Living off-campus: Academic, emotional, social, and financial experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria.

A Mini-Dissertation

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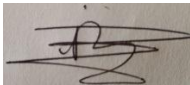25 May 2022

Pretoria, South Africa

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DISSERTATION RELEASE FORM

I certify that the following student **Sikhathele Elitha Sibanda u16197268** was under my supervision. I further certify that she has fulfilled all the requirements that I set before her as the supervisor. I hereby release the student without reservations to submit her dissertation for marking.

Name of supervisor: Dr Anathi Ntozini

Signed

Date 21/05/2022

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DEDICATION

In appreciation of all the efforts of my parents, who made it possible for me to pursue my studies further, this evaluation is dedicated to my family. I also dedicate this work to the academia world to further the studies that make this world a better place to live in.

ABSTRACT

Students' transition to academia comes with challenges which, if inadequately addressed, may negatively affect their academic performance and psychological well-being. Investigating these factors and their impact on the experiences of first year students will aid in the understanding of issues or reasons why these experiences differ among first year students considering whether one stays on campus or off-campus.

One critical issue to note is the gap between students' prior expectations and the realities of university life, which cause significant distress, poor academic expectations as well as increased attrition rates if not managed effectively. It is salient to note that, contextual factors such as accommodation or housing issues (in this case off-campus residences), financial concerns, social and emotional experiences, external work pressures, and experiences of stress from heavy assessment demands, are some examples of likely contributors to perceptions of student satisfaction in transitioning to university.

This research study investigated the academic, emotional, social, and financial experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria (UP) who reside in off-campus accommodation. UP's main campus is in the suburb of Hatfield, Pretoria. It is one of Africa's top universities and it is also the largest contact university in South Africa, with a total number of 53 430 registered students by 2020. However, with 10 000 students in UP accommodation spaces, the university can only cater for a minority of the student population and most UP students live in off-campus residences and private accommodation.

This study focuses on the factors that have an influence on first year students' experiences of transitioning into university, particularly those that are residing off campus. Using a qualitative approach to capture rich data about the participants' experiences, overall, the study's findings indicate that first year students experience academic as well as social challenges when compared to their counterparts. Thus, the institution(s) should address the needs of these diverse student bodies. Furthermore, institutions should promote student learning and support students striving to accomplish their educational goals through student engagement initiatives.

Moreover, the study's findings may be of importance to current university policies and practices that use measures of student satisfaction at the end of the academic year and the important aspect of this is that such measures will be capturing a time-specific concept of satisfaction.

ACRONYMS

COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease of 2019

CHE – Council on Higher Education

GPA – Grade Point Average

HEI – Higher Education Institutions

HE – Higher Education

NSSE – National Survey of Student Engagement

PTT - Presidential Task Team

SSOB- Student sense of belonging

WHO - World Health Organization

UP – University of Pretoria

CONTENTS

KEYWORDS

First year students, transition, campus, residence, residing off-campus, student experiences: academic experiences, financial experiences, emotional experiences, social experiences

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introductory discussion on the current study. The chapter begins with providing a general background overview of the study. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the experiences of first year students residing off-campus particularly regarding their academic, social, emotional, and financial experiences. The chapter concludes with definition of the terms used throughout the dissertation.

1.2 Background of the Study

Just as in the past (Hinshaw, 1992; Ladd, 1989), first year students continue to be confronted with social and academic challenges (Rayle & Chung, 2007). Undergraduates, specifically first year students encounter various experiences in relation to residing off campus. These experiences could be both negative and/or positive experiences. Living off-campus is when a student housing is located or available outside the campus (Dictionary.com, 2020). 'Student experience' is a phrase that is widely used and encompasses all aspects of living such as academic studies, social interactions as well as campus life. There are many academic and non-academic obstacles that first year students must overcome when transitioning from high school to higher education (Parker et al., 2017). First year students encounter various challenges in their transition into university life from high school. Conley et al. (2014) states that the transition to college, which for most of the youth simultaneously occurs with the transition to emerging adulthood, is most often stressful and disruptive. Parker et al. (2017) further states that whilst the first year of university can be an exciting time for students, it can also be most challenging with regards to personal adjustment. According to Xu (2011) many students arriving for the first time at university are not ready and such students find it difficult to transition and adjust to university life. Hence, it is possible that some students upon arrival may feel a little lost and may feel like they do not belong as like schools because Universities are complex and chaotic places. Thus, it is important for first year students to have a sense of belonging so that they may not feel isolated and lost (Meehan & Howells, 2018).

Additionally, one of the reported challenges that first year students may face, particularly students residing off-campus, is the feeling of social isolation, in that they may be facing difficulties in developing a sense of belonging and connectedness to other students, staff and the wider institution (Kember et al., 2019; Lambrinidis, 2014; Tinto, 1987). Thus, Parker et al. (2017) states that universities can support the students' transition and offer to make diverse

groups of students feel welcomed and develop a sense of belonging in Higher Education so that they achieve successful outcomes. The above-mentioned factor contributes to how first year students experience their transition from high school to university. According to the CHE (2013) about a third of all South African university students drop out in their first year. International research further states that one-fourth of all students, regardless of gender, do not return to school after the first year of college with most students leaving at the end of their first semester in university (Cretzmeyer, 2003; Sand et al., 2005). This shows that circumstances encountered in university may have negative impacts on the life of most first-year students which may lead some of them to drop out, for most students it could be because of financial burdens. Moreover, Walton et al. (2015) states that securing the financial means to study at university can be a challenge for students who are accepted at university, and finance is an important determinant of whether university acceptance is translated into university access. Hence, it is obvious that different groups of students have different experiences and outcomes in higher education (Parker et al., 2017). Therefore, Parker et al. (2017) further notes that an efficacious and successful transition into university is important if first year students are to stay the full course in higher education and experience successful outcomes. Drawing from the literature mentioned, this study will focus on financial, social, academic, and emotional experiences of first year students living off-campus.

1.2.1 Rationale for study

As mentioned, transitioning from high school to university can cause concern for many students. According to Hassel and Ridout (2018) one critical issue to note is the gap between students' prior expectations and the realities of university life, which cause significant distress, poor academic expectations as well as increased attrition rates if not managed effectively. It is salient to note that, contextual factors such as accommodation or housing issues (in this case off-campus residences), financial concerns, social and emotional experiences, external work pressures, and experiences of stress from heavy assessment demands, are some examples of likely contributors to perceptions of student satisfaction in transitioning to university (Gruber et al., 2010). Additionally, Suleman & Chigeza (2019) argue that the commencing students who are now entering university come from different economic and social backgrounds and thus higher education institutions need to cater for these diverse students. Programs and strategies offered throughout South African universities attempting to help students to enhance their experiences and participation in their university life would be beneficial, for example such

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programs as First Year Experience to enhance student participation in their studies (Suleman & Chigeza, 2019).

In terms of financial experiences that first year students may face, Merrill (2015) states that there is a lack of extensive and in-depth research that focuses on students who are from the working class and that issues of retention and withdrawal are complex, such as the interaction between students, their university experience, and external factors. Furthermore, Biak et al. (2015) states that it is concerning that financial stress correlates with poor student experience and can thus lead students to be forced to consider deferring or even withdrawing from their studies. Therefore, there is a fundamental demand for government funding for students who are from under-represented groups so that they may be included in higher education with sufficient support (Biak et al., 2015).

The study is important to undertake because investigating the experiences of first year off-campus students at one of the leading universities in South Africa that also has a growing diverse group of students could aid in assisting the University of Pretoria as well as other universities in the country in promoting successful transition of first year students to university.

1.3 Problem statement

Studies indicate that there are many challenges faced by off-campus students that affect their wellbeing and that these challenges distract the concentration and focus of the off-campus students in some negative ways (Muslim et al., 2018). On the other hand, on campus students who communicate regularly with their on-campus peers about college/university experiences may feel more positive connection to the institution and this may foster greater confidence in their ability to perform well in their academic work (Cheong et al., 2019). In a study conducted by Lekana and Bayaga (2018) it was found that over 50% of students, drop out due to the inability to cover the costs of university study or are unable to carry-on studying when the financial burden increases. This is particularly true for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

The general purpose of the research study was to explore the academic, emotional, social, and financial experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria particularly first year's residing off-campus. To achieve this, these objectives served as a guide:

- To explore and gain a deeper understanding of how first year students experience living in off-campus residences.

- To gain knowledge about the factors that could influence first year students' perceptions of their integration in university.

- To examine how residing off-campus has an influence on their perception of university life.

1.5 Research questions

- What are the experiences of first year students living off-campus?

- What factors influence first year students' perceptions of their integration in university?

- What is the impact of off-campus living on student's perception of university life?

1.6 Significance of the study

Even though universities are confined communities they interact with the broader society, hence what happens in society affects the university community. It was noted that "having a safe campus does not guarantee staff and students' off campus safety as they pass through, live, shop or just hang out in these often high-crime areas" (Dube, 2018). Students could also significantly contribute to their own safety if they are involved in initiatives that are provided by UP to keep them safe within and around the university. This study will be beneficial to the students who will participate in the study by raising their awareness of safety and security issues. By responding to questions, students will get an opportunity to reflect on their own behaviour so that they can answer questions, and this will make them realise the extent of their knowledge regarding safety and security and perceptions of university life. It would be another benefit if the respondents in this study change their behaviour because of being more aware of their safety and security issues. This awareness has the potential to benefit other students if the respondents in this research discuss the issue with their friends. Thus, this study has the potential of raising awareness among first year residence students of their own safety and security and perceptions of university life.

1.7 Definition of key terms

Campus - Grounds of a school, college, or university usually self-contained and distinctly separate from the outside community.

Residence - Campus student accommodation at a college or university. At UP, residence refers to on or off campus accommodation provided to students, mostly for out-of-town students or international students. Given the fact that students may not be security conscious" they are easy prey for burglars and robbers. In this study, three first tier residences (i.e., residences for first year students) have been selected.

1.8 An overview of the minor dissertation

This dissertation is divided into six (6) chapters.

Chapter one is an introductory discussion on the current study. The chapter commences with providing a general overview of the study topic. Particular focus is placed on the academic, emotional, social and financial of first year students residing off-campus. Rationale, aims and objectives of the study are outlined in this chapter

In chapter two, a review of literature on the academic, emotional, social, and financial experiences of first year students residing off-campus. The chapter is divided into subtopics focusing of the above-mentioned specific experiences. The literature is drawn from studies in South Africa as well as studies from foreign countries.

Chapter three unpacks the theoretical framework, which in context of this study is transition theory. This chapter provides an overview of why higher education, particularly the first year, is challenging and why so many students therefore withdraw or fail in that first year.

Chapter four outlines the methodology of the research study. Participants are drawn from the University of Pretoria, and particularly first year students from differing faculties. An exploratory qualitative design is utilised, and the results presented in this section. Following is a detailed discussion on the focus group interview technique that was used to capture the data of the participants and a thematic analysis method report. Furthermore, the trustworthiness and rigour of the research study is presented followed by the ethical considerations.

Chapter five provides the findings of this research study. This chapter documents the academic, emotional, social as well as the financial experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria residing off-campus. These findings support the literature reviewed in the earlier chapters.

Chapter six concludes the study with a brief discussion of the results as well as themes, limitations, and recommendations of the study. Moreover, the study concludes with a discussion on the suggestions for future research.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on the background to this research study. The research topic, central research questions, objectives and concept clarification were presented. The significance and the outline of the dissertation was also presented. In the next chapter, a literature review will be presented.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Living environments for university students can affect them in diverse ways and this may have an impact on their academic and social life either positively or negatively. It is therefore essential for student housing to have provision of the basic infrastructure facility needed by the students (Ogendo et al., 2020). In this literature review, a thematic exploration of the key areas that are linked to the objectives pertaining to this research study and the context of the topic will be discussed. The literature review will present some ideas on a theoretical framework, policies geared towards campus life in South Africa, campus crime, campus safety and security services, student behaviour and perceptions and the role of the first-year students living off campus.

2.2 Conceptualization of student's perceptions of campus life

For most students, the stress of having to move away from home and starting university, living independently for the first time, as well as transitioning to a new schedule and institution can be overwhelming (Rabel, 2020). How well, or how poorly, university students navigate their adaption to university is a factor that influences retention rate (Martin, 2017). Students residing off-campus are currently facing major challenges that are associated with their living environments Muslim et al. (2012) state that research has indicated that living on campus can be beneficial to graduation rates, retention from term to term, and grades, for first-year students as well as the general population students. Additionally, housing for students has been a prime area of concern with the ever-increasing student population because of increasing interest in the higher institution of learning over the years. According to The Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2020) in the last two decades, student's enrolment to university have expanded considerably and this has resulted in increased access for students from diverse backgrounds, inclusive of first generation. Specifically, in South Africa, total student enrolment in the year 1994 was approximately 425 000 (CHE, 2010), and in 2013 enrolment increased getting to approximately one million students (CHE, 2015). However, the challenge is that increasing access has not resulted in the increase of student success (Mngomezulu et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, despite government as well as other forms of financial assistance, a considerable number of students fail to complete their university degrees in minimum time, sometimes they drop out of programmes completely (CHE, 2014). Thus, this section will cover

various experiences of the first-year students residing off-campus at the University of Pretoria pertinent to this study. These include academic, financial, emotional, and social experiences.

