THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A VALUE-ADDED SOCIAL CURRICULUM TO EMPOWER WORKING MOTHERS STUDYING AT AN ODL INSTITUTION

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A VALUE-ADDED SOCIAL CURRICULUM TO EMPOWER WORKING MOTHERS STUDYING AT AN ODL INSTITUTION

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I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

JM van der Merwe

01/01/2021

Date

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my loving family, who has supported and encouraged me to pursue my dreams. To my dearest husband, Frik, who has always been by my side and for being my greatest supporter in completing my studies. To my beautiful daughters, Jenna and Isabella, for always helping mommy by being quiet when I was writing this dissertation and understanding when I could not come out to play with you. Also, to my parents, Erika and Owen, who have always believed in me.

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ABSTRACT

There is a notable concern regarding the increasing responsibilities that working mothers are experiencing in South Africa and the world, trying to further their education. If online distance education is going to be a viable option for working mothers, the educators and institutions must take the responsibility to assist these students by providing them with life skills that empower them after completing their studies. Although the formal qualifications these students are pursuing are vital for future success, it is equally crucial for them to focus on other aspects of life to ensure total personal balance and functioning outside of their formal qualifications. Therefore, the research focused on the need for holistic support in empowering women, in particular mothers, to manage their roles, create better futures and derive positive outcomes and achievements in their daily lives.

This qualitative empirical study included a critical research paradigm using an exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) approach in a case study research type. The study aimed to explore the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution. In addition, the study examined the effectiveness of using ODL initiatives in providing women with practical skills and knowledge in different areas of their lives.

The findings of this study revealed that although women are overwhelmed by their multiple roles, they will take any opportunity to educate themselves further, whether in a formal or informal setting. All participants made positive changes to their lives using the practical information gained in the social curriculum and found the modules to be relevant to their current struggles. The women also viewed the social curriculum as an added support structure in helping them succeed in their studies. The findings indicate that the social curriculum empowers working mothers studying at an ODL institution, provided that they actively engage in the material and apply the knowledge to their everyday lives.

Key concepts: Social curriculum, practical knowledge, empowerment, working student mothers, support, multiple roles, social skills

ABSTRAK

Daar is 'n noemenswaardige kommer oor die toenemende verantwoordelikhede wat werkende moeders in Suid-Afrika en die wêreld ervaar om hul opvoeding te bevorder. As aanlyn-afstandsonderrig 'n lewensvatbare opsie vir werkende moeders gaan wees, moet die opvoeders en instansies die verantwoordelikheid neem om hierdie studente by te staan deur vir hulle lewensvaardighede te voorsien wat hulle bemagtig nadat hulle hul studies voltooi het. Alhoewel die formele kwalifikasies wat hierdie studente nastreef noodsaaklik is vir toekomstige sukses, is dit net so noodsaaklik dat hulle op ander aspekte van die lewe fokus om totale persoonlike balans en funksionering buite hul formele kwalifikasies te verseker. Daarom het die navorsing gefokus op die behoefte aan holistiese ondersteuning om vroue, veral moeders, te bemagtig om hul rolle te bestuur, 'n beter toekoms te skep en positiewe uitkomstes en suksesse in hul daaglikse lewens te bereik.

Hierdie kwalitatiewe empiriese studie het 'n kritiese navorsingsparadigma ingesluit wat 'n verkennende-beskrywende kwalitatiewe benadering in 'n gevallestudie-navorsingstipe gebruik. Die studie het ten doel gehad om die doeltreffendheid van 'n sosiale kurrikulum met toegevoegde waarde in die bemagtiging van werkende moeders wat aan 'n aanlyn-afstandsonderrig-instelling studeer, te ondersoek. Daarbenewens het die studie die doeltreffendheid van die gebruik van aanlyn-afstandsonderrig inisiatiewe ondersoek om vroue van praktiese vaardighede en kennis in verskillende areas van hul lewens te voorsien.

Die bevindinge van hierdie studie het aan die lig gebring dat hoewel vroue oorweldig word deur hul veelvuldige rolle, hulle enige geleentheid sal benut om hulself verder op te voed, hetsy dit in 'n formele of informele omgewing is. Alle deelnemers het positiewe veranderinge in hul lewens aangebring deur die praktiese inligting wat in die sosiale kurrikulum verkry is en het gevind dat die modules relevant is vir hul huidige stryd. Die vroue het ook die sosiale kurrikulum beskou as 'n bykomende ondersteuningstruktuur om hulle te help om suksesvol te wees in hul studies. Die bevindinge dui daarop dat die sosiale kurrikulum werkende moeders bemagtig wat aan 'n aanlyn-afstandsonderrig-instelling studeer, gegee die feit dat hulle aktief betrokke raak met die materiaal en die kennis in hul alledaagse lewens toepas.

Sleutelkonsepte: Sosiale kurrikulum, praktiese kennis, bemagtiging, werkende studentemoeders, ondersteuning, veelvuldige rolle, sosiale vaardighede

KAKARETŠO

Go na le tlhobaboroko ye e lemogegago mabapi le go oketšega ga maikarabelo ao bomma bao ba šomago ba itemogelago wona ka Afrika Borwa le lefaseng ka bophara, ge ba leka go tšwetša pele dithuto tša bona. Ge thuto ya go ithuta o le kgole ka inthanete e ya go ba kgetho ye kaone ya bomma bao ba šomago, barutiši le diinstitšhušene ba swanetše go tšea maikarabelo a go thuša baithuti ba ka go ba fa mabokgoni a bophelo ao a ba matlafatšago ka morago ga go fetša dithuto tša bona. Le ge e le gore mangwalo a dithuto a semmušo ao baithuti ba ba ithutelago ona a bohlokwa go katlego ya ka moso, go sa le bohlokwa go bona gore ba kgone go tšwela pele ka maphelo a bona le go kgonthiša tekatekano ya motho ka noši ntle ga dithuto tša semmušo. Le ge go le bjale, nyakišišo e sekasekile nyakego ya thekgo ye e feletšego le go matlafatša basadi, kudukudu bomma, go kgona go dira mešomo ya bona bokaone, gore ba be le bokamoso bjo bokaone le go hwetša dipoelo tše kaone le katlego go maphelo a bona a ka mehla.

Nyakišišo ya phihlelelo ya khwalithethifi e akareditše mokgwa wa nyakišišo wo o tseneletšego ka go šomiša mokgwa wa khwalithethifi ya tlhahlobo-tlhalošo (EDQ) go mohuta wa nyakišišo ya thuto ya mohlala. Nyakišišo e sekasekile bohlokwa bja go akaretša lenaneothuto la setšhaba la boleng bjo bo okeditšwego go thekga bomma bao ba šomago le go ithuta diinstitšhušeneng tša ODL (thuto ya kgole ye e bulegilego). Go tlaleletša, nyakišišo e sekasekile katlego ya go šomiša maano a ODL go fa basadi bokgoni le tsebo go dikarolo tša go fapanafapana maphelong a bona.

Diphihlelelo tša nyakišišo ye di utullotše gore le ge basadi ba imelwa kudu ke mešomo ya bona ye mentši, ba ka tšea sebaka sefe goba sefe sa go tšwela pele go ithuta, ka ditsela tša semmušo goba ye e sego ya semmušo. Batšeakarolo ka moka ba bile le katlego maphelong a bona ka go šomiša tshedimošo ya tirišo ye ba e hweditšego ka lenaneothutong la setšhaba gape ba hweditše dimotšule di le maleba go matshwenyego a bona a bjale. Basadi ba bone gape lenaneothuto la setšhaba lebjale ka mokgwa wa thekgo wa go ba thuša gore ba atlege dithutong tša bona. Diphihlelelo di laetša gore lenaneothuto la setšhaba le matlafatša bomma bao ba šomago le go ithuta institšhušeneng ya ODL, ge fela ba bala didirišwa tša thuto le go šomiša tsebo ye maphelong a bona a ka mehla.

Mantšu a bohlokwa: Lenaneothuto la setšhaba, tsebo ya tirišo, matlafatšo, baithuti ba bomma bao ba šomago, thekgo, mešomo ye mentši, mabokgoni a setšhaba

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
BSA	British Social Attitudes Surveys
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CEDU REC	College of Education Research Ethics Guidelines
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIT	Critical Incident Technique
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
EDQ	Exploratory-Descriptive Qualitative
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
HDEI	Higher Distance Education Institutions
IASAS	International Association of Student Affairs and Services
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LSBE	Life Skill Based Education
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ODL	Open Distance Learning
R	South African Rand
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa
WHO	World Health Organization

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Ages of all participants who replied to the study invitation 66
Table 4.2: Ethnicity of all participants who replied to the study invitation 66
Table 4.3: Sex of all participants who replied to the study invitation 67
Table 4.4: Location of all participants who replied to the study invitation 67
Table 4.5: Completion of Social Curriculum modules of all participants who replied to the study invitation..... 67
Table 4.6: Modules completed by all participants who replied to the study invitation68
Table 4.7: Parenthood status of participants who replied to the study invitation 68
Table 4.8: Number of children of mothers 69
Table 4.9: Ages of children for mothers who participated..... 69
Table 4.10: Employment status of mothers who participated 70
Table 4.11: Availability for telephonic interviews of mothers who participated 70
Table 4.12: Summary of all participants who qualified for the study..... 71
Table 4.13: Themes and sub-themes..... 73
Table 4.14: Theme 1 findings summary 103
Table 4.15: Theme 2 findings summary 104
Table 4.16: Theme 3 findings summary 105
Table 4.17: Theme 4 findings summary 105

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Essential qualitative feminist inquiry (Source: Researcher's own) 44
Figure 3.1: Rationale for empirical research (Source: Researcher's own) 47
Figure 3.2: Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)..... 58

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION I

DEDICATION II

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS III

ABSTRACT IV

ABSTRAK V

KAKARETŠO VII

ABBREVIATIONS IX

LIST OF TABLES X

LIST OF FIGURES XI

CHAPTER 1 1
ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND 1

1. 1 INTRODUCTION 1
1. 2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY 1
1. 3 PROBLEM FORMULATION 5
1. 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 6
1. 5 AIM OF THE RESEARCH 6
1. 6 RESEARCH DESIGN 7
1. 6. 1 Research paradigm 7
1. 6. 2 Research approach 8
1. 6. 3 Research type 8
1. 7 RESEARCH METHODS 8
1. 7. 1 Selection of participants 9
1. 7. 2 Data collection 9
1. 7. 3 Data analysis 10
1. 8 ETHICAL MEASURES 10
1. 9 TRUSTWORTHINESS 11
1. 9. 1 Triangulation 12
1. 9. 2 Member-checking 13
1. 9. 3 Transferability 13
1. 10 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS 14
1. 11 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS 15

1. 12 CONCLUSION 17

CHAPTER 2 18
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 18

2. 1 INTRODUCTION 18
2. 2 MULTIPLE ROLES OF WOMEN 18
2. 2. 1 Pressures placed on women 20
2. 2. 2 The meaning of motherhood 22
2. 2. 3 Women empowerment 26
2. 2. 4 The well-being of women 28
2. 2. 5 Motherhood skills and the working environment 29
2. 3 EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT 30
2. 3. 1 Distance education as a means of empowerment 32
2. 4 INSTITUTIONAL AND FAMILIAL SUPPORT 33
2. 4. 1 Familial and spousal support 34
2. 4. 2 Institutional support 35
2. 5 LIFE SKILLS AND THE SOCIAL CURRICULUM 37
2. 6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 39
2. 7 CONCLUSION 45

CHAPTER 3 46
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS 46

3. 1 INTRODUCTION 46
3. 2 RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH 46
3. 3 RESEARCH DESIGN 47
3. 3. 1 Research paradigm 48
3. 3. 2 Research approach 49
3. 3. 3 Research type 49
3. 4 RESEARCH METHODS 50
3. 4. 1 Selection of participants 50
3. 4. 2 Data collection 52
3. 4. 2. 1 Rationale for the use of online questionnaires 52
3. 4. 2. 2 Online questionnaire as research instrument 53
3. 4. 2. 3 Rationale for semi-structured interviews 53
3. 4. 2. 4 Semi-structured telephonic interview as research instrument 54
3. 4. 3 Pilot study 56
3. 5 DATA ANALYSIS 57

3. 6 TRUSTWORTHINESS 59
3. 6. 1 Credibility 59
3. 6. 2 Authenticity 60
3. 6. 3 Criticality 61
3. 6. 4 Integrity 61
3. 7 ETHICAL MEASURES 61
3. 7. 1 Ethical clearance 62
3. 7. 2 Confidentiality 62
3. 7. 3 Informed consent 62
3. 7. 3. 1 Online questionnaire 63
3. 7. 3. 2 Telephonic interviews 63
3. 7. 4 Risk concern 63
3. 8 CONCLUSION 63

CHAPTER 4 65
DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS 65

4. 1 INTRODUCTION 65
4. 2 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS 65
4. 2. 1 Participants' profiles 65
4. 2. 2 Discussion of the themes 72
4. 2. 3 Thematic analysis 74
4. 2. 3. 1 Theme 1: Working mothers, furthering their education, perception on the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study 75
4. 2. 3. 2 Theme 2: The relevance of the modules regarding working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles 89
4. 2. 3. 3 Theme 3: The extent of support the additional modules on practical aspects of life give women in dealing with the challenges they face 92
4. 2. 3. 4 Theme 4: A value-added social curriculum to empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution 98
4. 3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 103
4. 3. 1 Theme 1: Working mothers, furthering their education, perception on the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study 103
4. 3. 2 Theme 2: The relevance of the modules regarding working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles 104

4. 3. 3 Theme 3: The extent of support the additional modules on practical aspects of life give women in dealing with the challenges they face 105
4. 3. 4 Theme 4: A value-added social curriculum to empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution 105
4. 4 CONCLUSION 106

CHAPTER 5 107
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 107

5. 1 INTRODUCTION 107
5. 2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE 107
5. 3 SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL STUDY 108
5. 4 SYNTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS 110
5. 5 CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS 115
5. 5. 1 Sub-question 1: How do working mothers, furthering their education, perceive the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study? 115
5. 5. 2 Sub-question 2: How relevant are the modules to working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles? 116
5. 5. 3 Sub-question 3: To what extent will additional modules on practical aspects of their lives support women in dealing with the challenges they face? 117
5. 5. 4 Sub-question 4: How can a value-added social curriculum empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution? 118
5. 5. 5 Main research question: HOW EFFECTIVE IS A VALUE-ADDED SOCIAL CURRICULUM IN EMPOWERING WORKING MOTHERS STUDYING AT AN ODL INSTITUTION? 118
5. 6 LIMITATIONS 119
5. 7 RECOMMENDATIONS 119
5. 7. 1 Recommendations for institutions 120
5. 7. 2 Recommendations for students 120
5. 8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH 121
5. 9 CONCLUSION 121
REFERENCES 124
APPENDIX A: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE 137
APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM INSTITUTION 139
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT 140
APPENDIX D: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE 141

APPENDIX E: TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 142

APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW..... 143

APPENDIX G: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING 147

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1. 1 INTRODUCTION

There is a notable concern regarding the increasing responsibilities that working mothers are experiencing in South Africa and the world, trying to further their education. Higher Distance Education Institutions (HDEI) play a fundamental role in the students' accomplishments in their courses (Meenambigai, 2018:19). If online distance education is going to be a viable option for working mothers, the educators and institutions must take the responsibility to assist these students by providing them with life skills that empower them after completing their studies. Although the formal qualifications these students are pursuing are vital for future success, it is equally crucial for them to focus on other aspects of life to ensure total personal functioning outside of their formal qualifications. They need to develop interpersonal skills and become knowledgeable on all facets of life to be well-rounded and healthy. By being exposed to the value-added social curriculum, they have the opportunity to invest in themselves and benefit personally. The benefits of engaging in this self-enrichment curriculum may also benefit those around them. The newly gained skills can assist them in making better life choices to enhance their lives and social functioning within their context and communities (Taute, 2008:42).

