THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE PERSISTENT REAPPLICATION FOR A MASTER'S DEFREE IN APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY: A SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the motivation behind students' persistence in reapplying for an applied master's degree in Psychology. The Self-determination theory (SDT) had been used as a theoretical lens to guide the understanding behind their motivation and the subsequent determinants thereof.

A qualitative research approach with a multiple case study design was used in order to gain a deeper understanding of these applicants' motivation. Seven participants were obtained through snowball sampling and individual semi-structured interviews conducted. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Research findings included participants' descriptions which indicated that the process of reapplication involved aspects related to the three needs of the SDT, namely autonomy, relatedness and competence. In terms of autonomy, participants included statements that indicated that they have a natural interest in Psychology and to qualify as a psychologist was an independent decision. Their need for relatedness was satisfied through social support from significant others and colleagues, as well as the need to serve the broader South Africa. Participants furthermore indicated that their level of competency was affected by their need to better equip themselves in order to enhance their professional growth. However, competence was questioned in the event of an unsuccessful application. In conclusion, the findings found a level of intrinsic motivation related to persistent reapplication for a master's degree in applied psychology.

(Keywords: autonomy, competence, master's degree, Psychology, selection, Self-determination theory, relatedness)

Abstrak

Hierdie studie het gepoog om ondersoek in te stel rondom die motivering agter studente se aanhoudende heraansoek vir 'n meestersgraad in toegepaste Sielkunde. Die Self-determinasie teorie (SDT) is as teoretiese lens gebruik ten einde 'n beter begrip rakende die motivering en gevolglike determinante hiervan te verkry.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering met meervoudige gevallestudies is gebruik om 'n dieper begrip te verkry van sodanige aansoekers se motivering. Sewe navorsingsdeelnemers is deur 'n sneeubalsteekproeftrekking gewerf en individuele semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude gevoer. Tematiese analise was gebruik om die data te analiseer.

Navorsingsresultate sluit in dat aansoekers aangedui het dat die proses van heraansoek aspekte insluit wat relevant is aan die drie behoeftes van die SDT, naamlik outonomie, verwantskap en bekwaamheid. Rakende outonomie, het aansoekers se stellings ingesluit dat hulle 'n natuurlike belangstelling in Sielkunde het en om te kwalifiseer as 'n sielkundige 'n onafhanklike besluit was. Hulle behoefte aan verwantskap was bevredig deur die sosiale ondersteuning van geliefdes en kollegas, sowel as hul behoefte om tot diens te wees vir die breër Suid-Afrika. Aansoekers het verder aangedui dat hulle vlak van bekwaamheid beïnvloed was deur hulle behoefte om hul bevoegdheid te ontwikkel om sodoende professionele groei te stimuleer. Bekwaamheid was ook bevraagteken gedurende die proses van 'n onsuksesvolle aansoek. Ter afsluiting, die bevindinge het 'n vlak van intrinsieke motivering aangedui wat verband hou met aanhoudende heraansoek vir 'n meestersgraad in toegepaste sielkunde.

(Trefwoorde: bekwaamheid, meestersgraad, outonomie, seleksie, Self-determinasie teorie, Sielkunde, verwantskap)

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1. Introduction

This chapter provides a concise description of the current research project. A broad discussion of the research background is the starting point and concludes with an outline of all the chapters and key terms used in this study.

1.1 Research Background

Australian researchers, Schweitzer et al. (2014) argue that the selection of psychology master's students are one of the most important decisions in the field of psychology. Postgraduate psychology selection has also enjoyed the attention of many researchers across the globe (Appleby & Appleby, 2006; Mayne, Norcross, & Sayette, 1994; Norcross, Sayette, Mayne, Karg, & Turkson, 1998; Traub & Swartz, 2013). Their focus was mainly on the nature of the selection criteria.

According to the Health Profession Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (2011), an applied master's degree in psychology is required, in order to register as a psychologist. Pillay, Ahmed and Bawa (2013) indicated that the competitive nature of master's selection is influenced by universities' limited available positions for psychology master's students. This competitive nature combined with ethical and methodological issues surrounding selection increases the difficulty of being selected for a master's degree in psychology (Mayekiso, Strydom, Jithoo, & Katz, 2004).

Qualified psychologists explained that qualifying as a psychologist most often requires multiple attempts in order to be successful. Applicants are, however, motivated to engage in these multiple attempts. In order to understand the quality of motivation that sustains multiple attempts of reapplication, the Self-determination theory (SDT) will be used as guideline as this theory is a macro theory of human motivation and development (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

1.2 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the motivation behind the persistent re-application of students for a master's degree in psychology after being unsuccessful. The SDT will be employed as theoretical lens.

1.3 Overview of Research Design and Methods

This study is of a qualitative nature and a multiple case study design (Yin, 2009) used to explore and describe participants' motivation behind reapplication. This research design

allowed the researcher to use the SDT in exploring and describing applicants' motivation to reapply.

Snowball sampling (Neuman, 2006) was used to recruit research participants. This sampling method identified seven individuals who had more than one unsuccessful application for a master's degree in psychology.

Seven, individual semi-structured interviews (Qu & Dumay, 2011) were conducted. The interview schedule included nine consecutive questions from which additional questions could develop in order to facilitate deeper and more detailed descriptions of participants' motivation. Interviews transcriptions was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This study was approved by the Research Committee of the Department of Psychology at The University of the Free State. Additional ethical considerations included (but was not limited to): (a) informed consent (b) confidentiality of data and anonymity of participants' identity and (c) issues regarding self-disclosure (Allan, 2011). The trustworthiness of the study was ensured by addressing the following principles: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability.

1.4 Overview of results and discussion

While conducting the thematic analysis the researcher considered the three needs of the SDT namely, autonomy, relatedness and competence. Participants' descriptions indicated that aspects relating to reapplication addressed the three needs of the SDT, including applicants' persistent reapplication.

1.5 Summary of all chapters

This study consists of six chapters. This section focuses on giving an overview of each chapter and its content.

Chapter one. Chapter one refers to an overall summarised view of the chapters included in this study. In an attempt to do so, it includes the research background, research aim, an overview of the research design and methods, a summary of all chapters and the key terms used in this study.

Chapter two. Chapter two includes a comprehensive discussion about the master's selection in psychology. This involves discussions on aspects relating to the background of psychology in South Africa and processes and challenges in qualifying as a psychologist.

Chapter three. Chapter three focuses on the concept of motivation and how the SDT with its sub-theories explains motivation. This chapter also outlines the link between motivation and persistent behaviour.

Chapter four. Chapter four involves revisiting the research aim, followed by a detailed discussion of the research design, data gathering, data collection and data analysis. It then addresses the trustworthiness and ethical considerations relevant to this study.

Chapter five. Chapter five includes a summary of the themes and subthemes (in relation to the SDT's psychological needs) derived from the interview transcriptions. These are supported by individual participant quotes. Participants' recollections are then discussed in terms of the SDT's literature that relates to the three psychological needs.

Chapter six. Chapter six focuses on concluding remarks as well as the current study's limitations and recommendations for future research. In this chapter the researcher concludes by adding a personal reflection.

1.6 Key terms

Master's selection *refers to the process by which students are selected by a university's or psychological department's panel for a master's degree in applied psychology.*

Reapplication *refers to individuals' tendency to reapply for a master's degree in applied psychology after an initial unsuccessful application.*

Applicants/participants, *for the purpose of this study includes individuals who had unsuccessfully applied for a master's degree in applied psychology more than once.*

Master's degree, *for the purpose of this study, refers to the postgraduate degree required to register as a qualified psychologist both nationally and internationally. The researcher is aware that on international level this degree is referred to as a doctoral degree in psychology.*

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter aimed at proving the reader with a clear and concise layout of the study. The research was discussed under the headings: research background, research aim and overview of research design. This was followed by an outline of each chapter with a brief description of each.

2. Master's Selection

The discussion included in this chapter aims at providing the reader with a broad understanding about the profession of psychology and the master's degree selection process. This chapter will discuss: (a) the history of psychology in South Africa, (b) qualifying as a psychologist and the known challenges, (c) the selection procedures for a master's degree in psychology and experiences related to master's selection. Figure 1 gives an overview of the flow of the chapter's discussion.
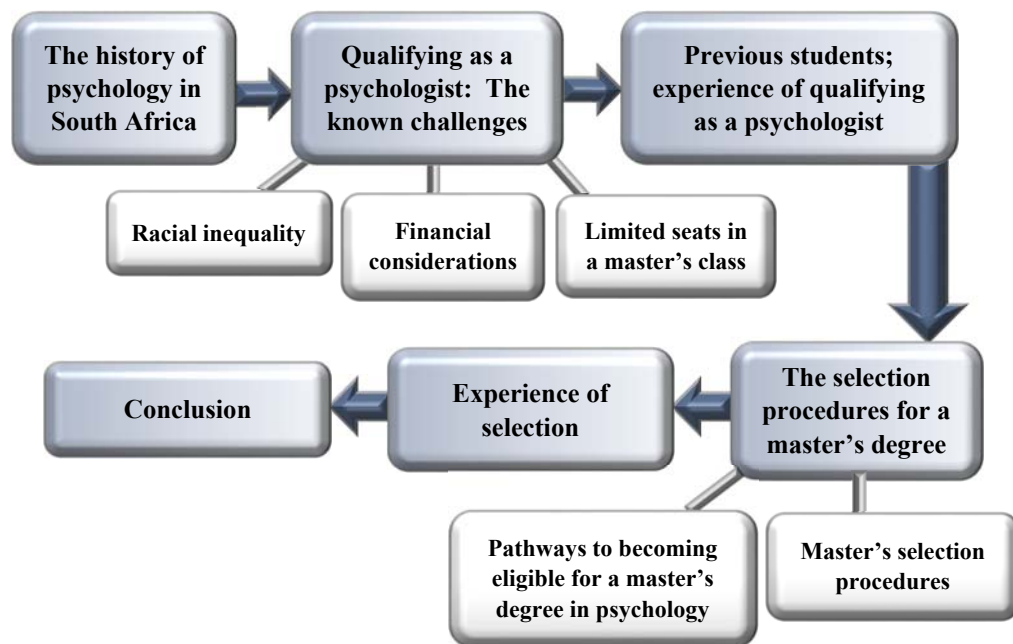
Figure 1: Visual presentation of Chapter two

2.1 The history of psychology in South Africa

Prior to 1917, psychology formed part of the philosophy movement (Louw & Foster, 1991). However, this changed in 1917 when the University of Stellenbosch appointed R.W. Wilcocks as the professor of Logic and Psychology. The University of Cape Town soon followed this example by appointing a chair of psychology. These appointments paved the way for the establishment of psychology departments at other South African universities. In 1974, Psychology South Africa recognized the registration and differentiation between sub-categories within psychology and established categories such as clinical, educational, counselling, research and industrial Psychology (Leach, Akhurst, & Basson, 2003).

The first South African Psychological Association was formed in 1984 by South African psychologists in Bloemfontein, Free State (Nicholas, 1990). This was the only psychological

association that existed in South Africa until 1994. The political change that occurred in South Africa during 1994, was also felt within the profession of psychology as it was criticised for supporting apartheid principles (serving the needs of the elite white minority citizens while excluding the needs of the majority) (Watson & Fouche, 2007). This realisation and criticism brought about a strong demand for a more independent, non-racist and non-sexist psychological association. In an attempt to meet this demand, the Psychological Society of South Africa (PSYSSA) was established on the 27th of April 1994. Currently, PSYSSA is perceived as a leading professional organisation that ended the oppressive and exclusionary nature of Psychology during the apartheid era in South Africa (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012).

In the mid-1990's, South African government classified the psychological profession as a "scarce and priority resource" (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). This was an indication that the South African government acknowledged psychology as an important part of the country's development.

According to Cooper (2014) the profession of psychology in South Africa is acknowledged on the African continent as a prominent role player in the establishment of the Pan-African Psychological Union. The acknowledgement of South African psychology also applies internationally, following the successful host of the International Congress of Psychology during 2012. Psychology has become a respected field of study at tertiary education institutions in South Africa as both undergraduate and post-graduate psychology programmes are being offered by many South African publicly funded universities (University of South Africa, University of Fort Hare, University of the Free State, University of Cape Town, University of Limpopo, University of Zululand, University of Johannesburg, University of Venda, Walter Sisulu University, Rhodes University, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, University of the Western Cape, University of Pretoria, North-West University, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Stellenbosch University and University of the Witwatersrand) (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012).

Despite this strong position that the profession of psychology holds in South Africa, it still experiences criticism. Cornell (2012) identified some of the main concerns of psychology, as being too eurocentric, decontextualized and individualistic implying irrelevancy to its context. According to Ahmed and Pillay (2004) Psychology South Africa responded to this critique by introducing the category of community Psychology which speaks to the unique consequences of an apartheid system (such as inequality and poverty). Furthermore, the South African health sector has made room for registrations such as registered counsellor or lay counsellor in order

to assist in dealing with the mentioned issues and demands relevant to the South African context (Pillay et al., 2013).

It is evident that Psychology South Africa has made attempts in the past to address the criticisms and demands of the South African society. Recently PSYSSA (2016) continued in this attempt as the main theme of their conference related to the decolonization of psychology. In addressing this, it is important that psychologists' scope of practice becomes relevant. The HPCSA currently fulfils the role of assisting psychologists in doing so by providing regulatory laws (Leach et al., 2003).

Against this background, it is clear that the discipline has grown significantly. The challenges related to qualifying as a professional in psychology will be discussed in the following section.