Moreover, this literature review chapter is divided into four overarching sections: academic, emotional, social, and financial experiences. Each section is focused on a discussion focusing on the section/topic.

2.3 Academic experiences

The transition to higher education often involves a change in living arrangements for many first-year students (Sharma et al., 2020). Thus, during this transition to university students are required to adapt in various ways including socially, academically, culturally, financially, and emotionally, as they reposition themselves from their familiar surroundings of home and high school to the totally different environment of a college campus and classroom (Martin, 2017). Martin (2017) further states that first year students come to the realisation that university is not the same as high school as they experience, among other things, more academic demands with added school material, less academic structure, independence/increased autonomy, and a decreased structure. For most first-year students this transition is usually marked by intense confusion, often stressful in nature, as they are forced to move beyond the comfort of home life and routines of high school and start a journey to college/university experience.

While some first-year students can commute to the university campus for lectures while still living at home with their families, there are other students who reside relatively further from the university that have to relocate and move to temporary accommodation closer to the university for the duration of their studies (Sharma et al., 2020). Clack (2005) supports this notion stating that student transition to higher education, just like other moves to new environments comes with several challenges of both an academic and socio-cultural nature. Moreover, Clark (2005) also states that besides becoming enrolled in a new program and institution, students leave home, their friends as well as their old lifestyle to which they need to learn to adapt. Martin (2017) further notes that such adaptation, whether poorly or successfully tends to play a significant role in the retention rate among first year university students.

Furthermore, research suggests that living on campus is an advantage for students. This takes into consideration that it offers students an opportunity for receiving social support,

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becoming an active part of the campus community, and to gain access to campus resources such as library services, among the least (Kuh et al., 2008). Moreover, the multi-fold transition from high school to university can be a cause of stress to most first-year students considering the availability and accessibility of study resources (Wilcox et al., 2005). Students staying on on-campus residences have access to library facilities which students residing off campus may not have readily available to them. Kascus and Aguilar (1998) stipulate that library support is an essential part of quality education and a crucial service which should be made available to all students, whether on-campus or off-campus. If this concern is inadequately addressed it may have a negative effect on academic performance (Friedlander et al., 2007).

Rabel (2020) supports this claim by stating that on-campus living in its different forms appears to impact students in several ways. This pertains to the student's success in university/college, some research has also demonstrated that living in a residence hall setting supports students in transitioning to campus as well as providing access and convenience to important resources (Rabel, 2020). Rabel (2020) defines an on-campus residence hall as a traditional residence hall or dormitory setting that is usually owned and operated by the college/university, it is contracted by academic year, where students reside in an individual bedroom or suit-style room which includes resident assistance and most often a meal plan for the students. The advantage with living on on-campus residences is that on-campus residents are typically more regulated, they are usually limited to those enrolled or working at the university in terms of tenancy, and provide support for students via a staffing model in addition to property management functions made available to the residents (Rabel, 2020)

Students residing on-campus can expect benefits to their overall university success and engagement at the university. Research has shown significant impacts on student success particularly in student graduation rates (Rabel, 2020). There are many definitions of academic or student success (Alyahyan & Dustegor, 2020). According to Kuh et al. (2006) student success refers to academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desire knowledge, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, skills, and competencies as well as post-college performance. Whereas York et al. (2015) give an amended definition which concentrates on the most import six components that include satisfaction, acquisition of skills and competences, academic achievement, persistence, attainment of learning objectives, and career success. In this regard, social connections as well as perceptions of connection are also improved from living on campus.

On the other hand, one of the many problems associated with residing off-campus is that students sometimes become disengaged from the very institution entrusted with nurturing as well as fostering their academic development. A comparison was made by Schudde (2011) that reported that students who live on-campus have a 66% graduation rate as compared to their counterparts who reside off-campus with a graduation rate of 55%. In one article examining student's living circumstances and the student's likelihood of being retained at college or university, Schudde (2011) conducted an analysis of multiple sets of data of students living on-campus and students living off-campus from tested national datasets. Schudde (2011) reported that students living on-campus were found to be more likely integrated into campus, they also have better social support as well as available resources. Schudde (2011) thus concluded that "initiatives enabling more first-year undergraduate students to live on campus could increase the retention of first-year students" (p. 599).

Furthermore, Ogendo et al. (2020) asserts that disengagement that is marked by lack of environment in the myriad academic activities that are made available to students in post-secondary institutions. Such academic activities include environmental groups, language clubs or political clubs, profession and paraprofessional association, academic work shops or seminars and academic discussion (formal and informal) with other faculty members and honour societies. The challenge is that some of these disengaged students resort to hazardous student subculture and dangerous behaviours that may include excessive alcohol use and drug use. Therefore, while many factors may have an influence on students' level of academic engagement, the single most important environmental factor that has been identified in previous research is living on campus in residential hall (Astin, 1993). According to Ogendo et al. (2020) such findings have been impetus for the vast body of research which has focused on examining the relationship between residence (on and off- campus) and various desirable students' outcomes that are closely linked to students' engagement that may include critical thinking, academic performance as well as persistence to graduation.

Ogendo et al. (2020) further states that there is unambiguous evidence that the success and perseverance of students can be significantly impacted by living environment factors. Students living off-campus (particularly those living outside a certain radius to the university) are usually not involved in the various educational and social systems as compared to their counterparts who reside on campus. Furthermore, according to Ogendo et al. (2020) housing

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environment that is good can have an impact on one's life and can thus lead to the attainment of convenience, comfort, satisfaction as well as overall life fulfilment and meaningful academic performance for students. Nonetheless, Aluko (2021) states that housing that is poor can lead to many health problems as well as stress and depression on students' which will eventually affect their academic performance in a negative way. Often such student housing that is not regulated by the academic institutions or that is off campus may not be well maintained thus becomes poor for students to reside in.

Ghani 1 & 2 and Suleiman (2016) are of the opinion that adequate housing is thus required by higher education learning institutions or universities. This assists universities or academic institutions to accommodate the students without physical and psychological effects. Furthermore, Nuss (2003) states that students' accommodation is an integral part of university. It is fundamental that the higher education institution facilities students to optimally develop their intellectual capabilities, personal developments, and other related mission by providing student accommodation that supports student success. Ogendo et al. (2020) supports this notion by stating that students that reside off campus may be disadvantaged because they often face more challenges than the ones living within. Therefore, the housing of students plays a fundamental role in the academic support mission to student affairs.

Although previous research may suggest that living on campus promotes a variety of desirable outcomes for students through engaging student engagement and involvement with their university institutions (Astin, 1984; Chickering, 1971, 1974; Pascarella et al.,1994; Welty, 1976), research on academic performance tends to ignore the possibility that different groups of students are differently affected by their living circumstances (Turley & Wodtke, 2010). Additionally, Turley and Wodtke (2010) note that previous studies frequently rely on students from a few large public research universities rather than a broad range of institutions. This preludes any analysis of institutional differences in the impact of residence. While much literature has supported the benefits of living on campus, however some literature finds no difference in living environments (Rabel, 2020). According to Gonyea et al. (2015) many areas of the National Survey on Student Engagement and other studies reported that little or no difference in engagement between on campus students and students living off-campus.

According to Turley and Wodtke (2010), while multiple factors influence a student's level of academic engagement, the one significant and important factor identified in previous

research is living in on campus residence hall. Taking into consideration the positive relationship between living on campus, student involvement as well as several outcomes that are closely linked to academic performance, it is quite reasonable to make a hypothesis that students who live on campus will also earn higher GPA than those living off campus or elsewhere (Turley & Wodtke, 2010). However, research focusing on the relationship between student residence and academic performance indicates that there are no differences in cumulative grade point average (GPA) between students living on campus in residence halls. Much focus has been directed on the general effects of residence, thus past research on academic performance ignores the possibility that different groups of students may be affected differently by their living environments.

2.4. Social experiences

The social experiences are what shapes the love and need of belonging of all human beings. Thus, the need to belong has had influences on how first year entering students shape their social life. Pokorny et al. (2017) states that student success is related to student sense of belonging (ssob) and is closely aligned with the work of Tinto (1975) and concepts of social and academic engagement. According to Pokorny et al. (2017) studies of student sense of belonging are also linked with strategies that are related to persistence, successful retention, and dropout rates of first year students. Thomas (2012) notes that studies of student sense of belonging draw from psychological as well as sociological factors exploring the concept at the individual level and from the social perspective.

Furthermore, Pym and Kapp's (2013) research study reports that although students coming from all walks of life, especially students from disadvantaged backgrounds may enter tertiary institutions/university they experience a crisis of confidence as well as self-esteem which may influence their sense of belonging into the new environment. There is a gap that exists between those that come from advantaged backgrounds and those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. In a research study by Pather and Chetty (2016), it was reported that parental or family support as well as how life circumstances have shaped an individual, play a role in influencing the nature of engagement as first year students. However, Kuh (2009) argues that what often brings students to university or higher education does not really matter to their success than what they engage in during their time in university as a student.

Some first-year students either reside off-campus in private residences and others may reside at home with their family and utilise commuter transport to get to campus/university. Long travel times and a culture of students attending class/lectures and then rushing to leave makes it difficult to develop a sense of community in the university (Pokorny et al., 2017). Furthermore, living at home and the often-lengthy commuting time contributes to lack of sense of belonging. Whereas, for students residing on-campus residences this often extend their academic environment and facilitate the interaction of students across courses, levels of study as well as across subject disciplines (Pokorny et al., 2017). Consequently, Lefever (2012) takes note of the importance of providing an opportunity for social engagement for students in on campus environments, whilst Staurt et al. (2011a) concluded that those students that live at home participate less in social groups and activities. Pokorny et al. (2017) thus suggests that students that stay at home or residing off campus experience the process of attending university differently from their counterparts residing on on-campus accommodation in their first year of study. There may also be a matter of tensions as independence and new identities may be more difficult to forge for those remaining in the home environment.

Furthermore, Ogenda (2020) notes that the importance of housing in general covers the entire aspects of human life. This involves physical protection from hazards which may ordinarily be considered as shelter but also provide the setting from many of the basic biological and social processes that are necessary to sustain life thus playing a fundamental role in permitting the healthy growth and development of the mind. For both students accommodated in on campus residences and on off-campus residences, student housing still has an influence on the students' overall leadership development, on their behaviour as well as their academic performance and sense of belonging (Regnier, 2003). According to Rabel (2020) leadership development is also an essential component of considering the literature focusing on college/university student development, their persistence as well as success. Some research reports that students' involvement, particularly in residential leadership opportunities has a beneficial effect on the student's personal and academic development (Rabel, 2020).

Additionally, McEwan (2014) asserts that social network satisfaction increases the students' commitment to university and impacts retention outcomes. The fit between institution and student also increases university satisfaction and decreases social isolation that may be experienced by first year students or any other student, but it also increases students' intentions to persist in university (Bowman & Denson, 2014). Furthermore, according to Lillis (2011) a

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student's desire to remain in university or college is also significantly impacted by student-faculty interaction that is frequent. Contact with the institution's professional staff, inclusive of academic advisors, has been largely associated with an increase in retention and student success and this includes the time during first year (Bigger, 2014). Students residing on-campus usually have the added advantage of being able to participate in mentoring programs which have a positive impact on persistence decision (Hu & Ma, 2010). Another notable advantage of residing on campus for first year students is that they get extra orientation in their house/dormitories as provided by the house clubs available to the particular on campus student residence.

Thus, withal, according to DeAngelo (2014), Cambridge-Williams et al. (2013) orientation programs are seen as effective strategies that increase first year student retention, their engagement as well as success, because, among other factors they play a major role in generating discussions about adjustment and success as they offer vital social interaction as well as support for students transitioning into university. On the other hand, in the first year of university, student engagement is critical to success (Kahu et al., 2017) as it is widely seen as valuable to a variety of student outcomes (Trowler & Trowler, 2010). According to Kahu et al. (2019) within the education interface there are four elements of student experience that are generated from the interaction between student and institution which include self-efficacy, emotions, belonging as well as wellbeing. They note that these are the mediating variables or pathways that increase or decrease the likelihood of engagement (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Thomas' (2013) work on student belonging supports that engagement is crucial to retention and success in higher education

2.5 Financial experience

According to Rabel (2020) many university and college students are faced with financial challenges. This means that a student's financial needs continue to predict challenges as students entering university with fewer financial resources tend to feel stretched to pay for fees, tuition, study material such as books, housing as well as food. Outside of the financial barriers to student's academic success includes part-time enrolment, family concerns as well as pressure, working full time while enrolled at university and transitioning to a new geographical location which most first hear students experience as overwhelming (Rabel, 2020). Thus, student poverty and the lack of sufficient funding have been consistently cited as

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key reasons for students' academic failure and difficulties with progression (CHE, 2010). Additionally, Rabel (2020) asserts that the cost of tuition at university is constantly rising, and incremental cost increases in student housing and accommodation can be challenging for students with financial needs. According to Holton (2016) is more than simply a place or somewhere to reside during the term, however student homes are intensely dynamic places which contain multiple disconnected identities.