This dissertation of limited scope focused on answering a multi-dimensional question related to the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum, the importance of education and support in empowering women and the role of digital and online learning in making the information more accessible. The background to the study follows.

1. 2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The empowerment of mothers in the labour market will reduce inequality and improve socio-economic conditions. However, regardless of the robust and powerful integration in international documents (UN conferences in Cairo, 1994, and Beijing, 1995, as cited in Malholtra & Mather, 1997:627), the notion of female empowerment remains ambiguous. These policies fail not only to stipulate precisely what facets of

power are most significant but also to acknowledge the difficulties innate to the idea of power in its applicability to gender interactions (Malholtra & Mather, 1997:627). Education is unquestionably a start for life improvement and the foundation of development. According to UN Women (2013, as cited in Moghadam, Esmaeili & Salsali, 2017:2), the education of women is essential to attain the ongoing agenda of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of gender equality and empowerment. The literature considers people as 'excluded' when they cannot access the resources and opportunities needed to increase their quality of life (Ozoemena, 2018:21). Okeke-Uzodike (2019:350) points out that these obstacles continue despite ongoing endeavours by the government to improve training and research opportunities, and Zikhali and Smit (2019:476) notice that despite the implemented measures, the number of female leaders is declining. The efforts fail to meet labour market needs; hence, the widespread demand for more upgrades in educational offerings.

The advancements in technology have allowed a South African Private Higher Institution the opportunity to create a social curriculum that is a free, value-added series of micro-modules available to all registered students enrolled at the institution to increase their everyday life skills. This initiative was taken by the Institution's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as a strategic goal to provide a holistic learning experience to students focusing on personal and professional growth. The courses are designed on 21st-century micro-module learning principles to be flexible, easy to use and inspiring. Students can conveniently access them on their mobile devices, anytime and anywhere. At the end of each module, students get a certificate of participation to improve their Curriculum Vitae with short, relevant and impactful units of study (Private Institution, 2021).

The institution acknowledges mothers' unique issues, including managing family and work obligations and coping with dual-career relationships related to pursuing careers with a family (Sixl-Daniell & Wong, 2015:5). Furthermore, the institution aims to increase the benefits and lessen the challenges these women face (Huyck, 2018:122). Research shows that the status and empowerment of women affects the health and financial well-being of herself and her children (Asaolu et al., 2018:1). Chirinda (2018:11) refers to a saying "that what parents do in moderation their children will do in excess". Therefore, mothers who invest in themselves make a better investment in their children. By showing their children that they can create their own truth and do not

have to conform to societal views and place themselves in the box society created for them, they have the ability and capacity to create a reality they want (Chirinda, 2018:11). Thus, the study determined whether a value-added social curriculum would be beneficial for mothers in furthering their skills and empowering themselves in different aspects of their personal and professional life.

The focus of the study is on the experiences of distance education student mothers enrolled at a Private Higher Education Institution, engaging in a non-compulsory social curriculum providing them with information and practical applications in six areas of modern life. The fields of study include finances, personal branding, entrepreneurship, career, well-being, and digital literacy (Private Institution, 2021). Each course area is designed to provide students with valuable information on how to navigate life in a specific context, as outlined below:

Finances - Financial knowledge and the capacity to make sound financial decisions are imperative. The Finances learning area will introduce students to saving, budgeting, and topics related to financial independence and growth (Private Institution, 2021).

Personal branding - With the increased popularity of digital and social media, building and maintaining a healthy, realistic online presence and reputation while navigating the digital world is a crucial skill. The Personal Branding learning area teaches students how to manage their personal and professional identity while allowing them to stand out from the crowd (Private Institution, 2021).

Entrepreneurship - An entrepreneurial spirit is a skill that drives success both in business and in the workplace. Irrespective of students' career ambitions, the characteristics and skills of an entrepreneur can open or create new and exciting opportunities (Private Institution, 2021).

Career - A career is not built overnight; it takes planning and determination to learn how to steer in the competitive labour market. The career learning area will provide students with practical skills, tools and advice on how to start and build a career in a dynamic workplace (Private Institution, 2021).

Well-being - Well-being plays a significant role in creating a successful and fulfilling life. It encompasses different areas of life, including mental, emotional, physical and

spiritual health. This course area takes a holistic approach to expand engagement, productivity and self-esteem by delving into social wellness, managing work-life pressures, stress management and personal development (Private Institution, 2021).

Digital literacy - Entering the 4th Industrial Revolution has made technology the new normal for students to keep up to date. This course area deals with topics related to the internet, Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (Private Institution, 2021).

The Private Higher Education Institution has developed a series of micro-courses with various micro-modules related to the topics discussed above. A micro-learning module is defined by Brown (2019) as “an educational approach or strategy that offers the right amount of information to help learners achieve a specific, actionable objective or outcome”. These micro-modules aim to allow students to complete each module in the series in under 25 Minutes, thus making it relevant and manageable for these women with severe time constraints (Private Institution, 2021). According to Moghadam et al. (2017:1), institutions must acknowledge and consider the importance of mother-student roles in the support and education provided to these women to acquire valuable skills to excel regardless of the roles they need to play. Institutions should develop approaches to overcome the traditional view that women cannot meet motherhood and educational obligations simultaneously. The dualism of these women’s roles in a masculine society amplifies the complexity of self and career development that we cannot separate from the domestic and family role they hold (Anwar, Suhariadi & Fajrianthi 2017:82). Therefore, successful careers for women with children are constructively affected by spousal support (Amin, Arshad, & Ghani, 2017, as cited in Reissova, Simsova, & Laslofi, 2018:205). Institutional support can also be delivered in different ways, including distance options (Ellis & Gullion, 2015:161) and, in the case of this research, access to receiving social knowledge and skills provided by the institution in which they are formally enrolled for higher education courses. The information contained in the social curriculum is not related to subjects in their chosen field of study.

With a clear understanding provided in the initial introduction and background, the following section covers the formulation of the problem and the need for research.

1. 3 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Education is crucial to individual and society's well-being and socio-economic development. It lessens constraints and empowers women to reach their full potential (Lumadi, 2017:1). Women's multiple roles as wife, mother, student, employee and business owner are becoming universal phenomena; consequently, researchers have noticed a conflict between the numerous roles and well-being of women due to the sheer number of women balancing these roles concurrently (Dako-Gyeke & Ibrahim, 2012:400). If more women are encouraged to learn critical social skills needed to succeed in domestic and professional roles, they can set an example for women thinking they need to choose between their family and career roles (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:13).

Concerning the role conflicts, women experience a lack of support and resources to acquire empowering information and succeed in multiple roles while studying online (Lazou, 2019:8). However, if institutions expose women to relevant and practical information through digitised learning, education becomes more than theoretical knowledge (Riyad, Pramana, Munakib, & Maseleno, 2020:5080). As a result, women will challenge their role in society, and working mothers can further educate themselves, have a career, enjoy motherhood and manage the family-work trade-off more efficiently (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:13).

Women have self-agency in their mothering experiences with unique abilities in cognition, emotive and behavioural dimensions. Therefore, they should be viewed in a specific economic, socio-cultural and historical context (Collins, 1991; Arendell, 2000, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118-119) to understand mothering from different contextual frameworks (Glenn, 1992, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118-119). As indicated above, there is a concern about the high demands placed on women in motherhood roles in South Africa and other parts of the world. There have been numerous studies on the need to empower women psychologically and in the economy (Akyol & Arslan, 2020; Anwar et al., 2017; Arpino & Luppi, 2020; Dako-Gyeke & Ibrahim, 2012; Hills, 2015; and Ellis & Gullion, 2015). However, the researcher could not find any articles or books on how providing working student mothers with trustworthy and bite-sized modules on finances, personal branding,

entrepreneurship, career, well-being, and digital literacy can empower them to manage and perform in the different roles they hold.

1. 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the research problem as discussed in the previous section, the main question this study aimed to answer was:

HOW EFFECTIVE IS A VALUE-ADDED SOCIAL CURRICULUM IN EMPOWERING WORKING MOTHERS STUDYING AT AN ODL INSTITUTION?

In addressing the main question, the following sub-questions guided the study:

- How do working mothers, furthering their education, perceive the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study?
- How relevant are the modules to working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles?
- To what extent will additional modules on practical aspects of their lives support women in dealing with the challenges they face?
- How can a value-added social curriculum empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution?

1. 5 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution. In addition, the study examined the effectiveness of using ODL initiatives in providing women with practical skills and knowledge in different areas of their lives. Based on the aim, the objectives of this study included:

- Determine how working mothers, furthering their education, perceive the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study.
- Investigate the relevance of the modules to their educational needs and personal struggles.

- Establish to what extent additional modules on practical aspects of their lives will support them in dealing with the high demand for time and resources.
- Provide guidelines on how a value-added social curriculum can effectively empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution.

1. 6 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Akhtar (2016:68), “research is valid when a conclusion is accurate or true, and research design is the conceptual blueprint within which research is conducted”. Therefore, the strategy and structure of the research will become apparent through the discussion and explanation of the research paradigm, research approach and the research type applied by the researcher.

1. 6. 1 Research paradigm

The selection of a paradigmatic framework is vital due to the ontology, epistemology and methodology that shape the elements of a research paradigm (Asghar, 2013:3121). Non-critical paradigms, such as positivist and constructive paradigms, merely describe what is evident in a setting, while a critical paradigm, because of its intrinsic passion for reformation, delves deeper than just the observations and attempts to change the world (Asghar, 2013:3121).

Therefore, a critical paradigm guided this research study. The approach views reality as socially constructed and intentionally adopts the moral, ethical, and social context of events (Hammersely, 2012:30, as cited in Pham, 2018:4). Creswell (2007, as cited in Pham, 2018:4) explains that “research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants”. This study is in line with the view of Kellner (1993:44) that research should continuously investigate and solve modern-day social problems. Critical theory strives to liberate and develop new thought processes and practices that may commission frank discussions and rectify biased and discriminatory power imbalances (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:11). The concepts of epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology of the critical paradigm will be discussed further in chapter 3 (Section 3.3.1).

1. 6. 2 Research approach

The study aimed to explore and understand the subjective experiences of the study participants. It, therefore, follows a qualitative, exploratory-descriptive approach (Vejar, Madison-Colmore, & Maat, 2006:19). “Exploratory-descriptive designs, usually field studies in natural settings, provide the least control over variables. The data collected either contribute to the development of theory or explain phenomena from the perspective of the persons being studied” (Brink & Wood, 1997:283).

Shank (1994, as cited in Vejar et al., 2006:18) explains the essence of qualitative research as the capacity to understand social phenomena fully. Conducting a qualitative study allowed the researcher to study the collective views of working mothers furthering their education. The qualitative methods apply open-ended questions that extract personal information enabling students to share individual opinions, thoughts, and feelings. Therefore, this approach appeals to women’s communication styles, allowing the researcher to unearth the phenomenon of student working mothers (Farnsworth, 1996; Jayartne & Stewart, 1991, as cited in Vejar et al., 2006:19). In Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.2), the use of the approach and justification thereof will be discussed further.

1. 6. 3 Research type

Due to the nature and aim of the study, the researcher selected a case study research type. Yin (2012:141) states that “All case study research starts from the same compelling feature: the desire to derive a(n) (up) close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single or small number of “cases,” set in their real-world context.” The researcher discusses the case study research type further in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.3).

1. 7 RESEARCH METHODS

Participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis in qualitative research allow for a first-hand investigation of the participants’ environment, responses and subjective opinions regarding the topics and issues selected for critical analysis. Furthermore, since participants can express themselves during the study,

the research methods allow researchers to gain new insight into phenomena (Kuada, 2012:94).

1. 7. 1 Selection of participants

The population is the subject on which the measurement is taken, and sampling includes selecting elements in the population (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:179). For purposes of this study, the population included all female students enrolled for a course at the HDEI and engaged in the social curriculum. Thus, the sample included 13 participants out of a population of 4799 female students who participated in the value-added social curriculum. By utilising a mixed sampling method of probability sampling (random selection) and non-probability sampling (selection criteria), the researcher chose purposeful random sampling for the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:183). The selection criteria for participants in this study included: (1) enrolled for any of the courses at the institution, (2) currently employed, (3) have children of any age or gender, and (4) participated in the social curriculum at the time of the study. No limitation was set on the number or ages of the children to ensure diversity in the study.

