

**EXPLORING PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE
THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN A
RURAL COLLEGE**

By

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Declaration with regard to independent work:

I, Nomthandazo Prudence Zwane Identity number 9103210869080 and student number 2009140373 hereby declare that this research project, submitted to the University of the Free State for the Psychology of Education Masters degree, titled 'Exploring psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a rural college', is my own independent work and complies with the relevant policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the University of the Free State.

I have not previously submitted it to any institution for the attainment of any qualification.

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N. P. ZWANE
NOVEMBER 2021

09/09/2022_____

Date

Dedication:

This dissertation is dedicated to my two beautiful daughters; Kwazinkwenkosi Zwane and Bukhonabenkosi Zwane, who inspired me to work harder, do more, and push beyond boundaries. I do not only know, but also understand that being a mother and the only parent to your children requires keeping your faith and taking risks as some of life's ingredients for success.

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the study is exploring the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a rural college. Students' academic performance is the responsibility of all educational stakeholders. 'Psychosocial' refers to a combination of psychological factors and the influence of the surrounding social environment on the physical and mental wellness of individuals. Psychosocial factors have been known to influence the academic performance of students. Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory informed the study, and the mixed method approach was adopted to address the main and sub-research questions of the study. The study used an explanatory sequential design. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data for the study. The study used convenience and purposive sampling to select the participants in two phases of the study. The population of the study consisted of 115 participants. The first phase selected a sample of one hundred and fifteen (115) participants (N=115; gender: 19 males and 96 females) for the quantitative component, and the second phase selected six (6) participants for the qualitative component (N=6; 3 males and 3 females). All participants were students registered for the 2020/21 academic year at a rural TVET college in the KZN province, South Africa. This study used descriptive statistics to determine the frequency and percentages to analyse quantitative data, and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The findings were coded, presented and organised into themes, and subsequently discussed. The results revealed that the support services as well as psychological and social factors influenced the academic performance of the students in a rural college. Most participants viewed negative psychosocial factors as influencing their academic performance negatively. Furthermore, it was evident that the rural colleges lacked resources and intervention programmes to improve the academic performance of the students. The results indicated that students could not fully benefit from available support system and resources. They also provided suggestions regarding interventions the institution can employ to improve the academic performance of students who are negatively influenced by psychosocial factors. Based on the findings, the study recommended improving academic performance of students negatively influenced by psychosocial factors in a rural college.

Keywords: Academic performance, psychological and social factors, support services, rural college, TVET, students and psychosocial

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List of abbreviations and acronyms:

TVET	:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
NCV	:	National certificate vocational

NQF	:	National Qualification Forum
KZN	:	KwaZulu-Natal
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
DHET	:	Department of Higher Education and Training
SAP	:	Student academic performance
NQF	:	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS	:	National Students Financial Aid Scheme
GAP	:	Grade Average Points
NDA	:	Neither disagree nor agree
SD	:	Strongly Disagree
D	:	Disagree
A	:	Agree
SA	:	Strongly agree

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

“Psychosocial factors are often overlooked as factors responsible for individual development (Burke, 2012). It has been posited that psychosocial factors influence the achievement of college students enrolled in developmental coursework (Fong, Davis, Kim, Marriott, & Kim, 2016). Naz, Nawaz, Liaqat, Rasheed and Fatima (2020) indicate that psychosocial factors combine the effects of psychological elements and integrate social conditions into the students’ physical and emotional well-being and their ability to perform in their academic studies. Another study by Kirui and Kaluyu (2018) states that psychosocial factors (psychological and social factors) may hinder learners’ performance. According to Hako and Shikongo (2019) psychosocial factors include issues such as motivation, self-esteem, stress, test anxiety, help-seeking, student adjustment to the environment, self-efficacy, major negative life changes, and lack of social support as elements that can affect students’ abilities to complete their studies. Rural college students might face numerous psychosocial challenges that may lead to risky behaviour which are likely to affect their academic performance (Gang, Han, & Bansa, 2019). Rajkumal, Sooraj, Sandeep, and Harish (2015) note that poor academic performance, yearly dropouts, students' transition from secondary schools to higher education centres, lack of concentration, and lack of attendance may be factors affecting students’ academic performance at rural colleges.

Globally, college students face various challenges during their college years, including academic, financial and psychosocial issues. Many of these challenges could impede the students’ academic performance (Naz et al., 2020). According to Hako and Shikongo (2019), every learner suffers from psychological and social difficulties, not because of physical challenges, but due to human nature, characterised by limited capability, expectations, and interpretations of prevailing situations. The study by Gaffoor and Van der Bijl (2019) indicate that since the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) programme inception in 2007 at the TVET colleges, the NCV programme has experienced low levels of programme completion and high failure rates, which revealed that psychosocial factors, among others, influenced the poor performance of students. Therefore, psychosocial factors present a huge impression/impact on the outcomes of college students and

educational institutions. These factors influence the thoughts, motivation and decision-making in all academic endeavours (Hako & Shikongo, 2019).

Psychological well-being transports/supplies/provides energy for students to study, learn, and retain acquired academic knowledge. This well-being may influence students' academic performance and can predict students' future career success (Gang et al., 2019). Rajkumal et al. (2015) suggest that psychological factors influence individuals' physical and mental wellness, and their ability to function in their academic studies. In most cases, psychological factors like stress, poor concentration, low self-esteem and lack of self-efficacy correlate with low academic performance, causing students in higher education institutions to fail. A study by Hako and Shikongo (2019) indicated that psychological and academic integration factors affect learning. These factors are the interactions between the individual student and the college environment, including his/her attributes, motivation, satisfaction, interests, commitments, and intellectual development. Some of the psychosocial challenges that affect students involve emotional and relational factors. College students have greater psychosocial needs than expected, and those needs are mainly psychological (Naz et al., 2020). Therefore, these psychosocial factors interfere with the students' ability to function normally in college-related activities (Kraak, 2016).

Social factors such as students' communication, academic and financial support, have opened the need for further education in many regions of the country. Students have many interpersonal relationships, including the teacher-student connection and student-student relationships which may interfere with healthy study habits and further decrease academic performance (Lakey & Cohen, 2015). A study by Naz et al. (2020) also showed that, in general, motivation for academic performance has been associated with several environmental and educational factors. These factors include the financial/ socio-economic background of the students which is believed to be critical for students to succeed and reach their intended goals (Hako & Shikongo, 2019). This aspect may result in students becoming disturbed psychologically and socially, leading to poor performance. These findings support Buthelezi's (2020) study that a student's performance is a product of socioeconomic, psychological, and environmental factors.

The influence of psychosocial factors on student academic performance in colleges can determine how the student strikes a balance between stressful academic responsibilities and social activities. This may only be possible through the intervention of adequate support (Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013). Hako and Shikongo (2019) suggest that college support helps students to control their studies through effectively managing their study time; keeping up with the pace of the courses; prioritising school and personal issues, developing motivation and self-confidence; and managing stress. Therefore, these factors indicate that psychosocial factors experienced by students and significant others involved in learning may influence students' performance.

This study aimed at exploring psychosocial factors that may influence the academic performance of the students at a rural college and further elaborated on the kind of support students need to improve their academic performance. However, the literature confirms that rural colleges have still not come to terms with the influence of psychosocial factors on students' academic performance, and have largely ignored other important areas of students' academic development (Beharu, 2018). Psychosocial factors among rural college students have sparked research interest in terms of their contribution to students' academic performance. In light of the foregoing, this study explores psychosocial factors influencing the academic performance of students at a rural college.

1.2 Research problem of the study

The mission of rural colleges is to provide students with equal access to quality vocational education and training programmes, responsive to the needs of the labour market (Gulzar, Ali, Aijaz, & Hussain, 2010). During these programmes, students are empowered with the knowledge, skills, and techniques that may help them address their psychosocial issues, and improve their academic performance (Gaffoor & Van der Bijl, 2019). According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2018), these colleges provide the following: student support services;

social support; emotional support; academic support; and moral support. However, these programmes are characterised by low levels of completion, as well as high failure and dropout rates (Muthunguri, 2021). Buthelezi (2020) states that psychosocial support services are vital for facilitating and assisting the transition of students into colleges and also to increase the retention of students. Furthermore, psychosocial factors have the capacity to hinder students' ability to socialise and achieve their academic goals (Rajkumal et al., 2015). Poor academic performance, dropouts, lack of concentration, and lack of attendance at rural colleges are challenges which offer opportunities for intervention regarding students' psychosocial development. Some of the psychosocial challenges that affect students are emotional, anti-social behaviour and relational factors. These factors potentially affect a country's financial stability, including both the employability and financial wellbeing of individual students (Naz et al., 2020). As a result, students become disturbed psychologically and socially, leading to poor performance. A study by Anderman and Patrik (2012) indicates that many rural college students do not perform well academically, do not attend classes every day, lose concentration during lectures, and drop out yearly. Therefore, psychosocial support services for sustainable learning in rural colleges are an important component to assist college students in their academic studies and performance (Buthelezi, 2020). Gulzar et al. (2010) note that the presence of a support system in academic institutions can enhance the learning capacity of students, by helping them with school-related mental health interventions that may have positive benefits for both the rural college and students' academic performance; if implemented properly.

The impact of psychosocial factors on academic performance is still an issue in the history of rural colleges. Numerous studies (Kraak, 2016; Kolo, Jafaar, & Ahmad, 2017; Buthelezi, 2018; Badenhorst & Radile, 2018) have demonstrated the issue of psychosocial influence on academic performance. The study by Buthelezi (2020) reports that there is still a gap with regards to psychosocial support services to assist college students to be successful in their academic performance. This study investigates the psychosocial factors that may influence the academic performance of the students at a rural college and also to suggest interventions that may help students to overcome those psychosocial challenges. Additionally, the knowledge gap that exists in the literature of psychosocial factors indicates the gap that this study intends to fill by

investigating psychosocial factors influencing students during their registered term at a rural college.

1.3 Rationale of the study

The study sought to explore psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of students at a rural college. To fulfil the mandate of the rural colleges to provide students with equal access to quality vocational education and training, the psychosocial factors that influence academic performance needed to be identified for the academic needs of rural college students. It was hoped that the study would provide a deeper understanding of the psychosocial factors influencing students' academic performance. The study may assist management at a rural college to discover psychosocial factors at an early stage and to provide the support services that meet the students' psychosocial needs. It may further assist to provide ways to improve the academic performance of students, including enhanced emotional stability and academic support provided by college. This study may contribute to improved departmental planning and policy making at a rural college improvement. The study findings can be regarded as generated knowledge to facilitate the provision of support systems and psychosocial intervention at a rural college.

The researcher's perspective was based upon personal experience and observation from the position of being a lecturer at a rural college for eight years. The years of teaching provided the researcher the opportunity to work closely with students from different backgrounds. The researcher observed that most of the students at that rural college have psychological and social problems which disturb and affect their academic performances. DHET (2018) reports that psychosocial support services should be available in all public TVET colleges. However, the studies mentioned above and the researcher's observation indicate that the development of psychosocial support services is not prioritised at all the colleges. Therefore, it is believed that this study may assist the rural college to evaluate the psychological and social experience of students in order to improve the students' academic performance and provide adequate support to students.

The study may further contribute to support the institution's values by developing and enforcing students' academic values and supporting students' psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, the study may help the management of the rural college and the college counsellors in the assessment and identification of the specific psychosocial factors that may negatively influence rural college students. This will in turn help to resolve the psychosocial factors that prevent many students from achieving their full potential and perform better academically.

This study may contribute to knowledge about rural college students and the psychosocial influences which may determine their academic performance. Knowledge and understanding of the psychosocial factors affecting students' academic performance may provide additional insight into psychological and social factors impacting rural students' academic performance. Knowing the predicting power of selected external and internal psychosocial factors to students may assist post-secondary institutions (TVET colleges and other higher education institutions) in developing programmes and creating student support systems, which will help enhance academic performance and course completion.

The investigation of psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students at a rural college was the focus of this study. The study explored those factors as well as the support the students needed to improve their academic performance and to help them cope with the various psychosocial issues. The researcher believed that the study clearly communicated the support needed to improve the students' performance by answering the research questions. The researcher, students as well as the selected rural college, may benefit from the study findings, as psychosocial factors impact the academics of the students and the throughput of the institution (Anderman & Patrik, 2012).

Psychosocial factors may hamper the mental health, academic performance of the students and progress of the institution's positive outcomes. Exploration of these psychosocial factors, may have a positive impact on the students and the institution (Rajkumal. et al., 2015). Furthermore, findings

of this study may help to improve the teaching and learning process, and meet the needs of rural TVET college students to a much better degree.

The study may add to the recognition of the connection between psychosocial factors and academic performance. This research involved students as participants in the study and therefore the results may offer a new understanding of psychosocial factors from the students' perspective. Mostly but not least, the college and student counsellors at the college may use the study findings and recommendations to implement appropriate interventions aimed at improving the academic performance of the students at a rural college.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Primary research question

- What are the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students at a rural college?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

- What kind of support services do students need to improve their academic performance at a rural college?
- What are the college students' experiences at a rural college?
- What are the effects of poor academic performance at a rural college?
- What are the remedies enhancing academic performance among students at a rural college?

1.5 Research aim and objectives

1.5.1 Aim of the study

- This study aimed to explore the influence of psychosocial factors on the academic performance of students at a rural college.

1.5.2 Research objectives of the study

- To determine the kind of support services students need to improve their academic performance at a rural college.
- To explore the college students' experiences at a rural college.
- To determine the effects of poor academic performance at a rural college.
- To determine the remedies enhancing academic performance among students at a rural college.

1.6 Research design and methodology

1.6.1 Research approach.

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Fong et al. (2016), a mixed-method approach involves a procedure for collecting, analysing and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand a research problem more completely. The rationale for the use of mixed methods in the study is that neither data collected by quantitative nor that collected by qualitative methods on their own are sufficient to capture the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of rural college students. The mixed-methods approach helps to uncover contradictions between quantitative results and qualitative findings; reflect on participants' viewpoints and ensure that the study findings are grounded in participants' experiences.

1.6.2 Research paradigm

This study used pragmatism as its paradigm. A paradigm is a basic belief system and theoretical framework with assumptions about the study's ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. It is a way of understanding the reality of the world and studying it (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). According to Frega and Silva (2011), the pragmatic paradigm refers to a worldview that

focuses on "what works" rather than what might be considered absolutely and objectively "true" or "real". The use of this paradigm is important, because pragmatists focus significantly on theorising inquiry, meaning and the nature of truth; and clarifying the meaning of hypotheses by tracing their practical consequences (Nyumba, Wilson Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2017).

Using this paradigm is appropriate for the study because it emphasises many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research, noting that no single point of view can ever present the entire picture, and that there may be multiple ways of collecting data. The use of this paradigm did not restrict the researcher in the investigation on psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of the students at a rural college, since pragmatism concentrates on "what works" to answer the research questions of the study (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

The researcher believed that there was no correct or incorrect information to be gathered from the participants. Instead, data needed to be judged according to relevance to the purpose of the research, and lack of bias. However, inquiry in general, and research in particular, are specific realms of experience (Nyumba et al., 2017). The researcher used the pragmatic perspective to obtain knowledge pertaining to the study.

1.6.3 Research design

This study used a sequential explanatory design. Othman, Steen, and Fleet (2020) state that sequential explanatory design is the quantitative phase of data collection and analysis, followed by a phase of qualitative data collection and analysis, with a final phase of integration or linking of data from the two separate strands of data. The researcher believed it was appropriate to use a sequential explanatory design as research design because it is an effective approach for investigating complex problems, and allowed understanding of the factors influencing the academic performance of students at a rural college (Gilbert, Cattell, Edwards, & Bowen, 2017). Gilbert et al. (2017) further indicate that a sequential explanatory design uses quantitative data to test, or generalise qualitative findings. Quantitative data are collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data, which are collected and analysed later.

1.7 Data collection

1.7.1 Quantitative data collection tool

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Roopa & Rani, 2012). A questionnaire was used to collect data on the types of psychosocial factors that influence the students' academic performance. The researcher used this data collection technique to answer the research questions quantitatively. Questionnaire content included closed format multiple-choice questions, which consisted of short and simple sentences in line with the respondents' level of knowledge (Wagner, Kawulich, & Garner, 2012).

1.7.2 Qualitative data collection tool

Qualitative data were collected after the first term of the college academic year. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data at the end of the first term of the 2021 academic year. The timing of the investigation was chosen because students' academic performance is evaluated after every academic term in a year (Subedi, 2016). This study used semi-structured interviews so that interpretations are better grounded, and the subjects' reality and perceptions be documented and understood (Hyett, Kenn & Dickson-Swift, 2014). Qualitative interviews alerted the researcher's eyes to the thoughts, concerns, anxieties and triumphs experienced by the respondents (Kaiser, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information about how psychosocial factors influenced students' academic performance. The interview consisted of open-ended questions and the field notes were transcribed for analysis. The researcher decided to use semi-structured interviews because they permitted participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms based on their lived experiences.

1.8 Selection of study participants

1.8.1 Study population, sampling, and samples

According to Mdluli (2017), the researcher should first decide on the population, from which the study result will be generalised. This is a group of potential participants the researcher wants to generalise the study results. The study targeted 200 NCV level 3 students, registered for the 2020/21 academic year. This study's population consisted of students enrolled at the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college of the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) level 3 programme. The programme enrolled students after grade 9 and was a three-year from the National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 2 qualifications to NQF level 4 NCV qualification (Buthelezi, 2018).

The study was conducted at a selected TVET College in Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa, where students participated in the study to understand the psychosocial factors that impact the academic performance of the NCV students at a rural TVET college. A sample of 115 individuals participated in the first quantitative phase. A sample of 6 individuals comprised the interview group for the second qualitative phase. The members of the interview group were selected from the first phase of 115 survey participants who indicated their willingness to be interviewed following receipt of an informed consent form. Participants were likely to be knowledgeable and well-informed about the phenomenon under study.

1.8.1.1 Sampling techniques and samples

This study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, also called judgement sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant because of his /her qualities or knowledge. It is a non-random technique, based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Hyett et al., 2014). One hundred and fifteen students indicated their willingness to participate in the study. The

participants signed and returned consent forms at the selected TVET College that allowed them to express their college experiences from previous and current academic years. Participants were allowed to divulge their views and knowledge in isiZulu, their home language, so that language would not be a barrier to talk honestly about their psychosocial experiences. The participants were willing to provide information about how psychosocial factors influenced their academic performance. The participants hailed from the surrounding rural areas of the selected college. Because of the above reasons and qualities, one hundred and fifteen TVET College students were selected by means of purposive sampling. These students were given questionnaires for the collection of data. Purposive sampling was useful to the study, because it related to the typical members of the affected population and helped the researcher to find people who were willing to provide useful information for the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

In every type of research, it is ideal to use the whole population, but in most cases, it is not possible (Etikan et al., 2016). Convenient sampling involves subjects of the population who are easily accessible to the researcher. It is also a type of non-probability or non-random sampling, where members of the target population who meet certain practical criteria, such as availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate, are included for the purpose of the study (Taherdoost, 2016). In this study TVET College students were used to collect qualitative data. From the first phase six participants of 115 indicated their availability and willingness to be interviewed for qualitative data collection. These participants were regarded as having knowledge, experience and the insight about how psychosocial factors influenced students' academic performance. Therefore, six participants from the selected TVET College were individually interviewed in semi-structured interviews to answer research questions qualitatively, as well as to automate the objectives of the study. Convenient sampling was used as an alternative sampling technique, because it is quick and easy to deliver results. The two sampling techniques, purposive sampling and convenient sampling are outlined below:

1.8.1.2 Quantitative phase

During the first phase, the researcher selected a sample of one hundred and fifteen (N=115) participants (19 males and 96 females). These were selected through purposive sampling according to the following criteria:

- All participants were registered TVET students from the NCV programme, NQF level 3.
- All participants spoke IsiZulu as a home language.
- The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 45 years old and above.
- All participants voluntarily answered and signed the consent form.

1.8.1.3 Qualitative phase

During the second phase, the researcher selected a sample of six (N=6) participants (3 males and 3 females), using convenient sampling. Six participants who indicated their willingness to be interviewed were selected from the 115 survey participants. The following was established as criteria:

- These six participants indicated on the consent form that they are available and willing to participate in the second phase of the study.
- They were willing to provide the information for the study.
- They all came from surrounding areas and were available for the face -to- face interviews after classes.
- All participants communicated freely and openly with the researcher.

1.8.2 Description of the rural college

The study was conducted at a rural college that used to be called a ‘Further Education and Training (FET) College’; however, it is now called a ‘Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College’, according to the DHET (2018). The selected rural Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) provides vocational, occupational and artisan education and training. This rural college is a post-school education and training that enrolls students who have completed Grade 9. As stated earlier, “the mission of the rural TVET College is to provide students equal access to quality vocational education and training programmes that are responsive to the needs of the labour market” (Rajkumar et al., 2015). This rural TVET college boasts of a well-established, good quality, post-school education system that targets responsible senior adolescents and adults who should be serious about following an education and training programme, with a view to acquiring marketable skills (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2021). This college is dominated by students from rural areas, as it is the only central higher education institution around the villages of Ladysmith and Estcourt. This rural college is divided into three campuses that all provide theoretical and practical training in the students' chosen fields of study. It prepares them for the workplaces as well as for further higher education opportunities. The education and training offered is vocational and occupational (Kraak, 2016). However, the study's location was at only one of the campuses of the rural TVET College in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The campus is situated in the Ladysmith town in KwaZulu-Natal Province. Most of the students who attend this campus are from the surrounding villages. However, some of the students are renting accommodation which suggests that they do not have adequate psychological, social and academic support from their parents. The majority of students at this rural TVET college come from low socio-economic backgrounds and have limited access to personal psychosocial support services. These students were identified as the key participants in this study.