Thus, the financial burden of university or college can be very significant for most students, but student success metrics are seen to be adversely impacted if students have considerable financial needs (Rabel, 2020). According to Bello and Ezeokoli (2020) the cost of off-campus private accommodation is often unsustainable for most students. Furthermore, the rate at which the rent for accommodation on off-campus residences is increasing is exponential (Bello & Ezeokoli, 2020). It is notable that this increase is concerning as it also suggests that the factors that should usually be investigated before fixing rents are often ignored or neglected (Mudau, 2017). Such factors that include good housing conditions, facilities that are functional and good water supply that are necessary for good living are usually not accessible or available in some of the off-campus student housing notwithstanding the high rent the housing commands from the tenants (Bello & Ezeokoli, 2020). Often, students at university require more money to cover the cost of study as well as accommodation closer to university. However, due to limited financial resources and the rising cost of higher education, there are students that face financial struggles in their daily lives (Daud et al., 2018).

According to Mngomezulu et al. (2017) the Presidential Task Team (PTT) on funding in higher education (2016) supports the notable pressure of persistent underfunding of high education in a "context of increasing enrolment growth. This leads to most institutions passing an increasing burden of costs onto students through high annual fee increases" (CHE, 2016, p.6). Some students may have financial loans available to them, but they are most often inadequate to cover all their expenses. In many cases, families and students can sign up for these loans or financial aid however they end up facing loans that they may be paying off for years (Kraft & Furlong, 2015). Furthermore, often students find that working part time jobs during their university years helps offset some of their living costs even, so they are still challenged with maintaining the grade point average that is often necessary to keep financial aid limited to study (Rabel, 2020). Unfortunately, some students resort to dropping out of university due to financial burdens.

Additionally, according to Rabel (2020) financial concerns are usually the top issue that drives students to drop out and not re-enrol to university/college. Moreover, students experiencing high financial need may experience more pressure to work to support themselves as well as their education (Rabel, 2020). To the contrary, Rabel (2020) states that correlation trends between retention and students living on campus demonstrate that there may be a significant risk to students who do not live on campus. Notable to state is that students who are from lower income backgrounds are often those who opt-out of living on campus and they are most at risk (Douglas-Gabriel, 2015). Therefore, the lack of resources and support for first year transition could cause a hindrance to the student's academic success.

Correspondingly, Rabel (2020) acknowledges that overall student's financial need has been shown to predict persistent challenges, and in addition to the required tuition and fees, housing can also be a source of college/university-related expenses. Furthermore, students are required to pay the services and the equipment that is required by their course studies as well as paying for room rent, daily expenses for meals and drinks, public transport or petrol and other things (Daud et al., 2018). Staying off-campus is more expensive than staying on-campus due to numerous factors such as having to pay for one's own Wi-Fi, full rental payment for accommodation, groceries as well as electricity to name the least. According to O'Keeffe (2013) these kinds of challenges may result in the students dropping out of university due to being unable to cover all their financial cost of living off-campus.

Further, some students that reside on off campus accommodation travel from far distances to the university campus and this is most often challenging for them as most do not choose their circumstances. Additionally, Turley and Wodtke (2010) note that living off campus with family may often be more challenging for minority students if they have more family responsibility, fewer financial resources, and inadequate transportation to and from campus. Further, economically disadvantaged families often live further away from campus because of financial constraints as housing near college or university campuses tends to be very expensive (Turley &Wodtke, 2010). Thus, research suggests that living off-campus or at a parental home has an effect in that it increases the likelihood of first-year dropout (Gury, 2011; Bozik, 2007; Smith & Naylor, 2001). In a study conducted by Bozick (2007) he found that there is a risk of first year students dropping out which is about 2 to 2.5 percent higher for students living at home compared to students living on campus. When compared to students

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living off-campus, but not at their parental address, it was estimated that these students had a risk of dropping out from university approximately 5 percent above students living on campus. According to Schudde (2011) living on campus during the first year of university decreases the dropout rate.

As previously noted, in most cases minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged families are also more likely to reside further away from the university campus due to costly housing in the area, and often low-wage workers often trade longer work commutes for better and housing that is more spacious. Moreover, parents from low-income households, using their income without any assistance, most South African households are often not able to support a dependent at college or university (particularly in terms of study as well as related accommodation and the cost of living) (CHE, 2016). This is usually a cause of concern as students living among such families are often disadvantaged in terms of frequent participation in activities such as studying with their classmates, meeting with their faculty, or working on campus which can be very challenging (Ogendo, 2020). All these factors combined and others which have not been mentioned create a university experience that can be especially challenging for students residing off-campus with family and for some who live alone.

However, in some cases the costs of living on campus and off-campus may be the same. An article by Douglas-Gabriel (2015) exploring the financial ramifications of living on campus for first year students. In the article, the author reported that while many universities advertise the best value in living arrangements for their local area, the author describes the students' individual experiences when they were able to find less expensive options off campus. According to Rabel (2020) in many cases, it has been reported that the cost is equal or less than what it would cost for students to live off campus. On the other hand, Turley, and Wodtke (2010) contend that living on campus is more costly than living off-campus with family.

2.5. Emotional experiences

The first year of university brings along with it many challenges that may lead to emotional frustrations. Transitioning from high school to university can be stressful and first year students can be particularly vulnerable to stress and adversity (Dvorakova et al., 2017). The emotional state of students affects their academic performance. Dvorakova et al. (2017) further states that, comparative to other study years, first year students endorse higher levels of on-going and chronic stress, and this usually results in poor coping strategies, unhealthy relationships as well

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as deteriorating academics. Therefore, according to (Ogendo et al., 2020) it is of importance to note that wellbeing can be implicit as a condition of one's health, their happiness as well as their prosperity and their student life satisfaction in this case is of importance to their wellbeing.

Ogendo et al. (2020) further defines wellbeing as an expression of one's life satisfaction, as an approach to influence the quality of human beings and their society, these aspects are inclusive of health, social network and of course the living environment. Whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) (2014) described mental health as a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his or her own potential and can cope with the normal stresses of life as well as work productively and fruitfully and is thus able to contribute to his or her community. Thus, according to Morton, Mergler, and Bowman (2014) optimism and wellbeing as well as self-efficacy have an impact on student adaptation to university. Additionally, Lerdpornkulrat's et al. (2018) findings report that student involvement, their perceived anatomy as well as meaningfulness of content are all influencing factors on emotions as pathways to engagement.

According to Bewick et al. (2010) research has shown that many first-year university students are affected by mental health problems than the general population of students. Which may be related partly to the first-year students living separately from their homes away from their families. Both Wannebo et al. (2018) and Dvorakova et al. (2019) report that when adolescents or teenagers live away from their parental homes, they may experience loneliness, poor social connections as well as difficulties in obtaining social support. Needless to say, that for most first-year students, the transition to university has been said to be an acute stressor which has a strong impact on their mental health (Irie et al., 2015). The challenge is that first-year students with poor mental health have more problems with academic activities and social relationships during their second year (Watanabe & Watanabe, 2015). Therefore, according to Irie and Maruoka (2017) poor mental health in the first year of university is related to high levels of drop out in university. Baumann et al. (2014) asserts that first year university students with good wellbeing perform better in their academic work.

There is a fundamental need for an effective and conducive student housing facility, and this cannot be over emphasized as the students are expected to be in a good state of mind to excel in their academic endeavours with physical protection and also a healthy social and behavioural stability. Thus, the productivity of a set of students may however not be totally unconnected with their housing condition (Aluko, 2011). Butz et al. (2016) notes that emotions

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are often overlooked however they are a fundamental precursor of success in the academic life of students. Hence, Ransdell et al. (2018) suggests that academic success depends on social and emotional health particularly in the transition to university.

Furthermore, Jansen and Dube (2013) suggest that often the quality of student housing plays a major role to student academic success, and it's also a mechanism to improve the lives of citizens who were excluded from past equal opportunities. Therefore, logically growth in higher education should result in an increased demand for student housing. Post 1994 experienced a significant increase in the demand for higher education in South Africa. This increase was an attempt to address socio-political historical inequalities. Thus, Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) had to now accommodate a larger number of students who required university accommodation as more students were studying away from home. In turn more university institutions were not capacitated to cater for the increased numbers of students who sort university accommodation. As such Pascarella and Terenzini, along with Blimling (1994) (quoted in Graham et al. (2016) assert "living on campus will maximize opportunities for social, cultural, and extracurricular involvement, and this increased involvement will account for residential living's impact on various indices of student development".

To improve Black working-class community's socio-economic status by increasing access to and opportunity within higher education also demands quality student accommodation. Quality accommodation that meets the learning styles of students enhances student success. If the South African State is serious about transforming society through the academic success of students, then it must invest in safe, adequately resourced accommodation. The Department of Higher Education and Training (2011) maintains that "whilst there is a complex relationship between student housing and academic success, there is preliminary evidence to suggest that being housed in a safe, well-managed residence does advantage students, particularly those from poorer backgrounds".

Over the years, the number of university/college students who reside off-campus have increased, and the number of students who stay off campus exceeds those of the students who reside on campus (Mbara & Celliers, 2013). The increased demand for quality accommodation in South African higher education sector has been a serious matter of contention amongst students and student bodies. Between 2009 and 2013, alone South African higher education experienced thirty-nine student protests over student housing (Jansen & Dube, 2013)**.**

Following these protests, the Minister of Higher Education, Blade Nzimande, in 2011 set up a task team to investigate the national student housing crises. The specific objective of the task was to establish the scale and magnitude of student accommodation challenges and to offer a well-motivated and justifiable differentiated framework for redressing the student accommodation quandary. It was reported that they also found that the severe shortage of residence accommodation meant that most students who seek off campus accommodation are often housed in unsafe areas in unacceptable conditions (South African Higher Education Reviewed, CHE 2016). Hence the task team emphasised the fact that student accommodation and residences are "living social communities that can either advance or detract from our shared university or societal goals."

Furthermore, resultantly in September 2015 the Ministry of Higher Education gazetted a policy on Minimum Norms and Standards for Student Housing at Public Universities (DHET, 2015). The application of these norms and standards was to ensure that students are provided with adequate, fit-for-purpose accommodation of reasonable quality and that they enjoy learning and living environments that promote academic success. Although not very explicit, the norms and standards allude to safety and security of students as a key component in quality residences for students.

Sometimes students have the prion to either choose to stay on campus and or to stay in private or off-campus accommodation. Regardless, a good housing as well as decent accommodation often plays a significant role in healthy living and may lead to improved productivity especially those in tertiary institutions, who require good accommodation in a serene environment for proper assimilation of what they have been taught and when students are satisfied with the facilities provided in their residence halls, it will lead to enhancement in the academic excellence of the students (Azeez et al., 2016). Thus, absolute residence satisfaction can be obtained when student needs are met (Khozaei et al., 2010). If the quality of the hostels is positive, it will directly create a good attitude towards the hostel and obviously influence the students' residence satisfaction level.

2.6 Conclusion

The key themes pertaining to this research study have been discussed in relation to relevant theories and similar studies. Most of the studies referred to are international, with a few South African studies. However, some of these findings will have some relevance for

South African universities. However, much more research is needed on campus safety and security in South Africa. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework used in this study will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Transition theory

The transition theory which aims to understand why higher education, particularly the first year, is challenging and why so many students therefore withdraw or fail in that year will be the theoretical framework employed for this study (Evans et al., 2010). The theory sought to provide practical responses to the identified challenges that particularly first year students face. Three broad theoretical explanations of the challenge are evident and describe the 'gaps' between student and institution differently and so offer different solutions. First, early theorising argued that the problem was insufficient skills mainly targeting previously disadvantaged cohorts of first year students, this explanation assumed that, due to their demographic characteristics and background, these students would have poorer literacy, numeracy and academic skills (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

The second explanation, academic socialisation, argues that students also need to be inducted into the cultural ways of the academy. Here, the transition metaphor is a maze and students leave or fail because they do not know how to navigate. Despite increasingly diverse student populations, the overarching academic culture continues to assume traditional young, white, middle-class students, thus making navigation more challenging for students not belonging to this group (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

The third explanation, founded in critical discourse analysis, argues that learning also involves identity and power and draws on Bourdieu's ideas of habitus which, are culture, economy, and society (Bourdieu et al., 1997). Traditional students bring not just economic capital, but also embody cultural and social capital which is valued and represents power. Educational institutions have maintained this order through institutional habitus, which favours the knowledge and experience of dominant groups.