1. 7. 2 Data collection

The most used data collection techniques in qualitative research include focus groups, observations and qualitative interviews (Kuada, 2012:95). The researcher opted to take a pragmatist approach to data collection and applied convenient methods for the study but still considered the study's objectives (Kuada, 2012:119). Since the study population consisted of all students studying at an ODL institution and are geographically separated across South Africa, an online structured self-administered questionnaire with mainly open-ended questions and semi-structured telephonic interviews were used to collect data. The researcher distributed 325 questionnaires with a predicted response rate of 30 participants. Although 27 responses were collected, 13 participants met the research criteria for the study. Telephonic interviews were conducted with six willing participants until data saturation was reached. The telephonic interviews were recorded, and the researcher obtained verbal consent from each interviewee before the commencement of the interviews.

For the telephonic interviews, the researcher applied the critical incident technique (CIT) to gain insight into the students' experiences with their multiple roles and the

perceived benefits of the social curriculum, which provided the researcher with information on their perceptions, experiences and behaviours (Kuada, 2012:98). As Kuada (2021:99) explains, CIT allows researchers to engage on an intellectual and emotional level with their participants to understand their experiences during reflection, gain richer information on lived experiences and gain better insight into the students being studied.

1. 7. 3 Data analysis

Data analysis allows researchers to make sense of the collected information (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016:161). A range of analytical techniques can be employed in the diverse field of qualitative research to generate an interpretation of large datasets. Thematic analysis is one of the frequently used techniques that entails discovering repeating patterns. The recurring patterns are put forward as broad statements or themes (Lochmiller, 2021:2029). Gathered data were manually analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method that permits the researcher to identify, analyse, organise, describe, and report on themes in a flexible style giving a rich, detailed and sophisticated account of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, as cited in Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017:2)

The researcher chose this data analysis and interpretation approach to discover the participants' motivations, opinions, thoughts and outcomes to make inferences about the participants and their responses. The approach aims to discover the patterns, resemblances, and variations in participant responses to draw conclusions and answer the research questions (Lochmiller, 2021:2031). The study's data analysis will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5). The researcher will discuss the ethical measures taken in the following section.

1. 8 ETHICAL MEASURES

Ethical consideration protected the participants' rights to confidentiality, privacy, autonomy and no harm. Therefore, informed consent was obtained from the study participants (see APPENDIX C) during the inquiry audit and empirical research activities (Manti & Licari, 2018:145).

The researcher informed all participants of the purpose and methods of the study and acquired permission to record telephonic interviews. Participants understood that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they could retract any statement or answer or withdraw from the study at any time before submitting the questionnaire. The researcher did not have access to or ever gained access to student records, except for the information they voluntarily shared with the institution and researcher on availability to partake in the study.

The institution assisted the researcher in forwarding a mass message to the online questionnaire to students engaged in the social curriculum inquiring about their interest in partaking in the study. In addition, the researcher contacted the students who voluntarily gave their contact details to partake in the telephonic interviews and informed them of the ethical considerations, purpose and research methods before conducting the telephonic interviews.

The researcher received approval from the Private Higher Institution's Programme and Ethics Committee (see APPENDIX B) and obtained ethical clearance from the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee (REF: 2021/08/11/48402346/12/AM) (see APPENDIX A) to conduct the empirical research.

1. 9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001, as cited in Hunter et al., 2018:5) suggest four primary validity criteria in Exploratory-Descriptive Qualitative (EDQ) Research. These criteria include credibility, authenticity, criticality and integrity and will be discussed next.

Credibility - For research to be trustworthy, it must meet credibility criteria. The credibility criteria comprise the verification that the results are reliable from the viewpoint of the research participants. Given that the study is from this perspective, qualitative research aims to explain or comprehend the participants' experiences. The participants are thus the only legitimate source that can determine the credibility of the research results (Trochim, 2021). The credibility of the qualitative study focused on using two techniques, namely triangulation and member checking (Patton, 1999:1190). In addition, the researcher attempted to ensure (1) transferability through the use of detailed descriptions showing applicability to other contexts, and (2)

confirmability was established by conducting an audit trial on female lecturers and tutors in the institution, highlighting all the steps taken during the data analysis and (3) an inquiry audit was conducted to establish the dependability of the study (Patton, 1999:1195).

Authenticity - Authenticity is directly related to both credibility and validity and entails the interpretation of research that reveals the experiences and meanings of the participants (Sandelowski, 1986, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:530).

Criticality - The understandings and beliefs of the researcher can theoretically impact the research process and therefore requires consideration to ensure integrity and criticality (Whittemore et al., 2001:531).

Integrity - Integrity is vital in the analysis and critical reflection of qualitative research. The partiality of explanatory research values of the researchers may produce uniquely interpreted data (Johnson, 1999, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:531).

The researcher will discuss the techniques used in the study to establish credibility, namely, triangulation, member checking and transferability, in this section. The other criteria will be discussed further in Chapter 3 (Section 3.6).

1. 9. 1 Triangulation

Triangulation is built on the assumption that alone, no method can sufficiently explain the question of opposing explanations since all methods reveal distinct characteristics of empirical reality, different data collection methods and analysis yield “more grist for the research mill” (Patton, 1999:1192).

Triangulation expands the understanding of the phenomenon studied and ensures that the research findings are thorough, complete and well-developed (Patton, 1999:1191). In addition, triangulation allows for the integration of different methods and collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (such as data from questionnaires, telephonic interviews, field notes and critical observations together with diverse methods for data analysis (such as discourse analysis, content analysis, inferential methods, descriptive methods and statistics) (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo & Gonzalez, 2018:72).

The researcher employed four types of triangulation, namely: (1) Methods triangulation - An online structured self-administered open-ended qualitative questionnaire and

semi-structured telephonic interviews were used to determine the reliability of the findings (Patton, 1999:1193); (2) Triangulation of sources - The researcher forwarded a link to an online structured self-administered questionnaire with open-ended questions to all willing participants in the institution (whether they are mothers or not) and compared the views of mothers to the perspectives of childless women engaging in the same social curriculum (Patton, 1999:1193); (3) Analyst triangulation - The study supervisor reviewed the data and findings and ensured analyst triangulation by identifying the flaws or drawbacks of the analysis process (Patton, 1999:1193) and; (4) Theoretical triangulation - The researcher used multiple theories and perspectives to allows for theory/perspective triangulation during the data interpretation (Patton, 1999:1193).

1. 9. 2 Member-checking

Research participants' involvement in checking and confirming results reduces the potential for researcher bias. The process of sending interviews and analysed data to participants is known as member checking, respondent validation or participant validation (Birt et al., 2016:1802).

The results and findings were communicated to telephonically interviewed participants, allowing them to refine their intentions, correct misunderstandings and elaborate on topics they felt were not a comprehensive representation of their thoughts and feelings (Birt et al., 2016:1803).

1. 9. 3 Transferability

The reconceptualisation of generality in qualitative research concentrates on the concept of transferability (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014; Schofield, 1990, as cited in Schreier, 2018:86). Transferability's fundamental purpose is not to generalise to an educated and decontextualised populace; it aims to determine if findings obtained in instances of a specific setting can be applied to instances in different contexts. Thus, the degree of transferability between cases depends on the likeness of the particular contexts (Schreier, 2018:86). Transferability is a technique used to establish credibility that was thus implemented through the use of detailed descriptions and themes that show the applicability of the findings to other contexts.

1. 10 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

This section provides an overview of the essential concepts of interest to the research. The aim is to define concepts within the context of the research problem and provide the reader with conceptual meaning and understanding.

Value-added social curriculum: A Value-added social curriculum aims to teach social skills related to everyday aspects required to function optimally in different settings. The value-added social curriculum consists of three elements: learning from industry experts, the growth of knowledge and skills in a wide range of aspects of life and employability (Private Institution, 2021). In addition, a value-added social curriculum aims to provide work-life-related support (work-life relationship of students refers to the ideas and experiences of work) and pedagogy for higher education students. Therefore, this curriculum should be viewed in a general sense (learning about life and gaining practical knowledge in different areas of life) and not as a field-specific curriculum.

Working student mothers: When defining the concept of working student mothers, each aspect should be defined independently to define the concept. Working, according to Oxford (2021), is defined as “having paid employment”; A student is defined as “a person who is studying at a university or other place of higher education; and a mother is defined as “bringing up (a child) with care and affection” (Oxford, 2021). Working student mothers are thus women who study and work outside the family home for an income and raise their children.

Empowerment: According to Oxford (2021), empowerment is the capacity to impact people’s actions by giving them authority or power with or without limitation.

Open Distance Learning (ODL): ODL provides formal and informal education to students while being physically separated using various forms of technology to facilitate communication and learning (IGI Global, 2021).

Support: Emotional, informational and instrumental support encompasses the three types of social support women can receive; (1) emotional support refers to emotional reactions towards the woman who requires the support; (2) informational support entails the knowledge, advice and experience shared with the woman, and; (3) instrumental support describes the material, financial and services women need to

deal with the issues they are facing (Jacobson, 1986 as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:123).

1. 11 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation of limited scope comprises five chapters. The structure and overview of the chapters are discussed below:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

The first chapter provides an introduction and background to the study, highlighting the need for students to develop interpersonal skills and become knowledgeable on all facets of life to be well-rounded and healthy individuals. It also gives a background on a South African Private Higher Institution that offers a free, value-add series of micro-modules to increase everyday life skills necessary for personal and professional growth, focussing on the experiences of working student mothers engaged in the learning of finances, personal branding, entrepreneurship, career, well-being and digital literacy. Next, the chapter discusses the research problem formulation that ties into the research question and study aim. Then, the research design, including the paradigm, approach, and type, is defined, and the research methods are explained under the headings of selection of participants, data collection and data analysis. Finally, the ethical measures taken by the researcher to ensure the study's trustworthiness are outlined, and the chapter ends with clarifying essential concepts of interest to the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The second chapter provides an overview of the literature and the theoretical framework related to the research topic. This chapter highlights the multiple roles women hold in their daily lives. The literature examines the pressures women face to perform in their various roles and how society views women working, studying and having children. It also mentions how the peak period for participation in the workforce is also the peak period in which women have the most responsibilities towards their children. Chapter two also highlights the importance of motherhood in women’s lives and how it takes priority over everything else. Women empowerment is briefly discussed by referring to the female identity, the components of women empowerment

and the discussion on women's ability to acquire control over the areas of their lives. After discussing these women's pressures and priorities, the researcher looks at research on the well-being of women choosing to work, study and raise children, and achieve a healthy work-life balance. Next, the importance of support both from the institution and family is discussed concerning the achievement of the female students juggling family, studies and work simultaneously. The literature review concludes with an African perspective on motherhood and the skills they bring to the working environment.

The chapter ends with an integrative theoretical framework drawing from Marxist feminism, critical feminism, poststructuralist feminism, social support theory, ecological systems theory and ambivalent sexism theory and draws upon essential qualitative feminist inquiry to explore the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum in empowering working student mothers.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

Chapter three provides a detailed explanation of how the study was conducted. In the chapter, the researcher offers a rationale for the empirical research and discusses the research design to justify the collective use of the critical paradigm and EDQ in a case study approach. The researcher explains the methods used in participant selection, data collection, and the use of a pilot study. The researcher also highlights the steps taken during the Critical Incident Technique and the Six Phases of Thematic Analysis during the data collection and analysis phases. Trustworthiness relating to the study's credibility, authenticity, criticality and integrity are discussed together with transferability. Finally, the chapter ends with the ethical measures taken to ensure confidentiality and informed consent.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Chapter four provides the presentation of the research findings. The chapter first discusses the participants' profiles, including the demographics of all participants who responded to the questionnaire and ends with the qualifying participants. The four themes are then identified with their sub-themes. Next, the chapter goes into the thematic analysis of the four themes. In theme 1: multiple roles of women, two sub-themes are identified, 1) pressure the women experience, and 2) work-life balance. In theme 2: education as a means of empowerment, two sub-themes are identified, 1)

formal and informal educational needs and 2) the importance of education for women. In theme 3: institutional and familial support, two sub-themes are identified, 1) support required to achieve aspirations, and 2) the importance of support to manage multiple roles. Finally, in theme 4: life skills and the social curriculum, two sub-themes are identified, 1) the effectiveness of life skills gained in a distance setting, and 2) practical, real-life application of skills gained. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Limitations of the Study

Chapter 5 offers summaries of the literature and empirical study. A synthesis of the research findings is presented, where the similarities and contradictions compared to the literature are discussed. The conclusion of the research questions provides the reader with the final findings derived from the participant's responses. The study's limitations, recommendations to both institutions and students and suggestions for further research have also been presented. Finally, the chapter ends with a conclusion on the effectiveness of a value-added curriculum in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution and a list of references.

1. 12 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced and provided the background to the study on the increasing responsibilities working mothers experience and how Higher Distance Education Institutions have a role to play in the accomplishments of their students. The chapter presented the reader with the initiative implemented by the institution to assist students in providing them with information on everyday life. The problem statement was formulated to inform the research question and define the study's aim. The researcher also introduced the research design and research methods in this chapter to ensure ethical and trustworthy research. The chapter was concluded by clarifying the main concepts and a division of sufficing chapters.

In chapter two, a literature review follows, detailing the most relevant and recent research on the multiple roles of women, education as a means of empowerment, institutional and familial support provided to women and social curricula aimed at social skills development. Chapter two will also outline the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2. 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a literature review, according to Western Sydney University (2017), “is to gain an understanding of the existing research and debates relevant to a particular topic or area of study and to present that knowledge in the form of a written report”. The researcher reviews the literature on the multiple roles of women, education as a means of empowerment for these women, institutional and familial support provided to women and social curricula aimed at social skills development. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the theoretical framework that guides the dissertation by demonstrating theories relevant to the research topic and knowledge areas (USC Libraries, 2021).

2. 2 MULTIPLE ROLES OF WOMEN

Society accepts mothers as naturally altruistic, nurturing, caring and selfless, which impacts how women, regardless of their motherhood status, are perceived and treated in the workplace and society (Gonçalves, 2019:478). The mother takes care of the children in the family structure while being a good and supportive wife. Therefore, the woman who works outside the household must adjust the daily routine, which can be problematic considering the different roles within and outside the home (Sanches De Almeida, 2012:316). These mindsets have preceded the demarcation of motherhood within modern society or what the French feminist philosopher, Badinter (2012, as cited in Gonçalves, 2019:471), defines as “conflict and how modern motherhood undermines the status of women and ultimately results in various setbacks to women’s freedom.” For Badinter, this freedom is full of inconsistencies and “the individualism and hedonism that are hallmarks of our culture have become the primary motivations for having children, but also sometimes the reason not to” (Gonçalves, 2019:471).

