

**Factors contributing to poor academic performance faced by students, at a
selected department rural university, Limpopo province**

By

Vuyiseka Luke

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Department of Psychology

School of Health Sciences

University of Venda.

Supervisor : Dr. F. J. Takalani

Co-supervisor : Dr. L. M. Masehela

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Declaration

I, Luke Vuyiseka, hereby declare that the proposal ***Factors contributing to poor academic performance faced by students, at a selected department rural university, Limpopo Province*** for the Masters of Arts in Psychology degree at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any university, that this is my own work in design and in execution, and that all references material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, thank you for your love and support. To my husband, Luzuko thank you for your guidance and on-going support, you always motivated me to persevere. And lastly to my late grandparents Nozipho and Rufus Nombila who gave me opportunity to be who I am today.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CHETL	Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
OBE	Outcome Based Education
SHDC	School Higher Degree Committee
SCGU	Students Career Guidance Unit
UNIVEN	University of Venda

Abstract

Students enter university with the hope to graduate and become successful one day but those hopes are shattered when their academic results decrease. Despite poor performance and poor results of students' academics, there has been a need to investigate why students' performance differs significantly. Students achieve low academic performance due to psychological, social and behavioral problems which arise during academic life. The aim of this study is to explore factors contributing to poor academic performance faced by students at a selected department rural university, Limpopo province. The study was conducted at the University of Venda (UNIVEN), situated in the scenic Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province. A qualitative approach using phenomenological design was used for this study. A sample of 15 students was selected from the target population using non-probability purposive, convenient random sampling method. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview. An interpretative phenomenological approach was used to analyse data. The study findings indicate that revealed that low levels of social support from parents, friends and family contribute to anxiety experienced by students at the university. In addition, Students developed low self-esteem, low self-confidence as a result of poor academic literacy, low marks and lack of social support. The study recommends that Head of the Department to have an open session for students to discuss matters concerning the teaching and learning style offered to them and ways to improve.

Keywords: Factors, Poor academic performance, Students, University

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background of the study

According to Aremu (2003), poor academic performance is viewed by the examinee as failing the below minimum standard expected for a particular task. He argues that academic failure affects not only students and parents but also frustrates the society in terms of dearth of qualified manpower in all spheres of the economy and politics. Poor academic performance in a learning situation refers to the one that fails to meet certain standards and expectations of a given task (Okoye, 1982). There is no accepted definition based on its origin and broad nature of it. Bourdieu (1977), termed poor academic performance as a performance caused by cultural capital, which requires the learner to perform according to his or her optimum level of knowledge, average practical skills and expectations from the Institutions of higher learning. Despite poor performance and poor results of students' academics, there has been a need to investigate why students' performances differ significantly. Causes of poor academic performance are unending. However, some of the factors are motivational orientation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional problems, study habits, teacher-consultation and poor interpersonal relationships (Aremu & Sokan, 2003)

A study conducted by Rajkumar, Sooraj, Sandeep and Harish, (2015) on Indian students at the University of Karnataka revealed that psychosocial problems in which most students face academic stress, difficulties in transitions from secondary schools to higher education institutions are a life challenge. These students experience academic strain during the completion of assignments, presentations, the imbalance between environment and demand. Pekrun, Goetz and Titz, (2002) studied psychology students at the University of Munich, Germany and found that academic emotions, self-regulated learning, achievement and academic emotions were significantly related to students' motivation to learning strategies. It was also found that students who are from poor socio-economic backgrounds have financial problems which lead to depression, anxiety and stress (Owens, Stevenson, Hadwin & Norgate, 2012). The highest drop-out from higher education takes place in the first academic year (Thomas, Nakasa & Quinn, 2007). High drop-out rate, low graduate rate and low levels of academic literacy lead to a decrease in academic performance and students experience some difficulties in adjusting to university when they perform poorly. Continued loss of instruction, class attendance and poor academic achievement among students with high absenteeism are essential for students who later drop out of school (Mayer & Mitchel, 1996).

The majority of students entering historically-advantaged universities which have a different background not only educationally, but also culturally, find it difficult to fit into the university environment (Jones, Coetzee, Bailey & Wickham, 2008). Integration at university takes the form of academic and social integration and both form the basis for the student to remain in the institution. Historically-disadvantaged students entering university perceived their university environment to be hostile and unwelcoming. This perception of a hostile and unfriendly or difficult environment makes the academic and social adjustment even more difficult than normal and leads to poor academic performance at the university (Mandew, 2003).

In Nigeria, Afoloyan, Bitrus, Onasoga, Babafeni and Juan's (2013) study on nursing students at the University of Ilori, Department of Nursing revealed that anxious students found it harder to avoid distractions and took longer to turn their attention from one task to the next, and to their less anxious peers, but with no academic improvement. This makes learning, reading, remembering and writing more difficult, thus affecting academic achievement (Eysenck & Derkshen, 2009). Disadvantaged black students are reflected to have familial, social and cognitive obstacles that learners experience at universities (Hemson, 2007; Tshiwula, 2007; Jones, 2008; Schenck, 2008, 2009; Wade, 2009; Ross, 2010 & van Breda, 2011). According to Niven (2005), many students enter university without the ability to adapt their approaches and methods in order to effectively participate in the different disciplinary discourses of practice that they encounter. Some researchers have indicated challenges students face being linked to their slow progress at the university after their matric. They indicated that this gap may have adverse effects on the students performance especially, in their first year of study at tertiary institutions. This may affect how they will progress throughout until completion (Mumba, Rollnick & White 2002, & Nel, 2006).

According to Shumin (2002) obstacles occur when learning is generated by affective factors that revolve around the emotional side of a human being, which is directly related to feelings, behaviors and emotions. There is a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and emotional intelligence skills (Chao, 2003). The relationship is discovered when a student is expected to perform his academic arrangements in English. Students often lack the literacy required by the university to succeed academically. This is often caused by the poor high school education system students received, characterized by insufficient teaching and learning methods to effectively prepare learners for university. This creates a gap between what students have learned and the way they have been taught at high school, as well as the knowledge they possess to succeed academically at the university (Holder, Jones, Robinson & Krass, 1999). A study by Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) at three South African universities found that the primary

cause of poor academic achievement in students is absenteeism. According to Williams (2000), students who have a high rate of absenteeism problems generally suffer academically and socially. Studies indicate that students who are absent from class obtain lower marks (Barker and Jansen, 2000). Sustained absences lead to truancy and this not only affects university results but also students' overall capability (Lotz & Lee, 1999). According to Mazrui, (2002) human development reflects three elements; namely, the complex interaction of the person, the person's behaviour and the environment. It is because of a persons' human behavior and the environment, the researcher was prompted to conduct a study of this nature in order to deal with the consequences as explained above. Students experience defense mechanism, whereby one protects his or her emotional imbalance as well as self-esteem, in a variety of ways. Such an emotional imbalance occurs when a student attributes it to loneliness, low self-esteem, lost identity as well as lack assertiveness when his or her academic results are poor (Ehrman, 1996).

1.2 Problem Statement

Students enter university with the hope to graduate and become successful one day but those hopes are shattered when their academic results decrease expectation, researcher had an opportunity to become a tutor in the department and observed some challenges, contributing factors to poor academic performance. This prompted the researcher to research to why students' academic achievements differ significantly. The University of Venda is a multi-cultural university which comprises of students who are first, second and even third language speakers of English, who often experience social challenges regarding their academic achievement. Academic overload, stress, loneliness, self-discrimination, adjustment factors and poor concentration are all causes of poor academic performance and causes poor social challenges. These students also experience psychological challenges such as anxiety, poor self-image and esteem, as well as social challenges, such as isolation from other students. This is a result of repeating a module or lower grades and behavioral challenges such as drop-out, substance use and abuse as well as smoking, drinking alcohol to escape from frustration (due to low grades) as well as isolation from other students.

A study by Webb (2002) at the University of Pretoria found that students generally suffer from serious effects during university life, such as poor academic achievement; poor foundation for cognitive development and academic progress, as well as poor self-image. Anxious learners try very hard to avoid embarrassment, humiliation, criticism and to preserve their self-esteem. Students feel alienated, depressed, loneliness, suffer from low confidence and identity crisis once

their academic performance falls below expectation. Furthermore, students suffer from learning disabilities and there are those with visible physical disabilities as well as invisible learning disabilities. These are hindrances which a student may not report to the lecturer. Such students who, do not have the ability to express themselves in an academic way, lack assertiveness, are unable to express themselves. As a result they become followers and not leaders and suffer from psychological disorders such as emotional behavioral disorder and dyslexia. Students' are faced with growing opportunities, early adulthood, identity and self -confidence which lead to unhealthy levels of stress if they are unmet. This hinders the students' ability to socialize and achieve their goals. Psychology students often feel isolated, alienated and lonely in an unfamiliar environment. Third year students have parental expectations, such as graduation which needs to be met, and which hang over as a burden if the student's academic performance is low.

A student who realizes his or her academic results are diminishing may resort to unlawful behaviour such as substance use, bunking of lectures, psychological imbalances', hence parental expectations, such as succeed in university, will not be met. Students face psychological imbalances such as stress, depression, anxiety (always anxious about the next lecture), drop-out, skip seminar activities for example, presentations and active participation in class. The use of the mother tongue at home by students may result in poor academic performance, as students find difficulty in forming terms in academic arrangements. When students fail to meet parents' expectation, this may lead to psychosocial problems. There is a significant relationship between academic performance and psychosocial challenges such as test-anxiety, academic motivation, self-esteem, perceived stress, academic overload and perceived social support.

Students face social and cognitive challenges when engaging academic endeavors. This causes psychosocial problems and leads to poor academic performance. Social challenges occur when students' peers have good academic skills while one's academic skills are poor and students tend to have low self -esteem when they discover their poor academic results. Students are taunted by other peers whose academic performance seems to be better in relation to a specific field of study. Cognitive challenges reflect students who realize their own potential to knowledge and ability to process information for academic reasons. Furthermore, students procrastinate their academic tasks with the hope that their academic performance will improve. When this does not happen, students are faced with psychological distress and inappropriate behaviour.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study may provide insights to lecturers in the Department of Psychology on the psychosocial challenges faced by students with poor academic performance in that department. This might not only benefit the students of psychology department but all students in the university might benefit from the results of this study. The results of the study will assist academics and academic developers in developing relevant academic development programmes for such students. Currently, the academic support programmes that are available are pragmatic. That is they are not informed by research within the institution but they are practices blindly adopted from other institutions. Therefore, this study will further help the university to design programmes that are based on empirical research.

- **Policy planners:**

The findings may be used by departments that are responsible for development in the institution to amend the existing policies around teaching and learning.

- **University of Venda and the university in general:**

The University of Venda as an institution will benefit as the throughput percentage will improve by enabling students to enter and exit programme in the specified duration. The University as such will not have a burden of unsubsidised students by the Department of Education.

- **School of Health sciences:**

The findings may benefit by finding ways to improve students' academic performance and introduce academic literacy programme that might contribute to the improvement of academic performance. .

- **Department of Psychology:**

The study may benefit the Department by introducing good quality results for students' academic performance for the department and provide guidelines to improve. Once the guidelines to assist students with poor academic performance have been met, this will have a good impact on psychology as a discipline and overall course to students and lectures.

- **Lecturers:**

The findings may also benefit lecturers when the coping strategies by students with poor academic performance are known by lectures. Lecturers will refer those learners with poor academic performance, to the Academic Development Unit; for those with psychosocial

challenges they will be referred to the students counseling services to be helped. This will help lecturers in acquiring knowledge as to why students' academic performance is low and refer such affected students to Students' Career Guidance and Counseling Unit for further assessment.

1.4 The aim of the study

The aim of this study is to explore the factors contributing to poor academic performance faced by students in the Department of Psychology of the University of Venda.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The study seeks:

- To explore psychosocial challenges faced by students with poor academic performance
- To explore the social factors which contribute to poor academic performance by students
- To explore behavioral factors that contribute to poor academic performance by students.
- To develop guidelines to help improve students' poor academic performance

1.6 Research Questions

- What are the psychosocial challenges faced by students as a result of poor academic performance in the Department of Psychology at the University of Venda?
- What are the social contributory factors to poor academic performance by students in the Department of Psychology at the University of Venda?
- What are the behavioural contributing factors to poor academic performance by students?

1.7 Delimitation of the study

This study targeted all poor performing students who perform below 50% below the minimum standard, in the Department of Psychology who are at level three (3) of study. Age and gender will not be considered in this study.

1.8 Conceptual Definition of concepts

Poor Academic performance

Poor academic performance is a performance that is viewed by the examinee/ lecturer and some significant others as falling below an expected standard set by examiners (Aremu, 2000).

Psychosocial Challenges

The psychosocial approach looks at individuals in the context of the combined influence that psychological factors and the surrounding social environment have on their physical and mental wellness and their ability to function (Woodward, 2015).

Psychological challenges

Psychological challenges are aspects which are the result of emotional, psychological stance of the mind and affect the learner and the assessor (Sandhu, 1995).

Social challenges

Social challenges can be defined as challenges affecting students' performance in a social phenomenon (Sue & Morishima, 1982).

Students

Students can be defined as children and young adults in an educational environment for learning and academic performance (Lin, Yi & Mori, 2000)

1.9 Theoretical perspectives of the study

Social Cognitive Learning Theory

Albert Bandura (1997) introduced the self-efficacy and social cognitive theory which relate to human functioning that adapt to the notion that humans can regulate their behavior. Individuals possess a system of self-beliefs which enables them to have control over their thoughts, feelings and actions. The Social Cognitive Behavioural theory emphasize on 'triadic reciprocity', which means a person's interplay is strongly influenced by factors like personal, behavioural and environmental influences. Self-efficacy is defined as an optimum levels of confidence individuals have in their ability to execute causes of action or expect a specific performance outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Personal efficacy expectations are proposed to influence initial behaviour, how

much effort will be applied to attain an outcome in the context of higher education. Self-efficacy refers to an individuals' ability to independently and efficiently accomplish academic tasks (Schunk, 1991).

Self-efficacy affects how an individual thinks in self-enhancing situations and how well they motivate themselves and persevere when facing challenging situations. Psychology students need self-confidence to be future psychologists and deal with psychological terminology. A student needs good self-efficacy to effectively tackle psychological terms and modules. The quality of an individual's emotional life and vulnerability to stress and depression as well as choices they make point out for a person to set out expectations in life. A person needs to persevere in all difficult situations and use his self-efficacy in decision making. Through these diverse means, belief in one's capability to achieve some measure of control in the face of difficult stressors promotes resilience in them. Self-efficacy plays a key role in stress reactions and quality of coping in threatening situations (Bandura, 1997). The theory is relevant in this study because given that poor performing students at University of Venda, they are no different from students from elsewhere. The fact that they have succeeded in matric and have secured admission at the University implies that they have the capability to become successful in their lives. Social cognitive theory relates well with a study where students face difficulties when required to express themselves academically and their ability to perform well in their studies.

Tinto (1975) has developed a theoretical model to explain and predict students' drop out behavior at universities. His model placed the significance on how students interact with their environment. For example, a student may perform well academically (academic integration) but at the same time lack social support and social interaction with peers, lecturers and family and loneliness (lack of social integration). The academic and social integration of students influence their level of goal and institutional commitment. Students' determination to succeed one day largely depends on social integration. Tinto (1975) also stated that the eventual persistence for a student at the university requires that a student makes transition to university and becomes aligned with ongoing social and intellectual life of the university. Bean and Eaton (2002), have also researched on psychology models of college students on academic performance. They argued that academic and social integration (adjustment) into the university and how students interact with their environment are the central concerns in explaining retention and persistence for students to succeed. It is reasoned that the amount of perceived social support students receive from family and peers play an important role in determining how students integrate on a social level, whereas students' level of test anxiety and self-efficacy play a role in academic integration. Both models

stress the importance of academic and social integration experienced by students in the university environment and provide a comprehensive approach to explaining student persistence or a drop-out behavior. In the chapter that follows, a literature that supports the claims made in this study is provided in detail.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature relevant to the topic to help the researcher familiarize with the factors affecting psychosocial challenges other students face in their respective context. The literature review places a research project in context. It shows the path of prior research and how the current project is linked to the former (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011). The following themes were identified, psychological challenges, social challenges and behavioral challenges that students are faced with at the university. Other psychosocial challenges include such as language anxiety, teaching and learning at South African universities. Lastly the chapter focuses on services to assist students with psychosocial challenges and coping strategies students use to account for poor academic performance. Albert Bandura (1997) as indicated in the previous chapter, introduced the self-efficacy and social cognitive theory which relate to human functioning that adapt to the notion that humans can regulate their behavior. Individuals possess a system of self-beliefs which enables them to have control over their thoughts, feelings and actions. The Social Cognitive Behavioural theory emphasize on 'triadic reciprocity', which means a person's interplay is strongly influenced by factors like personal, behavioural and environmental influences. A persons' social learning is influenced on how he perceived himself and react in challenging situations. A persons' self-efficacy is determined by how he perceives the environment, his self-confidence, social support and good communication channels a person is exposed to.