Transition theory is employed for this study because it highlights that alignment between student and institution is important for success and understanding first year students' difficulties. Transition theory usefully emphasises the importance of the first year and highlights the need for institutions to adapt to diverse students particularly first years (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

Transition to university poses different challenges for individuals depending on how they experience their new university. Students' adjustments to university life vary, which could be a result of their attachment to their parents. According to Lapsley et al. (1990) cited by Sigelman and Rider (2003: p.390), "students who are securely attached to their parents display better psychological and social adjustment during the potentially difficult transition to college than students who are insecurely attached". The university environment plays a role in students' adjustment whereby residence halls would be an ideal place to have activities for freshmen and help create a sense of connection to the university (Enochs & Roland, 2006). There are some gender differences in adjusting to university.

Kenny and Rice (1995) cited by Enochs and Roland (2006), found that developmental processes for male and female college students may differ, in that women tend to rely on relationships and socialization experiences to aid in adjusting to college more than their male counterparts. Thus, various factors contribute to one's adjustment to university. Peer relationships and friendships are important to adolescents (Sigelman & Rider, 2003). Due to this, social connections play an important role in assisting students in their overall adjustment to the college environment (Enochs & Roland, 2006). Gitelson and Thomason (1992) cited by Hickerson and Beggs (2007), note that for many young adults, the college years are a period of expanding freedoms and focusing interests. For most students, transition to university is a period of new freedoms away from parents hence they engage in experimental behaviour and new recreational activities. In some cases, the behaviour that they engage in poses a risk to their safety such as experiments with alcohol use.

Transition can be understood as the internal process in the mind which takes place when students undergo change and pass from the familiar to the unknown, responding to cultural, social, and cognitive challenges (Perry & Allard, 2003). Change is something that happens to people, and they may or may not agree with it. Whereas change can happen quickly, making an effective transition when faced with change can often take longer. Higher education can be viewed as consisting of multiple, concurrent transitions (Jindal-Snape, 2010) both in context (such as a move to a new city, to a new educational system) as well as in interpersonal relationships (such as forming new relationships with students, peers, university support and academic staff as well as changes to existing relationships with family and school friends). Thus, transition is an ongoing process where levels of support should be adjusted accordingly.

The research presents a summary of the environmental, financial, social, and academic changes which occur during the transition 'into' and 'through' higher education as well as potential challenges this may be experienced. Thereafter, overviews of some of the current models of transition which exist in the literature are presented. These models were selected based on their relevance to student transitions in higher education. When considered together, these models are useful for understanding the numerous changes experienced by students during their transitions into and through higher education.

CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology for this research study. The first section outlines the study setting. The following section is a discussion of the exploratory qualitative approach as well as the research design. The third section outlines specific data collection procedures used and the sample and this is followed by a section focusing on a discussion about the use of thematic analysis for this study. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a brief discussion on the trustworthiness and rigour of the study, and the ethical considerations that were considered throughout the research process.

4.2. Study Setting

Due to the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the restrictions in South Africa, the interviews were conducted remotely (via Google Meet).

4.3. Research Design

A research design is important for research because it is the conceptual structure that underpins the foundation for data collection, analysis, and measurements (Kothari, 2004). Additionally, a study design determines and describes the research study and the ways to conduct it (Pilkington & Pretorius, 2015).

4.3.1. Qualitative Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, a method that captures the rich data for deeper insight and exploration of the academic, emotional, social and financial experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria residing off-campus. The aim of qualitative research is to understand the meaning and experience dimensions of human lives as well as their social worlds (Fossey et al., 2002). This will allow the researcher to understand the subjective insights, experiences, and interpretations of the participants. This methodology is relevant to the study because it gives the researcher the opportunity to interact with the participants (Collins, 2006).

Qualitative research is sometimes characterised by substantial inductive approaches to knowledge allowing for the generation of meaning-making that is derived from topics that

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participants cover during the interview (Hancock et al.,2009; Leavy, 2014). Furthermore, Hammarberg et al. (2016) suggest that qualitative research also targets addressing questions about meaning and experience from the perspective of the participant. Moreover, Leavy (2014) states that the participants' subjective experience and meaning-making process is often important to take note of when interested in better understanding how individuals respond, behave, and construct their lives, and qualitative research thus creates a space to explore such.

4.3.2. Exploratory Study

According to Brown (2006, p.43), "exploratory research tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has done". Therefore, as suggested by Saunder et al. (2012), exploratory qualitative research does not intend to provide conclusive evidence, rather it aims at providing better insight of a question or a problem.

For this study, adopting an exploratory qualitative approach allowed the researcher to explore the experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria residing of campus, and this gave a better understanding of the participants' academic, emotional, social, and financial experiences.

4.4. Sampling Method

The sample for this study consisted of first year students at The University of Pretoria specifically those residing off-campus. Participants were recruited from across the university from the seven campuses. The method of convenience sampling was used. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or their willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study (Dörnyei, 2007). This study made use four focus group discussions with a total number of nine participants, altogether. Nine participants are considered large enough for a focus group (Nyumba et al., 2017).

According to Connaway and Powell (2010) focus groups are qualitative research techniques, which involve conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of participants to explore their viewpoints on a particular idea, program, or situation. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002b) defines a focus group as a typical group of people who share similar type of experiences, but a group that is not naturally created as an existing social group.

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According to Jones et al. (2018) focus groups typically consist of a small number of participants who are guided through a discussion by a moderator using a structured interview protocol. The researcher usually carefully selects these focus group participants to assemble a group of people who have certain characteristics in common or share a certain view about a particular topic.

Considering the new online learning system due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, the recruitment process of participants experienced minimal challenges. The recruitment strategy and activities included social media, word of mouth and emailing lecturers to assist with requesting participants to join this study. At the end of the recruitment process, there were four focus group meetings held, some participants dropped out of the study. Each of the four focus groups consisted of three, two, three and one participant(s). The focus group meetings were held online, via Google Meet as requested by participants. Unfortunately, some participants could not access Zoom. The number of research participants for this study allowed a thorough examination of the characteristics that address the objectives and aims of the study, and it also distinguished conceptual categories of interest among the participants (Dworkin, 2012). Furthermore, this maximised the possibility of data saturation and clarification regarding the relationship between conceptual categories and identifying any variations in the study (Morse, 2000).

4.4.1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The criteria for participation required individuals who are in their first year, studying at the University of Pretoria and residing off-campus. A total of twenty young adults were contacted for the study, however only nine (9) participants were included in the study. Thus, the sample of the study constituted a total of nine participants between the ages of 18 and 23 years. Among the sample of participants were six female students and three male students.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants using Pseudonyms

Participant Name*:	Age	Gender	Course of Study
Noma	18	Female	Social Work
Lihle	20	Female	BA General
Jess	19	Female	Social Work

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Tino	22	Female	Social Work
Minenhle	18	Female	BA General
Luyanda	19	Female	Public Administration and International Relations
Mihla	20	Male	IT
Bheki	21	Male	Bachelor of Education
Bavuyise	23	Male	Engineering

All names are pseudonyms *

4.5. Interview Process

The focus group discussions were conducted remotely and via Google Meets because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to participant dropout and data challenges faced by the participants there were four (4) focus groups scheduled. Each of the focus group session processes were between thirty minutes to forty-five minutes long. The focus group discussions were conducted in English as all participants understood English and communicated fluently in English. The recorded focus group discussions were thus transcribed and later utilised in the thematic analysis. As mentioned above, data was collected in the form of focus group discussions. The discussions were recorded in English and then transcribed verbatim by the primary researcher. The focus group discussions aimed to identify how the participants felt and how they perceived their experiences as well as their opinions on the research question.

4.6. Data collection

While adhering to the rules of the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee, data collection from the participants only began upon approval of the study and upon getting ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee. To ensure the safety of participants from the spread of COVID-19 the interviews were therefore conducted virtually through an audio recorded Google Meet session.

The study utilised semi-structured interview questions to guide the focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and allow discussion in real time of any issues that might arise; furthermore, semi-structured interviews are advantageous because they provide for any ambiguities that might relate to the questions clarified at the time when questions were ask for (Cozby, 2009). A semi structured interview is described by Given

(2008) as a form of qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks participants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions, in that regard allowing the researcher to extract in-depth information from participants (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

Moreover, using a semi-structured interview schedule gave the researcher an opportunity to hear and acknowledge the participants talk about their experiences as first year students residing off-campus. Furthermore, the probing of the questions served as a trigger which allowed the participants to talk openly while generating knowledge unknown to the researcher who curated the questions (Willig, 2013). These semi-structured interview questions also assisted the researcher to obtain additional information made possible through the structured flexibility of the questions fed from the research participant's responses. From the structured interviews, there was also the opportunity for conversational interview within the focus group discussions where dialogue fluidly moved back and forth as prompted by the questions (Tesch, 1994). The researcher ensured rapport by making sure that every participant got an opportunity to speak, and no leading questions were asked.

The following questions were used as a guide to reach the objectives to the research study:

- How would you describe your academic life as a first year living off-campus?
- Can you tell us more about your experience living off-campus?
- Share the most positive aspects of living off-campus.
- Share the most challenging aspects of living off-campus.
- Are you sharing with anyone?
- What is your social life like as a student residing off-campus?
- How do you feel about your safety living off-campus?
- How do you feel about the quality of your residences?
- Tell us about the nature of your facilities in your residences.

4.6.1. Challenges experienced during data collection

A few challenges were encountered during the data collection process. Firstly, the study was initially scheduled to be conducted face-to-face with the participants, preferably conducting the focus group discussion on campus at the University of Pretoria. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a remote alternative was thus adopted. The researcher had to conduct the focus group discussions online via Google Meet platform. Unfortunately,

because of these inevitable circumstances this prevented gathering of data from secondary factor which included body cues/language.

Another challenge encountered during data collection involved participants' challenges with accessing Zoom and for some data was a challenge which resulted in participant dropouts. The focus group discussions were conducted via Google Meets as opposed to the initial platform proposed, Zoom. Most participants opted for Google Meets as they reported not having access to Zoom.

Furthermore, scheduling of the group discussions was a challenge as participants had different availability times which resulted in splitting of the focus groups into four different sessions to accommodate the participants.

Additionally, connectivity challenges were also encountered during the data collection process. Some participants had to join from remote areas where connectivity is often a major challenge. This was challenging because the researcher faced difficulties hearing at times what the participants were saying and sometimes participants would get disconnected.

4.7. Data Analysis

This study made use of thematic analysis to analyse the data. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), thematic analysis refers to the process of identifying themes or patterns within qualitative data, here the main goal is to identify any themes that will be utilised to address the research topic.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis. It is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective. Thus, this makes it a very flexible method, a considerable advantage given the diversity of work in learning and teaching. With regards to this study "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning with the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82).

Furthermore, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p.82) define thematic analysis as a process that involves "a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon that is under investigation, and therefore, as constituting a form of pattern recognition within the data".

According to Braun and Clark (2006), within thematic analysis, there are two different levels of identifications which include semantic and latent levels. The semantic levels engage the data at a surface, on the other hand, the latent level engages the data more deeply (Baun & Clarke, 2006).

Latent levels often look at the data beyond the surface level and it attempts to identify as well as explore ideological and conceptual meanings of the data which may inform the content under study (Firth & Gleeson, 2004; Patton, 1990). Appropriate for this study was the latent level approach, which was thus used to explore the data allowing the researcher to fully engage with the underlying and implicit data. Additionally, latent themes of data also looked at identification and examination of the underlying ideas, assumptions as well as conceptualisations (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Therefore, this study analysis followed an approach created by Braun and Clarke (2006). The steps of analysis involved an iterative process in which there was a back-and-forth engagement with the date at the different steps of analysis and interpretation which allowed the researcher to capture the important themes of the data. These are the steps a 'thematic analysis' approach applies to interpret the data as provided by Braun and Clarke (2006): According to Maguire & Delahunt (2017) the steps for thematic analysis are as follows:

Step 1: Transcribing

This is the initial first step in thematic analysis process of analysing data. According to Bailey (2008) this process refers to a symbol of audible and visual data into written form and it is an interpretive process. Therefore, it involves listening of the audio tapes and noting down the participant's responses recorded from the focus group discussions.

Step 2: Familiarise yourself with the data

This is the second step in thematic analysis, and it focuses on the reading and re-reading of the transcripts. Terre Blanche et al (2006) indicates that when it comes to data analysis, researchers should already have primary understanding of the meaning of information, while tabulating all material, and go through it over again, this time working with texts rather than working with lived reality. In this study, familiarization included listening to the recording repeatedly, taking notes, impressions were notes and brainstormed. Being familiar with the

data also involves a process of reading until the meanings and interpretations form part of the first step (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 3: Generate initial codes

This step involves initiating the process of organising the data into a meaningful and systematic way (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thus, the data was coded into meaningful clusters or groups (Tuckett, 2005) allowing the researcher to reduce large date into small chunks of meaning. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), there are different ways to code and the method will be determined by your perspective and research. During this step, the researchers coded specific segments of data that was of relevance to the study, this involved using coding a phrase, sentences, or paragraphs.