1.9 Data analysis

This study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for complementarity, and to allow for a more complete analysis. The study adopted pragmatism as the paradigm used to guide the study. A major tenet of pragmatism is that quantitative and qualitative methods are compatible. Thus, both numerical and textual data, collected sequentially or concurrently, can help understand the research problem better (Ivakova & Stick, 2007). Analysis of data is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data, with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making (De Jonge, & Vanderloo, 2013). Triangulation is often used in studies that combine both quantitative and qualitative data (Almalki, 2016). Quantitative and qualitative data help to provide a better understanding of phenomena, through convergent results in certain areas and through unique perspectives/angles that one or more of the individual methods can provide in other areas (Almalki, 2016). Therefore, triangulation from different data sources was used in the study to build a coherent justification for the final themes that emerged from the study.

1.9.1 Quantitative analysis

The study used descriptive statistics to analyse data through the presentation of numeric facts or data, in either tabular or graphic form (Kaur, Stoltzfus, & Yellapu, 2018). Descriptive statistics is the term given to the analysis of data that helps describe, show, or summarise data in a meaningful way. For example, patterns may emerge from the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). In this study quantitative data was analysed by using descriptive statistics through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25). The researcher believed that descriptive statistics allowed for statistical inferences, which were used to draw conclusions about the study population based upon the sample data. The study used frequency and percentages to explore how psychological factors influenced academic performance at the TVET college. The frequency and percentage were used to determine and calculate the influence of the psychosocial factors on students' academic performance. The study used this particular form of analysis to establish possible connections between the psychosocial factors and academic performance of the students at a rural college.

1.9.2 Qualitative Analysis

This study used thematic techniques to analyse the qualitative data. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data that can generate vast amounts of 'raw' data (Kaur et al., 2018). Once all qualitative data were collected, the researcher analysed the notes to develop an understanding of the people and situations investigated. The researcher used open coding and analysed qualitative data by systematically identifying, organising, and presenting insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset, to understand the association between psychosocial factors and students' academic performance (Morgan, 2007).

Thematic analysis was used in this study to make sense of the data collected during the semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis is useful for studying qualitative research. It can be used with unstructured material and is sensitive to the context and symbolic forms of data. The researcher believed that thematic analysis is appropriate to analyse data collected for the study because it is flexible and is not tied to a particular perspective or theoretical perspective. It also looks beyond what has been said, to identify and examine the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Data were analysed after the researcher had read and re-read the transcripts.

The researcher then generated initial codes by organising data in a meaningful, systematic way. The researcher captured significant or interesting data, and defined them through illustrations, mostly tables and other descriptive ways for a report at a later stage (Kaur et al., 2018). The purpose of this phase of analysis was to predict the influences of the psychosocial factors on the academic performance of rural college students in response to research questions and the stated problem of the study.

1.10 Ethical considerations

Scholars such as Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012:62) consider ethics significant since it deals with beliefs regarding what is morally good or bad, right or wrong, and proper or improper. Confidentiality means that the respondent's identity is known to the investigator but protected from public exposure. The researcher kept any identifying information out of published reports. Anonymity means that the researcher does not know the identity of the participants in the study (Kaiser, 2009). Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly considered in the study to protect individuals from public exposure. When sensitive information is revealed during a study, public awareness may create the risk of persecution, as well as reputational, financial, or legal consequences (Kaur et al., 2018).

In line with these notions, the researcher wrote a letter to the Institution management requesting permission or approval to conduct the study. She also applied for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State to protect the research participants' dignity, rights, and safety. These permits were both granted (see appendix A and B). An informed consent form was developed. The form stated that the participants were guaranteed certain rights if they agreed to be involved in the study and it was acknowledged that their rights were protected. A statement relating to informed consent was affixed to the form, reflecting compliance by participants. The anonymity of participants was protected by numerically coding each returned questionnaire, and responses were kept confidential. While conducting the interviews with the selected respondents, they were assigned fictitious names for use in their description and reporting the results. The identifying information was not kept either by the researcher or other participants. All participants' responses were completed anonymously.

The researcher ensured that all research data, including electronic files, questionnaires, and interview transcripts, were kept in a locked file on the researcher's computer and would be destroyed after a reasonable period. Participants were told that data would be disseminated to the professional supervisor of the researcher and later converted into dissertation findings, but in no way would it be possible to trace responses to individuals.

Researchers can avoid confidentiality dilemmas that might otherwise lead them not to report rich, detailed data (Kaiser, 2009). The researcher introduced herself and explained the purpose of her

research to participants before the investigation so that participants had adequate information regarding the research. Participants were given the power of free choice, enabling them to consent to or decline participation in the research. The process was embedded within the principle of respect for autonomy to provide the participants with information about the research benefits and maintain participants' confidentiality while presenting detailed accounts of psychosocial life and unique challenges necessary for conducting the research (Hyett et al., 2014). The setting selected for this study was open only to NCV, NQF LEVEL 3 students of a selected TVET college in Ladysmith, South Africa.

1.11 Definition of the key concept

Academic performance is the level of knowledge shown in an area or subject compared to the norm, and it is generally measured using the grade point average (Lamas, 2015). Narad and Abdullah (2016) define the academic performance of students as one of the important goals of education, which can be defined as the knowledge gained by the student which is assessed by marks- awarded by a teacher and/or educational goals set by students and teachers to be achieved over a specific period of time. Academic performance involves factors such as the intellectual level, personality, motivation, skills, interests, study habits, self-esteem or the teacher-student relationship (Noemy, Inés, Cristina, & Patricia, 2017). The purpose of academic performance is to achieve educational goals that involve achievements and objectives set in the programme or course that a student attends (Baharu, 2018). These are expressed through grades which are the result of assessments that involve passing or not certain tests, subjects or courses (Lamas, 2015). Academic performance is, therefore, a concern of people who have vested interest in the college. They may include parents, students, lecturers, college management and the entire society that form the rural college as a community (Ismail, Mahmood, & Abdelmaboud, 2018).

Psychological factors are a multidimensional construct (Baharu, 2018). Psychological factors are psychological elements that integrate social conditions on the individual's physical, emotional well-being and the ability to work (Naz et al., 2020). These factors include students' attitude, thinking, aptitude and motivation. Furthermore, psychological factors include individual-level processes and meanings that influence the students' mental states (Upton, 2013). It is noted that

psychological factors do not always have a positive effect on the process of increasing students' academic performance; in actual fact, it may be a substantial reason for the poor academic performance of students who may then not graduate from tertiary educational institutions (Aprieliava et al., 2021). Psychological factors are demonstrated in the ability of students to acquire knowledge, gain skills, perception of educational information, attitude to others, as well as mutual understanding of other people (Lamas, 2015).

Social factors are things that affect an individual's lifestyle, entailing the facts and experiences that influence an individual's personality, attitudes, and education (Kolo et al., 2017). Social factors include general factors at the level of human society, concerned with social structure and social processes that impinge on the individual (Upton, 2013). Social factors include relationships between individuals and the social environment. Social factors are any variables which arise from the environment which influence the student to think and act in a certain way (Glozah & Pevalin, 2014). Basically, social factors have a huge impact on students' continuous underperformance and failure to pass subjects that they are enrolled for at the rural college.

Support services encompass a cluster of facilities and activities that are provided to college students to make the learning process easier and more interesting. (Kaur, 2016). Support services can be provided by both special and general employees of the college, as these services are designed to improve performance relative to a specific and measurable goal (Krumrei-mancuso et al., 2013). Support services provide, therefore, a support structure for students who are not making expected progress toward learning goals. These services ensure the development of quality learning and teaching, monitor and support the implementation of curriculum statements and assessment regulations; and support the development of lecturers at a rural college (DHET, 2018).

Rural colleges are institutions that cater mainly for those who do not qualify for admission to universities (Buthelezi, 2020). These colleges are intended to enable students to acquire knowledge, practical skills, and applied vocational and occupational competence, to enter employment, a vocation, occupation or trade; or higher education (DHET, 2018). The focus of rural colleges remains on core vocational and occupational training roles (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). These colleges find ways to address the enormous social challenge of providing opportunities for young people who are not in employment or attending other educational

institutions.

TVET is an abbreviation for Technical and Vocational Education and Training that is broadly defined in terms of programmes at different levels on the NQF and is located at the intersection of general and higher education and the world of work (DHET, 2018).

A student is an individual who attends an institution of higher education full-time or part-time (Buthelezi, 2020). This is someone who is enrolled in a diploma or degree-granting programme at an institution of higher learning (Kaur, 2016). Basically, a student is an individual that is studying a particular subject or programme and is interested in the subject and spends time studying it.

‘Psychosocial’ is a shorthand term for a combination of psychological and social factors, which implies that the effect of social processes are sometimes mediated through psychological understanding (Upton, 2013). Psychosocial factors are defined as psychological and social factors that may facilitate or hinder learning a specific subject or a course (Kirui & Kaluyu, 2018). Psychosocial factors can be viewed as underlying forces that operate in a student’s life as a result of their psychological and social states and affecting his/her level of productivity (Njenga, Njoka, & Ndungu, 2019). Psychosocial factors play an enormous role in the outcomes of students’ performance and the subsequent success of educational institutions.’’

1.12 Layout of chapters

Chapter 1: General introduction of the study

This chapter provides an overview of the study background. The problem statement, aim of the study, research design and methodology, rationale of the study, description of the rural college, definition of the key concept, as well as the layout of the whole research were presented.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter focuses on the literature review. Additionally, this chapter highlights the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The chapter elaborates on the following: background of psychosocial factors on academic performance, self-efficacy, stress, anxiety, motivation, socio-economic status and student-lecturer interaction as factors influencing students’ academic

performance at colleges. Furthermore, psychosocial factors are discussed as a threat to students' academic performance. Finally, evidence of the support system to enhance students' academic performance, historical background and objectives of psychosocial theory and the relevance of the theory to the study are examined.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used to generate the empirical data.

Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

This chapter is about the analysis of data and the presentation of findings on exploring psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students at a rural college.

Chapter 5: Discussions, recommendations and conclusion

This chapter discusses the findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings from exploring psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students at a rural college.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter began by describing the purpose of the study, offering background information and the context in which the study was conducted. The research problem and relevance of this study was explained. A brief overview of the rationale for the study related to the present study was offered. This was followed by the presentation of the primary and secondary research -questions, and the description of research design and the methods used to answer the questions. Based on this, the study's findings will be analysed. The data collection phases, as well as tools used to collect data from selected research participants were presented, followed by the definition of key concepts of the current research and ethical considerations of the study. The chapter ends with a brief layout of chapters. A comprehensive theoretical framework of the study and the literature review of the study are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review of the study, focusing on the psychosocial factors that impact the academic performance of students at a rural college. The purpose of this literature review is to locate the present study within research previously conducted on psychosocial factors in relation to academic performance, as well as to the field of teaching and learning. The influence of psychosocial factors on students' academic performance is explained in this chapter, with special emphasis on the potential threat of those factors on students' academic performance. Subsequently the support system to enhance students' academic performance is discussed. The chapter deliberates the theoretical framework (Erik Erikson' psychosocial theory, 1902-1994) from the field of psychosocial influences, with the underlying purpose of justifying the choice of the framework for this study. The discussion is done by considering the historical background of the theory, psychosocial developmental stages, the objectives of psychosocial theory, and an analysis of the relevance of the psychosocial theory.

2.2 Psychosocial factors influencing academic performance of students at colleges

“Psychosocial factors influence a student’s ability to function normally in his/her school- related activities (Kraak, 2016). Anderman and Patrik (2012) indicate that many rural college students do not perform well academically, do not attend classes every day, lose concentration during lectures, and drop out yearly. Psychosocial problems occur in a wide variety of settings and often have a negative impact on students' mental health, leading to stress which affects their physical and psychological health (Rajkumal et al., 2015). These factors cause students to experience anxiety, resulting in poor performance, low self-esteem and fear that interfere with their ability to perform well academically.

Students' academic performance has received considerable attention in previous research, and has been found to be a very challenging aspect in academic literature. Mushtaq and Khan (2012) emphasise that student performance is affected by social, psychological, economic, environmental and personal factors. These factors vary from person to person and from country to country.

In the context of teaching and learning, psychosocial factors are processes that measure various interrelated aspects of learning in an educational system. This study aims to explore psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a rural college. Kolo et al. (2017) indicate that psychosocial factors like self-efficacy and social interaction of students play an important role in students' academic performance, and are essential for the delivery of quality teaching and learning. These factors remain the key determinants of students' academic performance and, a series of factors should be considered when exploring and identifying the psychosocial influences on the quality of students' academic performance in this study. Various studies report that psychological factors correlate with academic performance and that those factors create tension and anxiety that may lead to mental health problems (Rajkumar et al., 2015). It is also reported that students who are from rural colleges are more prone to experiencing lack of social support, which negatively hampers mental health (Buthelezi, 2018). Rajkumar et al. (2015) state that psychosocial factors lead rural college students to social malfunctioning that necessitates/justifies the growing interest in the factors influencing academic performance.

2.2.1 Self-efficacy as a factor influencing students' academic performance at colleges

A study by Tenaw (2013) found a positive and significant correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance. Self-efficacy points to the confidence people have in a given task, varies between individuals and actually fluctuates within an individual for different tasks. Similarly, Lamas (2015) found that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of academic performance. Student academic performance fluctuated because of the varying students' self-efficacy, which depended on the performance outcome of past experience (Tenaw, 2013).

Self-efficacy affects students' choice of activity, their effort and persistence. Students constantly judge their intellectual capabilities against the curriculum demands and the values of school tasks, and then decide to persist in the coursework or not (Kolo et al., 2017). Different studies show that self-efficacy is one of the most powerful predictors of student achievement. Academic self-

efficacy is strongly related to failure on the one hand, and better academic performance on the other hand, both directly as well as indirectly through academic expectations (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018).

2.2.2 Stress as a factor influencing students' academic performance at colleges

Stress is the body's natural response to challenges. It is frequently listed among the contributing factors to the development of disorders such as depression and anxiety (Mihailescu et al., 2016). When students experience high levels of stress or chronic stress, regardless of their age or level, it may interfere with their ability to learn, memorise, and earn good grades (Aafreen, Priya, & Gayathri, 2018). It is noted that high levels of stress interfere with concentration and memory, which are critical for academic success (Bernal-Morales et al., 2015). However, Gaffoor and Van der Byl (2019) indicate that performance suffers under both low and high stress conditions. In their research, Badenhorst and Radile (2018) suggest that performance is best when stress levels are moderate. Excessive stress can lead to psychological problems such as depression and anxiety (Aafreen et al., 2018). Bernal-Morales, Rodríguez-Landa, and Pulido-Criollo (2015) note that both chronic and acute psychosocial stressors are significant predictors of anxiety disorders and poor academic performance among students. The number of individuals with common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety caused by stress is rising on a global scale, more specifically in lower-income countries. These findings reveal that stress correlates with symptoms of depression and anxiety, leads to increasing dropout rates, and causes academic performance problems (Mihailescu et al., 2016).

It is also worth noting that stress is an inevitable part of student-life, as it takes a toll on most students' physical health, emotional wellbeing, and academic performance. Students suffer from stress when they are unable to cope when confronted with so many tasks. These include busy schedules, crammed with studies and extracurricular activities that can take a toll on a student's physical and mental health, especially if one is not eating or sleeping properly (Gaffoor & Van der Byl, 2019). Those stressors can compound over time, leading to even greater levels of stress and poor academic performance. The rise of the Covid-19 pandemic created a sudden change in lifestyle, an increased study load, adapting to blended learning and new responsibilities, among

others. These undoubtedly led to increased stress amongst students and had become the number one reported impediment to academic performance, as fellow students now report being more stressed than ever before. Performance and progress in academic life has been associated with psychosocial stressors among college students (Gulzar et al., 2010). Elevated stress levels among students can result in decreased performance in academic accomplishments and can affect the physical and mental health of students.

2.2.3 Anxiety as a factor influencing academic performance of students at colleges

Every human being experiences anxiety. This emotion consists of fear and uncertainty and occurs when an individual believes that an event is a threat to the self or self-esteem (Ajmal & Ahmad, 2019). Anxiety blocks the normal thought processes. These include when students experience problems during their studies and feel anxious when taking exams or making significant life decisions, which may cause students to underperform consistently (Bernal-Morales et al., 2015). A study by Nadeem, Ali, and Zaidi (2012) that studied the impact of anxiety on student achievement indicates that when anxiety increases, the academic performance of students declines. Bernal-Morales et al. (2015) indicate that anxiety is an adaptive response generated by environmentally stressful situations that activate alarm mechanisms in the individual to assure survival. Research results consistently show a negative effect of stress and anxiety on academic performance (Malaspina, 2018). Anxiety is negatively related to academic performance and fear of negative evaluations (Baharu, 2018). Aafreen et al. (2018) indicates that it is important to remember that mental constitution or coping capacities vary from one student to another. It is noted that negative intrusive thoughts relate negatively to academic performance, and this aspect of anxiety is adaptive (Baharu, 2018). Therefore, students with poor coping capacities become prone to stress, anxiety, depression, and fear of academic failure. Anxiety is a serious problem for students in both developed and developing countries (Bernal-Morales et al., 2015).

Anxiety has an adverse effect on learning and achievement because the anxiety caused in the educational environment tends to be context -specific and affect performance, causing deterioration in the students' academic performance (Wright, 2011). Researchers Ajmal and Ahmad (2019) revealed that high levels of anxiety influence the decrease of working memory and

reasoning in students. Vitasari et al. (2010) have further demonstrated that anxiety has a detrimental effect and that experiencing anxiety while studying is a major predictor of low academic performance. The above-mentioned clearly indicates that anxiety has an impact on students' academic performance.

2.2.4 Motivation as a factor influencing students' academic performance at colleges

It has been found that students' type of motivation is one of the factors that affects their performance. Academic challenges leading to low performance and absenteeism have proven to be indicators of low levels of motivation for learning (Ismail, Mahmood & Abdelmaboud, 2018). Currently, it is considered that cognitive and motivational factors interact and take part in the quality of students' learning and consequently in their performance (Malaspina, 2018). The motivational constructs are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Badenhorst and Radile (2018) state that intrinsically motivated students engage in an activity for its own sake, because they find working on the task enjoyable. However, students can also be extrinsically motivated to engage in an activity when they believe that working on the task will result in desirable outcomes (Hattie, 2012). Motivation is important for better academic performance.

It should also be noted that motivation as a factor influencing academic performance affects the encouragement of students to study, which in turn, is an important aspect of improving the academic performance among students at tertiary educational institutions (Katagami & Tsuchiya, 2016). The students' motivation to study is an important psychological and pedagogical problem on aspects of critical thinking among students at colleges and other tertiary educational institutions (Aprielivia et al., 2021). Motivation is one of the most important issues in education that can significantly support efficiency of the educational process (Hattie, 2012). Yilmaz, Sahin and Turgut (2017) also indicate that motivation to study is quite a variable process, and therefore motivation should receive serious attention. Motivation has a dominant position in the educational process in educational establishments, it is an important process that ensures effective learning. Dişlen (2013) also argued that students at colleges are less motivated and have poor academic performance due to boring lessons and complex tasks without a detailed explanation from the lecturer. Yilmaz et al. (2017) indicate that students are less motivated when learning, if they do not believe their efforts will improve their performance and that they have other priorities

preoccupying their attention. Wright (2011) also states that feelings of being unable to do the given tasks, little confidence in learning and having deficient relationships or poor communication with lecturers also cause students to have low motivation levels that result in poor academic performance.

2.2.5 Socio-economic status as a factor influencing students' academic performance at colleges

Socio-economic status (SES) is one of the most researched and debated factors among educational professionals that contributes towards the academic performance of students. The most prevalent argument is that the SES of learners affects the quality of their academic performance. Most of the experts argue that low SES has a negative effect on the academic performance of students, because the basic needs of students remain unfulfilled and they do not perform well academically (Akessa & Dhufiera, 2015).

Previous studies and reviews clearly indicate that students from low SES families are more likely to exhibit low levels of literacy, numeracy and comprehension compared to students from high SES families. The non-availability of some critical resources needed for practical work impedes effective learning and academic performance (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). Akessa and Dhufiera's (2015) study revealed that parents' SES is significantly related to the academic performance of students. They indicated that the higher parents' SES, the higher the academic performance of the student. Their study noted that low SES negatively affected academic performance because low SES prevented access to vital resources and created additional stress for a student.

The socioeconomic status of learners affects the quality of their academic performance. The level of truancy or unexplained absence among students is closely related to poor educational performance, which tends to be higher among students from low SES backgrounds (Olufemi, Adediran, & Oyediran, 2018). Unexplained absence among students can be explained as a causal factor in educational performance, which tends to be higher among students from low SES backgrounds (Olufemi et al, 2018). Akessa and Dufera (2015) state that college students support services (SSS) and their financial aid programmes' inability to help poor students escape from the impoverished conditions in which they grow up, negatively contribute to students' academic performance.

Many students do not achieve their postsecondary educational goals or benefit at optimal levels from their college experience, leading to a waste of human talent and potential. There is a strong association between the academic performance result (GPA) and SES of families. Aafreen (2018) revealed that academic anxiety was the least in students from high socio-economic classes – which may be partly attributed to their secured future at least in material aspects. The prevalence of anxiety disorders tends to decrease with higher SES.

2.2.6 Students-lecturer interaction as a factor influencing students' academic performance at rural college

Interaction is a reciprocal process. Once a lecturer and student interact, their thoughts, feelings and behaviour influence each other and result in behavioural changes (Kolo et al., 2017). Research conducted by Gulzar et al. (2010) found a significant and positive relationship between teacher-students' interaction and their academic performance. Kolo et al. (2017) indicated that educators who exhibited better leadership, friendly and understanding behaviour in their interaction with students enhanced students' academic performance. However, educators who showed more uncertain, dissatisfied and admonishing behaviour in their interaction with students had a negative impact on students' academic performance.

