt teaching strategies and ensure academic performance success.

1.8. Operational definitions

Predictors: Something that will or can happen in the future (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2010). In this study the researcher refers to the predictors of academic performance

success as the variables that can forecast the academic performance of first-year nursing students.

1.9. Overview of research method

In this study a descriptive survey design was used to investigate factors predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa. The quantitative research approach is a formal, objective, systematic study process to describe and test relationships and to examine cause-and-effect interactions among variables (Grove, Burns, & Gray, 2013, p. 706). Similarly, LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2010, p. 583) define the quantitative research approach as the process of testing relationships, differences, and cause-and-effect interaction variables. Therefore, the quantitative research approach will be used to investigate factors predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa. The study was conducted at a Nursing College in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The study involved all the total 171 first-year nursing students, registered at the Nursing College. An all-inclusive sampling technique was used to include all students in the first year of the nursing programme.

The questionnaire which was administered consisted of open- and close-ended questions. Section A covered demographic information about respondents, such as age, gender, marital status, and academic background. Section B measuring use of varies sources of help available, while section C measuring seeking academic help, section D measuring help seeking as a threat to self-esteem, and section E measured perceived stress, as predicting factors of academic performance. Permission to collect data was obtained from the head of the college. The data generated from the completed questionnaires were entered into the Statistical Package for

Social Science (SPSS) version 24. Each respondent's identification on the questionnaire was kept secret by using a code.

A statistician was used to conduct data analysis. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through a pilot study. A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.7 and above indicated that the instrument was reliable, and the questionnaire was assessed for face and content validity by the researcher's study supervisor and experts in the field respectively. The ethics approval letter was obtained from the university's ethics committee and permission to conduct the study was requested from the Head of the College and the Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The principles of confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence and non-maleficence were upheld and maintained throughout the process of collecting and analysing the data.

1.10. Outline of the dissertation

Chapter One: Introduces the study, and describes the problem statement, study objectives, rationale of the study and definition of terms.

Chapter Two: Presents a review of the literature used to support and verify certain facts, and theoretical framework that guide the study

Chapter Three: Explains and discusses the methodology of the study, which includes the design, study setting and population as well as data collection procedures. Validity and reliability along with the ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter Four: Presents the study findings.

Chapter Five: Discusses the key findings of the study in relation to the literature.

Chapter Six: Provides the conclusions, implications, recommendations, and limitations of the study.

1.11. Conclusion

The introduction to and background of the study are presented in this chapter, which describes the problem statement, objectives, rationale and definition of terms. In the next chapter, the literature review as a secondary research method will be outlined in support of the primary data collected.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In Chapter One the background of the study was provided, including the rationale and significance of the study, aim and objectives. Chapter Two presents a review of the relevant literature related to the topic of the study. The literature review enables us to understand the current knowledge surrounding the research problem, and is a platform to identify gaps in the knowledge base. This chapter provides an overview of the literature review, focusing on the psychosocial predictors for academic performance, which include the use of various academic sources, seeking academic help, seeking academic help as a threat to self-esteem, and stress as a predictor of academic performance. Lastly, the chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study.

2.2. Psychosocial factor influencing academic performance

An overview of the literature is given to highlight and give a general background on what psychosocial predictors of academic performance entail. Studies addressing psychosocial factors that predict academic success are limited, even though various authors have suggested that psychosocial factors play a key role in predicting academic success of college students (Sommer & Dumont, 2011). Personal attributes, such as academic motivation and self-esteem, the ability to cope with perceived stress and academic overload, as well as interaction with various sources of support provided enhance academic performance (Rosli et al., 2012). A previous study has demonstrated that the effects of the psychosocial factors on students' academic performance are mediated by the quality of the students' adjustment to university life (Petersen et al., 2009). Students' adjustment to the college significantly predicts their wellbeing

and academic performance (Sommer & Dumont, 2011). First-year college students in particular face challenges to their psychosocial wellbeing and academic performance during their introduction to higher education (Kotze & Niemann, 2013).

In contrast, poor adjustment to campus life, a less supportive environment, lack of time management skills and mishandling administrative and social problems are some of other the factors affecting academic performance (Kotze & Niemann, 2013). In addition, perceived academic stress related to examinations, assignments, and practical work often led to emotional ups and downs among students (Law, 2010).

A comprehensive search of the literature was completed using various databases as well as hard copy sources such as the Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Google Scholar and Science Direct, textbooks, journals and governmental reports. The focus of the literature review was on the following areas:

- student use of various academic sources;
- Academic motivation
- seeking of academic help;
- help-seeking as a threat to their self-esteem;
- stress as a predictor of academic performance; and
- the theoretical framework of the study.

2.3. Student use of various academic sources

This section discusses the various academic sources of help and how frequently students use these. Academic sources include friends, course instructor manuals or books, the library, computer tutorials and/or YouTube videos to help them understand their subject courses. Dube

and Mlotshwa (2018) revealed that the use of information and communication technologies for learning, coupled with adequate learning resources (library, computer laboratory and classroom) can enhance academic performance. Ferran-Ferrer, Minguillon, and Perez (2013) note that students preferred the internet as a source of information, which was mainly used by students to complete academic activities such as assignments, exam preparation and research projects. It emerged from the study that respondents did seek help when they experienced difficulty in understanding the subject matter (Ferran-Ferrer et al., 2013).

A previous study revealed that the reason why students do not utilise the available educational resources was due to the fact that they were public and the fear that they could be labelled or stigmatised as a "weak" student (Swartz et al., 2017). A study conducted at a South African university regarding students' perceived reasons or factors involved in poor academic performance reported that the students did not know about the existence of or where to find academic support (Jama, 2016). A study conducted on 'Factors that hinder the use of sources for academic performance among first-year nursing students in Namibia' showed these to be insufficient resources, lack of university accommodation, lecturers becoming furious when asked questions, and lack of resources such as books or notes (Pinehas, Mulenga, & Amadhila, 2017).

Chowdhury and Halder (2019) state that academic achievement has become the prime concern of teachers and parents as well as of students in the 21st century. A discussion which emerged from their study revealed that the use of sources for academic help certainly plays a contributing role in students' learning and academic achievement. Almeda, Baker, and Corbett (2017) note that students who do not seek academic help are more associated with negative

learning outcomes. Furthermore, a student positively benefits from the use of sources for academic help, when seeking such help early in the learning process (Almeda et al., 2017).

Swartz et al. (2017) conducted a study on factors that promote academic success among 80 students across eight universities in South Africa. A cell phone was given to each participant to collect data during an interview which took place once a year over a period of 4 years; the results show students being aware that they need to rely on support from their peers, family and academic support provided by the university.

A study on students' perceptions of academic success identified that parental involvement in education, a good educator–student relationship and academic support services offered by teachers enhance academic performance (Dube & Mlotshwa, 2018). Supportive academic sources to assist, such as classroom computer technological gadgets, an internet connection and adequate learning facilities were perceived as fostering better academic performance of students. The results also showed that educated parents play a vital role in support and motivation to improve academic performance (Dube & Mlotshwa, 2018).

It is believed that those students who do not need extra help do not use academic services or academic support (Thomas & Tagler, 2019). Evidence in the literature showed that nursing students do use available sources of academic help as they realise the positive benefit of using them (Thomas & Tagler, 2019).

2.4. Academic motivation

Academic motivation is an inner process that is purposeful, unique, and variable and it is affected by internal personal factors like interests, values and beliefs, and external factors such as social, family and academic elements (Rafii, Saeedi, & Parvizy, 2019). Academic motivation

is a determinant factor that energises and drives behaviour toward achievement and academic success (Plante, O'Keefe & Théorêt, 2013). Academic motivation is not a single construct; rather it is the sum of a variety of different constructs like motivational beliefs, task values, goals, and motives (Wigfield, Tonks & Klauda, 2016).

Students' cognitive abilities and their prior achievement are among the best single predictors of academic success (Kriegbaum, Jansen & Spinath, 2015). Motivation constructs can be structured into two categories: students' beliefs about their capability to perform a task, which are called expectancy components (for instance, ability self-concepts and self-efficacy); and their motivational beliefs about their reasons for choosing to do a task, which are called value components (for instance, task values, goals) (Wigfield et al., 2016). A concept analysis by Rafii et al. (2019) identified that academic motivation has six main attributes: an internal process, purpose oriented, variable, unique, driving force of educational performance, and facilitator of learning and educational achievement. Students' ability self-concepts are defined as cognitive representations of their ability level (Wigfield et al., 2016).

Several studies support the hypothesis of social cognitive motivation models that students' motivational beliefs are significantly related to their academic achievement (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2018; Muenks, Yang & Wigfield, 2018; Steinmayr, Weidinger & Wigfield, 2018). These provide evidence that students' academic motivation is predicting their academic achievement, beyond their intelligence or prior achievement (Kriegbaum et al., 2015).

Motivation is a critical factor for nursing education, as nursing students encounter different demands from their patients during their professional life, and need long-standing motivation to keep learning information and skills to enable them to provide excellent quality healthcare services (Zhang et al., 2015). An increased enrolment of nursing students into the nursing

profession mainly arises out of the motivation and desire to help others (Rose, 2011). Furthermore, motivation has been positively related to learning outcomes, and the learning outcomes have been correlated with increased retention in higher education (Rose, 2011).

Identifying what motivates nursing students, not only be assisted in learning but also for entering the nursing profession, might provide educators with insight and enable them to design strategies to assist students through the challenges and retain them (McLaughlin, Moutray, & Moore, 2009). However, the question of what motivates student behaviour toward academic achievement is one area that has been of interest and controversy among educators at all levels of academia.

To assist our nursing students with difficulties and challenges in their learning process, there needs to be an understanding of the individual motivational patterns of the student to promote better learning outcomes. Furthermore, students' motivation for learning is generally regarded as one of the most critical determinants of the success and quality of any learning outcome (Mitchell & Chandler, 1993). Researchers have shown that there is an overall enhanced learning outcome resulting from intrinsic motivation, such as more interest, excitement, confidence, enhanced performance, persistence, creativity, self-esteem, and general wellbeing (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006).

Lectures and study content should be designed and taught in such a way that the student finds it motivating and interesting, and feedback should be given in such a way that a student feels motivated rather than demotivated (Artino, 2012). Creating a peer support system in which academically stronger students assist the weaker students helps the latter to become motivated and feel capable of doing certain tasks (Artino, 2012). Enactive learning occurs when one learns something by doing it and develops mastery experiences (Artino, 2012).

2.5. Seeking academic help

Academic help-seeking is an important learning strategy that students use to solve difficult problems and get to grips with information that they do not understand (Astin & Oseguera, 2005). The seminal theory of involvement stresses both the quality and quantity of effort that students place on their involvement in the academic and social aspects of college life (Astin & Oseguera, 2005). Academic help-seeking is also the process of obtaining assistance from another individual in order to solve a problem. A study on 'University student support systems, help-seeking behaviour and the management of student psychological distress' identified that 70% of students are willing to seek help (Bostwick, 2014). The author suggests that the university needs to make sure that students are aware of how, where and from whom to seek help (Bostwick, 2014).

Huet, Motak, and Sakdavong, (2016) conducted a study on 'Motivation to seek help and help efficiency in students who failed in an initial task', as to whether help-seeking behaviour differs in its respective links to motivational variables such as achievement goals, help-seeking perceptions and self-efficacy. The authors state that those students who seek help do perform academically better after they do so, as opposed to those who do not (Huet et al., 2016). The study revealed that self-efficacy was the only motivational variable linked to students' effectiveness in help-seeking (Huet et al., 2016). A study on student help-seeking attitudes and behaviours in the digital era indicates that students use a broad range of communication options (Qayyum, 2018) for messaging, social media and to communicate with classmates. In addition, most students asked for help from classmates and peers by talking to them (Qayyum, 2018). It is obvious that the students do realise that in seeking help to assist them academically they will reap the fruits of success.

Most students described having a heavy workload in their first year that was hard to manage (Swartz et al., 2017). However, some students seldom made use of academic development programmes – although they were aware of them – when grappling with difficult academic tasks, and most students relied on their friends (Swartz et al., 2017). According to Han, Li and Parsons (2019), academic procrastination is a common behaviour among tertiary students. Procrastination can be due to a students' inability to balance study, work, and family responsibilities. Seeking academic support from a teacher would enable them to deal with the academic workload (Han et al., 2019). Thomas and Tagler (2019) reported that positive outcomes of academic performance are the result of a student seeking academic help, and students with a high level of self-discipline normally performed well academically.

A good supportive relationship between nurse educators and students fostered better academic performance (Dube & Mlotshwa, 2018). Osborne (2019) reported that students need to recognise their need for help, to develop help-seeking behaviour. However, the fear of being labelled as incompetent can be the reason for not seeking academic help (Osborne, 2019). A study on pharmacist students at the University of Arkansas showed that stress and depression were identified as barriers to help-seeking (Payakachat et al., 2013). Assistance from teachers and administrators were seen as two enablers of help-seeking behaviour and academic performance. Mastery of sound help-seeking behaviour is both an educational and professional advantage (Payakachat et al., 2013). Chowdhury and Halder (2019) state that educators are vital in stimulating academic help-seeking and reducing feelings of anxiety. Parents should concentrate on increasing the academic help-seeking behaviour of a student (Chowdhury & Halder, 2019).

The evidence in the literature indicates that in order to succeed academically, students need to establish a sound communication network with their peers and teachers (Umarani, 2020). Academic help-seeking can be a useful strategy which promotes effective learning, and the student can benefit in moving towards academic excellence (Umarani, 2020).

2.6. Seeking academic help a threat to self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to the behaviour of the learners towards seeking academic help, self-acceptance, and positive or negative attitudes towards the self (Abdulghani et al., 2019). A student's self-esteem plays a positive role in their life and correlates positively with academic success. Having low self-esteem can result in learners not seeking academic assistance. Academic success has a great influence on a student's self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance in higher education (Valli-Jayanthi et al., 2014). Self-esteem as a personal resource is needed for positive psychological adjustment to transitions in life that can be stressful. Individuals with high levels of self-esteem have the ability to complete a task adequately, employ effective coping strategies and manage resources well. Alyami et al. (2017) studied factors such as measuring stress levels, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and assessing preferred learning styles, and examined the effects of these psychological variables on academic performance among psychology students. The findings of this study indicate that there were higher stress levels associated with self-esteem, academic self-efficacy and perceived stress; however, the author suggested further investigations to determine gender differences in relation to self-esteem, academic self-efficacy and stress.

Jama (2016) conducted a study to determine students' perceptions of factors affecting their academic performance. The study identified psychological factors such as feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, panic attacks, negative feelings, loss of self-esteem, loss of motivation

and sleeplessness as affecting academic performance (Jama, 2016). A similar study conducted by Valizadeh et al. (2016) on 'Self-esteem challenges of nursing students' identified the psychosocial challenges pertaining to the consequences of low self-esteem. It also showed that there is a medium to low level of self-esteem among students. These results raised the question on what kind of interventions could be conducted to prevent these psychological consequences of low self-esteem. To determine whether self-esteem leads to high achievement, Abdulghani, et al. (2019) conducted a study at six health science colleges and identified various factors, such as previous results in high school, parent's occupation, low household income, transportation, language and chronic diseases, as affecting student achievement. The relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement is regarded by many educators as a well-established fact. In order to maintain appropriate emotional balance, tips on management of anxiety and stress can be given to students (Chowdhury & Halder, 2019).

In summary, low self-esteem can be a barrier to academic success. The literature review indicates that there is a correlation between stress, mastering the subject matter, self-efficacy, time management, availability of study material and resources, family support, academic support, student's health status, student's mental status, transportation, financial status and self-esteem. When a student has good self-esteem it can positively impact their academic performance, while low self-esteem can negatively impact student performance. Students can be referred for sessions with a student counsellor to learn skills on how to advance their self-esteem and attitude towards self (Abdulghani, et al., 2019).

2.6.1. Student self-esteem and academic support

Research has documented that students with increased help-seeking behaviour can have a positive effect on student achievement (Osborne, 2019). Those who have

higher academic achievement tend to feel more confident (Aryana, 2010). In contrast, those students who lack confidence in themselves are fearful of seeking academic help, due to the fact that they think other people might see them as incompetent (Aryana, 2010). Self-esteem affects the thinking process, emotions, desires, values and goals of a person (Rosli et al., 2012). In addition, depression, anxiety, body image and academic performance have a strong relationship with self-esteem, whereas perception of high demands, sleep disturbances and poor social support play a crucial role in the prediction of stress symptoms (Aryana, 2010; Rosli et al., 2012). In general, self-esteem and stress greatly affects academic performance. The evidence in the literature has shown that teachers encouraging students to ask questions and take risks, and specially designed student help-seeking activities, can enhance students' self-esteem; elevating self-esteem helps to improve academic performance (Osborne, 2019).