Step 4: Inducing themes

Here the codes generated in the previous step were organised into thematic patterns while relevant codes from the previous step were collated with the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme refers to a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. As Braun & Clarke (2006) explain, there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017) a theme is characterised by its significance. A small focus group was used, therefore there was no data saturation encountered by the researchers, the coding stage and the inducing themes step overlapped.

Step 5: Review themes

In this stage, the preliminary themes that were identified in step four are reviewed, modified, and developed. In simple terms, it involves the exploring of themes more closely. There are two identified purposes of elaboration, namely, to capture the deeper meaning not captured by the original coding system and secondly giving a good explanation of what is going on in the data (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Step 6: Interpreting and checking

This step is also known as defining themes which is the final step involving the refinement of the themes and the goal is to "identify the essence of what each theme is about" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). During this step, researchers can ask themselves questions such as: What is the theme saying? Are there subthemes, how do they interact and relate to

the main theme? How do the themes relate to each other? Lastly, this step involves ascribing names to the themes that would reflect the meaning, enable the reader access, and understand the content of the theme.

From the data gathered, common themes were derived as follows:

1. The impact of residing off-campus

1.1.   Lack of facilities

1.2.   Academic support facilities and services

2. Off-campus housing and accommodation

2.1.   Privacy of rooms and freedom of living off campus

2.2.   Quality of the residences

3. Unregulated accommodation/housing spaces

3.1.   Noise in off campus residences

3.2.   Challenges with safety

4. Building social networks and developing friendships

5. Living expenses

4.8 Bias

Bias refers to any systematic error in the design of a study that can result in distorted results and lack of honesty of the research study. In some cases, bias means the prejudice for or against an individual, group religion to name the least, in a way that is unfair or unjust. According to Simundic (2013) bias can occur either intentionally or unintentionally. To avoid bias in this study, triangulation was utilised. Triangulation involves finding other sources of data that support the study's interpretations. Patton (1999) defined triangulation as the use of different/multiple sources of data in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena.

4.9 Trustworthiness and Rigour of the Study

According to Walker et al. (2007), often qualitative studies particularly phenomenological studies may be sensitive in which participants are asked to share their own experiences of what has happened to them. Therefore, there are a few procedures identified by Creswell (2014) that can be implemented to ensure that there is an enhancement in the trustworthiness of the study. Thus, the following procedures were utilised in this study:

•Credibility

Anney (2014) asserts that credibility establishes whether the research findings represent trustworthy findings, furthermore findings can be drawn from the respondents' original data and is a correct interpretation of the respondents' original opinions.

- Transferability

This involves conveying one thing to another, thus in research it refers to the degree to which the findings of the research study can be transferred or applied to other contexts with other participants similar to the particular study. According to Anney (2014) transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the qualitative research is transferred to other contexts with other participants, usually research participants of similar characteristics.

- Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree to which research findings can be regarded as being trustworthy and reliable. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006), dependability refers to a detailed description that shows how certain actions and opinions are rooted in, and develop out of contextual interaction, and by providing the reader with an honest statement of methods used to collect and analyse data.

- Conformability

Confirmability is the degree to which the research findings of the study could be confirmed by other researchers with a similar study. Moreover, confirmability is thus concerned with the formation of data interpretation of the results that are not fantasies of the researcher's imagination, however they are obtained from the data of the research study (Anney, 2014).

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the research study, Ethical approval was first obtained from the University of Pretoria Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics (see Appendix C). Furthermore, the researcher adhered to the ethical standards throughout the research study processes and particular ethical items were highlighted in the participants' consent form (see Appendix B), information sheet (see Appendix A) and further discussed with the participants.

According to Walker (2007), often qualitative studies particularly phenomenological studies may be sensitive in which participants are asked to share their own experiences of what has happened to them. Thus, the following ethical standards were adhered to in this study.

Informed consent

Informed consent involves informing the participants of the study about the main purpose of conducting the study, as well as the possible risks, benefits of the study and what is expected by the study (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Moreover, it entails informing participants of their right to withdraw from the research study at any given time. In this study, the research participants were well informed about the study before signing the consent forms. The participants were emailed the consent form and the information sheet before the focus group discussion meeting. All the participants signed the consent forms, and they emailed the forms back to the researcher.

According to Faden and Beauchamp (1996) it is important for research participants to understand that they are authorising someone else to involve them in research. Thus, for the young adults to partake and volunteer in this study, the research obtained informed consent from them, which was also accompanied by an explanation of the study (Wasennar & Slack, 2016).

Confidentiality

According to Baez (2002) confidentiality in qualitative research refers to the protection of privacy of all the participants in the research study, while building trust as well as rapport with the participants, and maintaining good ethical standards and the integrity of the research process. The identity of the research participants was kept confidential, throughout the study.

Autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons

According to Egan (2014) autonomy in research entails honouring the rights of the participants to self-determination as well as to make their own informed choices and to live their lives by their own values, beliefs, and preferences. Researchers are obliged to honour the dignity and worth of the participants through-out the study.

The right to withdraw

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The right to withdraw entails that the participants reserve conditional 'right' to withdraw from the research study at any time and without giving any reason for their withdrawal. This research study was thus based on voluntary participation, participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

Nonmaleficence

Haggerty (2004) states that the ethical principal of nonmaleficence focuses on preventing as well as avoiding or limiting any harm towards the research participants involved in the study. Therefore, Leedy and Ormrod (2016) suggest that it is especially important to create an environment that is safe for the participants, and which will in no way create harm to the participants.

Storage of data

Since the research was conducted online, data was kept securely in the researcher's laptop, and it was protected with a personalised password. Accordingly, data obtained from the research participants will be kept for a duration of five years and it will be destroyed after the five years have elapsed.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter focused and explored the research methodology for the research study. The first part of this chapter briefly described the study's setting. The following section was a discussion of a qualitative research design adopted for capturing the data of the research study. This chapter also focused on data collection processes and challenges related to data collection. Furthermore, this was followed by a discussion on data analysis and interpretation of the data presented in this study. In conclusion, this chapter concluded with a brief discussion on the trustworthiness and rigor of this study, bias and the ethical considerations adhered to throughout the study were also discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the online focus group discussions with nine first year off-campus students on their experiences of residing off-campus at the University of Pretoria. The chapter also outlines a brief discussion obtained from the semi-structured interview conducted from the research participants. Thematic analysis was utilised in this study which allowed the researcher to derive as much variation and detail to better understand the participant's experiences. The themes that emerged through the thematic analysis process are discussed in this chapter.

This chapter takes note of the points as well as the themes connected from each of the participants via the codes to access whether the views are common or different. Additionally, the findings from the participants are discussed in relation to the literature and relevant research studies.

The codes tend to overlap different themes however this depends on the interpretation and translation of the question and answer by the participant. However, despite this overlap, the points remained salient, and this did not influence the interpretation of the discussions and the participant. The following sections will focus on the themes derived.

5.2 Presentation of Themes

The following themes emerged from the research study, namely the impact of living off campus, the off-campus residences, issues relating to safety, traveling to campus.

5.2.1 The impact of residing off-campus on academic life

Lack of academic support facilities and services

As stipulated by Muslim et al. (2012) students residing off campus are currently facing huge challenges that are associated with their living environments. It also emerges that low-income students often cannot rely on a family structure while at university as far as material support is concerned (Schudde, 2016).

Thus, it is essential for student accommodation and housing to provide the basic infrastructure facility as needed by the student (Jimoh et al., 2018). However, such facilities

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which include toilets, running water, electricity as well as a recreation area provision of these facilities in good working order is something that is not always readily available.

Luyanda reported that,

"Uuuummm, living off of campus you don't have much accommodation in terms of you being a student. So, your own space that you in live has to be your own space of learning. Because there's no quite room where you are there to study or a library like there would be in an actual on campus res. You know… So, with that I guess it would be literary like being at home except by yourself. Because when it comes to facilities you have to make do of what you have there isn't student friendly kind of facilities for you to study. I've lived in a one-bedroom apartment because I have a problem with sharing the actual space with someone, which is why I actually lived off of campus. So yes, for me I was by myself in a one-bedroom apartment with just a bedroom a bathroom, a kitchen, and a little living room which I then actually turned into a study room. So, yea…."

According to Muslim at el. (2012) research examining the impact of on-campus living satisfaction on student development has consistently shown that student's chances of persisting to graduation are often greatly improved by living on campus, having a positive living, and learning experience. Thus, students that have a positive experience are often more likely to complete their program and have increased satisfaction with their overall university experience. The participants were displeased with their academic experiences of living off-campus and the nature of the facilities provided which merely support their academic growth development.

Jess stated,

"Honestly, I don't think there's anything positive about living off-campus. Maybe it's because I haven't experienced the other part of it… For me it's challenging, honestly, because the environment that I'll be studying at, I'll be always on my bed with my PC and it's not easy."

Furthermore, as much as student housing plays an important role in the enrolment of students, however the adequacy of facilities can add to the desire to remain on campus for students. According to many responses from the research participants during the focus group discussions, having to study when one stays off-campus can be challenging, often requiring a great deal of discipline. Although the off-campus student residences or accommodation attempt to create study spaces, participants mentioned that they often need the resourceful campus

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library which also provides computers, printing and photocopying machines and private study spaces. It also emerges that low-income students often cannot rely on a family structure while at university as far as material support is concerned (Schudde, 2016). Thus, due to financial constrains it becomes a challenge especially for students who reside off-campus to access study equipment as they may not often have easy access to the university library.

Tino further expressed that,
"Eish how do I explain it…. the library is a challenge, I don't have the textbooks, asking for chapters every now and then like from the library, I think it gets tiring, and all that, and being not able to form study groups with other students. Yeah…

This information indicates that in some off campus residences they do not provide study spaces, unlike on on-campus residences where there are spaces which are purposely allocated for studying. Withal, in a study conducted by Devi et al. (2015), results indicated that students who reside on campus often perform better on their schoolwork than their counterparts who reside off-campus. Another study conducted established that most students staying on off-campus residences usually spend a considerable amount of time traveling to and from campus, whereas if these students stayed on campus, then they might have had an option to use the time used traveling in more productive way (Mbara & Celliers, 2013) such as engaging in academic related activities/tasks.

With frustration Luyanda stated,
"Living off campus, Ummm I think in terms of academic the only downfall there was in terms of leaving on off campus is that the apartment accommodations are usually just further to the actual school than res students are. So, when it comes to using the library and so on and so forth, it's a bit of a hassle because now when you have to walk back you know you have to do that by yours. And having to walk to the library as well it's a bit much and just walking on campus and back home just in general. When you are living on campus your building is right by the gate, the access to campus is a lot more, its better, a lot better. So, when it comes to the library, I think I ended up not going as much as I used to before Covid actually happened, and just in general, the access wasn't as easy as it would have been had I lived on res. So I had to actually find other means and other things to do apart from going to the library, And going on

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campus as well, during Covid we never used to go as much but going was also a hassle because whenever you had to go you had to get a permit from the school and you have to run tests and have proof that you actually don't have Covid before entering the campus even if you were just going for 20 minutes/30 minutes or going to the library too as well. So, the easier thing was just to avoid going on campus."

The challenge with residing off is the unavailability of library services, as already mentioned in the previous subsection. Most participants mentioned issues relating to the lack of library services, study halls, computer rooms for instance for printing and photocopying academic documents. For example, Lihle expressed the following,

"...access to facilities, I think people living on campus, they easily assess the labs, the computers and we have to get access first. Like the Covid letter before going inside campus and also connectivity. They have internet connection that is very stable, and we struggle to get connection and we buy data, and it's very challenging."

Luyanda further expressed that,
"Uuuummm, living off of campus you don't have much accommodation in terms of you being a student. So, your own space that you live in has to be your own space of learning. Because there's no quite rooms where you are there to study or a library like there would be in an actual on campus res. You know. So, with that I guess it would be literary like being at home except by yourself. Because when it comes to facilities you have to make do with what you have there isn't student friendly kind of facilities for you to study"

Furthermore, Minenhle stated,
"Yeah, like the resources, tjo! some people talk like they have full access to some things that are on campus, and only to find out you have to ask and get a permit that takes time. Maybe your email won't be reached on time by the time you need that thing. So, ooh, it's really hard it's really hard. If you had easy access like I'm going out it would be easier because you have to wait, and time is running out. Because what I've realised is you don't have time in uni. Time is just tjo… It's a luxury hahaha, so everything has to be on time so sometimes the resources it's sad, man, when you can't get everything, you need. Because private residences only provide you with the accommodation. Some, just the expensive ones, make it an extent ok they'll only give you a study room. But the resources you'll only get them at the uni or unless you have the

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money to alternate for something else. 'I encountered a problem during first semester, mmh my laptop broke down, so I didn't know what to do. So, I lost everything, so I have to start from scratch and first thing, notes, some were removed on the Clickup so it was difficult getting someone who's like I have all of them. Some they said ahh… I don't save them. It was near a test, oh yeah, and the lecturer removed them. So, I cannot find any anything, I was like request from the library, and they said the library they received a lot of emails, and they will get back to me and I couldn't study and when you go down to the computer lab you find that all the computers are being used. Oh, it was a nightmare. I had to buy a new one, so I didn't have a choice. I had to make sacrifices either you have a phone because I had a lousy phone. Sometimes people use their phones to access click up so mine was outdated and it didn't wanna use click up, so I was like let me just sacrifice a bit of things and get a laptop."