Cragg, Andrusyszn and Fraser (2005:24, as cited in Lazou, 2019:4) state that “the inevitability of role conflict is underlined by the little recognised fact that for women participation in the labour force peaks in the 25-44-year age group, which is also the

age when women have the most demanding child care responsibilities." Although women earning a salary are inclined to devote it to their household and contribute to a worthy generational cycle that can increase the family's social standing (Williams et al., 2018:4), Gouthro (2005:12, as cited in Lazou, 2019:5) believes that "[m]any women are caught between their responsibilities and commitments to paid work, the expectations of educational institutions and their connections to others within the homeplace. These commitments often lead to conflict in women's lives as they attempt to balance competing for needs and interests."

Hakim (2000, as cited in Reissova et al., 2018:202) differentiates between three types of women; 1) family-oriented (20%), career-oriented (20%) and adaptive (60%) women. For the family-oriented woman, her children and family life take priority. The career-orientated woman typically chooses not to have children and prioritises her career. Finally, the adaptive woman selects to blend work and family.

The work and family conflict perspective is drawn from the scarcity approach (Moore, 1963, as cited in Woo, 2009:5) of the multiple role theory and sees time and energy as scarce resources, which indicates that the stresses of studying, working and caring for a family are unsuited in some instances. The more time a woman devotes to a role, the less time she has available to perform the other roles (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000, as cited in Woo, 2009:5). Frone (2000, as cited in Woo, 2009:5) explains that the high level of mental and emotional involvement in one role may cause mental preoccupation with a role while engaging in another role. Contrary to this belief, the work and family facilitation perspective explains that there may be a constructive connection between the roles women hold, making it possible to contribute to or improve functioning in the other roles (Woo, 2009:7).

The increase of mothers in the labour market over the last decades (Jaumotte 2004; Janus 2012, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:550) has not changed the fact that women are still more involved in child-rearing than men (Winefield et al. 2011, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:550). Hochschild (1989, 2011 as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:550) explains how this "double shift" escalades the strain women face due to role incompatibility between family and the labour market (Frone 2003; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly 1983; Voydanoff 2005, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:550). Good mothers should "expend a tremendous

amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children" with their behaviour guided by a "logic of unselfish nurturing" (Hays, 1996:x, as cited in Ellis & Gullion, 2015:152). In contrast, students are "trained to be monkish in their devotion and lavish in their pursuit of knowledge" (Springer, Parker & Levitan-Reid, 2009:438, as cited in Ellis & Gullion, 2015:152). Thus, the cultural stresses of motherhood and further education oppose each other and lead to role tension (Ellis & Gullion, 2015:152).

Women's multiple roles are complex, with different variables related to the pressures they experience from society, family, school and the workplace. Also, what motherhood means to them amid all the other responsibilities they have; how they empower themselves to achieve the goals they set in life; the maintenance of a work-life balance where they can find the time and energy to deal with different and daily responsibilities and the skills they bring to the working environment as mothers, homemakers and students. The sub-headings that delve deeper into the literature on these aspects include pressure placed on women, the meaning of motherhood, women empowerment, the well-being of women and motherhood skills and lastly, the working environment. These sub-headings are discussed below.

2. 2. 1 Pressures placed on women

Women's self-determination, willpower and independence are debatable concepts within the feminist movement, manipulated in contradicting viewpoints (Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:117). The sheer amount of pressure placed on women in this regard is worrisome, with society telling them that they should (without needing to be asked) be successful career women while simultaneously being sacrificing mothers (Douglas & Michaels, 2004, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:117).

Women admit to tiredness due to the amount of daily work they have to assume in all the roles, decreasing meaningful learning. Spronk (2001, as cited in Lazou, 2019:6) state that "the issues facing women are fundamentally those of access and control, which in turn give rise to issues of costs and choices" and since they "lack control over the strategic resources they need to sustain their lives, they are relatively disadvantaged in every dimension one can name" (Lazou, 2019:6).

Greenberg et al. (2016, as cited in Gonçalves, 2019:472) refer to the term 'working mother' as a juxtaposition of oppositional language in which the social standing,

customs and anticipated obligation of being a decent mother are in direct conflict with the expected exertion, capability and expertise compulsory to be an idyllic worker. While women have overcome the right to skilled work and obtain an education, it is still expected of them to be obedient to men and be in charge of the household and care for their children (Biasoli-Alves, 2000, as cited in Sanches De Almeida, 2012:316). This expectation causes a sense of guilt for the disagreeable adjustments and happenings that forcibly occur in their households and families, resulting in the work-life struggle becoming more noticeable, even though women who work improve the family's lifestyle and prospects (Sanches De Almeida, 2012:317).

Research has revealed that society perceives working mothers as more capable and effective than stay-at-home mothers; they are also, less likeable, less dedicated and colder to motherhood (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Bridges, Etaugh, & Barnes-Farrell, 2002; Coleman & Franiuk, 2011; Cuddy et al., 2004; Okimoto & Heilman, 2012, as cited in Szastok, Kossowska & Pyrkosz-Pacyna, 2019:2). The "Mother-Pole" phenomenon explains mothers as sincere and kind-hearted, simultaneously as capable, balanced and strong (Hryciuk & Korolczuk, 2012, as cited in Szastok et al., 2019:2). This phenomenon is ingrained in 19th-century thinking; while men fought battles, women raised children alone and carried out stereotypical male responsibilities. Together with the social role theory (Eagly, 1987, as cited in Szastok et al., 2019:3), these events shaped perceptions of warm and competent mothers with inner resourcefulness that enables them to manage the difficulties of life (Mikołajczak, 2016, as cited in Szastok et al., 2019:3), which should allow all women to be perceived as similarly proficient.

Women thus face a dilemma; if they commit to a profession, they are inadequate; but if they commit to childcare, they sacrifice their professional credibility. These concepts thus clearly suggest that women cannot have professional and family lives if they want to be viewed positively in their traditional roles by society (Szastok et al., 2019:12). How women are perceived influences their choices in life. Paré and Dillaway (2005, as cited in Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1261) found that the opposing views on mother employees stem from their perceived selfishness due to their focus on their own versus child successes. Contrary to these findings of negativity towards self-enrichment, women that work out of financial necessity were viewed more positively by society (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005, as cited in Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1261).

These findings exaggerate the view that women are always self-sacrificing in the mother role and will be judged more harshly on their motivations to continue or return to work due to a sense of self and longing for professional and personal development than due to familial and financial difficulties. Furthermore, the idea exaggerates the notion that women are never in control of their lives and the only way for society to view them positively is when their circumstances guide their actions rather than their hopes, dreams and aspirations as individuals, regardless of the roles they hold in and outside of the household (Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1261).

Research on mothering has identified multiple societal patterns of femininity and masculinity resulting from cultural or socio-economic differences and historical contexts (Connell, 2002, as cited in Hunt, 2015:1). These innovative theoretical approaches describe mothering as a socially formed set of actions and interactions involving caring and nurturing of others. Thus, femininity and mothering are interconnected and used to strengthen the gender identity of women, and in turn, motherhood and womanhood become synonymous (Hunt, 2015:1).

The British Social Attitudes Surveys (BSA, 2014, as cited in Eden, 2017:143) have presented noticeable changes in mindsets concerning working women and men with children, suggesting cultural changes for legislation motivating equal opportunities. However, research from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (2015, as cited in Eden, 2017:143) found that the shift in perspective has not transpired into reality. The key driver of the changing cultural attitudes is related to economic factors. Women feel the pressure to contribute to their household income due to the decreasing living standards of households (Eden, 2017:145).

Women are effectually between the hammer and the anvil, on the one side, the model of the good mother, whereas, on the other side, the normative model of the idyllic worker. The successes in education, entry into the labour market, and non-discriminatory legislation are still not affecting employer attitudes and cultural norms that perceive women as best suited to the primary caregiver role (Eden, 2017:143).

2. 2. 2 The meaning of motherhood

Ndlovu (2005:134) describes mothers as “leaders, service providers, supervisors, protectors (umbrellas), teachers, mentors, coaches, mobilisers of people and

resources, good coordinators and organisers, good planners and good managers of resources". The skills and characteristics of these women are introspective of a servant leadership approach as presented within the perspective of Ubuntu cultural values. The move into a motherhood role influences all facets of a woman's life, including her individuality, priorities, obligations and connection to her family and the community (Vejar et al., 2006:17). Bringing children into the world as a working mother affects the lifestyle, family dynamics, marriage and career (Hock et al., 1980 as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:120). Therefore, her mothering perspective determines her work status, whether she is always available to her children or preserving a personal identity outside of the home (Johnston & Swanson, 2006, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:120). Balancing the activities associated with motherhood and being a student without neglecting either one is an unavoidable predicament most student mothers find themselves in (Moghadam et al., 2017:2). Many studies have shown that when the role of mother overlaps with the role of student, the motherhood obligations take priority over their educational duties (Moghadam et al., 2017:2).

In research by Fambely (2019:19), respondents indicated that being a mother was the most critical role before enrolling in higher education courses. The role of the wife was second and the homemaker third. However, once they started their academic journey, motherhood remained their first priority, with the role of student taking the second slot. Although they perceived their studies as a significant responsibility, they indicated that "You never stop being a mother." Regardless of the roles women hold in their lives, their children and motherhood are the main priorities for most of them (McMahon,1995, Hays, 2011, Maher, 2005, Crockett & Mason, 2012, as cited in Akyol & Arslan, 2020:275).

To understand the experiences of working mothers, the researcher looked at De Meis et al.'s maternal belief system approach. As a working mother, a woman assesses the mother-child relationship through three different belief systems; (1) "maternal separation anxiety", where the mother experiences adverse emotions like anxiety, guilt and concern when leaving her child to pursue employment, feeling that she and she alone can provide her child with the best care needed; (2) the consequences, both positive and negative, of the child's reaction to the mother leaving; and (3) the balance

between child and work with investments in both maternal and career roles (DeMeis et al.,1986 as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:120).

With women gaining more independence and choice over their marital and motherhood statuses, a restructuring of mothering ideologies became apparent due to the success of feminist movements and increased women's rights. However, these rights are being "manipulated by new mothering ideologies" (Hays, 1996; Douglas & Michaels, 2004, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:116-117). Douglas and Michaels (2004:620, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:116-117), explain how the media constructs mothering ideologies as new *momism* "A set of ideals, norms and practices most frequently and powerfully represented in the media, that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach".

The *momism* concept defines "mother" as a specialist in comprehending all a child's emotive, mental and physical desires. Mothers have to fulfil different roles in their children's lives, including healthcare, therapy, education, and companionship. Intensive mothering recommends child-centred rearing practices that are labour-intensive, specialist-led and engaging, both economically and emotionally (Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:115). While there is no sole agreed definition of mothering (Arendell, 2000 as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:116), a collective premise is that mothering implies "The social practices of nurturing and caring for dependent children" (Arendell 2000:1192, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:116). Although mothering, by its definition, does not imply being a woman or female, many societies see women as the principal caregivers, which is still seen as the norm regardless of the changes in the status, financial means, education or culture of women. However, what has changed is the patterns in child-bearing age and childcare (Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:116). Fundamental economic and social shifts, alongside changes in types of fertility and family size, have separated the home from the workplace for women (Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:116).

According to O'Reilly (2004, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118-119), motherhood holds two separate meanings in providing the investigative means when contemplating or researching motherhood. The first definition is "the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction—and to children; and the

institution—which aims at ensuring that that potential—and all women—shall remain under male control" (Rich 1995, as cited in O'Reilly 2004:2). The second definition refers to mothering and how "mothering refers to women's experiences of mothering that are female-defined and centered and potentially empowering to women" (Rich 1995, cited in O'Reilly 2004:2). In the first definition, there is a clear male dominance oppressing women, whereas, in the second definition, mothering becomes empowering, "drawing on feminist, phenomenological perspectives and women's empowering, subjective experiences" (Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118-119). It is important to note that this study focused on the latter definition of how working student mothers navigate their mothering experiences when managing their different roles in the home and society.

According to Arendell (2000, as cited in Akyol & Arslan, 2020:265), research on motherhood focuses mainly on their meanings and identities, maternal relationships, the experiences and activities of these women and their social settings and structural contexts. When looking at motherhood identities and the meaning of motherhood, the emphasis is on the feelings of being a mother and making sense of motherhood. They also question the trade-off between the responsibilities of being a mother and being a worker. These struggles affect their identity and how they manage their emotional, economic, relationship and health needs. When studying maternal relationships in respect of the mother-child interaction and the mother's needs in contrast to the needs and well-being of her children, the critical question falls on maternal power and how they apply, perceive and experience it within the family dynamics. Researchers focussing on the experiences and activities of mothers focus on their responsibilities, character, daily duties, child-rearing, the development of the mother and child and how these dynamics influence or promote the development of the children, maturation of the mother, maternal behaviours and emotional states of mothers. Lastly, the investigation of the social setting and structural context delved into the family and motherhood ideologies and gender politics of motherhood influencing capitalism. It also assesses the meanings of raising children in rural and metropolitan areas mediating between the outside world and their children and family units, and how these women find support in a politically charged economy (Arendell, 2000:1201-1202, as cited in Akyol & Arslan, 2020:265-266).

Motherhood can thus be explained as a continuous evolvement of relationships and social interaction associated with negative and positive perceptions (Holden & Edwards, 1989, as cited in Akyol & Arslan, 2020:266).

2. 2. 3 Women empowerment

Parchure and Soman (2017, as cited in Koko & Osuji, 2018:211) refer to the five components of women empowerment as (1) a sense of self-worth; (2) a right to choices; (3) a right to opportunities and resources; (4) the ability to influence and (5) the capacity to impact social change.

Skilled and knowledgeable women now feel they have more options than merely marriage and family. They can generate an income, increase their status and have an identity outside of their marriages. Moreover, knowledge among women allows them to gain access and exposure to new information, ways of thinking and fresh viewpoints on existing information. Also, literate women can constructively voice their opinions and use their talents to find their purpose and enable them to have fulfilling and satisfying lives (Meenambigai, 2018:21).