2.2 Qualifying as a psychologist: The known challenges

Prospective students applying for a master's degree in Psychology are faced with various challenges (De Freitas, 2013). Local research (Carolissen, Shefer, & Smit, 2015; Traub & Swartz, 2013) and international (Thakker, 2009) has indicated that one of these challenges include: (a) race (race is perceived as either a positive or negative factor which influenced the potential for successful selection), (b) socio economic status and financial issues (financial costs related to the long study process and the prolonged ability to provide financially for significant others), (c) entry requirements (the required degrees before becoming eligible for a master's degree and the limited amount of students selected for a master's degree) and (d) the intellectual and emotional demand of the program (psychology study material being irrelevant to students' respective realities). This section will focus on racial inequality, financial considerations, and limited seats in a master's class as some of the challenges.

2.2.1 Racial inequality

The challenge of racial integration appears to be a global phenomenon for the profession of psychology. A study conducted in the United Kingdom found that the small number of existing black psychology professionals are decreasing even more (Turpin & Coleman, 2010). With the focus on South Africa and considering its history of racial discrimination, it is expected that professions like psychology, who conformed to the apartheid ideologies (serving middle and upper class white South Africans) would require transformation as part of the South African democracy (Carolissen et al., 2015; Painter, Terre Blanche, & Henderson, 2006). This year South Africa celebrates 22 years of democracy and therefore it could be reasonably

expected that professions such as psychology would be integrated in terms of race. In 2013 this was however not the case as Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) (2013) reported that less than half of the profession's postgraduate students and interns were black. Even though South Africa's population consists of 8,7% of white individuals, the psychology profession registered 52,7% white postgraduate students. This is in contrast to the 44,8% black postgraduate students which include African, Indian, Coloured and Asian individuals (Stats SA, 2013). Within the profession there still remains room for hopefulness regarding the integration of the psychological profession, especially with the change in numbers towards an integrated profession (Carolissen et al., 2015).

Since South Africa is a democratic country, it is only fair to consider the racial experience of white applicants as well. Traub and Swartz (2013) agreed with this when they conducted a study regarding white applicants' experience of racial inequity in the psychology master's selection. Listed, is a summary of the findings of this study: (1) no transparency of how equity is being established throughout the selection process which results in a fear of being excluded primarily on the basis of race; (2) a sense of shame and guilt regarding white South Africans' privileged background; (3) equality should focus more on socio-economic background than race as history shows that poverty was and still is prevalent in all races; (4) a need exists for black psychologists as it would be beneficial if every South African was able to identify a therapist with whom they can relate to and feel comfortable with. In appreciating South Africa's road to democracy one cannot ignore the overwhelming realisation that the profession of psychology still requires so many transformations in order to respect the diverse context in which it functions.

In light of South Africa's history, it is understandable that sensitivity to racial inequality exists. The above mentioned studies clearly indicate that racial issues affect students from all races in their application for a master's degree. It appears that a consensus exists amongst applicants' idea that race plays a role in either being rejected or accepted for a master's degree in psychology.

2.2.2 Financial considerations

It appears, yet again, that (not unique to South Africa) financial challenges are a reality to Psychology students and this challenge is not unique to South African students. The research of Norcross, Ellis and Sayette (2010) found that 81% of American Psychological Association (APA) accredited psychology postgraduate programs failed to provide students with an all-

inclusive financial assistance. Financially, studying psychology can post three different challenges to potential applicants.

Firstly, some students are conflicted by the duration of studying towards a master's degree as it entails a long training period to qualify as a psychologist. The road to qualifying as a psychologist requires students to first obtain a bachelor's degree (three or four years full-time, five to six years part-time) in which they major with psychology. Thereafter, they would have to successfully complete an honours degree in psychology (one year full-time, two to three years part-time). Only after obtaining these two degrees would they be eligible to apply for a master's degree in psychology.

Secondly, the recent #feesmustfall epidemic (Luescher, 2016) experienced by most South African universities loudly echoed the financial challenges that students experience entering tertiary level studies. It can be predicted that with the multiple degrees required to qualify as a psychologist these financial challenges can be even more daunting to Psychology students.

Thirdly, considering the long period of qualification, it can also be expected that after completing a master's degree, psychology students would be eager to apply for employment as soon as possible. The South African government do not provide finances for counselling psychologists' positions (Young, Bantjes, & Kagee, 2016) while clinical psychologists are placed in a 12-month, paid community service position at government institutions (Pillay et al., 2013). This implies that there is a larger amount of financially secure clinical Psychology positions in South Africa. Knowing this, applicants from a disadvantaged background would either have to apply for the clinical Psychology category (during master's application) even though they might be interested in counselling Psychology or they will have to enter the private sector which Young et al. (2016) described as a small and saturated market. Considering these researchers' description of the private practice sector, a difficulty in both obtaining and maintaining clients can be predicted. Having the required patience to obtain and maintain clients in such a saturated and small market, are further challenged by factors such as family expectations regarding financial assistance and piled up university bills.

2.2.3 Limited seats in a master's class

Despite the past reputation of the profession of psychology in South Africa being racist and sexist, universities indicate that it is one of the most popular fields of study amongst undergraduate students (Academy of Science of South Africa, 2011). Most universities reported that the third highest percentage of registrations within the Humanities faculty consist of psychology students (Academy of Science of South Africa, 2011). Kagee, Harper and Spies

(2008) argued that this phenomenon stretches beyond the South African context and also occurs internationally. When considering the popularity of psychology as a chosen field of study amongst students, the findings of Sundin and Ogren (2011) which implies that universities frequently receive more applicants than what they can accommodate, is not surprising. Pillay et al. (2013) also indicated that universities are approached by a number of applicants that are ten to twenty times more than what they can accommodate. Carolissen et al. (2015) from the University of the Western Cape found that South African universities ultimately only select six to twelve students for the master's program in psychology. This is an indication that even though universities are approached by a large number of applicants, only a few are successfully selected. During 2016 the HPCSA's registration list included 1,492 students (student psychologists) who were in the process of completing a master's degree at a South African university. This number is considerably lower than students registered (as updated on 3 May 2016) in other health professions such as student medical technologists (4,261) and medical students (13,004) (HPCSA, 2016). These figures are not representable considering that the profession was classified as a "scarce and priority resource" in the mid-1990's (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). A study conducted at universities of the United Kingdom demonstrated that the limited number of selected postgraduate psychology students relate to the high costs (both financial and personnel resources) associated with this field of study (Scior, Bradley, Potts, Woolf, Williams, & Amanda, 2014). This can therefore indicate that both local and international psychology postgraduate applicants are faced with the probability of being unsuccessful in their application for this specific degree.

South African universities such as UNISA (2013) advise undergraduate psychology students as well as students who have repeatedly had an unsuccessful application for a master's degree in psychology, to make themselves more employable by adding amongst others, one of the following courses to their primary degree: (1) A Postgraduate Certificate in Education - this can lead to qualifying as a teacher. (2) A Diploma in Tertiary Education - will allow the particular student to practice as a tertiary lecturer. (3) Short learning programs in Human Resource Management - ability to practice as a human resource consultant or labour relations analyst. Recommendations to follow these alternative career paths indicate that universities are well aware of students' challenges to obtain one of the limited seats within the master's program.

The sensitive nature of racial challenges in a country still healing from the scars of racial inequality, combined with the financial challenges raises concern as to whether an application for this degree is worth the effort.

2.3 Previous students' experiences of qualifying as a psychologist

Thakker (2009) explored the experience of qualifying as a clinical psychologist. Participants of this study indicated that completing the master's course becomes more important than spending time with family members. Furthermore, qualified psychologists described the qualification process as a long and challenging process which required multiple attempts in order to succeed (De Freitas, 2013). Edwards, Ngcobo and Edwards (2014) found that South African psychology master's students would describe the master's program as demanding, anxiety provoking, overwhelming and sometimes paralyzing. Previous psychology master's students also mentioned that they felt suffocated when completing their master's degree as there was a high demand on their time (De Freitas, 2013). The following are included as expectations in a master's program: (a) to gain theoretical knowledge, (b) start a research thesis and (c) sharpen their practical skills that will be required in the internship that follows after completing the master's degree (De Freitas, 2013).

2.4 The selection procedures for a master's degree

2.4.1 Becoming eligible for a master's degree in psychology

According to UNISA (2013) prospective psychology students need to gain a realistic understanding of the practicalities of becoming a psychologist and should therefore consider intensive research and active engagement within the field of psychology. The HPCSA'S (2008) rules and regulations indicated that in order to register as a student psychologist (master's degree in psychology) an individual would be expected to have successfully obtain the following: (1) a bachelor's degree with psychology as a major is one of the first requirements to qualify as a psychologist and can include many different combinations and (2) an honours degree in psychology. Students can then either after successfully completing or during the course of finishing their honours degree (depending on the particular university) apply for a master's degree in psychology. At master's level students are required to register within one of the following categories: Educational Psychology, Clinical Psychology and Counselling Psychology. The HPCSA guides and regulates the profession of psychology (including other health professions) in South Africa. It can therefore be concluded that the mentioned requirements to become eligible for a master's degree are respected and relevant to all tertiary institutions providing a master's degree in psychology.

2.4.2 Master's selection procedures

Australian researchers, Schweitzer et al. (2014) opined that the selection of psychology master's students is one of the most important decisions in the field of psychology. Kagee et al. (2008) added to the importance of this selection process by stating that psychologists are supposed to be experts in understanding human behaviour. Therefore, a certain degree of pressure exists in selecting future psychologists in order to protect and maintain the profession's respectful position in society. In addition to this, the selection of future psychologists should be done by considering the mental health of the South African population (Mayekiso et al., 2004). It appears that while applicants may find master's selection competitive and challenging, the panel involved in selecting master's students may also experience a great sense of pressure in selecting future psychologists.

The importance and nature of this selection process has enjoyed the attention of many researchers over the years (Appleby & Appleby, 2006; Mayne et al., 1994; Norcross et al., 1998; Traub & Swartz, 2013) as they attempted to gain a better understanding of the selection criteria and process. Mayne et al. (1994) identified that academic scores together with the chosen undergraduate psychological subjects play a dominating role within the selection criteria of American higher education institutions. Canadian researchers Sundin and Ogren (2011) found that most higher education institutions conduct individual interviews as part of their selection process. The higher education institutions (Canadian schools of Psychology) included in the study of Sudin and Ogren (2011) appeared to structure their interview questions around factors that Bergin and Garfield (1994) believed would bring about psychotherapeutic change. These include: (a) supportive factors (e.g. the ability to establish functional relationships), (b) learning factors (e.g. the ability to evaluate outcomes and be emotionally open to experiences) and (c) action factors (e.g. the ability to motivate others and model behaviour). More recently, Schweitzer et al. (2014) indicated that during interviews the selection panel evaluates three factors (the factors are listed according to their importance to the selection panel), namely, the applicant's awareness (self-awareness, empathy and awareness of state of mind), secondly, the applicant's ability to reflect independently or with guidance and lastly the applicant's reasoning skills which involves critical thinking and writing skills. While the mentioned studies focused on international selection criteria, Pillay et al. (2013) found that even though South African universities differ in their selection criteria their most common criteria include: (a) academic marks, (b) personal experiences in life, (c) reflexivity and (d) community orientation. Globally, it appears that the ability to perform academically has hold its place in the selection criteria for a master's degree in psychology. This could be indicative of the academic demand that is associated with a program such as a

master's degree in psychology. In turn, this could add to the competitive nature of the selection as applicants are reminded that their academic marks will either support or disadvantage their application.

The competitive nature and the ethical and methodological issues surrounding selection are known to increase the difficulty of being selected for a master's degree in psychology in South Africa (Mayekiso et al., 2004).

2.5 Experience of selection

Scior et al. (2014) believed that the tendency of identifying only a limited number of successful students has resulted in an intensive in-depth selection process. It is therefore not surprising that potential applicants experience the application process as competitive and in turn, anxiety provoking (Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group (PSYPAG), 2016). Apart from the competitive nature of the application, PSYPAG (2016) indicated that postgraduate psychology students may experience additional anxiety due to the uncertainties related to admission requirements. When considering the common criteria (Pillay et al., 2013) for South African universities, it appears to be very broad and general. Due to this it can be hypothesised that applicants will struggle with a sense of uncertainty when it comes to the selection criteria.

Ivey and Partington (2014) found that the selection panels tend to favour an applicant who can demonstrate a "wounded" personal history which includes the applicant's ability to be vulnerable and open to discuss their personal losses and traumatic experiences. The tendency to favour past "woundedness" has resulted in a suspicion about bias against applicants who have lead a "normal" less traumatic life (Ivey & Partington, 2014). This brings to mind the idea that applicants could feel pressured to have past traumatic experiences or to wonder whether they stand a fair chance to be selected if they have a fairly stable personal background.

An international study done by Appleby and Appleby (2006) found that some applicants tend to excessively disclose details about their personal lives within the selection process. This could be related to the possible pressure that participants experience in trying to sketch their "woundedness" and vulnerability. Recently a new trend appeared where applicants' interpersonal skills are assessed at some universities by members of the public (service users) (Matka, River, Littlechild, & Powell, 2009). When assessing the nature of the selection process it should be considered that applicants feel pressurised to communicate during a selection interview in order to ensure that they adhere to all the above mentioned criteria (Appleby & Appleby, 2006). A previous applicant also mentioned during Traub and Swartz's (2013) study that throughout the selection process she experienced an intense sense of being judged.

Appleby and Appleby (2006) recommended that due to the competitive and pressurised nature of this process, universities' psychology departments should provide mentoring to all possible applicants before entering into the application process. These researchers stated that applicants make crucial mistakes within the application process which could be due to the stress of the application process. The different selection criteria at the various universities, have also raised concerns and it is recommended that a psychometric tool be developed for master's selection (Schweitzer et al., 2014). This is to ensure that all selection panels are able to make fair judgements based on specific criteria relevant to the profession of psychology. It is evident that the selection process for a master's degree in psychology can be a very competitive, personal and unnerving process.