5.2.2 Off-campus housing and accommodation

Privacy of rooms and freedom of living off campus

In a study conducted by Muslim et al. (2012) it was found that students were less satisfied with university housing than with their academic or social lives. This finding was attributed to space limitations, lack of freedom, lack of privacy, as well as poor maintenance that is often found in on-campus housing. However, with regards to off-campus living as explored in this study, it was found that most participants (students residing off-campus) reported an enjoyment and appreciation of not having to use communal bathrooms, privacy in their own rooms, kitchens and also not sharing bedrooms. Luyanda expressed that,

"*… part of the reasons why I didn't live on campus is because the places are usually small and also you didn't have many options such as having your own room. Like 80% of the time, you had to share the actual room that you live in, there were just disadvantages as well. I think the quality considering the space and the comfortability was very good. I've lived in a one-bedroom apartment because I have a problem with sharing the actual space with someone, which is why I actually lived off of campus. So yes, for me I was by myself in a one-bedroom apartment with just a bedroom a bathroom, a kitchen, and a little living room which I then actually turned into a study room. So, yea….*"

Nevertheless, Muslim et al. (2012) suggest that some of the reasons students prefer to stay off campus is because those who live off campus have a certain level of privacy. Moreover, according to Muslim et al. (2012) satisfactory student accommodation is often seen where the

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environment stimulates silence, privacy, suitable room sizes and less crowding. In addition, most students also expressed a certain level of freedom with residing off campus. Furthermore, they expressed that living off campus means less restrictions in terms of what one does and who they invite for sleep overs. They also expressed that one has the freedom to do as they please at their own time which includes studying at their own chosen time.

Luyanda openly expressed that,

"I think with the positive results of living of campus there are completely academic unrelated. Because for me, one of the main reasons I had to live outside of campus because I'm not from the area. So if my family comes to visit or my friends that means they have come a long way. So, they'd have to sleep at my place as a result. But if you are living on campus, you not allowed visitors even during the day never mind visitors that would have to sleep over, but in general you can't have visitors. And in areas that do allow visitors, you'd have to pay a fine every night that the visitors actually come through. So that was a disadvantage for me considering that everyone that comes to visit me practically does not stay near me, so they have to sleep over. I think as well, when you live on campus, you don't really have freedom such as being able to cook for yourself, you know. Which is a very big disadvantage, so at least I'd be able to cook for myself as well. Mmmhhh.... Mmmmhhhh, let me see... What else is great? I guess, the space in general, I think for me considering that I was alone, and I dint have a roommate was more comfortable for me even when it comes to having to study. Because I'd imagine that if you've got so many people living in the same space as you, you don't really have the freedom of studying whenever you wanted to or always having the quite that you need to actually do you schoolwork because there are people that ae around you all the time. So having your space as well alone has that advantage, you know living off of campus that I'm literally always able to study whenever I wanted to during the day, I wouldn't have to wait for people to sleep at night to get the complete silence that I need to study, because I need absolute silence to be able to perform at my best."

Mihla also expressed,
"Well, I feel like as a first-year student living off campus was a bit too much because of the freedom you know the freedom and all that you can do whatever whenever and bring who ever. No one is concerned about you, no one is really worried what you do where you are at the time. Unlike when you are at UP res, it's much more, better because certain res' won't allow guys

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if it's a girl's res and certain boys' res won't allow women. So, it gets to put a boundary around
certain things.

However, not all participants shared the same sentiments. A minority of the participants felt that there wasn't enough space in their rooms, and they also complained about the strict rules set by the off-campus residences. The participants also alluded to feelings of being uncomfortable in the off-campus residences with regards to the room space. Minenhle was in contrast, she expressed that.

"...there was small space between the rooms, you don't have privacy there, because you share
bathroom like there are two sleepers, but it's so little, it's so uncomfortable when you can
study, and you not allowed to. The person is uncomfortable when you have to study, you get
uncomfortable when too close to the person. even the study place there's a table that you have
to like use to study, they don't want you to move it, they say you don't move anything there and
it's too close to the next person, some people like to study with music and I prefer silence it
would clash obviously, they told us not to move their furniture, so it's kind of difficult just to
work your way around it."

5.2.3 Quality of the residences and basic facilities

The participants had mixed opinions about the quality of the places of accommodation. However, most of the participants were satisfied with the nature as well as the quality of their residences as well as the services provided. This is in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training (2011) that maintains that "whilst there is a complex relationship between student housing and academic success, there is preliminary evidence to suggest that being housed in a well-managed, safe residence does advantage students, particularly those from poorer backgrounds".

Tino reported that,
"mmmh... I think I like the apartments more now hahaha... We have our own rooms, everyone
has their own room... ok my unit, we have 4 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms then we share the
kitchen... So ahhha, the dining room... So, there's no noise or anything, and then they clean
for us, and they do your laundry. So yeah...

Luyanda also stated,

"Ooooh, ummm so when it comes to the quality, I think overall it was pretty good considering that the apartment was not made for just students. But it had a lot of options like there was space and stuff since it's... you know, like more family oriented or young professionals and everything else. Because I found a lot that...mmmhh... I think the quality considering the space and the comfortability was very good."

In support of the of the above statements, Bheki also highlighted,

"...For me personally, it was learning friendly. Mmhh... I don't think I had problems, but all I can say is that they provided me with everything a learner needs because basically there were just student accommodation, just that it was off campus. So, they provided me with Wi-Fi and accessible internet, I was able to attend classes and everything with sufficient Wi-Fi. Even though sometimes it could glitch, but you know sometimes, like it doesn't matter. And then I had a study desk, mmmh... the facility was fine, the toilet was clean every day. Ummm yeah, everything was just perfect for me I don't wanna lie."

Although most participants were satisfied with the quality of their residences, other participants had different experiences. Other participants expressed their grievances about the quality and state of the residences with regards to maintenance as well as hygiene.

Mihla expressed that,

"Personally, mmmh they failed hence I have been moving a lot. So, I feel like I could have made a better decision to stay at res, that's how I feel."

Minenhle reported that,

"... it was a matter of convenience actually because I applied late it was the only one left with the preference that I want, like a fully furnished apartment and all that, so ahhh, when I got there tjo it had Wi-Fi issues..."

Minenhle further expressed her dissatisfaction and stated,

"The only thing that gave me a problem was the elevator, ayyy... it didn't look safe that one, every time when I went there, I had to pray because it had plastic, I don't know if its fixed now, but the time I was there it's had plastics all over, it looked like it was going to crush. I think it was still under maintenance because it was horrible."

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It's essential that residences provide quality accommodation that meets the learning styles of students as it plays a significant role in enhancing student success. According to Gopal and Niekerk (2018) if the South African State is serious about transforming society through the academic success of students, then it must invest in safe, adequately resourced accommodation. Furthermore, Ware and Miller cited in Frazier (2009) reviewed research trends in student life and they found that although there were some differences in how the studies were conducted; they concluded that often student accommodation and housing plays an important role in the success of university students. Additionally, student housing plays an important role in the enrolment of students as well as the adequacy of facilities can add to the desire for them to remain on campus.

5.2.4 Unregulated accommodation/housing spaces

Noise in off-campus residences

Muslim et al. (2018) stipulates that the challenges of living in accommodation/housing and commercial buildings with problems related to noise, smell and safety are a cause of concern. Therefore, Muslim et al. (2018) express that the concern for university students living outside the campus is warranted. In this study, most of the participants agreed that noise was an issue when one resides on off-campus residences.

Minenhle emphasised that there's always noise at her residences some of which comes from her surrounding area. She expressed that; "…*it's noisy… oh it's noisy… the Fields… The complex below has every entire restaurant you can think about people are always there…*" She further commented with frustration saying, *"yesss… the noise…. is disturbing and all that, even my roommate, the other one next door yeah used to make some noise but it's not a bad place, it's okay just nje."*

Tino also expressed that, *"…eish Flats on William… I don't know, like, it's not giving me vibes like, I prefer being at home. When I had Covid I had to go home, so I studied more when I was at home than when I'm at the Apartments. Because it's closer to the road, I think it's noisy so hayi..."*

Mihla further commented saying, "*I feel like when it came to studying my time to study might not be the same time for someone else. So, at that time, the person is making noise for me."*

Luyanda expressed that, *"the second part was that sometimes when you live on campus, a lot of things, the environment is very regulated. You not gonna find someone that is playing music loudly during the day or people that are just causing chaos. But when you live off campus*

because it's each to his own, people sometimes you know… do what they want to, someone could be washing their car outside and playing music loudly for hours when you'd want to study. Or people could have a party next door, that was okay because the area is not regulated and it's not just students and you know things like that. So, there are a lot of times were felt that the area is not very student friendly, and people are just living the way they want to…"

According to Konecni (1982) all music processing utilizes cognitive capacity, so listening to music may impair cognitive task performance. For most participants noise particularly, loud music has had a negative impact on their academic life especially as a hindrance to studying and being able to fully focus. It is evident that living off-campus comes with challenges related to unregulated surroundings such as noise from within the off-campus residence as well as outside the residence.

5.2.5 Challenges with Safety

According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2011), "student housing in South Africa must be of an enabling nature. Muslim et al, (2018) concurs that current trend of student accommodation/housing development and rapid enrolment changes are thus affecting students' daily lives such as safety, housing comfort and convenience.

The severe a shortage of residence accommodation meant that the vast majority of students who seek off campus accommodation are often housed in unsafe areas in unacceptable conditions." From the interviews, there was a consensus with regards to feelings of being unsafe that comes with residing off campus.

Luyanda commented,

"I think when it comes to safety, it's not very safe to be honest with you because now considering that the apartment space is not only for students the security is not very tight, you know. They don't monitor who comes in and out, so literally you live with regular people. So, anyone can ever just decide to, you know, walk into your apartment if your door isn't not locked. So, there isn't any patrolling where they check if all the students are okay, and all the doors are locked and everything. There's literally just one security guard downstairs that's there to make sure that there isn't any excessive noise and things are on a regular. But the security is not very tight, you don't have to identify yourself before walking into the building that you are a resident there. So, when it comes to that, security is not the greatest to be honest.

So, safety is always a concern. So, I'd always lock my door even if it's during the day, I lock the door even at my bedroom when I'm going to bed."

Additionally, Mihla, with great disappointment expressed that,

"…personally, mmmh… they failed hence I have been moving a lot. So, I feel like I could have made a better decision to stay at res, that's how I feel. Sometimes you'd feel like the safety wasn't enough and they weren't accommodating with everything."

Bavuyise also stated*, "When it comes to safety, it wasn't at a 100 because the entrance is just a sliding gate with a remote. Anyone can just jump in whilst it's open when someone is going out or going in. Unlike at a student res, you need to… use the tag or you need to sign in or use your fingerprint, usually it's use your finger print and then you go in and there's always someone there on guard 24 hours or 24/7 watching. So, in that way I feel like it wasn't that safe, cause there's no one actually guarding. There's just a caretaker who's not always there, sometimes."*

Most participants gave examples of their experience with unsafe accommodation, some participants reported incidents of mugging, getting attacked by perpetrators, burglary for example their laptops getting stolen, strange men entering their residences without any regulation. Mihla mentioned a scenario in which '*a couple of guys went into their commune, and they stole some laptops and phones from their room.'* Another example of an incident that displays lack of safely in private accommodation was given by Tino who reported that, *"Sunnyside that wasn't safe. Arcadia wasn't safe… I think because the flatmate parties every day, every day. I stayed with a flat me… I think there were only two girls, and she would come with all her brothers… tjo. hayii… I felt unsafe. But like now that ummmm I don't like Nigerians or anything but there were like Nigerian men, I'm so scared of those men…. so, every time at the elevator or the stairs, I'd meet one, so it was difficult. So, I moved in June, I got the NSFAS but then the place that I got… it wasn't NSFAS funded so I moved to Apartments. Apartments is more safer but I don't feel safe like walking alone walking down the road. Plus, the hobos… I think they could take your phone or sometimes."*

Moreover, it was mentioned that there is no safety outside the private accommodation, Bheki further expressed that, *"At first… and I had a huge problem because the street I was in,*

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there were a lot of thugs, at some point I once got mugged and I got stabbed which was not a great experience for me…"

From these findings, it appears that the participants are merely satisfied with the safety at the private accommodations. According to Ghani and Suleiman (2016), students, just like any other human beings, housing is their pivotal need and thus securing good, safe as well as affordable housing leads to a happy life, attaining high living standards, intellectually creative and rewarding better life. Therefore, many scholars are of the opinion that safe housing is a fundamental right, it is also a priority attainment to living standard and it is also the core to man-environmental interaction, an agent of security that led to a happy life, productive as well as fulfilling lives (Ademiluyi & Raji, 2008; Yusuff, 2011; & Cagamas Holdings, 2013).