Thomas and Tagler (2019) concur that a positive outcome in terms of academic performance is the result of a student's help-seeking. Pinehas et al. (2017) investigated factors that hinder the academic performance of first-year nursing students. The results revealed that students with a lack of self-discipline and self-confidence tend to develop behavioural problems, such as inability to concentrate on their school work, absenteeism and substance abuse. In contrast, students with a high level of self-discipline normally performed well academically (Pinehas et al., 2017). An assessment of students' time management skills, study skills, stress management skills, family responsibilities, access to technology and their activities outside the school provide teachers with information in order to provide more support in the areas of the student's need (Pinehas et al., 2017).

A study investigated the mental health of 516 Turkish nursing students and the stress experienced during their education (Karaca, Yildirim, Cangur, Acikgoz, & Akkus, 2019), and

identified stress, low self-esteem, and the presence of a negative event as affecting their mental health. Wongtongkam (2019) investigated the levels of emotional distress, self-esteem, social support and coping methods, and emotional distress in undergraduate students across year levels. The findings show significant differences across year levels for emotional distress and social support, especially in the first semester (Wongtongkam, 2019).

A study conducted among first-year students at a rural university in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa identified symptoms of hopelessness, loss of interest and low self-esteem (Pillay, Thwala, and Pillay, 2020). The extent to which students' academic performance was negatively affected by their depressive symptoms and the 7% of students who admitted to suicidal thoughts was a concern (Pillay et al., 2020). In a study conducted at a university in Mansoura, Egypt, Hanafi, El-Bilsha, and Khater (2016) found a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. It was suggested that self-esteem teaching activities be incorporated in the existing curriculum, and that the Psychiatric Nursing Department be involved to assist in the design of such a programme (Hanafi et al., 2016). In addition, Valizadeh et al. (2016) suggested that nursing educators have to look at what opportunities are available to refer students for assistance with self-esteem issues.

In summary, the literature has shown the importance of mental health support to a student's self-esteem. The level of self-esteem of a student indicates their ability to succeed academically and also whether they need academic assistance, which should be provided without them experiencing the fear of being labelled or stigmatised as incompetent.

2.7. Stress as a predictor of academic performance

A study on stress among nursing students identified academic workload, poor support systems and coping strategies as major factors (Parveen & Inayat, 2017). The academic workload, student's support systems and coping strategies used by the student to alleviate stress are discussed in the following sections.

2.7.1. Stress related to academic workload

Academic overload refers to students' "feelings of being overwhelmed by their academic requirements or responsibilities while pursuing higher education" (Sánchez de Miguel et al. 2020). There is insufficient time to effectively and adequately manage all academic tasks, such as tests, exams, research assignments, essays and oral presentations (Sánchez de Miguel et al., 2020). Stress can affect every individual and can have a powerful impact on their health, mind and wellbeing (Shultz, 2011). Nursing training is a stressful process, due to academic workload, communication with other medical professionals, and the gap between theory and practice (Yılmaz, 2016). Student nurses are subjected to different kinds of stressors, such as the pressure of academics with an obligation to succeed, an uncertain future, and difficulties of integrating into the system (Gomathi, Jasmindebora, & Baba, 2018).

Moreover, nursing education is considered to be stressful due to complex clinical requirements and challenges in the clinical setting (Shehadeh & Hamdan-Mansour, 2018). Nursing students spend a great deal of time in clinical placements and have to fulfil multiple roles, which can lead to further stress (Shehadeh et al., 2020). Nursing students experienced academic stresses such as preparing for exams, negative feedback from teachers, lack of guidance from teachers and the fear of failing theoretical exams or assessments (Yılmaz, 2016). Similarly, a study by Makhoba (2016) shows that among students 51% in 2011, 37% in 2012, 56% in 2013 and 48% in 2014 failed their exam due to stress from heavy academic workload. Students perceived the

workload and content of Nursing Science course is massive and difficult to complete in time for examinations (Makhoba, 2016).

A study indicates that 67.3% of students reported examinations as a major stressor and 57.5% reported fear of failing the course as a major stressor (Shultz, 2011). Kapur (2018) reported that a student's fear of examinations can impose negative effects on their attentiveness and memory. Their low academic achievement can be the result of fear of examination. Fear and anxiety from examinations usually stem from within the mind-sets of the students due to the fact that they fear not being as successful as their peers (Kapur, 2018). Furthermore, as mentioned above, fear can impose unfavourable effects and impedes the attentiveness and memory of the individual; hence, in order to do well in exams, it is vital for the student to be confident and overcome fear and anxiety (Kapur, 2018).

Nursing schools are recognised as a stressful environment that often exerts a negative effect on the academic performances and psychological wellbeing of the students (Gomathi at al., 2018); studying nursing science is at the centre of expressing stress (Chidiebere, Clementine, Noreen, & Ukamaka, 2016). The effects of stress extend beyond physical, emotional, and behavioural symptoms, as students may experience prolonged stress which can cause memory problems, inability to concentrate on studies, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, depression or general unhappiness and sleep disturbance, and may even lead to burnout (Gomathi et al., 2018).

However, while academic stress can reduce the efficiency of the student nurse, support and motivation are also the driving force that can catapult them to high academic achievement. It was noted that there should be a balance between curricular and extracurricular activities, which should be maintained by students to avoid undue stress related to academic workload (Chidiebere et al., 2016).

2.7.2. Student support systems and coping strategies

Students can develop counterproductive coping habits, in an effort to alleviate stress (Shultz, 2011). Rossouw (2018) identified the different ways of coping with stress; some of them relied on family and friends, others had a passive way of dealing with stress by ignoring issues, whereas yet others used medication and/or alcohol. Van Zyl and Dhurup (2016) note that lack of emotional support and negativism and denial were associated with poor coping strategies.

Coping strategies such as passive and active emotional coping, religious coping, self-restructuring, acceptance, tension reduction, situational support, and social support were suggested to cope with academic stress (Rossouw, 2018). The literature has shown that creating a positive and caring learning environment, promoting peer support and the inclusion of a health and wellbeing module in the curriculum can improve students' academically stressful life (Rossouw, 2018). Establishing study groups and providing guidance to students on how to balance study time and personal life (Van Zyl & Dhurup, 2016) and creating a positive learning environment using appropriate social and interpersonal support systems, as well as effective communication, can improve student wellbeing (Morissette & Doty-Sweetnam, 2010, p. 520).

Reddy, Menon, and Thattil (2018) states that in order to facilitate the development of effective counselling intervention strategies, the teacher should understand the sources of stress in order to alleviate student stress. It was suggested that faculties and counsellors have to assist in enhancing their students' self-efficacy and academic performance (Shehadeh et al., 2020). The authors further alluded to the fact that faculties need to find out what factors are causing academic stress through appropriate interaction, so that students can sharpen their skills to adapt to academic stressors. It was recommended that the university should provide assistance such as mentoring programmes and workshops to those students who encounter various types

of stressors, to improve coping strategies and help students to develop problem-solving skills to deal with their stressors.

2.8. Theoretical framework

Self-efficacy theory was originally proposed by Albert Bandura, who state that the concept self-efficacy refers to the confidence or a personal judgement of how well one can execute action required to deal with prospective situation (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996). . Individual who possess high degree of self-efficacy are more likely to attempt challenging tasks, to persist longer, and exert more effort on the process (Bandura, 1997). Several research findings indicates that self-efficacy correlate with achievement outcomes (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996,;Schunk,1995). Self-efficacy also correlate with self-regulation, especially the use of effective learning strategies. Thus, self-efficacy, self-regulation and cognitive strategy use are positively intercorrelated and predict achievement (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Self-efficacy has been linked to academic achievement, which is the result of intellectual capability and motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1994; Odedele, 2000). Self-efficacy is the people's belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influences over events that affect their lives. Thus, students with high efficacy are likely to have higher academic achievement compared with those with low self-efficacy who might doubt their capabilities, shy away from difficult tasks, give up quickly and finally drop out of school (Sewell, Palrno & Mann, 1981). A study on learners' self-efficacy has received considerable attention in the field of academic motivation and success, particularly in the medical field (Artino, La Rochelle & Durning. 2010). The two most vital aspects of self-efficacy are beliefs about one's own capability and the judgement to attain designated types of goal. Bandura (2006) emphasised that it is not enough for an individual to possess the requisite knowledge

and skills to perform a task, they must have the conviction that they can perform the required task successfully, even under challenging circumstances.

The core aspect of self-efficacy is that it affects individual choice of activities, effort and performance; for instance, an individual who has low self-efficacy for accomplishing a certain type of task may avoid it, whereas those who believe they are capable are more likely to achieve the desired goal (Bandura, 2006). It was stated that students with high self-efficacy in any academic discipline actively engage in the development of their knowledge, skills and abilities in those fields (Bandura, 2006). Moreover, study of self-efficacy has shown that it is not enough for the learners to possess knowledge and skills, they need to possess both the skills and the will to perform successfully under different circumstances (Bandura, 2006). Thus, educators should consider not only promotion of knowledge and skills, but also focus on the development of confidence and authentic mastery of the experiences.

Fenollar, Roma and Cuestas (2017) highlighted that the prediction of academic performance and investigation of the factors relating to the academic success and persistence of students are of the utmost importance in higher education. Integrating the construct of predicting factors of educational persistence theory and motivational models provides multidimensional models of student engagement in academic learning. Pajares (1996) argues that in the self-efficacy of the learners psychosocial factors are strong predictors of academic performance. The psychosocial factors refer to academic motivation, self-esteem, perceived stress, academic overload, and help-seeking (Pajares, 1996). Therefore the theory of self-efficacy was applied to guide the study (Figure 1).

Artino (2017) assumes that one's own physiological and emotional feedback during performance can be a source of one's efficacy. The author further states that individuals experience stress and feelings of anxiety during demanding tasks.

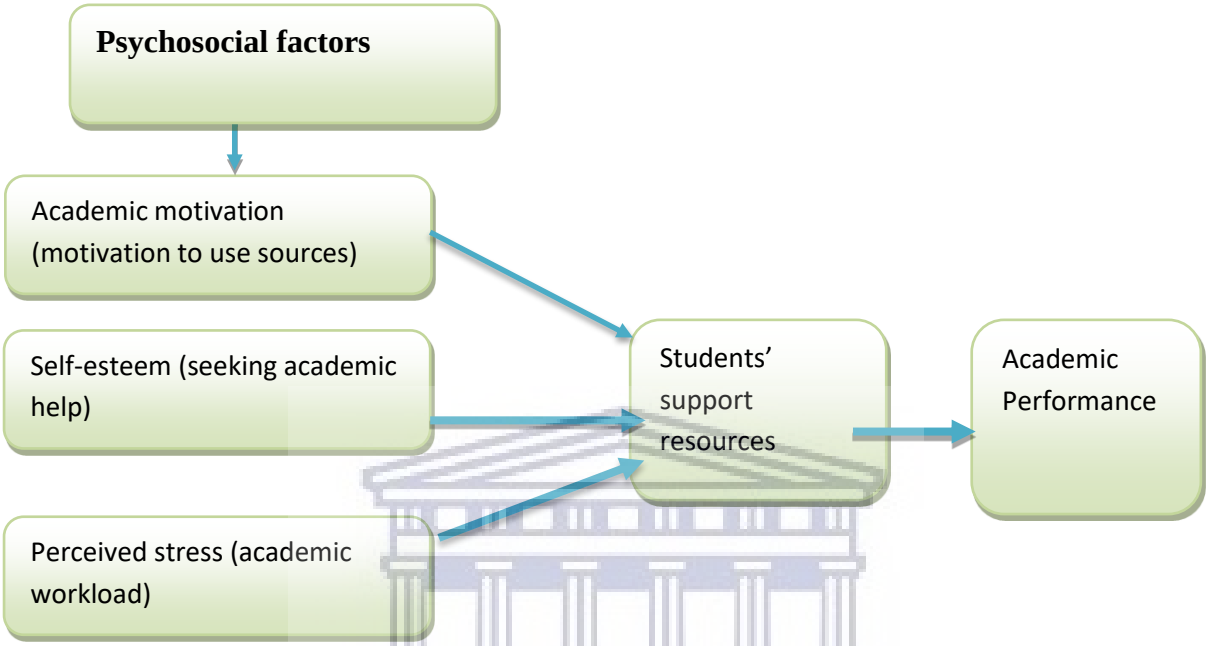

Figure 1: Application of the theory of self-efficacy.

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy refers to beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviours at designated levels (Bandura, 1986). It is one's belief in one's ability to organise and execute a course of action necessary to successfully accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997). Academic self-efficacy, or a belief in one's academic ability, is thought to be an important contributor to academic success (Klassen, 2004), and empirical studies support this relationship (Noftle & Robins, 2007). Further, supporting academic self-efficacy as a potential mediator between conscientiousness and academic achievement is the fact that it is associated with the personality trait of conscientiousness (Noftle & Robins, 2007). It has been found to mediate the relationship between academic achievement and other trait-like

characteristics such as identity style can have a positive influence on academic achievement (Hejazi, Shahraray, Farsinejad, & Asgary, 2009).

Bandura (1977) states that a student who looks at other students' performance can learn from their success. This is the so-called vicarious experience or observation of others, which can generate efficacy beliefs that the observer too can achieve success; however, this can be less dependable if students have low self-esteem. According to Bandura (1977) the vicarious experience where students observe the success of other students can induce efficacy beliefs in the observer, giving students the idea that they too can achieve what others have achieved. However, this vicarious experience can have the opposite effect on a student's self-esteem if they do not achieve the expected outcomes or marks they foresee.

According to (Artino, 2012), self-efficacy is one's capability to organise and execute courses of action required to attain academic performance. Students can draw motivation from fellow students by asking relevant questions regarding their use of sources for academic success. This will not only provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills, but they will also be able to acquire the skills to perform successfully under various circumstances, since a student can feel motivated by observing others (Artino, 2012). Huet, Motak, and Sakdavong (2016) conducted a study on motivation to seek help and self-efficacy in students who failed in an initial task. The study results yielded interesting information regarding the link between help-seeking behaviours and self-efficacy, where students who portrayed more confidence in their ability to succeed experienced more learning-related benefits (Huet et al., 2016).

Artino et al. (2010) and Bandura (1977) concur that self-efficacy affects your ability to choose activities, effort and persistence. This means people with low self-efficacy will avoid doing or performing a task, as opposed to those who believe in their own capability to perform and finish

a task. Chowdhury and Halder (2019) state that students' academic help-seeking behaviour can be affected by their self-efficacy and self-esteem. The low self-efficacy can have a negative impact on students' academic help-seeking behaviour and their attitude towards academic helping-seeking, resulting in the students perceiving help-seeking as a threat. The students belief in academic help-seeking as a threat to self-efficacy can also become a stumbling block with regard to their academic performance (Chowdhury & Halder, 2019). In contrast, the high achievers or academically successful students have a more positive opinion of themselves as opposed to those with low self-efficacy or low self-esteem. Short courses regarding personality development can assist students in boosting their confidence and their self-esteem (Abdulghani et al., 2019).

Artino (2017) postulates that your own physiological and emotional feedback during performance can be a source of your efficacy, and further states that individuals experience stress and feelings of anxiety during demanding tasks. While social cognitive theory provides a coherent framework linking self-efficacy and stress, most research has explored their independent roles in explaining academic outcomes (Rahardjoa & Basuki, 2016). Mulyadia, Rahardjoa and Basukia (2016) assumed that self-esteem and academic self-efficacy are factors influencing academic stress, and good predictors of students' academic stress. Shahmohammadi (2011) confirmed that the sources of students' academic stress, among others, are examinations, the amount and complexity of material that must be learned, difficulties in understanding the subject, and the amount of assignments. Students with positive self-esteem are considered as having the ability to meet any academic demands and stressors; self-esteem drives students to perceive academic demands as challenges, and as a result they do not suffer from academic stress (Arslan, 2017).

Self-efficacy can affect people's pursued actions, consequences that they expect from their efforts, how much they are affected by stress and depression, their life choices and their success (Bandura, 1997). An individual who has high emotional self-efficacy tends to use his or her skill, and it is important in terms of coping with emotional experiences (Kirk, Schutte, & Hine, 2008). Bandura (1986) asserted a regulatory emotional self-efficacy concept that heals negative emotional situations and expresses beliefs about experiencing positive emotions. Emotional self-efficacy is related to positive psychology concepts such as psychological wellbeing and gratitude, so that positive psychology applications may be performed at schools (Arslan, 2017). The students' self-efficacy beliefs in this regard can help them to deal with their academic stress, since the latter can affect academic performance. Choi and Lee (2012) reported a negative relationship between academic stress and college adjustment, but a positive relationship between self-efficacy and college adjustment. Self-efficacy thus affects the perception of external demands and mediates the relation between external stressors and psychological stress (Bandura, 1997).