When considering the described possible and actual experiences of applicants during the application process it is understandable that a master's application comes with a vast range of challenges and hard work. Pillay et al. (2013) however believed that the hard work starts even before entering the application process as potential South African applicants has a tendency of putting in the hours as volunteers at mental-health institutions in the hope of making their application more attractive.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed description of what it entails to qualify as a psychologist in the South African context. In designing this detailed description, the researcher focused on the history of South African psychology, its current challenges as a profession but also the challenges that it poses to applicants in applying for a master's degree in order to qualify as a psychologist.

Although the above mentioned concerns and difficulties exist, many applicants are motivated to apply for a master's degree even after being unsuccessful once or even more than once. Applicants have no guarantee of being selected but still this trend of reapplication continues. In understanding the motivation behind reapplication the self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2008) will be used as theoretical lens. The next chapter will focus on giving the reader an understanding of the SDT and its relevance to this study.

3. Self-determination Theory

Motivational theories, is the focus of this chapter with special attention given to the Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Figure 2 provides an overview of the flow of the chapter.
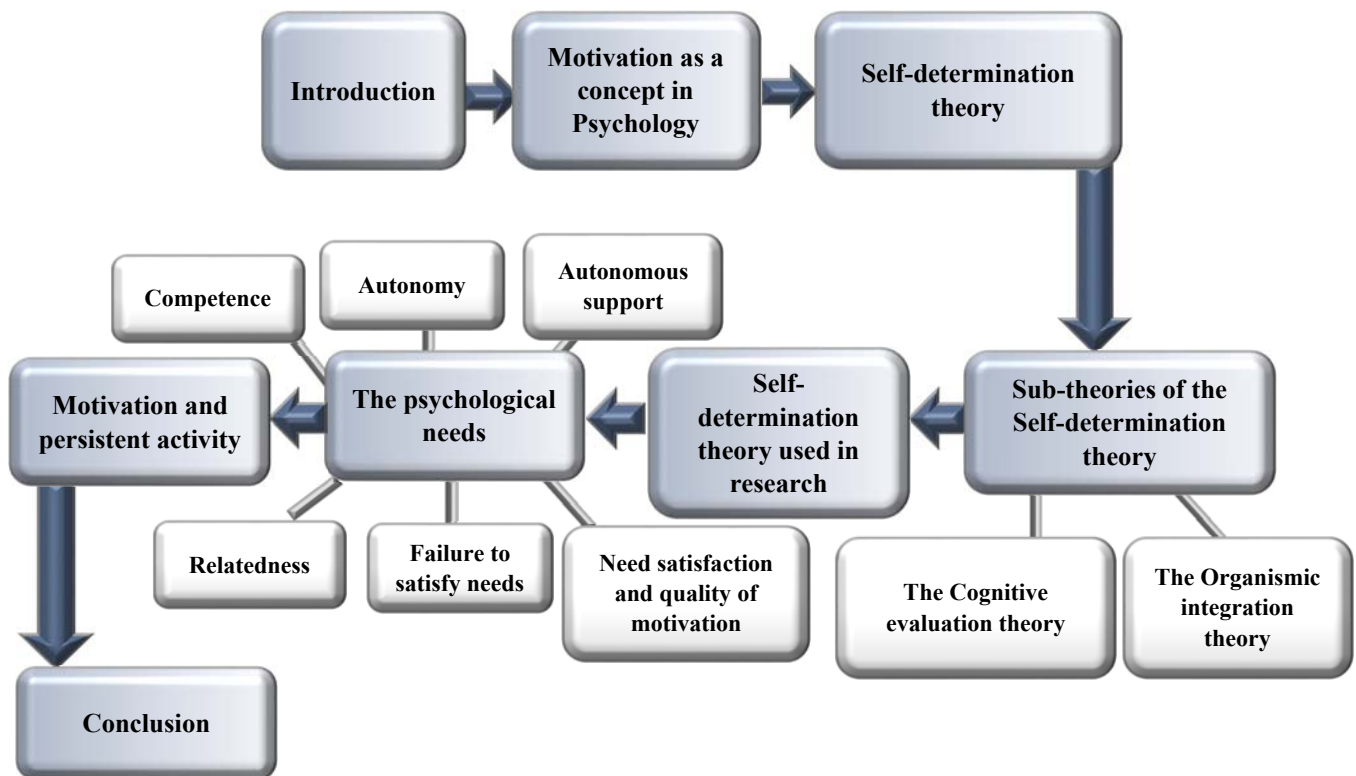
Figure 2: Visual presentation of Chapter three

3.1 Motivation as a concept in psychology

Parkinson and Colman (1995) defined motivation as entering, directing and energizing individual action. Motivation is an important concept in psychology due to the obvious relation between motivation and human behaviour (Maslow, 1954). During the early years, psychology attempted to understand the motivation for behaviour from an empirical and psychoanalytic approach (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Within the empirical approach, Hull (1943) proposed the drive theory, which holds that all human behaviours are motivated by drives such as hunger, thirst, sex and the avoidance of pain. It can be said that Hull (1943) mainly perceived behaviour as a concept which is motivated by biological drives. Within the psychoanalytic approach, Freud's (1915) theory of psychosexual development supported Hull's (1943) belief that behaviour is

motivated by primary biological instincts (e.g. aggression and sex, with sex as the dominant instinct).

Maslow (1954) expanded on the research of Hull (1943) and Freud (1915) when he argued that even though human beings are motivated to meet their needs, these needs expand beyond biological drives and instincts. He categorised the identified needs into a hierarchy of five levels (according to their importance to survival). Maslow (1954) argued that when the needs on the first level are met, people will be motivated to pursue the needs on the next level and they will continue to do so, until they reach the level of self-actualisation. In simple terms, Maslow (1954) perceived a self-actualizing individual as someone that derives meaning from life, not just merely existing.

It appears that during the 1950's the interest in the motivation of human behaviour resulted in contradicting findings as Skinner (1953) argued that all behaviour is maintained by the prospects of being rewarded. Skinner (1953) thus perceived rewards as more motivating as the satisfaction of biological drives, biological instincts or human needs. Skinner's (1953) findings were challenged by arguments indicating that since birth, children are motivated to explore and master their environment in the absence of rewards (Harter, 1978).

The understanding of intrinsic motivation is initially based on White's (1959) argument that competence is a motivator for engagement in activities, as well as de Charm's (1968) belief that people have a natural motivation towards actions that are influenced by themselves. This relates to Deci and Ryan's (1975) proposal that intrinsic motivation involves a need for competence and self-determined action. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan (2000) argued that intrinsic motivation gives way to active engagement which is fuelled by a personal interest (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Deci and Ryan (2000) stated that external rewards would not play a role in being intrinsically motivated due to the personal interest that one has in an activity which already provides internal rewards. Ryan and Deci (2000) perceived this form of motivation as possibly the only phenomenon that is indicative of the positive potential of human beings to be self-actualizing.

Researchers such as De Charm (1968) viewed extrinsic motivation as a depleted form of motivation. Deci and Ryan (1975) later argued that different forms of extrinsic motivation exist and that some forms involve active engagement. To support their argument, they indicated that people may rely more on extrinsic motivation as they age since social responsibilities may require engaging in activities that does not hold any personal interest (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Ryan and Deci (2000) opined that the above mentioned types of motivation differ on the basis that intrinsic motivation requires personal interest while extrinsic motivation requires an

external outcome. These researchers further stated that although humans are naturally inclined to intrinsic motivation, its maintenance and optimization requires the need for competence, relatedness and autonomy to be met. They also argued that even though these needs are vital in experiencing intrinsic motivation, the needs alone do not provide a sufficient or appropriate definition for intrinsic motivation.

It is evident from the above discussion that motivation is a longstanding concept in psychology. One of the influential theories in exploring this concept is the SDT.

3.2 Self-determination theory

The development of the Self-determination theory (SDT) came about when Deci and Ryan (1975) identified a need to determine the factors that would extract and aid intrinsic motivation, especially since its value was already clear.

The SDT can be described as a macro theory of human motivation and development (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Ryan (1995) perceived the SDT as related to the theories of Roger (1959) and Piaget (1952) as the assumption is that humans have a natural tendency to actively seek out psychological growth and development. The SDT originates from Deci and Ryan's interest in the natural human tendency of motivation and how it informs behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Although this tendency appears to be natural, it requires specific supportive elements from one's social context (Ryan, 2009). The SDT refers to these specific supportive elements as psychological needs (Ryan, 2009). According to Deci and Ryan (2000) the satisfaction of these needs influences the type of motivation experienced for psychological growth and development. The psychological needs include, the need for competence (the perception that one can cause desired effects and outcomes), the need for autonomy (the perception that one's activities are supported or congruent with the innate self) and the need for relatedness (the feeling that one is connected to significant others) (Klingaman, 2011).

3.3 Sub-theories of the Self-determination theory

Sub-theories of the SDT include the Cognitive evaluation theory (CET) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the Organismic integration theory (OIT). The CET can be defined as the theory that identifies the social and environmental factors that influence motivation. The OIT on the other hand focuses on explaining the process by which extrinsic motivated behaviour can become intrinsic motivated behaviour.

3.4.1 The Cognitive evaluation theory

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), the CET proposes that activities in support of intrinsic motivation would promote autonomy and competence while creating challenges and also allowing the experience of feelings. However, activities that threatens the development of intrinsic motivation would thus be enforced by others and involve pressure and deadlines in order to achieve tangible rewards. Environments that manifests a sense of safety and security while competence enhancing feedback is given further promotes the development of intrinsic motivation. Opposed to this, environments that involve intimidation, dictations to act or provide extrinsic rewards inhibits the development of intrinsic motivation.

3.4.2 The Organismic integration theory

Ryan and Deci (2000) took stand against the understanding that extrinsic motivation poses no sense of autonomy as they argued that extrinsic motivation entails varying degrees of extrinsic motivation. They also stated that extrinsic motivation occurs through the employment of two processes namely, internalisation and integration (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Internalisation can be defined as human beings transferring a regulation or value inwardly and integration as the process by which they transform a value or regulation in such a manner that it flows from their innate beings (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The degree of internalisation predicts whether an individual is unwilling to act, is passive in their compliance or personally committed in their engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Internalisation is evident throughout the human life span since humans are continuously faced with the internalisation of social norms and standards (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The mentioned arguments gave way to the development of the OIT that suggests that extrinsic motivated behaviour can only become intrinsically motivated after the external motives have been internalised. Kusurkar and ten Cate (2013) argued that this movement from one motivation to another occurs alongside a continuum with identified stages rather than through step-by-step stages. Kusurkar and ten Cate (2013) further stated that this nature of movement allows for movement from one side of the continuum to the other side without ever for example, experiencing the mid-point of the continuum. The continuum includes the following levels:

(1) Deci and Ryan (2000) placed *a-motivation* at the non-self-determined end of the motivation continuum. This state lacks any form of motivation – it is neither intrinsic nor extrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

(2) *External regulation* involves the lowest level of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Deci and Ryan (2000) this is a typical case of external motivation where behaviour is predicted by external factors.

(3) *Introjected regulation* has higher levels of autonomy than external regulation. Behaviour is more motivated by the need to avoid feelings of guilt and/or anxiety or to increase feelings of pride. Autonomy is therefore still not at an optimal level.

(4) *Identified regulation's* level of autonomy exceeds both external regulation and introjected regulation's level of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is however not the highest level of autonomy available in extrinsic motivation.

(5) *Integrated regulation* possesses the highest level of autonomy from all the types of extrinsic motivation. This type of motivation is congruent to one's values and needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is easy to confuse integrated regulation with intrinsic motivation or one can be faced with the question of what is the difference between these two types of motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) provided an answer to this question when they stated that integrated regulation still relates to the acquiring of external rewards where intrinsic motivation relates to acquiring personal enjoyment.

3.5 The Self-determination theory and its uses in research

The SDT have been applied to a vast range of issues relating to life domains (Deci & Ryan, 2008) Examples of these life domains include health, education and business. Research indicated that when the SDT's psychological needs have been met, cardiac patients were more likely to engage in cardiac rehabilitation programmes and it was recommended that rehabilitation programmes focus more on patients' perceptions of the satisfaction of the three needs. (Rahman, Hudson, Thogersen-Ntoumani, & Doust, 2015). A study conducted by Teixeira, Silva, Mata, Palmeira and Markland (2012) aimed at identifying the relation between weight control and autonomous motivation. It was found that autonomous motivation results in positive weight control. The study of Gillet, Vallerand, Amoura and Baldes (2010) indicated that when coaches provided autonomous support, athletes displayed self-determined motivation.

The SDT has also been applied in the education sector and it was found that when applying the principles of the SDT, the disabled youth's academic performance improved (Solberg, Howard, Gresham, & Carter, 2012) and students were able to sustain their academic engagement throughout the semester (Jan, Kim, & Reeve, 2015). Furthermore, the research of Alivernini and Lucidi (2011) found that the satisfaction or failure to satisfy students'

psychological needs also assisted in predicting whether students intended to drop out of school. A study (Naude, Nel, van der Watt, & Tadi, 2015) that investigated the experience of first year psychology students through the use of the SDT indicated that their evaluation of the discipline of psychology resulted in feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness thus promoting intrinsic motivation (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009) and in turn facilitating students' academic success.

Grant (2008) investigated the relevance of the SDT in the business sector and found a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and prosocial motivation, performance and productivity. In addition to this, Lau (2010) argued that employee autonomy can be used as a job-resource as it promotes intrinsic motivation to engage within employment activities. Kuvaas (2008) researched the hypothesis of the SDT in the public sector and results indicated that when supervisors support the need for autonomy and competence employees were intrinsically more motivated. Nie, Chua, Yeung, Ryan and Chan (2015) focused on autonomy support in the Chinese business sector and found a positive correlation between autonomous support and self-determined motivation.