Free interaction between educators and students results in good performance. Students and educators who are highly motivated contribute to good academic performance of students. Educators who complete their syllabi on time enhance their students' academic competence and affect the academic performance of students positively (Akessa & Dhufiera, 2015). The interaction of lecturers with students is considered an important social factor in improving students' academic performance. Student-lecturer interaction consists of communication processes where students exchange information of the course contents and socio-emotional information that contribute to their academic performance (Kolo, et., al. 2017). Good interaction between lecturers and students may overcome difficulties and eliminate negative influences on academic performance (Wu & Xin, 2019). Badenhorst and Radile (2018) indicate that academic performance, effective teaching and learning depend on the interaction and relationship between lecturer and students. However, if there are no communication processes where students exchange information about the course

content and socio-emotional information, it may result in poor academic performance. Kolo et al. (2017) point at some key steps that would build positive lecturer-student interaction. They suggest that educators ask students about their interests and try to understand the interest of the students as the educators interact with them. They should pay attention to students' non-verbal responses in their body language. They further mention that educators build on what is heard from the students and share their personal experience with the students for students to feel free to express their own worries, stories and interests.

2.3 Students' academic performance may be threatened by psychosocial factors

This section of the research chapter concentrates on psychosocial factors as possible threats to students' academic performance. Various aspects can affect students' performance at college level, ranging from socio-economic, environmental to psychological factors (Kolo et al., 2017). However, negative psychosocial factors distort teaching and learning techniques, often lead to poor academic performance, which is not only frustrating to students and parents, but its effects are equally grave on college brand and society in terms of dearth of manpower in all spheres of the economy and politics (Kolo et al., 2017). They further (2017) state that students regard themselves as inefficacious and shy away from difficult tasks, slacken their efforts, give up easily in the face of difficulties, dwell on their personal deficiencies, and lower their aspirations. Negative psychosocial factors among students were found to reduce success of their studies and contribute to bad habits with negative long-term consequences like absenteeism, school dropouts, and poor academic performance (Aafreen et al., 2018). It is therefore not surprising that Mushtaq and Khan (2012) indicate that academic performance is affected either by social, psychological, economic, environmental and personal factors.

Kirui and Kaluyu (2018) posit that many students who embark on college studies to obtain a qualification often do not complete their programmes when faced with the decision whether to remain in a college or a programme or to leave early, because of negative psychosocial factors. A study by Gang, Khan and Bansa (2019) indicate that besides the preceding factors mentioned above, rural students may also face other problems such as the school distance from home, lack of school facilities, and poor standard of living, which may reduce students' interest to go to college

and to complete their registered programmes. In addition, Kirui and Kaluyu (2018) state that besides the distance between home and college, other psychosocial factors including lack of emotional support and financial support may reduce students' interest to pursue their studies. These might be the reasons why the dropout rate is high at rural colleges. Abigail and Okonkwo (2013) note that the rural situation presents unique challenges to the academic performance and career decision-making processes of students in a rural college leading to poor academic performance. These include students in rural and remote areas who generally lack focus on paying attention to their academic performance. However, some rural college students do realise the importance of acquiring an education and would excel in their academic performance.

Additionally, the effects of social and psychological factors on student academic performance at rural colleges can determine how the student strikes a balance between stressful academic performance and social activities (Hako & Shikongo, 2019). These psychosocial factors include motivation, self-esteem, stress, test anxiety, help-seeking, academic overload, student adjustment to the environment, self-efficacy, mental distress, major negative life changes, and lack of social support as elements that can affect students' abilities to complete their studies (Hussain et al., 2010; Sommer & Dumont, 2011). These findings support a study by Kolo et al. (2017) that a student's performance constitutes the product of socioeconomic, psychological, and environmental factors. Hence, from the above-mentioned factors, it is evident that psychosocial factors by the students and significant others involved in teaching and learning may influence and threaten students' academic performance at a rural college (Hako & Shikongo, 2019).

2.4 Evidence of the support system to enhance students' academic performance

Early identification of individual needs actively promotes student success and enhances students' academic performance (Krumrei-mancuso et al., 2013). Gulzar et al. (2010) state that in an academic institution, the presence of a support system can enhance the learning capacity of students by helping them develop or improve their coping mechanisms. Ideally, all colleges should promote mental health programmes to foster healthy living and behaviour among students. Sommer and Dumont (2011) indicate that academic support structures for students are important and useful. These support structures aim to improve academic performance of students, they

provide skills that improve the students' abilities to cope with various demands (i.e. stress), to understand their own motivation to study at college (i.e. career orientation), and most importantly, to experience a conducive college climate. These support structures encourage students to seek help to improve their academic and social skills (Sommer & Dumont, 2011).

Wedekind (2010) indicates that all the administrative and corporate service functions at colleges should not focus only on academic performance of students, but jointly support the process of teaching and learning. Paying special attention to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds enhances students' academic performance (Buthelezi, 2018). Krumrei-mancuso et al. (2013) specify that students perform well if they are properly guided by their parents and also by their educators, because when students recognize their abilities and their competences, they perform well.

Student performance should improve if the administration of the college provides proper learning facilities and guidance to the students and improves the environment of the college (Akessa & Dhufera, 2015). A better understanding of academic performance and its correlation with distress may help develop better strategies (Mihailescu et al., 2016). Effective stress management also involves learning to set limits for the issues that create stress (Sikhwari, Dama, Gadisi, & Matodzi, 2020). Learning about common stressors can help mitigate negative or chronic stress in a student's life (Aafreen et al., 2018), although solutions to academic performance related to psychosocial factors in students are complex (Akessa & Dhufera, 2015). However, support services may help students to deal with the emotional side of their learning and overcome problems that inhibit their academic progress (Hako & Shikongo, 2019). These services may assist students to overcome problems such as stress, loss of concentration, and effectively sort out personal problems affecting their studies (Durlak et al., 2011). This type of support can also increase prosocial behaviours such as kindness, sharing, and empathy; it may improve students' attitudes toward learning; and may reduce depression and stress among students (Wedekind, 2010).

Support services at colleges focus on developing students' learning skills, including the skills of assessment and feedback (Gil-Jaurena, 2014). Support services also include tutorial services, mentoring programmes involving academic advice in assisting with course selection, study skills

and exposure to activities designed to assist students' academic performance (Gray, Adams, & Owen, 2014). Support services help students control their studies through keeping up with the pace of the programme they had registered for; prioritising college activities, and personal issues. Support services help college students to develop motivation and self-confidence; and managing stress (Gil-Jaurena, 2014). This type of support can also help students with course selection, academic performance, career advice, and skills development (Gray et al., 2014; Simpson, 2016; Gil-Jaurena, 2014).

According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2015), student support services (SSS) aim to motivate students toward the successful completion of their studies and help students develop key skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and responsible decision-making skills. Another support service that is often overlooked is financial support. Financial support is critical for students' academic performance and reaching their intended goals. Financial support is vital in terms of learning, planning, and execution of any mission (Hako & Shikongo, 2019). Furthermore, Murray (2014) argues that it does little good to have a high number of students at institutions of higher learning without sufficient financial resources to support their learning. Therefore, a need to re-evaluate the models of SSS at rural colleges is necessary to suit current situations and needs of students.

2.5 Theoretical framework: Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (1902-1994)

2.5.1 Historical background of the theory

This study employed Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory that considers the impact of external factors, society and experiences in resolving various psychosocial conflicts from childhood to adulthood. Erickson (1902-1994) was a 20th century psychologist, who developed the psychosocial theory centred on the epigenetic principle, looking at how social influences contributed to our personalities throughout our entire lifespan (Hayward, 2012). Erikson's work (1950, 1968) on the eight stages of psychosocial development assumes that successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues. The theory assumes that all humans have the same basic needs that must be met through distinct stages of development rather than in a continuous manner; and that those stages contain conflicting ideas in social life to allow development to occur (Chavez, 2016).

The study highlights the key motivational constructs of the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students at a rural college. The word psychosocial is Erikson's term, from the words psychological (mind) and social (relationships). Erikson's theory refers to 'psychosocial crisis', as an internal struggle or challenge which a person must negotiate and deal with, in order to grow and develop (Rajkumal et al., 2015).

Erikson believed that his psychosocial principle shapes human development in all people (Chavez, 2016). Psychosocial Development theory is built upon Freud's theory of psychosexual development, by drawing parallels in childhood stages while expanding it to include the influence of social dynamics, as well as the extension of psychosocial development into adulthood (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021). The theory is very accessible and obviously relevant to modern life, from several different perspectives. Erikson's theory is useful for teaching, parenting, self-awareness, managing and coaching, dealing with conflict, and generally for understanding self and others.

2.5.2 Theoretical Framework

2.5.2.1 Psychosocial developmental theory

Psychosocial theory posits eight sequential stages of individual human development, influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors throughout a person's lifespan. This psychosocial approach has influenced several fields of study (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021). Life is a series of lessons and challenges, which help us to grow. Psychosocial problems occur in a wide variety of settings and often have a negative impact on students' mental health; including excessive stress that affects their physical and psychological health (Rajkumal, et al. 2015). The theory used in this study indicates that individual characteristic patterns of behaviour are exhibited and certain capacities are established in eight stages, which are strongly related to age (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021). These stages contain conflicting ideas in the social life to allow development to occur (Chavez, 2016).

In Psychology, theories are used to provide a model for understanding human thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, while Social Psychology focuses on helping us understand and explain social

behaviour (Burke, 2012). Erikson's theory refers to a 'psychosocial crisis' as an internal struggle or challenge, which a person must negotiate and deal with, in order to grow and develop (Rajkumal et al., 2015). Erikson believed that the psychosocial principle shapes human development in all people (Chavez, 2016). This psychosocial theory, concentrating on only three stages (Adolescence, young adulthood and middle adulthood), is suitable for the study because psychosocial theory speaks to the focus of the study (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). The three stages of the theory relate to the study participants selected for the study. Colleges enrol students for academic programmes from the adolescence stage of development. The rural colleges also enrol young adults and middle adults to deliver general-vocational programmes that would prepare students for entry into the workplace and provide the equivalent of a vocational matric at Level 4 of the NQF.

It is beyond the scope of this section to discuss theories that span the field of psychosocial development, and the range of current motivational and psychosocial theories. However, the researcher realised that students undergo different kinds of stress to study, to complete their assignments, and to participate in various programmes at college. In addition, a systematic review was conducted to explore the psychosocial factors relevant to Erikson's Adolescence, young adulthood and middle adulthood stages of development that influenced the academic performance of students at a rural college. In the table below, each stage is defined by two opposing psychological attitudes, one positive/syntactic and another negative/dystonic, in which the opposite is true with the adoption of psychosocial virtue (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021).

TABLE: 2.1 Psychosocial developmental stages

Stage	Period	Positive Resolution Attitude	Negative Resolution Attitude	Significant task/ Psychosocial Virtue
1	Early Infancy	Trust	Mistrust	Mutual affirmation of mother and child/ Hope, faith
2	Late Infancy	Autonomy	Shame and Doubt	Differentiate right and wrong and to establish psychosocial Independence/will, determination
3	Early Childhood	Initiative	Guilt	Role experimentation/purpose, courage
4	Middle Childhood	Industry	Inferiority	Skill learning/competence
5	Adolescence	Identity	Identity Confusion	Establish philosophy of life/fidelity, loyalty
6	Young Adulthood	Intimacy	Isolation	Establish mutually satisfying relationships – primarily marriage and friends/love
7	Middle Adulthood	Generativity	Stagnation	Perpetuate culture/care
8	Older Adulthood	Ego Integrity	Despair	Completion of life/ wisdom

The following three stages of the psychosocial development theory; adolescence, young adulthood and middle adulthood are very significant, as they speak to the focus of psychosocial influences on academic performance of rural college students. Stages arise as individuals grow and face new decisions and turning points during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. These stages contain conflicting ideas in the social life to allow development to occur (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021). Successfully passing through each crisis involves 'achieving' a healthy ratio or balance between the two opposing dispositions that represent each crisis. As informed by literature, psychosocial factors are multidimensional and measure various interrelated aspects of learning in rural college educational systems (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). Erikson's psychosocial theory is widely and highly considered significant for dealing with conflict, and generally for understanding self and others.

Identity vs Identity Confusion, adolescence stage 'To be oneself (or not to be)', is where Identity basically means how a person sees himself/herself in relation to the world. It is a sense of self or individuality in the context of life and what lies ahead. Identity Confusion indicates an absence of

identity, and people cannot see clearly who they are and how they can relate positively with their environment. Psychosocial theories explore the psychosocial crisis of adolescence, and personal identity vs identity confusion. This concept highlights the need for individuals to find self-definition, as well as a sense of meaning and purpose that will guide decisions as they transition into adulthood (Chavez, 2016).

The theory introduced the concept of normative psychosocial crises, as well as predictable tensions that arise as a result of conflicts between socialisation and maturation throughout life. The interaction with the outer and inner world rejects incongruent evaluations of self and a decreased level of anxiety, respectively. Extreme ego identity can become fanaticism, which can create unhealthy interactions with the self and others. One must navigate the two opposing values in each stage to find a balance, instead of only striving for the positive quality (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021).

Intimacy vs Isolation, young adulthood stage 'To lose and find oneself'. Erikson explained this stage in terms of sexual mutuality - the giving and receiving of physical and emotional connections, and all the other elements that we would typically associate with healthy adult relationships conducive to mating and child-rearing. Intimacy means the process of achieving relationships with family and marital or mating partner(s). Isolation conversely means being and feeling excluded from the usual life experiences of dating and mating and mutually loving relationships. This is characterised by feelings of loneliness, alienation, social withdrawal or non-participation (Rajkumal et al., 2015).

Generativity vs Stagnation, middle adulthood stage 'To take care of'. Erikson acknowledged that this stage also extends to other productive activities - work and creativity. Erikson's analysis of this stage was strongly oriented towards parenting. Generativity derives from the word generation, as in parents and children, and specifically the unconditional giving that characterises positive parental love and care for their offspring. Generativity potentially extends beyond one's own children to all future generations. Positive outcomes from this crisis stage depend on contributing positively and unconditionally. We might also see this as an end of self-interest. Success at this stage actually depends on giving and caring - putting something back into life, to the best of one's capabilities. Stagnation is an extension of isolation, which turns inward in the form of self-interest.

It is the disposition that represents feelings of selfishness, as well as lack of interest in young people and future generations, and the wider world.

2.5.2.2 Objectives of psychosocial theory

Erikson proposed that we are motivated by a need to achieve competence in certain areas of our lives. The theory assumes that all humans have the same basic needs that must be met in distinct stages of development, rather than in a continuous manner. In Psychology, theories are used to provide a model for understanding human thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, while Social Psychology focuses on helping us understand and explain social behaviour (Burke, 2012). However, psychosocial theory explains changes in self-understanding, social relationships, and one's relationship to society from infancy through later life. Individual characteristic patterns of behaviour are exhibited, and certain capacities become established in eight stages which are strongly related to age (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021).

Psychosocial theories focus on the nature of self-understanding, social relationships, and the mental processes that support connections between the person and his/her social world or worldview across the life span (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). Social expectations in each stage of psychosocial development are the same across all cultures, and parental influence exists throughout the stages of childhood and adolescence. Psychosocial theory connects important psychosocial development across a person's lifespan, provides a pragmatic perspective on personality development, and demonstrates middle and late adulthood as active and significant periods of personal growth. Erikson's psychosocial development theory provides a stepping-stone for movement toward proper growth that one can apply to distinguish individual difficulties and, in turn, provides the appropriate support and services for tackling the challenges.

2.5.3 Relevance of the theory to the study

The psychosocial theory is used to provide the rural students' different perspective of the crisis (psychological and social) described by Erikson (1963) in three selected stages (Adolescence, young adulthood and middle adulthood) of psychosocial development. This theory is relevant and talks to the evident crisis faced by students at a rural college. Under this theory, experiencing these crises in life can be damaging as older individuals like rural college students may feel that time has run out to turn things around regarding their academic performance. The various information

and records presented in this study provide examples of psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of the students at a rural college through the utilisation of Erik Erickson's psychosocial theory. Therefore, psychosocial theory, as the lens informing this study, enabled the researcher to generate meaning and understanding from the survey and interviews responses, which led to the results of this study.

The rural college students are at three of Erik Erickson's psychosocial development stages, and are influenced by a number of factors in an individual's mental abilities and environment related to their academic performance. The study findings reflect the huge influence of the psychosocial factors on the adolescence, young adulthood and middle adulthood stages of development, and on the rural college students' academic performance. These factors included psychological and social factors. The sample of 115 participants in the study reported students who fall under Erikson's three (5, 6, &7) stages of development presented above. Psychosocial theory in this study helped to review the construction and piecemeal research systematically into the factors associated with academic performance, identify the associated factors that are relevant to Erikson's three (5,6, &7) stages of psychosocial development, and integrate them to present a comprehensive review of psychosocial influences on adolescence, early adulthood and middle adulthood students at a rural college. This study used psychosocial developmental theory to describe the influence of psychosocial factors on students' academic performance.

From the above it is clear that psychosocial development theory formed the main theoretical framework in this study, as the researcher believed that this theory is the most relevant model for exploring psychosocial factors at the rural college. The researcher also believed that Erikson's Psychosocial theory may fill the gap, given the lack of longitudinal research in psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of rural college students and provide the foundation for future research. Finally, psychosocial developmental theory was chosen because it made it possible to identify multiple factors influencing the students' academic performance. Through psychosocial developmental theory, the research question for this study could therefore be fully answered.''

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature related to the present study. The systematic review focused on the psychosocial influence towards academic performance. The various psychosocial factors that may influence rural college students' academic performance were identified and the possible threats to student academic performance at a rural college were presented and discussed in this chapter. The chapter presented the support system evidence regarded as vital pillars of the education process to enhance students' academic performance.

The chapter discussed Erickson's psychosocial theory as the theoretical framework that underpins the study. Three psychosocial developmental stages that form the focus of psychosocial influences on the academic performance of the rural college students were discussed. The chapter discussed the backgrounds of psychosocial theory, as well as the objectives of the adopted theory. The relevance of Erikson's psychosocial theory, which served as the guide of this study, was also explained and placed in context. The following chapter presents the research design and methodology used to explore psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of the students at a rural college.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature that included the conceptual framework and theoretical framework. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in the study. It discusses the research approach and paradigm. A sequential explanatory design and its pertinence to this study is presented in this chapter. The data collection method for the quantitative component and interviews for the qualitative section are discussed in this chapter. This chapter also presents the mechanism for collecting data and the procedures followed in obtaining data. The instruments for data collection and the data analysis in the mixed method are outlined in this chapter. The chapter identifies the ethical considerations of the study.

3.2 Research Approach in Mixed-methods

The purpose of a research approach is to specify a plan for generating research evidence that will be used to answer the research question (McMillan, 2012). The process of exploring psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a rural college adopted a mixed method approach. The mixed method approach allows for greater validity in a study by seeking corroboration between quantitative and qualitative data, using a combination of research approaches, providing a more complete and comprehensive picture of the study phenomenon (Hyett et al., 2014). Fong et al. (2016), argue that utilising a mixed methods approach can allow for the limitations of each approach to be neutralised while strengths are built upon; thereby providing stronger and more accurate inferences. This helps to answer the research questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative methods alone and provides a greater repertoire of tools to meet the aims and objectives of a study (Fung & Siow, 2013). Furthermore, mixed methods research has been defined as a model of inquiry combining qualitative and quantitative models of research, so that evidence may be mixed and knowledge increased in a more meaningful manner than either model could achieve alone (Nyumba et al., 2017). These two approaches are separately explained below.

3.2.1 Quantitative Research Approach

“The quantitative research approach is regarded as an organised inquiry about the phenomenon through a collection of numerical data and execution of statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques (Neuman, 2014). Quantitative research objectives are measurable and cannot be separated from variables and hypotheses. Variables are concepts with variations that can take numerical values, while hypotheses are untested assumptions or propositions of relationships between variables. These objectives include collecting facts about human behaviour that will lead to verification and extension of theories (Mokhampanyane, 2021).

The quantitative research approach was beneficial in this study because study concepts could be operationalised in terms of well-defined indicators, tracing trends and relationships, making comparisons, and using large and perhaps, representative samples (Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2021). The quantitative research approach was helpful in collecting data from a large number of rural college participants, thus, increasing the possibility to generalise the findings to a broader population (Plano & Ivankova, 2016). According to Dawadi, et al. (2021), the quantitative research approach of data collection brings breadth to the study by supporting the researcher with data about psychosocial factors that influence academic performance from different participants.

In order for this study to assess significant predictors quantitatively and use the quantitative results to develop qualitative follow-up exploration (potentially through survey), and explore the influence of psychosocial factors on academic performance; the qualitative method was used. Quantitative results were also triangulated with qualitative findings and vice versa. The qualitative method is explained below.

3.2.2 Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative research approach emphasises the qualities of entities, processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (Elliott, 2018). It is a situated activity which locates the researcher in the world, qualitative research aims to promote better self-understanding, increase insight into the human condition, to describe, clarify and investigate human experiences (Yin, 2011). Mokhampanyane (2021) defines the qualitative research approach as an interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, and occasionally counter-disciplinary field of inquiry that commits to a naturalistic viewpoint and the interpretive understanding of the human experience.