2.9. Conclusion

This chapter described the literature review on predictors of academic performance, and theoretical framework which guided the study. It includes literature on students' use of various academic sources, seeking academic help and help-seeking as a threat to self-esteem, stress related to academic overload, support systems and copying strategies. Information regarding student self-esteem and the support provided was discussed. Stressors as a predictor of academic performance, stress related to examinations, support systems to assist students to alleviate stress, and stress due to academic workload were discussed. The literature review identified that little has been done regarding providing assistance in enhancing students' self-

efficacy. The focus has mainly been on the cause of stress and its impact on their academic success, but students lack coping strategies to deal with

academic stress. Lastly, the theoretical framework guiding the study was discussed. The next chapter presents the research methodology used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter the research methodology used to conduct the study is presented. The research approach, positivist paradigm justifying the choice of the quantitative research methodology, research design, research setting, study population, sampling and sample size are described. The chapter also describes the instrumentation used for data collection, data collection process and analysis of the data, reliability and validity of the study, and ethical considerations.

3.2. Quantitative research approach

The study employed quantitative research methodology to collect and analyse the numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer the research objectives. Creswell (2014, p. 32) states that quantitative research methodology is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. Brown (2018) asserts that in quantitative research methods data are obtained under natural conditions, with no attempt to manipulate the situation in any way.

Quantitative research methods are concerned with objectivity, tight control over the research process, and the ability to generalise findings (Nieswiadomy, 2018, p. 6). Quantitative research studies are typically designed to collect numerical data, which are statistically analysed to study research questions or hypotheses. Creswell (2014, p. 23) states that quantitative research involves the processes of collecting, analysing and interpreting the results of a study. Burns and Grove (2013) concur that the research purpose is generated from the problem and identifies the specific focus or aim of the study. The problem statement indicates what is not known and provides a basis for the study purpose (Burns & Grove, 2013, p. 39). Therefore, a quantitative

research approach was used to investigate the psychosocial factors predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa.

3.3. Positivist research paradigm

The positivist research paradigm was used as a suitable paradigm to choose a quantitative research approach for the study. The positivist research paradigm provides the researcher with more objective measures for gathering information (Panhwar, Ansari, & Shah, 2017). Creswell (2014:7) argues that the positivist research paradigm holds true in quantitative research that determines the effects of the outcomes, while reducing ideas into small discrete sets to test, such as variables that comprise hypotheses and research questions. The positivist paradigm observes and measures the objective reality that exists in the study; therefore, studying the behaviour of individuals is important and verifies theories that govern the world (Creswell, 2014).

Positivists claim that quantitative studies reflect the need to identify and assess the causes that influence the outcomes (Creswell, 2014). Positivist assumptions relate to the nature of the reality to be studied and what can be identified and measured (Creswell, 2013). Ontology is the study of questions that are concerned with the nature of reality and what can be known about it (Carpiano & Daley, 2006). It is a branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions we make in order to believe that something makes sense about the social phenomenon we are investigating (Scotland, 2012, as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It also assists the researcher to understand the problem being investigated and contributes to its solution (Kuvunja & Kuyini, 2017). The positivist ontology believes that the world is external and that there is a single objective reality to any research phenomenon or situation, regardless of the researcher's perspective or belief (Grove et al., 2013). Ontology helps us to understand questions that begin

with ‘what’. In the current study the researcher investigated the question ‘What are the psychosocial factors predicting academic performance of first-year college nursing students?’ Epistemology is concerned with the nature of the relationship between researchers and the researched, and that the researcher is being objective and not influencing the decisions of the respondents (Creswell, 2013). This affects how you will go about uncovering knowledge in the social context that you would like to investigate, and how you come to know something about the truth (Kuvunja & Kuyini, 2017). Quantitative research is typically rooted in a realist epistemology, which assumes that there is a real world independent of our perceptions of it, against which claims of validity can be tested (Jason & Glenwic, 2016, p. 37). Epistemology is a philosophical stance that describes how we know something is the truth (Cooksey and McDonald, 2011).

In this study the positivist research paradigm provided the opportunity for the researcher to be more objective in gathering information on psychosocial factors predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students. It allowed the current study to reduce effects of bias and prejudice, and emphasised that the researcher was objective and did not influence the decisions of the respondents. This was achieved by the use of a structured self-administered questionnaire as the data collection instrument.

3.4. Research design

This study employed a survey research design as the mechanism for finding solutions to research questions (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2010, p. 159). Grove et al. (2013, p. 195) describe research design as a blueprint for conducting a study. In this study a descriptive survey design was used to investigate factors predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students. Nieswiadomy (2018, p. 63) concurs that a research design is the plan for how the study would be conducted, which is concerned with the type of data that are collected and

the means used to obtain these data. Brown (2018, p. 260) agrees that a research design is a framework or general guide regarding how to structure studies conducted to answer a certain type of research question. Jason and Glenwic (2016, p. 257) state that quantitative research is deductive, tests theories or hypotheses, and studies the relationship among variables or gathers descriptive knowledge. These authors also report that quantitative research methods are primarily used with the goal of producing universal, generalisable knowledge. It is for this reason that the current study sought to investigate factors predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa using such methods.

3.4.1 Descriptive research design

Descriptive research typically has as its main objective the accurate portrayal of people's characteristics or circumstances and/or the frequency with which certain phenomena occur (Polit & Beck, 2017. According to Parahoo (2014), in descriptive studies the researcher describes phenomena about which little is normally known. Parahoo (2014) further states that from the data collected, patterns or trends may emerge and possible links between variables can be observed, but the emphasis is on the description of phenomena. Descriptive research was suitable for this study to investigate factors predicting academic performance in first-year college nursing students.

3.4.2 Survey research design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a survey refers to a study that has used a representative sample. Survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research where investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe their attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics (Polit & Beck, 2017). In this study, the

researcher collected quantitative data using questionnaires and statistically analysed the data to describe the psychosocial factors predicting academic performance.

3.5. Research setting

The research setting situated in Cape Town metro pole area. Pre-1994, there were four nursing colleges in the Western Cape, however, in 1994 the Minister of Education Kadar Asmal, instructed Provincial Government on nationalizing nursing colleges. As a result four nursing colleges were dissolved and merged into one nursing college named the Western Cape College of Nursing. The year 2002 was the first intake of nursing students at the newly formed college (Asmal, 2002). Since the merger of the four nursing colleges, 70 students have been enrolled every year for the four-year nursing diploma programmes. In 2018 the nursing college took in 171 students for the four-year Bachelor of Technology Nursing degree programme in conjunction with Cape Peninsula University of Technology. For the current study the researcher approached the entire population of 171 first-year nursing students.

3.6. Population

LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2010, p. 221) define a population as a well-defined set that has certain specified properties. A population can be composed of people, animals, objects or events (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2010, p. 221). Polit and Beck (2008, p. 761) refer to a population as the entire set of individuals or objects having some common characteristics. In this study the population was all first-year college nursing students registered in 2019. The total number of first-year nursing students who formed the study population was 171.

3.7. Sampling and sample size

According to LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2010, p. 224) sampling is a process of selecting a portion or subject of the designated population to represent the entire population. Creswell

(2014, p. 170) states that the goal of sampling in quantitative research is to be able to make generalisations about the population from which the sample was drawn. Creswell (2014, p. 179) further states that it is always wise to set the sample size a little bit larger than what is actually desired to allow for non-responses or subject dropout.

The purpose of sampling is to increase the efficiency of a research study. Grove et al. (2013, p. 708) affirm that sample size is the number of subjects or respondents recruited and consenting to take part in a study. Grove et al. (2013) further state that the adequacy of sample sizes must be evaluated more carefully in the study before data collection. The sample of the study includes all of the total target population of first-year college nursing students. The size of the total population was small; therefore, an all-inclusive sampling technique was used to include all students in the first-year of the nursing programme. The total sample was 171. The sampling process was administered by the researcher.

3.8. Instrumentation

Creswell (2014, p. 191) reports that research instruments/tools are devices used to collect data and facilitate the observation and measurement of the variables of interest. The researcher should take great care in selecting most appropriate instrument(s) (Creswell, 2014, p. 191). Brown (2018) also states that the devices used to measure variables are called tools or instruments. Commonly used nursing research instruments include rating scales, questionnaires, physiological measurements, and observational scoring.

The researcher approached Professor Emeritus William E. Martin from the Northern Arizona University and sought permission to use his questionnaire in this study. The author granted permission to use the questionnaire (Appendix 5). The original questionnaire was adapted under supervision of the study supervisor and adjusted to suit this study. The questionnaire was

written in the English language, which was the language of the academic medium of the respondents. The adapted questionnaire consists of close-ended questions where respondents had to respond with the following: Strongly agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly disagree (Appendix 1).

The questionnaire consisted of five sections of questions, made up as follows:

- **Section A** was related to the respondents' demographic information and consisted of 6 items.
- **Section B** measured with the respondents' use of various sources of help and consisted of 5 items.
- **Section C** measured the respondents' help-seeking behaviour and consisted of 4 items.
- **Section D** measured whether respondents see help-seeking as a threat to their self-esteem and consisted of 13 items.
- **Section E** measured the respondents' perceived stress in academic performance and consisted of 17 items. It also tested stresses related to academic expectations, academic work and examinations, and students' academic self-perceptions.

3.9. Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted to test the feasibility of the study, in order to ensure that aspects of the questions were clear and unambiguous. According to Grove et al. (2013, p. 703) a pilot study is a smaller version of a proposed study conducted to develop or refine the instrument. The pilot study acted as a precursor/frontrunner to the entire study.

The feasibility of the study could be evaluated through the pilot study (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 195-196; Grove et al., 2013, p. 343-344). The pilot study assesses whether a questionnaire or research instrument is clear, intelligible, and can be answered with ease. Durrheim (2006, p.

70) further adds that a pilot study also helps to identify potential problems with the design, which can therefore be rectified before the actual study is carried out and enhance cost-effectiveness. The pilot study will also give the researcher guidance as to whether the tool needs adjustment or not. The researcher used ten respondents from first year college nursing student to test the validity of the tool and to establish if the instrument measured what it was intended to measure. The pilot study was done at the same nursing college in a classroom setting where students felt comfortable. The respondents responded well to the questionnaire during the pilot study and no changes were required for the main study. A statistician carried out the Cronbach alpha test on the instrument and a score of 0.908 was established, which meant the instrument was valid and acceptable.

3.10. Data collection

In quantitative research, data collection involves obtaining numerical data to address the research objectives, questions, or hypotheses (Burns & Grove, 2009, p. 44). Data collection is a precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the purposes of the specific objectives, questions, or hypotheses of a study (Grove et al., 2013, p. 691). According to Polit and Beck (2012), data collection is the process whereby the most appropriate method is used to systematically collect information to a specific standard with integrity, and the purpose is to address the research problem. The authors also report that factors of resources, time, travel, cost, confidentiality and anonymity should be taken into account in all phases of planning, implementing and evaluation of the data collection process (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Ethics approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of the Western Cape (appendix2), and then permission was obtained from the Director of Nursing of the Western Cape College of Nursing (appendix 4) where the data were to be collected. Permission was also obtained from Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Appendix 3) to use the study

respondents for the study. The aim of the study was explained to all respondents and also the importance of completing all questions. After explaining the purpose of the study, and the confidentiality of the respondents' identity and information to ensure there is no link to the respondent's identity. The consent form was first distributed to the respondents to be before starting with data collection. The respondents were informed that it would take 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to all respondents present in class on the day of data collection. The researcher was present during the data collection to answer the respondents' questions and assist them in completing the questionnaire. One hundred thirty (130) completed questionnaires were returned, 109 from females and 21 from males. The age range of the respondents was between 19 and 36 years of age.

3.11. Data analysis

Data were captured upon receiving the questionnaires from the respondents. The completed questionnaires were checked by the researcher to determine whether all of them were clear and complete. Each completed questionnaire was given a code for easy comparison against the original questionnaire during the data cleaning. The analysis of quantitative data is a complex field of knowledge and requires a qualified statistician. Grove et al. (2013, p. 691) define data analysis as conducted to reduce, organize, and give meaning to data. Fain (2017, p. 264) reported that for the researcher to justify whether the results and conclusion of the study are correct, the appropriate statistics must be applied. This author also states that the purpose of data analysis is to answer the research question (Fain, 2017, p. 264). Analysis was done using descriptive measures to describe the findings (Polit & Beck, 2013). Numerical values were assigned to the Likert Scale (1= never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4= very often), and (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Slightly disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree) thus

calculating an average score used to ascertain which of the academic resources were used more regularly than others to predict academic performance.

The generated quantifiable data were transformed into symbols by using codes and a code book was used to keep records. The data generated from the completed questionnaires were first captured on an excel spreadsheet and double-checked for correct entry and then imported into SPSS version 24 program for analysis. A statistician was used to conduct data analysis. A descriptive analysis was conducted, tables and graphs were generated to present the results. The analysis results were reported using frequencies, percentages and graphs. To determine the association between categorical variables, the Chi-Square test was conducted with significance value at $P<0.05$.

3.12. Reliability of the study

According to Wood and Haber (2010, p. 585) reliability of the study lies in the consistency of a measuring tool; reliability is the consistency and dependability of the instrument of research in measuring variables (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2012). The reliability of the instrument was ensured through pilot study with 10 respondents from the similar study population. The reliability of the instrument was improved by making sure the questions in the tool were clear and explicit. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was determined. Any questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha of > 0.70 is acceptable, indicating that the items in the concept were positively correlated to one another. In this study the Cronbach's alpha of the instrument was 0.908 and indicated the internal consistency of the instrument (Burns & Grove, 2013). This refers to the extent to which all items on an instrument measure the same variable.

3.13. Validity of the study

Polit and Beck (2008, p. 768) define validity as a criterion which comprises the degree to which inferences made in a study are accurate and well founded; with regard to measurement, it is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Creswell (2014, p. 206) states that validity of scores on instruments leads to meaningful interpretation of data and determines whether one can draw meaningful inferences from scores on the instrument. The author also raises the question of "do the items measure the content they intended to measure" (Creswell, 2014, p. 206).

LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2010, p. 585) concur that validity of the study is the determination of whether a measurement instrument actually measures what it is purported to measure. It is also central to building sound evidence for practice. There are many types of validities used to measure an instrument, for example, construct, face, content and criterion validity, though only face and content validity were determined in this study. Internal validity will detect if the results are a true reflection of what you aimed to research (Grove et al., 2013).

Middleton (2019) wrote an article regarding four types of validity, in which the author state that face validity considers how suitable the content of an instrument seems to be on the surface and whether it measures what the researcher intended to measure (Middleton, 2019). The questionnaire was assessed for face validity by the research supervisor, and expert in the field of education, who scrutinized the questions for appropriateness and helped strengthen the face validity of the instrument. The content validity, as described in Burns and Grove (2013) examines the extent to which the measurement method includes all of the major elements relevant to the construct being measured. Content validity was reached through an extensive literature review and mapping the theoretical framework (self-efficacy theory) of the study,

providing a basis for each item on the questionnaire in line with the research aims and objectives.

Table 1 indicates the content validity of the study.

Table 1: Content validity of the study

Objectives	**Questions**
Objective 1: Section B, measures the use of various sources for academic understanding	Q1 – 5
Objective 2: Section C, measures seeking academic help	Q1 – 4
Objective 3: Section D, measures seeking academic help as a threat to self-esteem	Q5 – 13
Objective 4: Section E, measures perceived stress in academic performance	Q1 – 17

3.14. Ethics

A letter indicating ethics approval was obtained from the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Science Ethics Committee, Ref. number HS17/10/19 (Appendix 2), and permission to conduct the study was granted by the Director of the nursing college and the Ethics Committee of Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Appendix 3). The principles of informed consent, including confidentiality, autonomy, justice, non-maleficence, beneficence and veracity were upheld during this research process.

Confidentiality: No personal details, such as name, surname or address which could reveal respondents' identity was included in or on the questionnaire. Each questionnaire was provided with a code after completion and collection.

Anonymity: The right to stay anonymous and for identity to be kept private was respected. All respondents remained anonymous and the data were kept confidential. The questionnaires were identified with a numerical code and kept in a safe, locked cabinet, and the soft copy on the computer was protected by a password known only to the researcher. Participation in the research study was voluntary (Brink et al., 2012). Each respondent had the opportunity to participate in the study voluntarily after information regarding study and its purpose had been given. The respondents had the right to withdraw from study at any time without any consequences.

Beneficence: This principle encourages researcher to do good and, above all, to do no harm. The researcher attempted to make sure that respondents experienced no harm and to minimise harm during participation in the study. There was no distress or any sort of psychological discomfort related to filling in of the questionnaire observed among the respondents. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained during dissemination and publication. Reassurance was given to respondents that information provided in the questionnaire would be treated confidentially, both during the study and during dissemination of the results. On completing the study, the hard copy of the data will be stored in a secured, locked cupboard at the School of Nursing for a period of five years, and the soft copy of data will be protected with a password on the desktop computer and kept for five years. The hard copy will be destroyed after 5 years by incineration and the soft copy of the data will be deleted.

