

Managing student unrest in a South African university: A case study

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation, **MANAGING STUDENT UNREST AT SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY**, hereby handed in for the qualification of Magister Artium at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work and that it has not been previously submitted for a qualification at/in another University/faculty.

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Yours sincerely

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LANGUAGE EDITOR'S LETTER

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter confirms that Unathi Mvuyisi Gwama's project titled "**Managing student unrest in South African universities: A case study**" was edited by a professional English-language editing staff at Education Research and Rural Community Development Forum.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God for keeping me safe until this far. And lastly to my beloved wife, Lusanele Gwama and my Lovely mother, Nophakamile Sylvia Gwama.

Abstract

Higher education and training institutions in South Africa have been plagued by nationwide student unrest and crises for the past few years. This has been a problem for the nation's colleges and universities. This is not just a problem for higher education in South Africa; similar problems exist in nations like Ghana, Nigeria, the United States among others. Most of these unrests are linked to lack of appropriate forum for dialogue between university administration and the students, and neither side is prepared to yield and make concessions. Therefore, it is necessary to ameliorate the conflictual gap between students and management so that the two can interact without interfering with the learning process. Therefore, this study sought to answer the following question: How can the prevalence of student unrest be managed in South African universities to ensure peaceful university education and its productivity? Using decoloniality theory, the study was underpinned by Transformative Paradigm as the research paradigm. The research design used was Participatory Research (PR) and method of data collection was focus group discussion (FGD). Participants were selected using a homogeneous sampling technique. The data was analysed using Braun and Clarke six-step thematic analysis.

The study revealed that lack of the proper structure to manage unrest, failure to involve the student in decision-making, and power differentials between students and university authorities are the challenging factors in the management of student unrest. And the neglect of rural universities, especially those merged with the campus in urban areas, and violent behaviour stems from society are also the two themes that have come as other contributing issues to student unrest in rural universities. And the possible solutions to the above challenges were the development of proper structures, involvement of stakeholders in decision making and development of common ground between the stakeholders could be used as solutions.

It was recommended that society be brought into the picture in order to properly address the issue of student unrest. It has been embedded into the society that for your demands to be heard, for example, when you need water, you must burn the library, and this has been inculcated into the youth of the country; therefore, universities must find ways of ensuring that this culture is unlearned among students. Secondly, the integration of students is a much-needed strategy. That is, students from

high school need to be properly integrated into the university, which is a new environment for them and that comes with independence. Thirdly, universities that have undergone the merger process need to pay attention to such as it has brought a lot of inequality between the campuses through amalgamation.

Keywords: Conflict management, Decision Making, Decoloniality, Management, Stakeholders, Student-involvement, Student Unrest.

List of Acronyms

FGD	Focus group discussions
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
GHREC	General/Human Research Ethics Committee
NSFAS	National student financial aid scheme
NWC	North-West University
PR	Participatory Research
SAPS	South African Police Service
SRC	Student representative council
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UFS	University of the Free State
UP	University of Pretoria
WSU	Walter Sisulu University

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Higher education and training facilities in South Africa have been plagued by a wave of student unrest and crises during the past few years (Stuurman, 2018:1). Both the nation's colleges and universities have experienced this. This undesirable development is not exclusive to South African higher education; it has also affected other countries like Nigerian, Ghanaian, and American higher education systems (Omodan, 2019:2; Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015:28). Stuurman (2018:1) argued that serious obstacles have beset South Africa's educational system since 1994, including the admission of students to higher education institutions, the cost of tuition, concerns of inequality and discrimination, and the availability of housing inside our universities.

In 2015, students took severe action to express their frustrations by bringing them to the streets, which in most cases led to unrest and crises of various magnitudes. They are committed to doing all it takes to combat the aforementioned problems and ensure that everyone has access to free, high-quality education. Thus, the introduction of Fees Must Fall, a movement that began in 2015 and resulted in the closure of the majority of South African universities (Langa, 2017:6). According to Archer (2017:1), South African universities and higher education, in general, have come under intense pressure to change their cultures and policies in order to make up for the past mistreatment of students and academic staff who were marginalized during the oppressive period. This pressure caused South African universities to close their doors after students called for decolonized, accessible, and transformed education.

Since some of them cannot pay the tuition or afford to live outside of hostel residences, it is believed that these formerly underprivileged students suffer the most from the aforementioned problems. Others are deprived of admission and also unable to benefit from government grants, and many students are excluded in the universities and led them to discontinue their education (Insight in Higher Education, 2009:19). As a result, those who were previously underprivileged find it challenging to see and realize their capabilities, which eventually fuels frustration (Choundhary & Hindi, 2018:757). In 2017, the Qwaqwa campus of the University of the Free State was forced to close

temporarily after 27 students were detained following an altercation with law authorities. The university's stunt of deregistering all registered students provisionally while they awaited the National Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) approval served as gasoline for these students' anger (Bloemfontein Courant, 2017:1).

The University of the Free State has had several closures over the last two years, during which no one was permitted to enter the campuses. Of course, by that point, students had projects to do and deadlines to meet. Due to the outsourcing of jobs, students and employees went on an unprotected strike on February 28, 2019. Due to the turmoil, classes were disrupted, and this demanded that management pay attention to these requests. The university administration reacted by starting a formal procedure for engagement with the demands made by the students and employees (Timeslive, 2019). Students forced the University of Free State (UFS), Qwaqwa campus to close in August 16, 2019, until their demands were honoured (Sicetsha, 2019, sourced from the South African).

This issue is not unique to UFS; North-West University (NWC), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), University of Fort Hare (UFH), University of Zululand, University of Pretoria (UP), University of Cape Town (UCT), and other universities have recently been the target of protests that have similarly shut down their campuses (Mutekwe, 2017:148; Mavunga, 2019:85). Most often, because of how long the unrests lasted, institutions are compelled to finish academic work quickly. Does that not imply raise tension of compromise that the integrity and productivity of universities, as well as the quality of education, could be compromised as against the argument that quality is the most important factor for higher education to achieve the set objectives (Singh, 2017:130).

When it comes to crises, especially those involving the university management and students, which are the focus of this study, it appears that our universities are more reactive than proactive in most situations. The university, which is made up of management, students, and other stakeholders, doesn't seem to have the right policies in place to handle student dissatisfaction (Omodan, 2019:7). Most frequently, the institution loses money and has property destroyed, costing thousands up to millions of rands. Instead of proper management structures, universities use force

more than engagement with the stakeholders, one of which is students. The above statement is supported by Langley (2018:82) that university resort to using national securities and Red Ants on campus during student unrest which is perceived as threats by the students instead of peacekeepers, and this perpetrates violence on campus. Onivehu (2021:12) added that Conflict management specialists have publicly denounced the indiscriminate use of security personnel and political thugs to suppress student protests because it frequently exacerbates already tense situations.

From the above argument, it is clear that there is a need to address these unrest to the lowest possible level. The management of the institutions can achieve this through effective crisis management tactics. Najib (2018:155) argued that for management of student's unrest, amongst other things, would be to develop strategies that will unify the stakeholders, like shared goals where everyone takes responsibility for and plays the part required with a mandate that campus management should take charge of this. Murage, Njoka and Gachahi's (2019:2) indicated that a key strategy for preventing riots and unrest at universities is adopting the innovation of using student leadership in the management of higher education institutions. Student leadership is a type of participatory democracy that is created to improve students' control over higher education institutions. The primary issue that this study seeks to address is this one. However, the ongoing instability in South African universities, as mentioned above, is a clear gap between the management and the students that need urgent attention for universities to achieve their goals.

Both students and university management have contributed to the escalation of the unrest. It was observed that at most cases, students are willing to meet with the management and have ongoing dialogues, but the management appears to have created a wall or has a tendency to dismiss the students and the issues they raise (Langa, 2017:9). On the other hand, it has been noted that students are impatient; they want things done on their schedule and according to their terms, and they frequently show little regard for any circumstances that would make it difficult for management to satisfy their demands. Etadon's (2013:339) argument is that society often overlooks students' minor infractions of the law because they will be future leaders and the voice of the state supports this. Therefore, it can be argued that student unrest is detrimental to university education's productivity and future. This

argument supports the assertion by Omodan (2016:11) that social crises in higher education impede the rapid realization of the system's predefined aims and objectives. This, in my opinion, shows bad publicity for the university's reputation, therefore, it is not just a loss for the students but also for the universities. From the preceding analysis, it is clear that the relationship space between university administration and students needs to be rebuilt. To put it another way, a project to improve convergence between the two crucial stakeholders is necessary if they can agree to work together for the benefit of productivity.

1.2. Research problem

The study is prompted by the reality that occasionally throughout the year, South African universities must halt their operations or endure disturbances when students raise requests with university administration. Institutions like Walter Sisulu University (WSU) were already going through what other universities could not see or talk about before the Fees Must Fall campaign swept through South Africa in 2015. For instance, WSU had to temporarily cease operations in August 2013 as a result of employee protests over salary demands (News 24, 2013). Occasionally, students would also lock down the campus in protest at the administration's denial of their demands. As a result of their perception that management is not doing enough and the perpetrators appear to get away with such acts, students from some of the colleges throughout the nation have been raising concerns about the management culture that appears to be increasing.

Many universities struggle to house all of their students, which has led to a great deal of unrest among students who feel abandoned by the unscrupulous hands of private property owners and that there are no adequate regulations in place to safeguard them. In support of this view is Xulu-Gama (2019:16) stated that there is a countrywide bed shortfall of at least 207 800 for students according to research on university accommodation, and it was noted that living in a university residence is a privilege enjoyed by a select few. Another issue that has caused a lot of turmoil in South African universities and higher education is funding since some deregistered students in the impacted schools did not give up easily. In accordance with the above arguments, Ayodeji-Falade and Osunkunle (2021:1) state that during unrest in certain universities, students called for several things, which include affordable housing, high-quality

accommodation, and commuting for students. The outsourcing of staff members (caretakers), which was perceived as an exploitation of the underprivileged and led to students taking up arms to address the issue, was one of the factors contributing to unrest in educational institutions. A major setback from these unrests is the loss of properties due to the destruction they caused and the loss of life at times and injuries (Mjema, 2013:79, & Adeyemi, 2009:193). For the university management and stakeholders to meet without interfering with the learning process, meaning without unrest, there is a need to close the gap between the students/stakeholders and the management. This lacuna call for decoloniality theory as a lens to unravel the student unrest in universities.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

Decoloniality theory served as the theoretical framework that has underpinned this study. Ncube (2019:03) claims that this theory primarily focuses on the alteration of how reasoning is maintained to expose and combat epochal colonial circumstances. Decoloniality, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:10), is concerned with challenging the contemporary social order, which is upheld by stable teachings and epistemologies that continue to harvest and alienate Africans, socializing them to despise Africa, of which they are a product and which discards them like Europe. In other words, the ideology pretends that African practices are not valuable and that Africa should adopt Western methods of thinking and doing things instead. It is imperative to note what Adegun and Ojo (2016:165) says that many student unrests might also be a result of management's apathetic approach to immediately addressing student grievances before they grow into unrest and most tertiary institutions are in crisis due to autocratic leadership styles and leaders' careless attitude toward the supply of amenities. Reinders (2018:72) advanced that university management preferred militarising universities to suppress students that reasoning. This is an element of coloniality that cannot be ignored. There are significant calls for decolonisation because our management and curriculum are westernized and symbolise colonial legacy. Looks like transformation has failed, and decolonisation must take its place, according to Joseph (2017:1). This is due to the numerous unsuccessful attempts to reform various areas of the university and the higher education sector, such as the requirements, staff, fees, and the impending need to switch from transformation to decoloniality.

This theory is relevant because amid other matters which are a source of unrest in our universities is the fact that there is an uproar to have a decolonised education. Therefore, the theory formed a basis for what decoloniality is all about when it comes to social issues and the way and manner people think and act in the face of togetherness. This theory assisted in decolonising the space of management of unrest between students and university authorities. Based on preceding discussions, the theory assists in changing how students think, leading them to believe that the only way to be heard is through protests and damaging school property. At the same time, this helped the management see the students as adults who must participate in decisions about their education and how it should be organized moving forward rather than imposing an education that may not even meet their requirements. The management and students can gain a better knowledge of how they are essentially seeking the same things but doing it in various ways as an epistemic reality of sociality among people, most especially among university stakeholders.

1.4. Research Question

2. How can the prevalence of student unrest be managed in South African universities?

1.5. Aim of the Study

This study aims to enhance the management of the prevalence of student unrest in South African universities to ensure a peaceful university operations.

1.6. Objectives

To actualise the above aim, the following objectives helped guide the study's process. That is, the study;

1. examined the challenges associated with the management of student unrest in the university system.
2. highlighted possible solutions to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities.
3. examined the conditions suitable for the solutions to strive.
4. develop a strategy to overcome threats to the solutions

1.7 Preliminary Methods

This section presents the preliminary methodology as a synopsis to chapter three of the study. This was done by explaining the research approach, paradigm, design and other methods applicable to the study.

1.7.1 Research Approach: Qualitative Approach

The study has adopted qualitative research as the methodology guiding the study. Goundar (2012:9) states that the focus of qualitative research is on quality-related qualitative phenomena, and it uses words, is descriptive, utilizes logic, and is not numerical. Also its objective is to convey the situation's meaning, sentiment, and description. Ugur (2020:21) pointed out that the researcher using qualitative approach can identify and reflect the reality and perceptions of individuals involved and being impacted by the phenomenon, including participant observation and in-depth interviews. It is indicated that the raw data gathered using qualitative methods, such as a direct quotation, might indicate respondents' feelings, thoughts, experiences, and perspectives on a certain subject. Mohajan (2018:1) defines qualitative research as an approach that describes a variety of data collecting and analysis methods that make use of open-ended, semi-structured interviews and purposeful sampling. It is characterized as a powerful model in a natural environment and allows the researcher to create a level of detail through intense immersion in the actual events. This is relevant to this study because the study seeks to find solutions from people with real life experiences when it comes to unrest. The phenomenon under research can be solved with the assistance of those who have first hand experience, so hence the use of this qualitative approach. This research was conducted in a natural environment where the actual event of student unrest take place. It is relevant also in the sense that the methods of data collection used resonated well with qualitative approach.

1.7.2. Research Paradigm: Transformative Paradigm

Transformative paradigm was used to view the study. According to Mertens (2007:212), the transformative paradigm is a paradigm that explores and addresses power disparities, societal injustice, and cultural challenges. This paradigm is stated to be primarily concerned with enhancing the lives and experiences of those who have been marginalized, such as racial minorities and those from impoverished backgrounds, even if it does not fully satisfy the requirements of any one group

(Romm, 2015:412). As a result, the paradigm make it possible for the research to transform and decolonize the unrest-ridden area, as well as guarantee that all interested parties are involved in improving existing processes. This will establish the foundation for future efforts to prevent further student unrest.

1.7.3. Research Design: Participatory Research (PR).

The research design for the study is participatory research (PR). This design concerned with the involvement and participation of all the stakeholders in a particular project (Strydom, 2011:491). The results of the study are equally the responsibility of the researcher and the research participants (de Vos, Strydom, Fouch & Delport, 2011:491). This research design, according to Maree (2016:134), is connected to the creation of a programme intended to better the situation or address social issues. Since the researcher's primary responsibility is to facilitate the creation of a solution that would end this recurring problem, this cannot be accomplished by the researcher acting alone. Instead, it must be done in collaboration with the research participants. Finding an acceptable solution to the issues and causes of students' unpleasant interactions with university authorities that result in the suspension of lectures, destruction of property at times and injuries to people will require cooperation from the researcher and other university stakeholders, as indicated in the definition of the design.

1.7.4. Method of Data Gathering: Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion FGD was used in the study as a method to gather data. The focus group is based on the premise that there would be a wide range of responses, help with forgotten knowledge, and the creation of a platform for participants to be free to disclose information they would not at a personal or individual level (Maree, 2016:95). This enables participants to build on and expand on one another's ideas to give in-depth opinions (Omodan, 2019). When a small, carefully chosen group is organized to apply knowledge, experience, and expertise to a specific challenge, this technique of data collecting is employed in a homogenous setting and emphasizes a region of interest (de Vos *et al.*, 2011:503). In this study, the FGD includes all the participants selected to participate in the process of solving the study's problem through in-depth focus discussion.

1.7.5. Selection of Participants: Homogeneous Technique

Homogeneous sampling techniques was used to select participants. This is used when a study's objective is to understand and describe a particular group thoroughly. In this case, the participants are all similar because they are university-based and are all affected by the student unrest. Shaheen & Pradhan (2019:31) states Focus group interviews target homogeneous groups and use open-ended questions with targeted issues or small groups. Sampling in focus groups involves bringing individuals from similar backgrounds to participate in a group interview. Omona (2013:179) also asserted that in homogeneous sampling, participants must have the same characteristics and be based in the same setting. The study's participants are chosen based on their participation in a subgroup or unit with certain characteristics. The selection of focus groups frequently uses this sample strategy.

Three management staff, three students (SRC members), three lecturers, and three security personnel from a university in South Africa were chosen as the participants for this study using a homogeneous sample technique. As previously mentioned, focus group was used to collect data for this study. Individuals were chosen using a homogenous technique because it is appropriate to pick participants who have similar experiences with the study's problem. de Vos *et al.* (2011:365) state that homogeneity must be considered when the researcher is selecting participants for social issues because those who perceive one another as being similar will talk about the topics at hand more. Because this research was conducted in universities with people who have unitary experiences with this difficulty, this technique will be applicable.

1.8. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, one of the data analysis methods utilized for qualitative research, was applied in this study. According to Braun & Clarke (2012:2), thematic analysis is a technique that identifies and organizes themes' patterns to offer insight into the collected data in a systematic, orderly manner. Thematic analysis is a technique used for the data-related analysis of categories and patterns (Alhojailan, 2012:40). It is also argued that thematic analysis is a flexible technique that allows the researcher to comprehend and interpret data in a variety of ways and is not restricted to a single theoretical viewpoint (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:3352). In a similar line, it is one of the techniques used to analyse data that was gathered through any kind of interrogation

or interview. They further contend that this approach offers or provides a wider perspective of what is investigated. Hence, the study applies Braun and Clarke's six processes of thematic analysis. Gwama, Omodan & Tsotetsi (2019:3) point out that the Braun and Clarke technique is based on these six processes, which are familiarizing yourself with the obtained data, creating initial codes, looking for themes, studying the themes, delineating the themes, and the write-up. This data analysis is pertinent in that it enables the researcher to analyse the data flexibly in accordance with the study's objectives without many restrictions and pinpoint the problems encountered in controlling students' unrest as well as potential remedies.

1.9. Value of the study

This study will contribute to reducing unwarranted student unrest across South African universities and developing a platform for productive interaction between students and university management in advancing our universities. It will also help to ensure that democratic governance norms are upheld in our universities without excluding any stakeholder who ought to be included in decision-making to enhance the learning environment.

1.10. Ethical Consideration:

The University of the Free State's ethical standards was followed in this research. This study was approved by the UFS ethics committee and the ethical number of the study is UFS-HSD2020/1347/2610/21. The University of the Free State's ethical guidelines serve as the direction for this study. By using pseudonyms to conceal their true identities, obtaining licenses and letters of agreement before collecting data, and making sure that the participants understand the goals of the study, ethical considerations help to protect research participants from any harm that they might be subjected to (Maree, 2011: 44). All participants were made aware that they may withdraw from the research at any time without incurring any penalties and without receiving any kind of payment in exchange for their time.

1.11. CHAPTERS LAYOUT

Chapter One: Background Information on the Study

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

Chapter Five: Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2. Introduction

This chapter explored literature related to the issues associated with managing unrest in South African universities and the theoretical framework that guided the study. Both these concepts were thoroughly discussed, with the reasons justified for the choice of the theory. The literature is discussed in relation to the objectives that underpinned the study ranging from the challenges associated with student unrest, the possible solutions that can be used to manage the unrest, and the methods to overcome all the threats to the implementation of the solutions.

The study's theoretical framework was discussed, and its relevance to the study is justified in detail. Two other concepts are clarified related to the theory, which is coloniality and colonialism, to eliminate all the possible confusion that they might bring in decoloniality as the theory. I also discussed the epistemology of the theory. The last section of the chapter defined the terms used in the study, and lastly, the chapter summary.