Apart from being relevant to different life domains, the SDT has also proven to be relevant to different cultural, ethnic and nationality groups. Villarreal and Garcia (2016) was interested in what assisted African American and Latino participants to persist and succeed despite facing obstacles. Their results indicated that situations which optimise a sense of relatedness and autonomy motivated students to persist in achieving their goals. The study of Nie et al, (2015) focused on applying the SDT to a Chinese work environment and their research findings indicated that the perceived autonomy relates to the type of motivation experienced. Naude et al, (2015) researched South African students' reflections of factors that either facilitate or prevent their success. Their reflections produced themes that are related to the three psychological needs of the SDT, indicating that students' predictions of success are influenced by perceived satisfaction of their psychological needs. Chue and Nie's (2016) study involved participants form Singapore, United Kingdom, United States and Australia. The findings of their study support the basic argument of the SDT as they found that participants' self-determined behaviour was influenced by their perception of psychological need satisfaction. All the above mentioned studies indicated that satisfying the need for competence, autonomy and relatedness results in a positive behavioural outcome.

3.6 The psychological needs

The idea of human needs has been argued from different viewpoints. Hull (1943) indicated that humans are driven to action by their innate physiological needs. Murray (1938) however argued that human needs are acquired and psychological in nature. The SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) encapsulated both these viewpoints of human needs as it concluded that human needs are innate opposed to acquired (Hull, 1943) and psychological opposed to physiological (Murray, 1983).

3.6.1 Competence

White (1959) defined competence as the ability to engage adequately with the environment – appreciating their effect on the environment and vice versa. The value that White (1959) added to competence is evident in his belief that development equals the attainment of competence. Gardner (1983) supported the importance of competence and argued that competency is area or context specific and cannot be transferred to the next area or context. This would imply that when competence is gained in for example, academics it does not automatically result in competence in another life domain.

In later years, competence was still perceived as valuable when Elliot and Dweck (2005) argued that it is a vital psychological concept and is relevant to well-being. They firstly motivated this statement by adding that individuals' daily functioning are either consciously or unconsciously directed by competence or incompetence. Secondly, Elliot and Dweck (2005) opined that competence produces an affective reaction during attainment or failure to attain. These researchers stated that this is an indication of human beings' need to attain competence and avoid incompetence. Thirdly, competence is prevalent across the life-span even though it manifests differently in the various life stages. During the infant years, competence relates to mastering the environment (White, 1959) and in adulthood it relates to self-presentation and self-worth issues (Dweck, 2002; Elliot, McCregor, & Thrash, 2002). Ryff's (1989) model of well-being supports the idea that competence relates to environmental mastery which is defined as having a sense of competence in one's ability to manage daily life and the reality of it.

In the SDT, Deci and Ryan (2000) referred to competence as an individual's trust in their own ability to produce specific outcomes and to succeed in their own environment. According to Deci and Ryan (2000) the need for competence assists people in identifying challenges that are in line with their personal abilities. In an education setting competence would involve feeling competent in meeting the academic requirements (Tessier, Sarrazin, & Ntoumanis, 2010). Research has shown that apart from self-evaluation, competence can also be influenced

by positive feedback from external sources (Ryan, Patrick, Deci, & Williams, 2008). Solberg et al, (2012) further found that disabled students experienced competence satisfaction when they engaged more with their academic challenges (for example by researching academic articles).

3.6.2 Autonomy

Luke (1973) defined autonomy as one of the fundamental goals and standards of individualism. The value of autonomy to human well-being can already be appreciated in Maslow's (1954) description of the self-actualizing person. Maslow (1954) stated that individuals who are independent of their environment are able to evaluate situations based on their inner-beings and that this assists them in remaining relatively stable when experiencing challenges. Roger (1959) valued autonomy as one of three personality characteristics of an individual who functions optimally. Erikson (1963) opined that autonomy is important to the psychological development of human beings from as early as toddler years, as he conceptualised toddlers in the autonomy versus shame and doubt psychosocial stage. He argued that when a toddler fails to develop autonomy, they experience shame and doubt which inhibits their tendency to actively engage with their environment. It is clear from the above mentioned that in psychology a sense of autonomy is perceived as an important facet of optimal psychological development which influences the manner in which individuals interact with their environment and associated challenges.

Chirkov, Ryan, Kim and Kaplan (2003) differentiated between autonomy and independence. They stated that autonomy refers to acting in accordance with one's values and interests while independence refers to acting without the support of others. It is possible to be both autonomous and dependent on others, especially if the other is viewed as supportive (La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000).

3.6.3 Autonomous support

When discussing autonomy one has to consider autonomous support. In 1989, Grolnick and Ryan argued that autonomous support refers to a higher level of internalising the values of a relevant context. In support hereof, Williams, Weiner, Markakis, Reeve and Deci (1994) stated that before applying for medicine school, students internalised the values relevant to the field of medicine. Recently the research findings of Nie et al, (2015) demonstrated the importance of autonomous support as it indicated that employees are intrinsically motivated when they are provided with autonomous support.

In the SDT, Deci and Ryan (1985) argued that the acknowledgement of personal choices, one's feelings and self-direction optimises intrinsic motivation. However, the opposite of being autonomous is being persuaded (Tessier et al., 2010). This links with Deci and Ryan's (1985) perception that without autonomy individuals are usually persuaded by factors such as an income (salary) and status. Deci and Ryan (1985) linked a somewhat good self-esteem with high levels of autonomy. Thus self-directed behaviour breeds a positive view of oneself and one's abilities. Similarly, Niemiec and Ryan (2009) found that students' need for autonomy was satisfied when they were able to identify their own contribution in determining their academic involvement.

3.6.4 Relatedness

When Tönnies (1957) proposed the Gemeinschaft theory, he believed that the formation of social relationships and entities are solely determined by an individual's will. Maslow (1970) mentioned a need for belongingness that involves human beings' hunger for engagement with others. Maslow (1970) assigned it to a natural human tendency to gather together, to join in and to belong. When considering both these theorists' understandings it appears that social relationships are build due to the human need for belongingness which wills them to engage with one another.

Bowlby's (1979) attachment theory is in line with Maslow's argument that human beings have a need for relations with others. He argued that infants are more likely to actively explore their environment when they hold a secure attachment with a parent. The idea of relating with others can also be observed in Erikson's (1963) psychosocial stage of intimacy versus isolation as feelings of intimacy are related to needs for love and belongingness (Maslow, 1954). Failure to obtain intimacy can result in a sense of isolation which creates a risk of failing to master important developmental tasks that follow later in life (Erikson, 1963).

The existence, relatedness and growth (ERG) theory (Alderfer, 1967) also identified relatedness to be a basic human need. According to the ERG theory of Alderfer, needs can be divided into three groups, namely, existence (physiological and safety needs), relatedness (social engagement, being socially accepted and experiencing a sense of belongingness) and growth (self-fulfilment and personal development). Arnolds and Boshoff (2002) conducted a study that examined Alderfer's ERG theory and they found that relatedness with peers have a direct effect on self-esteem which in turn affects motivation. Furthermore, research participants valued social relations with their peers which were characterised by respect.

In the SDT, Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested that the need for relatedness is based on the natural inclination to take care of and protect loved ones. They also added that relatedness can be perceived as communal involvement with others. Sheldon, Sheldon and Osbaldiston (2000) argued that even though relatedness provides a sense of belonging it also promotes survival as resources are being shared within a group. Deci and Ryan (2000) however draws attention to the possible threat that the need for relatedness can pose to the development of the need for autonomy. This is when an individual becomes so embedded in his or her social context that individual integration becomes neglected (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Kusurkar and ten Cate (2013) found that in the education sector the need for relatedness would be translated as the need to feel part of a professional body and/or the need to feel valued by loved ones.

3.6.5 Failure to satisfy needs

When the three psychological needs are not satisfied it may result in individual challenges. Research (Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996) found that individuals who experience low levels of autonomy and relatedness tend to over protect themselves against others. Furthermore, this particular research indicated that individuals' defensive nature resulted in a vicious cycle where meaningful connections with others were lost. Research has also indicated that thwarting psychological needs predicts the experience of negative emotions relating to depression (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch, & Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2011). The mentioned consequences are just a few of the many reasons Deci and Ryan (2008) believed that refraining to satisfy the mentioned needs in any social context could result in negative consequences. They also draw attention to a crucial understanding that individually, each of these needs contributes significantly. Therefore, the negligence of at least one need can have significant negative consequences.

3.6.6 Need satisfaction and quality of motivation

Deci and Ryan (2000) argued that even though the need for competence can be enhanced through external factors (e.g. positive feedback), it is essential that individuals experience their own competence in performance. Giving positive feedback and refraining from a demeaning statement can therefore enhance a sense of competence although it does not establish it. Ryan (1982) however found that on its own, a sense of competence cannot enhance intrinsic motivation but rather when combined with a sense of autonomy. Deci and Ryan (2000) argued that although competence and autonomy has proven to have a significant effect on experienced intrinsic motivation, relatedness has also been found to play a contributing role. A sense of

relatedness influences the expression of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This relates to Bowlby's (1979) argument that the nature of an infant's attachment will influence their degree of active exploration of the world. This implies that even though someone can be intrinsically motivated in isolation of others, acting on this intrinsic motivation requires secure and meaningful attachments (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) holds the understanding that the need for competence, autonomy and relatedness are relevant across all cultures and that when these needs are met individuals are able to actively engage with challenges. Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that the satisfaction of the need for competence, autonomy and relatedness optimises the inner resources required for resilience. It can therefore be predicted that in order to persistently reapply for a master's degree, applicants' need for competence, autonomy and relatedness have been met as they continuously display their resilience through reapplication.

3.7 Motivation and persistent activity

Research has indicated that intrinsic motivation is related to persistent activity. This is supported by the study of Jõesaar, Hein and Hagger (2011) which indicate that athletes' motivation and persistence are influenced by the satisfaction of the three psychological needs of the SDT. Furthermore, Grant (2008) proposed that when people are intrinsically motivated they are naturally drawn to completing their work. In addition to this, Grant (2008) also found that when fire fighters were intrinsically motivated they would not just be drawn to completing their work, but would also be willing to work overtime. This finding directly links with Hardre and Reeve's (2003) statement that students with high levels of task persistence have high levels of internal motivation.

3.8 Conclusion

Ryan and Deci (2000) described a motivated individual as a person who possesses the energy to obtain an end goal. When considering the frequency of reapplication for a master's degree in psychology, one could reasonably expect that these applicants are energised to obtain their end goal. Several studies (Ratelle, Larose, Guay, & Senecal, 2005; Solberg et al., 2012; Naude et al., 2015) used the SDT as a theoretical lens and found that basic need satisfaction and a good quality of motivation correlates positively. In attempting to understand the motivation behind reapplication for a master's degree in psychology, the researcher considered past research findings, as well as more recent arguments about the usefulness of the SDT.

Chemolli and Gagné (2014) found that the SDT still upholds itself as a rich and very useful theory conceptualising motivation.

4. Research Methodology

This chapter provides the reader with an understanding of the research methodology employed in this study. The chapter include discussions on the research aim, research design, sampling method, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study and also the relevant ethical considerations. Figure 3 provides an overview of the flow of the chapter.
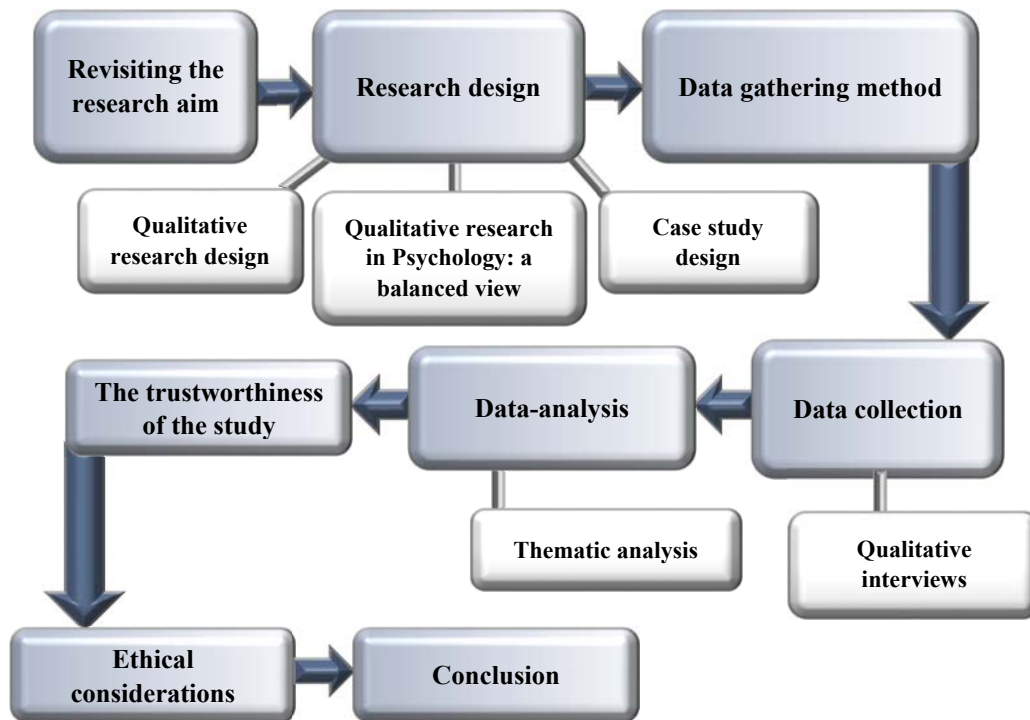
Figure 3: Visual representation of Chapter four

4.1 Revisiting the research aim

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the motivation behind the persistent re-application for an applied master's degree in Psychology. The HPCSA (2016) requires an applied master's degree in Psychology as a pre-requisite in order to register as a psychologist in South Africa. According to Pillay et al. (2013), selection into a master's degree in Psychology is very competitive in South Africa. This competitive nature combined with ethical and methodological issues surrounding selection, contributes to the difficulty of being selected. (Mayekiso et al., 2004). Despite these difficulties, many applicants are still motivated to apply for a master's degree, even after being unsuccessful previously. In understanding the motivation behind re-application, the self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2008) was used as theoretical lens.