The universal acknowledgement that power is multi-locational has directed discussions on women's ability to acquire more control over the different areas of their lives within the domestic, communal or governmental domains (Isvan, 1991; Kishor, 1995, as cited in Malholtra & Mather, 1997:604). Russum (2019:119) found that as mother entrepreneurs build their businesses, they select to work from home. Working from home eliminates the time and space limitations of the traditional office and allows them a sense of freedom to develop themselves and raise children on their terms. The capability to have a business and a child creates admiration from mothers who comprehend the difficulties of managing those roles. It also motivates and inspires prospective mothers to pursue a future that includes motherhood and a professional career (Russum, 2019:131).

According to gender roles, women do consider the insinuations of others; although their work may be empowering, they do not want to be portrayed as searching for masculine power (Meisenbach, 2010:8, as cited in Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1262) and challenge gender norms. Other women do not feel the need to clarify their decisions in having a "sense of pride in their ability to transmit their progressive and egalitarian

values and beliefs to their children" (Dunn et al., 2011:17, as cited in Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1262). Thus, growing gender ideologies toward egalitarian approaches where women can confidently and proudly make decisions regardless of being misunderstood and judged by others (Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1262).

The female identity is vigorous, multifaceted, intricate and influenced by social aspects and should thus be formulated with these ideas in mind (Moradi, 2005, as cited in Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding & Lunde, 2017:50). The above informs the reader that they have distinctive identities in the roles they hold that intercept (Jones & McEwen, 2000, as cited in Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017:50). The primary sense of self, "an individual's values and most valued attributes and characteristics" (Jones, 1997:383, as cited in Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017:50), is at the centre. From the primary sense of self, socially defined identities like ethnicity, culture, and gender intersect the primary identity, creating a multi-dimensional identity connecting all aspects of the sense of self, forcing us to view them in totality. Thus, no woman can only identify as a mother, wife, student, entrepreneur, worker and daughter; she is all, and all is her (Jones & McEwen, 2000:410, as cited in Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017:51). The prominence and evolvement of the different identities are continuous and actively developing due to personal experiences, context and refinement of her roles within the household, community and society (Abes et al., 2007, as cited in Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017:51). Creating personal meaning within the different roles is vital for women to develop a sense of worth within their identities and relationships. Abes and Jones (2007:619, as cited in Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017:51) described this creation of meaning as "organizational assumptions that determine whether identity is constructed through external expectations or an internally generated sense of self".

Empowerment means 'to invest with power' and demarcates the capacity to impact people's actions with or without limitation (Oxford, 2021). Thus, women need to be 'empowered' to gain control of their lives and better their socio-economic and political circumstances. Education is the most significant way to empower women (Meenambigai, 2018:21). Ghasem and Hosein-Chari (2013, as cited in Moghadam et al., 2017:7) held that a robust sense of self-efficacy enabled performance, as well as increased resilience. Student mothers who acquire this resilience have a better inclination to face challenges head-on (Leaman, 2015, as cited in Moghadam et al., 2017:7).

2. 2. 4 The well-being of women

When considering the aspects mentioned above, it raises concern for the well-being of working mothers attempting to further their education. Van den Bos (2015, as cited in Madhusudanan, 2017:2) defines well-being as “a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook or good quality of life.” According to Anwar et al. (2017:83), there are two main movements in the research on well-being. The hedonic perspective concentrates on increasing enjoyment as the aim of life and the foundation of happiness, where a person’s subjective evaluation of his or her life determines the level of well-being. The eudaimonic perspective concerns growth and personal fulfilment. This perspective frequently entails self-realisation, growth and personal development (Anwar et al., 2017:83). Working mothers struggle with intrinsic conflict amid work and family devotion (Corrinaldi, 2019, cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118). The cultural prevalence of intensive mothering has increased among educated mothers, creating contradictions in the mothering practices (Weingarten, 1997; Hays, 1996, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118), supported by a study that found that less-educated women experienced less stress and fatigue and more meaning and happiness than better-educated mothers. It also found that these differences in happiness and meaning were strongly associated with intensive mothering ideology increasing the social pressure and expectations from educated mothers (Nadal & Sevilla, 2015, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118).

In order to achieve a healthy work-life balance, women need to fulfil role-related expectations through managing their involvement in the separate spheres of their lives (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:550). The work-life balance can have positive effects on work commitment, life satisfaction, job satisfaction, family satisfaction, mental health and marital happiness (Losoncz & Bortolotto 2009; Lu et al. 2009; Matysiak, Mencarini & Vignoli 2016; Wayne et al. 2017, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:550). There are interdependencies between the spheres, where the work-life enrichment concept describes positive and negative spillovers from one sphere to the other (Gareis et al., 2009; Greenhaus & Powell 2006, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:551). Valcour (2007:1512, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:551) defines work-life balance and satisfaction as “an overall level of contentment resulting from an assessment of one’s degree of success at meeting work

and family role demands." Criticism on the concept of balance has included notions that individuals weigh family and work-life differently (Rapoport & colleagues, 2002, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:552). Although focussing on the general satisfaction in managing family and work, the actuality of work and family significance and the differences between people are taken into account (Abendroth & Den Dulk, 2011, as cited in Arpino & Luppi, 2020:552). Greenhaus and Powell (2006:6, as cited in Kumar, Chakraborty & Kumar, 2020:491) define work-family enrichment as "the extent to which experience in one role improves the quality of life namely performance or affect in the other role."

Benedek (1949, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:122) emphasises that women experience happiness and enjoyment within the mother-child relationship to experience confidence in their mothering capability. However, the employment environment and time at work affect the woman's well-being and can create barriers to an intimate, satisfying mothering experience. This well-being can also be affected by intensive mothering ideologies that stress the idea of perfection as the only alternative to mothering (Hays,1996, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:122). These purist beliefs about mothering induce negative emotions and create a sense of failure and inadequacy in these mothers regardless of how "good" of a mother they are (Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:123).

Lifestyle and quality of life go hand in hand, and those with a healthy lifestyle can enjoy a suitable quality of life. Working mothers need to balance daily tasks and relaxation to avoid exhaustion in terms of physical and mental health and pressure management (Kashefi, Kermanshahi & Fesharaki, 2018:216).

2. 2. 5 Motherhood skills and the working environment

From an African perspective, motherhood implies the intentional acceptance of duty in caring for biological children, family and the community. Mothers provide resources and skills while being caring, compassionate and imaginative servants to others (Chitiga, 2008; Mangena, 2009; Magwaza, 2003; Ngunjiri, 2009, as cited in Ndlovu, 2015:109). Ndlovu (2015:119) found consensus in a study that motherhood skills and traits can be transferrable to leadership, which distinguishes mothers in leadership from men. The women apply their intrinsic mothering skills to their daily tasks. Due to the mentorship women provide their children, they are inclined to mentor in their

workplace and leadership roles. Drake and Hansen (2008:2, as cited in Ndlovu, 2015:119) describe women as “dynamic leaders because motherhood and nurturing of families is truly the greatest management and [leadership] training program any woman could experience”. Sadri (2011, as cited in Ndlovu, 2015:120) highlights the key leadership responsibilities women have as homemakers to ensure the success of the household and guide their children. Because mothers hold the great responsibility of shaping the futures of those they mentor to succeed, they become accustomed to understanding different personality types and personal strengths in others to develop strategies to deal with each child in their households (Ndlovu, 2015:120).

Women in leadership are generally “approachable, accommodative, encouraging, and motivating and are strong in relationships even during difficult times” (Drake & Hansen, 2008, as cited in Ndlovu, 2015:123). The significance of approachability and relationship promotion taught to these women through Ubuntu encourages persuasiveness, hospitality, respectfulness, responsiveness, authenticity, genuineness and compassion for the people (Mangaliso, 2001, as cited in Ndlovu, 2015:123). Drake and Hansen (2008:1, as cited in Ndlovu, 2015:121) maintain that women worldwide have “made their roles as mother look effortless”. They also claim that women are currently adapting their motherhood skills and applying them as entrepreneurs. The lessons of motherhood teach these women essential skills needed to have successful careers; financial literacy, organisation, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, planning, conflict management and crisis control are just some of the transferrable skills these women apply to their careers (Ndlovu, 2015:121). Although motherhood gives them skills for the workplace, they need the education to embark on a career. Therefore, the following sub-section will discuss education as a means of empowerment.

2. 3 EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT

Education is the single most effective instrument for the liberation of the people and the most vital element in fighting poverty, empowering the community and advocating human rights. According to research, education is a sure way to free the mind and improve the socio-economic status of people (Okeke, 1995, as cited in Koko & Osuji, 2018:207).

For the academic transformation of systems, it is vital to provide students with general digital skills, inspire lifelong learning and improve their personal and professional development (Chetty, 2012, as cited in Ohei & Roelien, 2019:3). Puri (2018, as cited in Koko & Osuji, 2018:210) postulates that gender equality and women's empowerment are central to sustainable development. Education is the key to exposing women's potential for self-empowerment. Allowing women to discover and use their talents and abilities through education will enable them to live up to their potential and add to the socio-economic development of their communities (Koko & Osuji, 2018:207). When looking at the above mentioned, the role of education in promoting women's empowerment cannot be stressed enough.

Research shows that women with children from maternity up to the age of three years have fewer opportunities to access educational courses and resources (Ananchenkova & Kuznetsov, 2017:326). For many working mothers, the problems are more profound than just having access to educational institutions. The women hesitate to engage in educational activities due to traditions, cultural constraints, financial resources, social issues, family duties and formal educational systems' limitations that constrain women empowerment (Munawar & Akhter, 2017:80). Despite the progress made in allowing women to further their education, they still face numerous challenges other than their domestic duties and pregnancies (Hills, 2015:158).

Due to global shifts, the need to increase educational opportunities for groups most at risk, like working mothers, has led to a recognition of institutions to offer programmes and courses with academic relevance (Abdullahi, 2014, as cited in Ohei & Roelien, 2019:5). These global changes require people to continuously keep up-to-date with developments and new skills needed in the labour market, making new mothers especially vulnerable after maternity leave or after taking time off to raise children (Ohei & Roelien, 2019:5). Researchers have noticed that from the 1990s, more women have been enrolling in college-level education than men, with a higher graduation rate (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006; Esteve et al., 2016, as cited in Van Bavel & Klesment, 2017:2332). Meenambigai (2018:20) also found that after 1991, an increasing number of women have been joining the economy, pursuing remunerated employment outside the family home. As a result, women compete for more prominent roles in the economic market as employees, buyers, entrepreneurs, executives and shareholders.

Gouthro (2005, as cited in Lazou, 2019:7) supports that “[w]omen often enter into education with conflicting goals of wanting to attain a sense of independence and develop a sense of identity that is not determined by relationships with others (i.e. as a wife or mother) without rejecting the importance of these roles in their lives”. Lazou (2019:7) correctly points out that although education is a means for women to claim their independence, there is a repeated sense of contradiction as women feel guilt towards other aspects of their lives for wanting their own identity. Hayes (2000, as cited in Lazou, 2019:7) explains that the identity transformation women experience when obtaining formal higher education can occasionally necessitate hard choices between playing the part expected of them and their educational ambitions due to the seeming inharmoniousness between the different identities.

Engaging in studies while fulfilling the role of motherhood is not viewed as the norm in traditional higher education. Academic pursuits link to hard work and dedication. Consequently, motherhood obligations require these students to bear a more significant load than is expected, met with hostility from education institutions labelling them as incapable, unfocussed and non-productive (Moghadam et al., 2017:1). The researcher, therefore, looked at the literature on distance education as a means of empowerment for these women.

2. 3. 1 Distance education as a means of empowerment

Khatoon (2010, as cited in Munawar & Akhter, 2017:72) noticed that distance education fulfils an essential role in increasing women's education at a higher level, due to its flexibility, particularly for women with multiple roles, to improve their academic position. Research has identified different aspects of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) that are significant to education, (1) it increases the accessibility of education, (2) it enriches the interest to learn, (3) it improves education prospects, and (4) it expands the quality of education (Ohei & Roelien, 2019:4). Learning at a flexible pace and schedule is one of the key benefits of studying through distance learning. For women with children and a full or part-time job, this route allows them to (1) eliminate the physical distance and time required to get to and attend classes, (2) study and do assignments at a time convenient to them and that works for their schedule, (3) make it possible to study regardless of other commitments and responsibilities, (4) save money and get a cost-effective education, and (5) pursue

lifelong learning (Meenambigai, 2018:24). Although distance learning provides many benefits to these women, the need for support from institutions and family play a role in their chances for success and will be discussed next.

2. 4 INSTITUTIONAL AND FAMILIAL SUPPORT

Working mothers who do not receive domestic and peripheral support will find balancing work and family life challenging. Therefore, Alonso-Almeida (2014, as cited in Akyol & Arslan, 2020:275) believes that the spouses, family members, institutions and government should simultaneously offer working mothers support to reduce the pressure they face in accomplishing the obligations of work and family life. The most significant meaning for a working woman is to have the means and positive satisfaction to support her family. Emotional, informational and instrumental support encompasses the three types of social support women can receive; (1) emotional support refers to emotional reactions towards the woman who requires the support; (2) informational support entails the knowledge, advice and experience shared with the woman and (3) instrumental support describes the material, financial and services women need to deal with the issues they are facing (Jacobson, 1986, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:123). Although there are many forms of support, the researcher agrees with Mozley, D'Silva, and Curtis (2020:67) that support may be more valuable when directed at issues relating to students' personal situations rather than seeking to remedy academic issues. Increased support allows for better self-efficacy. "Self-efficacy is a theoretically robust motivation construct, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and solve problems" (Bandura, 1994; Klassen and Klassen, 2018, as cited in Mozley et al., 2020:67). Furthermore, self-efficacy connects to belief, determination and endeavour: those who believe they can be successful are prone to approach challenges with resilience compared to those who anticipate disappointment (Guntern et al., 2017; Burgoon et al., 2012 cited in Mozley et al., 2020:67). In addition, high levels of self-efficacy link to better emotional well-being and strength in students, which may affect the retention of students (Turan et al., 2013, as cited in Mozley et al., 2020:67).

Regarding the above-mentioned, it is vital to review the literature on familial and spousal support and institutional support separately.