2.2. Factors contributing to poor academic performance

2.2.1 Psychological challenges faced by students experiencing poor academic performance.

Entwistle & Ramsden (1982); Drew & Watkins (1998); Burton and Dowling (2005); Zajacova (2005), state that negative emotions that occurs as a result of academic stress, anxiety, fear, and anger compromise learners' learning potential and largely reduce their learning capacity and academic performance. Studies have shown that self -concept enables good management on the environment and in difficult situations at the university, thus affecting academic performance. It is clear that the more a student adjust on a new environment, the better academic achievements will be. A person's perception of ones' self are thought to influence the ways in which he or she

acts, his or her actions influences the way he perceives himself or herself when engaging academic arrangements.

According to Bandura's theory (1997), when individuals have high competency and good self-confidence, they perceive tasks easier to handle, even if they face difficult situations to process in actual tasks. This is witnessed when a student is about to perform certain academic activities such as presenting in-front of the class. Students' fear of being negatively evaluated by the course instructor in front of other students, is a major factor behind being anxious towards foreign language learning (Nicole, Pajares, & Herron, 2006). Learning involves upsetting situations, leading to feelings of psychological vulnerability, and insecurity. Other learning experiences are positive and can engender feelings of hopeful anticipation, exhilaration and discovery (Griffiths, Winstanley, & Gabriel, 2005).

According to Dollete, Steese, Phillips and Mathhews, (2004), university students are sensitive to psychological status. Students exposed in specific and challenging environments are expected to change their fate by studying hard. For them normal studying or living expenses cannot be guaranteed and interpersonal relationships appear difficult, which makes them feel inferior, anxious, gloomy, self-enclosed, extreme, jealousy, self-condemned and sensitive. These psychological barriers pile up and eventually lead to psychological crises. University students have challenging expectations to growth, to become adults early in life. Students are faced with challenging developmental stages such as growing without adult supervision, early adulthood to become be caught in a dilemma to perform well with studies as well as to be able to articulate challenging decisions. Students are faced with growing expectations to become adults, independent decisions without parental guidance towards this decisions making and living alone at the university. Students growing opportunities available in a college environment lead to unhealthy levels of stress, they are expected to perform well which hinder students' abilities to socialize and achieve their academic goals. A student is faced with a challenging situation back at home and has to work very hard at school to achieve good marks regardless of such daunting experience thus acting roles of adulthood and a student at the same time.

Kadison and Digeronimo (2004), condemn that students face numerous stressors and academic demands as they progress with their academics, they face family problems and work commitments which contributes to increased mental health problems. A student may experience a death of a loved one and has to perform academic tasks which requires strong character. According to Weightman (1999), stress can be classified in three categories namely stress that

develops from the individual life arrangement, stress that develops due to exposure to environment which leads to poor treated psychological challenges. Physiological stress may be caused by lack of physical performance, emotional exposure to demands of the academics and personal life challenges. Cognitive body functions relates to the academic standards a student presents at the university and stress that results to the combination of the above two categories which leads to the downfall of an individual that requires attention. Stress and fundamental reactions that relates to stress and among university students, it is caused by cognitive variables which makes students to perform low such as poor performance on academic studies (Hermaideh, 2001).

2.2.1.1 Frustration Intolerance as a psychological challenge to academic performance

According to Bridges and Roig (1997), students find it difficult to cope with their academics and experience frustration and achieve low academics. They find it difficulties to tolerate frustration with their studies and experience low health levels such as studying over time at night under pressure to write exam the next day therefor achieve poor academics. Studying a module or course that is difficult to understand and articulate knowledge can be a daunting experience to students who have difficulty in understanding, students develop frustration when faced with such situations and no matter how hard they try, it became difficult. Studying could easily become frustrating and students tend to struggle with frustration intolerance and would even spend less time reviewing their studies, consume vast amount of time with their peers and to shift focus on academic activities in order to escape frustrated tasks.

2. 2.1.2 Depression experienced by students which results to poor academic performance

Arslan (2009), state that depression has a significant factor on academic performance where students are faced with challenging situations, academic satisfaction and academic achievement. A study at Harvard School of Public Health on 140 campuses by Wechsler, Lee, Kuo and Lee (2000), reported that students with symptoms of depression achieve lower grades and are less active in the classroom relative to students who do not have these symptoms. The findings show that depression is a serious problem that requires psychological support for the majority of students who experience depressive symptoms. Depressive symptoms is most likely misdiagnosed by students due to lack of knowledge and support from peers. The prevalence of depression in females is higher than that of males in the general population (Piccinell & Wilkinson, 2000). Nelson-Hoeksema, Larson and Grayson (1999), in their study on gender differences of depression, reported that the reasons for these differences remain unclear, whereas gender

differences in depressive disorders are well documented in many studies. A number of studies have shown that symptoms of depression affect students' performance and achievement at university, college and school (Stark & Brookman, 1994, cited in Shamsuddin, 2013). Ibrahim, 2013; Sharif, 2011 concurs with Bostanci, 2005 that academic tasks cause a high risk of mental health problems, especially depression in students. Both these Authors agrees that academic endeavours can cause mental breakdown and requires immediate attention. A Turkish study found that depressed students have a poorer academic performance compared to students who do not report symptoms of depression. A number of researcher found that anxiety and depression on academic performance among students in the United Kingdom, discovered that depression has a negative relationship with academic performance. They investigated that a higher level of depressive episodes was associated with poorer academic performance (Owens, Stevenson, Hadwin & Norgate (2012, Haldorsen, 2014).

2.2.1.3 Low-self-esteem as a psychological challenge

According to Harter, (1998), self-esteem is one of the most influential factor which affects students' academic achievement and is the focus of attention in students. It has been found by many researchers that a student with high self-esteem led to achieve high academic performance. High self-esteem help individuals view themselves to be active and capable of setting higher goals of becoming successful in life and results to learning new things regarding their career. The best way to improve student achievement is to increase their self-esteem (Rubie, Townsend & Moore, 2004). Research has also been found that high self-esteem plays an important role in academics achievement, social and personal responsibility, such that those who have higher academic achievement tend to feel more confident than those who lack confidence within themselves (Redenbach, 1991). Gender differences in self-esteem has an influential factor on students' academics. Numerous differences have been found between males and females in their levels of self-esteem. Males experienced less low self-esteem than females as males are viewed to impress by goals characterized by independence and autonomy than females whose self-esteem is characterized by high sensitivity and interdependence (Jacob, 2002).

2.2.1.4 Academic stress

According to Lal (2014), academic stress is a mental disorder that affects students' academics and can be anticipated with students' failure unaware. Students are faced with challenging situations, academic demands for example examinations, answering questions in class, presentation performance, competing with mates as well as parents and teachers; fulfilment to succeed. Baker (2003) noted that students experience academic stress and are faced with interpersonal, social and academic demands during the transition from secondary to tertiary environment. When students face financial problems, they experience academic stress and coping (Bang, 2009). Academic stress among university students have received much attention since it has a lot of implications on academic results of the university (Shields, 2001). According to Shields, (2001) university students are prone to stress due to transition life from secondary school to university environment where demands of academic life, independent decisions are made, acquire new social skills and responsibilities for their own personal needs.

Cooley and Toray (1998) are of the view that academic stress develops in students' whose demands of academic life are overwhelming. Sources of stress involves academic requirements, academic pressure, relations with the faculty members (lecturers) and time management pressures (Misra & McKean, 2000). More strain develops from family expectations who expect graduation from student, social adjustment while separating from family and friends develop more stress. Archer & Lamnin, (1985), argues that academic stress is also caused by academic related factors such as tests, poor grades, competition between students' peers, time demands and meet deadlines as well as professional environments while poor academic performance is often caused negative feedback to about students' performance thus leading to stress, anxiety and depression (Ang & Huan, 2006). Coping management of academic stress depends largely to the individual interactive mechanisms such as friends, class peers and the teacher. This coping management of stress involves effective social support, time management, positive reappraisal and engagements in sport leisure. Coping with academic stress has been viewed to be the stabilizing factor in students' health and may assist students with psychosocial adaptation during stressful life events (Walton, 2002).

According to Fish and Neis (1996), students are faced with all kinds of stressors in all academic life such as that of excelling in academics, unclear future and problems related with adapting into work environment. Learning abilities and academic achievements of students are affected with challenges such as social, emotional, physical and family problems. Feld, (2011) is of the view

that family problems are the key factors of academic stress, if a student's parents are in a period of divorce, a student's academic problem rises. Womble (2003), studied various factors that affect students' academic development and believed that those factors societal activities, job demands which take away variable times affect students' academic achievement. Emotional, academic and financial aids are important factors that contribute to academic stress, the balance within these factors determines a student to achieve good performance at college (Trochel, Barnes & Egget, 2000). Other researchers also argued that relationship problems both at home and at university contribute to academic stress (Shaick, Kahloon, Kazmi, Khalid & Nawaz-Khan, 2004)

2.2.1.5 Anxiety

Spielberger, (1995) defined anxiety as a state of emotions, feelings, tension, apprehension and its effects on the nervous system. These feelings and tension are classified by Spielberger (1995) as in state and trait anxiety. State anxiety is the change in emotional state that reflects a person's interpretation of a particular phenomenon in a stressful situation at a particular period of time whereas trait anxiety is a feeling relatively stable when a person endures personality characteristics, individual differences that characterize people's anxiety. Spielberger's theory of anxiety forms the basis of understanding the general concept of anxiety to humans. An individual who has experienced level of anxiety can be found to be the better in understanding performance or behavior due to stress. The combination of feeling and behavior lead to interference with performance through mind blocking, behavioral disorders, thinking abilities which are cognitive interference, worries, and fears which are influenced by anxiety (Spielberger, 1983).

Sarason 1999, cited in Harris and Coy, 2003 defined anxiety as human emotion that consists of a sense of apprehension and uncertainty that typically appears when an individual perceives an occurrence as being a threat to the ego or self-esteem. Anxiety experienced by university students involves psychological symptoms such as feeling nervous before a tutorial class, panicking, going blank during a test, feeling helpless while doing assignments, lack of interest in a difficult subject while other students experience physiological symptoms such as sweating palms, cold, nervousness, panic, fast pace of breathing, racing heartbeat and upset stomach (Ruffins, 2007). Anxiety includes a range of varieties of emotional (depressive episodes) and behavioral disorders (mental disturbance) which affects university students in one way or another (Rachel & Chidsey, 2005). Students with anxiety disorders display an uttered mood, passive attitude in their studies and experience lack of interest in learning, poor performance in exams and do poorly on assignments. Anxiety while studying is a major predictor of academic performance (McCraty,

2007 and McCraty, et al., 2000) and various studies have demonstrated that it has a detrimental effect. Researchers have revealed that high levels of anxiety within an individual involves decrease in working memory, distractions and reasoning in students during academic arrangements (Aronen, Vuontella, Steenari, Salmi & Carlson, 2004).

Tobias in Abraham (1996), argued that anxiety plays a significant role in students' learning and academic performance and anxiety has both facilitating and debilitating effects on academic achievement. Students who experience high levels of anxiety displays a reduced memory span, loss of concentration and lack of confidence and poor reasoning power. As a result of this, students who experience more often obtain lower, marks in the end of semester examination (Hamzah, 2007). University students have a lot of responsibility to maintain their optimal academic performance, therefore, students who are exposed to insensible teaching environment and or over demanding syllabus receive poor academic performance. This occurs mainly when a student find difficulty in adjusting, afraid to voice his or her concerns about the lecturer and the syllabus, that student will obviously repeat a module if the behaviour continues. This then pushes students towards the surface approach as a coping strategy, stress and anxiety due to personal or family related problems that leads to a feeling of anxiety (Mayya, Rao & Ramnarayan, 2004).

Sansgiry, Monali, and Kavita, (2006) researched on anxiety and found that academic performance is influenced by personal efforts, time management, peer interaction, campus facilities, completion of assignments, class attendance, tutorial services, study groups and teaching style of that university. However, other researcher condemned that successful academic performance depends on how an individual perceives and manages his or given tasks and motivational strategies (Carroll & Garavalia, 2004).

2.2.2 Social contributory factors that contributes to poor academic performance.

Callahan (2011), states that interpersonal relationships among students begin to evolve from teacher-student relationship, student-student relationship, roommate relationship, up to love relationships. Facing students and teachers with different life-styles, values, financial conditions, interests and characters, loneliness, self-discrimination, inferiority complex occur among students who lack interpersonal communication relationships. Poor academic performance leads to the threat of failure and expulsion and a large contribution to student withdrawal from university and students' future being at risk (Wakey & Cohen, 2000).

2.2.2.1 Social support

According to Gurung, (2006), social support refers to the experience being valued, respected, cared about and loved by others who are present in ones' life. Different sources of social support includes parents, family, friends, teachers, community or any social group which a person feels close to. Social support helps individuals to reduce the amount of stress experienced during exams, tests and other academic endeavors and help to cope better in dealing with such stressful situations. Social support involves how an individual actively interacts, intergrates with others and can be influenced either directly or indirectly by another person.

Social support depends on the quality of it and how the individual perceives to adjust into it. Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger and Pancer, Lamothe, Currie, Alisat and Sullivan, (2000), researched on social support on university students and found social support as one of the protective factors for students to reduce the amount of psychological problems. Steinberg and Darling (1994) argued that social support from family and friends influenced students' academic performance. The social support roles act as a buffer against psychological problems which arise at the university and help students to cope better in life stressors and to promote their health at the university. Social support from university, family, friends and mentors create good impact to decrease academic stress Social support can be classified as formal and informal support systems an individual perceives. Informal support involves family, friends, colleagues at work or at school and neighbors while Doctors, teachers, lawyers and other professionals forms part of the formal relations. Both these support systems affect academic performance as they provide care, encouragement and direction to those in need (Cohen 2004; Uchino, Cacioppo & Kiecolt-Glaser 1996).

2.2.2.2 Isolation

According to Dennis,Phinney and Chuateco (2005), students who are socially inactive at university tend to be more isolated, achieve lower grades and are more at risk of withdrawing from university as there would feel no need to continue when there is no one to socialize with. A decline in the performance and adjustment among students who are lonely at college and this make them unable to utilize social resources (Nicpon, 2006). Many students at universities form new groups to socialize and supportive networks, students who find difficulties lack support from friends and significant others. This may cause a student to experience loneliness, isolated at the university which result to poor academic performance. Previous research indicates that students with high levels of social support are less isolated (Halamandaris & Power, 1999; Jackson, Fritch, Nagasaka, & Gunderson, 2002 et al.

2.2.2.3 Blaming others

Morakinyo (2003) believes that most universities academic results falls due to non-verbal use reinforcement strategy. Students who do not approve of the teaching method and style of the university tend to achieve low academics. Students tend to find something to blame as they escape from accepting they have problems regarding their academics. Students' poor academic performance could be attributable to a variety of factors such as student inability to manage their time, peers influence and family factors. It is without doubt that students always blame lecturers for poor academic performance as escaping from guilt, negative attitude and personal introspection to improve their performance .According to Bandura (1994) self-efficacy theory determines how people think, feel and motivate to do well. A person perceives his capability to finish task and make commitments towards them, depends on the individual to achieve ones goal.

2.2.3 Behavioral challenges experienced by students with poor academic performance

According to Calvete and Connor-Smith, (2006) university students who had outstanding performance at high school slowly lose superiority against numerous rivals at university. Such rivals may contribute largely on their academic life. This competition leads to a sense of loss, serious psychological conflicts, inferiority and disappointment to be discouraged to study. Some students may have failed to choose their specialty modules and careers based on their interests, which shifts from their dreams and aspirations. This deviates future competition and loss of interest and motivation to achieve good grades. Students experience some difficulty when entering higher education and are labeled as disadvantaged as a result of the linguistic, cognitive and social transition they have to make when entering higher education (Kapp, 2002). An assessment of the importance of emotion, state that “emotions are the factors that most influence language learning, and is least understood by researchers in second language acquisition”

(Scovel, 2000).