Non-maleficence: This principle encompasses freedom from harm or exploitation. The aim of the researcher was to make sure respondents experienced no harm, but it can happen that some psychological discomfort might arise due to the nature of some questions. The researcher provided a contact number should any respondents wishes to discuss any aspect of the issues

related to the questions. However, no psychological or emotional distress was observed among or experienced by the respondents during and after the data collection.

3.15 Conclusion

In chapter three, the research methodology, paradigm of the study, the design and methods for the study were discussed. The data collection process and procedure, data coding and data analysis, including the rigor of the study and ethics were described. The following chapter focuses on the analysis of the data and the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This study aimed to investigateinvestigate the psychosocial factors as a predictors of academic performance in first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape. A sample of 171 first-year nursing students from a college of nursing within the Western Cape were invited to take part in this study, and 130 agreed to participate, yielding 100% response rate. The findings of this study are presented in four sections, based on the objectives of the study:

- Objective 1 was to determine the use the various sources of help available among the first-year college nursing students.
- Objective 2 was to determine the academic help seeking among the first-year college nursing students.
- Objective 3 was to determine seeking help as a threat to their self-esteem the first-year college nursing students.
- Objective 4 was to determine the perceived stress as a predictor of academic performance of first-year college nursing students.

4.2. Demographic information on the respondents

Table 2 shows that 109 (83%) of the students were female and 21 (16.2%) were male. The majority of the respondents were single 111 (85.4%) and 15 (11.5%) were married. In terms of age category, 59 (45.4%) of the respondents were under the age of 20 years, 49 (37.7%) were

between 21 and 25 years of age, 11 (8.5%) were between the ages of 26 and 30 years, and 11 (6.2%) were older than 30.

Table 2: Demographic information

Demographic information		**N**	**Marginal percentage**
Gender	Male	21	16.2%
	Female	109	83.8%
Year	2018	77	59.2%
	2019	53	40.8%
Marital Status	Married	15	11.5%
	Single	111	85.4%
	Divorced	3	2.3%
	Separated	1	0.8%
Home language	English	38	29.2%
	Afrikaans	34	26.2%
	Xhosa	51	39.2%
	Other	7	5.4%
Matriculation year	2000 and before	6	4.6%
	2001-2005	4	3.1%
	2006-2010	3	2.3%
	2011-2015	49	37.7%
	2016 and after	68	52.3%
Race	White	8	6.2%
	Black	61	46.9%
	Coloured	61	46.9%
Age group (years)	Under 20	59	45.4%
	21-25	49	37.7%
	26-30	11	8.5%
	31-35	3	2.3%
	36 and older	8	6.2%
Total		130	100.0%

4.3. Use of various sources of help available for academic learning

In determining the use of various sources of help available for academic learning by first-year college nursing students, a descriptive analysis was conducted. The findings show that about 66 (50.8%) of the respondents reported never using their of friends as sources of help, while 49 (37.7%) of the respondents reported that they sometimes made use the teacher. Of the respondents, 101 (77.7%) reported that they often or very often use course manuals. On the question related to computer use, 70 (53.8%) of the respondents reported that they never use computer tutorials to help with academic learning. Similarly, in assessing the use of YouTube videos for academic learning; 74 (56.9%) reported that they never use these as a source to help in academic learning.

Table 3: Using various sources to help with academic learning

How frequently do you use the following various sources to help you understand subject?		**Never**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Very often**
Friends	n	66	25	26	13
	%	50.8%	19.2%	20.0%	10.0%
Teacher (course instructor/lecturer)	n	25	49	44	12
	%	19.2%	37.7%	33.8%	9.2%
Course manual (books)	n	8	21	48	53
	%	6.2%	16.2%	36.9%	40.8%
Computer tutorials	n	70	37	16	7
	%	53.8%	28.5%	12.3%	5.4%
YouTube videos	n	74	24	13	19
	%	56.9%	18.5%	10.0%	14.6%

4.3.1. Use of friends' help as a source in academic learning

Cross-tabulation using Pearson Chi-Square was used to determine the use of various sources to help with academic learning. Regarding the use of friends as a source to understand the

subject course, 51 (47%) of the female respondents reported that they never used friends to understand the subject course, and 15 (71%) of males students never used friends as a source to help learn the subject matter. There was no statistical significance (χ^2= 5.701, p= 0.127) in terms of gender and using friends as a source to help with academic learning. The main age group of those who use friends as a source to learn the subject matter was under the age of 20 years, while 35 (59%) indicated that they never used friends, followed by the age group of 21-25 years, where 22 (45%) never used their friends for this. A statistically significant value (χ^2 = 21.169, p = 0.048) was found for age category regarding the use of friends to assist in academic learning. More than half 59 (51%) of single respondents did not use friends as a source to learn the subject matter, compared to 7 (47%) married respondents who reported never doing so. Marital status showed no statistical significance (χ^2 = 6.897, p = 0.075) regarding use of friends for academic learning. In terms of the home language of the participants, a statistically significant association (χ^2 = 27.076, p = 0.001) was found between home language and use of friends to help in academic learning.

Table 4: Use of friends' help as a source in academic learning

		Use of friends' help				P value
		Never n (%)	**Sometimes n (%)**	**Often n (%)**	**Very often n %**	
Gender	Male	15 (71)	4 (19)	1 (5)	1 (5)	0.12710
	Female	51 (47)	21 (19)	25 (23)	12 (11)	
Age group (years)	Under 20	35 (59)	7 (12)	11 (19)	6 (10)	0.04796
	21-25	22 (45)	9 (18)	12 (24)	6 (10)	
	26-30	6 (55)	2 (18)	2 (18)	1 (9)	
	31-35	1 (33)	1 (33)	1 (33)	0 (0)	

	36 and older	2 (25)	6 (75)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
Marital status	Married	7 (47)	5 (33)	0 (0)	3 (20)	0.07526
	Single	59 (51)	20 (17)	26 (23)	10 (9)	
Home language	English	10 (26)	10 (26)	9 (24)	9 (24)	0.00136
	Afrikaans	19 (56)	8 (24)	7 (21)	0 (0)	
	Xhosa	35 (69)	5 (10)	7 (14)	4 (8)	
	Other	2 (29)	2 (29)	3 (43)	0 (0)	

4.3.2. Consulting the course instructor to understand the subject matter

The results in Table 5 show that of females, 18 (17%) indicated that they never and 12 (11%) that they very often consulted the course instructor as a source to understand the subject; 42 (39%) of females consult them sometimes and 37 (34%) often use a course instructor as a source to understand the subject matter. Among the males, 7 (33%) never consult, 7 (33%) sometimes consult, and 7 (33%) often consult the course instructor to understand the subject matter. No statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 5.030$, $p = 0.170$) was found between gender and help-seeking or consulting the course instructor to understand the subject matter.

Within the age category, the results showed that in the under 20 age group 16 (27%) never make use of nor consult the course instructor to understand the subject matter, whereas 20 (34%) often consult and 3 (5%) very often consult the course instructor to understand the subject matter. In the age group of 21-25 years, 5 (10%) never and the majority of 21 (43%) sometimes consult the course instructor to understand the subject matter. In the same age group 17 (35%) often consult their teacher and 6 (12%) very often do so in order to understand the subject matter. The 26-30- year age group had 3 (27%) who never and 3 (27%) who sometimes consult the course instructor to understand the subject matter, where 3 (27%) indicated that they often and 2 (18%) that they very often consult the course instructor to understand the

subject matter. In the age group 31- 35 years, only 2 (67%) indicated that they sometimes use the course instructor to understand the subject matter and 1 (33%) that they often do so. There was no statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 9.765$, $p = 0.637$) between the age category and the respondents' help-seeking behaviour.

With regard to marital status, 45 (39%) single respondents sometimes and 37 (32%) often approached the course instructor for help to understand their subject, while 7 (47%) indicated that they often and 1 (7%) that they very often do so. Of the married respondents, 3 (20%) never and 4 (27%) sometimes make use of or consult the course instructor, while 7 (47%) often and 1 (7%) very often did so. No statistically significant association was found between the marital status of respondents and help-seeking from course instructor to understand the subject matter. Regarding home language, there was also no statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 13.866$, $p = 0.127$) with help-seeking from the course instructor.

Table 5: Consulting the course instructor to understand the subject matter

		Teacher (course instructor/lecturer)				P value
		Never (%)	**Sometimes (%)**	**Often (%)**	**Very often (%)**	
Gender	Male	7 (33)	7 (33)	7 (33)	0 (0)	0.16959
	Female	18 (17)	42 (39)	37 (34)	12 (11)	
Age group (years)	Under 20	16 (27)	20 (34)	20 (34)	3 (5)	0.63653
	21-25	5 (10)	21 (43)	17 (35)	6 (12)	
	26-30	3 (27)	3 (27)	3 (27)	2 (18)	
	31-35	0 (0)	2	1	0 (0)	
	36 and older	1 (13)	3 (38)	3 (38)	1 (13)	
Marital status	Married	3 (20)	4 (27)	7 (47)	1 (7)	0.68312
	Single	22 (19)	45 (39)	37 (32)	11 (10)	
Home language	English	5 (13)	17 (45)	11 (29)	5 (13)	0.12719
	Afrikaans	10 (29)	14 (41)	6 (18)	4 (12)	
	Xhosa	9 (18)	17 (33)	22 (43)	3 (6)	
	Other	9 (14)	17 (14)	22 (71)	3 (1)	

4.3.3. Use of course manual or books in academic learning

Course manuals or books were often used by 36 (33%) and very often used by 48 (44%) of the females, while 18 (17%) used them sometimes and 7 (6%) never used either manuals or books. Similarly, 12 (57%) and 5 (24%) of male students respectively often and very often used the manual or books for their academic learning, while 3 (14%) used them sometimes, and 1 (5%) never used manuals or books for academic learning. Table 6 shows that no statistically significant value ($\chi^2 = 4.673$, $p = 0.197$) was found with regard to gender and the use of course manuals or books in academic learning.

Of those respondents under the age of 20 years, about 26 (44%) of them sometimes and 20 (34%) often prefer to use their course books or manuals in order to understand the subject better. No significantly statistical value ($\chi^2 = 17.124$, $p = 0.145$) was found related to age group.

With regards to marital status of participants, single respondents 48 (42%) were more prone than married respondents 5 (38%) to use their course manuals or books very often. There was no statistically significant value ($\chi^2 = 6.131$, $p = 0.104$) found within the marital status category. Home language of the participants showed a statistically significant value ($\chi^2 = 23.620$, $p =$ 0.0.005) with regard to the use of course manuals/books in academic learning.

Table 6: Use of course manual or books in academic learning

		Use of course manual (books)				**P value**
		Never (%)	**Sometimes (%)**	**Often (%)**	**Very often (%)**	
Gender	Male	1 (5)	3 (14)	12 (57)	5 (24)	0.19735
	Female	7 (6)	18 (17)	36 (33)	48 (44)	
Age group (years)	Under 20	1 (2)	12 (20)	20 (34)	26 (44)	0.14499
	21-25	3 (6)	6 (12)	19 (39)	21 (43)	
	26-30	1 (9)	2 (18)	6 (55)	2 (18)	
	31-35	1 (33)	1 (33)	0 (0)	1 (33)	
	36 and older	2 (25)	0 (0)	3 (38)	3 (38)	
Marital status	Married	3 (20)	3 (20)	4 (27)	5 (38)	0.10449
	Single	5 (4)	18 (16)	44 (38)	48 (42)	
Home language	English	1 (3)	3 (8)	10 (26)	24 (63)	0.00494
	Afrikaans	1 (3)	10 (29)	10 (29)	13 (38)	
	Xhosa	5 (10)	6 (12)	27 (53)	13 (25)	
	Other	1 (14)	2 (29)	1 (14)	3 (43)	

4.3.4. Use of computer tutorials for academic learning

The respondents were asked whether they use computer tutorials as a source to understand the subject matter. From the female cohort, 56 (51%) females reported never using computer tutorials, while 33 (30%) sometimes used computer tutorials to understand the subject matter. Among the male cohort, 14 (67%) reported never using computer tutorials for this purpose. Within the gender category was no statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 2.973$, $p = 0.396$) was found between gender and use of computer tutorials.

Within the under 20 age group, 31 (53%) reported never using computer tutorials. No statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 5.448$, $p = 0.941$) was found between age category and use of computer tutorials for academic learning. With regard to marital status and computer tutorial use, 63 (55%) of unmarried respondents reported never using computer tutorials; however, a small number of married respondents 3 (20%) reported that they use computer tutorials very often for academic learning. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 7.330$, $p = 0.062$) was found. Regarding home language background and use of computer tutorials for academic learning, again no statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 15.939$, $p = 0.068$) was found.

Table 7: Use of computer tutorials for academic learning

		Use of computer tutorials				**P value**
		Never (%)	**Sometimes (%)**	**Often (%)**	**Very often (%)**	
Gender	Male	14 (67)	4 (19)	3 (14)	0 (0)	0.39586
	Female	56 (51)	33 (30)	13 (12)	7 (6)	
Age group (years)	Under 20	31 (53)	15 (25)	10 (17)	3 (3)	0.94131
	21-25	26 (53)	16 (33)	4 (8)	3 (6)	
	26-30	6 (55)	4 (36)	1 (9)	0 (0)	
	31-35	2 (67)	1 (33)	0 (0)	0 (0)	

	36 and older	5 (63)	1 (13)	1 (13)	1 (13)	
Marital status	Married	7 (47)	3 (20)	2 (13)	3 (20)	0.94131
	Single	63 (55)	34 (30)	14 (12)	4 (3)	
Home language	English	15 (39)	13 (34)	5 (13)	5 (13)	0.06816
	Afrikaans	32 (59)	16 (18)	3 (6)	0 (0)	
	Xhosa	32 (63)	16 (31)	3 (6)	0 (0)	
	Other	3 (43)	2 (29)	2 (29)	0 (0)	

4.3.5. Use of YouTube videos to help understand subject matter in academic learning

Cross-tabulation using Pearson's Chi-square was also used to determine whether participants use YouTube videos to understand subject matter in academic learning. Of the female respondents, 60 (55%) reported that they never used YouTube videos as a source to understand their subject. No statistically significant value ($\chi^2 = 4.543$, $p = 0.208$) was found within the gender category. Among the under 20s, about 35 (59%) and within the age group of 21-25, 27 (55%) never used YouTube videos. No statistically significant value ($\chi^2 = 10.462$, $p = 0.575$) was found with regard to respondents' age. However, there was a significant difference when it came to married respondents 7 (47%), and single respondents 67 (58%) who had never used YouTube videos, and a statistically significant value ($\chi^2 = 9.204$, $p = 0.027$) was found in the marital status category. Participants' home language and use of YouTube videos also showed a statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 21.922$, $p = 0.009$).

Table 8: Use of YouTube videos to help understand the subject matter in academic learning

	Use of YouTube videos				**P value**
	Never (%)	**Sometimes (%)**	**Often (%)**	**Very often**	

					(%)	
Gender	Male	14 (67)	4 (19)	3 (14)	0 (0.0)	0.20849
	Female	60 (55)	20 (18)	10 (9)	19 (17)	
Age group (years)	Under 20	35 (59)	10 (17)	5 (8)	9 (15)	0.57550
	21-25	27 (55)	10 (20)	5 (10)	7 (14)	
	26-30	8 (73)	1 (9)	2 (18)	0 (0)	
	31-35	1 (33)	0 (0)	1 (33)	1 (33)	
	36 and older	3 (38)	3 (38)	0 (0)	2 (25)	
Marital status	Married	7 (47)	0 (0)	3 (20)	5 (33)	0.02669
	Single	67 (58)	24 (21)	10 (9)	14 (12)	
Home language	English	12 (32)	13 (34)	4 (11)	9 (24)	0.00913
	Afrikaans	21 (62)	4 (12)	3 (9)	6 (18)	
	Xhosa	37 (73)	7 (14)	5 (10)	2 (4)	
	Other	4 (57)	0 (0)	1 (14)	2 (29)	

4.4. Establish whether students are seeking academic help when they have difficulty understanding the subject matter

In measuring the academic help-seeking behaviour of respondents when they have difficulty understanding the subject matter, about 52 (40%) of the respondents reported that they agree that they seek help in order to understand the learning material (Table 9). Closer to a half or 63 (48.5%) respondents agreed about asking the teacher to go over course material with them. In assessing if they ask the teacher to explain what they didn't understand about the course matter, 56 (43.1%) of the respondents agreed that they seek help from the teacher. However, 48 (36.9%) reported that they strongly disagree with getting some help on the parts they didn't understand.