The qualitative research approach was suitable for representing the views and perspectives of participants in a study (Yin, 2011). This kind of research produces findings derived from real-world settings where the phenomena of interest unfold naturally (Gulzar et al., 2010). Hence, the qualitative research approach was used for analysing and presenting data because psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of the students in a rural college are grounded in the words, experiences, and thoughts of the student participants. The use of a qualitative research approach in this study was meant to yield real, rich, deep data that illuminate everyday patterns of action and meaning from the perspective of participants being studied. The use of this approach emphasised the importance of the voice of the participants and firsthand information regarding the lived experiences of the study participants regarding psychosocial factors that influence students' academic performance at a rural college. The qualitative research approach was further used to understand human behaviour and experiences from people's own viewpoints. Gilbert et al. (2017) indicate that qualitative procedures are mainly for considering the essential features of human experiences, and to help researchers explore those experiences. Since this study explored psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a rural college, the qualitative approach was well suited for it.

3.3 Research paradigm in mixed methods

3.3.1 Research paradigm

A paradigm, in simple terms, is a way of viewing the world (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). It refers to a set of philosophical assumptions that are shared by members of a research community (Humphrey, 2010, Chalmers, 1982 cited in Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). In essence, it is a way of representing a particular way of thinking that is shared by a community of scientists in solving problems in the field. It can be represented in terms of its ontological, epistemological and methodological concerns (Richards, 2003 cited in Asghar, 2013; Chalmers, 1982 cited in Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). It represents the commitments, beliefs, values, methods and outlooks shared across a discipline. These views may guide our thinking, our beliefs, and our assumptions about our society and us, and how they frame how we view the world around us (Fong et al., 2016).

A paradigm is a way of understanding the reality of the world and studying it (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This is a shared belief system that influences the kind of knowledge the researcher seeks

and how they interpret the evidence they collect (Brierley, 2017). Morgan (2007) further states that a paradigm treats the best known epistemological stances (e.g., realism and constructivism) as distinctive belief systems that influence how research questions are asked and answered, and takes a narrower approach by concentrating on it. Basically, a research paradigm is a basic supposition and philosophy that guides the behaviour of a researcher (Buthelezi, 2020). The pragmatism paradigm was adopted to simplify the values and beliefs that are guiding this study and is presented below.

3.3.2 Pragmatism

The pragmatist paradigm is informed by the belief that the practicalities of research cannot be driven by theory or data exclusively, but include a process that enables one to move back and forth between induction and deduction through a process of inquiry (Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009). According to realists, social interaction has a negative impact on human being and pragmatism has been identified in the mixed methods research literature as the appropriate paradigm for conducting mixed methods research. It is also used as a philosophical programme for the research study, using mixed methods (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The philosophy of pragmatism advanced the notion that the consequences are more important than the process, so that researchers are free to determine what works to answer the research questions (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013).

This paradigm helped the researcher to understand mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods throughout the study. It guided the researcher to recognise important lenses that directed the study to the research aim and theoretical framework that talks to the crisis faced by students at a rural college. The theory adopted in the study provided a pragmatic perspective on social and personality development. In support of this statement, pragmatists agree that research always occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts (Gang et al., 2019). In this way, mixed methods studies may include a theoretical lens that is reflective of social justice, personal growth and academic performance of the students in a rural college. Shah and Al-Bargi (2013) indicate that pragmatism allows researchers to design research studies that combine methods that will offer the best chance of answering the specific research questions. This study used sequential explanatory design, a quantitative phase of data collection and analysis, followed by a phase of qualitative data collection and analysis. Pragmatism was appropriate for this study, because it enables the mixing of

quantitative and qualitative approaches throughout the research process. Furthermore, researchers believed that the field of mixed methods research will move beyond quantitative versus qualitative arguments and will instead focus on recognising the usefulness of both paradigms and identifying how these approaches can be used together in a single study to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of each other (Doyle et al., 2009). The study by Rehman and Alharthi (2016) supports this and views a pragmatic approach as a new guiding paradigm that can act as a basis for supporting work that combines qualitative and quantitative methods and as a way to redirect our attention to methodological rather than metaphysical concerns. Therefore, pragmatism advocates eclecticism and a needs-based approach to the research method used and concept selection of the study. The other reason for using this paradigm was that pragmatism opens a unique contribution to the study, opens up inquiry to all possibilities while tying the search to practical ends (Sikhakhane, Govender, & Maphalala, 2020). Last, but not least, is that the pragmatic philosophy underpinning this study allowed for a systematic application of mixed methods to address the aims of the study.

3.4 Research design in mixed-methods

3.4.1 Research design

Different social scientists define research design in different terms. However, according to Othman et al. (2021), research design can be considered as the structure of research. It is the “glue” that holds all elements in a research project together. Literature also indicates that research design is the planning of the methods to be adopted for collecting relevant data and the techniques to be used in the analysis, keeping in view the objective of the research (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Mdluli (2017), cites research designs as types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches that provide specific directions for procedures in research. A sequential explanatory design was adopted in this study, following a pragmatist paradigm which was meant to develop an understanding of the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of the students at a rural college. The presentation of the sequential explanatory design used in this study is explained below.

3.4.2 Sequential explanatory design

When the purpose of the study is to explore a new phenomenon that has not been studied earlier, the research design is called explanatory. An explanatory study focuses on determining the aspect of connection data from separate components of data (Othman et al., 2021). The sequential explanatory design is a quantitative phase of data collection and analysis, followed by a phase of qualitative data collection and analysis, with a final phase of linking data from the two separate components of data (Dawadi et al., 2021). In support of this, Gilbert et al. (2017) indicate that a sequential explanatory design consists of two phases, beginning with the quantitative phase and then the qualitative phase, which aims to explain or enhance the quantitative results.

One of the reasons behind the use of explanatory sequential design in this study is that psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a selected rural college of Ladysmith Kwa-Zulu Natal have not been studied. This study used sequential explanatory design as a research design because it was an effective approach for investigating complex problems and arriving at a better understanding of the factors influencing the academic performance of students at a rural college (Gilber, et al., 2017). The figure 3.4.1 below illustrates the sequential explanatory design described above.



Figure: 3.1 Sequential Explanatory Design

3.5. Description of the rural college

The study was conducted at a rural Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college that provides vocational, occupational and Artisan education and training. This rural college offers training of a vocational or occupational nature, meaning that it prepares students for a specific job, several employment possibilities, or for self -employment. As stated above (see chapter one 1.8.2), the mission of the rural TVET College (Mnambithi TVET College) is to provide

students equal access to quality vocational education and training programmes that are responsive to the needs of the labour market (Rajkumal et al., 2015). This rural TVET college strives to improve the understanding of student development and its impact on students' academic performance, physical, emotional, and mental health. This college also strives for the involvement of college students academically and socially to improve students' academic success. However, these college students struggle to learn new skills and knowledge for competence and psychosocial development. Therefore, this study explored the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students at this rural college.

3.6 Population, sampling and sample

3.6.1 Population

McMillan (2012) states that a population is a group of individuals who share the same characteristics, or a totality of individuals from which interpretations are to be made in a sampling study. The study targeted 200 NCV level 3 students who were registered for the 2020/21 academic year. The researcher identified the target population from the 200 signed and returned consent forms of individuals who indicated their willingness to participate in the study. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, (2010) indicate that a sample is a carefully selected smaller group or subset of the total population. A sample should be drawn with the same characteristics of the broader population from which it is selected (Hyett et al., 2014). In the context of this study, the first phase consisted of hundred and fifteen (115) participants for the quantitative data collection process. The second phase consisted of six (6) participants for the process of qualitative data collection. The selected six participants hailed from the same group of 115 college students who participated in the quantitative part of the study.

3.6.1.1 Quantitative phase

The population of this study comprised students enrolled at a rural Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college for the National certificate vocational (NCV) level 3 programme. One hundred and fifteen (N=115), (19 males and 96 females) NCV students who were registered in the 2020/21 academic year were selected to participate in the study for better

understanding and exploration of the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of the students at rural TVET colleges. The profile of these students indicated that they were all from different areas and villages surrounding Ladysmith town, where the rural TVET college is located. The researcher found similarities among students from remote rural residences, who spoke IsiZulu as their home language. Some students lived at home and travelled daily to the college while others rented rooms around town where the rural college is located for the purpose of being nearby the institution.

3.6.1.2 Qualitative phase

The six participants to participate in the qualitative phase were determined from among the first phase of the 115 survey participants who indicated their willingness to be interviewed. Therefore, six (N=6) participants (3 males and 3 females) from the initial sample of 115 students were selected from the rural college in Ladysmith in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. The geographical information provided by the six (N=6) students participants during their interviews indicated that they were all from the surroundings of the Ladysmith town where the rural college is located. These six participants all spoke isiZulu as their home language. Some of these lived at home and travelled daily to the college, while others rented rooms around town.

3.6.2 Sampling Techniques

The researcher selected samples from the population using two sampling techniques, purposive sampling and convenience sampling. These two sampling techniques are described below.

3.6.2.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling, also called judgement sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. It is a non-random sampling technique based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Hyett et al., 2014). The rural TVET College students were selected to collect data. One hundred and fifteen (115) participants of the rural College students were selected using purposive sampling technique to participate in the first phase of the study. These participants were registered in NCV level 3 programmes who have college experience from the previous and current academic year. Participants were selected

because they had college experience and were related to the study. In this study participants were allowed to express their views and knowledge of the psychosocial experiences in their home language as a second language may present barriers.

The participants were willing to provide information about how psychosocial factors influenced students' academic performance. The participants were given questionnaires to answer the quantitative research questions. Purposive sampling was useful because it related to the typical members of the affected population of the rural college selected to explore the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students. This sampling technique also helped the researcher find people willing to provide useful information for the study (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The advantage of using purposive sampling is that research designs can involve multiple phases, with each phase building on the previous one. In such instances, different types of sampling techniques may be required at each phase. Purposive sampling is useful in these instances because it provides a wide range of non-probability sampling techniques for the researcher to draw on (Andrade, 2021). Another advantage of using purposive sampling was that it is related to the typical members of the affected students at the rural college.

3.6.2.2 Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling involves researching subjects of the population that are easily accessible to the researcher. It is also a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate, are included for the purpose of the study (Etikan et al., 2016). In every type of research, it would be ideal to use the whole population, but in most cases, it is not possible to include every subject. Therefore, the researcher selected samples for the qualitative phase using convenient sampling because of the availability of students and their choices. The six participants at the rural TVET College were selected using a convenient sampling technique. The 6 participants indicated their availability and willingness to be interviewed for qualitative data collection. These participants indicated having knowledge and experience about how psychosocial factors influenced students' academic performance.

Convenience sampling helped the researcher to gather useful data and information that would not have been possible using probability sampling techniques, which require more formal access to

lists of populations (Etikan et al., 2016). Another advantage of using convenience sampling is that the relative cost and time required to carry out a convenience sample are small. This enabled the researcher to achieve the targeted sample size for the study in an inexpensive way. However, convenience samples can lead to the under-representation or over-representation of particular groups within the sample (Andrade, 2021).

3.6.2.3 Criterion for selection of participants

The researcher selected a sample of one hundred and fifteen (N=115) participants (19 males and 96 females), and a sample of six (N=6) participants (3 males and 3 females) from the initial population of a selected TVET college in Ladysmith in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. The six participants were determined from among the first phase of 115 survey participants who indicated their willingness to be interviewed. The following table presents the criteria for both qualitative and quantitative sampling that was used:

Table 3.1: Participants selection Criterion

Quantitative selection Criterion	Qualitative selection Criterion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All participants were registered TVET students from NCV programme, NQF level 3. - All participants were speaking IsiZulu as home language. - All participants age ranged from 18 to 45 years old and above. - All participants voluntarily answered the questionnaire and sign the consent form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All participants voluntarily indicated on the consent form that they are available and willing to participate in the second phase of the study. - All participants were willing to provide the information for the study. - All participants were coming from college surrounding areas as face-to-face interviews were employed after classes and during free time. - All participants openly to communicated with the researcher during the interviews.

3.6.3 Sample size

A total of 115 students from Mnambithi TVET College were recruited to participate in the quantitative data collection of the study. The researcher further decided to focus on a qualitative investigation of psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance. This reduced sample size to the 6 students' participants (3 males and 3 females) all hailed from a selected rural TVET college Ladysmith in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa.

3.7 Procedure for data collection

Data collection techniques were developed as part of a study's total research design to systematise the collection of data and to ensure that all respondents are asked the same questions in the same order (Saunders et al., 2019). In order to gather suitable data to answer the research questions from a wider perspective, the researcher decided on two phases of data collection.

3.7.1 Quantitative procedure

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the research from the college management signed by the Rector before 115 students from the rural College were recruited to participate in the quantitative data collection phase of the study. In the quantitative data collection phase of the study, the researcher collected survey data by means of a questionnaire. The researcher collected the quantitative data over three weeks.

During the first phase, the researcher distributed a notice around the campus and during the morning briefings, requesting all registered students in the level 3 NCV programme to participate in the study. The participants responded either to the request and/or to an announcement posted on the campus notice boards and during morning briefings. During the students' free time, the researcher gathered all participants in a hall, explained the purpose of the research and gave all participants informed consent forms. The consent form contained an option to complete an anonymous survey. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were asked to complete the

survey. The final total sample population constituted 115 respondents with a 100% survey completion rate.

In the mixed methods analysis phase 1, the researcher utilised descriptive statistics through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25) to analyse data collected during the quantitative phase presented as numeric facts or data, in either tables or graphic form (Roopa & Rani, 2017). The study used this particular analysis for data collected from surveys, and to establish if there were possible connections between the independent variable and dependent variable.

3.7.2 Qualitative procedure

During the qualitative data collection phase, the researcher used semi -structured interviews. The interviews included six students who indicated to have poor academic performance at the selected college. The six students were identified from the 115 students that participated in the quantitative phase. The researcher collected the qualitative data over the course of three weeks.

During the second phase, the researcher selected a sample of six participants from the selected rural college. These participants were selected using purposive sampling as well as convenient sampling. Because the population is almost finite and it was not possible to include every subject, purposive sampling techniques were used (Etikan, et al. 2016).

Both numerical and text data, collected sequentially, aid to understand the research problem better (Othman et al., 2020). The qualitative data collected during the second phase were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data that can generate vast amounts of 'raw' data (Roopa & Rani, 2017). During the phase 2 analysis, the researcher utilised open coding and analysed qualitative data by systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset to understand the association between psychosocial factors and students' academic performance (Hyett et al., 2014).

3.8 Mechanisms for data collection in mixed methods

Harris and Brown (2010) indicate that questionnaires and interviews are often used together in mixed method studies investigating educational assessment. While questionnaires can provide evidence of patterns amongst large populations, qualitative interview data often gather more in-depth insights on participant attitudes, thoughts, and actions. These two instruments are explained below.

3.8.1 Quantitative instruments

Othman et al. (2020) regard a questionnaire to be relatively inexpensive to be administered; it can be self-administered and can be used to survey a large group of people at one time. In addition, a questionnaire can be distributed by mail or by hand. Keeping in view the psychosocial factors and after studying literature the study adopted a questionnaire as an instrument to collect quantitative data. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data during this research study. The questionnaires were developed and used as a tool to collect the information from the respondents. The developed questionnaire consisted of short and simple sentences in line with respondents' level of knowledge, which allowed participants to answer in the affirmative choices of either "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neither disagree nor agree", "Agree", "Strongly agree" (Wagner et al., 2019). The questionnaire instrument for collecting data included the following question and statements:

1. Feelings about achieving your academic goals while studying at Mnambithi College.
2. Feelings about the factors that cause you not to perform well academically
3. Does the college provide you with adequate services?

3.8.2 Qualitative Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were used to generate qualitative data, to make sense of psycho-social factors that affect academic outcomes of students in a post-school institution in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. The research data for the study were collected after a term of the rural college academic year. After the completion of quantitative data collection, the qualitative batch of data was collected at the end of the first term of the 2021 academic year. Semi-structured interviews

were used to collect data. The timing of investigation was deliberately chosen because students' academic performance is evaluated at the end of each term (Subedi, 2016).

The interview schedule consisted of approximately 10 questions that took approximately an hour to complete per session. These interview questions consisted of six categories related to psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of the students at a rural college: 1) satisfaction, 2) academic goals achievement, 3) causes of poor academic performance, 4) effect of poor academic performance, 5) resources and 6) support services helpful to enhance the academic performance and eradicate the problem. In addition, the researcher constructed open-ended questions to elicit responses in conversational style and to minimise leading questions (see appendix E).

3.9 Data analysis in mixed-methods

3.9.1 Quantitative analysis

The quantitative data analysis used descriptive statistical analysis. The descriptive statistical analysis was carried out using the software SPSS Statistics 25. Before the actual data analysis, questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency. Data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency distributions and percentages. Descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to make statistical inferences, which were used to conclude the study findings based upon the sample data. The data frequency was recognised and explained based on the above- mentioned three statement categories (see 3.8.1) related to the relationship between the academic performance and psychosocial factors. Percentages were also used to determine the influence of the psychosocial factors on students' academic performance. Results of the analysis were presented in tables (see chapter 4.2). The Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to generate descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage to present a sample demographic profile of respondents.

3.9.2 Qualitative analysis

After each interview, the researcher transcribed the findings, summarised each participant's narrative in his/her own words, and pulled out one representative quote for each participant. The

researcher went through the quotations several times and recorded his impressions of what was going on for the participant and between the participant and the researcher as the narrative unfolded. She recorded his insights about the data into a memo file attached to the participant's narrative file and coded these insights. She tried to conduct this process with humility, recognising that some voices are silenced and other voices and knowledge dominate the airwaves' (Kaiser, 2009).

This study used a thematic technique to analyse the qualitative data. Thematic analysis identifies patterns or themes within qualitative data that can generate vast amounts of 'raw' data (Othman et al., 2020). Collected data were transcribed, the researcher analysed the transcribed or field notes to develop an understanding of the participants and the influence of psychosocial factors on the students' academic performance at a rural college. In this study, the data analysis started immediately after the first of six interviews with an audio recording transcription. Transcribing and recording the interviews were the parallel activity of the interview processes. Transcription after every interview made work simpler because it assisted the researcher in identifying the general patterns at an early stage. The researcher used open coding. The researcher started by careful reading and re-reading of data, then identified a pattern within data where themes were constructed through the related issues that appeared to be more dominant and they became categories for analysis. The researcher subsequently systematically identified and organised data patterns into codes, and offered insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset to understand the association between psychosocial factors and students' academic performance (Neuman, 2014). The researcher generated initial codes by organising qualitative data in a meaningful, systematic way. Coding is an important part of qualitative data analysis. It is the process of grouping qualitative responses into categories that bring together similar ideas, concepts, or themes that have been developed (Theron, 2015). The researcher captured significant or interesting data, then defined them through illustrations and other descriptive ways.

Once the data coding and categorisation of the data from questionnaires and interviews were completed, themes and categories were illustrated. The names of themes were finalised as described in Table 4.6 (Chapter 4). Triangulation also helped the researcher to reduce bias and it cross-examined the truthfulness of participants' responses from both questionnaires and interviews (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). The triangulation technique used in this study was data

triangulation/participant triangulation where different research instruments, namely interviews and questionnaires, were used to collect study data. In addition, different participants were used to enhance the quality of the data from different sources.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Confidentiality means that the respondent's identity is known to the investigator but protected from public exposure (Kolo et al., 2017). The researcher in this study kept any identifying personal information out of published reports. Anonymity means that the researcher does not know the identity of the participants in the study (Kaiser, 2009). Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly considered in the study to protect individuals from public exposure. When sensitive information is revealed during the study, public awareness may create the risk of persecution, reputational, financial, or legal consequences (Roopa & Rani, 2017).

Scholars such as McMillan (2012:196) and Kaiser (2009:4) consider ethics significant, since it deals with beliefs regarding what is morally good or bad, right or wrong, proper or improper. In line with these notions, the researcher requested permission from the institution management to conduct the study. The researcher also applied for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State to protect the dignity, rights and safety of the research participants. These permits were both approved and granted to the researcher (see appendix A and B). The form that stated that the participants were guaranteed certain rights from the study, agreed to be involved in the study, and acknowledged that their rights are protected was also developed and used as an informed consent form. A statement relating to informed consent was affixed to the form, reflecting compliance by participation. The anonymity of participants was protected by keeping the returned questionnaires and responses confidential. During the interviews the researcher assigned fictitious names to the participants for use in their description and reporting of results.

To enrich trustworthiness in the study the researcher made sure that authorities and relevant people were approached before beginning the study. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to participants and those who wished not to participate were allowed to withdraw. All study data, including electronic files, questionnaires and interview transcripts were kept in a locked file in the researcher's computer, and would be destroyed after a reasonable period of time. Participants were told a summary of the data would be disseminated to the professional supervisor of the researcher

and later converted into dissertation findings, but in no way would it be possible to trace responses to individuals. To avoid confidentiality dilemmas, the researcher informed participants that the study was opened only to NCV, NQF LEVEL 3 students of a selected TVET college in Ladysmith, South Africa.”

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research paradigm, where pragmatism was discussed as a philosophical rationale for research by means of mixed methods. This chapter comprehensively defined sequential explanatory design and the reason for using this approach. The chapter paid attention to overarching research questions and sub- questions used on data collection instruments, and the research design model guiding this study.

This chapter also explained the ethical considerations and reasons behind the selection of sequential explanatory design for generating data and the mixed-method approach and instruments used to explore psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of students at a rural college. The following chapter builds on the methodological propositions made in this chapter by employing the proposed data presentation and analysis approaches to analyse the quantitative and qualitative findings. The following section describes the strategy for merging the two separate results to facilitate discussions and interpretations.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research methodology, which was located within pragmatism and employed a mixed-methods approach as its research methodology. The data generation instruments and procedures applied in this study were outlined to respond to the research questions of this study. It outlined the process of data analysis in a mixed-methods paradigm. This chapter describes the results of the quantitative survey and the qualitative interviews generated from research interviews and research questionnaires, obtained from the first phase of one hundred and fifteen (115) and second phase of six (6) rural college students who participated in the study.