2.2.3.1 Adjustment difficulties

Abdullah, Elias, Mahyuddin & Uli, (2009) condemn that students develop anxious feelings as they adjust to academic (during academic engagements), social (meeting with friends, classmates), and personal (problems at home) challenges that the university presents and this causes poor academic achievements. Parental control decreases and the student is faced with new found

freedom and independent decision making (O'Neill, 2007). The student has to adapt to changing lifestyle of the university, roles and reconstruct to his or her personal relations to this new environment, this results to mental and physical distress (Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hansberger & Pancer, 2000). Hostile experience in relation to adjustment may cause truancy (Roland, 2006). Students become anxious as they adjust to academic, social and personal lifestyle challenges that the university presents (Abdullah, 2009).

Winter and Yaffee (2000), study found good relations with parents, family and friends help students to adjust better at university. Adjustment at the university remain the basis of good academic performance, low graduation rates and poor success are affected by poor adjustment. Researchers concluded that poor academic performance correlates with poor adjustment that result to poor graduation rates of that university (Alder, Bevendge, Wang, Zhu & Zimmerman, 2008). A study by Mudhovozi on university students in Zimbabwe, found that female respondents had differences in culture, language and religion which were barriers to communication with other students. Most of the respondents who struggled to adjust were females as they make less social groups and activities. Males are more adjusting at the university that females due to social relations they form easier (Roland & Enochs, 2002).

2.2.3.2 Poor concentration

According to Buhs and Ladd (2001), poor concentration occurs when a student fails to pay attention to the lecturer in class during academic arrangements. Humans are often loyal to those who show some sense of affection to them on educational perspective, their strengths and shortcomings in their studies. Certain behaviors that students portray at the university such as classroom participation and prosocial behaviour have been examined as mediators of the association between classroom social experience and learning and performance (Buhs & Ladd, 2001).

2.2.3.3 Absenteeism

According to Epstein and Sheldon, (2002); Ready, (2010) state that better attendance results to good academic achievements for students in all backgrounds. Researchers reveal that students who chronically absent are more likely to develop low achievement and low standards. Students who missed classes on a given date were reported to respond incorrectly to questions relating to material covered the day missed by students. (Enomoto, 1997). He further states that students were penalized due to being absent from a lecture. Continued absenteeism results to loss of

money from the students' parents and time as a student realized later for wasted time. Oghuvhu (2002), asserts that absenteeism results to loss of social support, friends, disruption in class when absentees return which affect behavior of other students. Weller and Williams (2000), agrees that when students continue to be absent from class, they miss valuable information delivered by the lecturer, vital information used to clarify difficult concepts. Continued absences of students create a dead, tiresome, unpleasant classroom environment which makes student who return from absent uncomfortable and the teacher irritable. (Marburger, 2001). Lack of attendance was found to be a crucial factor to poor academic performance, students who do not attend classes are not aware of the scope which are given in class for later assessments (Fraser & Killen, 2003).

2.2.3.4 Peer pressure

Allen (2005), states that peers play an important role in a students' life from early stages of life, increases during teenage years. A peer is someone that any person feels safe, look up to and gains something either positive or negative from that person (Hardcastle, 2002). The term pressure refers to the process of influence to do something that they may not be ready to choose or do. Peer pressure refers to the influences that peers have on each other and implications those decisions have on one another (Hartney, 2011). People who belong on the same social group such as age, grade or status to act or behave in a manner similar to themselves are said to have peer pressure that is emotional and mental forces towards one another (Weinfied 2010). Other researcher defined peer pressure as the ability of people from the same social group or age to influence another and was usually associated with teens although its influence did not confine to teenagers alone (Jones, 2010). Peer pressure does not only affects teenagers, mature adults, young adults are also affected as doing things in order to belong or accepted in a certain groups by their peers. Peer pressure is associated with common episodes of risk taking such as delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual behaviors and bunking classes, these behaviors commonly occur in the company of peers. Peer pressure can also have positive effect if it is for a good cause, such that students decide to influence each other on a positive behavior such as forming study groups, make time-table to study for exams (Kellie, 2013). Negative peer pressure also have adverse results, peers influence one another in various ways such as joining a group who drink alcohol, smoke cigarette, hasty decision to join intimate relationships. Peer pressure makes youth to indulge in wrong activities outside the university institution, during school hours where parent's expectations are lost and lead to armed robbery and delinquent acts (Arief, 2011). Problems emanated from adolescent stages where students experiment things due to curiosity, peer pressure and peer satisfaction (Patel & Greydanus, 1999).

2.2.3.5 Substance use and abuse

According to Alklong, Tiruneh and Tsegay, (2013), one of the most common causes of alcohol, smoking by university students is peer pressure, university independent decision making, adult role expectations, social factors, academic related factors and psychological factors. Students reported that they consume alcohol, smoke cigarettes, and dagga to stimulate their nervous system which is the center of emotions and thoughts, this makes them to easily forget academic achievement and overcome teaching and learning in order to process academic loads and to meet deadlines (Meressa, Mossie & Gelaw, 2009). Students choose to drink alcohol that help them in ways such as to increase pleasure, to decrease emotional or physical pain as well as to gain sense of belonging into the university environment (Alklong, Tiruneh & Tsegay, 2013). Family has been described as the contributing factor to students' substance abuse (Meressa, Mossie & Gelaw, 2009). A students' parents were drinking in-front or they are not in good terms, a student may consume alcohol to forget domestic problems. Some students have been exposed to traumatic life events before arriving to university life, which plays a role in an early adult adjusting to university hence consuming to alcohol would seem to be a comfortable option (Martens, O'Connor & Beck, 2006).

According to Rintaugu, Ngetich and Kamande, (2013), students who have been exposed to emotional imbalance such as abnormally poor self-image and low self-confidence that negatively affects socialization with peers and teacher relationship. The high prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse among university students is related to the availability of the substances around the university selling points (O'Malley & Johnson, 2002). Universities are facing challenges regarding academic results, declining grades, absenteeism from class and high rate of school drop-out related with alcohol and drug abuse (Didenko & Pankratz, 2007). Alcohol abuse during celebrations at the university also has major cause for students' academic performance and students feel alienated from other peers who do not consume alcohol and interfere with cognitive and behavioral problems which results to misleading behavior (Fekadu, Atalay & Charlotte, 2008). University students disengage from the school activities such as group work, sport practices and school work due to spending time consuming alcohol leaving school work unattended (Gezahegn, Andualem & Mituku, 2014).

Lukoye (2011), confirmed that early stages of young adulthood are crucial stages where students consume alcohol due to peer pressure, college recognition and easy accessibility to substances. Peer pressure causes students to use substances, experiment and de-stressing with academic problems. Students who receive poor academic performance suffer from low self-esteem, bonding difficulties with their parents, lack of moral and spiritual values, sensation seeking and early initiation of substance use as a result of perceived peer pressure (Otieno & Ofulla, 2009)

2.2.3.5 Poor time management

According to Killen, Marais and Loedolff (2003), found that motivation, students' approach to studying, cultural expectations, psychological factors, students' academic literacy and time management skills are found to be post enrolment factors affecting students' academic performance. A study conducted by Sibanda, Iwu and Benedict, (2015), on South African university students found that number of factors related for success and failure respectively. It was found that lack time management, regular study, regular attendance and assignment completion which required dedication and commitment had a high rank among students. Students are faced with academic stress which is attributed to poor study habits, lack of care for school work and poor time management (Macan, Shahani, Dipboye & Phillips, 1990) studying for exams (Baldwin, Wilkinson & Barkely, 2000) and course work (Robotham, 2008) which may eventually lead to poor academic performance . Studies have shown that many students who do not manage their time well make lower grades than less socially accepted adolescent. This is because students spend more time worrying about their social life, to fit in groups and jollyng rather than studying (Hartney, 1990).

Achunine (1995), concurs that time management has to do with a person able to plan and schedule activities in a specified, correct manner, thus organizing tasks, prioritizes order and allocate time to those tasks correctly and achieve those desired objectives in time. Time management is not difficult but involves managing time and able to have control over time (Lakein, 2003). Some people especially at an institution or work place where demands of deadlines are present use calendars, effective tools to manage time and the art of arranging and scheduling those given tasks depends on the individual (Lakein, 2003). Time management is important for everyone but depends on how a person make use of time, managing books, seminars and tests is crucial for students, teachers, business leaders, professionals and home makers. Time management is explained as a behaviour that is believed to help in production of goods and material and alleviate stress, productivity implementing time management strategies helps to

organize aspects of one's life, therefore allowing one's time to complete all the tasks necessary to reduce one stress level (Misra, 2000). Students engage in activities depending on how well they use their time and practicing various academic skills. The more time and effort student spent with certain academic tasks, the more they tend to learn and achieve better marks (Kuh, 2003).

2.2.3.5 Academic procrastination

Dewitte & Schouwenburg, (2002); and Schraw, Wadkins, & Olafson, (2007) indicate that academic procrastination is very common, particularly among university students. It has been shown that the habits of procrastination can negatively affect students' academic positions, life quality, and performance, and these habits can also lead to guilt, decreased confidence, and stress, eventually resulting in numerous diseases (Lee, 2005, Tice & Baumeister, 1997). Steel (2007) reports in his meta-analysis study that there is a positive correlation between academic procrastination and irrational thoughts. She further stated that procrastination effects self-efficacy and self-actualization, distractability, ompulsiveness, self-control and organizational behaviour levels of a students. Students who engage in academic procrastination lead to psychological distress when their academic goals are not achieved on destined time. (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Ferrari, Johnson, & McCown, 1995). It also leads to inefficient behavioral outcomes and students may have problems in dealing with the environment productively (Milgram, Mey-Tal, & Levison, 1998). University students often engage in academic procrastination due to some personal characteristics such as being enthusiastic to learn, eager to learn, laziness, lack of motivation and peer influence (Zeenath & Orcullo, 2012). Number of studies confirmed that academic procrastination occurs when motivational levels within an individual decreases, a tendency to consume in procrastinated activities increases (Balkins, 2006; Klassen, Krawchuk & Rajani, 2008; Lee, 2005; Lerach, 2006; Orpen, 1998; Rakes & Dum, 2010; Senecal, Koestmer & Valleand, 1995).

Steel (2007) found that procrastination weakens self-confidence of students as well as their expectancy to finish tasks given, it also creates levels of anxiety therefore affects achievement goals. Procrastination causes higher levels of stress, low self-esteem, depression, and plagiarism, higher use substance such as alcohol and smoking and decrease the ability to maintain healthy life style. Students would rather spend time with their peers, doing recreational activities such as going to parties rather than studying for upcoming academic arrangements such as preparing for a test, exams (Noran, 2000). A number of studies state that different primary and secondary problems have been found to be associated with academic procrastination such as low academic

achievements, increased physical and psychological problems for example anxiety, confusion and irresponsibility. Zeenath and Orcullo, (2012) found that procrastination not only result to poor academic performance but also to the well-being and health of a student.

2.2.3.5 Under-preparedness of students

Rademeyer (2005) states that the Outcome Based Education (OBE) is the cause of learning problems for students because its purpose is to prepare learners for real-life situations, not for university education. Thus OBE students enter university under-prepared and this affects their academic performance. An increasing number of students receive lectures in English, which is not their first language. As a result, their academic performance is slow (Butler & van Dyk, (2004). Academically under-prepared students in the last instance contribute to the universities losing vast amounts of money in government subsidies, as a proportion of the subsidy is only obtained when a student graduates. The South African Higher Education subsidy system takes into consideration graduation rates, amongst other things (Vermeulen & Melck, 2004). Many students from previously disadvantaged communities have very limited knowledge of the economy at the start of their university careers. Furthermore, under-prepared first year students encounter further difficulties due to a lack of academic literacy skills. Final students are under-prepared for the academic demands placed upon them by the university (Du Pre`, 2003).

2.3 Language anxiety as a psychosocial challenge faced by university students.

2.3.1 Effects of learning language results to poor academic achievements

Harb and El-Shaarawi, (2006) found that the most important factor in students' performance is students' competence in English. If the student has strong communication skills and a strong grip on English, the chances of good performance and academic writing are high. Communication skills will also be affected by students' performance and communication is seen as a variable factor that can be related to performance on open learning. Through the use of appropriate statistical package, communication, learning facilities, proper guidance and family stress are factors that affect students' performance. Student's performance can be linked to the use of the library and the level of student's parental education (Young, 1999).

Pretorius (2005) argues that the reasons why students' academic performance is low is because of poor matriculation pass rates in South Africa and this has caused a reading to learning barrier. The students' learning environment is the strong predactor of academic performance prior to

students' learning. However, there are individual's economic, social and cultural factors affecting academic performance (Lizzo, 2002)

(Hake, (1998), Hijazi and Naqvi, (2006) suggest that there two types of factors affecting student's academic performance; external and internal classroom factors. Internal classroom factors are those factors relating to the student's competence in the English language, class schedules, class size, note-taking, learning facilities, environment of the class, whereas the external factors relate to extracurricular activities, family problems, work and financial, social and other problems. Such problems affect the academic performance of the student, as he or she occupies most of his or her life. Research studies show that students' performance depends on many factors, such as availability of learning facilities, gender and age differences that can affect student performance (Hansen, 2000).

2.3.2 Causes of Language anxiety

MacIntyre (1998) observed language anxiety as a form of situation-specific anxiety that refers to a situation where anxiety is experienced in a particular learning situations while Young (1992) stresses that language learning context as the provoking factor for language anxiety, defines language anxiety as a construct peculiar to language. Both theorists are of the view that language causes a change in the behavior of a learner. MacIntyre (1998) argued that anxiety occurs in a specific situation while Young contends that anxiety occurs when provoked. A learner will face a challenging situation and be required to perform an oral presentation on a certain module in-front of peers and experience panic attacks and anxiety towards English language by not able to present himself properly. This causes a disturbance in his personality and academic performance .and a learner may not have interest to attend another lecture. Language anxiety occurs where a learner is required to communicate in a second language when attending lecturers and performing tasks in a second language. According to Botha, Brand, Cilliers et al, (2005) national problems that occur at micro-level are affected by the higher education systems and students from poverty-stricken backgrounds feel the impact of their family's diversity at university level. Adler, Slonimsky and Reed, (2002) indicate that there is a challenge visible in classrooms where learners find it difficult to communicate with the teacher if the language of instruction is not their main language they share. For this reason, clear articulation of learners' thinking is not always easy. For that, they find it difficult to voice their thinking, and this leads to language anxiety. Anxious language learners feel uncomfortable with their abilities even if their objective abilities are good (Horwitz, 2001).

MacIntyre (1998) also found that language anxiety occurs when learners face negative emotional and worry reaction when using second language. Students tend to worry in many instances, where they have to communicate in class and receive lectures in English, which requires them to communicate in English. Such poor motivation to communicate in English may result to negative emotional reaction. Ehrman (1996) maintained that a person experiences defense mechanism through emotional equilibrium and self-esteem. He further explained that anxious manifestations such as reluctance to participate, avoidance of work and negative attitude are all defense mechanisms that anxious learners use to balance their emotional equilibrium.

Young (1990) found that students generally become anxious when they have to use the target language when faced with classroom tasks and when they are required to do oral task in-front of others. Students with high levels of language anxiety are most likely to have irrational ideas and are less able to control their impulses and find it difficult to cope compared with other learners (Broidy, 2005).

2.3.3 Inhibition as a psychosocial challenge faced by students

Inhibition means a feeling that makes one nervous and embarrassed, and unable to relax or behave in a natural way (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2000). Brown (1987) defines inhibition as a set of defenses to protect the ego. Inhibition occurs in a state of learning as a state of nervousness, anxiety and shyness during the learning process. A learner who has an inhibition withdraws himself from the activities done in the classroom, because of nervousness. The learner subsequently hesitates to answer, then quits participating in the lesson. Inhibition correlates with nervousness and anxiety. When learners feel nervous and anxious, they begin to develop an inhibition against learning. A state of inhibition result to negative feelings towards a learner. There is a close relationship between inhibition and self-confidence hence the learner needs to face when learning second language. Higher levels of anxiety induce to more inhibition. Learners with low self-confidence and self-esteem have greater tendency to become inhibited during the learning process.

Mohseni and Ameri (2010) suggest that inhibition presents itself when the learner wishes to protect his or her self-esteem. Inhibition presents some obstacles in language learning, as it makes students not to be actively involved in lessons. Instead students show some shyness and nervousness and therefore are reluctant to be active participants in the class. This may result in students taking much pleasure out of the learning a language. Therefore, they gradually become

isolated from the learning process. They build guards to keep themselves safe and stay in isolation.