2. 4. 1 Familial and spousal support

Working mothers who pursue further education need family members to take pride in their success and endeavours rather than see it as an obstacle for family life and dynamics (Meenambigai, 2018:19). Spousal support is one of the most significant determining factors of successful participation and the completion of these women's studies due to the unnegotiability of their work commitments. Therefore, her domestic duties must be lessened or re-evaluated during crucial study periods like assessments, assignments, and exams (Meenambigai, 2018:19). "Because distance education students study predominantly at home, family and friends can be either a great source of support or a significant barrier to participation in distance learning" (Cragg et al., 2005, as cited in Lazou, 2019:7).

Networks of support are vital to student mothers and their chances of success, yet Ellis and Gullion (2015:159), found that these women receive inadequate social support due to their conflicting roles. In their findings, Ellis and Gullion (2015:159) mention that there is overwhelming support in the forms of finances, childcare, and advice from sources outside of their families, which led to those with supportive families experiencing less strain and those with unsupportive spouses experiencing marital strain. Receiving solace and recruiting help from others is crucial for human social experiences. Thus, social support is an omnipresent concept in relationship science. Defined as "acts that communicate caring; that validate the other's words, feelings or actions or that facilitate adaptive coping with problems through the provision of information, assistance, or tangible resources" (Cutrona, 1996:10, as cited in Wang & Repetti, 2014:864), support can come in different ways to assist during a wide array of difficulties people encounter in their everyday lives. There have been many physiological and mental health benefits documented on receiving social support, with better immune systems, increased cardiovascular health, improved neuroendocrine function, management of chronic disease, reduced depression and nervousness and actual shielding against the harmful effects of stress (Cohen, 2004; Seeman, 1996; Thoits, 1995, as cited in Wang & Repetti, 2014:864). Support is an undisputed vital aspect of social relationships that substantially influences physical and mental well-being. Sahu and Rath (2003, as cited in Rasool, Zubair & Anwar, 2019:902) established a positive link between well-being and self-efficacy where motherhood, marriage and employment are correlated with better psychological and

physical health among women. Studies have also found that just knowing that family and friends support her had a greater impact on the woman than the actual support she did receive from them (Dzisi, 2008; Matzek Gudmunson, & Danes, 2010, as cited in Rasool et al., 2009:902).

A study by Phang and Lee (2009, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:123) found that women require more support from their significant other than any other support source. The emotional support provided by the spouse lessens the guilt and increases feelings of acceptance, love and belonging — equally, spousal communication ties into the desire to achieve and succeed in academic endeavours. The support of a spouse is crucial since support from other areas cannot mitigate a poor marital relationship (Coyne & DeLongis, 1986, as cited in Wang & Repetti, 2014:864), consequently receiving more support from others also leads to marital distress (Julien & Markman, 1991, as cited in Wang & Repetti, 2014:864). Davidson and Burke (Wolf & Frese, 2018, as cited in Rasool et al., 2019:900) recognise two types of spousal support; (1) emotional support**,** which includes compassionate awareness and attentive, warm encouragement; assistance and sincere benevolence for the well-being of the spouse; and (2) instrumental support, which includes physical assistance from the spouse in domestic errands, childcare and genuine support or easing in task management (Rasool et al., 2019:900). Matzek et al. (2010, as cited in Rasool et al., 2009:903) noted that sources of support, especially from the spouse, have a protective impact in terms of shielding against the ramifications of subjective and work-related pressure on improving a personal sense of contentment and inner happiness of women. As held by Welsh et al. (2016), "…enhancing and accelerating the role of spousal support can be meaningfully relatable as it acts as a catalyst for the expression of personal strengths (in terms of endurance and efficacy) and bears positive repercussions at social, cognitive and behavioral domains" (Welsh et al., 2016; Jurado et al., 2019, as cited in Rasool et al., 2019:911). The literature on institutional support follows below.

2. 4. 2 Institutional support

According to Lotkowski et al. (2004, as cited in Millett, 202:3), institutions are encouraged to employ integrated methods that "address the social, emotional and academic needs of students" before and during their studies. Applying a student-

centred approach allows the institution to acknowledge the enormous diversity in upbringing, skills and resources across the student base. It is crucial to recognise the needs of traditional and non-traditional students who differ in age, physical location, work status, family obligations and ethnic backgrounds. These, together with several other considerations, affect students' differing higher education prospects and experiences. To foster accomplishment throughout the student body and cater for the students' diverse needs, the institution needs to consider the distinctive needs of students and their strengths and attributes when enrolling at the institution. Identifying the inclination to use a deficit model approach when describing students has shifted the institution's view to adopt a strengths-based frame instead and recognise students' skills and the potential to develop, rather than mitigating and repairing students. Thus, the institution's responsibility is to purposefully construct the opportunity to boost retention, perseverance, academic achievement, life skills and optimal career outcomes (Millett, 2020:9).

Institutions need to support students in reducing potential issues and enhancing their probability of success in their studies and life in general. With student well-being as a leading concern, there is a strong need for alternative approaches in the higher education system to mitigate these issues (Pfund, Bono & Hill, 2020:97). Institutions must deliver high-quality and reasonable support offerings to online and distance students like retention services, student engagement, student wellbeing and learning support (Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, 2011; Gratz, 2020, as cited in Bouchey, Gratz & Kurland, 2021:29). Simpson (2012:55, as cited in Lumadi, 2017:115) describes support services as "all activities extending beyond the production and delivery of course materials that assist students in their studies". Open Distance Learning in the 21st century is crucial as it has become a vital player in improving higher education in South Africa (Lumadi, 2017:124). When institutions become mindful of different student populations and account for their goals, barriers and needs, they take positive steps toward open dialogue that contribute to student success (Fambely, 2019:23).

The landscape of challenges has shifted due to the socio-economic environments and the collective norms. Women overcome many obstacles to attain their aspirations and establish themselves in different areas of their lives, and this is where distance education acts as crucial and supportive of these women (Meenambigai, 2018:22).

Distance Education is now an asset to women to attain intellectual knowledge, innovative and fundamental thinking methods and complementary, agile perspectives on current information to increase their autonomy (Meenambigai, 2018:19). The mature female student needs assistance when resuming her higher education. This assistance is needed not only from herself but also from her family and institution. Britton and Baxter's (1999, as cited in Kumar et al., 2020:493) work on mature students' offers four distinct reasons for these students to continue their education. These reasons include 1) credentialism and obtaining formal qualifications, 2) realising their full potential, 3) improving current situations and 4) self-transformation. In addition, there is substantial research evidence suggesting age as a forecaster for part-time student success (Hoskins & Newstead, 1997; Richardson, 1995; Ibrahim et al., 2011, as cited in Kumar et al., 2020:493). Higher education institutions should be mindful of specific attributes, obstacles and challenges students encounter to better enable student success (Fambely, 2019:16).

With the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic, experts warn that students may now need more support than previously anticipated due to new stressors affecting their psychological, social and economic health. In addition, students may experience less academic motivation as the dynamics of work commitments and family needs amplify and become more unbalanced than before the pandemic (Blankstein et al., 2020; Fishman & Hiler, 2020; Hinton, 2020, as cited in Bouchey et al., 2021:31). For this reason, the value-added social curriculum includes micro-modules on information on COVID-19 and coping with stress and uncertainty during the pandemic as an additional means of support during the pandemic.

The following sub-section will discuss the need for life skills and the social curriculum.

2. 5 LIFE SKILLS AND THE SOCIAL CURRICULUM

With the number of women entering corporate organisations in leadership roles rising, it is paramount to equip women with a broader range of skills in addition to those taught in their areas of expertise (Sixl-Daniell & Wong, 2015:4). In reaction to the gender gap and inequalities mothers face in education, the institution developed an initiative utilising mobile devices to offer additional educational opportunities to students (Crompton, 2017:11). In addition, empowering students through interventions to

improve coping strategies and expanding social knowledge can help to increase self-efficacy and mitigate personal issues (Guntern et al., 2017, as cited in Mozley et al., 2020:68).

In order to fully understand the need for such a social curriculum, life skills need to be defined. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines life skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO,1994:1, as cited in George, 2013:3). 'Adaptive' refers to flexibility and the ability to adjust in various situations. 'Positive behaviour' involves forward-thinking and hopefulness in challenging circumstances (CBSE, 2011, as cited in George, 2013:3).

What students know about employment is built through socialisation, background, schooling and personal life experiences. The understandings of work and life become known from family and community, created through personal experiences and information gathered from different sources (George, 2013:3). The possible value of the social curriculum for working mothers increases as it allows them to receive up-to-date and expert-written information for better and faster growth (Horn 2009:13, as cited in Penttinen, Skaniakos & Lairio, 2013:886). Although families and society informally teach life skills, these teachings can be inaccurate due to different factors prevalent in communities and households and the increasing impact of social media, diversity and social change (WHO, 1994, as cited in George, 2013:3). In this context, institutions may be the best agency to provide the life skills students require by considering the students' interests, the country and society's needs.

The development of life skills is significant in dealing with core and peripheral matters. Life Skill Based Education (LSBE) describes an interactive method of teaching that empowers students to increase understanding and develop mindsets and competencies that assist the development of beneficial behaviours, quality relationships, and create well-being (UNICEF, 2011, as cited in George 2013:4).

The International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) highlighted the significance of tackling the fundamental personal requirements of students through a comprehensive set of out-of-the-classroom services. These offerings intend to "enable and empower students to focus more intensely on their studies and personal growth, both cognitively and emotionally. They also should result in enhanced student learning

outcomes and, consequently, higher retention and throughput (graduation) rates" (Ludeman & Schreiber, 2020:10, as cited in Bouchey et al., 2021:29).

Developing and acquiring life skills should be a lifelong pursuit, whether it is done so in a formal or informal setting (Roup, 1994; Bender & Lombard, 2004, as cited in Taute, 2008:41) due to the ever-changing demands and challenges of modern life. To meet these demands and succeed in all endeavours they take, they need the right skills and knowledge to overcome their challenges (Taute, 1992, cited in Taute, 2008:41).

Lazou (2019:2) identifies four variables as challenges that disempower women studying through distance education (1) conflicting roles, (2) time and financial resources, (3) domestic problems and personal relationships and also (4) institutional support and course design. The social curriculum design enables the institution to counter these disempowering challenges mothers in education experience. It accommodates those who have an internal pursuit of growing intellectually in the face of adversity. From a gender perspective, distance education has given women the prospect to maintain their studies, irrespective of the personal, domestic or professional obligations, consequently empowering them to accomplish their dreams (Lazou, 2019:3). Practical knowledge empowers women towards action that can change their lives and give them a greater sense of autonomy (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2011:3567).

The following section will discuss the theoretical framework that serves as the base for the study.

2. 6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework serves as the researcher's basis for constructing metaphorical and literal knowledge. The theoretical framework structures and supports the purpose and significance of the study, the rationale for the study, the problem statement, and the research question (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:12). The research draws upon essential qualitative feminist inquiry to explore how female working students with children experience a value-added social curriculum concurrently with their household obligations. According to Jayaratne and Stewart (1991), "Feminist methodology as a research paradigm emerged from a critique of positivist, patriarchal research steeped in a quantitative tradition”. Explicit criticisms incorporate the lack of research on

matters women view as important, the range of chauvinist research areas, prejudiced research designs that omitted female participants and a misconception of findings (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991, as cited in Iverson & Seher, 2015:64). In addition, Hesse-Biber (2007:3, as cited in Iverson & Seher, 2015:64) explains that feminist theory research entails the contest of knowledge that ignores while including females in research that assumes the results for dominant groups apply to other groups.

Arendell (2000, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118-119) explains how feminist constructivism has confused motherhood, mothering, childhood and family models. The constructivist theory has yielded two opposing approaches in the conceptualisation of mothering experiences: (1) the universalist approach explains that "while there are individual and cultural variations, mothers also share some commonalities of "maternal practice", such as nurturing, protecting and training their infants" (Leonard, 1996; Ruddick, 1994 as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118-119). Furthermore, the interaction between mother and child shapes the mothering experience as a learning process through maternal practices (Barnett, Brennan, & Marshall, 1994, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:118-119); (2) the particularistic approach views each mother-child relationship as a unique unit that cannot be generalised.

The study used an integrative theoretical framework drawing from Marxist feminism, critical feminism, poststructuralist feminism, social support theory, ecological systems theory and ambivalent sexism theory to examine the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum in empowering female students who are also working mothers (Seneviratne, 2018:194). “Feminist research is conducted for the purpose of improving women's lives. It is done to empower women - to assist them in developing strategies to make sense of and make choices about the world in which they live” (Foss & Foss, 1994:42, as cited in Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:16).

The researcher chose a critical paradigm for this feminist-driven study. Various cohesions between critical theory and feminist theory are valuable, and their variances have the potential to enrich both. Although feminist and critical theory focus on social inequalities, both aim to encourage system change. The two traditions have vastly expanded autonomously, with no deep-seated academic interchange. Their distinctions are mainly due to feminist theorists using gender and sex as the focus of

analyses. In contrast, critical theorists frequently place class at the core of analyses, with gender, sex, ethnicity and culture seen as less critical (Martin, 2002:5). Oxford (2001) defines class in society as “one of the groups of people in a society that is thought of as being at the same social or economic level” and defines class in groups as “a group of people, animals or things that have similar characteristics or qualities.” Since the research does not focus on females in general but on a specific class of women, the critical paradigm is better suited within the feminist theoretical framework of the study. The critical paradigm will be discussed further in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.1).

Using multiple theories, the researcher can supply different perspectives on the same matter (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:24). Therefore, each applicable theory related to the research question and literature review will be discussed.

A **poststructuralist feminist** pedagogy supports the interrelatedness of personal and social structure as the base for the evaluation of the four significant matters of feminist pedagogy (1) creation of knowledge, (2) mastery, (3) representation and (4) positionality (Lazou, 2019:8).

Marxist feminism identifies the family as a cause for the oppression of women. This perspective relates to the dual role women need to play and emphasises that if women work in the home, they are financially reliant on the "man of the house". However, if women work outside of the family, they still have to fulfil their domestic duties, resulting in them working harder for less remuneration than men (Lorber, 1997:11). As Sylvia Walby (1990, as cited in Seneviratne, 2018:190) argues, "men's domination over women is a byproduct of capital's domination over labour. Class relations and the economic exploitation of one class by another are the central features of social structures, and these determine the nature of gender relations".