Table 9: Academic help-seeking behaviour of students when having difficulty in understanding the subject matter

Items		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
I get some help to understand the learning material better	n	10	27	29	52	12
	%	7.7%	20.8%	22.3%	40.0%	9.2%
I ask the teacher to go over it with me	n	8	11	42	63	6
	%	6.2%	8.5%	32.3%	48.5%	4.6%
I ask the teacher to explain what I didn't understand	n	14	18	28	56	14
	%	10.8%	13.8%	21.5%	43.1%	10.8%
I get some help on the parts I didn't understand	n	48	13	21	34	14
	%	36.9%	10.0%	16.2%	26.2%	10.8%

Figure 2 shows a comparison of difficulty of understanding the subject matter with demographic variables.

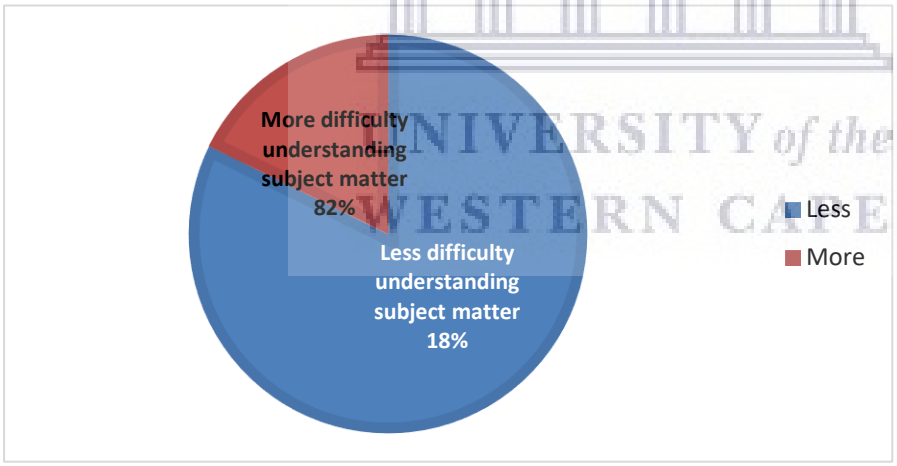

Figure 2: Comparison of difficulty of understanding the subject matter with demographic variables.

The study determined whether respondents had more or fewer difficulties in understanding the subject matter (Table 10).

In the terms of gender, the results showed that 17 (15.6%) females had less difficulty in understanding the subject matter compared to the 92 (84.4%) females who had no difficulty in understanding the subject matter. Six (28.6%) of the male respondents had less difficulty in understanding the subject matter, compared to 15 (74.4%) who were found to have no difficulty in understanding it. This was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 2.036$, $p = 0.154$).

The results related to the age groups showed that those of under 20 years of age appear to experience less difficulty in understanding the subject matter 9 (15.3%), followed by the 21-25-year age group (7, 14.3%). The age group 36 and older had more difficulty in understanding the subject matter (7, 87.5%). However, no statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 7.105$, $p = 0.130$) was found.

Within the marital status category, the majority 95 (82.6%) of single respondents were found to have more difficulty in understanding the subject matter, while 20 (17.4%) had less difficulty in doing so. About 3 (20.0%) of married respondents reported having less difficulty in understanding the subject matter. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 0.062$, $p = 0.803$) was found.

In terms of home language spoken by the respondents, 36 (70.6%) of Xhosa-speaking respondents reported having more difficulty in understanding the subject matter, while 15 (29.4%) Xhosa-speaking respondents reported having less difficulty in doing so. Similarly, 35 (92.1%) of the English-speaking respondents reported having more difficulty in understanding of the subject matter. There was a statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 9.720$, $p = 0.021$) between home language and difficulty in understanding the subject matter.

Among the Afrikaans-speaking respondents, 31 (92.1%) reported having less difficulty in understanding the subject matter, compared to 3 (7.9%) who reported having no difficulty in doing so. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 5.326$, $p = 0.255$) was found.

Table 10: Difficulty in understanding the subject matter

			Difficulty in understanding the subject matter		P-value
			Less difficulty understanding the subject matter	No difficulty understanding the subject matter	
Gender	Male	n	15	6	0.154
		%	71.4%	28.6%	
	Female	n	92	17	
		%	84.4%	15.6%	
Age group (years)	Under 20	n	50	9	0.130
		%	84.7%	15.3%	
	21-25	n	42	7	
		%	85.7%	14.3%	
	26-30	n	6	5	
		%	54.5%	45.5%	
	31-35	n	2	1	
		%	66.7%	33.3%	
	36 and older	n	7	1	
		%	87.5%	12.5%	
Race	White	n	6	2	0.002
		%	75.0%	25.0%	
	Black	n	43	18	
		%	70.5%	29.5%	
	Coloured	n	58	3	
		%	95.1%	4.9%	
Marital status	Married	n	12	3	0.803

		%	80.0%	20.0%	
	Single	n	95	20	
		%	82.6%	17.4%	
Home language	English	n	35	3	0.021
		%	92.1%	7.9%	
	Afrikaans	n	31	3	
		%	91.2%	8.8%	
	Xhosa	n	36	15	
		%	70.6%	29.4%	
	Other	n	5	2	
		%	71.4%	28.6%	
Matriculation year	2000 and before	n	6	0	0.255
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	2001-2005	n	2	2	
		%	50.0%	50.0%	
	2006-2010	n	2	1	
		%	66.7%	33.3%	
	2011-2015	n	39	10	
		%	79.6%	20.4%	
	2016 and after	n	58	10	
		%	85.3%	14.7%	

4.5. Measuring seeking help as a threat to self-esteem during academic learning

The study assessed whether the respondents' seeking help was seen as a threat to self-esteem (Table 11). The findings indicated that 57 (43.8%) of the respondents reported that they strongly disagree that they stay away from people when not doing well in school, and nearly half 62 (47.7%) reported that they disagree that they don't want to see anyone when not doing well in school. More than half 69 (53.1%) of the respondents reported that they strongly disagree with the statement that they don't want to talk to anyone about not doing well in

school. Regarding the statement that they don't want to talk about not doing well in school, 84 (64.6%) of the respondents disagreed with it.

More than two- third 89 (68.5%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement about keeping people from finding out when they were not doing well in the school. The respondents were asked whether they tried to hide when they were not doing well in school, and most 96 (73.8%) disagreed with the statement.

Table 11: Measuring asking for help as a threat to self-esteem during academic learning

When I am not doing well in the school:		**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
I stay away from people	n	57	25	25	12	11
	%	43.8%	19.2%	19.2%	9.2%	8.5%
I don't want to see anyone	n	55	62	10	2	1
	%	42.3%	47.7%	7.7%	1.5%	0.8%
I don't want to talk to anyone about it	n	69	42	6	9	4
	%	53.1%	32.3%	4.6%	6.9%	3.1%
I don't want to talk about it	n	24	84	6	13	3
	%	18.5%	64.6%	4.6%	10.0%	2.3%
I try to keep people from finding out	n	22	89	12	5	2
	%	16.9%	68.5%	9.2%	3.8%	1.5%
I make sure nobody finds out	n	35	81	10	2	2
	%	26.9%	62.3%	7.7%	1.5%	1.5%
I try to hide it	n	32	80	8	9	1
	%	24.6%	61.5%	6.2%	6.9%	0.8%
I don't tell anyone about it	n	18	96	12	4	0
	%	13.8%	73.8%	9.2%	3.1%	0.0%
I don't let anybody know about it	n	17	96	8	7	2
	%	13.1%	73.8%	6.2%	5.4%	1.5%

Figure 3 indicates the comparison of doing well or not doing well in the school with demographic variables.

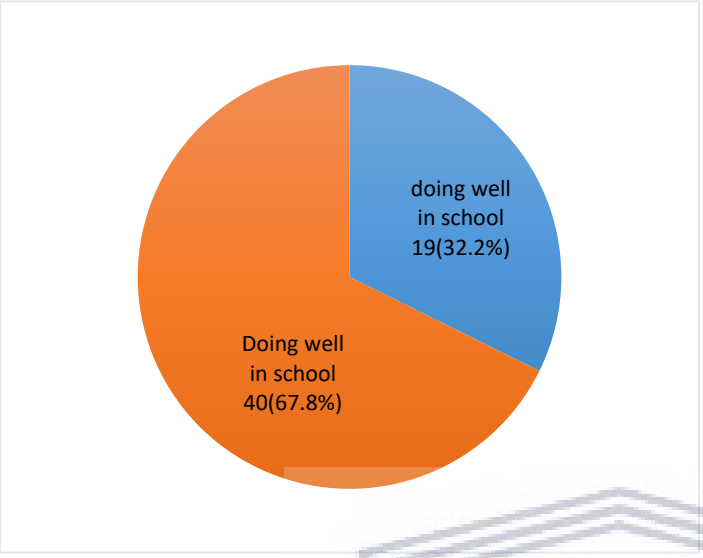

Figure 3: Comparison of doing well or not doing well in school with demographic variables.

In table 11,that determine whether respondents were doing well in academic learning or not, a total score was calculated. In terms of gender, 71 (65.1%) females and 17 (81.0%) males were found to be doing well with their studies, whereas 38 (34.9%) females were found not to be doing well. No statistical significance (χ^2 = 2.014, p = 0.156) was found between gender categories.

In terms of age category, of those respondents under the age of 20 years, 40 (67.8%) were found to be doing well, as were 34 (69.4%) in the age group 21-25 years. About 19 (32.2%) in the age group under 20 were found not to be doing well. No statistical significance (χ^2 = 1.910, p = 0.752) could be found.

Regarding marital status, 78 (67.8%) of the single respondents, and 10 (66.7%) of the married respondents were found to be doing well academically; whereas 37 (32.2%) of the singles were

found not to be doing well. No statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 0.008$, $p = 0.928$) was found between marital status and academic learning.

In terms of home language section, 40 (78.4%) of the Xhosa-speaking respondents and 23 (63.3%) of Afrikaans-speaking respondents were found to be doing well. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 6.675$, $p = 0.083$) was found.

With regard to the year in which respondents completed Matric, the 2016 matriculants (50, 73.5%) and 2011-2015 matriculants 31 (63.3%) were found to be doing well academically. However, no statistically significant association ($X^2 = 6.742$, $p = 0.150$) was found between the time of matriculation and academic performance.

Table 12: Not doing well in school

			Performance at school		**P value**
			Not doing well in school	**Doing well in school**	
Gender	Male	n	4	17	0,156
		%	19.0%	81.0%	
	Female	n	38	71	
		%	34.9%	65.1%	
Age group (years)	Under 20	n	19	40	0.752
		%	32.2%	67.8%	
	21-25	n	15	34	
		%	30.6%	69.4%	
	26-30	n	3	8	
		%	27.3%	72.7%	
	31-35	n	2	1	
		%	66.7%	33.3%	
	36 and older	n	3	5	
		%	37.5%	62.5%	

Race	White	n	6	2	0.021
		%	75.0%	25.0%	
	Black	n	16	45	
		%	26.2%	73.8%	
	Coloured	n	20	41	
		%	32.8%	67.2%	
Marital status	Married	n	5	10	0.928
		%	33.3%	66.7%	
	Single	n	37	78	
		%	32.2%	67.8%	
Home language	English	n	18	20	0.928
		%	47.4%	52.6%	
	Afrikaans	n	11	23	
		%	32.4%	67.6%	
	Xhosa	n	11	40	
		%	21.6%	78.4%	
	Other	n	2	5	
		%	28.6%	71.4%	
Matriculation year	2000 and before	n	4	2	0.083
		%	66.7%	33.3%	
	2001-2005	n	2	2	
		%	50.0%	50.0%	
	2006-2010	n	0	3	
		%	0.0%	100.0%	
	2011-2015	n	18	31	
		%	36.7%	63.3%	
	2016 and after	n	18	50	
		%	26.5%	73.5%	

4.5.1. Determining stresses related to academic expectations

On the aspect of stresses related to academic expectations, 34 (26.2%) agreed that competition with peers for grades can be quite intense (Table 13). In assessing if the respondents feel that their teachers are critical of their academic performance, 45 (34.6%) reported that they agreed

with the statement. The respondents were also asked if their teachers have unrealistic expectations of them, and 51 (39.2%) reported that they disagree with the statement. In terms of the question related to parents' academic expectations, about 39 (30.0%) were uncertain regarding the statement that the unrealistic expectations of their parents stress them out.

Table 13: Stresses related to academic expectations

Stresses related to academic expectations:		**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Competition with peers for grades is quite intense	n	24	32	33	34	7
	%	18.5%	24.6%	25.4%	26.2%	5.4%
My teachers are critical of my academic performance	n	18	13	48	45	6
	%	13.8%	10.0%	36.9%	34.6%	4.6%
Teachers have unrealistic expectations of me	n	36	51	36	7	0
	%	27.7%	39.2%	27.7%	5.4%	0.0%
The unrealistic expectations of my parents stress me out	n	36	34	39	18	3
	%	27.7%	26.2%	30.0%	13.8%	2.3%

Figure 4 shows the comparison of stress-related academic expectations and demographic variables.

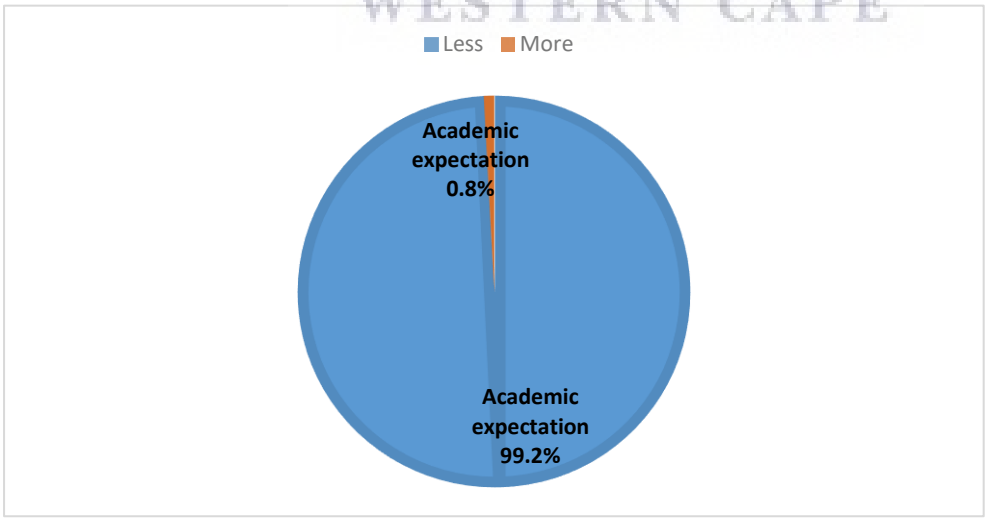

Figure 4: Comparison of stress-related academic expectations and demographic variables.

The findings indicate that both gender groups reported having more stress related to academic expectations: females, 108 (99.1%) and males, 21 (100%). No statistical significance (χ^2 = .194, p = 0.659) was found between gender and stress-related academic expectations.

Regarding stress and the age of respondents, of those under the age of 20 years, 58 (98.3%) and of those aged 21-25 years, 84 (98.3%) reported having more stress related to academic expectations. No statistically significant association (χ^2 = 1.213, p = 0.876) was found between the age of the respondents and stress-related academic expectations. Related to marital status, of the single respondents 114 (99.1%) and of the married respondents 15 (100%) were found to have less academic stress (Table 14). No statistically significant association (χ^2 = 0.131, p = 0.717) was found between marital status and stress related to academic expectations. With regard to academic stress related to language, of the Xhosa-speaking respondents 51 (100%), of the English-speaking respondents 37 (99.1%), and of the Afrikaans-speaking respondents 34 (100%) reported having less stress related to academic expectations. No statistical significance (χ^2 = 2.440, p = 0.486) was found.

Table 14: Academic expectations

			Academic expectations		
			Less stress related to academic expectations	**More stress related to academic expectations**	**P - value**
Gender	Male	n	21	0	0.659
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Female	n	108	1	
		%	99.1%	0.9%	
Age group (years)	Under 20	n	58	1	0.876
		%	98.3%	1.7%	
	21-25	n	49	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	26-30	n	11	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	

	31-35	n	3	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	36 and older	n	8	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
Race	White	n	8	0	0.566
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Black	n	61	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Coloured	n	60	1	
		%	98.4%	1.6%	
Marital status	Married	n	15	0	0.717
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Single	n	114	1	
		%	99.1%	0.9%	
Home language	English	n	37	1	0.486
		%	97.4%	2.6%	
	Afrikaans	n	34	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Xhosa	n	51	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Other	n	7	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
Matriculation year	2000 and before	n	6	0	0.922
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	2001-2005	n	4	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	2006-2010	n	3	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	2011-2015	n	49	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	2016 and after	n	67	1	
		%	98.5%	1.5%	

4.5.2. Stresses related to academic work and examinations

The respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statements about stress related to academic work and examinations. About 50 (38.5%) of them reported that they disagree with

the statement that the time allocated to classes and academic work is not long enough (Table 15). Regarding whether the size of the curriculum (workload) is excessive, 51 (39.2%) of the respondents disagree with the statement. Regarding whether the amount of assignments was too high, to the extent that they are unable to catch up with the academic work, 50 (38.5%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement. Half of the respondents 65 (50.0%) strongly disagreed with the statement that they have enough time to relax. About 55 (42.3%) reported that they strongly disagreed that the examination questions are difficult. The respondents were also asked if examination time was too short to complete the answers, and 49 (37.7%) disagreed with the statement. Regarding whether the examination times were very stressful for them, about 43 (33.1%) of respondents agreed with the statement.