2.4 Teaching and Learning at South African Universities

2.4.1 Academic overload

Parker (2004) have found new learning routines and academic learning skills to influence academic load. Students feel overwhelmed and pressured with an amount of time for independent learning, reading, course preparation and working on assignments and syllabus. This overestimated academic abilities and skill require time and good task management. As a result, students feel overloaded by constant updates on academic tasks and responsibilities. Historically disadvantaged students especially from multicultural universities find difficulty to multi-task activities and achieve poor performance and are susceptible to academic overload due to lack of adequate preparation and poor high school education (Du Pre, 2003, Holder, 1999; Nair, 2005; Scott, 2007; Yeld, 2004). Furthermore, the teaching language of English is also likely not to be their mother tongue so students find it difficult to absorb better learning material and style, this cause poor performance.(Jones, 2008; Naidoo, 2008)

2.4.2 Teaching curriculum

Welsh (2007), problems that causes poor academic performance are linked to attitude of teachers to their jobs, poor teaching methods and style as well as teaching curriculum influences students' academic performance. Teaching curriculum takes a wide variety of information, students require to pay more attention and master more information to succeed at university.

2.4.3 Effects of group size of students during lecture

According to Spencer and Blades, (2006) group size refers to the number of students in a classroom during a lecture. Group size can be termed over crowd once the expected number exceeds the one occupies the classroom. Crowding is a personal, subjective reaction that is related to a feeling of too little space which is occupied by too much density. High volume of students in a classroom cause direct behavioral outcomes which affects students' academic achievements and personality such as students' becomes hostile, irresponsibility, hostile, aggressive and funny movements during a lecture. Decreased social interaction were also found during overcrowd classrooms rather to noisy, ineffective interaction which regards to school work. Students who study in high density environment receive low academic achievements.

2.5 Guidelines to assist students improve their academic performance

McIlroy & Bunting, (2002); Tross, Harper, Osher, and Kneidinger, (2000) state that students' learning behavior or conscientiousness and self-regulation are related to better learning outcomes that students discover for learning. Students achieve learning from their learning styles or approaches to learning. There are two approaches to learning namely: deep and surface learning outcomes. A student who applies deep approach to learning will put great effort to learning and pays more attention to material while a student who applies surface approach to learning concentrate more on the words, surface itself and features of the text, memorize each word and tries very hard to remember the exact words without applying understanding. This student will not adapt, apply critical thinking and problem solving skills that are required to deeply understand the material being read. Students engagements and learning attitude are thus affected by institutional goals, procedures at the university, peer selectivity, curriculum and research orientation which result in poor academic performance (Arzubiaga, Ceja, & Artiles, 2000; Rueda, MacGillivray, Monzó, & Arzubiaga, 2001).

2.5.1 The use of Tutors and Mentors

The University of Venda introduced assessment and evaluation programs to assist students to improve academic performance. This is to help identify strength and weakness in certain areas of the syllabus. It is thus beneficial to the university, lecturers and students as it gives feedback and way forward to the program throughput of the university and academic plan. Evaluation does not only indicate the likelihood of students performing well academically but also provide the assurance that lecturers work their part in making students dreams to become a reality. (Archer, 2008; Davidowitz & Rollnick, 2005; Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008; Du Rand, 1998; Kagee, Naidoo, & Mahatey, 1997; Miller, Bradburry, & Acutt, 2001; Santed, 2009; Schreiber, 1998; Unisa, 2011; University World News, 2007). Programs provided by Center for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL) place emphasis on enhancing students' future and lectures to improve in Teaching and Learning style. South African universities began to compile a student tracking and monitoring system, academic development programs and student development programs.

2.5.2 The use of Library materials

Epunam (1999) in Uche (2010), pointed out that location for a child is very important in learning to improve academic performance. Schools that are well equipped with material resources enhance learning. The type of accommodation a child lives in also enhance learning and academic performance. It is reported that pleasant and conducive surroundings when provided to students enhance learning, concentration and performance. Noisy overcrowded and busy environment tend to affect the optimum performance of a student. The existence of a library influences academic performance in a positive way especially if those facilities are used regularly. A library is built for sharing ideas, knowledge which aims to provide with more research and information around the world (FRN, 2004). A library is regarded as a storehouse of material and resources to help students perform better and for students to acquire knowledge to improve academic performance. It has been observed that if there is a strong relationship between school library and academic performance. There have been reports that institutions that built well-equipped library, students perform better than the institutions with poorly developed libraries (Keith, 2000)

2.5.3 Students' learning preferences

According to Harb and El-Shaarawi (2006), found a correlation between students' learning preferences and instructors' teaching style which has a positive effect on students' performance. Learning preferences refers to a persons' natural, habitual and preferred way of learning new information. This assumes that students' learning style differ in mode of the instruction and which study method is most effective to them. Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer and Bjork, (2008) contend that scholars who promote learning preferences must measure and diagnose such method before application to learners. Indeed, Omrod (2008) is of the view that some students prefer learning when information is presented verbally through words exchanges, whereas other students prefer learning through visual (pictures, slides). In classes where only one type of method either verbal or visual type of teaching, number of students find learning environment less interesting thus affecting academic performance. Good relationship between how students learning preferences and adapt to teaching style lead to better recall memory and understanding (Felder, 1993).

2.6 Services to assist students experiencing psychosocial challenges

According to Sommer (2013), students choose to use university services such as counselling centers, clinics within the university and may also choose not to engage with academic staff or academic support staff who are involved with student support and students development

programs. Previous research indicates that many students make use of counselling services and attend when they face academic problems. At the same time, research also indicates that available services on campus are often not utilized by students (Constantine, 2005; Friedlander, 1980; Knapp & Karabenick, 1988; Oliver, 1999; Raunic & Xenos, 2008; Russell et al., 2008), which has certain implications and which need to be considered. Counselling centres should be viewed as helping students to adjust well to university life, to the demands and expectations of academics and requirements of the university. Counselling centres at university have to make an (extended) effort (to inform students more about their services especially during orientation period and be visible in all times example familiarize students with concepts of counselling, lower perceived stigma attached to counselling and to ensure that their services are used more readily (and are easily accessible) by students who need their assistance (Sommer, 2013). Other researchers have shown that students who reject help for academic problems some achieve low marks and some have academic difficulties experience low self-esteem and alienated at the university community (Juhasz, 1993).

2.7 Coping strategies students use to account poor academic performance.

Coping can be defined according to online dictionary as to face and deal with responsibilities, problems, or difficulties, especially successfully or in a calm or adequate manner” (Dictionary.com 2015).

2.7.1 Forming study groups

According to Mahoney and Cairns (1997); Mahoney, Cairns, and Farmer (2003); Mahoney and Stattin, (2000); Tieu., Pancer, Pratt, Wintre, Birnie-Lefcovitch, Polivy, and Adams 2010, students engage in extracurricular activities such as study groups, sport activities and residence activities and this needs advice and encouragement from lecturers. Students form study groups to better understand a certain module and for clarity purposes but some students fail to commit for group meeting arrangements and receive poor performance. It is noted that these activities should not be on quantity but high quality that is relevant perspective on students. Structured activities that is includes clear rules and guiding principles together with student attendance and be supervised in order to have a positive effect on students’ adjustment to university

2.7.2 Avoid negative distractions

Gaudreau, Nichols, & Levi, (2010) that students coping mechanisms involves task-oriented, self-regulation and distraction-oriented as coping with academic demands which draws away from the

situation. They argued that students manage their academic demands by avoiding negative distractions by focusing on achieving good marks. Other researchers found that students prefer to commit in task-oriented for coping and self-regulation for a specific tasks, while other students preferred emotion or distraction-oriented coping mechanism as self-regulation at university. (Gaudreau, Nichols, & Levi, 2010). This implies that students choose to cope with academic stress and manage how to avoid negative distractions that causes disturbances.

2.7.3 Help seeking

In a study conducted by Stewart, Beton, Marshallk, Lee and Wong (1997) students seek help from counselling centres if faced with academic challenges. It is found that students who make use of counselling centres have chances of low psychological problems and good interpersonal skills. Social cognitive and behavioral theory by Albert Bandura argued that a person needs to persevere in all difficult situations and use his self-efficacy in decision making. Through diverse means of living, belief in one's capability to achieve some measure of control in the face of difficult stressors promotes resilience to them. Coping mechanisms like counseling, meditation, sharing problems with friends, sound sleep and exercise were found to be helpful during stressful situation. Some researcher studied students' psychosocial adjustment and found that student's positive help-seeking attitudes lead to better student adjustment and suggesting academic support and performance. Students who are asked for clarity questions about course content, who meet with lecturers, teaching assistants or tutors to discuss course material are better adjusted to university and have chances to achieve good academic performance. (Boulter, 2002; DeStefano, 2001; Grant-Vallone, 2004).

2.7.4 Prayer

A study by Pariat, Rynjah and Kharjana (2007), on Indian students found a positive coping strategies that helps to reduce stress were prayers, meditation and sleep which proved to be very effective on academic stress. There was a high degree of correlation between the coping strategies such meditation, prayer, sleep and academic stress. A students would be faced with academic stress, pray or sleep to shift focus of attention to the stressful situation. Taylor (2008) conducted a study on the link between spirituality and academic performance and found that students who frequently attend religious worships, maternal guidance, discussions between different faith traditions and connection between God and morality coped well with academic endeavors. Students who grew up been guided with prayer at home, at university, when faced with problems, during exams students resort to God and pray to pass. It was thus found that

strong spirituality was negatively correlated with academic performance. On the other hand, Mooney (2005), studied religion from few universities in America and found that students who participated in religious activity at least once a week reported to obtain higher grades than those who did not take part in religious activities. Other researchers conducted a study among African American students about relations between religiosity, academic self-regulation and achievement and found a positive correlation between students' religiosity and academic achievement (Abar, Carter & Winsler, 2009).

CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a research strategy that outlines how the researcher plans to undertake his or her study in order to achieve the research aims and objectives. It is the technique utilized to gather information or data for research purposes (Fritsch, Trulson, & Blackburn, 2013). This chapter seeks to give a comprehensive insight on the methods of research that will be used in the study in exploring the psychological challenges that student face as a result of poor performance, with specific reference to third-year psychology students at the University of Venda. Ethical considerations applied to the research will also be discussed.

3.1 Research approach

The qualitative research approach was used to achieve subjective valuation of the learners' psychosocial challenges and academic performance. This research approach explored the psychosocial challenges faced by students with poor academic performance at university of Venda. The use of qualitative research enabled the researcher to gain insight into factors contributing to poor academic performance.

3.2 Research design

Exploratory phenomenological and contextual research design aims at obtaining a full description of data directly from the direct participants who have lived experience of the phenomena. It also aims at describing how the participants universally experience a phenomena, in this case academic achievement, to be experienced by all third-level psychology students (van Maanen, 2014). An exploratory phenomenological and contextual research design was employed in order for the researcher to examine the in-depth experiences of the learners and capture their meaning attached to those experiences. Learners are the ones who experience poor psychosocial challenges. Therefore using exploratory phenomenological research helped the researcher to gain more personal experiences from students. The researcher used exploratory phenomenological research in order to determine the contributing factors contribute to poor academic performance and poor academic literacy. Furthermore, the researcher explored the challenges experienced as a result of poor academic performance by the students themselves, who have had the experience and exposure during academic arrangements.

3.3 Study setting

The location of the study is the University of Venda, which is situated in the Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District, East of Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province. From Gauteng Province, the University of Venda is about 497 kilometers (5 hours); join the National Road 1 (N1) Route north of Johannesburg passing Polokwane, Louis Trichardt then turn right into the Punda Maria route R524, passing Tshilidzini Hospital until you reach a traffic circle, off-ramp to the left (R523). Pass two traffic lights (robots) then turn left at the third traffic lights, proceed straight until you reach University of Venda.

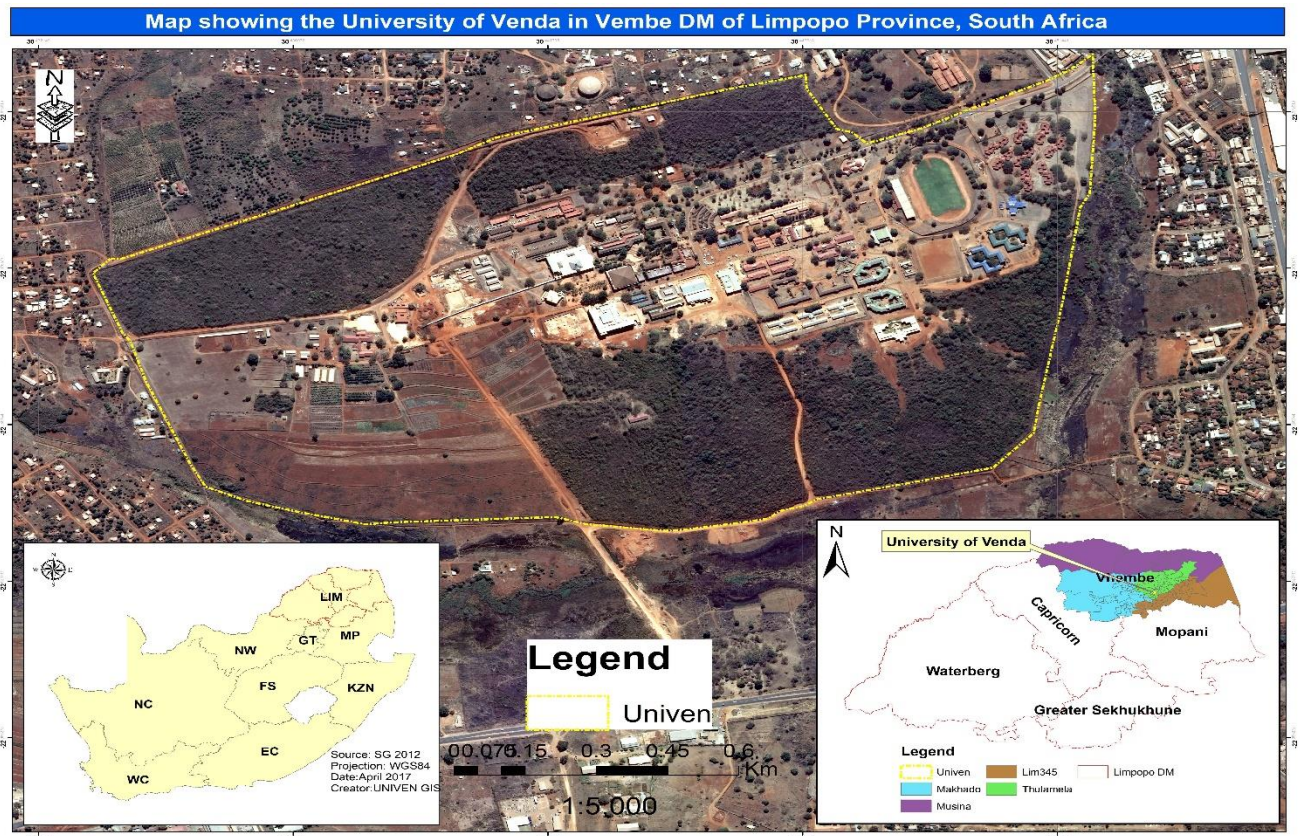


Figure 1: Map of the University of Venda GIS Resource Centre, University of Venda (Dondofema, 2016).

3.4 Study population

The individuals of interest (the population) are level three general psychology students in the Department of Psychology, School of Health Sciences. The Department of Psychology, has about 700 students registered; the researcher will select a sample from the level three group in order to collect the data for the study. Students are given lectures by lecture seminars, provided assignments, presentations, note taking method as well as assessment. It is important for students to provide good academic writing in order to be critical thinkers and to maintain good programme throughput. Good academic literacy is an important requirement for academic reading and writing during assignments, as well as during seminars, presentations and note-taking. If this is not adequately achieved by learners, they are bound to perform poorly in their studies (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

3.5 Sampling and sample size

The researcher used non-probability sampling method: purposive, convenient sampling method. This method was used in situations where population elements are selected based on the fact that they are easily and conveniently available. The researcher asked for a list of students from the tutor in the department and selected students who achieved low marks and 15 students were thus selected. There are about 104 third year registered students in the Department of Psychology. The researcher targeted fifteen students performing below 40 percent from the list. The researcher interviewed 15 students who are in level three in the Department of Psychology in the School of Health Sciences until data saturation and those who appeared not to be doing well in their studies according to their performance either in assignments or tests

3.6 Entry negotiation

The researcher requested permission from the School of Health Sciences to undertake the study through issuance of a letter (see Appendix 4). The letter indicated the aim and objectives which the researcher would like to achieve in the study.

3.7 Pre-testing

The researcher pre-tested the research instrument by interviewing four students in level three in the Department of Psychology. The research instrument was tested prior to the official data collection, to determine whether the questions are appropriate and accurate. The responses obtained during the pre-test helped the researcher to rephrase, identify gaps in research

questions so that the researcher may rephrase questions. Through pre-testing, the researcher found out if the questions in the interview guide will elicit the relevant responses to the discussed topic.