C**ritical feminist** theorists believe that lived experiences are relevant to removing systemic inequalities that commonly occur in how society is regulated; consequently, discrepancies and disadvantages are critical to fundamental equality (Ozoemena, 2018:16).

The **social support theory** refers to support as "continuing social aggregates (namely, continuing interactions with another individual, a network, a group or an organisation) that provide individuals with opportunities for feedback about themselves

and for validation of their expectations about others which may offset deficiencies in these communications within the larger community context" (Caplan, 1976:200 as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:123).

For individuals to experience work-life balance, the **ecological systems theory** suggests that work, home and educational microsystems must operate together to construct a permeable work-life division, which is reciprocally supportive (Haddon, Hede, & Whiteoak, 2009, as cited in Boakye, Mensah, Bartrop-Sackey & Muah, 2021:1).

According to the **ambivalent sexism theory**, sexism can be hostile and benevolent (Glick & Fiske, 1996, as cited in Szastok et al., 2019:3). According to Allport (1954, as cited in Szastok et al., 2019:3), hostile sexism takes an antagonistic view, whereas benevolent sexism is more flattering and positive. Furthermore, benevolent sexism rewards women if they fit into the stereotypical mould society creates for them (Becker, 2010; Gaunt, 2013; Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997; Hebl, King, Glick, Singletary & Kazama, 2007; Kofta, Soral, Kwiatkowska, Kapusta & Mikołajczak, 2016, as cited in Szastok et al., 2019:3).

Feminist perspectives disagree with the view that labour is distributed on a biological basis, "on the grounds that there is no natural or inevitable task sharing in society". Instead, feminists argue that no biological factors prevent women from working and that they are somewhat culturally socialised into these roles through chauvinism, patriarchy and capitalism (Giddens, 2012:517, as cited in Akyol & Arslan, 2020:267). The assumption primary to feminist research is the awareness and exposure of gender as a forming principle of social life which deeply forms the realities for women in their day-to-day lives (Harding, 1987; Lather, 1992, as cited in Iverson & Seher, 2015:65). Due to this assumption, they acknowledge that gender differences and power relations articulated in these irregularities historically have transferred to the research process (Fonow & Cook, 2005, as cited in Iverson & Seher, 2015:65). Therefore, an essential objective of feminist research is to give women their voices to confront their indiscernibility and the historical "exploitation of women as objects of knowledge" (Lather, 1992; Fonow & Cook, 2005:2213 as cited in Iverson & Seher, 2015:65). Furthermore, it is crucial to provide contextualised evaluations and interpretations of motherhood, considering the essentialist debate on femininity and motherhood that

has shaped feminist conversations of women's lives for decades. Chandra Talpade Mohanty indicates that such research can better portray "the contradictions and complexities of women's lives and roles" (Mohanty 2003:527, as cited in Jilek, 2020:4).

Figure 2.1 below illustrates the applicability of the theoretical framework to the topics discussed in the literature review as well as the multi-dimensionality of factors related to the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum, the importance of education and support in empowering women and the role of digital and online learning in making the information more accessible.

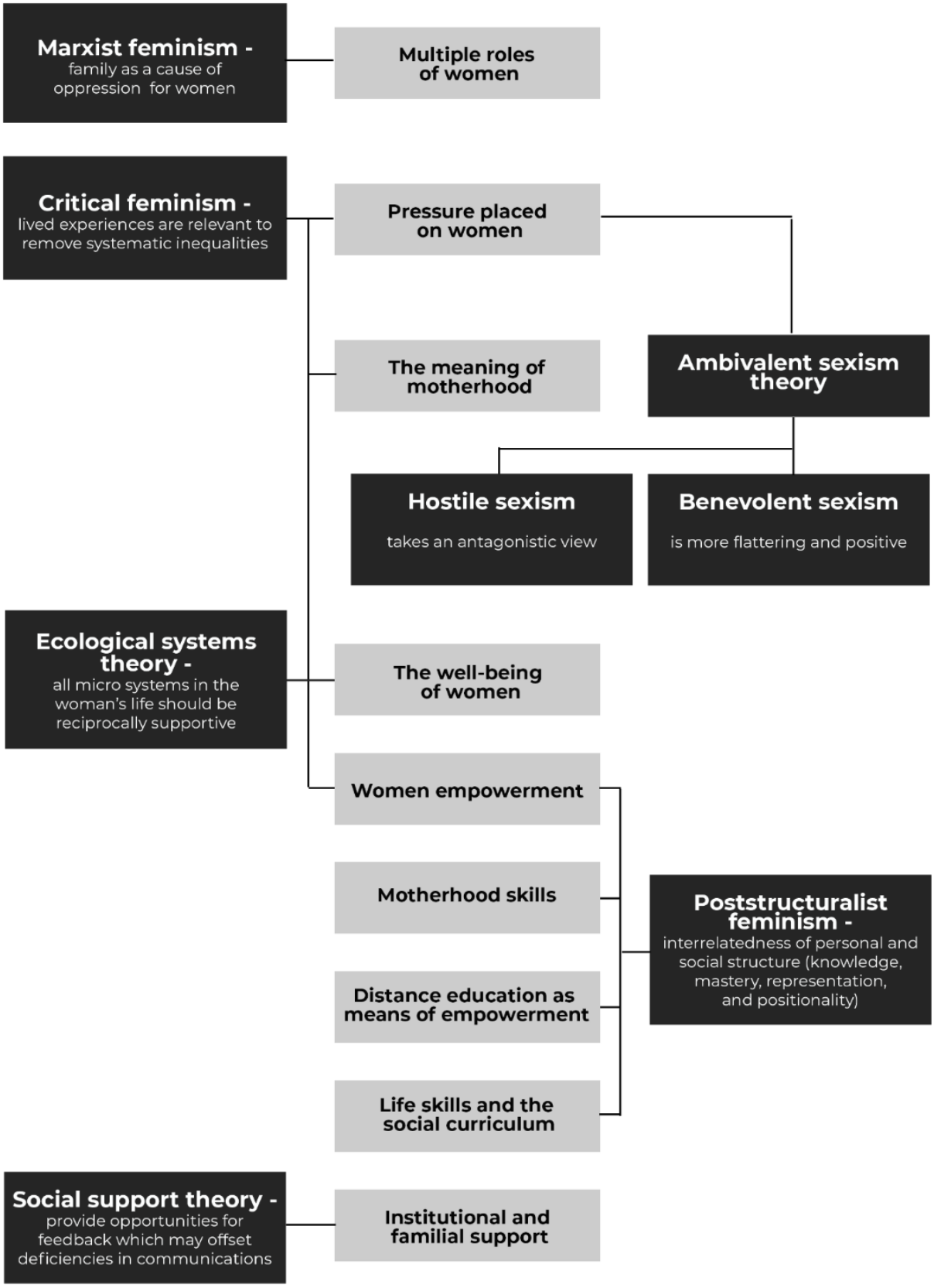

Figure 2.1: Essential qualitative feminist inquiry (Source: Researcher's own)

2. 7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 outlines the research on women's multiple roles, focusing on the pressures they face, the meaning of motherhood, empowerment, well-being, and motherhood skills. The focus was also placed on distance education as a means of empowerment, institutional and familial support, life skills and the social curriculum and this study's theoretical framework. The literature review emphasised how discrimination towards women working and raising children increases the need for additional support like a social curriculum, where they can get the information needed to succeed, regardless of the discriminatory actions being hostile, benevolent or even subconscious. With the right to work and raise a family, the responsibility still lies with them (Biasoli-Alves, 2000, as cited in Sanches De Almeida, 2012:316), which noticeably increases the guilt and conflict in their contradictory identities that are ever-changing (Hall, 2001; Louro, 1997, as cited in Sanches De Almeida, 2012:316). However, the successful empowerment of women may be contingent on the subject matter, and in specific settings, professional advice is more beneficial than peer interactions. Digital platforms help dissipate the lie that women have to choose between being homemakers or professionals by acknowledging how women can hold both of these roles simultaneously (Russum, 2019:117).

The following chapter will deal with the research design and methods.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3. 1 INTRODUCTION

The study's research methodology is the guide that informs researchers of the required data and data collection tools needed for the purpose of the study. It is thus “an articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data” (Ellen, 1984:9, as cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:52) that refers to the critical analysis of information construction methods. Furthermore, the methodology is the “strategy, plan of action, process or design” researchers utilise in their choice of research methods (Crotty, 1998:3, as cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:52), that “is concerned with the discussion of how a particular piece of research should be undertaken” (Grix, 2004:32, as cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:52).

The rationale for empirical research; the research design covering the paradigm, approach and type; the research methods, covering the selection of participants, data collection and pilot study; the data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical measures will be discussed in the following sections.

3. 2 RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Empirical research answers questions using a systematic approach by collecting data under specified conditions that can be duplicated (Calfee & Chambliss, 2005:43). This study focused on a research area that has not been investigated previously, as mentioned in Chapter 1 (Section 1.5) and aimed to explore how effective a value-added social curriculum can be in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution. Through the first-hand account of these women on the effects the content of the value-added curriculum had on their lives, the researcher could fill the literature gap in social support working mothers receive from their institutions through practical life skills.

Empirical research is not limiting and aims to find answers with broader relevance beyond the descriptions included in a particular study (Schreier, 2018:84). The rationale for empirical research is tied to the research problem, research question, and

the research aim concerning the literature discussed in the previous chapter. Figure 3.1 below ties the literature to the research study's problem, question and aim.

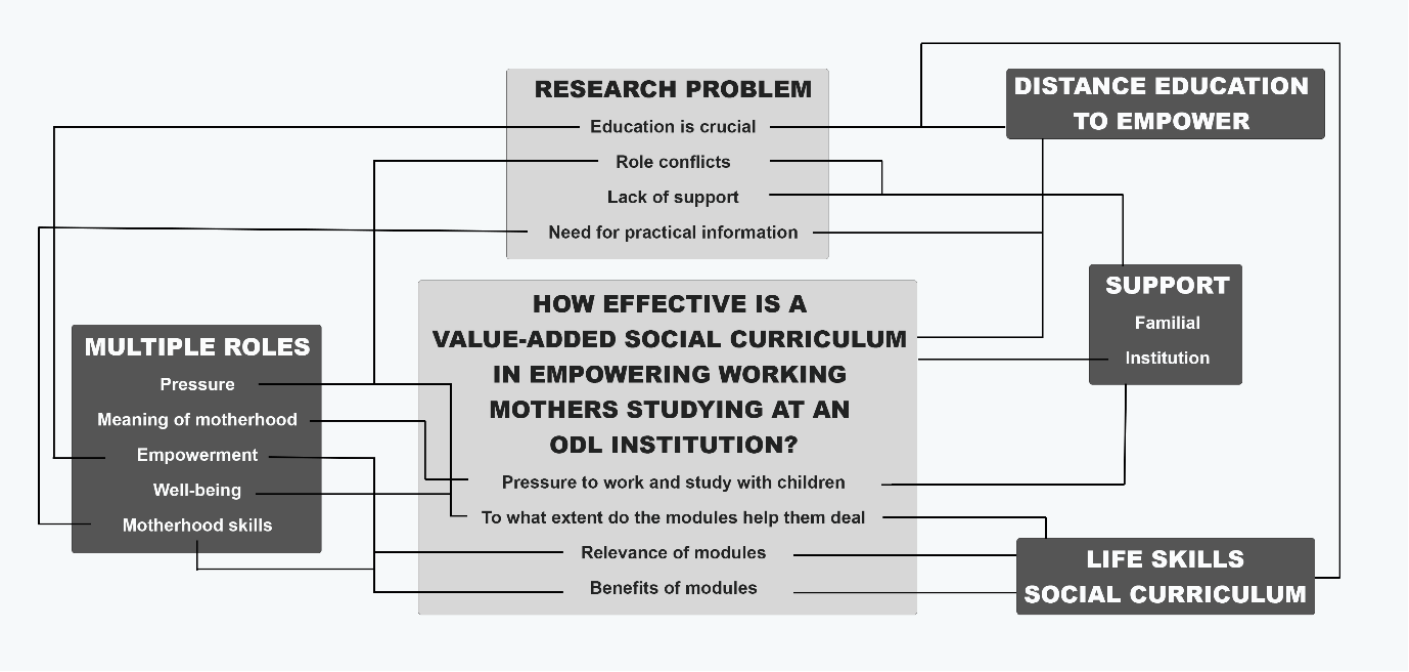

Figure 3.1: Rationale for empirical research (Source: Researcher's own)

The institution and other institutions can use the findings and recommendations of the research dissertation to determine the effectiveness of such a value-added curriculum in the empowerment of working mothers studying through the institutions. The findings can also guide the institution in providing women with the required practical skills and knowledge in different areas of their lives.

The research paradigm, research approach, and research type form part of the research design discussed in the next section.

3. 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Durrheim (2006:34) explains research design as "a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research".

The research design acts as a planned and systematic guide that directs the investigation of the value-added social curriculum and its effectiveness in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution. The research is called systematic observation because it is guided by a research question and design (Durrheim,

2006:34). The following sub-sections describe the use of a critical paradigm in an exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) approach and case study. The thematic analysis is also covered.

3. 3. 1 Research paradigm

The term paradigm, meaning *pattern* in Greek aetiology, describes the worldview or perspective to derive meaning from research data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). The research paradigm thus establishes "the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world and how s/he interprets and acts within that world" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). The researcher identified the critical paradigm as the guide for the research in Chapter 1 (Section 1.6.1). The research paradigm consists of epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26).

Epistemology refers to knowledge; it establishes researchers' trust in their data and how researchers uncover knowledge in the social setting being investigated (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Finally, interactivity is emphasised in critical theory research where the researcher and the participant's interaction on the influences and impact of social factors on the participant are essential (Dammak, 2015:8). "Ontologically, reality in the critical research paradigm is described within a political, cultural, historical and economic context" (Dammak, 2015:8). As a branch of philosophy, ontology involves the "nature of existence" and the assumptions that direct thinking towards the importance and impact of the research problem and how to understand the problem to contribute (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Methodology is an umbrella term referring to the design, methods, and approaches used to answer the research question. It determines how data, knowledge and understanding will be obtained to contribute to the knowledge (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). The key agenda of critical research is to change and better the lives of the oppressed. Axiology is concerned with the ethical issues researchers need to consider to make value decisions (Finnis, 1980, as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27).