2.1 Challenges associated with the management of student unrest in the university system

The literature related to the challenges associated with managing student unrest in universities was reviewed in this section of the study. The following subjects were discussed, among which are; lack of proper structure to manage unrest, Lack/failure to involve students in decision making and power differentials between students and university authorities.

2.1.1. Lack of proper structure to manage unrest

Despite the structures and procedures in place to handle conflicts, it appears that no university is immune to students' unrests worldwide, including South Africa. This indicates that there are still potential avenues to research about the control of student unrest. Murage, Njoka, and Gachahi's (2019:1) asserted that universities have creative techniques to minimize and regulate student unrest is backed by the above statement. There is little evidence, nevertheless, that these tactics are successful at governing. According to Mjema (2013:131), which supports the above-mentioned

claim, there are no systems in place to pinpoint the issues that fuel student unrest in universities. As a result, it appears as though the institutions are unprepared for student protests. Another sign that there are inadequate procedures and a lack of proper structures in place to manage student unrest is the fact that institution management often allows problems brought up by students to fester until they become serious (Adegun *et al.*, 2016:166). It goes without saying that if effective structures were in place in our institutions, unrest would be extremely rare and wouldn't be as harmful as they are now.

Mjema (2013:130) has argued that the university administration uses authoritative techniques like intimidation in addition to other techniques to suppress student dissatisfaction. These have failed because they are received with resistance, making the situation worse than anticipated. To prevent the developing and growing culture of student unrest at our university, which has occasionally been fatal, there is an urgent need to develop and reinforce the existing measures that are used to curb the unrest. According to Annual Report (2018:6), universities mainly rely on private security because they lack the essential resources to maintain public order. The report further revealed that universities have militarized institutions in an effort to control unrest due to poor management strategies, which has drawn harsh criticism. The above-mentioned approaches didn't just make things worse between students and university management; instead, they increased tension between the two critical stakeholders.

There is a need, as the study envisages, a necessity to strengthen the system for handling student unrest and, if necessary, identify other solutions. Universities are losing a lot of money due to this unrest, and students are also getting hurt, so the issue needs to be managed and controlled. Reinders (2018:72) posited that South African universities had militarized their campuses, which has encouraged violence and the use of force against students. This was made clear during the 2015–2017 national turmoil in South Africa, as the militarization and use of force by university authorities and the South African Police Service (SAPS) on several campuses helped to sustain violence. Therefore, intense unrest has the potential to hurt the people who are dissatisfied as well as cause property damage and other employees and staff members to become distracted (Langley, 2018:14).

Because protests have caused so much anxiety in our institutions regarding the protection of lives, police have been dispatched to campuses during these periods to maintain peace. However, the same intention to create peace has unintentionally endangered lives. In some cases, lives have been lost at the hands of police officials (Ebrahim, 2016:2). Langley (2018:46) agrees that these protests have brought major consequences in that aggressive behaviour was displayed, property was destroyed, and some were ultimately destructive to the universities' reputation.

2.1.2 Failure to involve the student in decision making

Similar to other organisations, universities comprised of various stakeholders. Students who are also customers or consumers of the university, as well as management, lecturers, staff, and the neighbourhood where the school is located, are among these stakeholders. It is assumed that in a democratic society, all of these stakeholders should be included in the decisions made, especially those that directly affect them as individuals. This also applies to students, who should participate in governance and decision-making of the university just like any other stakeholders of the institutions they are a part of (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011:8). However, Kiprop, Tikoko and Bomett (2011:98) affirmed that the majority of decisions regarding administration, curriculum, and student welfare are mostly made without the participation of students. They added that because university management rejects the democratic principle and chooses authoritarian and paternalistic approaches instead, parents and administrators see student participation as an issue.

There is an assumption that students lack the knowledge and maturity necessary to make informed decisions because they are immature and lack the capacity to do so (Kiprop et al., 2011:93; Oni and Adetoro, 2015:66). On the other hand this is contrary to the above argument, Davies *et al.* (2015:39) promote student participation in various decision-making processes, particularly through student organisations, which fosters open communication between the administration and the students in higher education institutions. This statement is also a little flimsy because it just encourages students to participate in part, which is not what democratic principles mean entirely. Nevertheless, Singh (2017:129) suggests that the classroom should be used as a tool for nation-building and should be used to teach students about democratic processes,

where they are given a chance to make their own decisions and stand up for themselves.

The institution benefits when students participate in decision-making because it fosters transparency and builds confidence among all parties involved (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011:8). Based on the preceding points, there is some evidence that students are not fully acknowledged as university stakeholders and as participants in the governance of these institutions. This has led to various unrest because of the resulting mistrust between the authorities and students. It is easy for students to buy into the idea and own whatever conclusion is made when they are involved in making the decision itself. Oni & Adetoro (2015) support the above claim by stating that when students are involved in decision-making, they take full ownership of the choices rather than rejecting those that the management imposes. This, in turn, lessens agitation because students know that their interests will be considered. Additionally, they claim that it could improve operational leadership among the management of the university.

Therefore, not fully involving students in university affairs leads to resentment between the students and the management, which in turn fuels unrest within the institution. The engagement of students in decision-making produces a good, desirable environment that results in favourable learning outcomes, according to Oni *et al.* (2015:69).

2.1.3. Power Differentials between Students and University authorities.

The power difference between students and the management of the university, which has typically played a part in some of the unrest, is one of several issues universities face when it comes to governance and leadership. There is a plain power struggle and lack of cooperation between these two stakeholders. Many institutions struggle with cooperation in terms of governance. Thus, according to Kauffeldt (2010:17), most of the time, there is a power struggle that results in a lack of agreement between the management and students on many decisions that are made. According to Mjema (2013:10), who agrees with the above assertion, conflicts arise about how to distribute authority and resources inside an institution, which are some of the root cause of instability. The power imbalances between students and institution leaders significantly impact this. Under normal conditions, the university administration dictates to the students, however, it has been determined that this is not the case, as

proven by the fact that anytime the university senate makes a decision, student organizations present an opposing agenda (Etadon, 2013:339). It is also said that throughout the study, oppositional student leaders consistently believed it was right to uphold students' interests as or as being of the utmost significance before the interests of the university authority.

The use of coercive power in higher institutions of learning has also significantly contributed to student unrest because students, even their leaders, are sometimes forced into making decisions without consulting anyone else. Coercive power is defined by Tauceana, Tamasilaa, and Negru-Strautia (2016:70) as the use of threats to coerce others into complying. These threats may include, among other things, physical, political, emotional, economic, and social resources. Students are represented in university governance and management, but forcing choices without seeking student input has always led to a backlash, even when the action would benefit everyone associated with the university. In agreement with the above assertion, Asiimwe and Steyn (2013:22) note that the university management appeared to be more controlling in decision-making rather than participatory, shared, and open to examination. This is one of the issues that cause majority of student unrest. For everyone involved in the institution, including students, power sharing in this area is crucial to preventing collisions that could have been avoided.

Instead of adhering to democratic norms and involving the students, the institution of higher learning has somehow exhibited fascism in dealing with the student discontent. This is because the university has made every effort to intimidate and suppress the students (Reinders (2018:74). The use of force against students demonstrates a component of the universities' desire to have total control over the students without being held accountable, particularly by the students, who are treated as adversaries. On the other hand, it is unavoidable that students also harm other students in the same way. Students who choose not to take part in student unrest are frequently marginalised, treated with contempt, and occasionally threatened by those who are participants. Swart and Hertzog's (2017:2) research supports this claim, stating that students who choose not to participate in protest movements frequently have health and psychological issues due to pressure, intimidation, and other tactics used by individuals who are leading such campaigns. This is a sign that the two are engaged

in a power struggle because it is implied that people who are seen as inferiors would be treated as enemies.

2.2. Possible solutions as a means to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities

In the section below, the study has thoroughly reviewed the literature related to possible solutions that can be used to reconstruct the relationship between the university authorities/management and students. This will be accomplished under the guidance of the following areas: Developing appropriate structures; participation of stakeholders in decision-making; development of common ground between stakeholders; identification of conditions necessary to sustain solutions; and, finally, developing of a strategy to overcome obstacles to the implementation of solutions.

2.2.1. Development of proper structures

Based on the discourse above, universities must develop proper structures to handle and prevent any unnecessary collisions that cause the disorder. Numerous studies have shown that including all parties and stakeholders, particularly students, in decision-making can help reduce university campuses' unrest. Oni and Adetoro's (2015:67) research backs this idea that there is a need to increase students' participation in decision-making, without it, university objectives won't be met in the way they were intended to be.

Higher education institutions (HEI) will inevitably experience unrest, but the study aims to find measures to limit these unrest. This could be accomplished, for example, by identifying the difficulties these institutions of higher learning face so that solutions can be devised. According to a study by Tionneland (2017:4), the financial and access issues that South African universities face pose the greatest dangers to the institutions' viability because there has been a sharp rise in the number of students enrolling in higher education. Although around 70% of students are black, it is further asserted that only 14% of them can attend university and are significantly underrepresented in faculties like science, engineering, and technology. Mzangwa (2019:1) points out that prior to 1994, a number of South African institutions of higher education did not respect the social inclusion of various groups in education, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds. As a result, by enlisting students from low-income and

underrepresented social backgrounds, access is seen as problematic and challenging to sustain.

Additionally, it was discovered that the same students are struggling financially despite the fact that there are programs in place to help, such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Peters (2018:1) agrees with the above statement and argues that there is data showing a rising trend in the number of students enrolling in college and university (HEI) between 2001 and 2016/17. Langley (2018:6), in support of these arguments, states that universities in South Africa are not fully equipped for the high number of students who are qualifying to access university, and the free education has also brought problems that result in the university not coping well with its students. Therefore, it can be concluded that even though the issues argued above are not the only ones contributing to the dissatisfaction, it is important to note that they contribute significantly, and higher education institutions must devise solutions for them as well. By controlling the unrest, they will benefit from fewer potential unrests.

2.2.2. Involvement of stakeholders in decision making

For one to buy into a decision, one must be involved, which means if people are not included when decisions are made, they may turn to disagree with such a decision, regardless of how liberal they may be. Oni *et al.* (2015:67) concur with the above statement in saying that the institution would struggle with the planning and implementation of such decisions if it doesn't involve students when decisions are made. Singh (2017:134) also argues that since students are the most significant stakeholders in the institution, they must receive enough representation; otherwise, the institution may become unstable. The author continues to argue that even if there is a student charter and structures that may be used to handle student issues, students are not satisfied with them for several reasons.

Therefore students should participate in the decision-making process when decisions are made by educational institutions in order to prevent unrest or crises, and through communication, the gap between the authorities and the students can be completely bridged (Adeyemi, 2009:162). Although universities have policies in place to study and understand crises that involve stakeholders, the challenge is that during crises the same mechanisms fail because they deliver inaccurate information and exclude others

who are stakeholders from decision-making (Brennan and Stern, 2017:121). This suggests, in a way, that to minimize or ideally prevent unrest altogether, this communication and information gap must be closed absolutely.

It is simple to stand by a concept and support it even in trying times when all parties involved are on the same page and have debated and contributed in their own unique ways, but if not, they will question every step of the way and rebel when the chance arises. Singh (2017:130), in support of the above statement, states that students resist and put pressure on the government to change course when policies are made against them without their input through consultation since they have a significant role in determining the direction of national policy.

Kiboiy (2013:9) argues that despite tremendous advancements in academic freedom and student affairs administration, pre-existing conditions still increase student unrest in institutions. It is further also asserted that one of the driving forces for student unrest has been the alienation of student bodies from decision-making processes and inadequate communication methods. Mjema (2013:12), in support of the above discussions, argues that University administrators must enhance communication channels and involve both employees and students in decision-making in order to manage and resolve the unrest on campus. It is essential to note that at times though the university relies on, amongst other principles, meticulously analysing a problem and involving all the stakeholders to the lowest level in a key decision, there are often times when critical and rapid decisions must be taken to respond to critical issues, and this gets to be contrary to the principles mentioned above (Brennan and Stern, 2017:121)

It is evident from the discussion above and the literature that including students in decision-making can be a useful strategy for reducing unnecessary agitation propelling the unrest. It goes without saying that decisions must also be clearly implemented to prevent students from being deceived. It is crucial that students are viewed not just as wards of the system but as full participants and stewards of it as well.

2.2.3. Developing common ground between the stakeholders.

Stakeholders must always cooperate and buy into the vision and goals of that particular organisation or institution in order for it to function properly and effectively. An organisation's system is made up of various components, and if one of those components is flawed, the entire system faces a crisis. In this instance, there appears to be a disconnect between the stakeholders' points of agreement and the university system. There appears to be a lack of collaboration among the parties involved, particularly the management and the students. Choudhary (2018:757) supports the above statement by saying the bureaucratic system of government and its dictatorial leader possess students as their worst victims. This demonstrates that students and university authorities have no common perspective or understanding.

A common ground between the stakeholders needs to be sought in order to address the raging issue of unrest. Financial issues, facility issues, access issues, policy issues, unfair discrimination issues, and others also affect the welfare of students at many institutions of learning. Students from low-income families face unfair discrimination and struggle to achieve their goals as a result of the commercialisation of education, thus according to Choudhary (2018:758). Singh (2017:134) affirmed that a lack of fundamental infrastructure causes a large portion of student discontent. Ndamane (2018:30) points out that despite the introduction of new policies and frameworks at universities that are intended to address issues of equality, equity, transformation, epistemological traditions, and modifying institutional culture, there is still no sign of any change at all. Africa's Sub-Saharan institutions of higher learning, according to Kauffedt (2010:22), are characterised by a style of bad governance that results from a failure to uphold the concepts of democracy and shared governance.

When the stakeholders are looking for common ground, the problems discussed above should be taken into consideration. There is a chance of reaching a consensus if the parties involved take these issues seriously, especially when addressing student grievances. Finding common ground requires taking communication into account because a breakdown in communication can seriously jeopardize the sustainability of the solutions. The source of the information and the recipient of the information are both involved in the communication process. Communication is defined as the process of disseminating concepts, receiving them, and interpreting them and is a critical

enabler of productive and diligent human relations and engagements (Albalawi & Nadeem, 2020:68). Furthermore, it is stated that the context in which communication is occurring and the level of understanding between the parties involved greatly influence the effectiveness of communication.

The above-mentioned factor is crucial in establishing a common ground because it requires agreement from all sides. Information provided between stakeholders must be understood in the same way that the sender intended it to be understood, or else it always endangers the positive relationships. When dealing with issues of unrest in our institutions, dialogue is also of utmost importance and cannot be overlooked. The aforementioned are all aspects of communication and occasionally can be viewed as one notion, however, they are not. Rohn and Sutrich (2014:150) state that in a dialogue, participants are arranged into a certain communication setting to create a common social environment where creative, shared intelligence can advance. People must dissociate from the behavioural patterns that guide their daily lives in such an environment and consider their own perceptual models. It is also further mentioned that in order to create such conditions, those involved in the conversation must be able to act with decency, listen to one another, express their viewpoints, and do away with their own preconceptions. To bolster the argument made above Davies *et al.* (2015:39) argued that regular and meaningful conversations that inspire good working relationships are essential to closing the communication gap between student leaders and university management, and this will eventually lead to a reduction in the frequent unrests plaguing universities, especially those that can be avoided.

2.3. Finding the conditions to sustain the solutions

The following section explored the strategies we might employ to find meaningful solutions that will be sustainable in avoiding student unrest. This can be done through the following ways though not limited to, Meaningful negotiations, development of conflict resolution strategies, developing a strategy that will overcome threats to the implementation of solutions, avoiding political interference and lastly, improving the infrastructure conditions or implementation of resolutions.

2.3.1. Meaningful negotiations

Achieving meaningful negotiations through stakeholder dialogue is one way to resolve and prevent the student unrests that have continued ravaging university campuses. Meaningful negotiations, as pointed out by Mjema (2013:47), are those in which the relevant parties come together as a team to discover a workable solution rather than each party competing to outwit the other. It is further maintained that negotiation is a two-way exchange of information intended to find common ground amongst the parties engaged, who each have competing interests. Stakeholder discussions are reportedly ways to manage transformation programs cooperatively (Stakeholder Dialogue Manual, 2011:5). Furthermore, it is claimed that stakeholder dialogues allow all stakeholders to pursue impartial solutions while also enabling the parties concerned to put into action any measures that are agreed upon. Through the resolution of any possible problems, these conversations enable the parties to come up with novel ideas for sustainable growth.

Ntuli (2020:51) argued that compromise might be reached through the concessions of the various stakeholders in favour of the above arguments. Ntuli (2020:68) also adds that students will often resort to protests or unrest when they feel they have been wronged in negotiations. This is particularly true when university administration pushes issues to a vote because they are aware that students are underrepresented on the council. Not only between the students and management but also when the police or security are engaged, negotiations are crucial. (Amnesty International Public Statement, 2016:1) supports the above claim that police personnel should handle every situation peacefully by using discussion and mediation.

Onivehu (2021:21) and Mjema (2013:130) endorse the above-mentioned viewpoint by advocating for the use of negotiation, bargaining, reconciliation, arbitration, mediation, and intervention strategies as means of controlling and managing student discontent. In contrast to the previous argument, Langley (2018:75) asserts that a negotiation standstill before a resolution is associated with a significant risk for disaster and ultimately results in major acts of violence. However, Reinders (2019:73) notes that rather than engaging in negotiations, to which the universities' management purports to be committed, they prefer to use interdicts as justification for contacting law

enforcement and private security personnel, which undoubtedly exposed their contradictions and hypocrisy.

Therefore, with effective and meaningful negotiations, both voting on issues and student unrest when there are differences among the stakeholders could be avoided. Instead, the stakeholders will be able to use this route to create a platform for cooperation on whatever helps the institutions and, in return, curbing and avoid unnecessary unrests. Chepkawai (2014:15) in agreement with the above assertions, purports that where there are significant conversations amongst all the parties, it produces excellent, implementable resolutions.

2.3.2. Development of conflict resolution strategies

Human interactions inherently involve conflict, particularly when there are disparities in terms of gender, age, beliefs, intellect levels, and an endless list of other factors. Due to the fact that conflicts are a natural aspect of human relations, they are rarely fully resolved or eliminated from social interactions (Bekelcha, 2019:2). Additionally, it is stated that conflict theory contends that human behaviour in social settings results from conflicts between competing groups, but that these conflicts can be handled and controlled. Additionally, it is argued that conflict typically results from competing interests between groups participating in a given phenomenon and that conflict can be interactively defined as a condition of disturbance. Even though it involves human relationships, it can be controlled and monitored to improve such interactions.

Chemutai, Onkware and Iteyo (2020:6306) denoted that the absence of effective methods for resolving conflicts and communicating grievances to management was a key factor in keeping the unrest under control. Conflict can result from the fact that if students are not represented on university boards, they may not be in a position to effectively represent the interests of their peers. In order to build trust among stakeholders, it is crucial to teach the students how to acquire critical social skills like constructive conflict resolution. However, because the unrests were producing instability, university management had to handle the disagreement by utilising restraint methods like force (Murage *et al.*, 2019:2).

Students and university management are frequently at clashes because, among other things, students are treated like little children who cannot decide for themselves. They are decided upon without the required deliberation, and occasionally, promises are broken, which aggravates students. Due to such events, students have taken their matters into the streets, where they have caused significant harm that may cost millions of rands in damages. Kiprop *et al.* (2011:187), in support of the above view, claims that because of prejudice in the African culture, students are frequently excluded from consultation processes and are not given the opportunity to make judgments. It is further noted that the difficulty with the above-mentioned claim is that students often choose violence as a solution to conflicts with authoritarian organisations. Therefore, the study aims to address these issues, particularly the conflict, through constructive conflict resolution techniques.

It must be noted that Bekelcha (2019:2) claims that throughout human history, there have always been conflicts between individuals and social groups as a result of people vying for power and wealth. This is an indication that conflict can have devastating effects, as was previously deliberated.

2.3.3. Strategies to overcome threats to the implementation of the solutions.

The purpose of this study was to identify methods for overcoming obstacles to the implementation of any solutions discovered during the study's period. Omodan (2020:5) purports that a pleasant environment helps maintain a university's tranquillity, but it's also crucial to remember that an unfavourable environment poses a threat to the organisation's or institution's very survival. The availability of infrastructures, such as housing, funding, and academic marginalization, are issues that affect students the majority of the time. Therefore, it is possible that the institutions of higher learning would never experience stability if these things are not handled with the attention they require. This can be inferred from the fact that most of the recent student unrest was driven primarily by the issues discussed above. In a study done by Omodan (2020:182) and Davies *et al.* (2015:39), underfunding, which is accompanied by inadequate funding and financial mismanagement in universities, is among the issues that have posed a severe threat to the institution. Even though the study was conducted in Nigeria, it works well with previous research conducted in South Africa

and shows that financial difficulties have posed a severe danger to the stability of the higher education system.