The extracts captured in this chapter are direct expressions made by the participants from the first quantitative phase and second qualitative phase. They are not edited. This study considered the interview participants as constructors of knowledge in collaboration with the researcher. Participants' quotes from six (6) semi-structured interviews, and the English translations are indicated in brackets "(...)"'. The frequency and percentage survey results from one hundred and fifteen (115) questionnaires are indicated in tables below. These two sections (quantitative and qualitative) of the chapter begin with a description of the study participants followed by the interpretation of the findings from Phase 1 and Phase 2, and later the themes that emerged from the data presented are described.

4.2 Quantitative Results

4.2.1 Descriptive results

This section of the study presents the percentage and frequency of the quantitative results of the study, which include the descriptive results from biographical details of participants, psychological

influences, and social influences that affect the academic performance among students at a rural college.

4.2.2 Demographic characteristics of participants

The demographic characteristics of the 115 participants are summarised in the Table below, showing that all participants 115 (100%) in the study were doing NCV level 3. The age of participants in the study ranged between 18 and 25 years old (98,71.3%) and only one was 45 years old (1.09%). The remaining were those in the age range 18 years (2,1.7%), 31-35 years (4,3.5%), and 26-30 years (26, 22.6%).

Regarding gender, the majority of participants were females (96, 83.5%) compared to males (19, 16.5%). Regarding the number of years at the college, most students had been there for 2-3 years (63, 54.8%) followed by (11, 9.6%) 1-2 year students that included the first and second year of study in the level 3 NCV programme.

With regards to the courses registered, the majority of participants were registered in Office Administration (59, 51.3%), followed by Education and Development (21, 18.3%), and then Hospitality (14, 12.2%). The remaining participants were registered in Tourism (13, 11.3%) and Information Technology (8, 7.0%).

With regards to the highest grade, the majority (71, 61.7%) had passed grade 11 basic education before they were registered with the college followed by 30 (26.1%) who had passed grade 12, and 11 (9.6%) who had passed grade 10. The remaining three (2.6%) participants only passed grade 9.

Table 4.1 Biographical characteristics of participants

Variables		N (115)	Percentage %
Gender	Male	19	16.5
	Female	96	83.5
NCV level of study	NQF LEVEL 3	115	100.0
Course registered	Office Administration	59	51.3
	Information Technology	8	7.0
	Education and Development	21	18.3
	Hospitality	14	12.2
	Tourism	13	11.3
Age	Below 18	2	1.7
	18-25	82	71.3
	26-30	26	22.6
	31-45	5	4.4
Highest grade	Grade 9	3	2.6
	Grade 10	11	9.6
	Grade 11	71	61.7

	Grade 12	30	26.1
Years studying	1 – 2	39	49.2
	2 – 3	63	54.8

4.2.3 Psychological results.

The 115 participant survey results from the choices of “Strongly Disagree” (SD), “Disagree” (D), “Neither disagree nor agree” (NDA), “Agree” (A), “Strongly agree” (SA) were combined and presented in the table below. The psychological responses of the 115 participants are summarised in the table below. The six psychological influence statements for participants to agree or disagree to in the current study are presented first in a descriptive statistic of 115 (100.0%) participant responses. The questionnaire item 1 results below addressed the psychological factors that influence the students' academic performance at a rural college.

Table 4.2 Psychological factors influences

Psychological		SD	D	NDA	A	SA	Total (n)
I have been consistently depressed or down, most of the day, nearly every day, during my registered term with the college.	N	30	31	14	37	3	115
	%	26.1	27.0	12.2	32.2	2.6	100.1
I have felt anxiety or panic when I am in class.	N	31	40	7	32	5	115
	%	27.0	34.8	6.1	27.8	4.3	100

I have experienced or witnessed or had to deal with an extremely traumatic event that included actual or threatened death or serious injury to me or to someone.	N	39	33	11	22	10	115
	%	33.9	28.7	9.6	19.1	8.7	100
I have experienced abuse (physical, sexual, verbal) or neglect.	N	45	41	10	14	5	115
	%	39.1	35.7	8.7	12.2	4.3	100
I have difficulty sitting still or paying attention, I get easily distracted, find myself daydreaming or “spacing off.	N	23	32	13	36	11	115
	%	20.0	27.8	11.3	31.3	9.6	100
I feel fearful or embarrassed about being watched, the focus of attention, or fearful of being humiliated.	N	23	29	13	35	15	115
	%	20.0	25.2	11.3	30.4	13.0	99.9

The descriptive results displayed in Table 4.3 indicated that the majority of participants 37, (32.2%) agreed that they had been consistently depressed or down most of the day, nearly every day, during their registered term at the rural college, while only 3, (2.6%) participants strongly agreed that they had been consistently depressed or down most of the day, nearly every day, during their registered term at the college.

The descriptive result displayed in the same table showed that 40, (34.8%) participants disagreed that they had felt anxiety or panic when they were in class at the rural college, whereas 5, (4.3%) participants strongly agreed to feeling anxiety or panic in class.

The descriptive result displayed in the same table showed that 39, (33.9%) participants strongly disagreed that they had experienced or witnessed or had to deal with an extremely traumatic event that included actual or threatened death or serious injury to them or someone at the rural college, whereas 10, (8.7%) strongly agreed that they had experienced or witnessed or dealt with an extremely traumatic event that included actual or threatened death or serious injury to them or someone.

The descriptive result displayed in the same table showed that 5, (4.3%) participants strongly agreed that they had experienced abuse (physical, sexual, verbal) or neglect, whereas 45, (39.1%) strongly disagreed that they had experienced abuse (physical, sexual, verbal) or neglect.

The descriptive result displayed in the same table showed that 23, (20%) participants strongly disagreed that they had difficulty sitting still or paying attention, that they got easily distracted, and found themselves daydreaming or “spacing off”. However, 11, (9.6%) participants indicated that they strongly agreed that they had difficulty sitting still or paying attention, and that they got easily distracted, and found themselves daydreaming or “spacing off” in class at the rural college.

The descriptive result displayed in the same table showed that 35, (30.4%) participants agreed that they feel fearful or embarrassed about being watched, the focus of attention, and fearful of being humiliated at the rural college. However, 13, (11.3%) participants neither disagree nor agree that they felt fearful or embarrassed about being watched, or being the focus of attention, or fearful of being humiliated.

These responses indicate the frequency and the assessed percentages of psychological factors in students’ academic performance at a rural college.

4.2.4 Social result

Survey Question 2 was completed by 115 participants, with 100% of the participants answering in the affirmative choices of either “Strongly Disagree” (SD), “Disagree” (D) “Neither disagree nor agree” (NDA), “Agree” (A), and Strongly agree” (SA). The participants’ responses were combined and represented in Table 4.5 below. These responses indicated and explained social behaviour, the students' ability to socialise, and their ability to achieve their academic goals. The six social influence statements for participants to make a choice and/or decide on, in the current study, are presented below:

Table 4.3 Social factors influence students’ academic performance

Social factors		S D	D	NDA	A	SA	Total N
I am content with the current state of my life.	N	19	11	19	52	14	115
	%	16.5	9.6	16.5	45.2	12.2	100
Financial security is very important.	N	4	1	9	46	55	115
	%	3.5	0.9	7.8	40.0	47.8	100
It is difficult for me to meet assessment deadlines.	N	16	36	15	37	11	115
	%	13.9	31.3	13.0	32.2	9.6	100
My level of commitment to studies is very high.	N	5	29	11	49	21	115
	%	4.3	25.2	9.6	42.6	18.3	100
I respect all the rules of the college willingly.	N	3	10	4	42	56	115
	%	2.6	8.7	3.5	36.5	48.7	100
	N	3	23	8	42	39	115

I always attend classes on time.	%	2.6	20.0	7.0	36.5	33.9	100
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The descriptive results in Table 4.5 displayed that the majority of participants 52, (45.2%) agreed that they were content with the current state of their life at the rural college. Only 11, (9.6%) indicated that they neither disagreed nor agreed that they were content with their current state of life.

The descriptive result showed that 55, (47.8%) participants strongly agreed that financial security was very important at the rural college. Only 1, (0.9%) participant disagreed that financial security was very important at a rural college.

The descriptive result displayed in the same table showed that 37, (32.2%) participants agreed that it was difficult to meet assessment deadlines at the rural college, whereas 11, (9.6%) participants strongly agreed that it was difficult to meet assessment deadlines at a rural college.

The descriptive result displayed in the same table showed that 49, (42.6%) participants agreed that their level of commitment to studies was very high at the rural college, while only 5, (4.3%) participants strongly disagreed that their level of commitment to studies is very high.

The descriptive result displayed showed that 56, (48.7%) participants strongly agreed that they respected all the rules of the college willingly, whereas 3, (2.6%) s participants strongly disagreed that they respected all the rules of the college willingly.

The descriptive result displayed showed that 42, (36.5%) participants agreed that they always attended classes on time at rural college, while only 3, (2.6%) participants strongly disagreed about attending classes on time at the rural college.

These responses indicated the presence of social factors in students' academic performance at a rural college.

4.2.5 Services results

The 115 participant survey results from the choices of “Strongly Disagree” (SD), “Disagree” (D), “Neither disagree nor agree” (NDA), “Agree” (A), “Strongly agree” (SA) were combined and presented in Table 4.7 below. These responses indicated the presence of a support system in academic institution and school related mental health interventions.

Table 4.4 Support service

Services		SD	D	NDA	A	SA	Total N
I am given power to perform my tasks independently.	N	3	6	7	70	29	115
	%	2.6	5.2	6.1	60.9	25.2	100
I can work independently without lecturers' help.	N	13	56	13	25	8	115
	%	11.3	48.7	11.3	21.7	7.0	100
I receive constructive feedback to improve my academic performance.	N	4	17	15	63	16	115
	%	3.5	14.8	13.0	54.8	13.9	100
I am encouraged to come up with new ways of studying.	N	4	12	17	60	22	115
	%	3.5	10.4	14.8	52.2	19.1	100
I have resources or sources of information I need to	N	19	19	12	47	18	115
	%	16.5	16.5	10.4	40.9	15.7	100

improve my academic performance.							
I am recognised as a responsible adult.	N	6	9	10	62	28	115
	%	5.2	7.8	8.7	53.9	24.3	100

The descriptive results in Table 4.7 displayed that 70, (60.9%) participants agreed that they were given power to perform tasks independently at the rural college, while only 3, (2.6%) participants strongly disagreed that they were given power to perform tasks independently at the rural college.

The descriptive result displayed in the same table showed that 8, (7.0%) participants strongly agreed that they could work independently without a lecturer's help at the rural college, whereas 56, (48.7%) participants disagreed that they can work independently without a lecturers' help.

According to the result displayed 63, (54.8%) participants agreed that they received constructive feedback to improve academic performance. Only 4, (3.5%) participants strongly disagreed that they received constructive feedback to improve academic performance at a rural college.

The descriptive results showed that 60, (52.2%) participants agreed that they were encouraged to come up with new ways of studying at a rural college. However, some 4, (3.5%) strongly disagreed that they were encouraged to come up with new ways of studying at the rural college.

The descriptive result indicated that 12, (10.4%) participants neither disagreed nor agreed to having resources or sources of information needed to improve academic performance at the rural college, whereas 47, (40.9%) participants agreed that they had resources or sources of information needed to improve academic performance at the rural college.

The descriptive result showed that 62, (53.9%) participants strongly agreed that they were recognised as responsible adults at the rural college. However, descriptive results displayed in the same table showed that 6, (5.2%) participants strongly disagreed that they were recognised as responsible adults.

These responses indicate the frequency and assessed percentage of psychosocial factors in students' academic performance at a rural college. These responses indicated the presence of psychological and social factors in students' academic performance at a rural college. The presence of support service influencing academic institution and students' academic performance at a rural college was also presented in this section. The qualitative results of the study are presented below.

4.3 Qualitative results

This section presents the qualitative results of data collection for phase 2, including biographic results and thematic results.

4.3.1 Demographic results of the participants

The biographical results displayed in the table below indicated the description for each participant in the study. During the interviews, participants shared information regarding the locations where they lived. The interview participants had registered in hospitality, education and development programmes. The variety of participants' locations reflected, not only provincial, but also a range of different age groups, highest grade passed, experience with educational challenges, and factors influencing students' academic performance.

Table 4.5 Biographical results of participants

Participant s	Gende r	Age	NCV level	Course registered	Highest grade	Number of year	Residential areas	Home language
Participant 1	Male	18- 25	NQF LEVE L 3	Education and Developme nt	Grade 11	1-2	Elandskop	isiZulu
Participant 2	Female	18- 25	NQF LEVE L 3	Education and Developme nt	Grade 12	1-2	Nquthu village	isiZulu
Participant 3	Female	45 and abov e	NQF LEVE L 3	Education and Developme nt	Grade 11	2-3	Watersmee t	isiZulu
Participant 4	Female	18- 25	NQF LEVE L 3	Education and Developme nt	Grade 11	1-2	Zakheni	isiZulu
Participant 5	Male	18- 25	NQF LEVE L 3	Hospitality	Grade 11	1-2	Osizweni	isiZulu

Participant 6	Male	18- 25	NQF LEVE L 3	Education and Developme nt	Grade 12	1-2	Zakheni	IsiZulu

The NCV and/ NQF level of study

The NCV is the National Certificate (Vocational) programme, and enrolls students after obtaining their grade 9 of basic education. This vocational programme is a three year programme that takes an individual from a National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 2 qualification to an NQF level 4, to obtain a National Certificate Vocational (NCV) qualification and an understanding of the vocational education system.

Participant 1

Participant 1 was a male student registered under education and development at NQF LEVEL 3. His age ranged between 18 to 25 years old. His highest grade passed was grade 11. He had been at the college for about 1 to 2 years (2nd year student). He resided in Elandskop village where not much development has been taking place. The area does not have electricity. Even the mobile library does not reach this side of the rural area. The participant also indicated that they only get a mobile clinic once a week, and the school that provides basic education is far from the village. Participant 1 is a traditional male in his early adulthood stage who still believes in traditional ways of doing things. Participant 1 rented a room in one of the townships (Steadville) in Ladysmith to be near to the college. However, he travelled home and back to the college using public transport (e.g. bus and taxi) at month end.

Participant 2

This participant is a female student registered under education and development NQF level 3, with her age ranging between 18 to 25 years old. Her highest grade passed was grade 12, which she obtained after attending one of the schools around the village. She had been at the college for about 1 to 2 years (2nd year student). She resided in one of the villages in the Nquthu area, which is well known for traditional ways of doing things. The area and people who reside in it are also known as people with Ubuntu (humanity). They still live by the saying “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” (I am because you are or a person is a person for people). Participant 2 rented a room in one of the villages (Rosbom) near Ladysmith town to be near the college. At the same time, she travelled home weekly by public transport (e.g. bus and taxi).

Participant 3

The participant is a female student registered under education and development NQF level 3, a single-parent in her middle adulthood stage who strongly believes education is the key to success. Her age ranges from 45 years old and above. Her basic education highest grade passed was grade 11, which she obtained years ago while she was still attending one of the schools in the village called Watersmeet, known as “EPhayikeni ” in Ladysmith KwaZulu-Natal. She had been at the college for about 2 to 3 years (3rd year student). However, she was still doing 2nd year modules due to the gap year she took after facing challenges that prevented her from attending college (e.g. looking after her household). Participant 3 travelled from home to the college using public transport (e.g. bus and taxi).

Participant 4

The participant 4 is a female student registered under education and development NQF level 3. Participant 4 is a female student in her early adulthood stage, and her age ranged between 18 and 25 years old. She obtained her highest basic education grade 11 from one of the schools in the

township she resides in. She resides in the EZakheni area, a well-known township in Ladysmith. The area is in a culturally diverse setting where some people still live according to their traditional customs and values. In contrast, some have moved from traditional ways of doing things to more modern lifestyles. She had been at the college about 1 to 2 years, (2nd year student). Participant 4 travelled from home to the college using public transport (e.g. bus and taxi).

Participant 5

The participant 5 is a male student registered under hospitality NQF Level 3. His age ranged between 18 to 25 years old. Participant 5 is a traditional male in his early adulthood stage who still believes in traditional ways of doing things. His highest grade passed was grade 11 of the South African basic education system. The participant had been at the college for about 1 to 2 years (2nd year student). He resided in the Osizweni area with electricity and tarred roads, and the basic education schools were nearer to the peoples' houses. However, participant 5 rented a room in one of the villages near Ladysmith town to be near to the college, travelling home during weekends by means of public transport (e.g. bus and taxi).

Participant 6

The participant is a male student registered under education and development NQF level 3. Participant 6 was in his early adulthood stage and still believed in traditional ways of doing things. His age ranged between 18 and 25 years old. His highest grade passed was grade 11 after attending one of the schools in the township he resides in. He had been at the college about 1 to 2 years (2nd year student). Participant 6 resided in the EZakheni area, a well-known township in Ladysmith. The area is in a culturally diverse setting where some people still live according to their traditional customs and values while others have moved from traditional ways of doing things to modern lifestyles.

4.3.2 Thematic results

The interview data were linked to the primary research question and four sub-questions. As discussed in Chapter 3, semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed, and coded by the researcher, to identify patterns systematically, and offer insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset, and to understand the association between psychosocial factors and students' academic performance (Theron, 2015). The six interview participants' transcribed data were coded. The researcher utilised active listening, accurate transcription, playback and review of the interview recordings, and repeated close reading of the participant reflections. Codes emerged from the six interview transcriptions.

It is noted from the research records that the participants freely expressed the knowledge they knew that had a psychosocial influence on their academic performance. The extracts captured in this chapter were direct quotations of the participants' utterances and are not edited. This section presents the thematic analysis from the interviews. The researcher illuminated how responses to interview questions and transcript interviews were analysed and categorised to reflect primary and sub-questions of the research. The following table represents the initial themes generated and the sub-themes that fall within each theme.

Table 4.6 Emerging themes

Themes	Subthemes	Sub-sub themes
Psychosocial factors	Psychological	Lack of motivation
		Stress
		Loss of concentration and focus
	Social	Lack of financial aid

		Lack of health schemes
		Lack of students' residences
		Covid-19 pandemic
Support services	Lack of resources	
	Lack of intervention	
Students' experiences at a rural college	Satisfaction	
	Dissatisfaction	
Effects of poor academic performance	Anxiety	
	Loss of self-esteem	
	Anti-social behaviour	
	Violence	
	Goal achievement delay	
Remedies enhancing academic performance among students at a rural college	Intervention	
	Practical programmes	
	Needed resources	College leadership
		Relevant professionals
Different learning and teaching methods		

4.3.2.1 Psychosocial factors

The section below provides the description of the above themes and subthemes. It also contains extracts from participants' transcripts related to the above themes and subthemes identified during the analysis. This study found that psychosocial factors (psychological and social) could influence college students' performance at a rural college.

4.3.2.1.1 Psychological factors

All six participants identified knowledge of what could be the leading causes of their poor academic performance as the most important knowledge essential for their physical and mental wellness, as well as their ability to function in their academic studies. This study showed that the various psychological causes of poor academic performance of students at a rural college could influence their wellbeing and mental wellness. This included lack of motivation, stress, loss of concentration and focus. The causes of students' poor academic performance are presented below.

(a) Lack of motivation

This study indicated that motivation could cause poor academic performance among students at a rural college. Participants' responses exposed that motivation as a cause of poor academic performance could be a psychological component why they perform poorly in their academic activities. They also indicated that they performed poorly in their academics because they were not motivated and encouraged to focus on their academic activities. Some participants felt that there were some personal attributes that include lacking intrinsic motivation leading to ignorance of academic activities that determined their poor academic performance. Lack of encouragement of students to study, and paying attention to academic activities, specifically on exam preparation were cited in the participants' comments below as a psychosocial factor influencing students' academic performance at a rural college. The participants' comments were as follows:

“I think not studying and preparing for exam in time maybe the leading cause for my poor academic performance” (Participant 2).

“firstly, I will not blame anyone because sometimes I ignore my studies and not study enough before exams than my performance become poor” (Participant 4).

(b) Stress

This study revealed that stress could be a cause of poor academic performance at a rural college, as participants revealed that stress could be the leading cause of their poor academic performance. Participants said their minds were full of issues that diminished their academic performance. As adults, they faced different challenges daily, which led to stress and poor academic performance. Therefore, stress was cited in the participants' comments below as an element of psychological factors influencing students' academic performance at a rural college.

“when I am stressed I don't study” (Participant 2).

“I cannot focus in class when I am hungry” (Participant 5).

(c) Loss of concentration and focus

This study found that loss of focus and concentration in class and during academic activities could be a cause of poor academic performance at a rural college. The participants' responses from the interview results indicated that these causes interfered with their ability to function normally in their college- related activities. Students ended up missing out on what is taught in class. During classes they often thought about their problems, causing loss of concentration in the lesson. The participant comment is presented below.

“Because I cannot concentrate in class when a lecturer is teaching. I end up thinking about my problem while in class” (Participant 5).

4.3.2.1.2 Social Factors

This study suggested that social factors such as lack of financial aid, lack of health schemes, and absence of students' residences could cause poor academic performance at a rural college. This study also found that insufficient student support from lecturers from the effect of Covid-19 pandemic caused students' poor academic performance. The social causes of students' poor academic performance are presented below.