3.8 Research instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was developed by the researcher for data collection (see Appendix 1). These kinds of interviews are applicable to phenomenological studies, where a researcher used participants who have lived the experiences of the phenomena being studied. The questions were open-ended, to allow students to share their psychosocial challenges openly. In addition, the researcher was able to probe participants for detailed information. An in-depth kind of interview was used, where the researcher asked all questions to address the objectives of the study. The questions in the instrument were drafted in English and are included section A, which is on the demographic information of the participants, and section B which focused on the question around the challenges and contributing factors of academic performance (see Appendix 1).

3.9 Data Collection

The researcher collected the study data using in-depth interview and twenty students from level three were selected. The researcher interviewed fifteen students until data saturation was reached. The researcher booked appointments at the University of Venda Library cubicles to undertake interviews and made appointments with the participants. The researcher used semi structured interviews to collect data from participants. These types of interviews enabled the researcher to be able to probe for more information from the participants until relevant information was elicited from the participants. The researcher also used a list from the tutors in the department, viewed students with poor academic performance and interviewed fifteen of them. The researcher targeted students who perform below 50% standard criteria and those above were excluded. The researcher introduced the study to a research assistant with Masters of Arts in Human and Social Sciences in Psychology qualification. The research assistance was trained for a day to allow for clarity and preparations for the study. The researcher interviewed participants with the research assistant in a face-to-face situation, in which the researcher asked questions about the experiences and challenges faced by students with poor academic performance. The interview lasted for 45-60 minutes, for clarity and in order to probe for answers. This method was less formal and gave the researcher an opportunity to get to know the participants closely and gain insight into how they feel and think (Durrheim & Terre Blanche, 2006).

In order to implement the semi-structured interviews, the researcher used the assistance of an interview guide (see Appendix 1), with set of questions to guide the direction of the interview (Durrheim, 2006). The researcher recorded the interviews using an audio tape recorder, field notes and with the help of the research assistant. The researcher transcribed the data. Thereafter, the researcher asked follow-up questions, clarifying questions or responses, and obtain precise information from the respondents. However, the participants were not willing to give honest answers in a personal interview. In such a situation, the researcher reassured them that their responses would be treated as strictly confidential.

3.10 Data Analysis

The researcher used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze the data. IPA is dedicated to give detailed exploration from participants' meaning and lived experience. The main focus is on how participants are making sense of their personal and social world (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The IPA does not base studies on generalizations but gains reports based on the lived experience of participants. IPA was appropriate for this study as the researcher transcribed the data and gained information using IPA to obtain detailed, rich information from the participants who have lived experience of academic performance in the Department of Psychology. Interpretive phenomenological analysis aims at describing the lived experience of the participants; it also helps the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of what actually occurred during a certain event or situation. The technique was conducted manually using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis through a step by step process. The steps are as follows suggested by (Smith et al., 2009):

3.10.1 Multiple reading and making notes

The researcher read the interview transcript for the second time only this time was more slowly and divided the data in to meaningful sections. The researcher read the entire data set repeatedly in active way to search for meanings, ideas and identify possible patterns. The researcher had to listen for audios a couple of times to familiarize or immense herself with the data. After being familiar with data, the researcher began marking ideas for coding, making notes on observations and reflections about the interview experience. The researcher checked the transcripts back against the original audio recordings for accuracy. Each reading and listening to the recording which may bring some new insights.

3.10.2 Identify the codes

The researcher combined the sections identified as having a similar focus or content. This phase involves the production of initial codes from the data. The researcher coded the content of the entire data set. The coding was done manually with audio tape recorder and filled notes. However, the researcher worked systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item, and identify interesting aspects in the data items that may form themes across the data set. During the process of coding, the researcher wrote notes on the texts that were analyzed using highlighters to indicate potential patterns and identified codes and then matched them up with data extracted from the demonstrated codes.

3.10.3 Transforming notes into Emergent Themes

The researcher attained presuppositions in order to remain true to the phenomenon. This step was achieved after data have been initially coded and collated and the researcher had a long list of the different codes identified across the data set. The researcher sorted different codes into potential themes and collected all relevant coded data extracted within the identified themes. The researcher began to analyze codes and considered how different codes could be combined to form an overarching theme. Tables were used to organize codes into theme piles.

3.10.4 Seeking relationship and clustering themes

The researcher compiled themes for the whole transcript before checking connections and clusters. Some of the themes may be dropped if they do not have meaning or weak identical case. This includes looking for connections between emerging themes and group them together according to conceptual similarities and providing each cluster with a descriptive label and a coherent pattern. After themes appeared to form a coherent pattern, the researcher focused on re-reading the entire data set to ascertain whether the themes worked in relation to the data set and if there were missing data during coding stage, additional data were to be coded within themes.

3.10.5 Analyze the themes

During data collection process, reaching a point of saturation implies that all data were reduced, filtered and sampled through the process of analysis. This is a very critical stage for the researcher when analyzing themes to determine what one already knows to be relevant to attain purpose of investigation. The researcher had a satisfactory interpretive map data and define and refine data.

By defining and refining data, the researcher identified the essence of what each theme was about. Therefore, it is important to establish incidences and similarities in respective interviews. The researcher checked for the themes common to most or all of the interviews and individual variations. The unique or minority voices are to bring important counterparts regarding the phenomenon researched. The researcher concludes the explicit by writing a composite summary which must reflect all themes emerged (Smith et al., 2009)

3. 11 Trustworthiness of the study

3.11.1 Credibility

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006), credibility exists when there is reliable compatibility between the constructed ideas of the respondents and those that are attributed to them by the researcher. Credibility was ensured when the researcher informed participants about the purpose of the research and ensured voluntary participation in the study. Furthermore, the researcher established a rapport with participants to ensure honesty in responses. Thereafter, the researcher engaged in a prolonged semi-structured interview for about 45-60 minutes with the participant. Credibility in this study was achieved by recording three types at the same time in three ways, firstly the use of audio record tape, secondly was through written notes by the researcher and thirdly the research assistant compiled written notes. The researcher compared notes to ensure credibility.

3.11.2 Transferability

Transferability was ensured through the provision of background data to establish context of the study. The researcher ensured that the findings and conclusions are useful to other settings and populations. The researcher presented findings to the Department of Psychology and School of Health Sciences. Research design and methodology was to ensure possible application of the study in other settings. Results obtained in this study shall be shared with other departments within the school of Health Sciences to see if the recommendations made can be applicable to them.

3.11.3 Dependability

Dependability was ensured by making use of the experts available for assistance with regard to this study. Experts were the main supervisor and co-supervisors who continuously provided insights throughout the process of research. This ensured the study is dependable since errors

that the researcher may have overlooked maybe picked up by experts in the field. Field notes was recorded during data collection to ensure dependability. The responses within the study, which include research design and its implementation, describing what was planned and what will be executed on a strategic level, the operational detail of data collection and addressing the trivial details of what will be done in the field, will be reported in detail. This was done in such a way that future researchers obtain the same results. The researcher sought the assistance of an independent coder analyze data and discuss the findings. The effectiveness of the process was evaluated.

3.11.4 Conformability

The researcher used written notes and an audio recorder to confirm if the collected data meets the objectives. Substantial literature review was done to verify whether existing literature supports the findings or not. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the students who were interviewed initially for validation of data. The researcher ensured that the study findings are the result of the factors contributing to poor academic performance by students at the university, rather than the preferences of the researcher. Methods which were adopted was acknowledged within the research report. The researcher did member checking, which enabled the participants to ensure that their words matched what they actually intended to say. The researcher examined results of previous research and collected data. Furthermore, the researcher used different methods of data collection, to ensure credibility of the study by means of filled notes and audio tapes. It is concerned with bias-free way of collecting data and presenting results as they are supposed to be, from participants' point of view, and not influenced by other sources.

3. 12 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were assured throughout the study in order to protect participants from any form of harm. To ensure the safety of participants, the researcher considered the following ethics: permission to conduct the study, informed consent, respect for the dignity of person, confidentiality, non-maleficence, validity and truthfulness.

3.12.1 Permission to conduct the study

The proposal was presented to the School Higher Degree Committee (SHDC), and also submitted to the University Higher degrees for approval and for quality control. The proposal was further submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Venda for ethical clearance.

After getting the ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee, permission was sought from the student directorate to interview the subjects.

3.12.2 Informed consent

The researcher issued informed consent to the participants to sign, so that voluntary participation and confidentiality was reached. Participating voluntarily was ensured for participants, without being forced to participate. The researcher also understood that the interview was allowed to stop if the participant felt unable to continue participating at any point during the interview process. The condition of the study was fully explained to the participants and any circumstances in participation was explained.

3.12.3 Respects for the dignity of person

The researcher respected participants as persons with dignity, by ensuring that being academically illiterate is not a bad experience but needs time and learning.

3.12.4 Confidentiality

Participants' personal or private information was treated as confidential, unless overriding reasons conferred a moral or legal right to disclosure. Confidentiality was sustained because the research participants were not asked for their names and they were not asked to disclose any personal information regarding the interview. Their right to anonymity were not be violated in any way, in that their identity were not to be revealed in the research in any way.

3.12.5 Non-maleficence

The researcher ensured that no harm befalls the learners as a direct or indirect consequence of the research. The research participants did not experience psychological harm during the study. The participants provided information in a suitable environment, in order to ensure safety. Finally, the researcher made appointments with the chosen participants on time, to ensure non-maleficence.

3.12.6 Validity and truthfulness

The researcher was considered few counterparts regarding validity and the truthfulness of the study. Validity and truthfulness emphasizes the truth-value of qualitative research and list a number of means to achieve truth. The researcher ensured, when collecting and analyzing data

validity and truthfulness in terms of the phenomenological research about true and valid data from the participants.

CHAPTER 4

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results of the data collected from the student participants, through an interview. An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyze the data. The demographic information of the participants was outlined in detail prior to the discussion of the main themes. The themes of the current study were as follows: contributing factors to poor academic performance, language anxiety as a psychosocial challenge, teaching and learning at University of Venda, guidelines to assist students with poor academic performance, services that can assist students with psychosocial challenges, University of Venda policy to address students with poor academic performance and coping strategies students use to account poor academic performance. The subthemes of the identified themes are discussed below.

4.2 Description of participants' demographic information

This study comprised of fifteen students from the University of Venda, aged between 21-35 years. The results below presents the demographic information of participants.

Table 4.1 Demographic information of participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Home language	Marital Status	1 st year registered level 3	People living with disability
1	Female	23	Pedi	Single	Yes	No
2	Male	26	Venda	Single	Yes	No
3	Male	24	Venda	Single	Yes	No
4	Male	21	Venda	Single	Yes	No
5	Male	25	Tsonga	Single	Yes	No
6	Male	23	Tsonga	Single	Yes	No
7	Male	21	Swati	Single	Yes	No
8	Male	28	Pedi	Single	No	No
9	Male	22	Pedi	Single	No	No
10	Male	25	Tsonga	Single	Yes	No
11	Female	21	Tsonga	Single	No	Yes
12	Female	21	Swati	Single	No	No
13	Female	22	Tsonga	Single	Yes	No
14	Female	22	Swati	Single	Yes	No
15	Male	23	Swati	Single	Yes	No

According to table 4.1, the majority of participants were males (10), first time registered 3rd year (12) and few registered 3rd year for the second time (3). Their ethnic groups were Pedi (3), Venda

(3), Tsonga (5) and Swati (4). The majority of the participants were single and aged between 21-28 years of age. One of the participant is living with disability.

4.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND CATEGORIES DEVELOPED

Table 4.2: Factors affecting students' academic performance

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Factors contributing to poor academic performance	Psychological challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Denial • Low self-esteem • Depression • Panic attacks • • Low self-confidence
	Social challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation • Blaming others • Self-blame • Lack of social support
	Behavioral challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustments difficulty • Poor concentration • Absenteeism • Peer pressure • Substance use • Self-destructions • Academic procrastination • Time-management
Themes	Sub-themes	Categories

2. Language Anxiety as a psychosocial challenge	English as medium of instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of students' poor academic achievements • Causes of language anxiety
4. Guidelines / strategies to assist students poor academic performance	Availability of such strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutors or mentors • Library materials • Career guidance
5. Services to assist students experiencing psychosocial challenges	Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usefulness of such services and transparency of services
6. University policies on students	University of Venda's academic policy versus students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of lectures and students • Make-up tests • Follow up sessions between DVC academic and students. • Re-evaluate and penalize affected lecturers.
7. Coping strategies	Coping strategies students use to account for poor academic performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverance • Study groups • Time management • Resilience • Help seeking • Avoid negative distractions

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prayer |
|--|--|--|

4.3.1 Theme1: Factors contributing to poor academic performance

Under this theme, sub-themes were developed namely psychological, social, and behavioral challenges.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Psychological challenges

Psychological challenges that students encounter at the University of Venda include anxiety, stress, denial, low self-esteem, depression, panic attacks and low self-confidence. These categories are discussed below.

4.3.1.1.1 Category 1: Anxiety

The participants indicated that they experienced anxiety when faced with academic endeavors such as assignment projects, tests, presentations on seminars and during examinations. The fact that these students are third years who want to complete their undergraduate studies and graduate gives them feelings of anxiety especially when they seem to be struggling with their academic activities such as test, presentations and assignments. To support the above discussion, the following excerpts were recorded:

“ Mmh I think what made me to achieve low marks was because I tend to worry a lot about graduation, my mother complain that I need to graduate. (Participant 6)

“Aah I get anxious about the next lecture especially if I am required to do presentations...I am afraid to stand in front of the whole class and present” (Participant 6)

“Whenever I think about a specific lecturer who puts me on the spot to answer questions gives makes me to worry even more” (Participant 12)

I am worried about my academic marks, they seem to be lower and lower, obtaining low marks takes away your energy to continue to study even more (Participants 14)

4.3.1.1.2 Category 2: Denial

The findings of the study revealed that some participants were in denial that their academic performance was lower. Some participants do not believe they receive low marks due to lack of studying but carelessness. To support the above statement, the following excerpts were recorded:

“I believe I am not dumb, I’ve been achieving good marks ever since high school, so yes this just a phase but I will pass”. (Participant 11)

“Laughs...Like I joked about failing all the time, it’s not like I will be the first at home to fail, so registered for third year again is just normal”. (Participant 2)

“My marks are not low, it’s just one or two tasks that I fail, otherwise I will pass, there has to be a way”. (Participant 9)

“Lecturers always give us make up tests, so I study so hard then”. (Participant 15).

4.3.1.1.3 Category 3: Low self-esteem

Some of the participants indicated that they experienced feelings of being unsure, low self-confidence and unbelief to themselves. The study revealed that students find it hard to cope with their studies because of not believing that they will achieve good performance. To support the above discussion, the following excerpts were recorded:

“ It’s because the lecturer favors other top students in class, they give them scope, lecturer only gives attention to some students, if you don’t pass, its’ your loss... This makes me feel angry and furious and sometimes hopeless that there is one time we wrote exams and others received scope and we didn’t”. (Participant 1)

“ I do not believe I can make it for graduation. Aah...because I am not good enough to pass this year” participant 15

There were other few participants who indicated their parents did not have confidence in them passing and this created a wrong self-impression which resulted in them having low self-esteem. Below were the excerpts:

“Uhm... firstly my mother doesn't believe I will pass this year, she expects too much from me. One time she said I should pass no matter what, and I have to graduate next year”. (Participant 11).

“I disappointed them [parents] so much, by drinking alcohol too much, I did not listen to them now they don't believe in me, they say I will not pass and I am wasting their money” (Participant 7)

4.3.1.1.4 Category 4: Depression

Amongst those that were repeating the level of study it came out that they failed the grade because of depression that attacked them due to the loss of the loved ones. This severely affected them to a point of break because they lost focus and that eventually landed them to fail the level of study. Some due to loneliness and fatigue, they were lazy to take part actively on their academic achievement. The following excerpts were recorded:

“Uhm... I lost my dad just the beginning of this year, I was close to him as my mother would work away from home. This affected a lot in my studies as I tried very hard... Yes there were times where I was strong but yhoo , It was tough. I felt weak at some point sleep the whole day in my room”. (Participant 13).

“ I feel helpless in dealing with academic problems that I've been having”. (Participant 13)

“I was always tired, not in the mood to go to class, sleeping was the way for me, Its' stressing to study so hard and receive low marks, I am trying but its' just too hard”. (Participant 15)

According to the participant 15, she has even attempted suicide as she hated the institution and continued receiving low marks no matter how hard she tries.