This section worked to establish a plan to address obstacles to the execution of the solution, not just financial ones.

2.3.4. Avoiding Political interference

Political influence cannot be treated away from universities. However, the aim of this study, amongst other things, is to avoid any political interference when addressing issues that concern university stakeholders and addressing the problems they encounter. The university systems must be set up to eliminate any form of political intrusion. In accordance with the justification given above, Chemutai *et al.* (2020:6305) argued that students are hijacked from the learning environment and are swayed by the atmosphere during political times. In agreement with the preceding argument, Ntuli (2020:141) found from the data gathered in a study that while the Student Represented Council (SRC) first joined the #FeesMustFall movement, they withdrew as the movement gained momentum because of how the movement was viewed politically.

Kaudtfelt (2010:4) strengthens the above arguments by saying amongst many challenges faced by higher education is the economic and political instability, and important to note is that the universities have been relatively politicised and they have been used as the ground to demonstrate dissonance with the government and young intellectuals are seen to be the driving forces behind many unrests and mass demonstrations against the state.

Kaudtfelt's research also revealed that the movement was perceived as a group of students who were being exploited to overthrow the ruling party. Political organizations at the university level are linked to outside political organisations, and as a result, their mother bodies directly influence them. This undoubtedly affects how the student leaders react to whatever scenario they encounter in that particular institution, regardless of how it impacts the campus community. It is said that external bodies or the external political organisation related to student politics can pressure the student activist to participate in unrest that is not even related to student problems as long as they can advance the interests of the mother body, even if doing so means doing so at the expense of the students (Ntuli, 2020:209). It is further stated that mother bodies

may go as far as to demonstrate their business relationships with specific universities, in which case student activists would compromise and be utilised to sway the granting of contracts in their favour.

Just as Kiboiy (2013:215) argues, national political concerns sometimes subtly infiltrate the university authorities and the student body, which ultimately causes the student body to become polarised. If not handled appropriately, this may in some instances have an impact on the student and produce unrest. Universities have become a fertile ground for political agitation, among other things, as a result of the gaps in government funding that have led to poor service delivery (Murage et al., 2019:1). Omodan (2020:179) also states that political and outside intrusion, together with inadequate finance, have proven to be significant obstacles, which has led to instability at institutions of learning. This study also states that the lack of funding for pursuing educational goals cannot be underestimated, particularly in light of political influence.

Contrarily, it is crucial to remember that students are a part of the larger political community where the university is located. Universities have a crucial role to play in the process of democratic socialisation and provide students with the opportunity to participate in governance to experience the nature of democratic life (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011:15). Mjema, (2013:54) has noted that Political ideology, social mores, and academic standards all influence how universities operate. Furthermore, it was discovered that there appears to be a connection between the political system and the institution. It is crucial to keep in mind that public universities are somewhat dependent on or beneficiaries of the national government, meaning that politics will occasionally impact how universities are run. To support the statement, Seres, Maric, Tumbas and Pavlicevic (2019:9060) argue that government can at any time use its economic power because it controls the financial resources. As a result, the government now has a legal basis to participate in decisions that directly affect the institutions' decisions and are therefore considered to be political influences.

For the preceding grounds, political influence at all levels, from the national to the local, cannot be disregarded while trying to address the problem of the periodic student unrest that have caused disruptions at our universities. Political interference in student

unrest should be addressed not only from the management's perspective, but also from the students' perspective, as it is evident that students might be employed to further the objectives of outside political organisations. As was previously argued, political organisations can employ student organisations at universities to upset the stability of public institution governance. This must be taken into account in order to eliminate politics' effect on higher education.

2.3.5. Improving the infrastructure conditions or Implementation of resolutions.

Numerous studies have been undertaken in regard to the ongoing unrest that is wreaking havoc on our nation's universities and HEI, but only a small number of them have been able to successfully overcome the problem. It is crucial to emphasise that this research is crucial for addressing some of the issues that are fuelling the discontent. When dealing with persistently conflicting concerns, it may be inferred from much of the evidence above that there is a tendency to undermine the existing structures for both students and the university. Luescher, Klemencic, and Jowi (2016:22) argue that higher education and management in Kenya must be democratised, which requires modifying current organisational structures, composition, operational regulations, and processes to meet the desire for an inclusive approach to academic administration.

Furthermore, in addition to the fact that many conflicts result from an imbalance of power, democratization of decision-making is crucial since universities are strong supporters of democratic institutions and should put their ideals into practice (Obondo, 2000). Therefore, it appears that universities at a certain juncture go against the same democratic ideas they are teaching our students, which is also the main cause of conflict. This is done by excluding students from some of the important decisions that adults make that significantly impact the students. It appears that there is no reliable forum where university management and students can interact without getting into conflict.

It has been observed that while certain studies have been conducted in an effort to address unrest-related issues, nothing has been done to examine the issue of resolution implementation. I believe it would be reasonable to assume that following: every interaction between stakeholders and the adoption of resolutions, the next step

is to put those resolutions into practice. If this assumption were to prove incorrect, it would be reasonable to assume that any stakeholders who might feel they were let down would become frustrated. And such aggravation can result in a serious confrontation. Most frequently, students are included in this category. If they believe they are not being taken seriously, they vent their anger in public. It is crucial that university administrators deal with resources and infrastructural difficulties in a timely manner so that students have enough short-term academic life experiences (Langley, 2018:94)

Infrastructure's influence in the occurrence of unrest is one of several things to take into account. Infrastructure problems in several institutions have actually had a direct impact on the dissatisfaction of many students. It has been shown that universities can use a dialogue with student groups to lower the high rate of discontent, as well as train the management on crisis management and the creation of adequate infrastructure (Davies *et al.*, 2015:39). For a while, the majority of dissatisfaction in the nation has been concentrated on student housing, particularly the scarcity of it and the awful circumstances in which it is available to students.

Infrastructure means the social capital which is meant to help in providing services, especially in institutions of higher learning like universities. This includes offices, residences, lecture halls, internet services, water, classrooms, laboratories, and libraries (Jacob and Lawan, 2020:165). It is an indisputable fact that a lack of these will directly or indirectly affect the functionality of the entire institution. It is imperative to note that recently there is a growing trend of students enrolling with higher institutions of learning. The question is, is the infrastructure growing on the same level to accommodate this population? Jacob, and Lawan, also indicate that there are lack of proper/enough infrastructure in universities, which seems to be a threat to the survival of the university system and its survival in general, and that there is a directly proportional relationship to the academic performance of students and institutional resources. Concurring with the above is Gontina, Fitria and Martha (2021:150) who argue that an important factor to consider when it comes to achieving the educational goal and increasing efficiency for teaching and learning in university is the educational infrastructure.

Tshuma (2018:14) argues that with the widened access to universities, it seems that support from the government is not enough to cater for the increase, especially with infrastructure, staffing and funding. By the look of things, most students struggle to find decent living conditions or are unable to find any, which fuels dissatisfaction and leads to students taking matters into their own hands. Ntuli (2020:86) and Mjema (2013:64) discovered that one of the main causes of student unrest was the lack of adequate student housing. This had an impact on how student leaders and university administration dealt with the housing issue in order to create an environment that was conducive to living and learning.

2.4. Theoretical framework

Decoloniality theory served as the theoretical underpinning for this study. In the past, South Africa, like most African countries, endured oppression and injustice due to colonisation. And the repercussions also last for a very long time, affecting future generations. In other words, transformation will not be achieved in one day. (Oelofsen, 2015:132) in consonance with the above statements, as said, People's ability to reason about themselves and others was also impacted by the colonial and apartheid contexts which may not be reversed by political emancipation alone. Decoloniality calls have been made specifically in higher education for a very long time. Additionally, the idea of decoloniality emphasises the involvement of high education (Zembylas, 2018:3). Zembylas also argues that the universities that have only recently been established are designed in a way that makes them complicit in colonization and benefit from it. Therefore, it might be concluded that the university system does not appear to contribute sufficiently to overcome past injustices.

2.4.1 Coloniality,

It is important to understand that before decoloniality there is Coloniality and/or colonialism and it is important to contrast these three terms for better understanding and, if possible, to find out the epistemology of decoloniality theory and its principles thereafter. It is possible to treat these terms as if it's one term or they mean the same thing if not given a proper explanation, especially coloniality and colonialism. Coloniality is said to have been introduced around 2000 by Anibal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo, Where it is modernity's darker side that needs to be exposed, as it endures

to impose dominion, though it is depicted as best for all but continues to be exploitative (Seroto 2018:3).

Coloniality is found in mostly three forms, which are coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being. Briefly, coloniality of power is described as contemporary universal structures of supremacy, control and authority, whereas coloniality of knowledge is about how the alternative knowledge that is not Euro-American knowledge is destroyed and displaced and on the other hand, coloniality of being is about the understanding of the lived experience of African people during the era of colonisation and the consequences on the social and racialised classification of humans (Moerane, 2019:9).

2.4.2 Colonialism

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:xiii), colonialism's impact would be felt for the longest of time in Africa because the process of decolonisation started in the late 1950s to the 1960s, and this is based on the fact that even Latin America attained liberation political they are still feeling the legacy that was left behind colonialism. Ndlovu and Makoni (2014:505) define colonialism as a political and economic significance by which the autonomy of a particular nation rests on the supremacy of another nation, and that that nation is an empire. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 13) describes colonialism as a historical process that culminated in the invasion, conquest, and direct administration of Africa by nations such as Spain, Portugal, Britain, Belgium, and France to boost their reputation as empires, exploit natural resources, export surplus populations, and increase their prestige as empires.

Moerane (2019:14) states that colonization was a complex phenomenon from the outset since it was both a political and a cultural ideology that sought to establish new systems of wealth distribution, political beliefs, and identities. Taken from Fanon 1963, Moerane also states that holding a people under its control and depleting the citizen's brain of any shape and content isn't enough for colonialism to be successful.

2.4.3 Decoloniality

Moerane (2019:19) states that decoloniality is a theory that emerged in the sixteenth century with the introduction of the colonial matrix of power. This was done to counter and depart from the idea of Eurocentrism, which claimed that human civilization emerged from nature and reached its pinnacle in Europe and that the differences between Europe and non-Europe were based on biological differences rather than histories of power. Concurring with the above statement is Mignolo (2011:xxiv), in saying that decoloniality problematizes and interrogates the narratives of power with European background, and it is tantamount to decolonial thinking and doing. It is further said that decoloniality refers to socioeconomic, political, and analytical actions that oppose the two tenets of Western civilization: coloniality and modernity. Decolonization becomes a political and intellectual undertaking as a result. Decoloniality, in essence, is all about challenging the western ways of doing things and the underlying thinking that is influenced by such. It is means of removing the colonial systems and their thinking or reasoning methods.

Currently, there is great concern about colonialism's and coloniality's implications, particularly as it relates to indigenous social, political, and economic organization and to education at large (Seroto, 2018:1). Decolonising academic programs, intellectual environments, and infrastructures is considered the norm, especially in the education and academic space. According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:16) and Seroto (2018:01), the dominance of the mind and ideas originating from colonialism was the single most important aspect of dominance. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, 177–195) also posits that African schools, colleges, universities, and churches serve as breeding grounds for all forms of colonialism. It would be inaccurate to assert that coloniality's effects halted because of recently decolonised nations and their citizens. The coloniality mission had a substantial impact on the nation and its people. (Oelofsen, 2015:131). It is also argued that there is a critical necessity to decolonise the intellectual atmosphere of that nation and the previously colonized people's minds in order to eradicate colonialism and its effects.

Ncube (2019:03) corresponds with the preceding discourse by claiming that this theory aims to expose and combat the epoch-defining colonial circumstances by changing the way reasoning is maintained. In Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:10) argument,

decoloniality is concerned with challenging the modern social order, which is upheld by stable teachings and epistemologies that continue to harvest and alienate Africans, socializing them to despise Africa of which they are a product and to view Europe, which discards them, as the source of their misery. In other words, the ideology implies that African practices are not valuable and that Africa should adopt Western methods of thinking and doing things instead. There are significant decolonisation calls because our management and curriculum are more inclined to Westernised methods. Joseph (2017:1) said that by the looks of things, transformation on its own has failed, thus, decoloniality must be used in its place. This is due to the numerous unsuccessful attempts to reform university components such as the curriculum, fees, staff, and requirements; as a result, the urgent necessity to switch from transformation to decolonization has emerged.

Decoloniality theory is relevant in that it will serve as a foundation for understanding what decoloniality is all about when it comes to social issues, the way and manner in which people think and act in the face of togetherness. It is relevant because, among other things, there is an outcry for a decolonised education that causes unrest in our universities. It is important to remember that South Africa has a history of people battling for their freedom and existence on the streets. As previously said, colonialism impacts how people perceive society and how they think. Psychologically, it is feasible to surmise that although South Africa was liberated through negotiation, calls for liberation were prompted by popular dissatisfaction. This contributes to the fact that if students and management disagree, they subconsciously assume they must show their influence to be heard through unrests.

During the unrest periods, several institutions became battlegrounds, where campuses would be distinguished by the deployment of highly armed law enforcement personnel and students, were the targets of violence while others faced criminal charges (Stuurman, 2018:1). Some of these unrests reminded people of the Soweto Uprising, in which students were killed, and others were incarcerated for advocating for their rights. According to Omodan (2020:178), university turmoil is a legacy of colonialism that the younger generation has acquired, resulting from the military tyranny of the past.

2.4.4 The Relevance of Decoloniality to this study

This theory helps decolonise the area used to control conflict between students and the administration. Based on the discussions above, the theory aims to change students' perspectives so that they no longer believe that the only way to be heard is through unrest and destroying property. At the same time, this will help management by accepting the students as adults who must participate in decisions about their education and how education should be structured moving forward rather than forcing education on students that may not be addressing their needs. The chance will be given to management to evaluate its processes. Like the use of militarisation as a strategy to manage the unrests, but instead engage the stakeholders as part of the university and the democratic principles. Through this approach, both management and students can better understand how they almost have the same goals yet pursue them in different ways.

Omodan (2019:17) asserts that to decolonize practices, decoloniality as a theory seeks to explain what is truly happening, the genuine problems that need to be solved, and what is actually experienced. The relevance of this study is that it is used to explain the challenges that give rise to the unrest and how to solve them. Using this theory allowed the research to reveal the challenges that are associated with coloniality and therefore be in a position to solve them. And in reality, some of the challenges are actually rooted in the colonial systems that still exist in the society at large, including the university and its authority.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015:489) asserts in the following paragraph that the goal of decoloniality is to expose coloniality as the shadow side of modernity that coexisted with its claims of advancement, equality, fraternity, and liberty. It is a specific type of political and intellectual undertaking that aims to untangle coloniality from formerly colonised regions of the world. Decoloniality differs from other critical social theories in that it has a centre of enunciation and a genealogy outside of Europe. Decoloniality is best understood as a plurality of liberatory and redemptive epistemologies that aim to break free from the tyranny of abstract universals. The continual fights against the inhumanity of the Cartesian subject, the irrationality of the rational, and the authoritarian remnants of modernity are informed by decoloniality. This theory aims to bring to light all the underlying principles of coloniality that are playing a role in how

the modern world is moving or run. It seeks to disentangle the roots of colonialism and liberate the oppressed. The current education and management system in higher education has much of its roots in colonialism, so the theory is de-linking that from the current world. It helps reveal the modern world's hidden agenda and disrupts coloniality and how it is built. Doing so enables the research to deal with the challenges from the roots rather than at face value.

Clearly, communities of (previously) colonized peoples can benefit from decolonial strategies. To operate effectively in these environments, academics and practitioners must be able to identify and address the effects of colonial violence as well as leverage local knowledge to jointly create adaptable solutions to contemporary colonial problems. In this case, the community is the institution of higher learning. Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective (2022:14) posits that decolonial writers have stressed the importance of exposing colonial mentalities among white and WEIRD benefactors of the Eurocentric modern world order as well as communities of formerly colonized and other racially underprivileged peoples. These colonial mentality include simple examples of racial dominance, like endorsing laws and ideologies that support the racial contract (Readsure Decolonial Editorial Collective, 2022:14).

2.5. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

In the section below, terms used in the study are defined to give proper clarity of what they mean in this study.

2.5.1. Student Unrest

Unrest is a state or condition where a particular environment is in turmoil or agitated, which could include violence and, in this case, a university being disturbed by the people who found with thin it. It could be students or employees who are causing turmoil in the environment. For this study unrests definition is treated concurrently with student unrest. Taiwo (1999:4) defines the phrase "student unrest" as being interpreted in a variety of ways; for example, Odetan (1991) sees it as having two folds. According to him, the student and university administration relationship is the first fold, and the student-government relationship is the second. He claimed that because it frequently affects numerous higher institutions at once, the second is typically more contagious and of a wider scope.

Okeyo (2017:169) referred to it as a "student crisis" and said that it resulted from students' demands for their rights from university authorities. Another definition offered by Adeyemi (2009:156) characterizes student unrest as protests by students that damage lives and property as they pressure the university administration to grant their demands. Other researchers have described student discontent as demonstrations held by the student body to express their displeasure with how university authorities are handling their problems.

2.5.2. Management of Student Unrest

By management of student unrest is that though there might be a conflict between the students and the management of the institution, it should not be escalated beyond control but rather within the controlled environment. In my view, it means when student unrest is managed, there is no disturbance whatsoever goes to an extent of destroying the property and disturbing those who don't participate. No militarisation and threats are used but rather negotiation and dialogue. Omodan (2019:64) posits that crisis management which is the management of student unrest in the context of this study, that is, addressing and containing disorderliness in colleges. It is further stated that as a result, the university authorities use the Management of Students' Crises as a tool to manage, curb, and avoid student disorderliness.

It is important to note according to Haris (2012:1), an institution or organisation must define a risk assessment before setting up and maintaining an efficient business continuity management system method that will make it possible for it to comprehend the threats and weaknesses of its vital operations and auxiliary resources. It is essential to evaluate the effects that would occur if a danger was realized and resulted in an occurrence that disrupted the business of the day.

2.5.3. Stakeholders

Stakeholders are people who are part of an organisation's decision-making and have a direct interest in the organisation they are involved in. Benn (2016:1) defines it as "a person or group that can influence the accomplishment of an organization's goals or

that is impacted by the accomplishment of an organization's goals" or a "group for which the corporation is accountable"; group of stakeholders "in connection" when working with a group.

2.5.4. Decision-making

Decision-making in an organisation involves all the stakeholders of that organisation in consultation and assessing all that needs to be taken into cognisance before the actual decision is taken. Said (2017:2) argues in support of this view that making decisions involves a series of events from the moment decision-makers acknowledge the need to address an issue until they approve a course of action to address and it is a dynamic and participatory process. The process of evaluating different options and settling on one for a given situation is referred to as decision-making, and because nothing can be accomplished without making the appropriate decision at the right moment, decision-making is regarded as the foundation of company management (Panpatte & Takale, 2019). Making a decision involves selecting one option from a range of choices. Making profitable decisions increases an organization's revenue, whereas inefficient decisions result in losses. Therefore, the most important procedure in any firm is the corporate decision-making process.

2.5.5. Education Management

Education management can be defined as the technique of gathering and assigning resources for the accomplishment of established educational goal (Abdalla & Ali, 2017:326). Education management involves that amongst other things the planning, directing, coordinating, controlling and organising. It is important to note that the above functions of the concept also involves the human resource, the resource that are used for learning and the financial resources of that particular institution. In support of the above view Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube (2015:12) states that in order to create competent graduates who can hold important positions in society and, in turn, enhance educational practices and processes, they work to construct the finest educational policies and strategies, which involves upgrading educational programs and administrative services. It is further said that In order to achieve educational objectives, educational management procedures entail the planning and deployment of systems that guarantee the application of policies, strategies, and action plans throughout a set

of integrated practices. Only with a thorough grasp of how various work units fit into the whole can process performance be optimised.