(a) Lack of financial aid

This study indicated that lack of financial aid could cause poor academic performance among students at a rural college. Participants indicated that they performed poorly in their academics because of the financial challenges they faced. They further mentioned that they went to school on an empty stomach due to insufficient food and financial aid. This study found that participants believed that the college environment did not meet their financial needs. Participants indicated that lack of financial support was one of their major challenges. Participants indicated that, instead of paying attention to the lesson, they ended up thinking about making plans on getting something to eat, because there was no food at home. Participants also indicated that students struggled with rent payments and transport fees. Participants' responses revealed that lack of financial aid could be the cause of students' poor academic performance. The participants' comments are presented below.

“Sometimes it is caused by my financial challenges because there is no one who is working at home and utholukuthi ngilambile (when you hungry) and you cannot study with an empty stomach. at times you think about you background and how you will survive thola ukuthi ungumzali futhi zonkizinto zibheke wena (you are a parent and everyone at home depends on you)” (Participant 3).

firstly, sometimes my academic performance becomes poor because of the challenges we face at the college as students, in terms of financial needs, our background and rental accommodations” (Participant 1).

“firstly, I think social factors like coming to school without eating breakfast because there is no food” (Participant 5).

(b) Lack of health schemes

This study discovered that lack of health schemes caused poor performance among students at a rural college. The participants mentioned that the health schemes could help them maintain their health and perform well academically. Participants revealed that “a person is for himself” which means nobody cares about students’ needs. They indicated that the government or the department could help them with food at the college as in basic schools or provide them with food parcels because some students were schooling parents and some were orphans. Participants went even further to reveal the need for a health campaign to enhance their academic performance. Participants’ responses presented below:

“If the government or the department can help us with food maybe starters or fruits can help a lot of students who come to school without eating. Kunzima kabi ukufunda ulambile (it very hard to learn on an empty stomach). Because some students are orphans and some are parents themselves who have to look out for their children back home” (Participant 5).

“We also need programmes which can help us talk about our issues and get more information on how to deal with our problems” (Participant 4).

“No assistance has been provided by the college to help me or other students on the problems mentioned or have experienced. There is a way that the college can get students help and spot their psychological, social fitness while studying with the college” (Participant 5).

(c) Lack of students' residences

This study found that lack of students' residences could be a cause of poor academic performance at a rural college. Participants indicated that the college environment did not meet their residential needs. Participants also revealed that students lived with gender based violence and had to travel to the college all the time they needed to attend classes. The study found that they used public transport that costs more than they could afford. The abuse, trauma and experiences students faced, resulted in experiencing flashbacks and truancy during classes, which distracted their learning. Participants believed these traumatic experiences were one of the causes of the students' poor academic performance. Lack of students' residences was found to be a cause of their poor academic performance. The participants' comments stated the following:

“home environment, for example maybe the student is living under a gender based violence environment that may be the cause of suffering from stress which leads to failing and poor academic performance. Abanye abantwana baze babenama flashbacks even in class bengabe besaconcetrated eclassini mekufundiswa bese begcina sebefeyila (some students are unable to concentrate due to the traumatic experiences and flashbacks they have during class which leads them to fail)” (Participant 2).

It is very hard because there are students who dropout from the college, utholukuthi umuntu ubefuna ukufunda but ngenxa yesimo sokungasizakali agcine eyeka iskole (some student end up dropping out of the college because of not getting assistance they need). some student they even commit suicide because of such issues, because it is very hard to go back home without obtaining the qualification you registered for, bazokuhleka emakhaya ukuthi waphuma uthi uyofunda kodwa wabuya ungaphethelutho (you become a laughing stock at the village you are from) (Participant1).

(d) Covid-19 pandemic

This study found that the Covid-19 pandemic had become a challenge regarding the students' academic performance. Participants revealed that the adjustments to different methods of teaching and learning because of the Covid-19 pandemic were a challenge leading to poor academic performance. Participants believed that the Covid-19 pandemic and its protocols had created attendance changes and communication barriers between the students and lecturers. The participants indicated that the quality of lecturers' teaching and the teaching methods used needed to be improved. Participants also indicated that the teaching methods lecturers used reduced the motivation of students, resulting in poor academic performance.

One of the participants went further to mention that some of their lecturers did not explain again if the student missed information or needed more clarity on the lesson. The participants revealed the need for free interaction between educators and students, something which was not available. Participants' responses implied that educators who are not motivated contributed to poor academic performance. The extracts from participants noted the following:

"Because of the covid-19 pandemic, we don't get much time with our lecturers. We stay at home doing nothing and ignore our college work on the days we are supposed to do self-studying" (Participant 4).

"I think not attending every day and because of the covid-19 protocol we don't have enough time with our lecturers so teaching and learning is disturbed" (Participant 3).

"I think not feeling comfortable in the presence of the lecturer, for example you feel scared of asking questions even if you didn't understand what the lecturer was teaching. Some lecturers teaching us they do not even answer our questions or provide clarity when requested" (Participant 4).

4.3.2.2 Support services

(a) Lack of resources

This study found that lack of resources could be an element of inadequate support services experienced by the students at a rural college. Participants indicated that lack of resources had become a serious challenge for students' academic performance. Participants identified quite a few resources lacking at the college. Their responses indicated that lack of resources and not getting relevant support led them to perform poorly in their academic work. Participants also revealed that lack of needed resources disturbed students' academic concentration and resulted in not only poor academic performance, but failure to complete their registered programme, and violent behaviour. An extract from the participant responses is as follows:

“Sometimes it is caused by my financial challenges because there is no one who is working at home and utholukuthi ngilambile (when you hungry) and you cannot study with an empty stomach. at times you think about you background and how you will survive thola ukuthi ungumzali futhi zonkizinto zibheke wena (you are a parent and everyone at home depends on you)” (Participant 3).

“Like I said we end up failing due to lack of resources, stress, communication and discrimination against each other as students. We end up not getting support from lecturers and students, a person is for himself or herself (umuntu uzibheke yena nje)” (Participant 1).

“we lack facilities, you know that a healthy body is a healthy mind, if we had programmes and offices that help us with our problems it would be much better. Our needs and concerns

as students are not attended. If we had proper offices and trained individuals to deal with problems ngabe senza kangcono ezifundweni (we would be doing better)” (Participant 5).

(b) Lack of intervention

This study found that students did not receive adequate support in their academic performance. Participants indicated that the absence of the support system to enhance the learning capacity of students influenced the students’ academic performance. Participants identified resources that were at the college but not made available to every student, but provided only to a few. Participants indicated that the people assigned for distribution of these services to students did not do their duties accordingly, because they always made excuses not to help some students. Participants indicated that some students ended up deregistering or dropping out when they did not get the support services they needed. Some participants mentioned that, even during the Covid-19 pandemic when the attendance timetable changed the rural college could not provide them with enough resources.

Participants indicated that there were useful and productive ways the college could adopt to intervene in the academic performance of students at a rural college. Participants identified quite a few incidents where they found themselves helpless in their academics and other aspects of life. Some participants even went further to mention that the college could not identify students’ academic needs and challenges early. This study revealed what participants believed they needed for their academic performance but never received from the college. The following were their responses:

“No they do not give us support because sometimes, student’s wellbeing is ignored in this college” (Participant 3).

“sometimes they don’t, they will say they don’t have internet while you see they are online and they keep you waiting for long, busy with their personal staff or chatting to their friends... bathi linda babe busy nokuhleka nabangani babo ulide iskhathi eside (they keep you waiting while busy with their friends). It is very hard because there are students who dropout from the college, utholukuthi umuntu ubefuna ukufunda but ngenxa yesimo sokungasizakali agcine eyeka iskole (some student end up dropping out of the college because of not getting assistance they need). some student they even commit suicide because of such issues, because it is very hard to go back home without obtaining the qualification you registered for, bazokuhleka emakhaya ukuthi waphuma uthi uyofunda kodwa wabuya ungaphethelutho (you become a laughing stock at the village you are from) .all the people who are supposed to be helping us and they don’t, they have influence on what leads to depression and failure of students, ungazube nestroke ugule noma ufe impela bengakusizi ngenxa yestress (you might suffer from stroke and die because of not getting assistance)”(Participant 1).

“Because of the covid-19 pandemic out attendance has changed but the college don’t give us enough resources for example we only use textbook without any summarised or slides notes ukuze uzoshesha ukubambe okufundayo (so that it will be easy to understand the lesson)” (Participant 2).

“No assistance has been provided by the college to help me or other students on the problems mentioned or have experienced. There is a way that the college can get students help and spot their psychological, social fitness while studying with the college” (Participant 5).

4.3.2.3 Experiences of the rural college students

The study indicated that rural college students experienced various academic challenges that were important to express during the interview. The participants thought that the experiences they had

about achieving their academic goals could be an element of psychological factors that influenced the students' academic performance at a rural college.

(a) Satisfaction

The transcripts from participants' responses revealed that some of the students were satisfied with their academic performance. They highlighted that their marks were good and their assessment feedback was satisfying. Their responses indicated that they were feeling good and thought they would achieve their goals regardless of the challenges they experienced. Participants indicated that they were facing challenges during the academic activities at a rural college. The participants disclosed that the changing education system was also a challenge to students. However, the students were still pushing so hard and believed they would achieve their academic goals. The extracts of the participants below illustrate these.

“I feel good even though there are challenges but I am pushing, kusazameka (I am trying)”
(Participant 1.)

“so far, my academic performance is fine so I think I will achieve my goals” (Participant 2)

“so far, everything is going according to my plan and my academic performance is satisfying so I think I will achieve my goals” (Participant 3).

“Yes, I am satisfied” (Participant 4).

(b) Dissatisfaction

Some participants said that as things changed and might continue to change with time, they could not be satisfied. Participants indicated that their dissatisfaction was due to class attendance, timetable changes, and restricted interaction between educator and students and between the students. Class and group discussions had been prohibited. Everyone was instructed to keep a social distance from others, even if they needed clarification on a certain topic they did not understand. Additionally, one participant responded that he was not sure how he will achieve his academic goals due to his marks and results that were not satisfying. The student indicated that his

academic performance was worrying him, and he was not feeling good about his academic goals' achievement. The following extracts are instructive:

“I feel not good and I don't think I will achieve my goals because my results and marks are not good” (Participant 5).

“The way things happen, I see there will be a time where things will change and I will not be satisfied” (Participant 1).

“Not really, but the way things happen our class timetable has changed so we attend today but not tomorrow than come back the following day so I am worried ” (Participant 6).

4.3.2.4 Effects of poor academic performance

This study demonstrated the psychological and social effects of poor academic performance among students at a rural college. This study found that these psychosocial effects of poor performance among students included anxiety, loss of self-esteem, anti-social behaviour, violence and goal achievement delay.

(a) Anxiety

This study found that the anxiety amongst students at a rural college could be a factor influencing academic performance. Students indicated feelings of uncertainty and fear of failure at a rural college. In addition, the participants' reactions from the transcripts indicated that the influence of psychological factors led students to believe that poor academic performance is a threat to self and academic achievement. Their responses showed that the feeling of failure was a consequence of the student's poor academic performance.

The participants' responses indicated that these had created a bad feeling of disinterest in coming to the college. They indicated that their goals were fading right in their faces which made them emotionally disturbed most of the time. The participants' comments are presented below.

"You end up not feeling good about coming to school and unable to focus on your studies"
(Participant 1).

"I feel emotionally disturbed, and see my goals fading but I try not to allow these challenges to discourage me" (Participant 4).

"when I am stressed I don't study" (Participant 2).

(b) Loss of self-esteem

This study found that loss of self-esteem could be the consequence of poor academic performance among students at a rural college. The participants' responses indicated that poor academic performance affected their self-esteem. The study showed that the loss of self-esteem was also due to the different causes of rural college students' poor academic performance. The participants' comments are presented below:

"I lose self-esteem and think a lot about not achieving my goals which will lead me to end up failing. I end up not feeling good to attend lectures because when I am hungry I can't concentrate"
(Participant 5).

“Even our lecturers, we can't talk to them because they just come in for the lecture than leave abanaso isikhathi sokumamela izinkinga zethu (they don't have time to listen to our problems). For example, let say I am HIV+ and the lecturer's lesson that day is based on HIV and the lecturer only mention the bad side of it not knowing they are students suffering from the virus and that becomes a huge problem to me as a student so we need people” (Participant 1).

(c) Anti-social behaviour

The section below presents findings on the knowledge that explains students' behaviour, the students' ability to socialise and to achieve their academic goals. The participants assumed that the social knowledge they had about their behaviour could be the consequence of social factors that influenced their academic performance at a rural college. The participant's responses showed that the causes of their poor academic performance were none of the things they enjoyed doing, but rather, serious problems which led them to undesired and wrong doings. This study found that the anti-social behaviour presented by participants could be the consequence of students' poor academic performance. The participants noted the following:

“they are not enjoyable but a serious problem” (Participant 1).

“Yes, the causes that I mentioned to be the cause of my poor academic performance are a problem” (Participant 3).

(d) Violence

This study found that violence among students could be the consequence of poor academic performance. Participants pointed out that violent behaviour was initiated by their poor academic performance as well as the unavailability of certain services the students need. Participants indicated that violent behaviour was a problem. A response below from one participant was:

“Because we, as students, end up striking for financial assistance” (Participant 6).

The participant’s responses indicated that this was a serious problem in the rural college. This showed the effect of poor academic performance on the participant’s behaviour. Participants indicated that their violent behaviour was not only caused by poor academic performance, but was also the result of poor academic performance.

“No they do not give us support because sometimes, student’s well being is ignored in this college” (Participant 3).

(e) Goal achievement delay

This study found that the participants believed that delay on a student's goal achievement is a consequence of the poor academic performance. The participants’ responses indicated what they believed to be a cause of their poor academic performance. The participants revealed that they did not study due to poor academic performance that resulted in loss of self-esteem. Because students fail and their academic goals are delayed, the causes of poor academic performance are a problem that delayed their academic goal achievement. Participants commented as follows:

“Because when I am supposed to be studying I don’t then end up failing” (Participant 2).

“Because I do not get good marks on my test and exam result” (Participant 3).

“I lose self-esteem and think a lot about not achieving my goals, which will lead me to end

up failing. I end up not feeling good about attending lectures because when I am hungry I can't concentrate. I see my goals failing” (Participant 5).

4.3.2.5 Remedies for enhancing academic performance among students at a rural college

This study found that intervention, practical programmes and needed resources could be the remedies enhancing students' academic performance at a rural college.

4.3.2.5.1 Intervention

This study found that the intervention of the rural college support services could eradicate causes of students' poor academic performance. Participants presented possible interventions believed to eliminate the problem and to bring solutions to their academic performance at a rural college. Participants identified support services as part of the possible solutions they thought could be helpful to eradicate poor academic performance. They identified different professional and financial assistance the college could provide to help improve their academic performance. Participants recommended suggestion boxes to raise their views and complaints. The government or the department could help them with food parcels as some students were schooling parents and some were orphans. Below are participants' expressions on how support services could eradicate poor academic performance:

“As a student, I think we need to have Psychologist, social workers, and Therapist we would talk to about our problems. Even our lecturers, we can't talk to them because they just come in for the lecture then leave abanaso isikhathi sokumamela izinkinga zethu (they don't have time to listen to our problems). For example, let's say I am HIV+ and the lecturer's lesson that day is based on HIV and the lecturer only mentions the bad side of it not knowing they are students suffering from the virus and that becomes a huge problem to me as a student so we need people” (Participant 1).

“As a student, I think we need to have suggestion boxes to raise our views and complaints. Because sometimes we are scared of raising our concerns or even talking to a lecturer especially in front of the class” (Participant 4),

“...getting more assistance, especially financial support from the college. I think smartphones or tablets and computers can help a lot on the days we don't attend classes ... ubanento okanye umsebenzi ozowenza usekhaya ngoba (you can learn even when you are at home because) you end up forgetting what you were taught in class” (Participant 3).

“If the government or the department can help us with food maybe starters or fruits can help a lot of students who come to school without eating. Kunzima kabi ukufunda ulambile (it is very hard to learn on an empty stomach). Because some students are orphans and some are parents themselves who have to look out for their children back home” (Participant 5).

4.3.2.5.2 Practical programmes

This study found that participants believed that practical programmes help to refresh the mind and to socialise, as well as to achieve academic goals. The participants revealed that, when an individual's mind is in a good state, he/she performs better in different aspects of life, including academic performance. Participants went even further to mention health campaigns to enhance their academic performance. Participants' responses are indicated in the extracts below:

“Programmes like sports, trips, and music can help to refresh our minds and increase interest to come to college” (Participant 4).

“I think we need to have programmes like sport, health campaigns, social workers and psychologist can help” (Participant 5).

“I would look at where can I put more effort on my studies which is studying in time”
(Participant 2).

4.3.2.5.3 Needed resources

This study found that the majority of the participants believed that college leadership, relevant professionals, different learning and teaching methods could play a huge role in academic performance of the students at a rural college. Participants indicated that these resources could enhance students’ learning capacity and provide school- related mental health interventions. Participants identified suitable needed resources the college could make available to students. Therefore, poor academic performance and resources needed to fight against factors influencing students’ academic performance are presented below.

(a) College leadership

This study found that leadership at a rural college could enhance academic performance of students. However, participants indicated that professional guidance and mental health education at a rural college is generally not carried out properly. Participants believed that college management and leadership is not in line with the needs of college students for learning, growth and academic performance. They suggested that college leadership be carried out in accordance with students’ academic performance, education and career guidance for different majors so that

college students can arrange their own studies and life. Participants also revealed that the college management system and incentive mechanisms were not enough to strengthen the teaching and learning process, as well as the academic performance of rural college students. The study participants identified the need for a strong college leadership that included qualified management and other professionals (e.g., students' liaison officers) the college may make available to students. Participants mentioned that the officers the college had did not seem to know or understand what they are doing. The following were the different participants' comments:

“If we can have a strong leadership, that is not selfish but a leadership for all. SRC, managers, lecturers, as well as good support from each other as students not bullying one another” (Participant 2).

“like SRC, and college Management they don't care about students' well-being; they only concentrate on learning but ignore the psychological and social health of students” (Participant 3).

(b) Relevant professionals

Participants identified suitable resources needed for support services, relevant professionals and offices, which the college may make available to students. This study found that professionals like psychologists, social workers and therapists could provide mental health intervention, nurses could provide medical intervention, and properly qualified lecturers could help towards students' life experiences and academic performance. Participants indicated the need and the gap these mentioned relevant professionals may close in students' life in general and in their academic performance. The abstracts from the participants stated the following:

“I think what we need the most is the people who are professionals like psychologist, social worker and therapist, Nurses, and qualified lecturers who can help us with our problems as well as live

life campaigns so they can talk to students about love and life because students' dates and hurt each other here at the college" (Participant 1).

"We also need programmes which can help us talk about our issues and get more information on how to deal with our problems" (Participant 4).

(c) Different learning and teaching methods

This study found that different learning and teaching methods were needed at a rural college. Participants identified suitable resources needed for teaching and learning and mentioned the need for a support system that can enhance their learning and help them with school-related mental health to enhance their academic performance. Participants indicated the need for different learning and teaching methods, especially those that would accommodate different learning styles. Participants revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic changed, not only the lifestyles, but also students' learning. The study found that applying different teaching methods could accommodate the students using different learning styles, as well as enhance the students' academic performance. The following were students' responses:

"Online learning can help a lot during this covid-19 pandemic because we can learn even when we are at home since our class attendance has changed" (Participant 5).

"Get more help for students who use different learning styles. ukukhulumela nje abakhubazekile nabasebenzisa some specific learning styles, for example physically disabled students, if they can accommodate them babenamatoilet abo nendlela yokunyukela emaclassini aphezulu lokhu okungekho lapha eskoleni (they should accommodate all students including the ones with special needs)" (Participant 6).

4.4 Conclusion

For the researcher to analyse and interpret the large volume of raw data collected through the closed and open-ended questions in the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, descriptive statistics and thematic analysis was employed. Data presentation, analysis and interpretations for the two phases of this study were thoroughly deliberated in this chapter. In order to offer the reader greater depth of understanding, and to ensure that participants' voices are heard, this chapter presented the key findings that emerged from the presented data collected quantitatively and qualitatively. This study clarified how statistical results and thematic results were analysed.

The study results from either quantitative and/or qualitative phase were presented in this chapter. The psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of rural college students were identified in this chapter. The support services which were either effective or inadequate were also outlined in this chapter. The research discussions, limitations, conclusions, and recommendations for further research are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The results presented from the participants' responses to the interviews and questionnaires in the previous chapter directed this study to the five main themes. These themes established important aspects of the study facts in conjunction with the research aims and objectives. The results for both qualitative and quantitative phases provided a basis for the researcher to construct themes which are related to literature and the theoretical framework of the study. These initial themes were generated during exploration and analysis of the psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of students at a rural college.

The aim was to report on data in as authentic and precise a way as possible to ensure trustworthiness. This chapter discusses findings organised into specific themes (psychological influence, social influence and support services) and sub-themes. These themes are discussed in detail to present the major findings of the study. This chapter presents the discussions of the results to connect them with the previous studies, answer the primary and secondary research questions of the study repeated below in 5.2), and summarise the main findings in terms of the connection between psychosocial factors and academic performance of the students at a rural college. The chapter also presents the limitations of the study. Finally, this chapter defines study recommendations in order to explain some strategies for creating solutions to psychosocial influences on academic performance of rural college students.

5.2 Research questions

5.2.1 Primary research question

- What are the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students at a rural college?

5.2.2 Secondary research questions

- What kind of support services do students need to improve their academic performance at a rural college?
- What are the college students' experiences at a rural college?
- What are the effects of poor academic performance at a rural college?
- What are the remedies enhancing academic performance among students at a rural college?

5.3 Discussions of the study

There are many reasons for rural college students to perform poorly in their academic work. These included medical problems, emotional problems, poor socio-cultural home environment, and even environmental causes (Aafreen et al., 2018). However, the themes generated from exploring psychosocial factors that influenced students' academic performance guided this study to form an initial understanding of the influence of the psychosocial factors in a rural college. This assisted to link both phase 1 and 2 findings to discover psychosocial factors, and to explore solutions in conjunction with the research aims and objectives.