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Qualitative research design

Van Maanen (1979) defined qualitative research as *"an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world"* (p.520). Bernard (2011) resorted to a more basic explanation of qualitative research when he stated that qualitative research focuses on deriving a comprehensive understanding of "who", "what" and "when". In order to gain an understanding into the "who", "what" and "when" one would have to explore, understand and interpret meaning (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). According to Braun and Clarke (2013) characteristics of qualitative research furthermore include the gaining of an understanding into human beings' processes of how they make sense of the world and their life experiences. This is in line with the aim of this study as the researcher attempted to gain a better understanding of participants' motivation behind the re-application for a master's degree in Psychology.

A qualitative research design was used due to a need for obtaining rich and detailed descriptions about participants' experience of reapplication. This would grant the researcher with the opportunity to gain an understanding of applicants' motivation and its subsequent determinants. The qualitative research approach also allowed the researcher to play a prominent role in obtaining clarified data. According to Merriam (2009) researchers are able to clarify data while engaging in the data collection (interviews). This prevents misunderstandings which may lead to misinterpretations. Conducting interviews allowed the researcher to be flexible to new and emerging phenomenon or in this particular study, themes (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Thus the space to acknowledge individual participants' journey of reapplication was created. It is also in line with qualitative research's reputation of providing contextualised understanding (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benetka, 2008). Rigidness would hinder the contextualising of each participants' experience of reapplication. Although the participants' data is viewed through the SDT, the flexible nature of qualitative research provided room to perceive themes within data as variations of the SDT's psychological needs.

4.2.2 Qualitative research in psychology: a balanced view

According to Povee and Roberts (2014), postgraduate psychology students and academic staff are of the opinion that psychology's nature for listening to people's stories in order to gain an understanding, guides the idea of qualitative research being inherent to psychology. They further opined that qualitative research's strength of eliciting rich and detailed data is vital to

the psychological inquiry. It appears as if the qualitative research method assists psychology researchers in staying true to the nature of their profession. Braun and Clarke (2013), Ponterotto, Kuriakose and Granovskaya (2008), as well as Sciarra (1999) concluded that psychologists find qualitative research attractive as it tends to focus on participants' emotive and cognitive experiences of life. Bhati, Hoyt and Huffman (2014) also added that qualitative research contributes to the profession of psychology by giving an in-depth contextualised account of people's experiences and the meaning attributed to these experiences.

Despite the mentioned positives of conducting qualitative research, psychologists have been criticised for their lack of theoretical knowledge regarding qualitative research. Psychologists are more knowledgeable in quantitative research and may require intensive training in understanding the broad field of qualitative research, but such training opportunities are difficult to locate (Griffin, 2004; Ponterotto, 2005). Smith, Bekker and Cheater (2011) argued that qualitative research in psychology is complicated due to the overlapping of methods and perspectives. He therefore advocated that student psychologists' training in qualitative psychology should produce the ability to easily identify the type of qualitative method and its theoretical unpinning. Researchers such as Ponterotto (2005) are furthermore concerned that psychology researchers' use of qualitative research may reflect elements of quantitative. For instance, questions included in a semi-structured interview may be based on literature and standardised for all participants involved.

4.2.3 Case study design

A case study research approach is defined as an attempt to obtain an understanding of a single setting and the dynamics that occur within it (Eisenhardt, 1989). Furthermore, Baxter and Jack (2008) added that a case study design employs multiple sources of data in order to gain this understanding. This results into the unveiling and understanding of the multiple dynamics of a phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Yin (2009) stated that case studies should be conducted when the researcher is interested in answering the "why" and "how". Yin (1984) provided two different methods (a single case study and a multiple case study design) that would comply in answering these "why" and "how" questions.

A single case study focuses on challenging or confirming a theory or represent a unique case (Yin, 1994). Despite many advantages, a single case study runs the risk of becoming too context specific. For the purpose of this study, a multiple case study design (Yin, 2009) was employed. A multiple case study refers to the collecting and analysing of data which originates from several cases. Instead of only studying individuals who, for example, applied for a

master's degree at one particular university (single case) the researcher investigated individuals who applied at different universities in South Africa and who applied at different stages in their lives. Thus the context for each research participant was somewhat different and is therefore categorized as a multiple case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A multiple case study design allowed the researcher to acknowledge the uniqueness of each participants' motivation. This delivered robust and reliable results of each participant's experience of motivation for reapplication. Their data related to the needs of the SDT in different ways and the researcher acknowledged this by including subthemes in the discussion of the results.

The qualitative nature of the study combined with a multiple case design optimised the researcher's ability to engage with participants' reflections of reapplication for a master's degree in psychology, while considering the psychological needs of the SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

4.3 Data gathering method

This study employed a snowball sampling method which is classified under the non-probability sampling group (Goodman, 1961). Snowball sampling refers to a referral process performed within stages. Participants identified in stage one of the sampling process refer the researcher to the next possible participants who will be included in stage two which will then refer the researcher to the participants that may be included in stage three. This referral system continues until the researcher has enough participants for his/her estimated sample. According to Neuman (2006), snowball sampling is based on the notion that people are directly or indirectly connected. The sample obtained through snowball sampling consisted of individuals who are connected through a network or through acquaintances (Neuman, 2006). According to Sadler, Lee, Lim and Fullerton (2010) these individuals, whether they are referring or whether they are the ones to whom the researcher is being referred to, usually share an experience or event with each other (the master's reapplication in this case).

The researcher carefully considered the sampling method. Frank and Snijders (1994) argued that snowball sampling assists in identifying the hidden population as members of a population maintain in contact with each other. Through snowball sampling the researcher relies on this maintained contact to reach individuals that would otherwise be difficult to reach. It might be that participants felt reluctant to participate in this study considering that the researcher is in the favourite position of completing her master's degree in psychology. Stivala, Koskinen, Rolls, Wang and Robins (2015) indicated that snowball sampling aids in the development of trust in the researcher-participant relationship since participants were referred

by a trusted acquaintance. It was relevant to this study given the sensitive nature of reflections to develop a trusting participant-researcher relationship with participants in order to encourage reflective responses. Although these significant benefits exist, the researcher considered the risk of conducting a biased study when employing snowball sampling (for example, participants may only be from a specific economic group or race) (Stivala et al., 2015). This was however not applicable to this study as snowball sampling delivered a diverse group of participants. Table 1 summarises the demographic information of the research participants.

Table 1: A summary of participants' demographic information

No	Name (pseudonym)	Age	Race	Gender	Number of applications	Master's selection	Universities applied to
1	John	31	White	Male	6	Successful (Clinical Psychology)	University of the Free-state, University of Johannesburg and University of Pretoria
2	Sophia	32	White	Female	2	Unsuccessful (Clinical Psychology)	University of the Free-state
3	Mandy	25	Coloured	Female	2	Successful (Clinical Psychology)	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and Rhodes University
4	Jennifer	35	White	Female	2	Successful (Clinical Psychology)	University of Stellenbosch and Rhodes University
5	Lauren	30	Indian	Female	2	Successful (Clinical Psychology)	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and Rhodes University
6	Marlize	38	Black	Female	3	Successful (Counselling Psychology)	Fort Hare University and Rhodes University
7	Jessica	29	White	Female	2	Successful (Clinical Psychology)	University of Stellenbosch

							and Rhodes University

The snowball sampling method started when the researcher approached an acquaintance. The inclusion criteria entailed individuals who applied for an applied master's degree in psychology at least twice in the past five years. The email (see Appendix A) sent to possible participants, contained a brief description of the research aim and purpose, the method of data collection and the inclusion criteria. Colleagues responded to this email in two different ways: (1) offering to be a participant in the study or (2) providing details of colleagues known to them who could be possible research participants. The researcher interviewed those offering to be a participant and later contact any new possible participants. The contacted individuals responded in the same manner and again the researcher would respond by conducting interviews with willing participants and contacting possible other participants. This process continued until seven participants were successfully recruited and interviewed.

4.4 Data Collection

4.4.1 Qualitative interviews

The researcher conducted seven semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews involve a set of questions that are predetermined with the intent to stimulate discussion around a specific theme while allowing aversion from the set questions. This was viewed as especially applicable to this study as it acted as the gateway in understanding participants' motivation behind their persistent reapplication for a master's degree in psychology.

This form of data gathering was also motivated by Rabionet's (2011) definition of interviews as being an effective and flexible tool in eliciting participants' voices and the individual meanings that they assign to their experiences.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews provided room for flexibility and probing in order to reveal hidden information (Qu & Dumay, 2011). For these reasons Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) described semi-structured interviews as the most accommodating method of collecting data within qualitative research. In addition to this, semi-structured interviews provided the platform for both the interviewer and interviewee to actively partake in the process of developing interview questions (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Regardless of the evident strengths of semi-structured interviews, critics are of the opinion that semi-structured interviews are not a neutral tool of data collection because the interviewer orchestrates the reality of the interview (Qu & Dumay, 2011). When conducting the seven

individual semi-structured interviews, the researcher consciously refrained from engaging with preconceived ideas of what participants' motivation would be.

Considering literature on semi-structured interviews, the interview schedule was created prior to conducting the interviews. Nine consecutive questions were identified from which additional questions were asked in order to facilitate deeper and more detailed descriptions of participants' motivation to reapply for a master's degree in psychology. Examples of these questions (see Appendix B) include: "Tell me about your journey in psychology", "How did this journey impact your life?" and "What influenced your decision to reapply". The funnel strategy (starting with broad questions and later narrowing it down to more topic-specific questions) was proposed by Andrews (1980) in identifying the structure of questioning. This allowed the researcher to discuss the specific topic of the motivation behind the reapplication for a master's degree in psychology while elaborating on individual matters and challenges related to the reapplication process. Although the SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) was used as a theoretical lens, the researcher guarded against developing leading questions based on the SDT.

4.5 Data-analysis

4.5.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis developed from the need to move beyond the mere observation of materials (Merton, 1975). According to Boyatzis (1998) the process of thematic analysis attempts to demonstrate data in detail in order to stimulate a better understanding of diverse subjects by means of focusing on the interpretations of others. Namey, Guest, Thairu and Johnson (2008) elaborated on this interpretative nature of thematic analysis when they stated:

"Thematic moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence, or graphically displaying code relationship." (p.138)

Thematic analysis can either be theoretical or inductive (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Theoretical thematic analysis is motivated by the researcher's theoretical interest, while inductive thematic analysis focuses more on themes which naturally emerge from the data (Patton, 1990). In this study the researcher was open to explore all aspects of participants' motivation for reapplication while considering the predetermined psychological needs of the SDT. This resulted in a coding process that reflects both theoretical (concerned with previous identified themes of a particular topic, relevant to this study, autonomy, competence and

relatedness) and inductive thematic analysis (concerned with information as they naturally emerged from the data). According to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) a combination of theoretical and inductive analysis allows the researcher to fundamentally stay true to the principles of theoretical analysis while allowing themes to be revealed within data. Ali and Birley (1998) opined that this combined approach to analysis ensures the researcher taking advantage of established theories while considering the participants' subjective experience.

Thematic analysis also enabled the researcher to make sense of the collected data. The following discussion focuses on how the six steps of thematic analysis was conducted. Throughout this discussion the reader will get a sense of how thematic analysis provided the researcher with a meaningful understanding of participants' data.

The six step process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

(1) Get familiar with the data. This is common practice in all qualitative approaches and involves researchers' attempts to immerse themselves into the data. During this study the researcher conducted and transcribed the interviews. The transcribing of the interviews by the researcher herself enhanced the researcher's familiarity with the data.

(2) Coding. This step is only possible if the researcher is already familiar with the collected data. Codes were derived from the data which highlights facets of the data that are of interest to the researcher. During the first round of analysis the researcher was open to coding any themes if supported with sufficient data. However, during the second round the focus moved to data relating to the psychological needs of the SDT. This would allow viewing of data through this specific theoretical lens. It resulted in both open and axial codes. The process of coding allowed the researcher to divide the data into meaningful clusters.

(3) Identify themes. Themes can only be identified after data has been coded and collated. This step mainly focuses on translating codes into potential themes. Participants' data directly linked to the psychological needs of SDT making it easy to use as main themes. Additional themes emerged from the rest of the data which resulted in a total of nine themes. These were labelled as follows: (a) autonomy, (b) competence, (c) relatedness, (d) duration of the process, (e) negativity as a result of being unsuccessful, (f) actual reasons for reapplication, (g) finances as an important dynamic, (h) negative reflections of the process and (i) positive reflections of the process.

(4) Reviewing themes. Refining themes is the main focus. After identifying possible themes within the data, more refining of themes was required. The researcher considered whether certain themes could be a subtheme to the three psychological needs of the SDT. With

the assistance of literature, it was easy to consider some of the themes as subthemes to the psychological needs, without disregarding the uniqueness of a theme.

(5)   Identify and label themes. This step involves detailed analysis of a theme and also assigning a synoptic and descriptive name. During this stage the researcher only focused on final themes derived in step 4 which was supported by a significant amount of data. Themes were then labelled as follows: autonomy, relatedness and competence. Autonomy included sub-themes such as: (a) qualifying as a psychologist: a personal decision, (b) existential meaning, (c) persistence and (d) autonomy support. Subthemes for relatedness included: (a) social support from significant others, (b) social support from colleagues, (c) relating to fellow South Africans through service delivery (d) financial impact. Competence included subthemes such as: (a) a desire for professional growth, (b) active self-equipment and (c) self-doubt.

(6)   Recording/writing up data. This step entailed the writing up of the findings of the research.

Qualitative psychologists should continuously be able to answer the "why and how" questions of their research process (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The six steps of thematic analysis provided the researcher with a detailed understanding of how data was analysed.