2.6. Summary of the chapter

The above chapter has discussed the literature of the study in connection with the challenges of managing the student unrest in South African universities, especially in rural areas. The literature was discussed using the following themes under the challenges: Lack of proper structure to manage unrest, failure to involve student in decision making, and power differential between Students and University authorities. Literature was further discussed under possible solutions as a means to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities: Development of proper structures, Involvement of stakeholders in decision making and Developing common ground between the stakeholders. And it also the Finding the conditions to sustain the solutions, which are meaningful negotiations and the development of conflict resolution strategies. And lastly, a strategy that will overcome threats to the implementation of the solution which are avoiding political interference and improving the infrastructure conditions or Implementation of resolutions.

The theoretical framework underpinning the study was discussed with coloniality and colonialism to clarify their meaning. The last portion of the study has been used to define the working terms of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter discussed the methodology for the research. This was followed by the discussion of the adopted research approach and paradigm, research design, data collection method, which is focus group discussions, sampling technique which is homogeneous sampling, and thematic analysis as a method of analysing data. Trustworthiness, such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, was also discussed. Lastly, ethical consideration was discussed in detail for the safety of all those involved in the study.

3.1. Research Approach: Qualitative Research Approach

The research approach that was adopted in this study was the qualitative research approach. According to Vos et al. (2011:307), a research approach is the planning that the researcher uses to carry out the study, such as the decisions made along the process. Concurring with the above definition is Creswell, Ebersohn, Eloff, Ferriara, Ivankova, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen and Plano Clark (2016:72) by stating that research approach is a method that moves from philosophical presumptions to the specifics of how the researcher will select the participants or subjects, what method will be utilized for data collection, and what method will be used for analysis. In other words, it is a complete mental representation of the entire study, from start to finish. By definition, a qualitative research is a method that combines observations, interviews, and documentation analysis (Vos *et al.*, 2011:307). According to Creswell *et al.* (2016:53), in contrast to other research methodologies that rely on numerical data, qualitative research is grounded in words and uses meaning-based analysis of the data rather than statistical procedures. Additionally, it is suggested that a qualitative approach takes advantage of natural surroundings to comprehend the social context.

Qualitative research, therefore, enables the researcher to be in a position to directly involve the participants in finding the problems in the research phenomenon and how best such problems can be solved. This is so because participants in qualitative research are affected directly by the phenomenon under study. As will be elaborated in the population, people who are used in this study are all involved in one way or the

other and are directly affected by the unrest, so they are the best to be used to find solutions to managing the unrest.

3.2 Research Paradigm: Transformative Paradigm

This research adopted transformative paradigm. According to Mertens (2007:212), the transformative paradigm is characterized as a paradigm that explores and addresses power dynamics, societal injustice, and cultural intricacies. Mertens also states that this paradigm is broader in the sense that it involves paradigmatic perceptions intended to be emancipatory, participatory and inclusive. Also, transformative paradigm is driven by social justice and human rights programme which is meant for people like women, people living with disability, racial/ethnic minorities and the poor, who are the marginalised groups from those who are considered non-dominant cultural groups (Mertens, 2009:266).

Although this paradigm is believed to not just serve the interests of individuals who have been excluded from positions of dominance, it is nevertheless referred to as focusing on improving the lives and experiences of those who are marginalized, such as racial minorities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Romm, 2015:412). According to Romm's study, this paradigm is thought to provide fundamental weight to the lives and experiences of underrepresented groups like the poor, those with disabilities, women, and ethnic or racial minorities. It is crucial for the researchers to link social research findings to concrete actions while also connecting the research to larger issues of social injustice and inequality.

In corroborating the above statement, Matjila and van der Merwe (2021:3) states that the transformative theory was developed because the two theories, namely the positivist paradigm and the constructivism paradigm, had shortcomings, especially regarding the marginalised minority. Romm (2015:123), drawing from the word of Mertens, says that scholars who are embracing the transformative paradigm as an alternative to positivist/post-positivist and interpretive/constructivist clearly bear social justice matter so that their investigations become entangled with a political programme and are also action-orientated in the direction of producing amplified objectivity in the social fabric.

Based on the above, I can present the argument that the transformative paradigm emphasizes the lives and experiences of underrepresented groups, including women, people of colour, persons with disabilities, and the poor. When adopting this paradigm, inquirers make an effort to link the findings of social research to action and broader issues of social injustice and social justice (Romm, 2015:412)

van Reenen (2019:17) states that universities, like the understudy, are some of the historical Afrikaans universities which pride fully served the interests of the nationalists in promoting Afrikaans and Christian' institutional philosophies amongst exclusively white personnel and student organisation. It is also stated that in the early 1990s, the university accepted people of colour in undergraduate courses and as university residents, which also meant policy transformations. But it cannot be ignored that such history is still influential in the current system of the university. In corroborating the above statement Nyamupangedengu (2017:113) says that "though the main issue that sparked the student protests was unaffordable fee hikes which were negatively impacting equitable access to higher education, the protests also brought to the fore, other issues impacting students' success such as the lack of transformation and the manner in which universities deliver their curricula which do not cater for the now diverse student body."

Based on the above arguments, this paradigm goes hand in hand with the decoloniality theory to address the perceived marginalisation that has led to so much social unrest in universities, most especially in South Africa. Therefore, this paradigm enables the study to transform and decolonise the space of unrest to ensure that there is better understanding and inclusion of all the stakeholders in changing the way things are done. This will bring a platform for making sure that persistent student unrest can be avoided in the future.

3.3 Research Design: Participatory Research (PR).

The study adopts Participatory Research (PR) as the research design. Levac, Ronis, Cowper-Smith and Vaccarino (2019:1866) point to the origin of PR from several fields, including action research, adult education, international development and critical sociology. They also state in their study that PR was developed based on growing concerns for respect of persons, beneficence, and justice for vulnerable groups. This

happened due to numerous examples of extremely unethical practices in social science research, like the Tuskegee Syphilis study that was done on people in Nazi concentration camps. Ogungbure (2011:78) states that a huge number of black males, around 6002, were the subjects of the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which was conducted in Macon County, Alabama, USA, from 1932 and 1972. Of the 600 subjects, 400 had syphilis, while the remaining 200 served as the control group. The study sought to ascertain whether black people respond to syphilis in the same way that white people do as well as how long a person can survive with untreated syphilis. In this study, the participants were not informed of what they involved themselves in, and they were deceived that they were treated for “bad blood”. It is also explained that even when a cure was available, these “participants” were not treated in order to see how long can they live and what will be the impact of syphilis.

Ethical conduct here were violated entirely, for example, using human beings as subjects, no justice was done to the people used as subjects, and they were completely not respected at all. These people their free will was taken away from them completely, and they were lied to coerce them to participate the in the study. They were a target because of their race and their socio-economic status, and that is racial profiling part of racism. These all violate the code of ethics that agitated for informed consent, and freedom of participation, among others (Okeke, Omodan & Dube, 2022) that guides research and hence the PR design as it affords the participants to be part of whatever topic that is being researched.

According to de Vos, Strydom, Fouch and Delport (2011:491), it's a design concerned with the involvement and participation of all the stakeholders in a specific task. Both the researcher and the research participants are responsible for the research outcomes (de Vos *et al.*, 2011:491). According to Maree (2016:134), this research design is associated with developing a programme meant to improve or solve a problem that has been identified. This cannot be done by the researcher alone but through working hand in hand with the *researched* (participants) since the ultimate work of the researcher is to facilitate the development of the solution that will curb this persistent problem.

Duarte, Brendel, Degbelo and Kray (2018:5) concur with the above statement that in PR, the aim is to make sure that the population that is affected by that particular issue must be involved in the research process, and that this design is orientated towards those people whose life is affected and therefore the whole process of planning and conducting the research revolves around them. They additionally state that under the PR design, the participants are not just seen as participants that contribute to the research once in a while or objects of the research, but they are treated as co-researchers and equal partners. Levac *et al.* (2019:1866) corroborates this fact in saying the research participants hold an important position in the research due to their expertise, and not only that, they are also not seen as participants or subjects of the study but they are treated as co-researchers and carrying intimate empirical knowledge and vigorous knowledge.

Amongst other things, the benefits of PR are that it is equitable and respectful, and not only that, but it can produce high-quality evidence which makes it possible to drive applicable programmes and can bring about improving the lives of the participants and influence policy changes (Kuper *et al.*, 2021:335). PR resonate very well with the research paradigm in this case which is the transformative paradigm, because both of them are participant centred. In other words, solutions to the problem or issues at hand are sought after by the same people affected. As mentioned in the above discussion, participants are not just participants, but they are conceded as co-researchers.

As stated in the definition of the design, it will take the collaboration of both the researcher and all the university stakeholders to find an amicable solution to the challenges and causes of the students' unpleasant relationships with the university authorities that result in the suspension of lectures. The stakeholders that were used in the study were university management, lecturers, students and securities who were selected homogeneously. They were selected because they are found within the same environment, and they are all directly impacted by the topic discussed in the study, and they all bring a certain perspective that can ultimately lead to a solution. Subject to the above, focus group discussion was identified as a good method of data collection because it helps participants to agree or disagree on a particular subject and gives insight into how a group think about the topic (Bassnet, 2018:83).

3.4 Method of Data gathering: Focus Group Discussion

The study adopts Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to collect data. Focus group is grounded on the hypothesis that there is a wide range of responses, assistance with forgotten information and creating a platform for participants to be free to disclose information that wouldn't at a personal or individual level (Maree, 2016:95). Basnet (2018:84) further states that in this, participants are able to add and elaborate on each other's ideas to provide in-depth views. FGD is a method of data collection where a group of individuals are brought together by the researcher to engage and discuss a particular subject, where the researcher intends to draw from the participants' complex personal experiences/knowledge, attitudes, philosophies, and perceptions (Yayeh, 2021:54; O.Nyumba, Wilson, Derrik and Mukherjee, 2018:21). Yayeh in corroborating the above definitions also indicates that FGD is a data collection method where "a selected group of people discusses a given topic or issue in-depth, facilitated by a professional, external moderator."

It is clear that through the use of this method of data collection, the research collects a massive broad amount of data, which is useful in getting a better understanding of the issue at hand and possibly the possible solution on the topic from the participants. Zacharia, Pai and Manu (2021:2) say that in focus group discussions, the responses are open-ended, comparatively broad and qualitative. In agreement, O.Nyumba *et al.* (2018:20) explains that focus group discussion has been widely used and frequently used as a qualitative method to gain an in-depth understanding of social matters, and it aims to collect data through a deliberately selected group of individual.

Basnet (2018:82) adds that focus group discussions originated from sociology and is popular in business, marketing and education. This study further states that FGD is used to collect data in the form of opinions from a selected group of people about a specific and pre-determined matter. Focus group not only provide the researcher with in-depth data, but with variety as well, it can provide a close idea of what the people's sentiments are and thinking about that particular issue and can provide a lot of data in a relatively short space of time (Zacharia *et al.* 2021:2). According to de Vos *et al.* (2011:503) this method of data gathering is used in homogeneous environment and emphasizes a region of concern, is also when a small group selected is organised to apply knowledge, experience, and expertise to a particular challenge. The FGD

process in this study comprises all the participants chosen to participate in the process of solving the study's topic through in-depth conversation.

Focus group discussion is relevant for the study because the study uses PR as a research design. The two have shown to work well together because they respect the inclusion of the research in the process of finding solutions to the problem (student unrest) in universities. This is supported by the arguments in the literature made above that PR design encourages the involvement and participation of all the stakeholders when seeking a solution to a specific problem; it is even better to bring them under one roof, therefore. de Vos, Strydom, Fouch and Delport (2011:491) argue that the results of the research are, under this method, is ultimately the responsibility of both the researcher and the research participants.

In support of this view, Yayeh (2021:57) indicates that the fascinating thing about the use of FGD is the much-needed discussions and debate in connection about that particular research topic, especially when it demands the collective opinions and the meanings that are hidden behind those opinions without leaving behind the expertise and beliefs. This is in consonant with the study because the researched topic of the study demands inclusive data to be collected in order to find the solution and FGD as a method of data collection proves to be the relevant method, hence adopted.

3.5. Describing the Participants

For the purpose of this study, the stakeholders that were involved in the research were the university management, the lecturers, the representative student council (SRC) and the security personnel. The university management are on the receiving end of the grievances by students. In most cases, the conflict is always between them and the students, making them the perfect participants for the study. During unrest especially prolonged unrest, tuition time is always affected, which directly impacts the lectures.

SRC is the leading structure for students, and they are the liaising body between the management of the university and the students at large, and in most cases, they are the initiators of the unrest, so they are a necessary part of the participants. Securities are directly affected as they are expected to provide protection for everybody in the

university, including the property. At times they also have to clash with those who are unsatisfied during unrest. So these groups of participants are relevant because they are directly or indirectly affected by student unrest.

3.6 Selection of Participants: Homogeneous Technique

In this study, three management employees, three students (SRC members), three lecturers, and three security officers from a university in South Africa were chosen as the participants for this study using the homogeneous sampling technique. As previously said, the research employed focus groups to collect data, thus, it used a homogenous strategy to choose participants since it is appropriate to select individuals who have similar experiences with the study's research problem. De Vos *et al.* (2011:365) suggests that homogeneity must be considered when the researcher is selecting participants for social concerns. These participants are all in the university and they have all been affected by the social issues of students unrest, directly or indirectly.

Therefore, this technique is relevant because this research was conducted in a university with participants who have a unitary experience of this challenge. FGD resonate well with homogenous as also indicate in a study done by Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins, and Popjoy (1998:2) that focus group discussions are characterised by people's involvement which includes series of consultations and participants that are homogenous in connection with the research interests and that includes generating qualitative data.

3.7 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

This study adopted thematic analysis as a method of data analysis, which is one of the methods used for qualitative research. Braun and Clarke (2014:2) define thematic analysis as a process by which themes and patterns are identified and organized to give information about a group of facts systematically. Thematic analysis, on the other hand, is a technique used for the data-related analysis of categories and patterns (Alhojailan, 2012:40). In the same vein, Yousaf, Rafique, Mahmood and Butt (2020:259) defines thematic analysis as the procedure used to identify and highlight patterns and sequences found in a wide set of data.

Thematic analysis is a flexible method that enables the researcher to interpret and understand data in numerous ways, and it is also not bound to one theoretical perspective (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:3352). Ladejo (2021:8) concurs with (Maguire et al. 2017:3352) by stating that thematic analysis is a suitable method that can be used in different research interests with different theoretical perspectives; this is due to the fact that it can be used for a vast range of questions and it is a method that can be applied to analyse diverse types of data. Though the method is known for its flexibility, it cannot ignore the fact that there are disadvantages associated with it. Amongst other things, the shortage of significant literature and the flexibility of this method can result in inconsistency and lack of coherence when developing themes from researched data (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017:2).

In a similar vein, it is one of the techniques for analysing data that was gathered through any kind of interrogation or interview. They further contend that this approach offers or provides a wider perspective of understanding what is investigated. The study uses the Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic analysis. Literature reveals that the method was discovered by Braun and Clarke's; hence it is often referred to as Braun and Clark's method. Nowell *et al.* (2017:2) state that Braun and Clarke 2006 have been arguing that thematic analysis is supposed to be a foundational method for qualitative analysis because it offers core skills for conducting many forms of qualitative analysis.

Braun and Clarke's method, according to Gwama, Omodan and Tsoetsi (2019:3), is based on these six steps which are acquainting yourself with the gathered data, then one must create initial codes scrutinising for themes, studying the themes, delineating the themes and the last step is the write-up. In support of the above statement, Yousaf *et al.* (2020:259) argued that in this procedure, the researcher must familiarise him/herself with the data, which is followed by generating the initial codes. This step is tailed searching for subthemes and reviewing the subthemes. Last face is defining and naming the themes followed by a report. This approach of data analysis is pertinent in that it enabled the researcher to analyse the data flexibly in accordance with the study's objectives without many restrictions and identify the difficulties encountered in controlling the unrest of the pupils and potential remedies.

3.8. Trustworthiness.

In this section, the study discusses the trustworthiness of the research following four steps: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). FitzPatric (2019:215) explains that a validity check in a study is meant to allow both the researcher and the research participants to trust the contextualised statements and afford the readers or other researchers sufficient evidence to demonstrate that conclusions are logical and trustworthy. FitzPatric (2019:215) also indicates that validity is not a general thing; it depends on the purpose and circumstance of that particular research and to note the conclusions derived from a certain instrument to address pertinent validity threats to that research. It is important to note that the conclusions of a study can be trusted only with validity.

3.8.1 Transferability

Baumgart, Craig, and Tong, (2021:539), and Nassaji (2020:428) states that transferability is a particular level to which the results are relevant and have the same implications in different contexts and populations. It is further stipulated that the researcher must demonstrate details that are enough about the context of the study and the characteristics of the participants and must be in a situation to compare the results of the research with research that is conducted in different context, and allow other researchers to judge for themselves if the findings can be pertinent to their contexts. Kyngas, Kaariainen and Elo (2020:41) concur with Baumgart *et al.* (2021:539) in saying that transferability means the results of the study must be applicable to a study of a different context, taking into consideration the dependability showing that the findings are replicable and consistent.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018:122), transferability is mostly about how applicable the research is to other research done in different circumstances. They continue to mention that it is important for the researcher to give an in-depth account of the research participants and the procedure, as this will allow readers to evaluate for themselves if the findings are transferable based on the specific contexts. To some researchers, transferability is almost similar to generalizability, which is the same as using a research procedure but in another context which can yield different results (FitzPatric, 2019:213). Though they explain that transferability replaces generalizability, they concur with the above statement that it is all about the degree to

which findings are applicable to studies conducted in different environments altogether (Lemon & Hayes, 2020:605).

In qualitative research, the sample size of participants is often smaller in size, which makes it less of a population representation; therefore, generalisation of the findings becomes difficult, and transferability cannot be a tool to make generalisations, but it should be used to provide enough information to ensure possible transfer (Nassaji, 2020:428). To ensure the transferability of this study, a full description of the participants (context-wise) was provided, meaning the size of the sample, demographics, and sample strategy was described, the socio-economic background of the context of the study, the topic its self, the procedure of the interviews and the questions of the interviews.

3.8.2 Credibility

Kyngas *et al.* (2020:41) define credibility as having assurance in the accuracy of the findings of the study. For research to be seen as credible, it must offer a reasonable degree of comprehensive, truthful, and the phenomenon under investigation must be reasonably explained. And it is of paramount importance to note that meaning is constructed between the researcher and the participants in qualitative studies, and the collection of data is not meant to assess a single objective reality Amanda (Baumgart *et al.*, 2021:531). In agreement with the above arguments, credibility in its principle I is about the magnitude to which the findings and conclusion of research can be regarded as acceptable/believable (Nassaji, 2020:428). Nassaji also argues that “it concerns the truthfulness of the findings and the extent to which they reflect the reality of the phenomenon investigated.”

In simple terms, credibility is defined as a process of authenticating the results with the participants (Prochner & Godin, 2022:8). To increase credibility, amongst other things, one can have extended engagements with the field, triangulation of data sources, pursue conventional research measures and peer-debriefing (Prochner *et al.*, 2022:8). To establish credibility, the researcher must make sure that the interpretations are inclusive and that their understanding of the research participants, setting, and methods is as precise and thorough as feasible.

The use of focus group discussions is another way of ensuring the credibility of the study, as the method gets in-depth views. This study has adopted participant validation, in other words, after data has been collected, transcribed and interpreted, participants were allowed to validate the findings.

3.8.3 Dependability

Nassaji (2020:428), dependability as one of the principles of validity in qualitative studies means the research must be conveyed so that others can attain analogous analysis should they wish to review the data. Dependability is a way of ensuring the quality of the study in essence. Lemon *et al.* (2020:605) assert that the credibility of a study cannot be achieved without dependability vouching for the uniqueness of the findings to definite time and environment, and data elucidation must be consistent across. It can be deduced, therefore, that dependability is the backbone of credibility. On the other hand, dependability relates to whether rationality and transparency connection amid the findings, data, methodology and procedures and interpretation of data is required; therefore, replication of the results is not possible (Baumgart *et al.*, 2021:539).

In essence, it is how long will the findings of a particular research stable over a period of time; it also involves allowing the participants to scrutinise how the findings and interpretations are made, including the recommendation of the research to ensure that data supports all of that as per the participants of the study (Baumgart *et al.*, 2021:539). Dependability is all about the level where the external audits approve the research, and it is how far the researchers' theoretical inference can be acceptable (Prochner *et al.*, 2022:15).