5.3.1 Primary research question: What are the psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a rural college?

There are many factors that influence students' academic performance (Aafreen et al., 2018). However, this study found psychological factors and social factors as the main psychosocial factors that influenced students' academic performance at a rural college. The researcher believes that the following two elements found as psychosocial factors can enhance our understanding of the effects of psychological factors, namely stress, loss of concentration and focus, and lack of motivation; social factors, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, lack of financial aid, health schemes and students' residences on students' academic performance at a rural college. Some researchers

had investigated the associations between psychosocial factors and academic performance. However, the researcher realised that it was of vital importance to find some specific additional psychosocial factors that have an impact on students' educational accomplishment at a rural college. The researcher believed that identification of additional factors will help the students to enhance their academic performance and educational learning. These will provide information about necessities and difficulties of students' learning at rural colleges. It is predictable that additional and psychosocial factors will assist in supporting students and lecturers in their efforts to enhance students' academic performance. In addition, how each of these factors influenced academic performance of the students at a rural college was presented.

5.3.1.1 Psychological factors

Singh et al. (2016) indicated that when there is more involvement in both academic and social aspects of the college experience, psychological factors can play a decisive role in influencing the students' academic performance. The psychological factors may influence academic performance of the rural college students in many ways. Hence, there are many psychological reasons for the poor academic performance of rural college students. Some psychological factors make great contributions to students' academic performance and completion of their registered programmes. This study found that satisfaction and dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, as well as a feeling of lack of academic goals' achievement, caused poor academic performance. Consequences of poor academic performance were psychosocial factors that further influenced the academic performance of the rural college students. These factors are discussed in the section 5.3.6 below.

Psychological factors can play a decisive role in influencing the academic performance of students in a rural college. However, the majority of students regarded a relationship between psychological factors and their academic performance a challenge to their academic performance. This study found that the psychological factors which mostly influenced the academic performance of students at a rural college were ignorance, stress, loss of focus and concentration, loss of self-esteem, dissatisfaction with academic performance, depression and anxiety. These qualitative and quantitative results combined to answer the primary and first secondary research questions.

Challenges faced by the students related to various types of psychosocial factors discussed further below.

(a) Lack of motivation

It is very important to examine the motivation in the educational sphere (Mauliya, Relianisa, & Rokhyati, 2020). Creating motivational programmes is a difficult and expensive activity for any organisation (Lorincova et al., 2016). However, Starecek et al. (2017) state that motivation to study is a process, to which serious attention should be constantly paid. Tenaw (2013) indicates that a person's lack of motivation can be seen as an epistemic risk that may put a person at risk of not knowing or not knowing enough which includes the lack or incompleteness of knowledge. This study addressed the perceived psychological influence on the academic performance of students at a rural college. Most participants mentioned that the cause of students' poor academic performance were personal attributes. As confirmed by literature, psychosocial challenges were so widespread and complex that they clearly need to be observed from different angles and perspectives (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). The study indicated that lack of motivation on studying for internal and external assessments was to blame for students' poor academic performance. In support of the findings of this study, Peels and Pritchards (2020) confirm that ignorance results from lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and has a negative impact in educational practices. Therefore, lack of motivation for exam preparation and studying for academic assessments is a serious challenge towards students' academic performance. In particular, incorporating lack of motivation with studying ignorance would be a mistake that results in poor academic performance.

(b) Stress

Psychosocial problems occur in a wide variety of settings, and often have a negative impact on students' mental health, leading to stress that affects their physical and psychological health (Rajkumal et al., 2015). This study noted that stress did not only affect students' physical and psychological well-being, but also contributed to their academic performance. Mampurunga et al. (2015) state that stress has a very serious impact on college students' academic performance.

Excessive stress could lead to psychological problems such as depression and anxiety (Aafreen et al., 2018).

The study found that students faced severe emotional upheavals at a rural college. Students cannot study and focus in class when they are stressed and hungry, as this results in poor academic performance. When a student experiences high levels of stress or chronic stress, regardless of his/her age or level of study, it can interfere with the ability to learn, memorise, and earn good grades (Aafreen et al., 2018). The results of this study indicated that stress and other psychological factors negatively influenced academic performance of the rural college students.

(c) Loss of concentration and focus

The study findings indicated that hunger in class resulted in loss of focus and concentration, which influenced the academic performance of rural college students. Focus and concentration are mental processes that support students' academic activities and their academic performance. Baharu (2018) states that the success or failure students face in various academic activities depends on their focus and concentration. The findings of this study indicate that the loss of focus and concentration had a negative effect on academic performance of students. These psychological factors have a huge Influence on academic performance (Roopa & Rani, 2012).

5.3.1.2 Social factors

Previous studies indicate many social factors that influence students' academic performance. However, this study found social factors, like financial aid, the Covid-19 pandemic and student-lecturer interaction, college and home environment, health schemes as well as anti-social behaviour as social factors that influence students' academic performance. In the previous chapter, each of these factors disclosed how they influenced academic performance of students at a rural college. This section discusses the social factors mentioned above.

(a) Lack of financial aid

Students' failure is not only attributed to the financial problems that the majority faces, but also to problems related to the adjustment to college life (Al-Zoubi & Younes, 2015). The findings indicated that the college needed to develop means of paying special attention to students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Participants indicated that improving the financial support system such as that of students from low socio-economic backgrounds had a positive impact on students' academic performance. Mampuranga et al. (2015) indicate that the poorly performing economy resulted in students failing some of their modules as their minds could not concentrate due to other pressing problems like home/rental environment and inadequate funding emanating from the poor socio-economic circumstances.

Participants called for financial aid or student loan schemes to be developed. These schemes should include students who depend on their grandparents grant' which are not enough to cover all their academic needs. It clearly emanated that inadequate funding disturbed students' academic concentration and performance. The statistical result indicated that 55 (47.8%) participants strongly agreed that financial security was very important. Nnamani et al. (2014) note that students who come from a home environment where they do not know the source of the next funding do not normally perform well academically. These students are always under pressure because they are not sure where they will get money for food and transport to college for the next day.

(b) Lack of health schemes

The study findings indicated that the lack of health schemes created difficulties for students to maintain their health, proper lifestyle and academic performance at a rural college. This study revealed that lack of health schemes often caused disruption to students' learning. It was found to be one of the causes of poor academic performance among students at a rural college. The physical and conceptual resources over which learning is distributed help and inform the learning itself (Hayward, 2012). Learning is influenced by the learning activity within which it occurs, and the learning activity is influenced by the context in which it occurs (Seshea, 2017). The study findings revealed that the health schemes might help students maintain their health and academic performance at a rural college. However, participants stated that "a person is for himself" at the rural college, which means nobody cares or is concerned about students' needs.

The participants called for the government or the education department to help students with daily meals at the college or food parcels. Hunger during classes was stated as a problem that students faced. The findings also indicated that students were in need of health campaigns and professionals to share their academic concerns and life challenges. Given these and other concerns, it is important to understand, acknowledge, and enhance academic performance of students, while at the same time adapting health schemes to fight against challenges faced by the students at a rural college (Olufemi et al., 2018). The rural college facilities should be adequately provided, including appropriate attention and funding (Olufemi et al., 2018). The study found that there was a need for a health campaign to enhance the students' academic performance at a rural college.

(c) Lack of students' residences

Khozai et al. (2012) state that adequate accommodation is one of the student's personal services that enhances the achievement of educational objectives or instruction in an educational institution. In the context of this study, lack of residences was regarded as causing poor academic performance at a rural college. It was noted that the college environment does not meet students' residential needs. Students indicated living under a gender- based violence environment.

Chiguvi and Ndoma, (2018) indicate that noisy and overcrowded residences with inadequate security and lighting at night are the common examples of physical environments that undermine students' ability to engage in their studies. The study findings revealed that students resided in different locations across the province and travelled from home to the college using public transport daily when they had to attend classes. The study also found out that lack of students' residences encouraged absenteeism and poor academic performance. The overcrowded residences of students and the minimal supervision and insecurity were factors that affected students' academic performance (Khozai et al., 2012). If the college is unable to provide housing for students, students face additional pressure, and the lack of affordable off-campus housing may become a significant problem (Oluwaseyi, 2015). The study findings revealed the abuse and traumatic experiences students faced because of lack of residences within the rural college. These students' living conditions are likely to negatively affect academic performance of students, which

results in aggressive behaviour emanating from such an environment, experiencing flashbacks during classes which distract their learning. Therefore, lack of students' residences was found to be the cause of their poor academic performance.

(d) Covid-19 pandemic

The study findings showed that the Covid-19 pandemic and its protocols created attendance changes and communication barriers between the students and lecturers. This confirms that the COVID-19 pandemic had transformed society in profound ways, often exacerbating social and economic inequalities. Governments around the world have moved to suspend face-to-face teaching in schools, affecting some 95% of the world's student population, the largest disruption to education in history (Engzell et al., 2021).

The teaching platforms and methods made available for students were declared by participants as not satisfying and affected the students' academic performance and preparation for exams. The college students' academic education is closely related to lecturers' quality, teaching methods, educational mechanism, and campus cultural activities (Wu & Xin, 2019). This study's findings indicated that the quality of students' lecturers' interaction and teaching methods needed to be improved, so it could not affect the students' learning enthusiasm, creativity, and reduce the motivation of students. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, students struggled with their academic performance. They did not get enough access to attend and communicate with their lecturers.

It was found that lecturers who exhibited more leadership, friendly and understanding behaviour in their interaction with students' enhanced student's academic performance positively. However, lecturers who showed more uncertain, dissatisfied and admonishing behaviour in their interaction with students affect academic performance negatively (Douglas et al., 2014).

Interaction is a reciprocal process. Once a lecturer and student interact, their thoughts, feelings and behaviour influence each other in the process of the interaction and results in behavioural changes (Ahmad, et al., 2017). Interaction of lecturers with students is considered an important social factor in improving students' academic performance. The study findings revealed that participants did not feel comfortable in the presence of their lecturers and did not get much feedback on their

questions when asked. This study also found that the Covid-19 protocols disturbed the students' attendance and interaction with their lecturers. The findings revealed a negative relationship between the effect of Covid-19; insufficient student support from lecturers, and students' academic performance of the discussed significant social factor in a rural college.

With regard to these research findings, a positive relationship was displayed between psychological factors and academic performance of students at a rural college. The study findings are consistent with those of Rajkumar et al. (2015) that psychological factors influenced the physical and mental wellness of the individuals, as well as their ability to function in their academics". Kolo et al. (2017) also revealed that the most significant factors that influenced students' academic performance were psychological factors. This study is consistent with previous studies that indicated that there are several factors that influence students' academic performance. However, psychological factors, namely stress, depression and anxiety, loss of focus, were the key determinants of psychological factors that influence academic performance (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012).

According to these research findings, a relationship between social factors and academic performance of the students at a rural college is demonstrated. These findings are consistent with other studies that revealed how violence was linked to poor academic outcomes (Ramírez-Granizo et al., 2019). There is a strong association between the academic performance and students' economic status as well as that of their families (Aafreen et al., 2018). Research conducted by Fan (2012) also found a significant and positive relationship between teacher-students' interaction and their academic performance. However, factors like student funding, the Covid-19 pandemic, students-lecturer interaction, and violent social behaviour were social factors that influenced academic performance in this study. Olufemi, et al. (2018) state that the influence on academic performance varies from one academic environment to another, from one set of students to the next, and from one cultural setting to another. When students move far from home to attend classes at the college, they often need to minimise spending, and students' residences have been a proven means of achieving this goal. Furthermore, lack of students' residences influenced students' growth, behaviour and academic performance (Chiguvu & Ndoma, 2015).

5.3.2 Secondary research question 1: What kind of support services do students need to improve their academic performance at a rural college?

Academic performance involves many psychosocial factors. However, social support has received increasing attention as it relates to vocational behaviours (Olufemi et al., 2018). This factor (social support) can be conceptualised as an exchange that offers a range of benefits on the academic performance of the rural college students (Glozah & Pevalin, 2014). This study found that rural college students identify lack of resources and intervention as elements of psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of the rural college students.

5.3.2.1 Lack of resources

Student performance should improve if the administration of the college provides proper learning facilities to the students and also improves the environment of the college (Olufemi et al., 2018). However, the study findings indicated that lack of resources and not getting relevant support had a strong influence on academic performance that resulted in failure. The study findings indicated that students' failure was not only attributed to specific factors that the majority faces, but also to problems related to the relevant resources and support needed for their academic performance at a rural college. The study showed evidence of various psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of the students at a rural college. Participants' responses from interviews and questionnaires showed that lack of resources and relevant support are barriers to efficacious academic performance. Participants indicated in their responses that a "person is for himself". These problems were highlighted by participants as factors contributing towards their academic performance. The findings also indicated that not getting relevant support and proper resources for academic challenges faced by the students led to frequent failure, despite their abilities that qualified them to perform well in their academics (Al-Zoubi & Younes, 2015). The study findings indicated that the presented college support services were the student total experiences they got in their contact with the rural college. As informed by the study findings (see Chapter 4), participants indicated that they were not happy with all the service they received from the college. However, the resources the college provides and makes available should help them with school -related social

and mental health interventions at a rural college. Textbooks, social network platforms, campus manager, SSS office and SRC were the resources the participants identified and referred to as not adequate for their academic performance. However, the study findings indicated that the above-mentioned resources were what the students needed for their school-related activities, mental health and academic performance. Therefore, in the current study, these resources and inadequate support services were viewed as a part of the package to determine whether the student would perform successfully or poorly in their academics.

5.3.2.2 Lack of intervention

The findings indicated that guidance and additional academic support needed to be given to students before they found themselves at a critical stage. Academic support and referrals to the relevant departments such as the financial aid department and personal mentors, were scarce and not done timeously so that students are well informed and know where to look for assistance. This study confirmed that the lack of interventions negatively affected academic performance of rural college students. Therefore, the kind of support students need to improve their academic performance are discussed below.

Gaffoor and Van der Bill (2019) indicate that studies tend to focus primarily on factors that influence dropout, poor performance or attrition, but that not much attention is given to the lack of resources that influence students' intention to complete their studies. The study revealed two possible solutions that could help improve the academic performance of students in a rural college, namely interventions and practical programmes. These were consistent with other studies, that college should offer quality intervention for students that develop the skills necessary to meet the short term goals of grade level proficiency and give them a base to be successful when faced with academic challenges in future (Rodgers, 2013). The study also noted inadequate support services, and lack of resources the students needed. Lamas (2015) states that learning styles are predispositions, relatively general and constant, responding to a subject's trend. They derive from the willingness of an individual to adopt the same strategy in different situations, regardless of the specific demands of the task. As a result, the study found that different learning and teaching methods are resources needed by the students to fight against psychosocial factors that negatively influence the academic performance of students at a rural college.

5.3.3 Secondary research question 2: What are the college students' experiences at a Rural TVET college?

Unsatisfactory academic performance is one below the expected performance and can be related to teaching methods (Douglas et al., 2014). Findings also revealed failure as the effect of these psychosocial factors on academic performance of students at a rural college. The findings of the current study described dissatisfaction as having a negative effect on students' personalities and academic performance of the rural college students. Satisfaction was found to have a positive effect on students' academic performance, personalities, and attitudes toward school. Some participants indicated that their academic performance was satisfying and they were feeling good. Therefore, the researcher considers student satisfaction and dissatisfaction to be an indication, rather than the cause, of a poor academic performance of the rural college students. Participants stated that textbooks alone were not enough to help them with their academic performance. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, organised social network platforms and social distancing measures altered factors such as seating arrangements, indoor climate and even home based learning, which, in turn, influenced student academic performance at a rural college.

The study findings revealed that the campus manager and student support services (SSS) office had always been there without providing adequate support to the students. The participants even went further to express that, once the students' representative council (SRC) is voted in, they reject and ignore those they represent, but only satisfy their own needs. The findings indicated that college management did not care about students' wellbeing. They only concentrate on teaching and learning but ignore the psychological and social health of students. Participants revealed that what the college wanted and concentrated more on was effective teaching and learning, and the rural college pass rate.

5.3.4 Secondary research question 3: What are the effects of poor academic performance at a Rural TVET college?

5.3.4.1 Anxiety

Anxiety may lead to increasing dropout rates and low academic performance (Baharu, 2018). This study revealed that anxiety was the psychological factor which mostly influenced academic performance. According to the research findings of this study, the majority (32.2%) of the participants agreed that they had been consistently depressed or down, most of the day, nearly every day due to the fear of failure. Furthermore, 32 (27.8%) participants agreed that they had felt anxiety or panic when in class. Aafreen et al. (2018) indicate that students with poor coping capacities become more prone to anxiety and depression, and that high levels of anxiety interfere with concentration and memory, which are critical for academic performance and students' success. In line with research literature, this study confirms the negative influence of anxiety on academic performance of the students at a rural college.

5.3.4.2 Loss of self-esteem

The results of the present study show that the effect of poor academic performance results in loss of self-esteem. The loss of self-esteem creates a gap between the academic performance and the student's expected performance. Participants indicated to be emotionally disturbed due to the psychological factors that they encountered at a rural college. Participants indicated that these factors had a huge impact on the opinion the students have about themselves, and how they handle academic, social- and personal difficulties. The findings of the present study are in accordance with previous research that loss of self-esteem lead students to attain lower academic marks (Aafreen et al., 2018). In particular, loss of self-esteem negatively contributes towards academic performance.

As informed by the literature review (see Chapter 2) and the findings (see Chapter 4), self-esteem predicts adjustment and academic performance (Sommer & Dumont, 2011). The findings indicate that not getting good marks, underperforming or even failing led students at a rural college to lose self-esteem. This psychosocial factor (self-esteem) is a powerful indicator of academic performance of college students (Krumrei et al., 2013). Studying requires students to have the perseverance, diligence, self-confidence, self-control, courage, self-esteem to overcome difficulties and eliminate negative interference on academic performance (Wu & Xin, 2019).

However, this study found that students with low self-esteem as a result of poor academic performance and other reasons found it difficult to achieve their academic goals. This study found that a proportion of students with low self-esteem ended up failing and not satisfied with their academic performance. Therefore, low self-esteem had a negative influence towards academic performance of rural college students.

5.3.4.3 Anti-social behaviour: Violence

The participants assumed that the social knowledge they had about their behaviour influenced their academic performance at a rural college. The participants indicated that academic performance influenced students' ability to socialise and achieve their academic goals. The social behaviour presented by participants was revealed as a serious problem. Participants pointed out that the violent behaviour may be initiated by their poor academic performance and unavailability of certain services (e.g. funding). The findings correspond to Ramírez-Granizo et al. (2019) recognizing that, among the types of violent behaviour studied in students, the most frequent is verbal violence (threats, insults, intimidation, scorn, offences, and grievances). Intense behaviour practice affects the various dimensions of factors; academic, social, emotional, family, and physical factors.

Violence is the exertion of physical force to injure or destroy, accompanied by the emotion of anger and hostility (Lepore & Kliewer, 2013). Violence embodies aspects like vandalism, rioting, and other socially damaging behaviour. Violence is common in the South African education system. Ramírez-Granizo et al. (2019) revealed that violence has been linked to poor academic outcomes, with adverse emotional and behavioural consequences. The study found that students depended on NSFAS payments and allowances and social grants for survival. The participants indicated that this was not enough to support them with all their social and academic needs. It is believed that students from poor socio-economic backgrounds would have financial problems which lead to stress and compromise the completion of the registered programmes (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018).

The study findings revealed poor socio-economic backgrounds and financial problems as causing anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour is a serious problem which has a negative influence on the students' academic performance in a rural college.

5.3.4.4 Goal achievement delay

This study found that paying special attention to students who are affected by different psychosocial factors could improve their goal planning and achievement. The study findings indicate that 11, 9.6% of participants had difficulty sitting still or paying attention, and that the students get easily distracted, and find themselves daydreaming or "spacing off" in class at the rural college. These difficulties could lead the students to perform poorly and therefore delay goal achievements. The study findings indicate that students were affected by the psychosocial factors in the direction of psychological (lack of motivation, stress, loss of concentration and focus) and social aspects (lack of financial aid, lack of health schemes, and lack of students' residences). These factors all contributed to students' goal achievement delay. Therefore, these causes of poor academic performance present problems that delay academic goal achievement. Hence, the researcher considers students' academic goal achievement delay to be an indication of how psychosocial factors influence the academic performance of the students at a rural college.

5.3.5 What are the remedies enhancing academic performance among students at a rural college?

Gulzer et al. (2010) indicate that in an academic institution the presence of a support system can enhance the learning capacity of students by helping them develop or improve their coping mechanisms. Preferably, all colleges need to promote programmes for healthy living and behaviour among students. This study found that paying special attention to students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and to their different learning styles could improve the student support system. This study revealed that the support services influenced the academic performance of the students at the specific rural college in three categories.

5.3.5.1 Interventions

Academic intervention is defined as additional preparation which supplements the instruction provided in the general curriculum and assists students in meeting the stated learning standards and/or student support services, which may include guidance, counselling, attendance, and study skills needed to support improved academic performance (Rodgers, 2013). Sommer and Dumont, (2011) state that college academic support structures for students are important and useful. These support structures should aim to improve academic performance of students and provide students with skills that improve their abilities to cope with various demands. It is noted from the study findings that poor academic performance at a rural college is a result of some aspect identified by participants. Participants indicated how they could eradicate causes of poor academic performance by including interventions as part of the possible solutions they believed to be helpful. Relevant professionals, college leadership, and learning and teaching methods were identified as services intended to assist students who are at risk of not achieving the learning standards, not gaining the knowledge and skills needed to meet or exceed designated performance levels in their academics at a rural college.