Table 15: Stresses related to academic workload and examinations

Stresses related to academic work and examinations		**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
The time allocated to classes and academic work is not enough	n	41	50	8	22	9
	%	31.5%	38.5%	6.2%	16.9%	6.9%
The size of the curriculum (workload) is excessive	n	28	51	10	22	19
	%	21.5%	39.2%	7.7%	16.9%	14.6%
I believe that the amount of work assignment is too much; I am unable to catch up if getting behind	n	14	32	50	30	4
	%	10.8%	24.6%	38.5%	23.1%	3.1%
I have enough time to relax after work	n	65	23	19	20	3
	%	50.0%	17.7%	14.6%	15.4%	2.3%
The examination questions are usually difficult	n	55	33	22	18	2
	%	42.3%	25.4%	16.9%	13.8%	1.5%
Examination time is too short to complete the answers	n	29	49	35	13	4
	%	22.3%	37.7%	26.9%	10.0%	3.1%
	n	16	11	39	43	21

Examination times are very stressful to me	%	12.3%	8.5%	30.0%	33.1%	16.2%

Figure 5 indicates the comparison of stress related to academic work and examinations with demographic variables.

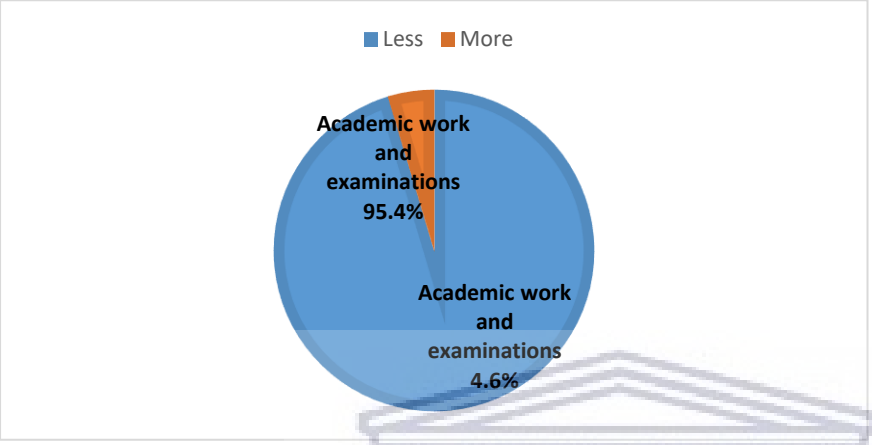

Figure 5: Comparison of stress related to academic work and examinations with demographic variables.

In terms of gender and stress related to academic work and examinations, both genders 124 (95.4%) reported more stress related to academic work and examinations; 103 (94.5%) of females and 21 (100%) of males. Only 6 (5.5%) of the females reported less stress related to academic work and examinations. No statistically significant association (χ^2 = 1.212, p = 0.271) was found between gender of the respondents and stress related to academic work and examinations. In terms of marital status, the single respondents 110 (95.7%) and married 14 (93.3%) respondents were both found to have more stress related to academic work and examinations (Table 16). About 5 (4.3%) of the single respondents were found to have less stress. No statistically significant association (χ^2 = 0.162, p = 0.687) was found between marital status and stress related to academic work and examinations.

Regarding home language, Xhosa-speaking respondents 51 (100%) followed by those with an English background 35 (92.1%) and Afrikaans-speaking respondents 31 (91.2%) were found to having more stress related to the academic work and examinations. Three (7.9%) English- and 3 (7.9%) Afrikaans-speaking respondents were found to have more stress related to the academic work and examinations.

Table 16: Academic work and examinations

			Academic work and examinations		P-value
			Less stress related to academic workload	More stress related to academic workload	
Gender	Male	n	21	0	0,271
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Female	n	103	6	
		%	94.5%	5.5%	
Age group (years)	Under 20	n	57	2	0.076
		%	96.6%	3.4%	
	21-25	n	47	2	
		%	95.9%	4.1%	
	26-30	n	11	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	31-35	n	3	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	36 and older	n	6	2	
		%	75.0%	25.0%	
Race	White	n	7	1	0.053
		%	87.5%	12.5%	
	Black	n	61	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Coloured	n	56	5	
		%	91.8%	8.2%	

Marital status	Married	n	14	1	0.687
		%	93.3%	6.7%	
	Single	n	110	5	
		%	95.7%	4.3%	
Home language	English	n	35	3	0.164
		%	92.1%	7.9%	
	Afrikaans	n	31	3	
		%	91.2%	8.8%	
	Xhosa	n	51	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Other	n	7	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
Matriculation year	2000 and before	n	5	1	0.557
		%	83.3%	16.7%	
	2001-2005	n	4	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	2006-2010	n	3	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	2011-2015	n	46	3	
		%	93.9%	6.1%	
	2016 and after	n	66	2	
		%	97.1%	2.9%	

4.5.3. Stresses related to academic self-expectations

With regard to question related to academic confidence (‘Am confident that I will be a successful student’), 40 (30.8%) of the respondents were uncertain, 39 (30.0%) agreed and 25 (19.2%) strongly agreed with the statement, while 7 (5.4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and 19 (14.6%) disagreed with the statement (Table 17).

Assessing the response regarding being successful in their future career, 24 (18.5%) agreed and 31 (23.8%) strongly agreed with the statement, while 43 (33.1%) strongly disagreed and 12 (9.2%) disagreed. However, 20 (15.4%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement regarding being successful in their future career. On the question related to being able to make academic decisions easily, 54 (41.5%) strongly disagreed and 17 (13.1%) disagreed with the statement, whereas 23 (17.7%) agreed and 9 (6.9%) strongly agreed. Twenty-seven (20.8%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement.

On the question related to fear of failing courses this year, 56 (43.1%) of respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed and 24 (18.5%) disagreed with the statement, whereas 14 (10.8%) agreed and 26 (20.0%) strongly agreed with the statement. Ten (7.7%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement. Upon assessing whether the respondents think that their worry about examinations is a weakness of character (personality), 39 (24.6%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement, while 32 (24.6%) disagreed and 22 (16.9%) strongly disagreed with it, and 11 (8.5%) strongly agreed and 26 (20.0%) agreed with the statement.

With regard to being worried about getting a job after passing the exams, almost half (63, 48.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and 16 (12.3%) disagreed with the statement, whereas 14 (10.8%) agreed and 15 (11.5%) strongly agreed with the statement. About 22 (16.9%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement on being worried about getting a job even if they pass their exams.

Table 17: Stresses related to academic self-expectations

Stresses related to academic self-expectations		**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
	n	7	19	40	39	25

Am confident that I will be a successful student	%	5.4%	14.6%	30.8%	30.0%	19.2%
Am confident that I will be successful in my future career	n	43	12	20	24	31
	%	33.1%	9.2%	15.4%	18.5%	23.8%
I can make academic decisions easily	n	54	17	27	23	9
	%	41.5%	13.1%	20.8%	17.7%	6.9%
I fear failing courses this year	n	56	24	10	14	26
	%	43.1%	18.5%	7.7%	10.8%	20.0%
I think that my worry about examinations is weakness of character (personality)	n	22	32	39	26	11
	%	16.9%	24.6%	30.0%	20.0%	8.5%
Even if I pass my exams, am worried about getting a job	n	63	16	22	14	15
	%	48.5%	12.3%	16.9%	10.8%	11.5%

Figure 6 shows the association between academic self-expectation and demographic variables.

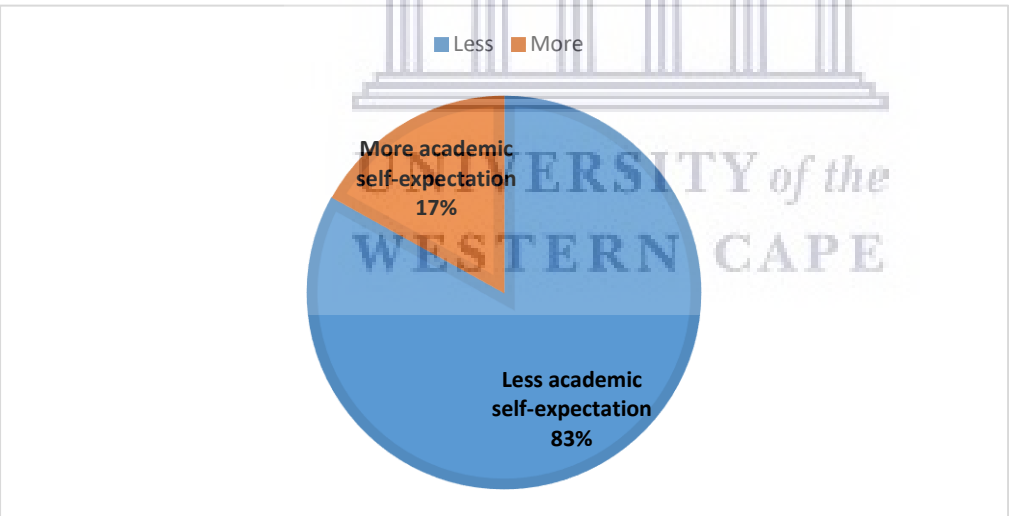

Figure 6: Association between academic self-expectation and demographic variables.

Looking at gender, 87 (79.8%) females and 21 (100%) males were found to experience more stress related to academic self-expectation, as opposed to 22 (20.2%) females who reported

less stress. No statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 5.102$, $p = 0.024$) was found between academic self-expectation and gender (Table 18).

According to age group, of the respondents aged under 20 years, 50 (84.7%) were found to experience less stress related to academic expectations, while 9 (15.3%) experienced more. In the age group of 21-25 years, 40 (81.6%) respondents were found to have less stress related to academic self-expectations, while 9 (18.4%) had more stress related to academic self-expectations. No statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 0.888$, $p = 0.926$) was found between the academic self-expectations and age of the respondents.

In terms of marital status, the single respondents (95, 82.6%) reported less stress related to academic self-expectations, while 20 (17.4%) reported more. Of the married respondents, 13 (87.7%) were found to have less stress due to academic self-expectations. No statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 0.155$, $p = 0.693$) was found between stress related to academic expectations and marital status.

Concerning language, Xhosa-speaking respondents 46 (90.2%) followed by those with an Afrikaans background 30 (88.2%) and English-speaking respondents 25 (65.8%) reported less stress related to academic self-expectations. Thirteen (34.2%) English-speaking respondents were found to have more stress related to academic self-expectations. A statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 11.986$, $p = 0.007$) was found between stress related to academic self-expectations and language.

Regarding when they matriculated, of those who completed matric in 2016 and after, about 57 (83.8%) were considered as having less stress related to academic self-expectations, while 11 (16.2%) reported having more. Of the group who matriculated in 2011-2015, about 40 (81.6%)

experienced less stress related to academic self-expectations, with only 9 (18.4%) reporting more stress related to academic self-expectations. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 2.082$, $p = 0.721$) was found in the relation between stress related to academic self-expectations and the year in which the respondents completed their matric.

Table 18: Stress related to academic self-expectations

			Stress related to academic self-expectations		**P-value**
			Less	**More**	
Gender	Male	n	21	0	0.0239
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Female	n	87	22	
		%	79.8%	20.2%	
Age group (years)	Under 20	n	50	9	0.9263
		%	84.7%	15.3%	
	21-25	n	40	9	
		%	81.6%	18.4%	
	26-30	n	9	2	
		%	81.8%	18.2%	
	31-35	n	2	1	
		%	66.7%	33.3%	
	36 and older	n	7	1	
		%	87.5%	12.5%	
Race	White	n	5	3	0.066
		%	62.5%	37.5%	
	Black	n	55	6	
		%	90.2%	9.8%	
	Coloured	n	48	13	
		%	78.7%	21.3%	
Marital status	Married	n	13	2	0.693
		%	86.7%	13.3%	
	Single	n	95	20	
		%	82.6%	17.4%	
Home language	English	n	25	13	0.007
		%	65.8%	34.2%	
	Afrikaans	n	30	4	
		%	88.2%	11.8%	
	Xhosa	n	46	5	
		%	90.2%	9.8%	

	Other	n	7	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
Matriculation year	2000 and before	n	6	0	0.721
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	2001-2005	n	3	1	
		%	75.0%	25.0%	
	2006-2010	n	2	1	
		%	66.7%	33.3%	
	2011-2015	n	40	9	
		%	81.6%	18.4%	
	2016 and after	n	57	11	
		%	83.8%	16.2%	

4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter the findings and statistical analyses of the data gathered from the questionnaire were presented. Findings were based on the research questions and objectives, and presented in figures and tables. The findings show that of the 130 participants, 109 (83.8%) were female and 21 (16.2%) male. The majority of the participants were single 111 (85.4%), while 15 (11.5%) were married and 3 (2.3%) divorced. The majority of participants 51 (39.2%) were from a Xhosa-speaking background, followed by 38 (29.2%) from an English-speaking and 26 (2%) from an Afrikaans-speaking background. Almost half of the participants 68 (37.7%) obtained their matric in 2016 or after. A large group of the participants 59 (45.4%) fall within the age group of 20 years and under, followed by 49 (37.7) in the age group 21-25 years.

In determining the use of various sources of help available for academic learning, the results showed that of the 130 participants, the majority 56 (43%) often made use of the course instructor/lecturer, while 49 (37.7%) sometimes used this source. The results of this study revealed that the majority 107 (82%) showed less difficulty in understanding the subject matter,

while 23 (18%) showed more difficulty in doing so. Forty-two (32%) of the 130 participants were not doing well in school, while 88 (68%) were doing well in school.

The majority of the respondents 129 (99.2%) had less stress related to academic expectations, with only 1 (0.8%) with more stress related to academic expectations. The majority 124 (95.4%) also reported less stress related to academic workload and examinations, with the remaining 6 (4.6%) having more stress related to these. Out of the 130 participants, 108 (83.1%) showed less stress related to academic self-expectations, while 22 (16.9%) experienced more stress related to academic self-expectations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter offers a discussion of the results regarding demographic information, use of various sources of help available for academic learning, and help-seeking behaviour of students when they have difficulty in understanding the subject matter. Student performance in the school, stresses related to academic workload and examinations, and academic expectations of first-year college nursing students in the Western Cape as predictors of academic performance are discussed.

5.2. Section A: Demographic information

The demographic characteristics show that there were four times as many female respondents as males 109 (83.8% vs 21 (16.2%). In 2017 the South African Nursing Council reported 6607 female nursing students registered for the four-year course and in 2018 there were 6915 female nursing students registered for the four-year course as compared to 2058 males in 2017 and 2155 males in 2018. Traditionally more females than males are interested in the nursing profession as a career (South African Nursing Council, 2018).

The majority of respondents were single 111, (85.4%) and 15 (11.5%) were married. In terms of age categories, 59 (45.9%) of the respondents were under the age of 20 years. The results showed that more than half of the female respondents 71 (65.1%) and 17 (81.0%) males were doing well academically in the nursing college. Of the 109 female respondents who participated in the study, 38 (34.9%) were not doing well in the nursing college, and of the 21 males, 4

(19.0%) were not doing well academically. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 2.014$, $p = 0.156$) was found between gender categories.

Hanafi and Noor (2016) did a study on the relationship between demographic factors and emerging adults' academic achievement, and found that the difference in the academic performance of male and female students may be attributed to their motivation for academic success. Hoffart, McCoy, Lewallen and Thorpe (2019) suggested that when learners choose nursing as a career, males leaners were more influenced by economic factors then females learners. Males also did not view support services as being as important as the female students did. The males also secured employment more rapidly after graduation than the females did (Hoffart et al., 2019).

Jereb, Perc, Lammlein, Jerebic, Urh, Podbregarl and Sprajc (2018) state that it is more likely for females to have a high motivation for study (76.9%) than for males to have a high motivation for study (61.6%). These findings have also created the impression that the gender gap at universities is not predominant in all areas, as it might be in society (Jereb et al., 2018).