5.2.6 Building social networks and developing friendships

A failure to achieve an adequate sense of belonging can have significant negative consequences (Durkheim, 1951; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Hence, models of college student persistence have often included elements of belonging and the most widely known as well as studied model is that of Tinto (1987). Tinto theorised that student's integration into their social and academic college environment often predicts whether the students are likely to remain enrolled in college. His model further predicted that to the extent that students do not become integrated members of the college community they are thus likely to withdraw, and implicit to his theory was that a sense of belonging that if determined by social and academic integration, is central feature of student persistence.

As observed in this study, most participants reported feelings of isolation and loneliness that comes with residing off campus while transitioning to university from high school. Moreover, it was found that sense of belonging further declined over the course of their academic year partly due to the Covid-19 restrictions and migrating to online learning. Participants expressed that interaction with other students from the university is limited due to multiple factors which mainly centred on staying off campus.

Noma with a low tone stated that,
"Ah… personally, I don't know a lot of people. I think that's so boring, because you know when you still in high school, they tell you…ahh… they are a lot of people, you gonna have fun in

university, you gonna know a lot of people…blaaah…blaah… blaah… So, I think it's not what I expected, like to have a lot of friends. I don't really have a lot of friends. I just have friends from Zimbabwe (home country), and a few that I do the course with, but I don't really see them every day or even once a week, just like once in a while. Yeah… I don't know anyone who doesn't do Social Work (course of study). If I stayed on campus, if I stayed on campus… I'd meet different people because you stay at the same place, mostly you have the same space. So, at the end of the day, you get to socialize and make friends because you get to see each other every day. I don't have people who can teach me at least different languages, unlike in high school…I'd say my social life is boring."

She further expressed that; *"I just know people from my country that I can communicate with, I don't have people that can teach me different languages or friends that I can hang around with. I used to learn at a girl's high school so people would be like in university you have a lot of friends, boys are like good friends. I'm not even friends with anyone. I don't even know boys. You don't have a variety; we just chat to people (boys) that we know."*

From the information gathered, it appears that the participants' social challenges affect her dating life as well. It appears that this challenge causes a strain on romantic attachments for most participants.

Lihle further underscored sentiments shared by Noma, stating.

"I'll say the same thing as Noma, it's coming from high school they tell you when you reach university you get to meet people but then now it's online, and we don't have social lives, cause meeting virtually is not the same as meeting people personally. I don't have friends outside my course. Only high school friends that are also at UP, but then from UP first year I do not know anyone besides the ones from my course." She further expressed that, *"There's no social gatherings, on WhatsApp sometimes you can't even see people's profiles. Even when your online classes, mics are muted so there's no communication. I only have high school friends that are also in UP but from UP first year's I do not know anyone else besides the ones doing my course."*

This indicates the challenges off campus students experience with regards to building new relationships both romantically and in general. There appears to be limited contact with other students. According to Tice et al. (2021) "transition to university is often a major change in social networks". Tice et al. (2021) further states that sometimes the transition to university

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can lead to an attrition of old friendships while new friendships are created. However, this does not seem to be the case for the participants in this study as most participants expressed difficulties with building new friendships. Moreover, most participants gave negative feedback about their social life as a first-year student living off campus. Luyanda further expressed,

"So, in terms of my social life, I think because of Covid, I don't have much of a social life because usually you'd have to meet people on campus. Which you then build relationships with outside of campus but considering that we rarely ever go to campus at all, if you even meet someone it's by coincidence when you going to buy groceries or you are out, and about which is less likely that you were to if you were going to campus. So, to be honest with you, my social life is nearly non-existent because I'm often always by myself. I've had a hard time on that, because I'm not from Pretoria so anyone in which I'd meet it would have to be someone that I'd actually meet at school because in that way it's easy to make friends and everything because you guys have so much in common already because you probably do the same course the same modules unlike someone that you meet out there it usually doesn't last that long because you different. So yeah, social life has had a toil."

According to Tinto (1987) often students who live off campus are at a disadvantage when compared to their on-campus counterparts, just as noted from the participants' responses and challenges with their social life. In his study, he found that off campus spent less time on campus creating relationships with other students as well as staff and thus clearly had fewer opportunities to engage in quality interaction. Therefore, these students are often less likely to make strong commitment to their studies.

5.2.7 Living expenses

As stated before, many university students as well as college students are faced with financial challenges, and this predicts challenges that the student is faced with while transitioning into university (Rebel, 2020). Furthermore, staying off-campus is said to be more costly than staying on-campus due to multiple factors that include having to pay for Wi-Fi, rent, groceries as well as electricity to name the least (Daud et al., 2018). Most participants expressed that living off-campus is more costly than living on-campus.

Minenhle expressed that,

"...maintaining that place for a person whose like dependent on someone who's a pensioner wasn't that easy because you buy your own electricity, and the geyser eats a lot of electricity."

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Bheki also complained that; *"…these apartments are expensive because this year, I saw on Twitter that Hatfield was trending, people were complaining about these apartments being too expensive. Mara, ummm… they really small, like they are really small and they kinda charge you for something that not even doable. But you know, you just gotta work with what you have."* He further reported that, *"It's just that it gets too challenging sometimes, because living off campus, now… you have to budget those type of things. And it's not easy because obviously you were living at home before you didn't have to buy groceries your ma or parents bought groceries now you have to experience… you know now… I have to buy certain food for this amount. I'm sure you didn't even know how much food costs, but we can all recall that food is expensive. I won't lie, food is expensive these days, everything is, actually. So now you have to budget because cosmetics, food, clothes also, you still need those things… you still need to buy books, all those thigs. It's very challenging and it's frustrating but ehhh… there's always a way. I don't wanna lie to you. There's always a way."*

From the expressions given by the participants and the literature it is evident and clear that the cost of living on off-campus residences is constantly rising, and this creates huge challenges for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. From the information gathered from this study, it is evident that living on off-campus private accommodation becomes unsustainable for most student (Bello & Ezeokoli, 2020).

Additionally, Luyanda further expressed that, *"you know when you live on campus, you are able to rely on people more since there are so many people around you. So, you don't have to be as responsible as you have to be when you are living off-campus. Because now when you leave off campus, let's say you get an allowance of a certain amount of money every month, when that finishes you literally have to see yourself. You have to make amends and it forces you to kind of… mature really quickly and grow because you by yourself"*.

It appears that off campus students also experience some challenges with budgeting for basic needs and for most participants, their allowance money is not sufficient enough to cover all their needs as needed by a university student. Thus, due to financial resources that are so limited and the rising cost of higher education and university enrolment, there are many students that face financial struggles in their daily lives (Daud et al., 2018).

5.3 Conclusion

The discussion on the different themes identified from the focus group discussions indicates the overlapping and similar experiences that first year off campus students face in their transition.

Furthermore, difference was observed from the examples, but the lenses and principles remained consistent. From the data sample it is quite clear that first year students experience more challenges relating to their academic life when compared to their counterparts for example challenges relating to access to particular facilities such as study rooms as well as the library. Additionally, safety also appears to be a concern to most participants as places of residences are often unregulated which contributes to their feelings of unsafety.

As observed above, the first year of university also brings challenges with social life, most participants indicated facing challenges with their social life and feeling isolated. Some participants mentioned that due to a challenging social life they experience a lack of belongingness unlike their counterparts who reside on campus. According to Thomas (2012) the period of transition from high school to university is a pivotal/key moment where a sense of belonging can be engendered. Thus, feelings of belonging are fundamental to a positive learning experience (Read, 2003) and therefore leading to a successful transition (Frame, 2015).

Although, these findings are entirely consistent with previous research noting the indirect role played by on-campus residence (Pascarella la & Terenzini, 2005) and the consistent positive effects of on-campus residence in comparison to commuting to campus (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005; Blimling, 1993, 1989), these results do not suggest that size itself either increases or decreases student engagement.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Parker et al. (2017) state that "a positive and successful transition into university is often crucial if students are to stay the course in higher education and experience successful outcomes". However, there are existing challenges in ensuring a connected transition from secondary and further education to higher education that is inclusive and supports the diversity in the current student body (Parker et al., 2017). Additionally, there are many academic and non-academic obstacles that first year students must overcome when transitioning from school or further education to higher education.

This concluding section presents the conclusions and recommendations from the key findings of the research study. Furthermore, the recommendations and conclusions of this study are in relation to the objectives of the study.

From the data obtained, the researcher concluded that a total of seven participants who were interviewed stated that they are merely satisfied with staying off-campus. LaNasa et al. (2007) stipulates that person-environment literature emphasises that students seek a supportive and an appealing environment that matches their internal needs and preferences, moreover this type of environment can indirectly support growth and development.

Furthermore, studies have shown that on-campus students tend to experience greater "cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual value" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and greater openness to diversity (Pike, 2002), than their counterparts, students residing off campus. From the results of this study, the first-year students mentioned that they experienced quite a number of challenges that impact on their first-year experiences as students residing off campus.

However, a few participants pointed that staying off-campus is convenient for them, because they prefer the benefits that come with staying off campus such as the freedom as well as privacy regarding having their own space.

6.2. Summary of themes

This study was conducted among first year students at the University of Pretoria who live off campus, with a particular focus on exploring their academic, financial, emotional, and social experiences. The data analysis and the findings of this research study were further discussed in

chapter five of this minor dissertation. The main findings from this research study are discussed in the summary below.

6.2.1 The Impact of residing off-campus on academic life
6.2.1.1 Lack of academic support facilities and services

There were some concerns raised by the participants with regards to facilities at off-campus residences which have a negative impact on their academic life and overall university experience.

According to most participants, staying off-campus is quite challenging. They reported that the facilities at off campus residences and private accommodation are not sufficient to accommodate the students' needs, especially their academic needs. For example, although, some off campus students' residences or private accommodation may have some space for studying, they are often not as resourceful as the library. Some participants expressed that they live in off campus residences that are not 'student friendly' and they don't provide study spaces or study rooms for the student tenants. Thus, often the student must find an alternative plan, and it's often a challenge. Such challenges often have a negative impact on whether the student completes their degree, and it also has an impact on their overall university experience. Therefore, according to Jimoh et al. (2018) it is often fundamental for student accommodation and housing to provide such basic infrastructure facilities as needed by the student.

6.2.2 Off-campus housing and accommodation

6.2.2.1 Privacy of rooms and freedom of living off-campus

Six participants alluded to the privacy as well as the freedom that comes with living off-campus. Participants also expressed that they intentionally opted to stay off-campus than on-campus due to personal preferences.

Five participants reported that rooms that are on campus are generally small and often residents have to share the rooms due to the limited spaces that are available on the campus residence accommodation. Furthermore, the participants mentioned the freedom that one gets when staying off campus such as doing as one pleases in their own personal space and at their own time without being restricted. The also expressed that they are able to study at their own chose time because they don't have to consider a roommate as they often stay alone in their

private residences. According to the participants, another advantage of staying off campus was that one can cook their own meals.

However, three participants complained about the off-campus room sizes at the residences. They expressed that often the rooms are small with two sleepers in each room. They also complained about the lack of privacy in their rooms as they had to share which often appears to hinder their studies particularly due to the distractions and the close proximity to the next person in the room. They further alluded to the restrictions at the private residences for example not being allowed to move the furniture to suit their needs or to get comfortable.

Quality of the residences and basic facilities

Participants expressed diverse opinions with regards to the quality of their off-campus residences. However, a majority of participants indicated their satisfaction with the nature and quality of their residences.

From the information gathered, it appears that some off campus residences provide students with private rooms, with at least two bathrooms and a kitchen that is communally shared. It was also indicated that the off-campus residences are well maintained through the regular provision of cleaning services as well as laundry services.

However, on the other hand, some participants displayed dissatisfaction with the quality of their residences as well as the basic facilities that are often needed by the student. Reports were made about poor maintenance of the residential infrastructure such as a dysfunctional elevator. There were also complaints about poor Wi-Fi coverage which pauses as a challenge to the student.

Above all, it is essential that the off-campus residences, or any other residence provides quality accommodation that meets the learning style of students because this plays a pivotal role in the enhancement of student growth, development, and overall success.

6.2.3 Unregulated accommodation/housing spaces

6.2.3.1 Noise in off campus residences

Participants complained about the noise at their off-campus residences which appears to have a negative impact on their academic performance. Participants expressed their frustrations with regards to the high noise on their off-campus residences both within their residences and from surrounding areas.

From the information gathered, it is also evident that off-campus students experience challenges related to living in accommodation and commercial buildings that face concerns

related to noise. Additionally, some participants expressed that this affects their productivity especially in their academic life to the extent that they find it more productive to study from home than at the off-campus residences. It is noted that often the high noise comes from commercial buildings as well as from other tenants and people in the surrounding area.