5.3.5.2 Practical programmes

The aim of the study was to explore the influence of psychosocial factors on the academic performance of students at a rural college. The quality and effectiveness of any programme or system utilised to help student academic performance is dependent upon its structure, services and goals (Rodgers, 2013). The goals of any academic programme are achieved in part, by the types of instruction and strategies utilised to support students in those programmes (Hayward, 2012). The current study revealed that practical activities helped refresh the mind, to socialise, as well as to achieve the participants' academic goals. The findings revealed the participants' hope for college practical programmes to improve the current status. Sports, excursions, music and health campaigns helped refresh the students' minds and increase interest to come to the college. Therefore, the rural college students anticipated the college to strengthen practical teaching, enhance college innovative cooperation, provide students with more practical opportunities, expand academic knowledge, and improve their ability through practice. The practical programmes may enhance their interest in theoretical learning and deepen their understanding of theory (Wu & Xin, 2019).

5.3.5.3 Needed resources

(a) College leadership

The findings established after the qualitative and quantitative data analysis in Chapter 4 enabled the researcher to define college leadership as a support structure developed with good intentions of providing the students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed and to promote student academic achievement. Participants indicated that the present support structures, professional guidance and mental health education at the college were generally not carried out satisfactorily to benefit students' academic performance. They were believed not to be in line with the needs of college students for learning, growth and academic performance. Therefore, the study findings captured various aspects designated to lead and manage academic performance of students at a rural college. However, the SRC, SSS officers, lecturers, college management system and other incentive mechanisms did not do enough to strengthen the learning motivation and academic performance of students in a rural college.

(b) Relevant professionals

Participants identified suitable resources needed for support services, including relevant professionals. The majority of the participants indicated that appropriately qualified professionals played a huge role in their academic performance and enhanced their learning capacity by helping them with school- related mental health interventions. The study findings indicated the need for certain professionals to be made available to students. As informed by the findings in the previous chapter, participants identified professionals like psychologists, social workers and therapists, nurses, qualified lecturers, as well as programmes which could help the students talk about their issues and get more information on how to deal with their problems other than academic challenges. The findings indicated that psychosocial factors in the teaching and learning process were a multidimensional concept that measured various interrelated aspects of learning in an educational system (Chavez, 2016). The participants believed other professionals could intervene to enhance their learning capacity, provide school- related mental health interventions, and help fight what Erikson called "psychosocial crisis". These crises are struggles or challenges which a person must negotiate and deal with, in order to grow and develop (Rajkumal et al., 2015). Erikson believed that his psychosocial principle is genetically inevitable in shaping human development in

all people. Participants revealed the need for other professions to intervene on the psychosocial factors that influence their academic performance.

(c) Learning and teaching methods

Participants identified suitable resources needed, as well as the presence of a support system that enhanced the learning capacity of students by helping them with school- related mental health interventions in their academic performance. The learning approaches were key determinants of academic performance (Lamas, 2015). The study findings also indicated methods of teaching and learning as ensuring that all students made significant progress toward their academic performance. Emphasis on basic skills of teaching and learning did not prepare students for critical thinking and problem solving necessary to be successful in their academic performance in a rural college (Chavez, 2016). As informed by the findings in Chapter 4, online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and accommodation of different teaching methods for all students using different learning styles promoted improvements in their instructional practice and academic performance of the students in a rural college. The study participants indicated that the college needed to implement other teaching methods to accommodate their learning styles. It is important to find the reason(s) for a student' poor school performance and come up with a treatment plan early so that the student can perform up to full potential (Karande & Kulkarni, 2014). This study confirmed that the different learning and teaching methods had a huge impact on academic performance of rural college students.

The study findings were consistent with other researchers who had a great contribution to psychosocial factors and students' academic performance studies. The other focus of this study was to find the kind of support the students needed to improve their academic performance as well as to determine the effect of poor academic performance amongst the students in a rural college. The effectiveness of academic intervention services on the long term academic success of students was a major theme across programme services and student progress. These programmes worked to help students learn more than test taking strategies (Rodgers, 2013). These study findings demonstrated that support services influenced the academic performance of the students in a rural

college. This study presented the most important support services discussed above that is influencing the academic performance of the students in a rural college.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The first limitation of the study is that it was conducted at only a single rural college in Ladysmith and is based on only one sample and not on multiple samples from different colleges. Thus, the results and conclusions may be limited to the particular sample, variables, and period under which it was carried out. Moreover, there may have been confounding psychosocial factors which influenced the rural college students of this particular college and which do not apply to other rural colleges (e.g. support services of other resources needed; relevant professionals, college leadership, different learning and teaching methods). It is unknown if the present study result would be appropriate to explain and predict psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of other rural college students. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised.

Secondly, the methodological consequences of this study used purposeful and convenient sampling and offered quantitative and qualitative approaches on determining the psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of the rural college students. Therefore, the limitation to this study was that the sample was biased towards registered national certificate vocational (NCV) programme students at the NQF level 3 in the rural college. First, the sample comprised mostly of only 115 young adults, and second sample consisted of 6 young adults whereas the inclusion of other NCV levels of younger and older population may have offered more variance in psychosocial factors that influences the academic performance of students in a rural college. However, the results of this study may be applicable to contexts similar to those outlined in this study, to better understand the psychosocial factors.

Thirdly, because of the Covid-19 pandemic and its challenges experienced by the researcher and the participants, it limited the researcher in getting all valuable participants. However, the sample

size was adequate and large enough to conduct study analysis and interpretation to explore the influence of psychosocial factors on the academic performance of students in a rural college.

5.5 Recommendations

Despite the hazardous Covid-19 pandemic conditions under which this research was conducted, the researcher hoped that the study would make a valuable contribution to understanding psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of rural college students. This chapter synthesises literature regarding psychosocial factors that influence academic performance of students at a rural college to propose conclusions, and recommendations for further research. Based on the research findings of this study, and participants' views on psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a rural college, the researcher made the following recommendations.

5.5.1 Psychosocial recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine the psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of students at a rural college. Therefore, the study found psychological factors, social factors and support services as psychosocial factors that influence students' academic performance at a rural college. With regards to the study aim, this study went further to reveal these identified psychosocial factors (psychological factors, social factors and support services) influences on the academic performance of rural college students. This study recommended that the institution should help students develop or improve coping mechanisms to manage psychosocial influences. The college management should promote wellness programmes in order to raise psychosocial awareness. With regards to the findings of the study the researcher therefore recommends the following:

5.5.1.1 Psychological recommendations

It is recommended that students attend educational psychology workshops during the first year of the study career, based on their identified needs. The early identification of students at risk is a very important action to reduce potential failures and poor academic performance. This study recommended that students should be dedicated to their academics and focus on their studies. Government should provide the college with enough instructional aids on teaching and learning to prevent lack of motivation, ignorance and fatigue to make the teaching and learning more interesting and meaningful to the students. The college should allow a common learning environment, students' participation in discussions, working in groups and application of innovative technological methods of studying to increase the motivation of students to study. Rural colleges should promote mental health programmes to foster healthy living and behaviour among students. These programmes should include effective stress management which promotes learning about common stressors and help to mitigate negative or chronic stress in a student's life as well as the methods to prevent distress. The college should have programmes that will help students boost their self-esteem and understand their level of concentration.

5.5.1.2 Social Recommendations

Students who depended on their parents and grandparents' social grants and those who got study grants from NSFAS indicated that the amount of money was not enough to meet their academic needs or requirements. Therefore, the institutions should intervene to accommodate students from poor backgrounds financially. According to Adunola (2011) and Ganyaupfu (2013), lecturing is a collaborative process that involves interaction between students' and the lecturers which should bring about a change in students' performance. The researcher recommends that lecturers exhibit more leadership, friendly and understanding behaviour in their interaction with students, to enhance student's academic performance. Once the students identify their challenges, the college should strive to provide assistance to students.

The college climate should encourage students to seek help to improve their academic and social skills. It is clear that students are not only interested in some of the academic interventions introduced at the institution, but they also indicated other practical programmes that will refresh their minds. Therefore, the study recommends work- integrated learning for students, that would

expose them to training that would also equip them with necessary skills to deal with psychosocial factors. Based on the social findings of this study, it is recommended that the rural college be given appropriate attention on feeding and health schemes. Colleges should not only focus on theoretical teaching, but also practical programmes that will help students experience a college climate that encourages them to seek help to improve their academic and social skills.

It is recommended that the government provide land where student residences can be built, especially near the institutions where students can easily have access and be within walking distance. The college should also make use of the vacant buildings and restructure them into students' residences and build students' residences at any rural college vacant land. With the change brought by the Covid-19 pandemic on teaching and learning, this study also recommends that the college and lecturers implement different teaching methods to improve academic performance and encourage success to students using different learning styles. In addition, diversity of teaching methods should be used in order to improve academic performance of the students, especially now during covid-19 pandemic. The institution should try to allocate extra classes within the main timetable, whereby extra activities and previous question papers will be discussed. It is therefore recommended that lecturers try by all means to support their students during lectures with information and some explanations that would assist them to pass and be able to become what they want to be in the future.

5.5.2 Recommended Support Services

The government should employ more trained and qualified lecturers in the field of higher education to handle the teaching to make the teaching and learning more effective. College lecturers should ask students about their interests and try to understand the interest of the students as the lecturers interact with them. They should also pay attention to students' non-verbal response in the body language emitted by the students, to understand and improve students' academic performance. The study clearly indicated that a college student who did not get the necessary resources and relevant intervention did not perform well. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the college provides resources and relevant support equally to every student. This study also revealed the presence of several needed resources that could help enhance the learning and improve

the academic performance of the students. It is also recommended that the college provide the students with support they need, and make sure all the administrative and corporate services function jointly to support the process of teaching and learning to improve and reach the performance target of the rural college students.

This study also revealed that negative psychosocial factors distort teaching and learning methods, especially if the needed resources are not provided to students with poor academic performance. It is therefore recommended that comprehensive and full-process education, including counselling services, should be provided for college students. It is therefore recommended that students be continuously encouraged to achieve better performance because those interventions are for the benefit of the students. The researcher recommends that the college and the department invite specialists from relevant professions and practices, who would further increase the love and understanding of the importance of life in general, educational goals and to improve academic performance of the students at a rural college.

5.5.3 Recommendations for dissatisfying experiences

The study clearly revealed the students' dissatisfaction, but it is possible to find an explanation for the students' experience in the educational process, in particular, the features of interests, planning and academic success. For the rural college to keep the students satisfied, the study recommends the effective implementation of information technologies in the educational process that will increase students' motivation to study and promote the formation of practical experience, self-development, self-knowledge and self-assessment. The study recommends that students look at the individual learning style of self-revelation of the potential to study creatively. This will contribute to the formation of a situation of success that will increase students' motivation to study to avoid dissatisfaction. The study findings indicated that students were not satisfied with their performance marks and results, and it is recommended that students be provided with satisfactory feedback by lecturers that explains causes of failure and poor performance.

5.5.4 Recommendations for the cause of poor academic performance

It is recommended that the rural college introduce counselling centre programmes for students so that they may cope with examination anxiety, academic anxiety and problem management. The study findings indicate that high levels of anxiety are responsible for poor academic performance,

however a healthy relationship between a lecturer and students could be helpful to minimise the anxiety factors. It is recommended that lecturers should deal constructively with students to overcome and reduce their levels of anxiety. The study recommends that students with higher levels of anxiety be identified and treated to enhance their academic performance. The college should have communication processes where students exchange information about the course content and socio-emotional information that may improve students' academic performance. It is recommended that the college should promote programmes to evaluate factors influencing the students' self-esteem and find ways to enhance it. It is recommended that in order to alleviate anti-social behaviour which is caused by psychosocial challenges at a rural college, the senior management, working with the 'Students Support Office, should create platforms where they sit down with the college students' representative counsel to listen to what students need and provide feedback on relevant needs.

The college should attend to students' needs and concerns to prevent violent behaviour. The institution should also take steps to address the concerns of the students to avoid undesirable behaviour. The study findings indicated that the academic support structures (leadership and relevant professionals) for students are important and could be useful in academic performance. If these support structures aim to improve academic performance of students, they should provide students with skills that improve their abilities to cope with various demands (i.e., stress, loss of focus and concentration, loss of self-esteem, Satisfaction and dissatisfaction) to avoid students goal achievement delay. The study findings indicated that the students' goals were delayed, therefore the college should track the students interest and goal settings to determine whether the students are still in line with what they have planned to achieve when they registered at a rural college.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The results of the research conducted in this study shed light on the psychosocial factors that influenced the academic performance of rural college students. Major themes across many of the questions involving academic performance of the rural college students in the study were psychosocial factors; psychological and social factors. Despite emphasis on the influences of

psychological and social factors on the academic performance of students at a rural college, there were a number of findings within the study that indicated possible solutions to help students improve their academic performance. In addition to the possible solutions, there were many remedies and information students needed in their academic performance that will make them complete their course successfully in a stipulated time frame. Practical programmes, relevant professionals, college leadership, better learning and teaching methods, were remedies participants indicated to be utilised to help students meet their learning goals and to improve academic performance.

Academic interventions are a great tool in helping students understand the influence of psychosocial factors they are struggling with. Different teaching methods and learning styles are valuable tools in helping students to succeed. Participants in this study indicated that employment and adjustment of these tools in different programme conditions could improve academic performance of the students at a rural college. The study focused on how psychological factors, social factors, support services specifically influenced student academic performance at a rural college. The study also looked at the experiences and the effect of the poor academic performance amongst the students at a rural college. Lack of resources and intervention indicated a negative influence on academic performance and benefits of students. The study focused on identifying how these factors negatively influenced the academic performance of the students. The study helped to reveal the causes of poor performance and the kind of support the students need to improve their academic performance at a rural college.

The quantitative and qualitative findings outlined in this study identified negative aspects of psychosocial influences on the academic performance of the students in a rural area. Mushtaq et al. (2012) state that academic performance is affected either by social, psychological, economic, environmental and personal factors in which the factors have a powerful influence on academic performance of students' as either positive or negative. The researcher concluded with the evidence from the study findings that the psychosocial factors negatively influenced the academic performance of students in a rural college.

In conclusion, this chapter provided the main findings, as informed by the literature review (see Chapter 2) and the empirical data (see Chapter 4). The findings were presented in line with the objectives of this study, as outlined in Chapter 1. The summary of the aspects for future research and recommendations were covered in this chapter. In this respect, it can be assumed that psychosocial factors negatively influenced the academic performance of the students at a rural institution of learning, namely a college. The study also concluded that there was a correlation between the psychosocial factors and the academic performance of the students in a rural college. More studies should be conducted on other variables considering the fact that psychosocial factors in this study can only explain the negative influence of psychosocial factors towards students' academic performance of the students in a rural college.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

03-May-2021

Dear Miss Nomthandazo Zwane

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Exploring psychosocial factors that influence the academic performance of students in a rural college

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2020/2025/21

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX B: APPROVAL BY THE COLLEGE PRINCIPAL


DHET 004: APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN TVET COLLEGES

DATE 11/02/2021

FOR OFFICIAL USE

DECISION BY HEAD OF COLLEGE

Please tick relevant decision and provide conditions/reasons where applicable

Decision		<i>Please tick relevant option below</i>
1	Application approved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	Application approved subject to certain conditions. <i>Specify conditions below</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Application not approved. <i>Provide reasons for non-approval below</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NAME OF COLLEGE		<u>MNAMBITHI TVET COLLEGE</u>
NAME AND SURNAME OF HEAD OF COLLEGE		<u>CHRISTOPHER JUBA NDLELA</u>
SIGNATURE		
DATE		<u>15/02/2021</u>

Mnambithi TVET College
Ladysmith Campus
2021-02-16
12 Walton Street/Bag 9030
Ladysmith 3370
Signature:.....

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANTS CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the insert specific data collection method.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date:

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s):

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire contains FOUR sections (A, B, C & D). Please answer all questions in all the four sections.

Section A: Biographical information

(Please tick one answer corresponding with the provided numbers)

1. Select your gender.

1	Male	2	Female
---	------	---	--------

Choose your NCV level of study

1	NQF LEVEL 2	2	NQF LEVEL 3	3	NQF LEVEL 4
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2. Which course you registered with Mnambithi TVET College?

1	Office Administration	2	Information Technology	3	Education and Development	4	Hospitality	5	Tourism
---	-----------------------	---	------------------------	---	---------------------------	---	-------------	---	---------

3. Which age group do you fall under?

1	Below 18	3	26-30	5	36-40	7	45 and above
2	18-25	4	31-35	6	41-45		

4. What is the highest grade you passed?

1	Grade 9	3	Grade 11
2	Grade 10	4	Grade 12

5. Indicate the number of years studying at Mnambithi TVET College.

1	0-1	3	2-3	5	4-5
2	1-2	4	3-4	6	5 and above

Section B: psychological

Rajkumal, Sooraj, Sandeep and Harish (2015) indicates that psychological factors influence the physical and mental wellness of the individuals, as well as their ability to function in their academics.

How do you feel about achieving your academic goals while studying at Mnambithi College?

Please tick one answer as per your personal experience.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I have been consistently depressed or down, most of the day, nearly every day, during my registered term with the college.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I have felt anxiety or panic when I am in class.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have experienced or witnessed or had to deal with an extremely traumatic event that included actual or threatened death or serious injury to me or someone.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have experienced abuse (physical, sexual, verbal) or neglect.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have difficulty sitting still or paying attention, I get easily distracted, find myself daydreaming or "spacing off.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I feel fearful or embarrassed about being watched, the focus of attention, or fearful of being humiliated.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C: Social

Social Psychology focuses on helping us understand and explain social behaviour, the students' ability to socialize and to achieve their academic goals (Rajkumal et al., 2015)

How do you feel about the factors that causes you not to perform well academically?

Please tick the answer as per your personal experience.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I am content with the current state of my life to me.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Financial security is very important.	1	2	3	4	5
3	It is difficult for me to meet Assessments deadlines.	1	2	3	4	5
4	My level of commitment to studies is very high.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I respect all the rules of the college willingly.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I always attend classes on time.	1	2	3	4	5

Section D: Services

Gulzar, Ali, Aijaz and Hussain (2010) state that the presence of a support system in academic institutions can enhance the learning capacity of students by helping them with school related mental health interventions.

Do you think that the college provides you with adequate services?

Please tick the answer as per your personal experience.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I am given power to perform my tasks independently.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I can work independently without a lecturers help.	1	2	3	4	5

3	I receive constructive feedback to improve my academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am encouraged to come up with new ways of studying.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have resources or sources of information I need to improve my academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am recognized as responsible adults.	1	2	3	4	5

End of survey

Thank you for your participation in the survey

APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
SCHEDULE

This semi-structured interview contains Two sections (A & B). Please answer all questions in all sections.

Section A: Biographical information

(Please tick one answer corresponding with the provided numbers)

1. Select your gender.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female
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2. Choose your NCV level of study

<input type="checkbox"/>	NQF LEVEL 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	NQF LEVEL 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	NQF LEVEL 4
--------------------------	----------------	--------------------------	----------------	--------------------------	----------------

3. Which course you registered with Mnambithi TVET College?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Office Administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	Information Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education and Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hospitality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tourism
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------	--------------------------	---------

4. Which age group do you fall under?

1	Below 18	3	26-30	5	36-40	7	45 and above
2	18-25	4	31-35	6	41-45		

5. What is the highest grade you passed?

1	Grade 9	3	Grade 11
2	Grade 10	4	Grade 12

6. Indicate the number of years studying at Mnambithi TVET College.

1	0-1	3	2-3	5	4-5
2	1-2	4	3-4	6	5 and above

(Please provide an answer corresponding with the question asked)

1.1 Rajkumal, Sooraj, Sandeep and Harish (2015) indicates that psychological factors influence the physical and mental wellness of the individuals, as well as their ability to function in their academics.

1. Are you satisfied with your academic performance?
2. How do you feel about achieving your academic goals while studying with the College?
3. What would you consider to be the leading causes of your poor academic performance?
4. What are the consequences of your poor academic performance?

1.2 Social Psychology focuses on helping us understand and explain social behaviour, the students' ability to socialize and to achieve their academic goals (Rajkumal et al., 2015)

1. Are the causes of your poor academic performance a problem?
2. How do you know that causes of your poor academic performance is a problem?
3. Why is the above mentioned problem exist?
4. What can be helpful to eradicate the problem?

1.3 Gulzar, Ali, Aijaz and Hussain (2010) state that the presence of a support system in academic institutions can enhance the learning capacity of students by helping them with school related mental health interventions.

1. Do you think that the college provides you with adequate support services?
2. What resources do we already have that could help fight against the factors often have impact on your academic performance?
3. What other resources or sources of information you may need to fight against the factors often have impact on your academic performance?

End of the interview

Thank you for your participation in the research

Appendix F: Language edit Declaration



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EDITOR'S DECLARATION

22 September 2022

To whom it may concern:

I, Maryna Roodt, an independent freelance language practitioner, hereby declare that I was tasked to carry out the language editing of the following dissertation: **EXPLORING PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN RURAL COLLEGE**

Written by: **Nomthandazo Prudence Zwane**

Student number: **2009140373**

which is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of: **Med. Psychology of education**

After my initial editing, several updates of the entire document were carried out by means of a “question and answer” exercise to render the work as error-free as possible. Please note that I take no responsibility for any alterations and/or errors that were introduced to the document after I finally returned it to the author.

I have extensive experience in copy- editing and have the following qualifications:
BA (major in English); Hons (BA) (English); MA(Applied Linguistics)
and MA (Higher Education Studies).


MP Roodt
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082 202 5167


The Goodest
Language Nurturer



Appendix G: Turnitin originality check report