Of the 130 respondents, 88 (67.7%) reported doing well academically, while 40 (32.3%) reported not doing well. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 1.910$, $p = 0.752$) could be found regarding student academic performance. According to the findings of this study, 10 (66.7%) of the married respondents reported doing well in school, while 5 (33.3%) reported not doing well. The majority of the single respondents 78 (67.8%) revealed that they were doing well in school, with 37 (32.2%) reporting that they were not doing well. A similar study by Meehan and Negy (2003), who compared married and single undergraduate students in terms of their adaptation to the academic demands, identified that the married students manifest poorer adjustment compared to unmarried students. No statistically significant differences were found

between the married and unmarried students regarding academic adjustment and personal-emotional adjustment.

Tabassum, and Akhter (2020) conducted study on the 'Effect of demographic factors on academic performance of university students'. The findings indicated that there are three different aspects: the married students with small families were performing better than those with larger families, those who were married with no children were performing better than the unmarried students, and there were more married students at high achievers' level, although the difference was not highly significant.

Compared to unmarried/single students, married students may not have enough time available to participate fully in extracurricular and student-related activities at college. However, the married students value the areas that are personally relevant to them, such as their academic performance and their emotional adjustment. Ghafoor, Chaudhry and Khan (2020) reported on 'Marital status as a stress indicator in postgraduate dental students', and their results revealed that married participants indicated stress in the domain of "self-efficacy beliefs", for example, fear of failing a course, fear of not being able to catch up if they fall behind, and lack of confidence in their own decision making. Single students were more stressed in four areas relating to their future career, academic responsibilities, and confidence in their decision-making ability, and insecurity concerning their professional future (Ghafoor et al., 2020).

In terms of language category, of the 38 English-speaking respondents, 20 (52.6%) reported doing well academically, while 18 (47.4%) reported not doing well in school. In the Afrikaans-speaking group, 23 (67.6%) reported doing well in school and 11 (21.6%) not doing well. Among the Xhosa-speaking respondents, almost all (40, 78.4%) reported doing well in school,

with 11 (21.6%) reporting not doing well in school. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 6.675$, $p = 0.083$) was found in the association between the respondents' language and academic learning.

According to Statistics South Africa, less than 10% of the South African population are native English speakers (Statistics South Africa, 2012). The key factors that impact learning experiences for students in South Africa include demographic variables such as class, language, and access to resources (Mittelmeier, Rogaten, Long, Dalu, Gunter, Prinsloo and Rienties, 2019). All programmes and examinations are taught in English, although only a small percentage of students are native speakers of the English language. The authors found that students who were not native English speakers were less well-adjusted within the programme Mittelmeier, et al., 2019). Oducado, Sotelo, Ramirez, Habaña, and Belo-Delariarte (2020) state in their study that problems with proficiency in the language used by the instructor to teach curricular courses may be considered a barrier to effective learning and academic success. The authors further state that the English language is widely used in the field of education, especially in highly technical fields like nursing. The results of Oducado et al.'s (2020) study revealed that nursing students generally have good English language proficiency; it also revealed an improvement in the English proficiency of students.

The results show that of the 130 respondents, the majority (83, 63.8%) reported that they were doing well academically.

5.3. Section B: Seeking academic help

5.3.1. Use of various sources of help available for academic learning

Objective 1 in this study measured the various sources that students used for academic learning and understanding. The findings showed that 64 (49.2%) of the respondents used their friends

as a source of help for academic learning (not statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 0.127$, p= 5.701). In agreement with the current study results, Qayyum (2018) concurs that students seek help from tutors and also informal sources such as friends. The results also depict that students use less formal sources for academic help from academic support services (Qayyum, 2018). In terms of instructor assistance, 49 (37.7%) made use of the course instructor or lecturer to assist with academic learning, whereas 53 (40.8%) made use of course materials. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 0.170$, p= 5.030) was found regarding student use of instructor/lecturer to assist with academic help. In agreement with the results of the current study, Amemiya and Wang (2017) concur that seeking help from your lecturer can enhance academic performance. The authors further state that help-seeking from teachers can increase academic self-concept, and revealed that help-seeking from teachers benefitted lower-achieving students (Amemiya & Wang, 2017). Cilliers (2017), Dimock (2017) and Qayyum (2018) identified that most learners rely on computer devices, social media or a phone as communication devices in seeking help for academic purposes. No statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 0.197$, p= 4.673) regarding the use of course material and use of the computer to assist in academic learning was found in this study. In this study, 59 (45.4%) of the respondents were under the age of 20 years and 49 (37.7%) were between the ages of 21 and 25 years; and this age group usually be considered as the digital generation. Miller and Mills (2019) state that those born in the 2000s are the generation who are more technologically integrated and they are also called Generation Z (Miller & Mills, 2019). Self-efficacy theory explains that highly motivated learners seek various sources of help or engage with multidimensional models of academic learning for designated achievement (Bandura, 2006).

5.4. Section C: Seeking academic help when having difficulty in understanding the subject matter

Objective 2 was to determine the extent to which first-year college nursing students seek academic help when they have difficulty in understanding the subject matter. The results show that the majority 101 (77.7%) of respondents used the course material for academic learning, 56 (43%) used the teacher for help in understanding the subject matter, 64 (49.2%) used their friends for help, 60 (46.2%) used the computer, and 56 (43.1%) used YouTube videos for assistance in academic learning. In a similar study, Ferran-Ferrer et al. (2013) identified that students preferred the internet as a source of information for academic learning. The internet sources were mainly used by students to complete academic activities such as assignments, exam preparation and research projects (Ferran-Ferrer et al., 2013).

It emerged from the study findings that students did get help when they have difficulty in understanding the subject matter. This is in line with the finding by Thomas and Tagler (2019) that if students seek help, this can result in positive academic outcomes. Their results indicated that the university-based academic support that is available is used by driven students. Thomas and Tagler (2019) believe that students who did not use academic services or university-based academic support did not need extra help. Those students who had busy schedules and lived off campus also used less of the university-based academic support systems (Thomas & Tagler, 2019). It was noted that although the universities have all of the needed sources available, they are unfortunately under-utilised, regardless of the fact that they are effective. A common reason for not seeking academic help might be their fear that other people may consider them as incompetent (Osborne, 2019).

The results of the current study revealed that the majority of the respondents used some resources in gaining an understanding of the subject matter. This proves that students do seek help when they have difficulties in their course. Morales (2012, 2014) identified that students do actively seek academic help when faced with challenges. Help-seeking behaviour is recognised as a component of self-efficacy, which consists not only of self-regulated learning but also of one's belief or strategy that one can perform well on a designated academic task and aid achieving academic success in the face of difficult or challenging tasks (Bandura, 1997). In other words, help-seeking behaviour is not an indication of dependency, but rather the use of an assistance from others when difficulties arise (Bandura, 1997).

5.5. Section D: Academic help-seeking as a threat to self-esteem

Objective 3 assessed the extent to which the first-year college nursing students perceived academic help-seeking as a threat to their self-esteem. The results show that the majority, 96 (73.8%) respondents disagreed with the statement that they did not want anybody to know about them not doing well in school. In general, the current study findings show that academic help-seeking is not a threat to self-esteem. A similar study found that college students' help-seeking given the prospect of poor performance was inversely related to the student's perception that help-seeking is threatening (Karabenick, & Gonida, 2018). Evidence from this study is consistent with viewing help-seeking in an academic context as achievement-related rather than as a dependent behaviour. Previous studies have shown that many students reported that they could have used assistance with their courses or study skills (Qayyum, 2018). Multiple linear regression analysis indicated that perceived threat, perception of instructors, and students' preference to work independently were significant in predicting whether students sought help from instructors outside of class (Qayyum, 2018).

Thomas and Tagler (2019) concur that a positive outcome of academic performance is a result of a student seeking help. Help-seeking involves an individual who has a need that can be met through the assistance of others (Fittrer, 2016). Self-efficacy theory explains that personal environmental and behavioural factors have mutual influence over each other in academic performance. The theory explains that personal variables such as self-esteem, among others, influence academic performance. Regardless of environmental factors, students with high self-esteem perform better academically compared to students with low self-esteem (Bandura, 1991).

5.6. Section E: Perceived stress as predictor of academic performance

Objective 4 was to determine perceived stress as a predictor of the academic performance of first-year college nursing students. Three different aspects were used to assess perceived stress in academic performance. Out of the 130 respondents, 41 (31.6%) agreed that competition with peers for grades is quite intense; however, 56 (43.1%) disagreed with this statement. A quarter 33 (25.4%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement that stress predicts academic achievement. In the current study, many respondents were uncertain regarding their answers to the questions; this could be either because they were not sure how to answer a question, or because they did not want to come across as prejudiced.

Bandura (2006) conceptualises self-efficacy as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific academic situations. Students with high self-efficacy interpret academic work as more challenging but handle it efficiently relying on their abilities, and they make effective use of a variety of environmental sources, and use their acquired knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1995). In contrast, low self-efficacy is often linked with a high rate of stress and anxiety-related academic challenges. In this way, personal self-efficacy has the ability to influence the

environmental-related academic stresses or moderate the effect of stress factors, and to predict high academic achievement (Bandura, 2006).

Olatunji, Aghimien, Oke and Olushola (2016) conducted a study to assess factors which affect undergraduate student performance in a construction-related discipline in Nigeria. The authors suggest that in students who underperform, this can be attributed to undue stress. Their study showed the relevance of parents and lecturers in influencing student academic performance, and therefore recommends that they be made aware of their role in an undergraduate student's academic life. Pather and Dorasamy (2018) assert in the 'The mismatch between first-year students' expectations and experience alongside university access and success' that there is a gap between students' expectations and experience at university. The results revealed that an awareness of student expectations can reduce their psychological stress (Pather & Dorasamy, 2018).

The study participants were asked whether the teachers were critical of their academic performance; 51 (39.2%) agreed and 31 (23.8%) disagreed with the statement, while 48 (36.9%) of respondents were uncertain. Tharani, Husain and Warwick (2017) identified that informing students about their progress ensures their psychological welfare. Students expressed their view that teachers are so focused on pointing out their weaknesses that they do not address their strengths while giving feedback (Tharani et al., 2017).

The respondents were asked to respond on whether the teachers or a parent having unrealistic expectations of them stresses them out. The majority of the respondents 87 (66.9%) disagreed with the statement that the teachers had unrealistic expectations of them, while a few (7, 5.4%) agreed that teachers had an expectation that students must know everything beyond their level; 36 (27.7%) were uncertain about the statement. Kapur (2018) suggests that teachers and parents

need to try and understand students' weaknesses and provide them with help, instead of getting angry when students do not achieve the desired academic performance, to motivate students and encourage them to do well in future.

With regard to parent expectation, 70 (53.9%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that parents had unrealistic expectations of them, whereas 21 (16.1%) agreed that their parents had unrealistic expectations which stressed them out; 39 (30.0%) were uncertain. Knapper (2017) stresses that a positive parental involvement can increase the students' motivation and develop in them a positive attitude towards their educational activities. Razia (2018) concurs with previous study findings that in order to create a stress-free and favourable environment to a student, the school and parents should work together.

5.6.1 Stresses related to academic work and examinations

Regarding stresses related to academic work and examinations, the majority of the respondents 91 (70%) disagree with the statement that the time allocated to classes and academic work is not enough as oppose to 31 (23.8%) who agree with the statement, while 8 (6.2%) of the respondents indicated uncertain with the statement. In a similar study it was identified that respondents experienced more of academic stress than the other forms of stress (Edjah, Ankomah, Domey, & Laryea, 2020).

Regarding academic workload the majority 79(60.7%) of the respondents disagree with the statement that academic workload was excessive, whereas 41 (31.5%) agree that the workload is excessive. In contrast, (Edjah et al., 2020) noted that students struggle to meet academic standards and that they found the course too demanding.

Regarding the question about the amount of assignments and whether students were unable to catch up with the academic work, 46 (35.4%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while 34 (26.2%) agreed that the amount of assignments was too much and they were unable to catch up. Han et al. (2019) state that academic procrastination is a common behaviour among tertiary students, and that usually students find it very difficult to balance their tertiary studies.

The study assessed whether the students had enough time to relax, and the majority 88 (67.7%) of the respondents reported that they did not have enough time to relax after academic work, whereas 23 (17.7%) agreed that they did have enough time to relax and 19 (14.6%) were uncertain. Consistent with this finding, Khanam, Sahu, Rao, Kar and Quazi (2017) found that students did not have good academic time management as they do not have enough time to work on an assignment. This could be related to time management.

Regarding the difficulty of examination questions, the majority 88 (67.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the examination questions were difficult, whereas 20 (15.3%) agreed about the difficulty of the examination questions; 22 (16.9%) were uncertain about the statement. Related findings by Kapur (2018) showed that low academic achievement can be the result of fear of examinations, which can impose negative effects on the students' attentiveness and memory.

In summary, in response to the question regarding stresses related to academic work and examinations, the majority of the respondents reported that the time allocated to classes and academic work was adequate. Regarding academic workload, the majority reported that it was not excessive, whereas almost half of respondents agreed that the academic work was excessive. Almost half of the respondents reported that there are too many assignments, and they were unable to catch up with the work.

5.6.2. Stresses related to academic self-expectations

Regarding response to stresses related to students' academic self-expectations, three interrelated questions were asked. Upon assessing whether the respondents thought they were confident that they would be a successful student, almost half 64 (49.2%) agreed with the statement, while 26 (20%) disagreed with the statement that they were not confident that they would be successful. However, 40 (30.8%) of the respondents were uncertain about the statement, which might be due to so many factors, such as lack of confidence in their own ability, or because they did not understand what the question entails.

On the question determining whether the students were confident about the success of their future career, 55 (42.3%) of the respondents were not confident that they would be successful, while 55 (42.3%) agreed with the statement that they would be successful in their future career.

Regarding the ability to make academic decisions easily, more than half 71 (54.6%) of respondents indicated that they disagreed with the statement about making academic decisions easily, while 32 (24.6%) agreed that they could make academic decisions easily, while 27 (20.8%) were uncertain. Dizon-Ross (2018), states that there are positive effects on academic decisions when information about absolute performance is provided to students.

In determining whether being worried about examinations was a weakness of their personality, 54 (41.5%) of the respondents disagreed that their worry about examinations was a weakness of character (personality). In contrast, 37 (28.5%) agreed with the statement that their worry about examinations was a weakness of character (personality), while 39 (30.0%) were uncertain about the statement.

In terms of wariness about whether they would be able to get a job even if they passed the course, the majority 79 (60.8%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that they worry about getting a job even if they pass the course, while 29 (22.3%) agreed with the statement and 22 (16.9%) were uncertain. Barlett and Barlett (2019) found a positive relationship between negativity and worry about unemployment, and. suggest that as emerging adults struggle with negativity (e.g. instability in their lives) as they transition through emerging adulthood, there is more worry regarding job status and finances.

5.7. Conclusion

It is shown by the findings of this study that the respondents do experience stress in their academic life. The respondents do search for academic help when the need arises, and mostly approach their lecturer for help. The respondents also reported that they do not have time to relax and are not sure whether they will get a job after passing their exams. The majority are not worried about failing and nor do they have any fear of failing.

As long as teachers together with parents establish the sources of stress for the student, they can together find appropriate measures to assist the student regarding proper ways to counsel and assist with the academic programme and study methods.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters presented the background to the study, study objectives, and literature used to support the study, as well as the methodology and data analysis used to address the objectives of the study. The quantitative data collected were analysed and findings were presented, and these were discussed and framed by the literature used.

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings, implications and recommendations of the current study.

The study had the following objectives:

- Objective 1 was to determine the use of varies sources of help available among the first-year college nursing students use the various sources of help available.
- Objective 2 was to determine the seeking academic help among the first-year college nursing students
- Objective 3 was to determine the help seeking as a threat to self-esteem among the first-year college nursing students view seeking help as a threat to their self-esteem.
- Objective 4 was to determine perceived stress as a predictor of academic performance of first-year college nursing students.

6.2 Key findings

6.2.1 Objective 1. Use of various sources of help available for academic learning

The aim of this objective was to determine the help-seeking behaviour of nursing students. The results of the current study showed that of the 130 respondents, 66 (50.8%) reported that they never used friends as a source of help for academic learning, and 49 (37.7%) made use of the course instructor or lecturer to assist with academic learning, whereas 53 (40.8%) made use of the course manual. Of the respondents, 70 (53.8%) and 74 (56.9%) reported never having used computer tutorials and YouTube videos respectively for academic learning. These results indicate that although more than half of the college first-year nursing students use various sources for academic learning, the degree to which the various sources were used varied. Home language was significantly associated with the use of various sources for academic learning.