This study has ensured dependability by making sure the researcher read the over and over again the data. Thematic analysis was used to code data and identify the participants' similarities and differences to ensure that dependency and trustworthiness is established.

3.8.4 Confirmability

At all times, the researcher must do away with all his/her biasness and maintains the position of neutrality no matter how close the topic is to his/her heart. Korstjens *et al.* (2018:120), in support of the above statement, argue that confirmability is how confirmable the research is to other researchers and is all about making sure that data interpretations of the research are not the figments of the researchers' preconceived ideas, but they are the true outcomes of the data collected. Kyngas *et al.* (2020:41) define confirmability as the level of neutrality maintained by the researcher to ensure that the results are a true reflection of the participants' sentiments, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences instead of the researchers' interests, motivations and prejudices.

According to Baumgart *et al.* (2021:539), confirmability aims at making sure that the results of the study are not influenced by the preconceived assumptions of the researcher but are genuine reflections of the participants' perceptions. They also indicate that to ensure confirmability, the researcher can use various strategies, like member checking and including the participant's quotations in the data presentation, to warrant precise and comprehensive perceptions of the participants. Agreeing with this argument is Lemon *et al.* (2020:605). Nassaji (2020:429) also states that confirmability is to what level con other research endorses the studies' interpretations and conclusions. It is further important to note that confirmability in qualitative research is considered as equivalent to impartiality. Nassaji mentions that confirmability is achieved by thoroughly explaining the data and the findings to the extent that the precision of the results can be confirmed by others and to what extent they can be replicated.

Lemon *et al.* (2020:605) present that confirmability tackle whether the interpretations and conclusions are based on the participants' lived experiences and are free of the researcher's biases. It also gets to the objectivity of the phenomenon under research, and the researchers should use the methods to discover and build new knowledge while ensuring trustworthiness. This study ensured confirmability by ensuring that all the participants are debriefed to confirm the data, and quotations were included in the data presented. And at the same time, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained at all times for the integrity of the study.

3.9 Ethical Consideration:

The study abides by the ethical guidelines of the University of the Free State. The university granted permission to conduct the study after adhering to the ethical principles and all the requirements stated by the GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC). The Ethical Clearance number of the study is as follows: UFS-HSD2020/1347/2610/21. The ethical standards of the University of the Free State guided this research. The ethical clearance approval letter is attached as an appendix.

As per the requirement, participants in the study were given pseudonyms to ensure they were kept anonymous and in no way they can be associated with the statements or the responses provided. Consent forms were issued and signed by all the participants of the study as it is part of the ethics in securing permission to participate and publish the research. The consent was thoroughly explained to the participants to ensure they were informed of what they consented to. Data that was collected was kept safe for about six months in a password-protected device. Participants also consented to record the FGD session. Participants were also informed that they were free to pull out anytime they felt uncomfortable continuing with the study.

3.10 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the research methodology was discussed. In this section, the qualitative research approach which was clearly explained and justified together with the transformative paradigm as the paradigm that underpinned the study were discussed. The research design, Participatory Research (PR), was justified thoroughly, and the method of data collection, which is Focus Group Discussion (FGD), was discussed properly as to why they are relevant to this study. Participants of the study were profiled and justified, and what makes them relevant to the research and the method of selecting participants was made known. The thematic data analysis method was discussed in the last section of the chapter, and the method was justified in detail with the trustworthiness of the research. The results of the study are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Most universities in South Africa, if not all, are affected from time to time by student unrest, especially in the universities situated in rural areas. In this chapter, the findings from the data collected were discussed. The findings that were discussed in this research were mainly based on one university that was used as the case study of the research. Findings were discussed based on the aims and the four objectives that were guiding the study. The study aims to enhance the management of the prevalence of student unrest in South African universities in order to ensure a peaceful university education and its productivity. The objectives were to examine the challenges associated with the management of student unrest in the university system, to highlight the possible solutions as a means to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities, to examine the conditions suitable for the solution to strive and lastly to explore the likely threat that could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions. To achieve the above, the data were analysed using the thematic data analysis method, where themes were generated and analysed to give meaning. The discussion was done based on the themes that were found from the data collected, and thereafter possible solutions were deliberated on.

Pseudonyms were given to the participants for ethical reasons and to protect them from linking the statements to them in any way possible. Statements made by the participants were indicated using quotation marks to indicate them as direct quotations. The participants for the study were university management, lecturers, security personnel and SRC members who were selected using a homogeneous sampling technique.

4.1.1. Lack of proper structure to manage unrest

Universities from time to time experience unrest, and it is clear that they still have no proper method of managing and controlling the unrest, but it's as if they are caught up by surprise. The literature has revealed that the things that are causing student unrest are common issues, but new issues keep popping up and surprising the university in general. The unrest is literally managed through militarisation, meaning bringing the police officers who sometimes are a threat to the safety of students and private security

companies. Student unrest are handled with threats more than reasoning and engagement between the stakeholders. It is alleged that a lot of student unrest that occurred during the course of the year were new issues. These issues propelled a lot by the lack of planning that is in close proximity with management of unrest. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Mxolisi Alleged that: *“The university knows very well so that next year February our academic calendar is beginning and they know very well that NSFAS will come on board at a much later stage, so, therefore, you cannot expect that err these people should come here for an entire two months hungry, these people should come here the entire two months without books, it is an issue. So I believe that with the preparation we could see a lot less of protest because they’ve done it before.”*

Siyabonga pointed out that: *“Basically, I feel if the management communicates with students, management be proactive, to prevent before things can happen, instead of being reactive.”*

As an institution of higher learning universities should not be caught off guard by student demands because it has access to research. Based on the above allegations, the university seems to be responding to student unrest which at times do not respond immediately and that in itself leads to student unrest. If universities had proper ways to manage unrest, there would be little to no unrest in the universities. Unrests are part and parcel of a democratic institution. Therefore managing them would simply mean having very few of them that are obviously manageable and undisruptive/with no property destruction. In support of the above arguments, Murage *et al.* (2019:1) argue that in many parts of the world, effective administration of student affairs in public universities continues to be a significant problem for university administrators and student leaders.

This indicates the structures are there to manage the students’ unrest, but they are not as effective as one would wish them to. On the other hand, Mavunga (2019:96) claimed that vice chancellors’ administrative shortcomings were severely exposed at the height of the #FeesMustFall protests because many of them were unable to handle the conflict between allowing the protests on their campuses while ensuring the safety of employees, students, and infrastructure. Lukman (2021:1) advanced that given that workplace conflict cannot be avoided, universities must employ a worthwhile strategy

to harness the conflict so that it may be used to explicitly and successfully accomplish desired goals. Universities' managers must manage this situation effectively to deliver positive results and prevent bad outcomes. Participants have mentioned this that management is rather reactive than proactive as they normally respond to issues after there has been unrest especially disruptive ones. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Mxolisi also alluded that: *“in most times management here acts only after there’s been protest and I’m saying this because errr 2019 there was an issue when the allowance was not reflecting and students were hungry, and they then went to protest DH was looted ant thing was burnt, someday around six or nine the money came into the accounts, and it then raised a question as to say so do we now need to always engage in this manner for something to happen.”*

The above arguments advance that universities in general, rural and urban universities in South Africa seem to lack proper and effective structures to manage student unrest. If at all, university management heavily relies on threats and militarization of campus more than anything. Concurring with this argument was Mavunga (2019:93) by stating that newspaper articles claimed that some universities had exercised their power, as demonstrated by their hiring of private security firms to guard campuses, their use of the legal system to prevent students from holding unrest on campus, and, in some cases, their use of threats and disciplinary action against protesting students. These actions are all inherently forms of agency used by university authorities to control the unrest. The university even holds the power of the student leaders, especially since they are partly employees of the institution as they receive stipend, so it becomes easy to hold them hostage. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Lubabalo shared this view: *“looking at the composition of the student structure, which is the SRC, the student structure gets hired by the same institution that they are fighting against, so who has the power in that case? Is it the same institution that hired you, because now they want to intimidate you at some point, it’s easier for them to do so.”*

The argument above shows that universities, at times, when in a position to do so, intimidate the SRC members as they are paid by the institution, meaning there are not as free as they are supposed to be. This does not only end with student leaders but all the students who happen to engage in protests. They are at some stage subjected

to such treatments by university management, but it is much easier to apply them to the SRC. In support of the above claim, Omodan (2021:13) asserts that the employment of security forces by university administration during protests, such as the Mobile Police and military, is viewed as authoritarian and anti-humanitarian. Universities employ this intimidation strategy rather than finding proper structures to manage student unrest. This is what Mjema (2013:130) alluded to earlier that university administration uses authoritative techniques like intimidation to manage the student unrest.

4.1.2. Failure to involve students in decision-making

University students feel that they are adults who cannot be decided for, but rather should be involved and be invited to the table that takes decisions, especially when it comes to issues that directly affect them. Omodan (2021:16) argues that one of the key acts in managing organizations is decision-making and the process involved. It is further argued that exploring options among potential courses of action is part of the decision-making process in crisis management. As a result, in a university system, decision-making should not be limited to managers but rather involve all system stakeholders. So at times, what makes university management and students at constant loggerheads is imposing decisions on them without proper consultations. Students allege that most of the decisions that are taken by university do not involve them, as stakeholders and therefore such is met with resistance the university do not involve them, as stakeholders. Therefore, such is met with resistance, especially when it seems to be against the student in whatever way. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Lubabalo shared this: *“Definitely let them know of what you are doing, how you are expecting them to be involved in the institution and what the value of their contribution within education, it’s not only about, higher education is not only about you coming and getting your certificate, is about shaping your career, it is about shaping the vision you have, and so forth you know.”*

Mohau alleged: *“So we exist as prefects and reps because we are expandable and disposable.”*

In simple terms students need to be kept abreast to buy into whatever idea or agenda the university wants to push. Getting the student involved in all levels of decision-making will surely limit the level of conflict because everyone is aware of what is

happening instead of being surprised. Chiluba (2019:270) states that another method of controlling conflicts is through conflict management, which can be used before the crisis, during (conflict stage), or after conflict. When necessary, it is more extensive and broad in conception and application and incorporates conflict resolution and transformation. It is more of a long-term partnership with institutionalized rules and processes for resolving disputes wherever they arise. It is further argued that conflict management refers to the resolution of conflicts, their neutralization to prevent crises from erupting, or their cooling during an eruption. And this also makes them feel recognised as stakeholders and that their contributions are valued. As participants claimed that as SRC, they are more like prefects than stakeholders, they are told what to do and what not to do. Obviously, this brings hostility towards management and the decisions they take without the student body's involvement and recognising them as stakeholders. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Bongiwe emphasized this: *“Some decisions are taken at the main; how do you expect someone in a different place to take a decision on a place they’ve never been to and expect them to give a decision favourable to students.”*

This is a decision that is taken by students who are in extension campus of the selected university, and the feeling is that the deciding body does not even know the circumstances of what they are deciding upon, and obviously, students don't take such things lightly. Between 2001 and 2007, the South African Higher Education System underwent a reform process involving merging universities, technikons, and colleges. It is important to note that the extension campus, before it was fully merged and incorporated to the University of the Free State, was a satellite campus of the then university of the North. Though it's incorporated, the students alleged that they don't necessarily feel part of the university merger. They are neglected and decided upon as if they are not part of the university as they claim they feel neglected and don't even know the management that is supposed to engage them in decision-making. According to Singh (2017:129), the classroom should be used as a nation-building tool to teach students about democratic processes, where they are given a chance to make their own decisions and stand up for themselves. In a democratic country, democratic processes include the involvement of the student in decision-making process.

It has been alleged that student unrests that took place were also motivated by student political influences and differences. The SRC indicated that even unrest that resulted in a student lab and clinic closing down was not SRC lead, but students supposedly lead themselves. And it is alleged that student leaders who belong to other political organizations not in charge of SRC at that particular moment seem to instigate to render a current SRC inadequate.

4.1.3. Power Differentials between Students and University authorities.

There's always an issue of power between the management and student leaders. Student representative council (SRC) are an essential part of governance in the governing of public universities in a democratic way, as has been stated in the above chapter. Amongst the common causes of student unrest in universities is management failing to recognise the students as part of stakeholders. SRC, most of the time, are a bridge between the management and the student. They take the students' demands and or needs of the students to the management, and or needs arise, they also represent the students' interests and bring back to the students the management's responses. This bridge/gap cannot be bridged by any means except the right way which is to recognise the SRC. In the case the student representatives are not properly recognised, chaos ensues, where students seemingly lead themselves as they lose trust on the SRC, and sometimes the SRC demands to be represented and propel the chaos themselves. The following statements from the participant support the above argument:

Tata 2: *“The issue of power when you look into the African leadership in Africa a large in the continent right, we are entitled and hold power amongst ourselves and whoever is superior and on you, they like to impose all those powers they have on subordinates. Now let's look at the composition of the student structure, which is the SRC. The student structure gets hired/paid by the same institution that they are fighting against, so who has the power in that case? Is the same institution that hired you, because now if they want to intimidate you at some point, it's easier for them to do so, though perhaps some of the discussions might not come clear on board, but your consciousness as an African student or as African individual it's not easy.”*

Mxolisi: *“if it is SRC, we ourselves would never destroy a university or burn or or o do whatever. So engage us to engage us, do not lock us out of the gates,*

because there was a time when we were locked out, err when everyone was kicked out; the SRC was also kicked out, it was a sad day. Really we understand that we are not part of management. We are only part of co-governance, but eng talk to us, you know, we talk. So once you've already decided i'm not willing to talk and you kick me out, you kick me out with an entire student body to sleep at the gate for an entire night; these students tomorrow will remember that this SRC we were kicked out with it, and we slept with it there outside, so how do you trust these people to defend you when they themselves could be degenerated and kicked out. So we exist as prefects and reps because really we are expandable and disposable."

The statements above show a sign that management, at times, is found imposing its power upon the students even when not necessary. The first grip of management upon the SRC is them giving a stipend to the SRC, which in a way, makes them subordinates more than the stakeholders they should be. The stipend can make student representatives more loyal to the management than to the students. It makes it difficult to fight for the student cause in a way that they are more like employees. It is alleged that it's even easier to intimidate them as the SRC. Also, the SRC has alleged that when it's leading unrest, it is prerogative to ensure the safety of the university's property and everybody else, but the management does not trust them. They were once thrown out of the university with the entire students while they were supposed to be inside negotiating.

This, above everything, opens a gap where students can no longer trust their representatives. This is an indication of management misusing its power and imposing upon the students. These arguments are supported by Ndamane (2018:59) that due to their environment's inability to meet their requirements, students feel undermined and powerless to speak up about the difficulties they face, and recent violent unrest by students to decolonize higher education curricula have been a sign of rising in solidarity against the oppression that black students have experienced. Ebrahim (2016:20) also states that this exemplifies the power dynamics in our society, where disadvantaged people are not only exploited by the dominant but are also used by the dominant to take advantage of other marginalized people, especially upper-class oppressed people.

Ndamane (2018:11) shared that colonialism is a system of controlling groups or persons over a region, wherein control is strongly tied to power and economics. And it is further stated that it is unethical for academics to misuse their authority over students or for students to abuse academics, and some students have complained that they are unable to express their creativity because they are required to follow academic directives. The demand to examine unequal power relations in educational institutions and throughout society informs Freire's concept of change. Participants also shared these views that the issue of power is not only imposed by management, but it boils down to the lectures as well, who do not have a space for questioning or to be challenged in any way, they are not even willing to have a simple dialogue. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Sbu: *"I believe that they are not doing enough; they can actually do more, we've got lecturers who are giving people a lot of problems, lectures that we cannot engage because you know very well that is if you engage that person you'll be confronted with a lot of issues. We've got victimisation of student leaders. You can't err automatically assume that if I approach you as a stakeholder in the university I've come to fight with you."*

The above argument is indicative of the fact that there are a lot of power issues at play. Those in power go to even the extent of victimising those who stand up for others which, in this case, the SRC. It is alleged that there are lectures that you cannot touch, and if you dare challenge them in any way, your life is made a mess, and you live to regret such. So though the SRC is supposed to have a certain power, it looks like it is suppressed to the core, and they are trying to stand up for what is rightfully theirs. There are consequences which are not pleasant at all. Here power seems to be abused and misused in order to enforce submission. Reinders (2019:85) purports that universities now have broader jurisdictional authority over student disciplinary actions. They have total control over the university since they are not held accountable. The use of force against protesting students also serves as a stark reminder of how institutions repress any criticism and opposition.

Mjema (2013:32) reiterated that speaking about the school's influence on students, it was noted that there appeared to be insufficient student access to the decision-making process and unfortunately, the scenario seems to make university students feel powerless, alone, and anonymous, as well as bored and unimportant. This often leads

to frustration, which fosters an environment conducive to conflict. Obviously, students will also do whatever it takes as well in order to show how powerful they can be as well. Hence they would even go to the extent of causing violent protests.

4.1.4. Neglect of the rural universities after university mergers

Students are complaining about the neglect they experience in rural universities, especially the sister campuses of those in urban areas. Though the university is the same after university amalgamation, students claim there is a vast difference. Visagie and Turok (2021:2) posited that rather than just levels of provision, feelings of injustice (inequality) could give rise to complaints and resentment that ignite social unrest, an example, persistent disparities in amenities between nearby areas send a strong message that the government is unwilling or unable to fairly meet their requirements. This is more or less in agreement with what propels the unrest in the rural universities because when they compare themselves to their counterparts in urban areas, they see the issues of neglect and inequality. It is alleged that they also wish to be fully integrated into the university in the sense that they get the same treatment that the Bloemfontein campuses are getting. They claim that even the number of student unrest bears witness to that in the sense that urban campuses are not have much student unrest as opposed to rural campuses, which is the poorer campus in all spheres. Most students in rural campuses or universities are from poor societies, whereas Bloemfontein students are students from a supposedly well of background. It is important to take into cognisance that the comparison here was made in a university that has various campuses in both rural and urban settings. Students also alleged that there is no student vibrancy on their campus which could be the reason that causes a lot of students to resort to drinking. The following statements from the participants support the above argument:

Mxolisi: *“Have programmes for us, do not make us feel excluded or outside perhaps the university brand. Do not make us feel like we are a separate university campus somewhere there. We need to feel that we belong, sometimes, when they say only a student knows the feeling, we don’t really know the feeling because we honestly do not understand the feeling; up to this day, most of us do not know the feeling. And I am about to leave the system. If I graduate, if everything goes well, I am out of the system without really knowing*

what the university was about. I've come here to take my degree and go. So integrate us, take us into the both."

Bokang: *"And then if go to let's say, the main campus, the main campus has a lot of students who are from well of backgrounds, where there is really no need for protest because everything is there. So even at university, most of these afflictions affect the poor or whatever they are not affecting them."*

Mxolisi: *"So a lot of issues, student life, there is no student life in Qwaqwa, there is no vibrancy in this campus, students get bored, and when they get bored, even in the community when the youth gets bored they engage in activities that, well sometimes not justifiable."*

The above statements are indications of the plights the students go through and their frustrations. The fees between the campuses are the same, the biggest question students are asking is why the resources and facilities are not the same. This is the reason behind students wanting to move from rural university to urban universities. Nel (2007:2) viewed that despite the rise in multi-campus universities in South Africa brought on by state-driven mergers, these merged universities face a number of challenges in ensuring that constituent campuses are managed in a way that fosters a high standard of learning for all students. It is also indicated that this is especially important because most of South Africa's integrated, multi-campus institutions include campuses that traditionally have not had quality parity regarding the available infrastructure, support services, and facilities. Though one can claim that the movement is because of the frequent unrest, the poor conditions leading to unrest is an issue that needs to be recognised. Due to these challenges, students feel that the other campuses are neglected in comparison with the main campus. They don't have the necessary infrastructure and other educational resources. Hence there are more unrest on the main campus, which is more resourced than other campuses. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Tata: *"students want to leave for Bloemfontein, but if their reason is frequent unrest and because of stress, this destructs the numbers accommodated at Bloemfontein."*

This statement confirms that a certain number of students are no longer compatible with being on this campus based on the frequent unrest, and students are claiming it's not only because of such but the conditions of the university or the campus its self. Based on the above discussions, it must be noted that unrest are attracted by the lack

of service delivery as in the demands and wellbeing of students not taken care of. The amalgamation of universities has brought a lot of challenges to those universities in rural areas that are amalgamated with those in the cities.