“I took some pills in my room and drank all of them coz I thought finishing my life was the answer to my problems”. (Participant 15)

4.3.1.1.5 Category 5: Panic attacks

Some participants revealed that whenever they are faced with academic pressure, attending lectures, doing presentations and writing tests would panic, experience feelings of uncertainty and feel that the academic demands were too much for them.

“Mmh...its discouraging to be told minutes left when writing exams, I tend to forget some of the work I have read, I panic, try so hard to remember but its gone”. (Participant 11)

“I was writing a test, I came across a question that I never even thought [read], panicked, difficult to breathe properly and ended up crying as I crammed for most of my work”. (Participant 14)

“Mmh my problem is that I love studying a day before I write a test and cross the night but this becomes worse when I write and would forget what to write end up leaving paper [exam sheet] blank. But when I am in my room, I remember everything, it is bad really”. (Participant 7).

Tjo It’s scary to think that this is your final year and you need to graduate, on the other side you have to study but you don’t know some of the stuff [academic work]”. (Participant 9).

4.3.1.1.6 Category 6: Low self-confidence

Participants developed feelings of low self-confidents when faced with challenging situations such as expected to stand in-front of other students and do presentations, defend their topics and some students feel discouraged when spent much effort to study and receive low marks. This is caused by not believing in themselves if they will ever have good presentation skills compared to other students in class. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I am afraid to ask my lecturer a question if I do not understand while he is busy teaching”. (Participant 1)

“it’s not fair to receive low marks but I have put much effort to study, sometimes I feel I will never pass this module ever”. (Participant 4)

“I hate presentations, it’s scary and frightening to stand in-front of the class because some students get to grill you with questions and I fail to answer them by talking, its better when I say something face to face than presenting in class”. (Participant 12)

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Social challenges

Social challenges students experience at University of Venda include Isolation, loneliness, Self-blame, Blaming others, lack of social support, self-discrimination. These challenges are highlighted next page:

4.3.1.2.1 Category 1: Isolation

Some participants revealed that they sometimes felt isolated when asked about what caused them to obtain low marks. There are different causes of poor academic achievement some are isolation, self-discrimination, poor self-concept and confidence as well as language used in teaching and learning at institutions of higher learning. The following excerpt was recorded:

“My friends in class seem to understand our lecturer when she teaches and I don’t, this makes me feel so lonely and discouraged to study for a test’. (Participant 2)

“Like I speak Swati and I don’t know how to talk to other students, I did not have friends here, I wouldn’t know what to say in my group coz they didn’t want to talk English with me. I prefer to work alone not with the group”. (Participant 13)

“My lecturer always make examples when he teaches in Venda, I feel isolated because I don’t understand and other students would be laughing and enjoying the lecture”. (Participant 15)

4.3.1.2.2 Category 2: Blaming others

The majority of the participants revealed that lecturers are to be blame and the University of Venda way of teaching and learning style for their poor academic performance. The following excerpts was recorded.

“I fail because my lecturer specifically the one who teaches me 3rd year now is rude. Its’ like some lecturers enjoy seeing us fail and this is painful”. (Participant 2)

“I blame my lecturer coz she did not explain much information in class so it was difficult to know all information on exams. Lectures will say, “we do presentations and get notes there, I mean how can you trust information from presenters”. Most lectures don’t care shame, they don’t [care] at all”. (Participants 4)

“Aah... I don’t understand my lecturers when they teach, my lecturer is fast when she talks and she gets angry fast. I am scared to ask questions, Eish...she will chow you in-front of others”. (Participant 6)

“Lecturers are rude, when you consult them, will refer you to class reps [representatives] and they don’t say it nicely”. (Participant 8)

“The university should find out why students fail so much from the lecturers. Some lecturers have personal problems at home, goes to class stressed and we suffer because of that”. (Participant 12)

“I find this university books, author’s old mode of teaching confusing, I mean when I compare with my friends we’re doing same course but tjo I was shocked what they study there [other university]”. (Participant 15).

4.3.1.2.3 Category 3: Self-blame

Some participants blamed themselves for achieving low marks and poor performance. They reported that they don’t blame anybody else but themselves for their marks being low. The following excerpts was recorded:

“I hang out with my boyfriend a lot during exams so yha I blame anybody but me [laughs]”. (Participant 12)

“I would say firstly I never wanted to study here [Univen], I applied at Wits [University of Witwatersrand] but they rejected me, so I blame myself of not applying earlier, I ended up doing wrong choice of course, I never wanted to do psychology but then I am doing it”. (Participant 15)

4.3.1.2.4 Category 4: Lack of social support

Few participants indicated that they lacked support from their family, siblings, friends, lecturers, Student Representative Council (SRC), University of Venda DVC academic, in order for them to proceed to the next academic class. The following excerpts was recorded:

“Aah... my mother doesn’t give me any support, she only cares about my other siblings and her business. I try very hard but she just doesn’t care”. (Participant 10)

“ Nah...no one at home ever asked me how is it here [Univen] but they are like that at home, my parents as long as they give me money, I am alright”. (Participant 15).

“When you fail, you don’t show to friends, they will laugh at me, I decide to let it stay like that”. (Participant 12)

“I told my mother I was sick at school, but she ignored me, kept on saying I must be strong. It was difficult shame a lot” (Participant 13)

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Behavioral challenges

Behavioral challenges which students experience at the University of Venda include: Adjustment difficulties, poor concentration, absenteeism, peer pressure, substance use, poor performance, time management and academic procrastination. These challenges are highlighted below:

4.3.1.3.1 Category 1: Adjustment difficulties

Some of the participants indicated that they had problems with adjusting to a new environment as some spend their most of their lives staying with parents. Few participants complained about enrolling at the University of Venda as a wrong choice since it became difficult to adjust well. They cited knowing very few people that could have helped them adjust well. This even affected their performance in class, they could not have self-confidence. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I came in Univen doing my second year, this affected me a lot. I didn’t have friends and the way they teach here is different. I find it difficult to mix [mingle] with friends and lecturers are sometimes difficult to understand”. (Participants 14)

“Firstly...coming here was a wrong choice for me, I don’t have much friends to interact with, in study groups, the weather here is very hot, shops are very far, they make jokes in their language and you look like a fool”. (Participant 15)

4.3.1.3.2 Category 2: Poor concentration

Results of the study indicated some participants as having difficulties in concentrating during class. This could be attributed to personal problems like relationships and juggling with sport which leads to poor academic performance as they experience during academic arrangements. The following excerpts were recorded:

“The issue of my girlfriend is another story who...firstly I stay with her and attend classes together, so I tend not to focus in class especially if we had a fight”. (Participant 4)

“I play soccer for spare time so I tend to be busy and tired in class not focusing more on the lecturer, such problems led me to fail”. (Participant 6)

“Most of the times I spend my time with my boyfriend, he doesn’t stay here at campus, so most weekends I am with him, I find it difficult to focus”. (Participant 12)

“If I study too much the previous night, my eyes becomes itchy and swell so I go to class just to be there and would leave the lecture empty”. (Participant 11)

4.3.1.3.3 Category 3: Absenteeism

Majority of the participants indicated that they bunk lectures more often. Different factors contributed to absenteeism among students with poor academic performance such as feelings of hopelessness, language anxiety, no encouragement to attend lectures, University of Venda’s policy on teaching and learning. To support the above discussion, the following excerpts were recorded:

“What’s the use of attending a class when your lecturer makes fun of you when you can present, aah I prefer to stay in my room Nna...cause you may find that you can’t present and students laugh at you...”. (Participant 1).

“I felt weak, moody because I would think about my Dad [father], so I decided not to attend my classes because I didn’t wanna talk or face my friends”. (Participant 13)

“Aah... you go to tutorials only to find that the tutor doesn’t know the work, so what’s the point cause these tutors are useless, so I decide to stay away and study”. (Participant 14).

“My grandma was sick at home, so I have to take some days off, and not attend lectures to look after her and my siblings”. (Participant 3).

4.3.1.3.4 Category 4: Peer pressure

The majority of the participants echoed that peer pressure is the most influencing factor to their poor academic achievements. Some participants reported that they spent much time with their peers, receive pressure to commit on negative engagements and eventually lack focus to improve academic arrangements. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I spend most of my time with friends, go to the shops at plaza, buy some things and spend the whole day not studying”. (Participant 4)

“Most of my friends have boyfriends, it’s like a trend to have one...they mock me not have one and that stresses me a lot as I am incomplete...I ended up having one [boyfriend]”.(Participant 14)

4.3.1.3.5 Category 5: Substance use

Few of the participants stated that they fail because drinking alcohol and smoking dagga. Participants reported that they would drink alcohol during examinations and that they don't find time to study and study preparations. Others reported that they drink alcohol due to stress and difficulty in coping with academics. The following excerpts were recorded:

“Every Friday I drink with my friends, I play basketball, so normally we smoke cigarettes, dagga and drink alcohol just to cool off the pressure of studying”. (Participant 9)

“Normally I hang out with my friends outside the campus, we go to Migerroni to enjoy ourselves and forget about doing assignments, it's even worse during exams...You may find that I go there [examination room] unprepared”.(Participant 4)

“Whoaw most of the times especially on weekends, we hang out with friends, girls and drink. Its' wrong but hey what can you say, friends seem to be fun than school”. (Participant 8)

“Yho I drink a lot when I am stressed thinking about my lower marks, I think about my parents coz they will shout me if I fail”. (Participant12)

4.3.1.3.6 Category 6: Self- destructions

The findings of the study showed that, students were themselves to be blamed for their poor performance at school. Some of them have cited having a lot of unrelated things to do, which are not school related. They find themselves selling some staff to make extra money since their parents did not work and this took most of their school time. Consequently they end up failing because of not having enough time for their books, it is like they have destroyed themselves. To support the above statement, the following excerpts were recorded:

“I am failing because I have to sell some chips, cigarettes and print and make copies for other students just to make extra cash sleep very late and not study sometimes...my parents are not working”. (Participant 9).

4.3.1.3.7 Category 7: Academic procrastination

Findings of the study indicated that students fail as a result of procrastinating. This is an effect of poor time management. Students revealed that they lacked focus which is why they kept on postponing thing until the last date. This directly affected their school performance. The following excerpts were recorded:

"I always promise myself that I will study but when its time, I will shift time table and say to myself it's still early to study, there's still time. This catches me badly coz I fail". (Participant 11)

"I don't want to lie shame, I am lazy to study and sometimes feel that the modules demand too much from us as students". (Participant 15)

4. 3.1.3.8 Category 8: Time management

The findings of the study showed that poor academic performance is affected by lack of time management and is being attributed to a lot of extraneous variables which make it difficult for students to be able to manage their time well. Some students cited selling cigarette, sweets and etc took most of their time and as such they could not focus on their school work. Students indicated that they failed because of poor time management on their side. To support the above, the following excerpts were recorded:

"I am not disciplined when it comes to make time to study, I will tell myself I will study at night but huh I love to sleep a lot...its' a big problem to make time shame". (Participant 10).

"I have a printing machine in my room, I make copies for students and sell airtime so most of the time so I hardly make time to study very well". (Participant 9)

4.3.2 Theme 2: Language Anxiety

Under this theme, subtheme was developed which is English as medium of instruction in teaching and learning. The following are categories namely effects of language learning have on students' results and causes of language anxiety. These categories are discussed below:

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme: English as medium of instruction in Teaching and Learning

The following categories were developed namely Effects language has on students learning and causes of language anxiety.

4.3.2.1.1 Category 1: Effects of language learning has on students' results

Some of the participants reported that English language is contributing to poor academic achievement. Some would like to be taught on their mother tongue, felt comfortable reading in engaging during academic arrangements in mother tongue, their academic levels would be better. Some students indicated that lectures are insensitive to language issue and not

consider other who cannot speak Tshivenda. Other students benefited whereas others could not benefit which is a reason enough to decolonize education in our institution of higher learning. The following excerpts was recorded:

“Yes... a lot, I passed Tshivenda [subject] with A, so I think doing my modules in Venda, I would pass. English words especially Psychology words [terminology] are difficult, so doing them in my mother tongue would be the best”. (Participant 2)

“Mmh...Yah doing my modules in my home language would be good, because I don't like presenting in front of others [class-mates] and talk English is frustrating”. (Participant 4)

“ I think my pass rates would be perfect and high, because you may find that I am reading a question paper, here comes a bombastic word and I lose it [meaning] plus one word can hinder for the whole paragraph”. (Participant 3)

“Yes, firstly when I study I cram a lot [memorize] so if I study and repeat in my Tsonga [language], wow I would pass with flying colours”. (Participant 10)

In contrary few participants were of the view that English as medium of instruction during academic arrangements is good does not affect or be the cause of poor academic achievement. This is supported by the excerpts recorded as follows:

“ No, because Education system will decline if we continue studying in our languages... I also need to gain more exposure and meet people of different places like Indians, Whites, Chinese so English is not at fault here, the problem is with how I learn not English and Sepedi is long so I don't want to read and translate”. (Participant 5)

“No, I need to sharpen [broaden] my mind a bit, speaking English is good especially with whites, so if I study in my own language that would be time consuming for me”. (Participant 8)

4.3.2.2 Category 2: Causes of language anxiety

The majority of the participants revealed some of the causes of poor academic performance related to English language as medium of instruction. Few participant expressed themselves that presentation in-front of other peers is daunting and requires them to use English language. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I think even some of the lecturers don’t understand the concepts in English so it makes it difficult to know it [grasp]”. (Participant 7)

“I hate presentations yho, they are scary especially you may find that you need to nail those bombastic [terminology] words and the class mates laugh, I prefer not to present”. (Participant 14).

4.3.3 Theme 3: Teaching and learning at University of Venda

Under this theme, sub-themes were developed namely concerns about teaching and learning at University of Venda.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Concerns about Teaching and Learning at University of Venda

Students were concerned about the way teaching and learning is delivered became a problem such as academic overload, teaching curriculum as well as group size of students during a lecture. These categories are discussed below:

4.3.3.1.1 Category 1: Academic overload

Some of the participants complained that their academic overload and time to meet deadlines was difficult. Some complained that about the large number of modules to complete in a semester. To support the above discussion the following excerpts were recorded:

“I find my work too much, the lecturer always refer us to look for books at library only to find that its little information that is required”. (Participant 5)

“ My course duties accumulate and I can’t complete them in time, I feel that our modules are too much”. (Participant 8)

“I find it so stressing to study all six modules in a period of five months including tests, assignments, I wish they can limit modules a bit”. (Participant 4)

4.3.3.1.2 Category 2: Teaching methodology and curriculum

The findings revealed that participants’ views about the teaching curriculum. Some participants revealed that the teaching curriculum is ancient curriculum yet confusing, non-interesting and this resulted to poor academic performance. The teaching methodology requires the students to apply knowledge than to reproduce knowledge which was a style that

they have been used to in their earlier years of study at the university. The following excerpts were recorded:

“Aah... I don’t understand my lecturers when they teach, my lecturer is fast when she talks and she gets angry fast. I am scared to ask questions, Eish...she will chow you in-front of others. (Participant 6)

“I feel as if studying overseas authors, style and everything is stressing, coz you find some modules are not realistic in today’s life, so I wish they can teach us updated modules applicable in African context”. (Participant 11)

“My problem, I would say was to adapting to university style of teaching and learning. I find it difficult to engage to this type of learning, like its old curriculum and not interesting enough. (Participant 14)

“I find this university books, author’s old mode of teaching confusing, I mean when I compare with my friends we’re doing same course but tjo I was shocked what they study there [other university]”. (Participant 15).

4.3.3.1.3 Category 3: Group-size of students during a lecture

The majority of the participants revealed that they are overcrowded in their academic lecture rooms and fail to obtain much information. They find it difficult to concentrate, probe for clarity and hear a lecturer when teaching and this affects their academic performance. The following excerpts were recorded:

‘I think if in my class they could divide us in two groups so that we can be able to probe for clarity, and you will not feel humiliated to ask the lecturer’. (Participant 7)

“mmh...its difficult to concentrate even hear when you’re standing and there are a lot of students in my class, you may find that you attend the lecture while standing”. (Participant 2)

“The university should divide us [students] to manageable groups, you may find that if you’re late, you stand there are no seats so this is a problem coz I don’t hear anything”. (Participant 3)

4.3.4 Theme 4: Guidelines to assist students with poor academic performance

Under this theme, sub-theme was developed namely available guidelines at the University.

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Available guidelines to teach students with poor academic performance at the university

Available guidelines at the University of Venda are the provision of trained Tutors and mentors, Library materials, Centre for Higher Education and Training (CHETL) and Programme Based Learning (PBL).