4.6 The trustworthiness of the study

Guba (1981) challenged qualitative researchers with four questions in order to proof the trustworthiness of their study. These questions included: (a) Are there any supporting evidence for the assumption that research results are true? (b) Can one determine the applicability of transferring research results to other settings or participants? (c) Will current research results be consistent with future research results obtained from a similar study conducted with similar participants? (d) Did researcher bias, motivation or interest influence the research results? Guba (1981) and Guba and Lincoln (1982) identified the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as methods by which qualitative researchers can answer these four questions.

Credibility refers to whether the research results reflects the information elicited from participants and whether it is an appropriate interpretation of participants' views (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lincoln & Cuba, 1986). According to Anney (2014) credibility can be ensured through peer checks, member checks, triangulation and reflexivity. For the purpose of this study credibility was ensured through peer checks (conducted by a qualified researcher

who supervised the research process). The researcher also practiced reflexivity as she continuously reflected on her own effect on the research process. In the researcher's opinion reflexivity was especially important to her research process as she could relate with the process of reapplication for a master's degree in psychology. Furthermore, theory triangulation was ensured by regarding motivation (in general) but especially the psychological needs from different theoretical perspectives.

The transferability of a study revolves around whether research findings can be transferred to other participants and contexts (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). According to Bitsch (2005), transferability can be achieved through detailed descriptions and purposeful sampling. In an attempt to ensure transferability, special attention was given to being accurate, clear and detailed when writing up the results (Bitsch, 2005). Applying a multiple case study design further ensured transferability since it guards against research being too context-specific which inhibits transferability (Aaboen, Dubois, & Lind, 2012).

According to Bitsch (2005) dependability refers to whether research results remains unchanged over a period of time. Dependability can be achieved through peer checks and code-recode strategy (Olivier, De Jager, Grootboom, & Tokota, 2005). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) requires coding and recoding. After the researcher identified final codes her supervisor would evaluate the accuracy and appropriateness of codes.

The conformability of a study refers to whether research results can be confirmed or supported by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Bitsch (2005) opined that conformability can, again, be ensured through an audit trail, triangulation and reflexive journal or practice. Throughout the research process the researcher's supervisor posed questions that challenged the researcher to reflect and think critically. In addition to this, the researcher also kept an audit trail, as well as all correspondence relating to choices made during the research process.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

As an intern clinical psychologist, the researcher had previously received training in ethics resulting in an existing sensitive approach and awareness towards ethical components in general, and also with regards to research. Ponterotto (2010) proposed that the employment of qualitative research elicit unique ethical challenges of which the researcher was constantly aware of.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants (see Appendix C). Ponterotto (2010) stated that qualitative research can be intense, personal and sometimes prolonged. During this

study the researcher ensured that interactions with participants were limited to a professional environment. In addition to explaining the nature, aim and use of the research, participants were also informed that their participation is voluntarily and that they possess the right to withdraw from the research at any stage.

The interviews were tape-recorded and participants informed about this before the beginning of an interview.

Upon giving their consent, participants were assured that their data will be confidential. The researcher aimed to practice confidentiality by storing data safely. The researcher advocated the anonymity of participants' identities by using pseudonyms during the data analysis, discussion and report-writing.

The practice of confidentiality and anonymity created a safe environment where participants could be honest and authentic in their reflections, especially since their accounts of the selection processes at different universities could not be traced back to them. This was vital to most participants as some of them are still affiliated with mentioned universities. In practicing confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher also respected the participants' dignity (Allan, 2011).

The researcher entered the research interviews with her own experience of reapplication for a master's degree in psychology. She was therefore able to identify with the possible difficulties encountered by each participant. This enabled the researcher to respect the individual experiences of each participant. While portraying this level of respect the researcher remained aware of the possibility of over identifying with the participants which may result in skewed results. Due to this consideration the researcher maintained an objective, non-judgemental and empathetic stance when participants recalled their subjective experiences of master's selection. This was done cautiously in order to ensure that the display of empathy cannot be translated as giving participants false hope. While interviewing participants, the researcher refrained from disclosing personal information in order to guard against the interviews turning into a mere discussion between friends.

The researcher acknowledged the sensitive nature of the research topic by arranging psychotherapeutic referrals if participants were to indicate a need for it. No psychotherapeutic referrals were made as participants did not indicate suffering of any emotional distress.

A number of ethical considerations were applicable to this study. The researcher guarded against unethical practice by continuously anticipating possible ethical dilemmas.

The study's proposal was also accepted by the research committee of the department of psychology, University of the Free State.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter explored the research methodology employed in this study in order to explore and describe the motivation behind participants' reapplication for a master's degree in applied Psychology. The researcher was able to collect rich and detailed data which will be discussed in the next chapter.

5. Results and discussion

Data gathering for this study was done through conducting seven semi-structured interviews which focused on the reflections of participants' experiences of the reapplication for a master's degree in psychology. This process resulted in about 210 minutes of interview data and 60 pages of data transcriptions. Data was evaluated by employing the Self-determination theory as theoretical lens (Deci & Ryan, 2000)) which produced both specific and open codes. The first process of analysis involved considering participants' descriptions as they relate to the three psychological needs of SDT, and secondly as they naturally emerged to the relevant research focus. Figure 4 illustrates a visual overview of the chapter.

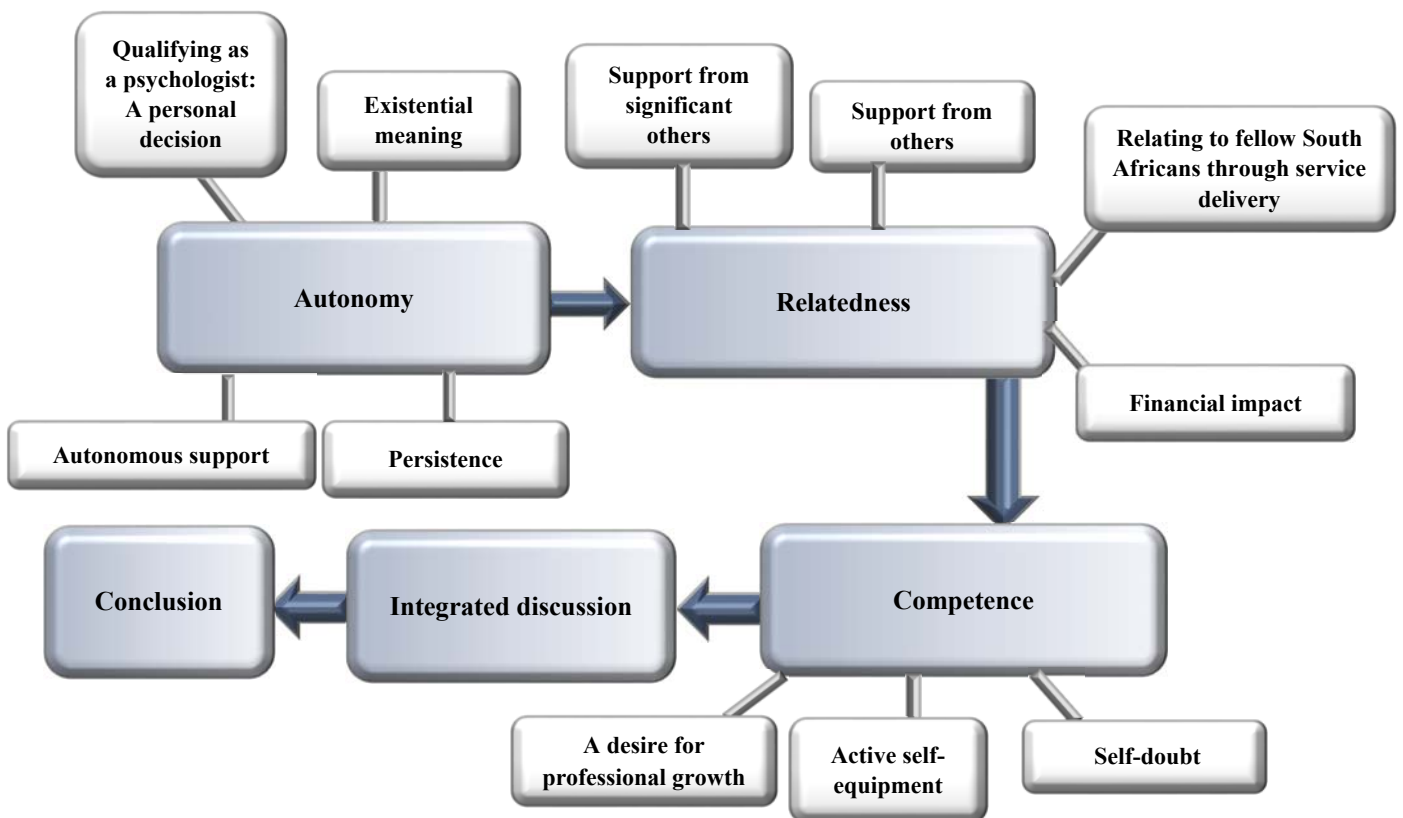*Figure 4.* Visual representation of Chapter five

5.1 Autonomy

The independent decision to qualify as a psychologist illustrates a sense of autonomy. Participants reported a natural interest, passion or love for psychology. Apart from these mentioned experiences which relates to autonomy, participants also reported to be autonomous in their decision to reapply despite encountering obstacles and challenges.

5.1.1 Qualifying as a psychologist: A personal decision

The personal decision to qualify as a psychologist relates to Deci and Ryan's (1985) understanding of autonomy as they argued that personal choices are crucial in self-directed behaviour and the development of intrinsic motivation.

John stated that becoming a psychologist was his own independent choice after considering other options. *"I wanted to become a psychologist or a, or an occupational therapist or a teacher...I think the reason why I stuck with it is because, I realised that I would not be happy with occupational therapy"*. For Marlize, becoming a psychologist has been a long-term goal: *"For as long as I can remember I knew I wanted to be a psychologist. From when I was still in primary school. Of course I did not know that it was a psychologist then. I just knew that I wanted to study the mind and how it works"*.

Furthermore, Lauren provided a brief explanation of her feelings following her non-selection into the master's in psychology programme: *"I knew that I ultimately wanted to become a psychologist but I did not know whether I was going into M. It was pretty much out of my hands...I told myself that I am I am not as invested in this process and that I leave it in God's hands...I realise... that I was sort of lying to myself a little bit when I was on the plane back to Durban after the selection week. And... on the plane I went, oh God I really want this"*.

The above statements are indicative of how the personal choice of studying psychology was based on an individual perspective of what they wanted to do. Individuals are more likely to remain stable when facing challenges if they made decisions independent of external factors. (Maslow, 1954). It can therefore be hypothesised that participants' sense of autonomy prevented them from succumbing to challenges related to an unsuccessful application.

In accordance, Niemiec and Ryan (2009) argued that students' need for autonomy is satisfied when they are able to identify their own contribution in determining their academic involvement. This argument supports the prediction that participants' need for autonomy was in play when they were able to enter the process again based on a pre-existing personal dream or ambition.

5.1.2 Existential meaning

According to Klingaman (2011) autonomy refers to activities that are congruent with the innate self. Deriving meaning from life is an individualistic process with each individual determining what would add meaning to their life. Luke (1973) is of the opinion that autonomy is the basis of being individualistic. Participants would therefore require some sense of autonomy in order to identify with qualifying as a psychologist on an existential level.

Marlize reflected on her unhappiness in another career and that qualifying as a psychologist was the only option for her to live the life that she wanted for herself. She stated: *"2014 I was quite tired of how things were happening in the police. I was basically not happy and I decided to apply. And I targeted Rhodes and Fort Hare…I was tired of where I was and I was not happy in that job. So I had a lot at stake even then but... When it did not work out it was a big blow but I felt that I was at the end of my road in 2014. By 2014 I was like it is either I do this or it is never going to happen again. Yes, so I felt like I did not have a choice if I wanted to live a life and be the best that I could possibly be and explore a second phase of what I always wanted to be in the first place"*.

This demonstrates the existential value that this participant assigned to qualifying as a psychologist, since she strongly believed that she could only live her life and be her best if she were to qualify. Functioning at an optimal level can be related to Roger's (1959) understanding of optimal functioning and Maslow's (1954) understanding of self-actualisation. Both theorists argued that a sense of autonomy is required in order to achieve optimal functioning.

John indicated that: *"I wanted to carry on studying. I wanted to have a bit more because I was never satisfied with the normal routine stuff. I actually wanted to make a difference"*. It is clear that John strived towards a more meaningful life as a result from a more meaningful career. He furthermore stated that *"he wanted to make a difference"*, which illustrates a possible need for existentialism.

5.1.3 Persistence

Qualifying as a psychologist is a long and time consuming process which requires a high level of commitment. Participants indicated that their persistence to reapply was mostly driven by their uncompromising desire to become a psychologist. This desire then resulted in the attitude to persist in the process at any cost.

John, Mandy and Lauren indicated how they were willing to apply for a master's degree more than once, despite having no guarantee that they would stand a better chance next time around.

John applied to several universities over a period of six years, hoping to increase his chances of being successful. He stated: *"So it is quite daunting to apply and because I really wanted to get in. I think I really wanted to do this. I did not just apply to one or two places, I applied to ten places and that drains you. So I think when you are disappointed it is quite a huge effort you put in to get in. So I think that is the biggest challenge is the effort of applying or to pick yourself up to apply again each year"*.

Mandy explained how she applied for a master's selection more than once: *"I applied to Rhodes and they did not accept me. I went to all the rounds but I was on the waiting list but then……And yes, I applied to more places the second application to just yes, increase my probability that I do get in".*

Lauren's journey of reapplication included two attempts at master's selection. She recalls: *"I applied for masters to UKZN and I went for interviews and I did not even get shortlisted. And yes, then I applied again the next year while I was working for the Human Scientist Research Council and then I got interviews at Rhodes and got in".*

It is evident that participants John, Mandy and Lauren were all willing to engage in more than one application process thinking that it would be the only way to open up the opportunity. It implies that their persistence in reapplication was influenced by the intensity of the desire. This relates to autonomy as it is evident that independent persistent behaviour is based on an internal drive (Chirkov et al., 2003).