It is important to note that obviously those who are in rural settings from the time of amalgamation were behind with infrastructure compared with their counterparts, which puts more pressure on the current management to bring them on par. This is also what causes students to want to transfer from Qwaqwa to Bloemfontein. An important point raised by Karodia, Shaikh and Soni (2015:334) is that in addition to centralization and poor management, some administrative offices, like the central purchase office, exercised complete authority over others and destroyed supporting roles. Due to amalgamation, the power was centralised. As a result, the other campuses depend solely on the main campus, which causes the neglect because those in power are not on the smaller campuses and are not entirely aware of what is happening.

4.1.5. Violent behaviour stems from the society

South Africa, a new democratic country, is clothed with violent unrest for service delivery from all angles of the country. Every now and then, there are reports of violent unrest in different municipalities and different metropolitan cities. It looks like between the leaders of the society, there is a huge gap that has resulted in people believing that the gap can only be closed through unrest, and at times, the leaders have proven that to be through because they seem to respond to the needs of the society when there are violent unrests. The university students that are currently housed in different institutions of learning come from the very same society that negotiate through property destruction with its leaders. Some, if not most, of the university students were born and cultured into such a society. It is in them to believe that whenever your leaders are not willing to submit to your needs, take it to the street and destroy whatever might be valuable to some leaders. It is safer to assume, therefore, that unrest have become the new culture of South African society, and because of this, the university is not immune and has been directly affected by this. It cannot be ignored that by the time a student reaches university, it is almost impossible to unlearn the customs he/she is accustomed to. The following statements from the participants support the above argument:

Officer 2: *“Charity begins at home; the biggest problem comes from society. Apartheid has played a role.”*

Officer 3: *“At the same time, we should not destroy what we already have, so that after a fight, yes, we have, we were fighting for, but we’ve lost something else, and that is something happening in the community we live in.”*

Mxolisi: *“So it’s like we burn ourselves in order to ensure that we get something out of it. It’s like that thing that Christians did back in the day, chastising oneself as a means of praise; we are burning a clinic because we want this and it is a practice that perhaps emanates from the communities out there because you’ll find someone burning a library for a clinic, then when the clinic is finished they burn the clinic so that the library gets rebuild. So iii it is a pervasive cycle that is just unending.”*

Participants in the above statements reveal that university unrests are not only a university problem but they are a societal issue. It means that when addressing the problem, overcoming it must also be taken to the level of society. It cannot only be left in the hands of the university management and students but society must be involved when dealing with the unrest. In relation to the above revelations, Langley (2018:89) notes that the university community, while diverse, is a microcosm of society and is made up of thinking people from all walks of life, irrespective of their cultural background, age, or gender. This statement supports the notion that societal actions are to blame for what is happening in the university because the university, in a way, mimics the broader society as the students come from troubled society. Murage *et al.* (2018:2) concur with the above by arguing that the issues faced by university student leaders have also been influenced by society. By encouraging their own children, parents are not exercising their parental leadership. Young people are not given the attention, care, love, discipline, or training they need to become responsible adults. Protests are a necessary part of lives, they have brought the change we see now, and it is the right enshrined in the constitution. The following statements from the participants support the above argument:

Tata: *“Society is moving to a space of entitlement” in matric, you do all this with no remuneration at university. Its better you’re paid to study 12 learners. This goes back to the question of solving certain issues; this is more of a social issue.”*

Tata2: *“given the nature of the country, the institution is a dual state of what is happening to the communities, so if they use violence in the communities, they still use the same ways at school.”*

In this statement, the same sentiments are shared that university is facing the challenges brought to it by the society it seeks to educate. This obviously cannot be achieved by only educating the students, but a part must be directed to society more than to the university students. It is evident that to transform the students, society as well must be transformed towards thinking or engaging other means than violent protests to make their demands heard. It also indicates that there is a sense of entitlement from both society and the university students, there is no sense of responsibility at all, and people have grown to get things done for them without doing much. Participants emphasise the fact that the university is a victim of the troubled society more than it's suffering because of its problems.

Noyoo (2018:1) argues that it believes that larger and more pervasive structural barriers to societal advancement are the cause of the demonstrations and it goes on to say that the former are remnants of colonialism and apartheid because South African society has not undergone the necessary transformation and because social and economic exclusionary patterns still exist there 24 years after the country's democratic transition. This further strengthens the belief that society is playing a significant role in the uncontrollable unrest that ravage universities. As a result, African students' demonstrated culture of violence is a product of ingrained ideologies they inherited from their parents.

It is obvious that university students in Africa have inherited the violent culture that was fostered by the generation before them during the colonial era or the struggle for freedom (Fomunyam, 2017:50). This notion indicates that this phenomenon is not only facing South Africa as a country but the African continent as a whole as most of the African countries were once colonised. This is where the theory of decoloniality comes in. Also, to conquer violent behaviour during unrest, it needs to address society. It can not only be the university that is expected to solve this. University students come to university having already learned about a lot of issues, so it becomes difficult for them to unlearn such cultures when they are already in university. Hence it was revealed that also helping this case would be through thorough orientation and proper integration of high school students.

4.2. Possible solutions as a means to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities

This section deliberates on the possible solutions to reconstruct the relationship between the management of the university and the students. This was done in relation to objective number two of the study. The following themes were discovered from the data as means that can be used: development of proper structures to manage the unrests, the Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making and developing common ground between the stakeholders. Data has revealed the above as the strategies that can be utilised to rebuild the relationship between the two stakeholders.

4.2.1. Development of proper structures

During the discussion with students, it was established that the university relies heavily on external security to manage student unrests, which at times proves to be a problem especially when it involves private security companies. Private security companies have a direct interest, and again when there are more student protests, so relying on them has a detrimental effect, and in a way, they can be perpetrators as well, it was alleged. So in order to have, amongst other things a safe environment for both the students and the staff, the security must be well trained, especially on crowd control. Langley (2018:20) states that university administrators may use the first indications of unrest as a prompt to activate law enforcement peacekeeping measures, but students may regard this as oppressive and justification for more virulent reprisal.

So the use of militarisation of campuses is not much of a strategy, but to students, it can be perceived as a means of provocation. But if they can utilise their university securities who are properly trained, the students will understand as they always deal with them from day to day. Omodan (2021:13) indicated that the employment of security forces by school administration during protests, such as the Mobile Police and military, is viewed as authoritarian and anti-humanitarian. These appear to be the driving forces behind students' continued use of coercive tactics to enforce their demands and defend their rights, particularly when they perceive university administration as their purported oppressor and feel marginalized, short-changed, dehumanized, colonized, and oppressed. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Mxolisi shared this view: *“One way to manage unrest is through our securities, they must train these ones here with crowd control, and we cannot err run with our securities. The securities they run as well. When there is a protest they run away, and this opens an opportunity for PSCs, these private securities companies (PSCs) yhea to come here. And one’s really, it defeats my logic to say you’ll bring someone with a vested economic interest to solve a problem that makes them money.”*

The statement confirms that universities are bringing in the law enforcement and private security companies because the university securities are not properly trained to control and manage crowds. This brings in or opens an avenue for the militarisation of our campuses and also a possibility of perpetrating the whole issue of unrest, including exploitation. Students do not respond well to the bringing of outside force to the campus, making matters worse than it’s supposed to. University should be able to rely solely on campus security without much backup, which sometimes brings chaos. The following statement from the participant support the above argument:

MRS: *“Orientation, students must be taught the right approaches in making their opinions heard, that violence is not answered to anything, especially not things or properties that benefit them most. Again, the place of educating students cannot be neglected.”*

University is an institution of learning; as the above suggestion indicates students must be taught the right practices that the university expects from them. As they enter university they must be taught to ensure that even if they engage in unrest but its peaceful unrest, and they need to know all the proper channels. Participants also encouraged the integration of the students not only to rely on orientation alone which is an event butent, but have programmes that are meant be for new students. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Mxolisi: *“After preparation, they must be prepared to also integrate high school students to the university; ask the university what program have you done for the high school students, besides the orientation, because orientation is just one thing err one day even to talk about whatever to play whatever games, but what have you done to integrate them to show them that this is a different environment and this is how we operate. Because we are coming from the same communities where protest is the order of the day, we are coming from very poor communities where you only see a drop of water once you’ve gone,*

err block the bridge somewhere or burned a clinic somewhere. We come from communities where protests is officials is the only language they understand, but now they are in a different space.”

This statement confirms that people are from a society that has grown to believe that in order to be heard, you need to take it to the street and burn something. To get rid of this mentality, the university, therefore, must by all means to, teach the students about democratic principles. Najib (2018:147) indicates that if higher education is to address the different difficulties, institutions must promote learning at the personal, institutional, and societal levels. As a result, leadership development training programs must be a key component of all HEI. This is indicative of the fact that this goes beyond the university walls.

Onivehu (2021:10) states that university students may take part in demonstrations over a variety of subjects, whether primarily associated with the university system or from urgent, ongoing societal issues and the larger community. Once again the, society comes up and trending issues. In other words, society directly or indirectly affects the frequency of student unrest. Just a simple example, this rural campus is situated in a small town that is always engulfed with unrest for various demands, and one way of the other, the students are learning one or two things from that. The environment itself is influential. Hence the university should not fold its arms. Those coming to university must be properly integrated to unlearn what has been learned from society.

4.2.2. Involvement of stakeholders in decision making

Decision-making is one thing that plays a significant role in ensuring the relationship between stakeholders, as alluded to in early parts of this research. It has been revealed earlier that amongst other things that students are complaining about is the failure to involve them as part of the stakeholders when making decisions. So to manage the student unrest, it is imperative to bring all the stakeholders to the table to ensure that whatever idea is sold to the university community, the stakeholders must first be part of it. In those stakeholders, students must be part. Murray (2018:1096) posited that even though many colleges have begun implementing sustainable policies and practices to encourage sustainability, there are many obstacles to their success. Although the causes of the lack of adoption are debatable, academics concur that

success depends on the involvement of campus stakeholders, particularly students. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Tata: *“Collaborative ways of doing things in diverse groups representation of both students and management and other structures dealing with all issues; or dedicate a team or have a unit for unrests with diversity where all groups are represented may have a better way of managing it might have an impact.”*

The above point is emphatic that to solve the issues that are bringing unrest you need all the stakeholders of the institutions working together at whatever issue or idea that is bothering the institutions. This is where everyone who matters is represented. In other words, so are their interests, and representation is what students have been mourning for the longest time. With important organizations, relations were forged through collaborative leadership emphasising students, relationships with the local community, outside organizations, internal co-workers, and leadership strategies (Najib, 2018:153). Sikweyiya and Nkosi (2017:2) noted that a large portion of the public unrest agenda entails interaction with stakeholders and/or state leaders in public institutions, it is not surprising that men tend to be more visible or are encouraged to take the lead. This research further revealed that leaders empowered and engaged faculty and student leaders through collaborative leadership. Likewise, forming alliances with outside organizations was crucial. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Officer3: *“whenever there is a problem, the SRC must take the demands from the students and the SRC meet with the management and management meet all the stakeholders, including security and set a meeting with the different departments. To find strategies to solve that particular problem, in order to control it so that it doesn't get out of hand.”*

The notion above is that the involvement of all the stakeholders' unrest can be manageable. It must be noted that stakeholders are not only the management and students alone. Onivehu (2021:12) supports the above notion by stating that student unrest can be reduced by implementing effective communication techniques, stable and reasonable tuition rates, student participation in decision-making, and good leadership behaviour. Singh (2017:130) posited that despite the fact that full participation in Students' Union events is not required, most students do so, and

students are essential in determining the course of the country's advancement and development policies, as a result the students union opposes any government decision that is not in the interests of the general welfare and exerts pressure for a change in policy.

This shows that from the development of policies for harmony in the institution, students must be involved and buy into the idea to abide by it. Obviously, as the customers, it is imperative that the policies be in favour of the students more than anyone else. Luescher-Mamashela (2011:8) proposed that the institution benefits when students participate in decision-making because it fosters transparency and builds confidence among all parties involved. Involving all the stakeholders in decision-making, including the students, solves many problems because everyone is abreast of what is happening in the institution. Oni *et al.* (2015:69) asserted that involving students in decision-making encourages them to fully own the decisions that are taken rather than rejecting management-imposed choices, which in turn helps to calm them down since they know their interests are being considered.

4.2.3. Developing common ground between the stakeholders.

Communication has been picked up as one way to be utilised to find common ground between the stakeholders. It is important for an organisation to survive and keep proper communication channels, and poor communication can prove detrimental to the same communication. The leaders of institutions need effective communication abilities to create institutional messages that cut through the confusion and turmoil (Najib, 2018:153). In arguing the importance of communication, Langley's (2018:79) research findings confirmed broad agreement that communication is a critical aspect that influences anger and triggers violent protest, particularly when it comes to problems like tuition costs and delays in financial aid administration, as well as issues like not having a voice in decisions, potential exclusions, and demands not met on time.

The arguments above indicate that violent unrests are inevitable with poor communication. Many participants in their responses kept on referring to communication as a root cause of the violent unrest ravaging universities. Participants have revealed that a lot of problems and what fuels unrest with violent behaviour at

times it's mealy because of communication breakdowns or poor means of communication. With communication, it is important to note that, at times, possible misunderstanding needs to be taken into consideration as well. The following statements from the participants support the above argument:

Officer: *“A lot of unrest is due to lack of communication, e.g. whenever there is a problem, the SRC must take the demands from the students and the SRC meet with the management, and management meets all the stakeholders, including security and set a meeting with the different departments.”*

Officer 2 (Siyabonga): *“Lack of communication is the main cause, I've been working in UFS for a long time, I was once a student from 2017-2020. Some of things happening it's because the institution and management take time to respond. Simple thing that could be addressed leads to a violent strike. Something that they could respond to easily, they take time to respond, and it leads to a strike. Students end up being anxious waiting for the answer and end up engaging in a strike.”*

Sbu: *“Some strikes happen because of communication breakdown –some SRC communication statements are not read properly by the masses because they are too long, then they jump to the conclusion; the opposition take that vacuum to lead a protest to tell students that this and this is happening, but masses do not read due data struggles, which is problematic for the SRC to help”*

The arguments above are an indication that communication can save the situation of unrest if used properly, if not, reduce them to a minimum. However, it is vital to note that there has to be an elimination of misunderstanding, because the same communication can fuel the fire if misread. As one statement above indicated that sometimes students jump to conclusions without getting the meaning of a communique, and opportunists use such gaps. The university needs to close the communication gaps and better the means of communication to close communication breakdown. With communication also comes the turnaround response time, management is accused of sometimes taking time to respond even to simple demands, and that makes the students agitated and it opens up a gap that is used by those who perpetuate the instability of the universities. If taken lightly, it creates an

element of a vacuum where anyone can lead, as indicated by the participants, especially those with wrong motives.

Though communication is sometimes there, it should not be left in the hands of students to interpret the meaning, but it must be clear and precise to eliminate misunderstanding. Communication breakdown has been mentioned as another factor at play during unrests that must be taken into cognisance. Frieg (2012:134) shared that communication is a crucial component of a stakeholder dialogue's coherence because the dialogue's direction and outcomes largely depend on effective communication on both levels. Kiboiy (2013:195) emphasises the fact that serious hostility, lack of communication and the presence of rumours produce widespread panic among the student body and the administration, which frequently results in decisions that have unfavourable outcomes. This argument concurs with the fact that communication and lack thereof affects not only the students but the entire institution and its administration, leading to questionable decisions. One of the participants also shared that:

Mxolisi: *“Communication, in any relationship that we have, communication is key. Without the communication, there is no way the relationship will continue. In a relationship where you know my weakness, and I know yours, we minimise a lot of things that can happen (expectations); if you don’t speak, I could think you will afford to do something only to find you can’t, if you spoke I would understand even if it hurts I will still understand (keep us prepared and in the light not in darkness). If there is no communication, nothing will happen. Best medicine between students and management.”*

This emphasises the notion that to maintain and sustain a good relationship for a longer period and trust between university management and students and student leaders, communication is key. Without proper communication, expectations are not communicated, and as a result, they break the trust and the relationship itself. This view also indicates a huge possibility of eradicating unrest if communication is properly maintained. Dentlinger supports this view (2017:103) greater emphasis and attention must be directed to efficient communication between all stakeholders if both staff and management relations are to improve. Once again, this notion demonstrates the importance of effective communication between the stakeholders for the stability of an

organisation. A relationship that is healthy is entirely based on the effective means of communication between those involved in the relationship. From the above views, it can be deduced that management and students need to work on their communication channels if they want to see the university thrive without these violent unrest.

4.3. Finding the conditions to sustain the solutions

In the following part, we'll go through several potential strategies for finding lasting solutions to stop student unrest. The explored solutions were entirely based on and guided by the third objective of the study. The following, albeit not exclusive, methods can be used to accomplish this the development of effective conflict resolution techniques, the creation of a plan to overcome obstacles to the implementation of solutions, the avoidance of political interference, and, finally, the improvement of infrastructure conditions or the implementation of resolutions are all important steps.

4.3.1. Meaningful negotiations

Students in university come from society, so in a way, the university is a mirror of society. Our society has not healed from the past injustices of our history and certainly not repented from how they dealt with the systems of the apartheid, and that has been carried over to the new dispensation of democracy. Unrest is a democratic right of all South Africans but with responsibility. But to our society, it has become the new norm of negotiation. The governance in all areas seems to have endorsed this element in the sense that the needs of the people are only answered when violent unrest happens. This mentality is what students bring in. so unrest have been adopted to be the way of negotiating, and it cannot be the way in university. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Tata: *“The slight positive is that students get heard easily if they do this, but it’s risky.”*

During unrest, when students or even the society gets what they were demonstrating for, it sends an indirect message that says in order to be heard, one must take it to the street and demonstrate, but yet forgetting the negative consequences of such acts. So a platform for meaningful negotiations should be opened for both management and students. Murage (2019:5) is off the opinion that encouraging dialogue between student leaders and university administration boosts trust. Student leaders must embrace discussion and dialogue when dealing with university administration and use

deadlines to drive action. Negotiation skills were also crucial during student protests in order to secure agreements that would improve the overall situation. The following statements from the participants support the above argument:

Sbu: *“Really, we understand that we are not part of management. We are only part of co-governance, but eng talk to us, you know, we talk.”*

Lerato: *“talk to each other, visit each other, have programmes for our students, talk to our students, and you’ll understand that perhaps they are not what you think they are, I think that’s what we can do.”*

Officer 3: *“There are so many platforms they can use to engage the management (why should students engage management not the other way around) sitting together on the table. They should ask for meetings with the management, from the SRC level and their unions (engage other SRCs from other institutions) that we have such a problem how we can solve it and at the same time preserve our academic time.”*

The above arguments confirm the obvious missing link that propels the unrest in engagements and meaningful negotiations. Students claim that management is not always willing to talk to them until it’s late. Students also claim to be willing to listen, but nobody wants to talk to them. This is evident in the preceding section, where management would rather threaten the students than reason with them. It is also imperative to note that students, at times, can be stubborn in the sense that if things don’t go their way, they would rather take cause chaos. This is where meaningful negotiations come in.

Omodan (2020:314) posits that, in negotiating or problem-solving meeting, where minimal students leaders are present against the whole members of the university senate, the voice of the student leaders may not be heard. Therefore, in implementing this, the management of the universities must find a way around this to ensure consistent negotiation and dialogue. This is in line with the recommendation of Odu (2014:37) that dialogue and effective governance are the most fundamental techniques for crisis management and prevention. Students must be well represented for meaningful negotiations to ensure their demands and voices are heard. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Tata: *“Nothing that defeats negotiations; put matters on the table and negotiate in good faith.”*

This statement indicates that if the university management and students can be opened about issues troubling both the management and students and discuss them openly. It cannot be disputed the fact that maybe the missing part in this is negotiating in good faith. It looks like the university management does not fully trust the students, including the students representatives. Van Reenen (2019:24) concurs with this view by saying on campuses, and in the surrounding areas, students have started acting violently toward people and causing property damage because they have engaged in negotiations in bad faith. Kiboiy (2013:195) also indicates that when student leaders experienced alienation, their method of dealing with management was confrontational and would probably result in a strike. However, when they viewed an open and accommodating system, their negotiation method reduced the possibility of a violent protest. Onivehu (2021:12) also argued for the management and control of student unrest through negotiation, bargaining, reconciliation, mediation, arbitration, and intervention techniques.