4.3.4.1.1 Category 1: Effectiveness of Trained Tutors and Mentors

Some participants reported that tutors and mentors were not effective due to lack of knowledge and information. Some mentors mislead other students by not meeting for discussions, few numbers of mentors available in the department. Some participants are of the view that programme of mentors and tutors be terminated due to lack of training and commitment and this results to poor academic performance. The following excerpts were recorded:

“Tutors or mentors are just there, they are not useful shame, you may find that some tutors are doing it for money and they don’t have the right information for us as students”. (Participant 5)

“ Aah..I once had a mentor but he was not helping at all, I could call him but would always postpone for some other time and I ended up not getting help at all”. (Participant 8)

“mmh I have never seen a mentor in this department, I mean I only heard but they say there were few, this becomes a problem as we are many who needs help”. (Participant 5)

“I think mentors are doing it for money, coz you may find that you ask them information, they seem not to know”. (Participant 6)

4.3.4.1.2 Category 2: Library materials and the access to library

Some participants complained about library materials, books and time offered to study. Students’ feel that library materials such as chairs to study are not comfortable, time available and access to library to study is limited. Students complained about how the library trading hours are short. Some complained about the availability, number of recent sources of books which are scarce. The following excerpts were recorded:

“Mmh... books at the library are torn out, some are not even there, you have to wait for a long period for a book to be available, it’s difficult coz you want to do assignments”. (Participant 2)

“I think the library must be open for twenty four hours because you may find that during the day we are attending lectures and at night it’s more calm and quiet”. (Participant 11)

“I think the university library books should be many, coz you may find that I always find books already borrowed by other students so I have to wait”. (Participant 12)

4.3.5. Theme 5: Services to assist students experiencing psychosocial challenges

Under this theme, sub-themes were developed namely Students Career Guidance and Counselling Unit and Students’ Disability Unit.

4.3.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Students’ Career Guidance and Counselling Unit

Services available at the University of Venda include Students Career Guidance and Counselling Unit (STGCU) and include knowledge about such services and the transparency of these services to students. This categories are discussed below.

4.3.5.1.1 Category 1: Knowledge and accessibility of psychological services

At the University of Venda there are services to assist students with psychosocial challenges, participants revealed about the effectiveness of such services, transparency of psychological services and the university doing enough to help those who present such challenges. Students also felt that it would be to the benefit of them if the Center for Student Counselling can work hand-in gloves with the various departments, to a point that their recommendations can work for the advantage of the students. Few participants reported that they have never seen an office or heard of psychological services to assist with academic psychological challenges and revealed that there are peer helpers that that move around during orientation period but not active throughout the year. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I only heard but never seen them, I don’t think they are useful coz they supposed to be at the clinic for us to see them, that’s if there are there”. (Participant 3)

“Firstly I only heard that there is a place if you are sick mentally you go there but have never saw it with my eyes”. (Participant 5)

“I once saw a guy wearing peer helper t-shirt for some activity but could not understand their effectiveness and his role”. (Participant 9)

“In my own experience I visited a psychologist there at the back next to social work classes, I was referred to by my friend since I was sick”. (Participant 13)

“I think the university is not doing enough to assist students who are sick, this other time I went to the Dean complaining about my low marks due to being sick, depressed. Instead of re-writing the exams, I repeated the whole year”. (Participant 14)

“I feel like the psychologist be available even at clinics because I faced a problem some months ago and I wanted an opinion of a psychologist and advice”. (Participant 14)

4.3.6 Theme 6: University policies on students

Under this theme, sub-theme was developed namely university s’ policy versus students.

4.3.6.1 Sub-theme 1: University of Venda’s policy versus students

University of Venda’s policy include evaluation provided to lecturers and feedback and follow up sessions between Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) academic and the schools’ Dean. These categories are discussed below.

4.3.6.1.1 Category 1: Evaluation of lecturers, students and feedback

Some participants revealed that the evaluation of lecturers regarding their teaching and learning is not useful. They complained that the university does not provide feedback to them as students and concerns about results thereof. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I think this other time we were given questionnaires to answer about certain lecturer, everyone knew that lecturer is rude, but what we wrote on the questionnaire was not presented to us”. (Participant 1)

“The university should also check with students complaints and supervisors, some lecturers Mmm...this thing of giving out scope to other students is wrong, my lecturer gave students scope to students that perform well and are her friends”. (Participant 8)

4.3.6.1.2 Category 2: Follow up sessions between Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) for Academic, lecturers and Students

Some participants suggested that there should be follow up, one-on-one sessions with the principal, DVC academic regarding their views, concerns, complaints regarding their academic arrangements. Some participants are of the view that if open sessions in one table

with research supervisors, Student Representative Council (SRC), lecturers and principal reach an agreement would improve their academic performance. The impact of doing this evaluation is for lecturers to refer to such results and attitudes and rectify them for future results to improve. The following excerpts were recorded:

“In my view, I think the DVC academic must come down to us as students and hear what problems we have about some lecturers and hear what we can say”. (Participant 8)

“We send our students rep.. [SRC] to represent us for such problems with a lecturer, but with no luck”. (Participant 5)

“Even SRC doesn’t do anything for us, so everything its’ just a mess, the university can call a meeting and hear our side of the story”. (Participant 14)

4.3.7 Theme 7: Coping strategies

In their quest to succeed and proceed to graduate, students compiled strategies to cope with poor performance of certain tasks. Despite they have to employ different strategies such as perseverance, study groups, time management, resilience and avoidance of negative destructions.

4.3.7.1 Sub-theme 1: Coping strategies students use to encounter poor academic achievements.

The findings of the study revealed that students encounter negative experiences such as low self-esteem, obtain low marks, consuming alcohol, attend lectures in large groups during academic arrangements and despite this they have to employ different strategies such as perseverance, form study groups, time management, help-seeking and avoid negative destructions.

4.3.7.1.1 Category 1: Perseverance

Some participants expressed that through perseverance, they can achieve good marks. Though it may sound easier said than done, some of the participants revealed ways they employ to overcome low academic marks. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I have learned that I am alone in this and I need to hang in there, study very hard next time, I can do this”. (Participant 1)

“Despite of difficulties and negative experience of being here not knowing the language they majority of students speak, I must hang in there and develop strategies to study very hard”.
(Participant 15)

“Even though English is not my mother tongue, I will make sure I study very hard and read more novels to polish the way I speak it”. (Participant 4)

“I must have self-determination and encourage myself that if anybody have passed it, so I can do this...I always watch people who are graduating and motivate myself from them”.
(Participant 8)

4.3.7.1.2 Category 2: Forming study groups

Some participants revealed that forming personal study groups throughout the year was a better coping strategy they should employ to better achieve good marks. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I form team work, group discussions and prioritize in my work as I want to succeed”.
(Participant 6)

“At the beginning of the year, before we present in class, we form groups and this helps a lot, so I study with them a lot”. (Participant 2)

4.3.7.1.3 Category 3: Time management

The majority of participants revealed that time management was a major cause of poor academic achievement. They had to form new time table and manage their time strategically in order to achieve better marks again. The following excerpts were recorded:

“Now that I have failed most of my modules, told myself that I will study early mornings like wake up at 02:00 and study”. (Participant 13).

“In my view, I don’t mind about my assignments, notes, tests, its’ just that I don’t manage time easily because of this business I do”. (Participant 9)

4.3.7.1.4 Category 4: Help-seeking

Few participants revealed that through help-seeking, in order for a students to effectively seek help, they can identify problems they need assistant with. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I need to attend group meetings in class and make sure I ask questions and especially from those clever ones in class”. (Participant 6)

“If I was absent from class, I need to check from my classmates the notes and make sure I up-date myself”. (Participant 3)

4.3.7.1.5 Category 5: Avoidance of negative distractions

Some participants revealed that in order for them to achieve good marks they should at least avoid negative distractions that will make them to achieve low marks. They reported that peers, family demands and social media is the result of their poor academic achievement. The following excerpts were recorded:

I spend a lot time with my friends, this thing started when we formed a presenting group in class, we would buy drinks and drink instead of focusing on school work”. (Participant 2)

“I think I hanging out with my boyfriend a lot and would sometimes fail to achieve high marks...its stressing coz you have to answer to your parents”. (Participant 14)

“Whenever I am free I study and avoid facebook, WhatsApp [Social media], It takes too much of your time and focus” (Participant 11)

4.3.7.1.6 Category 6: Prayer

As much as prayer can be helpful, in this study few students have indicated that they also rely on prayers as they prepare or study their academic activities. Amongst the participants, few of them reported prayer to be very helpful for coping with the challenges they encounter with poor academics. The following excerpts were recorded:

“I pray very hard to God for me to have strength to continue to study, I believe it’s Him who have decided for me to be here so before I study I pray”. (Participant 15)

“I grew up at hope praying, my dad taught me whenever it’s tough you must pray so it is my principal guidance before I study”. (Participant 13)

“I need to relax a bit and pray for strength to never give up no matter what but I know God is my savior and deliverer”. (Participant 10)

“I put more trust in Him, and know that this is a phase, it will pass. My pastor always teach me to pray whenever I phase difficult situations”. (Participant 11)

CHAPTER 5

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the present study by integrating with existing literature. An Interpretative Phenomenological analysis was used to analyze data. Illustrations from the findings are in-depth interviews from the 15 participants conducted research. Reports suggest that students need constant social support from parents, family and friends to improve their academics. Students suffer from depression, being isolated from family and friends, influence of peer pressure and self-destructive behaviors results to poor academic performance. Students find ways to improve their academics by praying and self-seeking behaviors.

5.2 Description of participants' demographic information

The results of the study revealed that majority of males participated in the study and experienced feelings of low self-esteem and low self-confidence. There is a significant difference between males and females who experience depression and anxiety during academic endeavors. Females were amongst the ones who repeated grades as a result to depression due to loss of a loved ones. Females appeared to be the ones who had adjustment difficulties at the university. Males reported that lack of time management and the use of substance are the reason for their poor academic performance. However the results shows that majority of participants reported solutions to better their marks is by forming study groups, perseverance, time management and avoidance to negative destructions improve academic performance.

5.3 Factors contributing to poor academic performance

The results indicated that UNIVEN students experience challenges that are psychological, social and behavioral in nature. These challenges affect students' academic performance.

5.3.1 Psychological challenges

5.3.1.1 Anxiety

The findings of the study concur that low levels of social support result in anxiety experienced by students at university. This is supported by Constantine, Wilton & Caldwell, 2003; Dean & Lin, 1977; Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger and Lancer, (2000) concur that supportive social network of parents, family and friends where experiences are shared may protect or buffer students' effects

or psychological distress such as family visits at the premises, continued check-ups from family and friends.

5.3.1.2 Depression

The findings of this study suggest that students suffer from depression, loneliness and depressed mood when faced with challenging situations especially academic arrangements. This is supported by Salzer (2012) who argues that the associated psychopathology among students manifested mainly as depression and anxiety were often referred to as “stress”. It was singled out to lead to difficulties in concentration, lack of motivation and interest, poor attendance and somatic physical complaints such as headaches, poor sleep and fatigue.

5.3.1.3 Low self-esteem

The findings of the study indicate that students developed low self-esteem, low self-confidence as a result of poor academic literacy and low marks. This is supported by Mohseni and Ameri (2010) suggest that students experience low self-esteem when faced with challenging situations and students adopt inhibition as a way to protect their esteem and self-confidence. Inhibition presents some obstacles in language learning, as it makes students not to be actively involved in lessons. Instead students show some shyness and nervousness and therefore are reluctant to be active participants in the class. Self-efficacy a person is exposed to that relates to the optimum levels of self-confidence one need to have and the ability to execute behavior and causes of action results to certain performance. (Bandura, 1997)

5.3.2 Social challenges

5.3.2.1 Isolation

The findings of the study revealed that isolation is a cause of poor academic performance. The findings are similar to Ali, Jusoff, Ali, Mokhtar and Salamt (2009) who stated that students are affected socially through interacting with peers and classmates but due to not able to express themselves academically in reading and writing, feel inferior. A student may isolate herself from others and experience loneliness, stress and presenting problems. In the same vein, Lidy and Kahn (2006), in their research on students’ adjustment to university stated that social support facilitates interpersonal relationships to help students cope with stress and isolation. Bandura also explained a social cognitive behavioral theory on ‘triadic reciprocity’, which means a person’s

interplay is strongly influenced by factors like personal, behavioral and environmental influences which cause a certain result to individuals to perform specific tasks.

5.3.2.2 Blaming others

The findings suggest that students blame lecturers to receive poor academic performance. These findings are supported by Nicole, Pajares, and Herron, (2006), who stated that students' fear of being evaluated in-front of other class mates could also contribute to poor academic performance and anxious to learn. In the same vein, Callahan (2011) stated that interpersonal relationship between teacher-students, student-student as well as roommate relationship plays a vital role in students' performance in class.

5.3.2.3 Self -blame

Findings suggest students blame themselves for achieving low marks due to wrong choice of a University, peer pressure as well as late applications for other universities. Self-blame is a major source for psychological challenges as it results to low self-confidence and poor judgement and feelings of inferior.

5.3.2.4 Lack of social support

The study also revealed that students lack social support from family and friends and this is the most important factor to poor academic performance as it may improve their self-esteem. To support this statement is Comer (2006), who stated that parents' interest in, and support of their children's school help to improve students' sense of belonging to school environment and their identification with teachers and other school personnel. The findings are also supported by Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla and Sylvester, (2014) who maintained that students face difficult situations outside the academic premises and this cause academic strain to students such as lack of parental support and peer interaction.

5.3.3 Behavioral challenges

5.3.3.1 Adjustment difficulties

The findings of the study revealed that students face difficulties when they move to a new environment. In line with these findings Calvete and Connor-Smith (2006), who believed that students fail to choose their speciality modules and careers based on their interests, which shifts them from their dreams and aspirations. This deviates future competition and loss of interest and

motivation to achieve good grades. In line with this is the study by Abdullah, Elias, Mahyuddin & Uli, (2009) condemn that students develop anxious feelings as they adjust to academic (during academic engagements), social (meeting with friends, classmates), and personal (problems at home) challenges that the university presents and this causes poor academic achievements.

5.3.3.2 Poor concentration

Findings of the study suggest students due to lack of concentration, their academic achievements were low. In line with this is a study conducted in Nigeria by Afoloyan, Bitrus, Onasoga, Babafeni and Juan's (2013) study on nursing students at the University of Ilori, Department of Nursing which revealed that anxious learners found it harder to avoid distractions and took longer to turn their attention from one task to the next, and to their less anxious peers, but with no academic improvement.

5.3.3.3 Absenteeism

The findings of this study reveal that students decide to attend or not attend lectures due to feelings of hopelessness, disappointed with the tutors and University style on teaching and learning. Weller and Williams (2000), agrees that when students continue to be absent from class, they miss valuable information delivered by the lecturer, vital information used to clarify difficult concepts. Barker and Jansen (2000), also agrees that students who are absent from class obtain lower marks.

5.3.3.4 Peer pressure

The findings of this study revealed that students are influenced by their peers not to study well and would sometimes please their peers to fit in the groups to socialize. This is supported by Aklog, Tiruneh, and Tsegay, (2013) assertion that the most common causes of poor academic performance is peer pressure, poor social factors, and poor adjustment related factors. Students regard their peers as most influential on decision making and time spent.

5.3.3.5 Substance abuse

The findings suggest that students fail because of consuming alcohol and peer pressure to escape from embarrassment and failure. Students claim that by consuming alcohol, it helps them to forget their academic work. This is supported by Gallanger (2005) who concur that university students reported severe psychological problems including depression, anxiety and substance abuse at counselling centers. In the same vein is a study Gezahegn, Andualem and Mituku,

(2014) that university students disengage from the school activities such as group work, sport practices and school work due to spending time consuming alcohol leaving school work unattended.

5.3.3.6 Self-destructions

The findings suggest that students invest little time on their studies and these deceptions are not conducive for a student who needs to pass at the end of the year. This is supported by Ahmed and Wias (2012), who researched on students' academic achievement and showed a number of distractions such as a spread of mobile phone that takes a lot of time spent by students and low motivation of students towards learning.

5.3.3.7 Academic procrastination

The findings study revealed that one of the reasons they achieve low marks is being lazy to study and will procrastinate their academic tasks with the hope to do it later, timing and irresponsibility catches with them with consequences. These findings are in line with Steel (2007), when he made mention of meta-analysis study that there is a positive correlation between academic procrastination and irrational thoughts. Students act careless as they are faced with role identity and independent decision making.

5.4 Language anxiety

Findings reveal that some students prefer to use their mother tongue as medium of instruction and their academic grades would improve. This is supported by Alder, Salonimsky and Reed, (2002), who indicated that there is a challenge visible in classrooms where students find it difficult to communicate with the teacher if the language of instruction is not their main language of instruction is not their main language they share. In contrary few participants were of the view that English as medium of instruction during academic arrangements is good and does not affect or be the cause of poor academic achievement.