Some participants' persistence resulted in repeating certain psychological modules in order to improve academic marks. Sophia mentioned: *"Then I finished it in three years and I did not make honours because I did not have the right subtotal. So I did a, I did Egan again in my fourth year and then I worked throughout that year.*

Erikson (1963) argued that failure to obtain autonomy ultimately inhibits active engagement with the environment. Participants wanting to increase their chances of progressing in their journeys, illustrated active engagement in the following statements: (a) improving academic marks, (b) volunteering as a way of gaining experience, (c) engaging in careers that are associated with psychology and (d) applying at different universities more than once.

Deci and Ryan (1985) found that optimised levels of autonomy relate to a good self-esteem which further promotes engagement as it involves a positive view of oneself and one's abilities. In this sense, participants' autonomy would then promote their self-esteem. Participants' self-esteem refers to personal evaluations of their ability to be successful in a master's degree application. This understanding of the relation between autonomy and self-esteem support the hypothesis that participant John, Mandy and Lauren's sense of autonomy encouraged them to reapply for a master's degree. It is predicted that their sense of autonomy ultimately resulted in their belief to eventually be successful. It further relates to Sophia's sense of autonomy as she improved her academic marks which produced the belief that she will be successful−making it worthwhile to repeat academic modules.

5.1.4 Autonomous support

Sophia developed an interest in psychology after engaging with information about what psychology can provide. This can be related to autonomous support (a higher level of internalising the values of a relevant context) (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Participants possibly internalised the values of the profession of psychology after being exposed to information relevant to psychology. This then informed their decision to pursue a career in psychology.

A discussion about sex therapy stimulated Sophia's interest in psychology. She described this experience as follows: *"I decided in grade 11 that I wanted to be a sex therapist. After hearing one speaking I was like oh my word this is a job! And then I did some research to see now, how can you do this, how can you actually make a life out of helping people with their marriage and their sex life. And I felt like the best route is through psychology".*

Mandy did not initially plan on studying psychology. Psychology was one of her major subjects and this is how she was exposed to psychology and what it entails. The more she engaged with psychology, the more she realised that she wanted to pursue a career herein. During the process of exposure to psychology she may have internalised the values of psychology and felt that it resonated with her. She stated: *"When I applied for university psychology was my second option and I got in to it. So but I think I fell in love with psychology in my first year"*

5.2 Relatedness

Relatedness has been described as a natural human need for social engagements (Maslow, 1970) which provides a sense of belonging. (Sheldon et al., 2000). The theme of relatedness highlights, amongst others, participants' need to be supported in the journey of becoming a psychologist. Participants stated that social support encouraged them to persist in their journey to qualify as a psychologist. They derived social support from different sources, such as colleagues and significant others. Some participants also indicated that being successfully selected for a master's degree would provide them with the opportunity to aid fellow South Africans.

5.2.1 Support from significant others

Engagements with significant others seemed to be the predominant source of support for most participants. Four of the participants explain it as follow: *"I went on holiday and Roger and I went for a long walk and it was clear that okay I have to study again"*. (Jennifer) *"My*

parents saw an advert for Fort Hare for applicants for the master's program for counselling and clinical and they let me know". (Marlize)

"My support system, my social support system. My mother was very encouraging and saying, why do you not try again? As well as my best friend because then she was the one who said, okay, let's go to...Let's go for the love life course. Let's go to all, like you know to get experience". (Mandy)

"My family are all like, oh well, it happened, move on. My love was like, okay, are you fine? You know. Are you fine? No. Okay, come and lie here. Are you better now? Yeah I am better, okay". (Sophia)

Arnolds and Boshoff (2002) stated that relatedness with peers positively influences self-esteem, effecting motivation in the same manner. Mandy stated how her friend motivated her to continue to engage in the process of becoming a psychologist even after being unsuccessful. She then suggested volunteering at institutions where psychological services were provided. Mandy described her friend's words as follows: "*Let's go to all, like you know to get experience. Let's volunteer at psychiatric hospitals"*. It is clear that this friend's support motivated her to engage in activities beyond what was expected of her, in order to optimise her chances of being selected for a master's degree.

For Lauren becoming a psychologist had a deeper relevance in terms of her sense of relatedness. She explained that her family's limited knowledge about her paternal uncle's schizophrenia diagnosis played a role in her qualifying as a psychologist. This was evident as she stated: "*I also, I have a paternal uncle who has schizophrenia. And so I grew up with him, around him. And I always remember thinking, I wonder why he is like this and yes if my grandparents have known or if they have done something sooner would it have been different"*.

Alderfer (1967) argued that relatedness involves individuals' need for social engagements. This argument is further supported by Deci and Ryan (2000) as they define relatedness as a perceived communal involvement with others. Participants' statements indicated how engagement and discussions with significant others motivated them to remain active in their attempts to qualify as a psychologist. The research findings of Kusurkar and ten Cate (2013) demonstrated that a need for relatedness can sometimes be translated as the need to be valued by significant others. This phenomenon however, warrants the consideration of Deci and Ryan's (2000) argument that a sense of relatedness can be threatening to a sense of autonomy. The need to be valued by significant others may result in acting in ways or making decision that diminished their sense of autonomy. The opposite was true for Sophia: "*And all my, my whole structure, family structure, friends structure, support were like, whatever you choose we*

are there. So they were, yes, they would be just as happy with me stopping as with me that I kept going".

5.2.2 Support from colleagues

In the context of his study, colleagues refer to individuals from the participants' place of employment as most of the participants engaged in alternative and/or temporary employment. For John, his colleagues included qualified psychologists while Jessica's colleagues were mostly qualified in other professions.

Relatedness implies a sense of social acceptance (Alderfer, 1967). Participants' colleagues demonstrated social acceptance by encouraging them to persist and remain engaged in the process. This motivated participants to reapply and is evident in the statement by John. He specifically highlighted their support after being unsuccessful: *"Which made it a lot easier is that I was working with psychologists at the time and when I give them the news they all would say that they think I am ready but it does not matter you can wait a couple of years more".*

Jessica demonstrated a similar experience that one's colleagues' play a role in staying motivated in the journey of becoming a psychologist. She assigned her confidence to reapply to the support of colleagues when she explained: *"I think the school counselling gave me a lot of confidence. The school principal was very supportive. The teachers were very supportive and they actually told me that I was doing a good job…So it was a supportive environment that gave me the confidence to reapply again".*

Both participants' experience of support from their colleagues is a clear example of how one can act autonomously while being related to others (La Guardia et al., 2000).

5.2.3 Relating to fellow South Africans through service delivery

Participants stated that unsuccessful master's applications were limiting their ability to assist others. This limitation in practice was described as real frustration.

John explained that, as a registered counsellor, his ability to make a difference in people's lives was limited and this awareness motivated him to apply for a master's degree. He stated: *"I wanted to carry on studying. I wanted to have a bit more because I was never satisfied with the normal routine stuff. I actually wanted to make a difference".*

Jennifer mentioned how a similar experience resulted in her referring patients to a qualified psychologist: *"I was working as a school counsellor and as I said just very much in touch with my limitations in that regard. And I really wanted to do something different. But at time I was constantly referring to educational and clinical psychologists".*

Jessica explicitly recalled her frustrations in her lack of knowledge in order to help children. She said: *"While I was doing the school counselling I sometimes felt frustrated because I did not really have the knowledge or the skills to help children that really have behavioural problems and clinical problems"*.

Participants indicated a concern regarding their limited abilities to assist service users since they were not registered as qualified psychologists. Those participants registered as counsellors, were expected to refer to qualified psychologists. This referral process was sometimes complicated due to logistic issues. Participants were often left feeling frustrated and very much aware that a successful master's degree selection would broaden their scope of practice. This is evident in another statement by Jessica: *"I was only able to do the social work part and that kind of frustrated me. So I decided I really, I wanted to do psychology so that I can be of help to these children and to other children in South Africa"*.

The demonstrated need to assist others correlates with relatedness which also involves taking care of and protecting others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Participants' frustration highlights the need to take care of others. A broader scope of practice would enhance the ability "to take better care" of service users.

5.2.4 Financial impact

Participants experienced financial difficulties as a significant dynamic when applying for a master's degree in psychology. An unsuccessful application or reapplication appeared to have impacted their lives significantly, especially in terms of requesting financial support from others or the inability to support others financially.

Marlize was unable to apply at some stage due to the degree being full-time which would imply resignation from her current job. This would have placed her parents under financial pressure. She stated: *"I am the first born of four so after I finished by honours a brother and sister was already in varsity so I did not really want to put that much pressure on my parents. And I have not really had luck in terms of bursaries and scholarships in the past so I did not look at that option"*.

After completing her honours degree participant Mandy hoped that she would be selected for the master's degree so that she would be able to provide for her family financially. Not being selected unfortunately prolonged this ideal and it frustrated both her and her family. This financial concern is emphasised in the following: *"Like my family we are not like, we come from a middle-class social economic status, family. They were like: "Oh when are you going*

to finish, when are you going to, like get a proper job?" So after four years of studying I thought, okay I am going to get into masters and then I would be able to work for them".

Lauren experienced guilt feelings about wasting her parents' money when she was not selected for a master's degree. She proactively engaged in finding a source of income during the reapplication process: *"Have my parents wasted their money on my degree? Because it is really hard to find any job with just an undergraduate or even honours degree in Psychology and in Durban especially there are not many opportunities...I did the Bpsych. equivalent because I thought that might be a way to earn money in the interim if I did not get in the first or the second time".*

Deci and Ryan (2000) stated that the need to take care of and protect our fellow men is associated with relatedness. Participants' sense of relatedness is therefore communicated through their identified need to be of better service to fellow South Africans. In addition to this, when participants discussed the challenges relating to this long process of reapplication, finances were a real concern. They were concerned about wasting significant others' money on studying and reapplication, as well as their prolonged inability to provide financially for their significant others. This phenomenon can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, as the need to take care of significant others and secondly, how it affected their loved ones. Participants were thus intrinsically motivated when engaging in reapplication and not concerned with or motivated by external factors such as salaries (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

5.3 Competence

As participants reflected on their journey of qualifying as a psychologist, it appeared that they also continued as a result of wanting to acquire additional psychological skills and knowledge. In addition to this, participants recalled their active attempts in wanting to better equip themselves in the hope of gaining a certain level of competence that would appear more attractive to the selection panel. Although participants' descriptions related to developing a sense of competence, they also identified how the process of reapplication resulted in questioning their competence.

5.3.1 A desire for professional growth

Participants indicated a need to develop professionally as one of the reasons for persistent reapplication. Participants demonstrated the need to be more knowledgeable and to engage with activities that stimulated them intellectually. In accordance, White (1959) argued that perceived development results in a greater sense of competence. Acquiring the higher level of

knowledge and skills provided by a master's degree would therefore illustrate personal competence.

As a registered counsellor, John was constantly aware of his lack of knowledge. This is reflected in his explanation of how reapplication affected his life. He explained: *"It was frustrating professionally. Because after three years of registered counselling you start to realise you want more. And then you become more and more frustrated with what you are doing, professionally"*.

Lauren agreed: *"I did the Bpsych. equivalent because I thought that might be a way to earn money in the interim if I did not get in the first or the second time. Yes, but it felt like it was too limiting I wanted to be fully qualified"*.

For Jennifer it was not just about gaining more knowledge and skills relating to psychology, but how these skills and new knowledge when implemented, could enhance her ability to serve others. *"I think the biggest thing is that it would enable me to better serve the people that I was already serving. So offer them more but then also feel more self-fulfilled. And yes perhaps more, I suppose I imagine approaching people and their challenge with a more boarder lens and therefore it would be more challenging and stimulating."*

5.3.2 Active self-equipment

After an unsuccessful master's application, participants questioned their readiness to progress in their professional journeys. Their question of readiness mostly related to them requiring more experience in the field of psychology.

Participants interpreted the sense of incompetence they experienced after an unsuccessful application due to a lack of experience. This interpretation explains why they would engage in active attempts to obtain more experience. Increased levels of experience would potentially optimise their sense of competence. Participants' active attempts to equip themselves are therefore in line with the statement of Elliot and Dweck (2005), that daily functioning is either consciously or unconsciously aimed at attaining competence or avoiding incompetence. Active attempts to better equip themselves can be interpreted as an act consciously performed to attain competence.

Jessica hoped that working as a social worker would add to her experience in working with people and thus increasing her sense of competence in being successful in her application. *"I did not want to become a social worker. I decided to do social work because I realised how strict the selection process (for a Psychology master's degree) is. So I decided to do the social*

work so that I get the experience and perhaps work to gain experience and eventually apply for the Psychology program".

Mandy considered engaging in volunteer work and she mentioned the following: *"Okay, let's go to. Let's go for the love life course. Let's go to all, like you know to get experience. Let's volunteer at psychiatric hospitals".*

5.3.3 Self-doubt

At most universities master's selection involves an interview with a panel of qualified psychologists. Not being selected by this panel resulted in participants doubting themselves. External sources such as an interview panel can either support or decrease a sense of competence by giving feedback (Ryan et al., 2008).

Participants demonstrated that a diminished sense of competence translated into feelings and thoughts of self-doubt. Thus a lack of competence produces an affective reaction (Elliot & Dweck, 2005). Feelings of self-doubt relates to the argument of Dweck (2002) and Elliot et al. (2002) that in adulthood, competence involves self-worth issues. Participants' feelings of self-doubt posed questions such as: "Am I good enough to be in master's?".

The following illustrate how feelings of self-doubt resulted into a sense of incompetence that ultimately resulted in participants' questioning their self-worth.