4.3.2. Development of conflict resolution strategies

Lack of communication between students and management is a serious cause of the constant conflict that is witnessed in our universities. Universities need to implement strategies that will effectively manage the conflict-causing issues. Amongst those strategies is a constant dialogue between the university management and the students. The aforementioned endorsed an earlier study by Davis *et al.* (2015:39) and Omodan (2020:314), which found that regular communication between student representatives and university authorities will bridge the communication gap. This will foster a harmonious relationship between the representatives of students and the university administration, which will eventually reduce frequent and preventable student unrest on the campuses of most universities. This statement shows that the absence of conflict in the university community is socially synonymous with the absence of vandalism, which will protect the campus from any kind of anti-social behaviour (Omodan 2020:7). The following statements from the participants support the above argument:

***Mxolisi:** “One of them is management coming to us; main campus management must come. They mustn’t come only when it’s time for them to receive memorandums of demands and, they must come to us, interact with us, know us because the campus management only knows us. Campus*

management, at times, when they say this is the issue, say it's an institutional issue. It has to go there and come back. We don't know our management; we only see them on graduations and see them at the next graduation. We are this campus that exists somewhere there. Sometimes we even feel forgotten, that we even think they remember that we are there or they don't. So engagement dialogue err err would help us forge a common path because most of us are here to learn and grow ourselves and also grow our campus, we want our campus to also be relevant in the community of campuses."

Bokang: *"It is important to address students openly and honestly about the issues, listen and give them a chance to explain their issues and the university must listen and act on issues, and they should provide direction."*

Students in this rural university campus feel that there is a big gap between them and the management mainly based in the city university campus. It is alleged students and management does not engage students in any form except when there is unrest that is taking place. It is also confirmed that dialogue can be used a method to curb the unrests that are taking place at the university. Management can be kept abreast of the needs of the students if there is consistent dialogue. Participants are also for honest and open mass meetings for management to receive student issues and respond openly and honestly. An honest engagement between the management and students can save a lot of things, including property destruction and even save people's lives. Unrest have become an order of the day, and they are a part of a democratic country, but they don't have to be violent, but rather a platform of engagement in a way. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Sbu: *"And also, when management does not engage us in good faith, to the people who deployed us, it is as if we are failing. It is as if we are betraying them and we are not acting in their interest."*

This statement confirms that even when management engages with the student representative, it is just for protocols' sakes not to find the solutions it should be seeking to address the needs and demands of students. In fact, it is seen as another thing that seems to be adding to the problems that are causing students' demands. The management has rendered SRC ineffective. And it was alleged that this is done through delaying tactics and students are very impatient and if not answered quickly

they engage in extreme measures to get the management's attention. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Sbu: *“Even when it comes to proper engagement and dialogue, there is no dialogue here. You only engage management when its war, when there is actually an issue that one cannot bear any longer. It took successive load-shedding for the campus to realise there is a need for a micro-grid. So all of these issues coming together, they cook up the storm, we have issues out there of people who are being killed. There is a security company that is being deployed by crime, but crime does not stop, and all of these issues, its these minor issues that could be solved, come together to actually form a much bigger problem that then ends up creating protests and protests leads to more protests and then it becomes just that issue.”*

In this argument, once again, you can pick up the missing link, which is the engagement of the students and other stakeholders, which can be used to solve all the mysteries behind the students' unrest. Dialogue again is coming up as one of the means that can be and must be utilised to bring together the different heads and ideas, which ultimately eradicate the problem. Rohn *et al.* (2014:150) indicated in the literature review that innovative, shared intelligence could advance in a dialogue where stakeholders are arranged into a specific communication setting to create a common social space. People must dissociate from the behavioural patterns that guide their daily lives in such an environment and consider their own perceptual models. So when stakeholders come together obviously from different levels putting their heads together brings a solution. The utilization of dialogue was among the top strategies that university officials should pursue successfully reducing student unrest (Davies (2015:27). Dialogue is a means to eliminate assumptions and ultimately eliminate conflict as everybody is on par with what others think and what is happening in the entire university.

4.4. Develop a strategy to overcome threats to the solutions.

The section below was used to deliberate on strategies that can be used to ensure that threats that might arise are overcome. The deliberation is based on objective four of the study, which was to explore the likely threat that could hinder the implementation of the possible solution. These strategies are solely based on what has come up from the data that was collected from the research participants. Several themes came up

as the means to overcome the threats. These are the strategies: Avoiding Political interference, Improving the infrastructure conditions or Implementation of resolutions, Neglect of the rural university, and violent behaviour stemming from society and communication. Literature has extensively revealed that if these can be implemented properly, many unrests can be avoided. It is further revealed by literature that some of the issues causing unrests are the effects of the universities amalgamations which brought neglect to the smaller campuses which, if improved on, can be avoided. Another thing that was discovered is that violent behaviour seen during the unrest stems from the society, and to win this, it needs to be dealt with by society.

4.4.1. Avoiding Political interference

Universities are an entity that is not in isolation, but it is found within a society, therefore, one way or the other it, gets affected like any other structure by the political and social atmosphere. Many students studying in rural universities are funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which directly affects the universities. This funding is a government financial aid scheme, which is directly affected by the political landscape and directly affects universities. A lot of unrest happened in this university, especially the rural campuses, amongst many things, were due to the NSFAS issues. For the past two years, South Africa has been attacked by many national disasters, one of which was COVID-19. This demanded many financial changes, which is alleged to have even affected NSFAS, which affected students. Therefore, it is up to the university to plan for such unforeseen circumstances to avoid destabilising our institutions' smooth running. The following statements from the participants support the above argument:

Lubabalo: *“NSFAS, well, that’s an external thing that, err, we cannot control; it is something that is entirely on the government.”*

Tata: *“Government funding has its own challenges money had to be channeled to COVID-19, and to sustain the fund, money had to be taken somewhere, but the government has to be proactive with its way of doing in that. This affects both students and the university.”*

A lot of unrest that happened were due to the NSFAS maladministration and changes, so universities should plan ahead to counteract such problems that are sometimes politically motivated. This is what Omodan (2021:13) argued in a way: Situations of instability in South Africa raise the possibility that universities and related government

organizations may not have met their obligations to guarantee a calm university system. It is reasonable to question whether the facilitative leadership style is dead or has not been properly incorporated into the system as a result. If the university does not step up and find means to curb this, unrest will be the order of the day. It can not only be the government that must be proactive, but even the university itself also needs to be proactive in such cases because students look up to it. NSFAS funding has created an element that makes the students feel like it is the university funding them. Maybe this is because in the past, while students were waiting for their allowances, the university would advance them. And that when it's not happening, students feel as if the university is the one that is holding them hostage, and they retaliate. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Mohau: *“NSFAS are matters that are not handled at an institutional level that makes students take matters into their own hands when they feel tricked then they take matters into their own hands.”*

This confirms the argument that there is a gap between government and university that needs to be closed, which makes students believe that the university is tricking them when it comes to handling their funds. Universities can close this gap through proper communication channels with students. The following statement from the participant supports the above argument:

Lerato: *“whenever there are burning issues we find out when we consult feedback is not favourable to students or delay propaganda starts or political structures or organizations perpetuate certain issues or narrative using the media and students take matters into their own hands, students are Very impatient.”*

The above claims support the narrative that other unrests are because of political factors at play which are disseminated by political organizations in the university. In most of our universities, the student political organisations have their mother bodies in the political sphere of society, so one way or the other such organisations have an interest in the institutions to push their narratives. Therefore when institutions are led by their oppositions, they use whatever means they have to destabilise universities as they know it renders the whole government inadequate, in this case, the unrest. Concurring with this view is Najib (2018:149) by arguing that the difficulties caused by political motivation were among the noteworthy findings on crisis management involving student protests.

When the management did not meet the demands of the many political groups growing on campuses, student protests started. However with proper communication between university management, SRC and students at large this can be clamped down. It remains crucial that prompt implementations back prompt judgments because political motivations drove the student protests. Murage (2019:3) As a result, universities continue to be fertile grounds for political dissent, activism, and violence, which is made worse by inadequate government financing resulting in decreasing the quality of services and facilities offered at all universities. Universities are still a site of student protest in the modern day, regardless of how the government responds to them, whether through authoritarianism or negotiation. Though one could argue that NSFAS is not political issue, it is in the sense that it is also affected by the political landscape.

4.4.2. Improving the infrastructure conditions or Implementation of resolutions.

The poor infrastructural conditions have propelled many student unrests across the African continent. This is from residences, lecture halls and even the technological infrastructure. According reinforces this argument of Jacob and Lawan (2020:165) that a shortage of adequate infrastructure presents a significant obstacle to the effective management of universities in Nigeria. Many universities lack the necessary infrastructure to conduct effective teaching and research programs.

From time to time, students engage in violent protests in order to ensure their demands are heard. However, it is important to note that while fighting for the improvement of the infrastructure, they also happen to destroy the already available infrastructure, which in a way, is standing the progress and improvements of the conditions. Just recently, the students on the selected campus, as noted above they, destroyed a student lab and a clinic while protesting for other needs they are having. Students are accusing the management of purposefully ignoring their needs even when they have an opportunity to do so. Mgimba and Mwila (2022:17) argued that when it comes to improving student performance and resolving issues with access to the educational system, school infrastructure is crucial. Students can study and stay in school pleasantly with the help of infrastructure such as chairs, tables, desks, lighting systems, sanitary facilities, and internet services. At the same time, teachers and other staff members efficiently do their job-related activities.

On the other hand it is important to note that the number of students attending universities has increased dramatically. Due to this, universities' infrastructure, which was initially designed to accommodate a small number of students, is now under additional stress, and as a result, essential learning facilities, including libraries, classrooms, and laboratories, are deteriorating quickly (Murage *et al.*, 2019:2). Congestion has also become more commonplace. In other words, when students are fighting for the improvement of infrastructure, it's not a matter of comfort, but it directly impacts how they perform academically. The above argument indicates that nothing is done, but the demand for access to university and its resources are growing more than the supply. The following statements from the participants support the above argument:

Sbu: *“Some it's just General maintenance of a university; a lump sum is paid to the university by NSFAS, for the past two years were not here, so surely they could have improved the state of the residences, so students have a problem with residences.”*

Mxolisi: *“We are looking at errr issues like infrastructure in the QwaQwa campus, there's a pothole that side near the residences. We have very old residences very very old, everything it hurts to see the entire campus crumbling around you when you feel that something can be done, but nothing is being done. So it is those issues where you feel like you are subjected to substandard or second-grade facilities when others are actually living.”*

This statement is an indication that even when there is an opportunity that can be utilised to improve the conditions of the infrastructure, the university management prefers to turn a blind eye. During covid-19 times students stay home for approximately a year or two, so by then, the management could have pushed for a lot of structural changes that will cater to the needs of the learners. This, in a way, was also an opportunity to counter the students' complaints and demands. The students feel subjected to substandard as compared to other campuses of the same university, which sometimes propels the agitation of students. It cannot be disputed that we are moving towards the fourth industrial revolution, which is the age of technology, so the infrastructure must bear witness to that as the students are demanding. Davies *et al.* (2015:27) purport that one of the essential procedures that university officials should pursue, among other things, is the provision of adequate infrastructure on campuses.

Gontina, Fitria and Martha (2021:150) emphasised that the schools' infrastructure and amenities are another aspects that influence teacher performance, and the effectiveness of education is greatly impacted by the infrastructure of the educational system meaning they are effective means for achieving educational objectives. School buildings and furnishings, learning aids including labs, teaching aides, and bookkeeping, as well as educational media that may be organized into audio-visuals using specialized tools, are all examples of educational facilities. Onivehu (2021:12) revealed that higher education institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria, considered the provision of improvements in student welfare as well as steady and affordable tuition costs as effective control methods for student crises.

Choudhary (2018:756) mentioned that the demoralization of Indian students could be directly linked to the state of the universities, the lack of adequate and proper facilities, the lack of sufficient and accessible professors, the incompetent and stiff-necked or bureaucratic university management, the lack of facilities for co-curricular activities, and the increasingly limited job prospects even after graduating with the highest degree. This is more or less the same thing that the participants of this study were complaining about. In actual fact, it's clear that improving the infrastructure will automatically help reduce and eradicate unrest.

4.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the data collected was analysed using the thematic data analysis method based on Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic analysis. As found in the literature review in chapter two, the data that was collected was analysed based on the study's objective and aims of the study as well as the themes thereof. Data collected pointed out the need to find strategies that can be used to minimise the students' unrest. Challenges that have been pointed out are the lack of proper structure to manage unrest, failure to involve the students in decision making and power differentials between Students and university authorities are the challenges that cause the unrests. Further to the challenges, data revealed neglect of the rural universities after university mergers and violent behaviour stems for the society as other serious challenges that cause unrest.

The discussion further particularised on the possible solutions as a means to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities, which was the development of proper structures, involvement of stakeholders in decision making and the development of common ground between the stakeholders. This chapter also discoursed strategies that will overcome threats to the implementation of the solution, which pointed out to avoiding political interference and improving the infrastructure conditions or implementation of resolutions as deliberated in chapter two. The above strategies proved an answer to the question of the study, which is to ultimately lead to a peaceful environment in the higher education system, which also embraces democratic principles. This also resonates well with the theory that underpins the study by eliminating the features of colonialism in our universities.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Introduction

In this section of the study, findings were discussed as per the results obtained from collected data. Conclusion and recommendations followed for the management of the student unrest in South African universities. The findings were discussed in relation to the challenges associated with the management of students' unrest, the possible solutions, the conditions to sustain the solutions and develop a strategy that will overcome threats to the implementation of solutions. The aim of the study was to enhance the management of the prevalence of students' unrest at South African universities to ensure a peaceful university education and its productivity.

The question that the study responded to was: How can the prevalence of student unrest cum crisis be managed in South African universities to ensure a peaceful university system.

The research was guided by the following objectives as stated in chapter one:

1. Examine the challenges associated with the management of student unrest in the university system.
2. Highlight possible solutions as a means to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities.
3. Examine the conditions suitable for the solutions to strive.
4. Explore the likely threat that could hinder the implementation of the possible Solutions

5.1. Discussion of Findings

This chapter of the study discussed the findings of the study in details based on the themes discussed above. The findings were based on the following themes: Lack of proper structure to manage unrest, failure to involve students in decision making, power differentials between students and university authorities, neglect of the rural universities (who are sister campuses of urban ones after university mergers) and violent behaviour stems from the society. Further the Possible solutions as a means to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities were discussed together with finding the conditions to sustain the solutions. The second section the conclusion of the study was drawn followed by the recommendations. The

Limitations of the study were also made known as well as the recommendations for further research and the last part of the discussion was summary of the study

5.1.1. Lack of proper structure to manage unrest

Upon data collection and what the participants have revealed, it was indicated that there is a lack of proper structures to manage the students' unrests that continue ravaging the rural universities. Student unrest is part of the higher education system, as part of democratic principles, but the biggest challenge is how they are managed. Most universities, as noted in the literature, often experience common causes of the unrest, though, at times, there are new issues that crop up. University relies heavily on the use of private security companies and police force which is a means of militarizing the institutions to control student unrest. It was evident even during the period of #FeesMustFall, where some students were injured or wounded due to the use of force by such a method of managing the student unrest. Instead of using in-house securities, they outsource for securities to control the unrest.

In chapter two, Mjema (2013:130) noted that the university's administration uses intimidating tactics, among other measures, to quell student dissatisfaction. Universities heavily rely on outsourced security because they lack the resources to simply keep the public order (Annual report, 2018:6). It is what the participant revealed that the university does not have trained security to control public order, which poses a challenge to the management of the unrests and has created a gap that has been used to perpetrate some of the unrests seen by our universities. This is one of the reasons the study used the decolonisation theory, because this element has been used for the past eras to control the revolutionary movements.

Students feel that the university is reactive more than proactive to the demands of students, which leads to the instability that is seen in higher institutions of learning. In this, the biggest culprit is NSFAS and financial issues that are causing many of the unrests seen in universities. Throughout the years, NSFAS has taken time to respond to funds issues to the students, but it has been found that universities have no clear strategy to curb the challenge. The university, when coming to issues of funds and students, is only responding when there is unrest. The funders are a perpetrator in this regard, but the university is not protecting itself in any way or its clients, for that matter,

who happened to be the students. This is what Mdepa (2022:107) that students mobilized to protest fee increases in 2015 and 2016 as a result of inadequate government support for higher education, a HEI budget crisis, and personal financial issues among students. Seven years later, this is still one of the challenges that have not been properly dealt with to curb the unrest.

In the past, universities used to advance students based on their funding sources, but to some universities, this just discontinued happening, and there was no other method to close the gap and students got agitated.

5.1.2. Failure to involve students in decision making

During the deliberations, it emerged that students are not adequately involved in decision-making and that is another challenge that stirs up havoc in universities. During the literature review, it was discussed that, amongst other things, the university administration is using mostly the authoritative style of leadership, which fails to acknowledge students as part of stakeholders (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011:8; Kipro *et al.*, 2011:98). Research findings have revealed that students are not involved in most of the decision, but they are decided for including the SRC that is supposed to represent the students. Decision-making have been centralised into one campus where the students in other campuses are completely ignored. Also, the amalgamation of the institutions has played a major role in this. It is against this that students pressure university management to accept them as stakeholders through unrest. Student leaders are treated like any other students, and this has created a gap that has caused some of the students unrests were not SRC lead and, as a result, property distraction occurred.

The general body of student lack trust and confidence in its leadership that, has been rendered helpless, and is not part of the decisions; as result, students took it upon themselves to close the vacuum. And this has caused more harm than good in the sense that more distraction takes place, and no one is accountable. Literature in chapter two revealed that management tend to treat students as children and yet they regard themselves as adults who are capable of deciding for themselves. Hence they must be involved in decision-making, and it is the democratic process to involve them. These are the same sentiments that were echoed in chapter two, that university is not

abiding much by the democratic principle of involving the students as stakeholders in decision making. During the discussion, it even emerged that SRC members were treated like prefects that were part of the institution's governance and were also kept in the dark about the decisions taken by the institution's management. Decisions are taken for one campus at another campus where the students are not involved, and the feeling is that it is practically impossible to favour them because the decision making body is not even aware of what they go through.

5.1.3. Power Differentials between Students and University authorities

Findings have revealed that South African institutions are somehow authoritative management of students. This has caused a lot of conflict between the management and the student leaders and resulted in a lot of unrest. Management imposes on the students its power, and with that, the students retaliate, resulting in more conflict, which is taken to the street by the students. The university management goes as far as locking the students with the SRC that is supposed to be engaged with the management to find solutions during the unrest. This is an indication that power differential is at play, and in this case, the management is imposing on the student leaders and not recognising them as part of governance. As part of co-governance, it has been revealed that there is a power differential between the students and management in the sense that the students are mourning for recognition that is not happening from the management side.

Scholars have indicated in chapter two that disagreements on how to distribute authority and resources within an institution may rise to instability and the power imbalances between students and institution leaders have a significant impact on this (Mjema, 2013:10; Etadon, 2013:339). They further purport that under normal conditions, the university administration dictates to the students. However, it has been determined that this is not the case, as evidenced by the fact that anytime the university senate makes a decision, student organizations present an opposing agenda. As a result, the students, in trying to demonstrate their power retaliate by taking things to the streets and causing instability. It has emerged that when power is misused by those in authority and showing contempt towards the students, the students turn to reciprocate that by mobilising the students.

This is what was indicated by Reinders (2018:74) in chapter two that the university has made every effort to frighten and repress the students, and the universities see students like adversaries and want to be in total control without being held accountable, especially by the students. The use of force against students demonstrates this oppression of the students by force, which is another reason the study has employed the theory of decoloniality to underpin the study. It has been found that the student leaders are even victimised instead of being engaged as the stakeholders, and this is not only done by the management alone, but it includes the lectures. And this means more conflict than solutions to the stability of the institutions.