5.4.1 Causes of language anxiety

Findings on language anxiety are supported by Young (1990), who states that language anxiety occurs when provoked, a learner may face a challenging situation and be required to perform certain tasks in class such as oral presentation, in-front of his peers and experience panic attacks and anxiety occurs.

5.4.1.1 Academic overload

Findings of this study suggest that participants achieve low marks due to academic overload. Students find a blame on achieving low marks as due to large number of modules and huge given tasks and deadlines ahead in a short period of time. This is supported by Watts and Pickering, (2002) who indicated that students may cope well and avoid academic overload at university by learning how to effectively manage their curriculum and study techniques and academic style.

5.4.1.2 Group size of students during a lecture

The findings indicate that students complained that the way academic lecture halls are full when attending lecturers makes it difficult to grasp as much information as possible in a short scheduled time. This is supported by a study compiled by Ward and Jenkins (1992), that indicated that students complained of feeling overwhelmed, anonymous towards each other, disorganized and unprepared. It is also supported by Gibbs and Jenkins, (1992) that lecturers working with large classes face challenges including forming relationships with students or classes, organization, administration loads, teaching approaches and assessments.

5.5 Guidelines or strategies students use to account poor academic performance

5.5.1 Effectiveness of trained tutors and mentors

Findings of this study suggest that tutors are not effective and sometimes are effective for those who see the opportunity. This is supported by (Archer 2008, Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008) who are of the idea that South African universities have invested millions on staff development and tutor training to assist students who see it through to succeed in the university. Whereas McIlroy and Bunting, (2002); Tross, Harper, Osher, and Kneidinger, (2000) argued that students' learning behavior or conscientiousness and self-regulation are related to better learning outcomes that students discover for learning.

5.6 Services to assist students with psychological challenges

5.6.1 Knowledge and accessibility of psychological services

Findings of this study suggested that few participants knows about psychological services and enquire about the effectiveness of such services to the university. In line with this is Topkayaa, (2013), who states that a major factor that prevents one from seeking psychological help is not being aware of how to go about seeking psychological help (or knowing whether or not

psychological services are available and where they are located). Some individuals do not seek psychological help because of their unwillingness to share their personal problems with an unfamiliar person. Hence the belief that people can handle their problems on their own can prevent one from seeking and receiving psychological help.

5.6.2 Transparency of psychological services

Findings of this study suggested that participants complained about transparency of psychological services to them and easy access. To support this is Cebi (2009), who argued that the reason learners do not seek psychological help because they perceive it as an unreliable and inappropriate way of dealing with personal problems and knowledge whether such services are useful.

5.7 University academic policies

5.7.1 Evaluation of lectures and feedback for program throughput

The study findings suggested that students require the university to evaluate lecturers' way of teaching and group size. Students also mentioned the issue of giving out scope to other least number of students. This is supported by a number of researchers that evaluation does not only indicate the likelihood of students performing well academically but also provide the assurance that lecturers work their part in making students dreams to become a reality (Archer, 2008; Davidowitz & Rollnick, 2005; Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008; Du Rand, 1998; Kagee, Naidoo, & Mahatey, 1997; Miller, Bradburry, & Acutt, 2001; Santed, 2009; Schreiber, 1998; Unisa, 2011; University World News, 2007).

5.8 Coping strategies

5.8.1 Forming study groups

Participants revealed that they employ to form study group in order to share academic endeavors to improve their marks. Students cope well by being divided in study groups in a more manageable group size to discuss missed information and researched work. To support this statement is a study by This is supported by Bojuwoye's study (2002), that emphasized a development of new social relationships, new friends, new values and learning to share with others as well as preparation for adult roles is vital to improve student academic achievement. Students who fail good social relationships miss the opportunity of experiencing good academic performance.

5.8.2 Time management

The findings suggested that students do not make time to study, they fail to prioritize between their leisure time and academic time and some of the factors influence involve spending too much time with their peers, going out. This is supported by Torres and Solberg, (2001) who maintained that students with high self-efficacy may perform better academically and have superior skills and academic knowledge because there is a positive relationship between hours devoted towards studying and self-efficacy. In the same vein is a study by Barnsley (1999), in his study he indicated that factors affecting academic performance are due to lack of time management on academic studies and psychological factors

5.8.3 Avoid negative destruction

The findings suggested that students are aware that they are destructed by other things which result to achieve low marks. By employing to divulge from using social media, hang out with friends, peer pressure and so could lead to good academic achievements and possible graduation. In line with this is a study by Gaudreau, Nichols, and Levi, (2010) who maintained that students coping mechanisms involves task-oriented, self-regulation and distraction-oriented as coping with academic demands which draws away from the situation. They argued that students manage their academic demands by avoiding negative destructions by focusing on achieving good marks.

5.8.4 Help seeking behaviour

Participants are of the view that they adopt styles and solutions to improve their academic achievements and state that by admitting that your marks are low this results to good health possibly find a solution. In line with this is Newman, (2002) who states that students need to accept that they need help to benefit for more information but should first identify the problem and believe that seeking for help will benefit them.

5.8.5 Prayer

Findings reveal that students resort to prayer in order to effectively gain strength and control to continue with their academics. They are of the view that prayer is their answer when they experience feelings of doubt, low self-esteem and inferiority. This is supported by Pinto. (2001); Dennis, (2005) and Nicpon (2006); Raychaudhuri, (2010), Mehta (2011), who stated that positive

coping strategies such as prayer, meditation and sleep was found to be helpful students used at universities.

CHAPTER 6: GUIDELINES TO ASSIST STUDENTS WITH POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Based on the objectives, the results indicated that students developed low self-esteem, low self-confidence, and poor adjustment, as a result of poor academic literacy, low marks and lack of social support. Students also complained about transparency and accessibility of psychological services to them at all times. It is these results the researcher developed some guidelines to improve students' poor academic performance.

6.1 Identification of students with poor performance

This is achieved when the lecturer delivers a test and received results. The lecturer identifies those performing poor with no improvement and gathers their names. Arrange individual consultation to discover the root cause of the problem and share possible ideas to solve a problem. This a most critical area where not all students may oblige to the idea but needs time and patience. Students may discuss most problematic areas concerning their studies to improve academic performance.

6.2 Possible causal factors identified from problematic areas

The lecturer will then identify those most problematic areas in class by engaging students, class representatives if any and come up with a conclusion of those performing low and those performing high. This occurs when the lecturer separately defines the most causal problem to improve students' academic performance and reasons behind.

6.3 Classify the causal factors

Once the causal factors are identified as to why students perform low, the lecturer begin to classify those problems into three, namely: Psychological, social and behavioural factors contributing to poor academic performance and challenges they face.

6.3.1 Psychological challenges

Identify those students who will claim reasons behind their poor performance maybe anxiety, anxious student will present complaining about presenting in-front of the classmates challenging, scary and results for a student to worry whenever he or she is required to present. Some may even discuss broader and personal problems such as being bereaved, panic attacks, personality

traits which needs proper care and treatment and psychological disorders which are considered normal by the university community.

6.3.2 Social challenges

There will be those who blame themselves for not always paying attention in class, some do not receive social support from parents, family and friends.

6.3.3 Behavioural challenges

Students find it difficult to adjust well at university, poor adjustment leads to isolation, anti-social and self-pettiness. Some students may report that under-preparedness when required to perform to compile assignment, a test, and during exams and this is a reason behind their performance.

6.4 Conduct supportive counselling or consultation

Once those problems classified are identified, it is therefore a duty of the lecturer to arrange time for individual consultation again to conduct supportive counselling where possible solutions, task provision and possible reference will be met. This occurs where a student and a lecturer meet, discuss the root cause of the problems accordingly and come up with ideas and tasks to compete at a certain period. The lecturer provide supportive, reassurance that receiving poor results is normal and can be improved. If then those continued consultations are positive, the lecturer may suggest strategies to improve.

6.5 Engage students' activities as a remedial

At this stage, lecturer begin by introducing tasks to a student for a certain period of time according to the problem arise during problem classification. If a student suffer from anxiety, possible solution may be to provide certain individual tasks such as a book to read, and make summary, a student to present individually to the lecturer to avoid embarrassment.

6.6 Reassessment

The lecturer will reassess tasks given to students to ensure good results. Lecturer reassess those students to check if strategies provided have worked. If there is improvement in strategies combined, it shows the tasks provided have worked and can be applied to other students. This occurs when the lecturer administer certain evaluations again to a student to compare results and strategies to improve.

7.1 Improvement of task administered

If there is improvement on the strategies administered, the lecturer is allowed to keep records for future applications. This will help the department to identify causes of poor academic performance and ways to improve. The department may suggest guidelines to the school and be applied to other departments.

7.2 Non-improvement of task given, refer students to students counselling unit for future management plan.

Some students may not channel to the given tasks and find difficulties to perform. At this stage, lecturer knows who performed better at tasks provided but o improvement, a lecturer will then refer those students presenting psychological, social and behavioural to CHETL for further assistance and future management plan.

CHAPTER 7: LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

7.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study focused on third year students at Department of Psychology, there are five departments at the School of Health Sciences, and as such generalizations cannot be made to the entire school.
- The researcher collected data when students were about to leave for holidays, and the majority of students have already left, this could limit the study as students would respond hasty on some questions.
- Since the study focused on the students, it would be better in future to conduct a study of this nature on teachers just to get their version on the challenges that students are faced with.
- The sample of this study is small and there is a need for a research of this nature to be quantitatively conducted so that there can generalization

7.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- For future research, there is a need to conduct a study on the correlation between teacher-student relationships to discover social support to improve academic performance of students.
- Findings about self-destructive behaviors such as the use of mobile cellular phones during the lecture, jollyng with friends and spent time on social media example face-book, twitter and Whats-Application (WhatsApp) suggest a need for future research which is the result of poor academic performance.
- Findings suggest that lecturers, students and schools' Dean to organize a seminar twice a year (first and second semester) so as to discuss burning issues and problems relating to teaching and learning
- Findings suggest that students complained that lecturers do not open a panel to discuss their grievances, for future research, a created platform where students, lecturers and schools' dean to discuss matters related to their academics and poor performance.
- There is a need for a research on teachers on their views regarding challenges students are faced with.
- There is also a need to research conducted to those students facing psychological challenges with improved academic performance strategies for future research.
- There is a need for the guidelines to be tested for their effectiveness in assisting and helping to improve students' poor academic performance.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Policy on First entering students**

The study revealed that students found the department of psychology as sheer luck and the only course available to enrol open for registration hence they are struggling with their studies. The researcher recommends that be a thorough selection measures for students so that only relevant qualified students are admitted in the department. Policy planners should consider first entering students to undergo psychometric tests. Especially those who landed in the university out of desperation (having been rejected elsewhere, having not applied for their study on time.

- **University of Venda**

Results of the study showed that the location of Students Counselling and Guidance Unit is obscured and some of the students are not even aware that it exists. Based on this finding, the researcher therefore recommends that it be relocated at an open place which it will be accessible to the students. Student counselling services should play a critical role to ensure students psychological and social challenges are addressed.

- **Department of Psychology**

It is recommended that the Head of the Department to have an open session for students to discuss matters concerning the teaching and learning style offered to them and ways to improve. There should be an evaluation administered on students with the aim to discover issues related to poor academic performance.

- **Center for Higher Education Teaching and Learning**

Students indicated that there should be a teacher-student relationship where stakeholder like CHETL propose seminars with the School of Health Deans and discuss matters relating to poor academic performance and cause thereof. This may aid as social support and improve academic performance by students.

- **Department of Psychology**

The department to hold Teaching and Learning seminars twice a year, first semester and second semester where students, lecturers discuss burning issues and problematic areas for students to express concerns, as the way to reach out to students to address problems relating to their academics.

- **Family members of students**

Family members should understand these students need continuous emotional and social support even when they are far away from home. They should have parent-child relationship where needs, concerns are discussed for future. This can be administered by every department to invite parents' as awareness programmes to discuss psychosocial challenges students face during academic lifestyle, social support they need and encouragement.

7.3 SUMMARY OF THE OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to explore the factors contributing to poor academic performance faced by students in the Department of Psychology. The objectives of this study as set out in chapter 1 were also evaluated. The objectives of the study were:

- To explore psychosocial challenges faced by students with poor academic performance
- To explore the social contributory factors which contribute to poor academic performance by students
- To explore behavioral contributory factors that contributes to poor academic performance by students.
- To develop guidelines or strategies to help improve students' poor academic performance

Objective 1 was addressed as students developed low self-esteem, low self-confidence as a result of poor academic literacy, low marks and lack of social support. Objective 2 was discovered when students with low levels of social support from parents, friends and family resulted to anxiety experienced at the university. Objective 3 was addressed as students resort to absenteeism, self-destructions, peer pressure, substance use and abuse, academic procrastination and find difficulty in adjusting at the university environment which contributed to their poor academic performance and lastly objective 4 was addressed, the researcher developed guidelines which can assist students, the lecturer and stakeholders to improve their academics.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The current study was to explore the factors contributing to poor academic performance faced by students in the Department of Psychology. The objectives were to explore psychological, social and behavioral challenges faced by students with poor academic performance and develop guidelines to assist students with poor academic performance. The theoretical perspective of the study used was Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive theory which argues that human functioning regulate their behavior and possess a system of beliefs which enables them to control over thoughts, feelings and actions. Bandura theory of self-efficacy argued that, human behavior can be predicted by an individual levels of confidence and how they view society and the ability to succeed in a specific task (Bandura, 1997). The qualitative research approach and exploratory phenomenological and contextual research design was used to obtain full description of data directly from the direct participants. The study was conducted at University of Venda. The researcher used non-probability sampling method: purposive, convenient random sampling method. A semi-structured interview guide was developed by the researcher for data collection (see *Appendix 1*). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the data. Trustworthiness of the study was achieved by means of Credibility, Dependability, Conformability and Transferability.

The study comprised of fifteen students from the University of Venda, aged between 21-35 years where 5 were females and 10 were males all doing level three. Findings of the study revealed that low levels of social support from parents, friends and family result to anxiety experienced by students at the university. Students developed low self-esteem, low self-confidence as a result of poor academic literacy, low marks and lack of social support. Students experience poor adjustment especially those who have different mother tongue language different from the majority of students at the university. Students complained about transparency and easy access of psychological services available at the institution to be available at all times. Students expressed to cope well when divided in study groups which is more manageable as group size to discuss missed information and researched work. Students adopted help-seeking behaviors such as prayer, study groups and time management styles to succumb poor academic performance.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview Guide

Section A: Biographical information

Biographical		Coding
Gender	Male	1
	Female	2
Age	22-21	1
	22-30	2
	31 & above	3
People living with disability	Disabled	1
	Married	2
	Windowed	3
First year registered level 3	Yes	1
	No	2
Ethnicity	Black	1
	White	2
	Coloured	3
	Indian	4

Section B: Interview Guide

1. What do you think are the contributing factors to your poor academic performance?
2. Do you think if you were taught in your mother tongue, your academic levels would still be the same as now? Please explain.
3. What would you like to change from the way of teaching and learning at the University of Venda?
4. Can you explain any structures or guidelines that can assist students' poor academic performance?
5. In your case, does the University do enough in terms of assisting students with psychological challenges?
6. What do you think the university should do to address students' poor academic Performance? Please explain your answer.
7. What are the coping strategies that you can use in dealing with accounting academic Arrangements?

APPENDIX 2: Consent letter

I, Vuyiseka Luke, am a research student from University of Venda, Department of Psychology. I am conducting a study on all psychology students in the Department of Psychology, School of Health Sciences. I am requesting your voluntary participation in my research study, as part of the requirements for Masters in Psychology degree.

I will be conducting interviews on the study entitled “**Factors contributing to poor academic performance at a selected department, rural university in South Africa**”. The interview my take a maximum of one and half hour. I assure you that your personal information/ identity will be kept confidential. Note that your participation is strictly voluntary, and that you are allowed to withdraw at any time during the study. I assure you my full honesty and uprightness.

If you are willing to participate, please sign below and the form on the next page.

Thanking you in anticipation for your participation.

Participant’s Signature

Researcher’s Signature

Date.../...../.....

APPENDIX 3: Informed consent form

I.....hereby consent to participate in the research study entitled “Factors contributing to poor academic performance at a selected department, rural university in South Africa”. I understand that I am participating voluntarily and without being forced to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point during the interview process. The conditions of the study were fully explain explained to me. I understand the circumstances of my participation.

.....

Signature of the participant

.....

.....

Date

.....

Signature of Researcher

Date