6.2.2 Objective 2. Seeking academic help when having difficulty in understanding the subject matter

Regarding the second objective, it emerged from the results of the current study that respondents did get help when they have difficulty in understanding the subject matter. The majority of the respondents (53, 40.8%) used the course material for assistance, while 56 (43%) used the teacher, and 64 (49.2%) used their friends for help. Seventy (53.8%) never used computer tutorials for assistance, while 37 (28.5%) sometimes used them, and 23 (17.7%) often used them. Likewise, 74 (56.9%) never used YouTube videos, while 24 (18.5%) sometimes did, and 19 (14.6%) often used YouTube videos. Similarly, 64 (49.2%) agree that they get some help to understand the learning materials better, 69 (53.1%) agree that they ask the teacher to go over the learning materials when they are having difficulty in understanding, and 70

(53.9%) agree that they asked the teacher to explain what they did not understand, while 61 (46.9%) disagree that they get help on parts they do not understand. Home language was significantly associated with difficulty in understanding the subject matter.

6.2.3 Objective 3. Seeking help as a threat to their self-esteem

The results clearly revealed that first-year college nursing students did not view seeking help as a threat to their self-esteem. As discussed in Chapter Five, the finding showed that most of the respondents 114 (87.6%) disagree with the statement that they see it as a threat to their self-esteem to tell anybody about them not doing well in school. It also emerged from the results that 113 (86.9%) respondents disagree that they don't want anybody to know if they were struggling academically due to feeling a threat to their self-esteem, and 82 (63%) disagree that they stay away from people when they are not doing well in school.

6.2.4 Objective 4. Perceived stress as predictor of academic performance

6.2.4.1 Stresses related to academic expectations

On determining perceived stress as predictor of academic performance, 41 (31.6%) agree that there is competition with peers for grades, while 56 (43.1%) disagree with this statement. With regard to teachers being critical of their academic performance, 51 (39.2%) agree and 31 (23.8%) disagree that teachers were critical of their academic performance. Regarding the question whether their teachers or a parent have unrealistic expectations of them that may stress them out, 87 (66.9%) disagree that teachers have unrealistic expectations, and 70 (53.9%) disagree that their parents have unrealistic expectations of them.

6.2.4.2 Stresses related to academic workload and examinations

Regarding stresses related to academic work and examinations, 91 (70%) of the respondents disagree that the time allocated to classes and academic work is not enough, whereas 31 (23.8%) agree with the statement. Regarding academic workload (curriculum), 79 (60.7%) of the respondents disagree that the academic workload is excessive, whereas 41 (31.5%) agree that the workload is excessive. Forty-six (35.4%) disagree that the amount of assignments was too much, while 34 (26.2%) agree that the amount of assignments was too much. With regard to having enough time to relax, 88 (67.7%) respondents disagree that they have enough time to relax, whereas 23 (17.7%) agree that they do have enough time to relax. Out of the 130 respondents, 88 (67.7%) disagree with the statement that the examination questions were difficult, whereas 20 (15.3%) agree about the difficulty of the examination questions.

6.2.4.3 Stresses related to academic self-expectations

Out of the 130 respondents, almost half 64 (49.2%) agree with the statement that they think they are confident that they would be a successful student, while 26 (20%) disagree with the statement. Equal amounts of students 55 (42.3%) agree and disagree that they are confident about the success of their future career. On the question about making academic decisions easily, more than half 71 (54.6%) of the respondents disagree with the statement, while 32 (24.6%) agree that they could make academic decisions easily. Upon asking the respondents if they fear failing the course, 40 (30.8%) agreed that they did. In terms of the question whether being worried about examinations was a weakness of their personality, 54 (41.5%) of the respondents disagree and 37 (28.5%) agree that it is a weakness of character (personality). It emerged from the results that the majority 79 (60.8%) of the respondents disagree that they worry about getting a job even if they pass the course, while 29 (22.3%) agree with the

statement. There was a significant association between home language and academic self-expectations, and between gender and academic self-expectations.

6.3 Limitations of the study

From the point of view of the researcher, describing the limitations of the study aims to highlight possible weaknesses that could possibly have an impact on the study. The study was conducted at one college of first-year nursing students in the Western Cape, therefore, it cannot be generalized to other nursing college students. This was a self-administered study, and the respondents might not provide genuine answers, and therefore results may not reflect what was happening practically on the ground. Many students chose to respond that they were 'Uncertain'; this could be because it is easier for them to respond in this way, as it does not require thinking. The 'Uncertain' responses might have impacted negatively on the findings of the study.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Recommendations related to the use of various sources of help available for academic learning.

The findings of this study show that respondents did use the course instructor/teacher for academic assistance. It is therefore recommended that the course instructor/teacher should have a timetable of when and where they would be available for student matters and assistance, and they should encourage and enhance independent learning so that the students do use the various resources available for academic learning. Administrative support should be available to facilitate the students' maximising of the use of various resources for academic learning.

The study findings also show that only a few students use computer tutorials as a source for academic help. It is therefore recommended that a computer laboratory be available to the students to enable them to explore more learning/information on their subjects and to work on their assignments. Nursing students have a certain amount of work-integrated learning hours to complete and work 12-hours shifts; therefore, it is important that the computer laboratory should be available after-hours.

6.4.2 Recommendations related to seeking academic help when having difficulty in understanding the subject matter

The study findings show that a number of students use more informal sources of academic assistance, such as friends. Therefore the researcher recommends that the students need to be connected with peer teaching instructors or older students to assist them with study material for better understanding of subject matters and successful academic performance.

The study findings also show that respondents did use the lecturer for academic assistance; however, very few students use instructional videos, such as those available on YouTube. It is therefore recommended that the teacher sets up instructional videos and podcasts, and shares these online to enhance the students' use of instructional videos for their academic learning.

6.4.3 Recommendations related to students viewing seeking help as a threat to their self-esteem

The study findings show that the majority of students did not see help-seeking as a threat to their self-esteem. However, there are still a few students who see help-seeking as a threat to self-esteem, while others were uncertain whether they see it as a threat to self-esteem or not. Therefore, the provision of a student counsellor to assist students with uplifting their self-

esteem is recommended. The researcher also recommends a confidential box in which students can drop notes to the lecturer, or making the email address of the lecturer available, specifically for those who do not want others to know that they are seeking advice.

6.4.4 Recommendations related to perceived stress as a predictor of academic performance

The study findings show that there are perceived stresses related to academic workload and examinations, as well as academic expectations. Therefore it is recommended that counselling support should be provided to students to assist them in identifying stressors and how to alleviate stress. During their orientation, they can receive assistance on how to set-up proper study timetables to assist them with time management, in order to help them manage their academic workload and examination preparation. Managing study time effectively and working on assignments early minimises the stress related to academic workload and examinations.

The study identified that language was one of the main psychosocial factors for predicting academic performance; therefore, it is recommended that language support and writing centres be established to help students struggling with academic language.

6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has demonstrated that the majority of respondents were seeking academic assistance from various sources, such as the teacher, course manuals/books, and the computer. The findings have shown that the respondents use more informal sources, such as friends for academic assistance or to understand the course/subject matter better. However, few

students use instructional videos and computer tutorials for academic learning. The study has also identified that gender has no statistical significance in terms of the use of sources, seeking academic help, and academic workload. The respondents also reported that they did not see help-seeking as a threat to their self-esteem. There was a significant association between home language and the use of various sources for academic learning. This implies that language is the prominent psychosocial factor for predicting academic performance and success.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

QUESTIONAIRE

Please answer all questions and indicate your answer with an X in the block next to the question.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1	Age								
2	Gender	A: Male			B:Female				
3	Race	White			Black				
		Coloured			Indian				
4	Marital Status	Married		Divorced		Widow		Widower	
		Separated		Other					
5	Home Language	English		Afrikaans		Xhosa		Other: Specify	
6	When did you finish your matric								

SECTION B: QUESTIONS MEASURING USE OF VARIOUS SOURCES OF HELP AVAILABLE

0 = Never; 1 = Sometimes; 2 = Often; 3 = Very Often

How frequently do you use the following various sources to help you understand subject courses

		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
		1	2	3	4
1	Friends				
2	Teacher(Course instructor)(Lecturer)				
3	Manual(books)				
4	Computer tutorials				
5	You tube video				

SECTION C. QUESTIONS MEASURING SEEKING ACADEMIC HELP

When I have difficulty of understanding the subject matter first year nursing courses

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 =Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Help Seeking	1	2	3	4	5
1	I get some help to understand the learning material better					
2	I ask the teacher to go over it with me					
3	I ask the teacher to explain what I didn't understand					
4	I get some help on the parts I didn't understand					

1

SECTION D: MEASURING VIEW SEEKING HELP AS A THREAT TO SELF-ESTEEM

When I am not doing well in the school, for example on a test, exam or unable to answer an important question

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 =Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	View seeking help as threat to self-esteem	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
5	I stay away from people					
6	I don't want to see anyone					
7	I don't want to talk to anyone about it					
8	I don't want to talk about it					
9	I try to keep people from finding out					
10	I make sure nobody finds out					
11	I try to hide it					
12	I don't tell anyone about it					
13	I don't let anybody know about it					

SECTION E: QUESTIONS MEASURING PERCEIVED STRESS IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

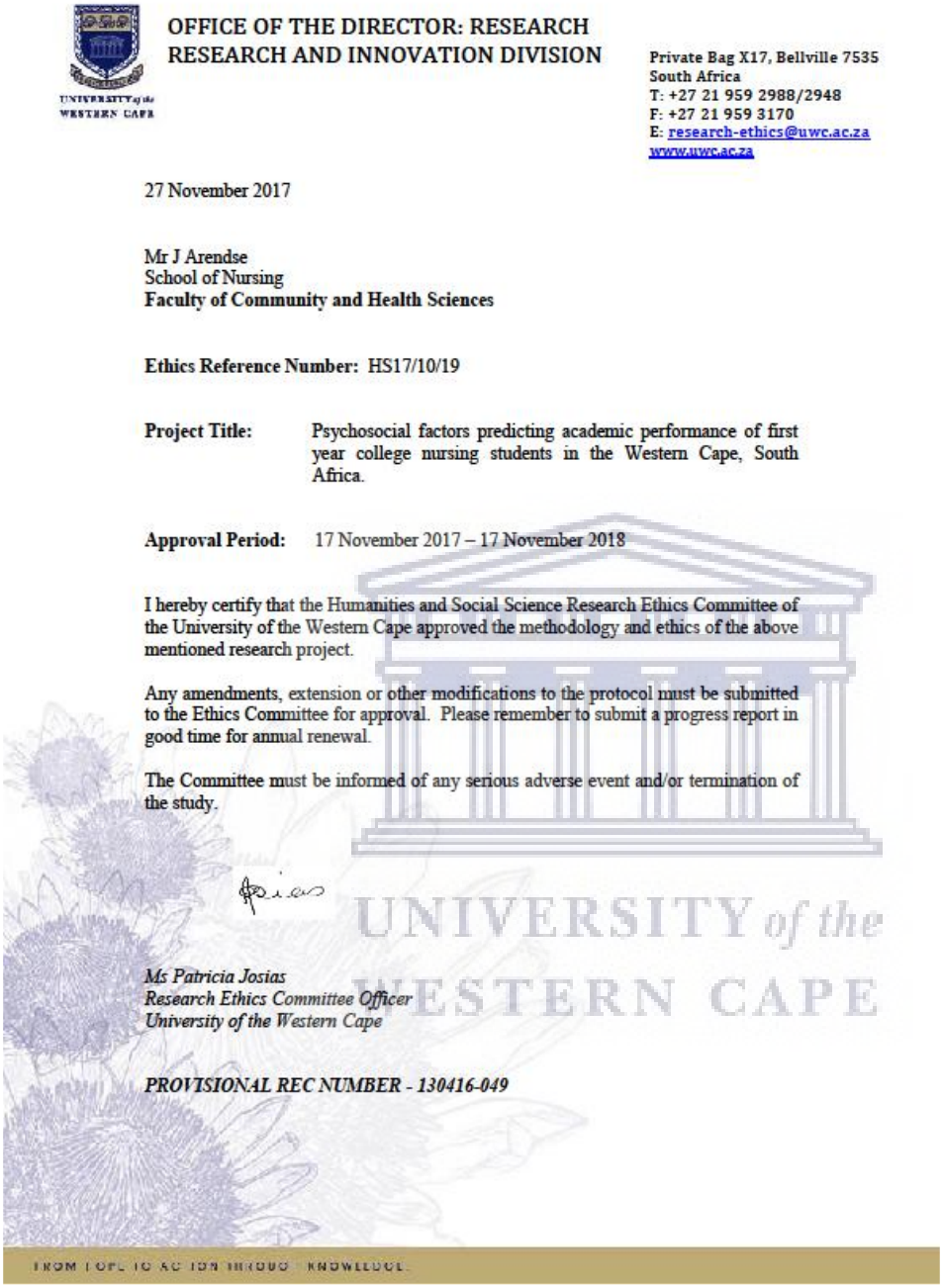
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 =Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
	Stresses related to academic expectations					
1	Competition with my peers for grades is quite intense					
2	My teachers are critical of my academic performance					
3	Teachers have unrealistic expectations of me					
4	The unrealistic expectations of my parents stresses me out					
	Stresses related to academic work and examinations					
5	The time allocated to classes and academic work is enough					
6	The size of the curriculum (workload) is excessive					
7	I believe that the amount of work assignment is too much Am unable to catch up if getting behind my work					

8	I have enough time to relax after work					
9	The examination questions are usually difficult					
10	Examination time is short to complete the answers					
11	Examination times are very stressful to me					
	Stresses related to students' academic self-perceptions					
12	Am confident that I will be a successful student					
13	Am confident that I will be successful in my future career					
14	I can make academic decisions easily					
15	I fear failing courses this year					
16	I think that my worry about examinations is weakness of character(personality)					
17	Even if I pass my exams, am worried about getting a job					

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval from the University of the Western Cape



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South Africa
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27 November 2017

Mr J Arendse
School of Nursing
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS17/10/19

Project Title: Psychosocial factors predicting academic performance of first year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa.

Approval Period: 17 November 2017 – 17 November 2018

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

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

PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049

Appendix 3: Ethics application from Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

HEALTH AND WELLNESS SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HW-REC)
Registration Number NHREC: REC- 230408-014

P.O. Box 1906 • Bellville 7535 South Africa
Symphony Road Bellville 7535
Tel: +27 21 959 6917
Email: sethn@cput.ac.za

18 July 2018
REC Approval Reference No:
CPUT/HW-REC 2018/H13

Dear John Paul Arendse

Re: APPLICATION TO THE HW-REC FOR ETHICS CLEARANCE

Approval was granted by the Health and Wellness Sciences-REC to Mr Arendse for ethical clearance on 31 May 2018. This approval is for research activities related to student research in the Department of Nursing Sciences.

TITLE: **Psychosocial factors predicting academic performance of first year college nursing students in the Western Cape, South Africa.**

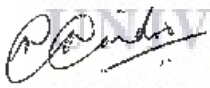
Supervisor: Dr M Bimerew

Comment:

Approval **will not extend beyond 19 July 2019.** An extension should be applied for **6 weeks before** this expiry date should data collection and use/analysis of data, information and/or samples for this study continue beyond this date.

The investigator(s) should understand the ethical conditions under which they are authorized to carry out this study and they should be compliant to these conditions. It is required that the investigator(s) complete an annual progress report that should be submitted to the HWS-REC in December of that particular year, for the HWS-REC to be kept informed of the progress and of any problems you may have encountered.

Kind Regards



Dr. Navindhra Naidoo
Chairperson – Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences

Appendix 4: Request to conduct and collect data for research on the Premises of the Western Cape College of Nursing

Western Cape Government
Health

Directorate: Nursing Services/Western Cape College of Nursing
Theresa.Bock@westerncape.gov.za
Enquiry: Dr Mabuda
Tel: (021) 684 1211
2018/11/14

From: Tendani B Mabuda
Sent: 14 November 2018 12:04 PM
To: Theresa Bock; John P Arendse
Subject: Re: Reference: WC_201808_019 / Request to conduct and collect data for Research

Dear John

Permission granted.

Wishing you well in your studies

Regards

Dr Tendani Mabuda .PhD (WITS), MCur (UNISA), BCur (UNISA), RN (LCN)

Director: Nursing Services/WCCN

Department of Health: Western Cape Government

Western Cape College of Nursing /Athlone

Tel: +27 21 684 – 1202

Dr Theresa M Bock

Deputy Director

WCCN: Metro West Campus

Theresa.Bock@westerncape.gov.za

Tel 021 684 1211

Klipfontein Road, Athlone 7764
Tel: +27 21 684 1202 Fax: +27 21 638 6988

Appendix 5: Request and permission to use an existing questionnaire

RE: Request permission to use a questionnaire
WM
William Eugene Martin <William.Martin@nau.edu>

Hello John Paul,

I have attached the study article and a characteristic survey that we used in part in the study. Your study sounds interesting. I wish you the best.
Bill

William E. Martin, Jr., Ed. D., LPC
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Department of Educational Psychology
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Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
[William.Martin@nau.edu]William.Martin@nau.edu