5.1.4. Neglect of the rural universities (who are sister campuses of urban ones after university mergers)

It has emerged from the findings that some of the causes of student unrest are due to neglect of the campuses merged into other universities, especially those in urban areas. The findings have indicated that rural universities are not treated the same as those that are in the cities. The conditions that students find themselves in are totally unacceptable compared to their sister campuses. It was discovered that the students/campuses are completely ignored in such a way that the student life is non-existent, and they are just left to fend for themselves. This is what Visagie and Turok (2021:2) pointed out about Inequality can spark social unrest through complaints and resentment more than just levels of provision. For instance, persistent differences in amenities between nearby regions send a clear message that the government is unwilling or unable to fairly meet their needs. The students are complaining of unfair treatment compared to other campuses. The facilities and conditions they live under are not the same as those of other campuses that are given a first citizen status. It looks like the university indirectly thought it could improve their conditions but continues to ignore them that. Is the rural universities and their fees are the same, but conditions are not the same.

The number of unrests in rural universities, compared to the urban ones bears witness, in the sense that they need no protest in the urban universities to be heard as compared to those in rural areas which are only heard through disruption and get to be attended at that time only. Findings reveal that there is deliberate neglect while the university management can be able to attend to the needs and demands of the

students. Students are mourning for even developmental programs and other activities that can revive life on their respective campuses. It has been discovered that some students are a result of this neglect, want to transfer and flock to the urban universities that are well taken care of and properly attended to. This affects the capacity of the main campus as well because it cannot accept all the students at once. To note also is that as the students are left unattended and not busy with activities, it was revealed that they easily get bored, which has brought many unrest to the rural campuses. They have revealed that they request activities that will keep them active and busy.

5.1.5. Violent behaviour stems from the society

The research findings have also suggested that the violent behaviour witnessed during students' unrests stems from the societies they grew up in. Society, when it needs the attention of those in governance urgently, will disrupt everything and go to an extent of burning the things they have in order to be heard. Unfortunately, they get the attention they demand. This has sent an indirect message to the youth that to be heard by those in authority, you must destroy the property or the infrastructure. Murage *et al.* (2018:2) posited that whatever is happening in the university it is shaped by the society in which the students come from, in that the youth is left alone to fend for themselves, they have not disciplined the way they should and the attention they deserve to get from home. It has also been indicated that charity begins at home, meaning whatever the students inherited from where they come from, which is the broader society they come from.

The findings have revealed that the unrest with the destruction of property is not only a university problem, but the larger society and the students are just copying the societal trend. Society has also grown to be an entitlement. Whatever they want, they want to get it without much reasoning. As a result, the university has become a victim of this trend, where it cannot say no to its students otherwise, it suffers the consequences of saying no. This attitude boils down once more the legacy of colonialism in our society and the institutions of higher learning. Based on previous experiences during the colonial era, the society got to be heard through unrests and destruction. Ultimately, it has led to a sense of entitlement because people feel like they are owed by both the government and those in leadership.

This is what Noyoo (2018:1) argued that larger and more pervasive structural barriers to societal advancement are the cause of the demonstrations, and it goes on to say that the former are remnants of colonialism and apartheid because South African society has not undergone the necessary transformation and because social and economic exclusionary patterns still exist there 24 years after the country's democratic transition. This is where the theory of decoloniality is featured as well. Also, the findings of this research are that to properly manage the unrests, education, in the true logic, needs to go beyond the borders of the university and into society. The citizens must be educated with regard to this violent behaviour and the entitlement point of view.

5.2. Possible solutions as a means to reconstruct the relationship between the students and the university authorities

Findings on the potential solutions to the problems at hand are presented in the following section. This was done based on these sub-themes:

5.2.1. Development of proper structures

Data has shown that the management of students' unrest can be done through the development of proper structures. And the proper structure of management includes the elimination of the militarisation of universities. This has been done because of poor security in the campuses. Data has revealed that if the campus security can be trained on crowd control, this will eliminate a lot of destruction. This will also eradicate the need to bring in private securities to control the unrests and protect property and those endangered by the unrest. Having properly trained security possesses the potential to even eliminate the potential exploit that comes with private security companies. Private security companies have interests in perpetuating uncontrollable unrests, so using them to control unrest cannot be a good idea at all. They directly make money from ongoing unrest, so training the campus securities will be managing the unrest and saving the university money.

Secondly, as means of managing student unrest, data has discovered that students must be properly orientated when coming into the university, not just one day. It is imperative to note that these students grew up and were cultured into believing in doing things forcefully. So mind deconstruction is needed for the new students in order to unlearn what they have learned from society about getting their demands heard.

Orientation must be intensified to adapt the students to new ways of doing things and the right means of negotiations. This is said b coupled with the integration of the new students. Students are left alone to discover the university way of life. This makes them vulnerable to those who have bad intentions. Through integration, the data has pointed out that students will have a better chance of unlearning the social behaviours that they grew up knowing to be right. Students must be taught and be cultured into democratic principles, and that must be done through orientation and integration. This can be done as far as high school as a means of reaching out to the community.

Lastly, preparation can be used as one of the proper structures to manage the unrest. Student unrests are frequent at the beginning of the year, and this is mainly due to the fact that the university is always caught off-guard. With preparation well in advance, a lot of unrest can be curbed. Students are normally challenged with registration issues, financial exclusion, and NSFAS delays; this happens yearly, as revealed in chapter two. So during preparations and planning, the university administration needs to plan around such. It has been said that as part of planning, the university used to advance the students to curb the issues of unrests, but this is no longer the case and has propelled many unrests. A system that has worked cannot be replaced without a better system that will be more effective.

5.2.2. Involvement of stakeholders in decision making

As a means to solutions, it was revealed that students must be brought to the table for decision-making. Data posited that there is a serious need to find collaborative means between the stakeholders to ensure that everybody is represented when taking decisions. Relationships with significant organisations were established through collaborative leadership and emphasising students, relationships with the local community, outside organizations, internal co-workers, and leadership tactics (Najib, 2018:153). Having every stakeholder represented is highly recommended in managing university students' unrests. With all stakeholders involved it is easy to even cascade information from management to the students and vice versa. According to Singh (2017:134), in chapter two, students are the most significant stakeholders in the institution. As such, they must receive adequate representation; otherwise, the institution may become unstable.

The above scholars agree with the importance of involving all the stakeholders in decision-making process. The policies are decided upon by the institution and the level of curriculum because these are some of the things that have caused a lot of havoc in many universities, so involving the students saves a lot of instability. As asserted by Adetoro (2015:69), involving students in decision-making empowers them to completely own the decisions that are made rather than rejecting management-imposed choices, which in turn helps to calm them down since they know their interests are being taken into consideration. This relationship of stakeholders is what has a significant potential to reduce the conflict between the students and management and ultimately reduce the unrest that are currently ongoing in universities. University management should not at any stage decide what is good for the students without involving the students and should not take students as children but rather as adults who are able to take decisions of their own, as related in a chapter of the literature review.

5.2.3. Developing common ground between the stakeholders.

During deliberations, communication between the management and the students as stakeholders has emerged as one technique to develop common ground between the stakeholders. It has been argued that communication has been identified as a key factor for any kind of a relationship to be healthy and last. Participants have strongly felt that one way to overcome the challenges is by stakeholders meeting each other halfway and that is via communication. Communication breakdown has been stated as one factor that propels the violent unrest that have been witnessed, so by strengthening communication, some unrest could be avoided altogether. In chapter two, Choudhary (2018:757) claims that "students are the worst victims of the bureaucratic set of administrative machinery and the dictatorial ways of its head." In other words, authorities do not communicate the way they should, but rather they impose.

A lot of unrest that has taken place in the rural institutions has been attributed to a lack and or poor communication between the students and the university. It was also noted that communication is a two-way street, in other words, it should not be pointed to management only, but the students as well must communicate with the management. The management has been blamed for taking too long to respond to the issues brought

to their attention, which has agitated the students a lot. By improving this element unrest can be solved. In chapter two, it was revealed by scholars that a conversation in which participants are arranged into a specific communication setting to create a shared social space where innovative, shared intelligence can advance and the context in which communication is taking place, and the level of agreement between the parties engaged both have a significant impact on its effectiveness. (Albalawi *et al.*, 2020:68; Rohn *et al.*, 2014:150). In this regard, communication needs all the parties to play their role and be willing to compromise where necessary.

It has been revealed that students have preconceived expectations from the management and conflict is bound to happen if there is no proper communication between them and the management. Through communication, the management can clarify what demands can be met and which cannot be met instead of leaving students hanging and believing that management is unwilling to meet their needs. Therefore the stability of the university is all dependent on how effective the lines of communication are. Poor communication opens a gap of exploitation by those who have ulterior motives about the instability in the higher institutions of learning.

5.3. Finding the conditions to sustain the solutions

The following section discusses the conditions that will be the solutions to the challenges of managing the student unrest.

5.3.1. Meaningful negotiations

It has emerged from the deliberations during data collection that meaningful negotiations can be used to sustain the solutions. Students and management must constantly engage in resolving all the challenges they face at any stage. Both of them need to work as a team. Students have reiterated how important it is for them to meet and negotiate with the management, which creates a platform for the two to know each other better. Data have revealed that student leaders don't know much who their management is because they never meet except when it's the actual unrest, which is not good at all. They have pointed out that they are always willing to negotiate, except that they are met with arrogance from the management side. Hence the application of the theory of decoloniality because management is esteemed to be superior to the students, which is the element of suppression. It is important to note that meaningful

negotiations, according to Mjema (2013:47), are those in which the relevant parties come together as a team to discover a workable solution rather than each party competing to outwit the other, as discussed in chapter two. Management and students shouldn't at any stage compete but complement each other as stakeholders.

This is what Ntuli (2020:51) had emphasised in chapter two that through concessions from the various parties, compromise can be reached through discussions. Ntuli (2020:68) adds that students who feel unsuccessful in negotiations turn to discontent to voice their concerns. This is particularly true when university administration pushes issues to a vote because they are aware that students are underrepresented in the council. It has emerged that what is needed is meaningful negotiation that is conducted in good faith between the stakeholders. Negotiations have the potential to reduce the mistrust that is between the management and the students. In chapter two, the preceding assertion is supported by Chepkawai (2014:15), who claims that when there are meaningful conversations amongst all the parties, it produces. Meaningful negotiation is another vital component of managing unrest and sustaining solutions.

5.3.2. Development of conflict resolution strategies

Conflict resolution strategies have come up as a missing link in solving the challenges faced by the university. Findings have indicated that conflict is part of any organisation that different stakeholders constitute, but the organisation or institution must have ways to resolve the conflict. Discussions have pointed to the need for constant dialogue between the stakeholders and the broader student body, even when there are no agent matters to be discussed. Dialogue has been identified as means to be effectively used to overcome the conflict that persists in universities. The stakeholders should not engage in dialogue when there is a sense of agency but continue forging a way forward. Dialogue has been the missing link in the university, and propelled frustration for the SRC and the students. It has been found that dialogue must be coupled with implementation and quick turnaround time to be effective and bring results.

In chapter two, Chemutai et al. (2020:6306) noted that what has contributed a lot to the management of unrest was the lack of correct methods that can be used to alleviate conflict and the methods of channelling the complaints/needs to management

by students. So as per the discussion, dialogue should be used correctly to address the conflict in universities and other higher institutions of learning. It has been argued that there's a need also to engage students in openness and honesty to ensure this works. During these dialogues and discussions, it should not be one way, but they need to vent out and be listened to and listen to each other with the intention of finding solutions. The element of mistrust should be completely eradicated to solve the conflict. Rohn *et al.* (2014:150) emphasised in chapter two that innovative, shared intelligence can advance in a dialogue where stakeholders are arranged into a specific communication setting to create a common social space.

5.4. Strategies to overcome threats to the implementation of solutions.

This section discussed the development of strategies that can be used to overcome the threats to the implementation of solutions.

5.4.1. Avoiding Political interference

During the discussion, it came out that there is political interference at play in most of the unrest, which is meant to cause instability and render the university dysfunctional. It was discovered that political interference must be eradicated by all means to manage the unrests. In rural universities, many students are funded by NSFAS, a government scheme that has shown to be one of the major causes of unrest. This fund is politically influenced and has directly affected the higher institutions of learning. It has been revealed by findings that universities must have a way to counteract the challenges that are brought by this factor. It has been emphasised that university management must have plans to meet this kind of challenge. For example, during Covid-19, funds were moved around, and the requirement of NSFAS was changed. That directly affected the stability of the university because students expect the university to do something about it, though it's an external factor. Kiboiy (2013:215), in chapter two pointed out that national political problems often discreetly infiltrate the university administration and the student body, polarizing the latter. It was said that the university has to find means to make it immune from such factors. According to Omodan (2020:179), as discussed in the literature, inadequate funding and political intervention have both proven to be significant obstacles that have contributed to the instability of colleges.

Discussions have indicated that sometimes there is a vacuum that gets to be occupied by political opportunists who push propaganda that results in serious unrest that even leads to property destruction. Ntuli (2020:141) highlighted from the data gathered in the study that while the Student Representative Council had initially joined the #FeesMustFall movement, as the movement consolidated and gained pace, they withdrew because of how the movement had been understood politically. So the management and the student representatives are responsible for guarding against political interference, especially in movements for a good cause. This links with the above discourses about open dialogue and effective means of communication. They will eradicate the chance and opportunity that political opportunists use to propel propaganda.

5.4.2. Improving the infrastructure conditions or Implementation of resolutions.

General maintenance of the infrastructure has emerged as one of the strategies to be used to ensure that threats are eliminated to the implementation of resolutions. It has emerged that some of the unrest were mere because of the lack of implementation of whatever resolutions have been decided upon, especially the infrastructural maintenance. To many unrests that have been witnessed, it was the maintenance of the residence and the facilities of the university. So it has been established that many unrests will be avoided by improving infrastructure and implementing resolutions. It has been shown that institutions can use a discussion with student groups to lower the high rate of unrest and train the administration on crisis management and the creation of adequate infrastructure (Davies *et al.*, 2015:39), as discussed in the literature review. Scholars like Ntuli (2020:86) and Mjema (2013:64) discovered that one of the main causes of student unrest was the lack of adequate student housing. This had an impact on how student leaders and university administration dealt with the housing issue to create an environment that was conducive to living and learning.

Infrastructure has been found to be of vital importance in the lives of students as it contributes a lot to their wellbeing and academic performance. It one of the aspects that cannot be ignored at all. Therefore, students have suggested improving infrastructure to ensure that they are afforded a fair chance of being at the same level as other universities. Facilities can afford them a chance of being competitive people as they get the same exposure and benefits as other students in the universities in

cities. Solving some of these unrests would be to lift up the standard of the rural universities to be of the same level as other institutions, which was the idea behind the amalgamation of institutions. Students mourn to have the same opportunities that their peers are enjoying elsewhere through the high levels of infrastructure. Langley (2018:94) posited in chapter two that it is crucial that university administrators deal with resource and infrastructural difficulties in a timely manner so that students have enough short-term academic life experiences.

5.5. Conclusion

To conclude this project, the findings of the study were explored according to the challenges that cause unrest which are the lack of proper structure to manage unrest, Lack or failure to involve students in decision-making, power differentials between students and university authorities, neglect of the rural universities (who are sister campus of urban ones after university mergers) and violent behaviour stems for the society. These have been identified as some issues that have kindled unrest in rural universities. It has been discovered if some of these challenges can be properly addressed, unrest could be avoided in the higher education sector. The proposed possible solutions to these unrests were the development of proper structures, the Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making, and developing common ground between the stakeholders. The findings of the study revealed that if these strategies could be properly implemented, universities can be saved from a lot of costs that come with these unrests.

The study also sought the conditions to sustain the solutions: Meaningful negotiations Development of conflict resolution strategies. To ensure that the proposed strategies last, the following was proposed and agreed upon by the participants as means that can be utilised to overcome all the threats to the implementation of solutions as discussed above, Avoiding Political interference and Improving the infrastructure conditions or Implementation of resolutions. The study used the objectives found in chapter one as a guide to these solutions discovered during the data collection. It was concluded, therefore, that by applying these strategies that were revealed, the unrest could be avoided. Throughout the discussion, it has been emphasised that the principle of openness and integrity should be applied with these strategies in order to

ensure that the stakeholders maintain trust as it has been indicated as something that opens a gap between the stakeholders.

5.6. Recommendations

The study recommended that society be brought into the picture in order to properly address the issues regarding the unrest and how to do things right. Amongst other things, university has been a victim of destructive unrest because of the culture that the society has adopted. It has been embedded into the society that for your demands to be heard, for example, when you need water, you must burn the library, which has been inculcated into the countries youth. So to win this battle, university must go as far as society.

(i) University must find ways of ensuring that this culture is unlearned when students come to university as the university is an institution of learning, so destructive behaviour cannot be acceptable though it embraces democratic principles.

(ii) Secondly, integration of students is a much-needed strategy. Students from high school need to be properly integrated into the university, which is a new environment for them, and that comes with independence. And when left alone, it becomes dangerous. Hence some of them end up with criminal records, which impacts their future negatively so. Students, especially new students, cannot be left to chance as means of learning, this opens a gap for those with sinister motives to once more ill-educate them, and the university also suffers at the same time.

(iii) Thirdly, universities that have undergone the process of merger need to pay attention to such as it has brought a lot of inequality between the campuses that we through amalgamation. Urban campuses have been seen to be more resourced than rural ones, and as a result, this has brought a lot of unrest due to competition and inequality.

5.7. Limitations of the study

The study was conducted during the Covid-19 period, making it very difficult to meet with the participants due to the hard lock-down rules. For a few months, it was more like on halt due to the regulations. Also, when conducting research involving lectures and people who are in management, it is very difficult to fit into their tight schedules.

This has caused a lot of delays in data collection. It also very difficult to recruit them to participate in the study as they were almost not available, and it was even worse during COVID-19 period as they changed their schedules and how they work.

Due to the fact that the study had been conducted in one South African institution, which is in a rural setting, it becomes limiting when it comes to generalisation as some of the institutions might not be directly affected by the same challenges. It is possible that some universities might not be affected by all challenges that were sighted in the research.

5.8. Recommendations for further research

Based on the research findings, further studies can be made on two themes: the neglect of rural universities, especially after merger, and the behaviour that students mimic society when dealing with unrest. The issues of the merger were once mentioned by Nel (2007:2) in saying that despite the rise in multi-campus universities in South Africa brought on by state-driven mergers, these merged universities face a number of challenges in ensuring that constituent campuses are managed in a way that fosters a high standard of learning for all students. A lot of attention will need to be given to these two issues in order to fight effectively unrest in rural universities.

5.9. Summary of the study

This research aimed to provide a framework to improve the management of student unrest that is taking place in South African universities. This study has used several themes as a guide for the challenges that propelled the unrest, and based on those challenges; several possible solutions came up that can be utilised to manage the unrest. Participants of the study have collectively shared their frustrations that are brought by these unrests and further shared the ideas that can be used to manage these unrests as discussed in chapter four of the study. The participants unanimously agreed that a lot of unrest are costly in all areas, it's time-consuming for everyone, and ultimately it has serious financial implications for the university. Participants involved in the study were all directly affected in one way or the other: management, lecturers, SRC and security personnel. The data generated from the participants confirmed that, lack of the proper structure to manage unrest, lack or failure to involve student in decision making, power differentials between students and university authorities are

the serious contributing factors to two unrests. And the neglect of rural universities, especially those merged with campus in urban areas, and violent behaviour stems for the society are also the two themes that have come as other contributing issues to student unrest in rural universities.

Possible solutions to the above challenges were further discussed, and findings revealed that the development of proper structures, involvement of stakeholders in decision making and development of common ground between the stakeholders could be used solutions. Furthermore, this chapter sought the conditions to sustain the solutions, which are meaningful negotiations and the development of conflict resolution strategies. And lastly developed strategies that would overcome threats to the implementation of the solutions, which was discovered to be avoiding political interference and improving the infrastructure conditions or Implementation of resolutions. These themes have become the strategies that can reduce and manage the students' unrests if they are utilised effectively by the university authorities without being biased to some.

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Appendix 1 (Turnitin report)

MEd Gwama.docx			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
8 %	1 %	0 %	7 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	Submitted to University of the Free State Student Paper		6 %
2	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper		< 1 %
3	sciedu.ca Internet Source		< 1 %
4	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper		< 1 %
5	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source		< 1 %
6	Submitted to University of Johannesburg Student Paper		< 1 %
7	ijdri.com Internet Source		< 1 %
8	Submitted to University of South Florida Student Paper		< 1 %
9	www.ajol.info Internet Source		< 1 %

Appendix 2 Consent forms



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 have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s):

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