6.2.3.2 Challenges with safety

Participants agreed that there are concerns with safety in off-campus residences as well as the off-campus surrounding areas. According to the participants, the off-campus accommodation caters for both students and families. Furthermore, participants reported that there is poor security at their off-campus residences and there is no regulation of visitation at the off-campus residences.

Participants further expressed that anyone has access to the off-campus residences premises, and this heightens issues relating to the unsafe environment in which participants live in. Moreover, participants reported that the security does not patrol the residential area which has become a concern to the participants.

Due to concerns with safety, some participants are forced to relocate to accommodation with the hopes of finding safer accommodation. Overall, according to most participants there is also concerns with the poor security system at the off-campus residences and at some residences there is no security personal to guard the residential place.

Participants also reported incidents of mugging, burglary, physical assault (getting stabbed), at the private residences. There's fear among the participants regarding their safety which is also compounded by the negative experiences they'd faced. From the information gathered, the researcher concluded that participants were unsatisfied with the safety at the private or campus accommodation.

6.2.4 Building social networks and developing friendships

It is essential for university students in their first year to develop a sense of belonging. Moreover, Tinto (1987) asserts that students' integration into their social as well as academic college environment plays an essential role in the student staying the course.

Most participants expressed that they felt isolated and lonely due to their living arrangements more specifically due to living off-campus during the first year of university. It was observed that this is also compounded by an immediate immigration to the online learning system due to the Covid-19 restrictions for social distancing. Thus, interaction and contact has been limited for the participants.

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Furthermore, most participants mentioned that they don't know a lot of people except the previous relationships they'd already developed with people from their homes and previous high school as well as a few fellow classmates whom they communicate with occasionally. Thus, most participants blamed their challenges with making friends or developing strong bonds/relationships with other students on staying off-campus. They also expressed that they often feel isolated at the off-campus accommodation/residences, and this results in the challenges they experience with the social life causing a strain on their romantic attachments or general relationships.

Living expenses

A majority of university students face financial challenges while transitioning into higher education (Rebels, 2020). It has been noted in previous literature that it is usually more costly to stay off-campus than on-campus due to many factors, such as Wi-Fi, bills, rent, groceries, and electricity to name the least (Daud et al., 2016).

Seven participants reported that they find residing off-campus more costly than staying on-campus. According to participants, one must pay bills while staying off-campus such as electricity which runs out faster due to heavy appliances for example the geyser which consumes more. This demonstrates the financial struggles/challenges participants encounter, particularly participants that comes from low-income households who are particularly dependent on pension allowance.

Participants further complained about the increase in rental prices and the small spaces one has to pay for while living in off campus accommodation. Furthermore, participants, considering that most reported coming from disadvantaged back grounds, complained about challenges acquiring all the basic needs such as food on a low budget. Thus, the researcher concluded that for most participants, living off-campus is often unsustainable for students especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and low-income homes.

6.3 Limitations of the study

There are numerous limitations to this study as acknowledged by the researcher. This section serves to outline the limitations for this study.

The study made use of an exploratory qualitative method which may have limited the research findings because this methodology can result in biased interpretations of the results that are obtained from the data sample. Exploratory qualitative research often targets a small

sample of participants with the aim of learning nuanced information on the chosen topic. This study was based on data that was obtained from nine participants from the University of Pretoria. Therefore, working with a small sample of participants often limits the research findings from the participants in that there is a generalization to the wider population. However, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994) exploratory research allows the researcher to derive theoretical generalisations and this research study highlighted theoretical insights from the findings which are thus useful for further research on the experiences of first year students residing off campus.

Moreover, it would have been desirable to conduct face to face focus group meetings with the participants at the University of Pretoria, however due to the national lockdown restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, alternative arrangements were adopted by the researcher. Data findings would have been more enriched by face-to-face focus group discussions with the participants, as more details would have been obtained from a more personal interaction. Furthermore, another alternative that was adopted to was conducting the discussions via video calling platforms such as Google Meets. However due to data challenges most participants preferred to disable their video cameras to save data and to avoid burdening the connectivity which was sometimes a challenge.

Another limitation to the study was as a result to withdrawal of participants due to personal reasons unknown to the researcher. At first the sample included diverse groups which includes black students and white students. However, the final sample of participants that joined the discussion only consisted of black participants. Thus, this limited the diversity of findings, as the view of other ethnic or racial groups were not represented.

A further limitation of the study was that the focus group discussion which was initially meant to be once off ended up being conducted in four sessions. The focus group was a challenge to assemble. This was because of participants dropping out from the study after signing consent from and not joining the online discussion. With that said, a total of four focus group discussions were conducted by the researcher. It would have been much more desirable to conduct one focus group with all the nine participants at once allowing for in-depth discussions to take place. This would have also yielded more data/information. As noted by Powell and Single (1996) a focus group is composed of individuals with shared characteristics that are often pertinent to the study and comprises between six to ten participants who are

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strangers to each other. In this way, not only are the research participants not inhibited by or deferential to intra-group differences, but the anonymity serves to engender an atmosphere that encourages honest airing of what could be crucial personal views and negative experiences (Powell & Single, 1996).

The results of this research study are somewhat limited in that they are primarily based on the unique population of a single university and are thus may not be generalizable to other institutions.

6.4 Recommendations

As stipulated by Parker et al. (2017), inclusion and a sense of belonging have an impact on a student's learning experience. The University could do more to encourage a sense of belonging for first year students transitioning into university. For example, initiatives that support commuting students as well as some on-line material and support. Additionally, the University as well as its offer should address the needs of its diverse student body. For example, first year orientation needs to improve, that is, a more serious approach towards advertising student societies to the new students. This would be an effective mechanism for integration and engagement for new students.

A further recommendation would be for high school students before commencing (prior to their enrolment) with their high education studies to go to the University to meet first year students and talk to them about their university experiences including the challenges. Additionally, some study skill sessions which include academic writing and referencing, better communication and the opportunity to meet existing students would assist the new students in building a sense of belonging in HEI. Therefore, further research into the ways the institution could better inform pre-entry students of the academic and social implications of Higher Education could assist students in their transition to university. Therefore, as the student population becomes more diverse, so do their expectations thus universities need to be more aware of this and cater for it accordingly.

It is also recommended that the HEI create a welcoming environment by supportive staff, smaller manageable lecture groups, as well as a space to relax which would allow students to meet new people (Parker et al., 2017). Furthermore, students find an understanding of their

diverse backgrounds through interaction with their fellow students and the university, and this results in feelings of being more involved in the learning community.

A recommendation would be that the institutions promote and foster student learning and also support students striving to accomplish their educational goals through student engagement initiatives. Institutions should consider finding to successfully allocate its human resources as well as other resources and organise learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate in while benefiting from such activities (Kuh et al., 2008).

Universities are encouraged to adopt to the use of NSSE data usage which is customised to suit their campuses. The researcher should consider replicating these findings in other institutional settings.

6.5 Suggestions for future research

Further qualitative research studies with the aim of exploring the experiences of first year students living off-campus from universities across South Africa should be conducted. This would further enrich the already existing findings on the experiences of first year student living off campus, would be helpful in tailoring initiatives and programs to cater for first year students transition to university particularly those residing off campus and to address the challenges they face.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies should be conducted. Longitudinal studies will help in assessing the experiences first year students first whilst transitioning into university and would also assess how the diverse student bodies deal with the challenges.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

TITLE OF THE STUDY

Living off-campus: Academic, emotional, social, and financial experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria

Dear prospective participants

My name is Sikhathele Elitha Sibanda, I am currently a Master student at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. You are being invited to take part in my research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the following information carefully, which will explain the details of this research project. Please feel free to ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

First year students today are still confronted with social and academic challenges (Rayle & Chung, 2007). They encounter various experiences in relation to residing off-campus and these experiences could be both negative and/or positive experiences. One of the challenges that first year off-campus students may face, is the feeling of isolation, in that they may be facing difficulties in developing a sense of belonging and connectedness to other students, staff and the wider institution (Kember et al., 2019; Lambrinidis, 2014; Tinto,1987). Thus, the purpose of this study is;

● To explore and gain a deeper understanding of how first year students experience living in off-campus residences. To identify factors that could influence first year students' perceptions of their integration in university. To examine how residing off-campus impacts on their perception of university life.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

● You will be invited to participate because you are a first-year student at the University of Pretoria residing off-campus.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

● You will be expected to participate in a focus group discussion that will be guided by an unstructured interview. A questionnaire with biographical information will be provided for each participant to complete. Audio recording will be utilised to ensure that no information is missed.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

● Yes. Participation is voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

● Please note participant information will be kept confidential, except in cases where the researcher is legally obliged to report incidents such as abuse and suicide risk.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The information obtained from this study may help in the understanding of how the experiences of first year students residing off-campus shape or influence their multifaceted progress in their university life. This will aid in the enhancement of the already existing interventions and strategies to assist first year students residing off-campus to have a successful transition to university.

WHAT ARE THE ANTICIPATED RISKS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Please note that the benefits outweigh the risks.

● The risks in this study may be related to the issue of confidentiality. Participants will be assured that their identities will be kept anonymous and that their responses may be used only for academic purposes and only for the research project at hand.

● Should you have the need for further discussions after the interviews an opportunity will be arranged for you, particularly in the unlikely event that some form of discomfort occurs due to partaking in the study.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

● Electronic information will be stored for a period of 15 years.

● Participant information in hard copies of raw data will be locked in the cabinet and electronic data will be kept in a file that is password protected in the Department of Psychology.

WILL I BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

● No, you will not be paid to take part in this study but refreshments will be provided. Travel expenses will be paid for the participants who must travel to the site. There will be no costs involved to you if you take part in this study.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

● The findings of the research study will be shared with you by Sikhathele Elitha Sibanda. You may expect to receive the results of the study via email in December 2021.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE CONCERN, COMPLAINT OR ANYTHING I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE STUDY?

If you have questions about this study or you have experienced adverse effects because of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided below. If you have questions regarding the rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the researcher, please contact the supervisor, and contact details are below

Researcher

Name Surname: Sikhathele Elitha Sibanda

Contact number: 0612 676 445

Email address: sikhathelesibandae@gmail.com

Supervisor

Name: Dr Anathi Ntozini

Email address: anathi.ntozini@up.ac.za

Appendix B: Participant Informed Consent Form

TITLE: Living off-campus: Academic, emotional, social, and financial experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria.

WRITTEN CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

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

STATEMENT	AGRREE	DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any consequences or penalties.			
I understand that information collected during the study will not be linked to my identity and I give permission to the researchers of this study to access the information.			
I understand that this study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance from Research Ethics Committee Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria.			
I understand who will have access to personal information and how the information will be stored with a clear understanding that I will not be linked to the information in any way.			
I understand how this study will be written up and published.			
I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.			
I consent to being audio recorded.			

I consent to have my audio recordings being used in research outputs such as publication of articles, thesis, and conferences if my identity is protected.			
I give permission to be quoted directly in the research publication whilst remaining anonymous.			
I have sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I agree to take part in the above study.			

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

Name of person taking consent   Date   Signature

Appendix C: Ethics Approval Letter from Faculty

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Office of the Registrar

2022-04-26

Ms S Sibanda
Department of Psychology
Faculty of Humanities
University of Pretoria

Email: sikhathelesibandae@gmail.com

Dear Ms Sibanda

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH STUDY

The UP Survey Coordinating Committee has granted approval for the research study titled "Living off-campus: Academic, emotional, social and financial experiences of first year students at the University of Pretoria".

The proposed research study has to strictly adhere to the associated study protocol, as well as the UP Survey Policy and the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities instructions.

Please liaise with the Market Research Office in the Department of Institutional Planning (carlien.nell@up.ac.za) to officially register the study and to finalise the survey regulations, procedures and the fieldwork dates. In order to register the study, the Market Research Office has to receive the formal ethical approval letter from the Faculty of Humanities.

A final electronic copy of the research outcomes must be submitted to the Survey Coordinating Committee as soon as possible after the completion of the study.

Kind regards

Prof CMA Nicholson
REGISTRAR
CHAIRPERSON: SURVEY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire & Main Research Questions

Humanities 100.
— 1919 - 2019 —
Department of Psychology

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Are you a first-year student at the University of Pretoria?
2. Do you stay off-campus?
3. What faculty are you in?
4. Which degree are you enrolled for?
5. What is your age?
6. What is your gender?
7. What is your ethnicity (Race)?

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your academic life as a first year living off-campus?
2. Can you tell us more about your experience living off-campus?
3. Share the most positive aspects of living off-campus.
4. Share the most challenging aspects of living off-campus.
5. Are you sharing with anyone?
6. What is your social life like as a student residing off-campus?
7. How do you feel about your safety living off-campus?
8. How do you feel about the quality of your residences?
9. Tell us about the nature of your facilities in your residences.