John explained: *"I would say the month after that (unsuccessful application) it was a lot of self-doubt. I think that is quite a lasting effect, self-doubt, am I supposed to do this, what did I say wrong what did I do wrong in the interviews should I go work again on my academics?".*

During the period of doubt, John also indicated uncertainty regarding the way forward: *"Should I go work again on my academics?"* The tendency to attain competence and avoid competence, while dealing with a strong sense of incompetence, is again reflected in John considering activities that will hopefully translate into a sense of competence.

After being unsuccessful Jennifer also raised questions related to self-doubt. She stated: *"I think I guess the usual questions of you know do I have what it takes. Yes, a lot of self-doubt".*

Jessica explained her challenges with self-doubt as follows: *"I think it is almost like you start doubting yourself. Will you really be a good psychologist? Should I not stay a social worker, I already have the degree. I might as well be a social worker".*

For Mandy self-doubt involved the following experience: *"It was very difficult to accept because I did feel like failure and I was asking myself what was wrong with me...I doubted whether I was good enough to be in masters. Like I started beating myself up about*

not performing my best in the interviews, not knowing enough. Yes, questioned whether I knew enough to be able to be a psychologist. Whether I deserved to be in the program or not".

Sophia described her moments of self-doubt: *"So you end up with this thing of I am not good enough. It is harrowing, it really is. It goes right to your self-image".*

5.4 Integrated discussion

Participants' reflections of motivation for reapplication related to the three needs as described by the SDT. Autonomy was associated with a personal choice to pursue and persist at qualifying as a psychologist, as well as the existential value that they added to become a psychologist. In terms of relatedness, participants identified social support and existential factors as their motivation to persist in reapplication. They furthermore referred to their sense of relatedness in how a master's degree would expand their ability to help those in need to the best of their ability. Participants entered the application process wanting to develop their professional competence but this pursuit was later challenged by unsuccessful applications and feelings of self-doubt. These aspects all related to their sense of competence.

According to the SDT the satisfaction of these three needs promotes intrinsic motivation which stimulates the internal building blocks for resilience (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Recognising the importance of individual choices, personal feelings and self-direction also stimulates the development of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Participants' statements relating to autonomy indicated that their experience of master's selection application promoted their sense for autonomy which in turn increased the probability of intrinsic motivation.

Furthermore, participants demonstrated active engagement with activities related to the field of psychology. This ranged from gaining experience in relation to psychology or redoing psychological modules to improve academic marks. As mentioned before, these actions were aimed at developing a sense of competence. This is supported by Solberg et al. (2012) who argued that competence satisfaction can be experienced when engaging with the task at hand. Deci and Ryan (1985) stated that environments or activities that results in the attainment of competence, stimulates the development of intrinsic motivation.

According to the Cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan 1985) environments that manifests safety and security promotes levels of intrinsic motivation. A sense of relatedness correlates with a sense of safety (survival) and security (sense of belonging) (Sheldon et al., 2000). Participants experienced sense of relatedness was demonstrated and supported by their statements. It indicates that they were intrinsically motivated since they felt safe and secure through relatedness.

From the above it can be hypothesised that participants' three psychological needs have been addressed. Experiences of intrinsic motivation sustained the ability to reapply persistently. This is supported by Grant (2008) who explained that intrinsic motivation produces sustainable action. Hardre and Reeve (2003) acknowledged this by stating that task persistence correlates with high levels of intrinsic motivation. It is evident that the different aspects of reapplication for a master's degree addressed participants' three psychological needs and it inspired intrinsic motivation, leading to the persistent behaviour of reapplication.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed themes elicited from participants' interview transcriptions. These themes were discussed in terms of the psychological needs of the SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Participants' statements were used to demonstrate how their descriptions relate to the psychological needs. Referring to the literature on these needs, provided an understanding of how the process of reapplications impact on participants' needs and how it can be interpreted.

6. Conclusion, limitations, recommendations and the *so what?* question

This research focused on the motivation behind the persistent reapplication for a master's degree in applied psychology. A qualitative research design with a multiple case study was used in order to gain a deeper understanding of applicants' motivation. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who have unsuccessfully applied for a master's degree more than once. Thematic analysis was used as a method to analyse the data. The data was discussed in terms of the three psychological needs of SDT, with reference to published literature.

This chapter will discuss the researcher's conclusions, her identified limitations within the study and recommendations on how to compensate for these limitations. In the final section of this chapter the researcher will share her experience while conducting this study.

6.1 Concluding comments

The three psychological needs of the SDT indicated how theorists argued in favour of autonomy, competence and relatedness before the SDT were developed. Theorists referred to these needs as part of human nature, vital to well-being and optimal functioning. Arguments for the relevance of these needs came about before the SDT came into existence. This confirms the value that the SDT later assigned to satisfying the three psychological needs. A study conducted by Hodgins et al, (1996) demonstrated that the negligence of the three psychological needs causes behaviour related to overprotecting oneself. Furthermore, the research findings of Bartholomew et al, (2011) indicated that needs negligence results in the experience of negative emotions that are related to depression. These research findings provided evidence as to why the SDT advocates the satisfaction of these needs.

Participants' interview transcriptions related to the three psychological needs of the SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The three needs were strongly supported by participants' recollections of their individual process of reapplication for a master's degree in applied psychology. Very little aspects inhibited the satisfaction of their needs. The development of intrinsic motivation is optimised by addressing all three needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Research findings of Rahman et al. (2015) is in support of this notion as it demonstrated that when cardiac patients' three psychological needs were satisfied they were intrinsically motivated to engage in recommended rehabilitation programs.

It has been determined that participants experienced some level of intrinsic motivation during their individual processes of reapplication. When considering participants' statements on reapplication in combination with the discussed master's selection chapter on qualifying as a psychologist, one is unable to ignore the high quality of intrinsic motivation. When participants' three psychological needs were met they were able to endure challenges without terminating their attempts at qualifying as a psychologist. Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that the satisfaction of the need for competence, autonomy and relatedness does not only correlate with the development of intrinsic motivation but it also optimises the inner resources required for resilience. In support of this argument, research conducted by Solberg et al, (2012) found that when the three psychological needs were met, the disabled youth were able to persist in academic engagement throughout the year despite having to face challenges relating to their disability. Not only were students intrinsically motivated but they were also able to display persistent behaviour. Hardre and Reeve's (2003) argued that persistence positively correlates with intrinsic motivation. This confirms that intrinsic motivation allows for persistent behaviour that causes observable results in the midst of challenges. In conclusion, to sustain active engagement in one's environment despite possible challenges, one would have to be intrinsically motivated. Research participants' persistent application for a master's degree in applied psychology can be considered as evidence of this conclusion.

6.2 Limitations and recommendations

Most of the research participants has eventually been selected for a master's degree. They are thus not currently engaging in the reapplication process. Their descriptions of their individual reapplication processes were based on what they were able to remember from a year ago or for some even later than this. Participants' ability to accurately remember played a vital role in the quality of data obtained. In order to enhance the richness of understanding the motivation behind reapplication, the study could have included more individuals who are currently in the process of reapplying and still motivated to do so.

Conducting face-to-face interviews limited the researcher to the sample available in the town that she was located in. In addition to this, face-to-face data collection may have resulted in participants' answers being influenced by the researcher's presence. Some may have wanted to impress the researcher or wondered whether a certain response would elicit judgement from the researcher. Considering both these arguments the researcher recommends that when conducting research on a sensitive topic, future researchers consider an alternative method to face-to-face data collection.

The individual interviews may be seen as a limitation to this study as a focus group could have provided a collective voice. The researcher is however of the opinion that both methods of data collection would provide individual limitations. Focus groups may have resulted in participants feeling the need to perform or change their description of their reality while interviews may have created a sense of scrutiny as the researcher was focusing on one participant. Both these limitations would have an impact on the collected data.

The researcher was aware that with one of the participants, English was a second language. At times the participant struggled to express herself verbally. It is recommended that research interviews be conducted in participants' home language.

This study resulted in the focus being on the one aspect of the SDT. Future studies can aim at gaining a more holistic understanding of motivation. This may be valuable to the field of psychology as motivation has been proven as a central concept in psychology.

6.3 Personal experience

The researcher could identify with the topic under study as she had a previous experience of reapplication for a master's degree in psychology. During her journey of pursuing psychology as a career, she engaged with individuals who had been applying for a master's degree multiple times and this sparked her interest in why individuals remain motivated to reapply.

This study has exposed the researcher to individuals who are passionate about psychology. Multiple attempts and varying routes travelled in order to eventually qualify as a psychologist provided the researcher with a great sense of gratitude for her own journey in qualifying as a psychologist. It has reconnected the researcher with her own process of reapplication after an initial unsuccessful application. Furthermore, she could relate with participants and this increased her sensitivity in engaging with applicants' personal recollections of reapplication.

During the research process and while engaging with the literature on psychology in South Africa, the researcher experienced a sense of pride. Considering the history of psychology, one has to acknowledge the evident development that occurred within the profession since 1994. The researcher is a non-white female almost at the end of her clinical psychology internship. This is evidence of how much South African psychology has changed from its past reputation of being sexist and racist. Being part of a profession that has been willing to embrace change elicited a strong sense of pride in the researcher.

6.4 So what?

This study highlighted participants' experiences of reapplication. The research findings can be appreciated by both higher education institutions (that provides a master's degree in psychology) and current prospective master's psychology students. Through this study higher education institutions can be informed about the challenges associated with initially applying but also reapplying for a master's degree. Acknowledging the challenges may stimulate critical thinking of how to assist prospective master's psychology students in their application process.

The results of this study can give current prospective master's psychology students a realistic idea of what it entails to qualify as a psychologist in South Africa. When one applies for a postgraduate degree in psychology it is not expected to encounter factors such as a reapplication for a master's degree and the impact it has on one's life. Previous master's applicants' experience could however also instil hope when prospective students are exposed to research participants' journey of sustainable motivation for reapplication. Students could be walking away with a sense of; "if they could do it, so can I". It will be even more so for those who can relate with one of the participant's descriptions of reapplication. Participants' statements give a direct explanation of what assisted them in remaining motivated and active during their pursuit of a master's degree in psychology.

This study combined with previous research on intrinsic motivation has confirmed the good quality of intrinsic motivation. It's sustainable nature and enhancement of persistence is valuable to goal achievement. It is therefore important to gain more understanding into the development of intrinsic motivation in different contexts, especially in a country where citizens encounter challenges in goal achievement daily.

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September 2015

Dear possible research participant

I would hereby like to request your willingness to participate in a research study that forms part of the requirements for a M.A. Clinical psychology degree. The research topic is "The motivation behind the persistent reapplication for an applied master's degree in psychology: A self-determination theory perspective".

The aim of the research is to understand applicants' motivation in reapplying for a master's degree in psychology. The research process will involve an interview that will mainly focus on your experience of this journey of wanting to become a psychologist, as well as the reapplication process for a master's degree in psychology. Unfortunately, there is a criterion that possible research participants must meet, namely they must have applied for a master's degree in psychology at least twice within the past five years.

I would also like to request that you forward this communication to any of your colleagues that you may regard as a possible suitable participant.

Kind regards

Daniella Booysen

APPENDIX B

Interview schedule

1. Tell me about journey of pursuing psychology as a career

2. How did this journey affect your life?

3. Reflect on your first decision to apply for a master's degree in psychology

4. Tell me about your first unsuccessful master's application

5. What are the prominent thoughts and emotions experience within he first month after an unsuccessful application?

   - How did these thoughts and emotions affect you?

   - How did you deal with these thoughts and emotions?

   - Why did these thoughts and emotions not prevent you from reapplying?

6. Reflect on the decision to reapply?

7. What are some of the challenges experienced because of reapplication?

   - How did you deal with these challenges?

   - What did overcoming these challenges entail?

   - What is the difference between someone who overcomes these challenges and others that succumb to the challenges?

8. What was your expectation of reapplication? What could reapplication provide you with?

   - Reflect on the last application

   - What made the last application different from the rest?

   - Were there any specific challenges during last application

   - Why did you believe that the probability of you being successfully selected were higher?

9. Is there anything you would like to add to the process of reapplication?

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September 2015

Dear Participant

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. This study forms part of the researcher's master's degree requirements.   The purpose of this study is to explore the motivation behind students' reapplication for a master's degree in applied psychology, while applying the Self-determination theory as theoretical lens.

Participation in this study is voluntary and should you feel the need, you may withdraw at any time. All your identifying data will be safeguarded in the strictest confidence. Although the data will be published, all information will be kept confidential and responses anonymous.

You will be expected to answer a few questions during a scheduled interview. Please feel free to voice any concerns to the interviewer in this regard.

Thank you

Daniella Booysen

Informed consent

I have read and understood the information on the form and I consent to be a voluntary participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time.

Name and Surname: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D

Excerpt of an Individual Interview Transcription

<u>Interviewer:</u> Tell me about the first time you did not get selected for masters …that experience for you.

<u>Participant:</u> (sigh) It (pause) it was frustrating because I was at interviews. (uhm) I think, every year after that I have been at interviews and every year one or two or three universities I did attend. The first time I did not get in, I was at three selection processes which was quite (stresses the word) frustrating (uhm) because Free-State did not give me an interview. But all the other universities across the country gave me one and I fell out every time at the last, at the last hurdle. So it was extremely disappointing. Also I think at the time I was not use to it and I thought okay well a year out of this circulation I have a good chance without realising that most people that are selected is well, 28, 27, 30 maybe. So at the time I was quite disappointed (uhm) but it did not deter me to apply again. It was just like okay this is not my year, we will try again next year. What made it a lot easier is that I was working with psychologists at the time and when I give them the news they all would say that they think I am ready but it does not matter you can wait a couple of years more. And I think what soften the blow a little bit more is that I was, I had a job. I did not, if I look at some of my colleagues who had an honours degree but they had nothing else, (uhm) I would, I would have been at a worse place. And I think because I was already working in psychology and already understanding sort of what was going on, (uhm) I think it made it a little bit easier.