Since the critical paradigm, also known as the transformative paradigm, is concerned with empowerment (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:38), the researcher chose a critical conceptual lens to examine this research's methodological facets and define the research methods used to collect and analyse data. The following section will describe

the exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) approach used within the critical paradigm.

3. 3. 2 Research approach

As introduced in Chapter 1 (Section 1.6.2), the study aimed to explore and understand the subjective experiences of the study participants through an exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) approach (Vejar et al., 2006:19). Exploratory research aims to highlight how phenomena manifest and are valuable to expose the nature of unfamiliar phenomena (Polit & Beck, 2012, as cited in Hunter, McCallum & Howes, 2018:1). In addition, it allows researchers to delve into topics with inadequate literature where participants aid in the development of new knowledge in the field (Reid-Searl & Happell, 2012, as cited in Hunter et al., 2018:1). Explorative research thus investigates a topic of interest instead of merely observing and noting incidents of the topic. The defining aspect is employed to understand and inform the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum for working mothers studying at a Higher Distance Education Institution (Hunter et al., 2018:2).

According to Bhandari (2020), qualitative research encompasses collecting and analysing non-numerical data, which allows for gathering in-depth insights into a problem. Therefore, the researcher chose a qualitative approach to understand the participants' opinions, thoughts and experiences through the use of an open-ended questionnaire and telephonic interviews. In the context of exploratory-descriptive qualitative research, the literature review identified a shortage of information on the topic and, therefore, validated the necessity for further research. According to Hunter et al. (2018:3), “it is important to identify a gap in the literature to justify the use of EDQ over other methodological approaches”.

3. 3. 3 Research type

Chapter 1 (Section 1.6.3) identified a case study as the most suitable research type for the study. The crucial elements of a case study are its scientific recommendations and its proof base for applications (Zucker, 2009:2). Case studies are concentrated studies conducted on a particular individual, family, unit, organisation or community and are defined as ideographic methods of research (Lindegger, 2006:460).

The generalisation of case study results is reduced to specific or similar types of participants. Nevertheless, the consideration of selected elements increases the evaluation and improves the transparency of interpretations (Zucker, 2009:2:10). A case study can be an innovative option compared to traditional descriptions that accentuate the participant's viewpoint as fundamental to the process (Zucker, 2009:14). These studies are descriptive and provide rich continuing information on individuals and situations (Lindegger, 2006:461). The researcher conducted a single case study on a unique initiative taken by an HDEI to empower their students through the provision of a value-added social curriculum. Since the study aims to determine the effectiveness of the initiative implemented by the institution, the researcher could not engage in multiple case studies. By utilising a single case study research type, the researcher made inferences on the effects of similar initiatives on working student mothers.

3. 4 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods used in critical research are selected based on what works for the critical enquiry. The methods chosen should enable critical study conditions from different perspectives. Some of the most widely used methods in critical research include questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, journals, surveys and observation (Dammak, 2015:10).

A significant connection lies between a research paradigm and the methodology due to the methodological consequences of paradigm choice that informs the research question, selection of participants, data collection methods and procedures and the data analysis (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:36). Therefore, the research methods used in the study will be discussed in the following subsections delving into the selection of participants, the data collection methods, the pilot study, open-ended questionnaires and telephonic interviews.

3. 4. 1 Selection of participants

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (Section 1.7.1), a population is a subject on which the measurement is taken, and sampling includes selecting elements in the population (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:179). For purposes of this study, the population included

all female students enrolled for a course at the HDEI and engaged in the social curriculum. Thus, the sample included 13 female participants out of a population of 4799 students who participated in the value-added social curriculum. According to Schreier (2018:89), there is a controversial discussion on sample size in qualitative research. Authors contend that in quantitative research, the sample size is vital regarding population size for statistical generalisation and argue that in qualitative research, the sample size is unrelated or, to a certain degree, a lesser concern, but that the selection of information-rich relevant cases is more critical. Thus, question and sample structures are deemed more valuable than the size of the sample (Schreier, 2018:89).

In EDQ, sample strategies are classified as purposeful (Hunter et al., 2018:3). Purposeful sampling is suitable for descriptive qualitative research to allow researchers to describe a phenomenon in various circumstances (Sandelowski, 2000, as cited in Hunter et al., 2018:3). “Qualitative research, with its holistic and in-depth approach, typically limits itself to a few instances or units only” (Schreier, 2018:84).

The researcher opted for a purposeful random sampling technique due to the geological separation and no available data on the parenthood status of students engaged in the social curriculum. The main aim of purposeful sampling, also called purposive sampling, is the selection of participants that will give rich data enabling the researcher to answer the research question (Schreier, 2018:88). Although random sampling is usually used in quantitative research, particularly in survey or questionnaire research, to ensure generalisation, this technique is feasible to the point that the sample truly represents the population (Schreier, 2018:87). When working with case studies, the primary matter in sampling is how these cases relate to each other under the “logic of replication” (Yin, 2014:56). To ensure the study was based on the literal replication logic with relevant dimensions, the participants were selected from the same HDEI, having access to the value-added social curriculum, were mothers and were all employed. Thus, the criteria allowed for internal generalisability in the dissertation of limited scope (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014, as cited in Schreier, 2018:94).

According to Schreier (2018:94), researchers conducting case studies have a proclivity to limit themselves to only a few participants, thus permitting detailed

analysis of each participant. Considering studies that used exploratory-descriptive approaches, Hunter et al. (2018:3) found 15 participants as the typical sample size used. Therefore, the study was conducted with 13 participants, all 13 participated in the online questionnaire, and six were interviewed telephonically.

3. 4. 2 Data collection

Problems that contribute to obtaining accurate illustrations of the experiences of community members are essential and go beyond descriptive research (Mertens, 2018:43).

The open-ended questionnaire and telephonic interview design elicited in-depth responses focusing on topics like the need for additional information; state of mind and sense of self; relevance of the social curriculum; familial responsibilities; support systems in place; aspirations for the future; meaning of motherhood; changes in self, motherhood, career and studies after engaging in the social curriculum; opinions on societal and cultural views on women studying, working and raising children; and, the limitations and barriers they face as mothers. The questionnaire also included closed-ended questions to capture the study participants' demographic information (such as age, geographical location, race and the number of children). The researcher opted to collect information on age, geographical location, race and number of children to determine if there were differences in responses received from women of different ages who are located in different parts of South Africa and have different cultural backgrounds. Both data collection methods and the rationale to utilise them are discussed in the sections below.

3. 4. 2. 1 Rationale for the use of online questionnaires

The practice of implementing internet-mediated methods in research retains the potential of allowing researchers to utilise the capability of evolving technology to focus on complex and intricate social matters across society (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2013:43). For example, internet-assisted questionnaires allowed the researcher to contact hard-to-reach distance education students (Horrell et al., 2015, as cited in Liamputtong, 2020:6698c). Furthermore, through online questionnaires, the researcher could produce a representative sample that expands generalisation

capability in the overall results (Hewson, 2003, as cited in Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2013:44).

3. 4. 2. 2 Online questionnaire as research instrument

A structured online questionnaire developed on Google Forms was used for this research (see APPENDIX D). An email explaining the reason for the study was sent to 325 students with a link attached to the questionnaire. Since the researcher had no prior data on student gender, age, parenthood status and work status, the questionnaire was designed to disqualify participants at certain stages of the document. The questionnaire stages were as follows – 1) All students who did not select yes when asked for consent to partake were disqualified immediately (0 of 27 responses); 2) after the initial demographic information (age, ethnicity, sex, geographical location) was gathered the second criterion was the completion of any of the *Do Life* modules (4 of 27 responses); 3) The third criterion in the questionnaire was parenthood status where all participants who were not mothers or currently expecting mothers where disqualified (7 of 23 responses); 4) In the next section, questions regarding motherhood were asked, and the disqualifying criterion was their employment status and, therefore, unemployed mothers could not continue with the questionnaire (3 of 16 responses); 5) After the questions on being a working mother were covered, the participants where asked if they would be available for a telephonic interview to discuss their answers in more detail (7 of 13 responses). Because online questionnaires can elicit different understandings and interpretations of the questions and create a barrier to conveying emotions and feelings (Debois, 2019), the researcher chose to use a second data collection instrument by conducting telephonic interviews with willing participants and combining the data. The rationale for using a semi-structured interview will be discussed in more detail below.

3. 4. 2. 3 Rationale for semi-structured interviews

When using various methods and sources to collect data, researchers reduce the risk of conclusions reflecting systematic biases or drawbacks of a particular method and allow for a clearer understanding of the questions being investigated. This strategy is called triangulation, where researchers use “a second method as a check on the results of another method, to confirm or challenge these results” (Rothbauer, 2008, as cited in Flick, 2018:3). The researcher thus collected additional data with the aid of

telephonic interviews (see APPENDIX E). In addition, the semi-structured telephonic interviews used in conjunction with the questionnaire (Lechuga, 2012 as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018:535) allowed the participants to elaborate on their questionnaire answers to give the researcher a better understanding and context to the participants' thoughts and responses (Kuada, 2012:98).

3. 4. 2. 4 Semi-structured telephonic interview as research instrument

Dialogue is an essential resource of communication among people. Through dialogue, individuals gain the opportunity to understand others and discover more about their thoughts, encounters and their reality. Therefore, if researchers want to understand how individuals see their world, they must converse with people (Brinkmann 2018; Brinkmann & Kvale 2018, as cited in Liamputtong, 2020:1). In-depth interviews help "reconstruct events the researchers have never experienced" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012:3 as cited in Liamputtong, 2020:1). It is especially helpful in learning about different people's lives.

As a meaning-making endeavour, in-depth interviews between the researcher and the interviewee require active asking and listening (Hesse-Biber 2017:106, as cited in Liamputtong, 2020:2). The technique permits information-sharing and allows researchers to capture participants' opinions, experiences, emotions and encounters in their own words (Liamputtong, 2020:2). Historically, women have not had good platforms to tell their stories. As a replacement for women only answering questions, the semi-structured interview allowed them to freely articulate their thoughts, concerns and uncertainties in detail (Borer & Fontana, 2012:52, as cited in Liamputtong, 2020:3). According to Anderson and Jack (1991:15, as cited in Liamputtong, 2020:3), 'If we want to know what women feel about their lives, then we have to allow them to talk about their feelings as well as their activities.' The semi-structured interview allows the interviewees the freedom to explain their responses and, in turn, allows the researcher the opportunity to ask relevant questions pertaining to the research. Researchers who utilise in-depth interviewing as a data collection tool are inclined to use semi-structured interviews as it offers a middle ground between structured and unstructured interviews (Liamputtong, 2020:5).

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was employed during the telephonic interviews to gain insight into the students' experiences with their multiple roles and the perceived

benefits of the social curriculum and to collect data on the students' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours (Kuada, 2012:98). The critical incident technique is a method for collecting specific valuable data relating to behaviour in identified circumstances that does not comprise rigid rules that govern the data collection. This accommodating collection of principles was revised and tailored to meet the specific needs of the research. For example, inferring judgment that different variables have similar effects or that one variable has a more significant effect than others regarding the objective or aim is characteristic of the most common types of judgments. The characteristics were clearly defined to ensure the accuracy of the judgments. When defining the critical incident into a classification system, the researcher achieved an equally good measure of objectivity (Flanagan, 1954:335).

The first three of the five main steps in the Critical Incidents Technique and how the researcher implemented them follow below. Since steps four and five relate to the analysis of data and the interpretation thereof, they will be discussed in the relevant sections later in the study. Therefore, step four, ***the analysis of data***, will be discussed in Section 5 of this chapter and step five, ***interpreting and reporting***, will be discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1).

Step 1 involves the general aims. Defining the general aims of the interview is vital in the formulation of a working description and allows the researcher to plan and evaluate specific behaviours through the development of an interview outline to establish the general aim (Flanagan, 1954:336). The use of discourse and language is essential; thus, while conducting feminist interviews, the researcher intended to approach participants reverentially and fairly to emphasise their voices and reported experiences (Roulston & Choi, 2018:235).

Step 2 entails the planning and specifications. A practical way to obtain specific data is to acquire reports of "critical incidents" observed by the researcher. These incidents are characterised as extreme behaviour, either exceptionally effective or ineffective in attaining the general aims of the interview (Flanagan, 1954:338). The researcher used the participants' questionnaire answers to guide the telephonic interview to establish more in-depth responses. In the semi-structured interview, the same themes from the questionnaire established the foundation for questioning. However, the interviewer’s sequencing of questions was led by participant answers.

The researcher also used follow-up questions following what interviewees had already said (Roulston & Choi, 2018:233).

Step 3 involves the collection of data. Data collection is simplified during CIT when researchers develop proper plans and specifications. However, the results must be evaluated, classified and recorded immediately after collection (Flanagan, 1954:339). Therefore, the researcher reviewed the answers given in the questionnaire before conducting the telephonic interviews. “If full and precise details are given, it can usually be assumed that this information is accurate” (Flanagan, 1954:340).

The saturation criterion was employed to conclude the sampling process as more participants would not have contributed new information regarding the concepts and their dimensions (Schwandt, 2001:111, as cited in Schreier, 2018:90). Steps 4 and 5 of the CIT will be discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5) and Chapter 4 (Section 4.1), respectively. A pilot study was conducted to test the data collection instruments in preparation for the data collection and is discussed in the following section.

3. 4. 3 Pilot study

According to Hunter et al. (2018:3), researchers rarely discuss pilot studies in exploratory-descriptive approaches. Nevertheless, novice researchers can use pilot studies to assess their data collection method and include the gained information in the data analysis. Therefore, the researcher conducted a pilot study with five female employees who have engaged with the social curriculum to assess the usefulness and user-friendliness of the online questionnaire, also to familiarise herself with the interviewing process and test the recording application selected for the transcribing of the interview conversations. The pilot study results did not necessitate any changes to the data collection instruments, except for a finding that the conversations had to be conducted on speaker for the application to record both parties of the conversation. It also allowed the researcher to build the necessary confidence to engage with the study participants in telephonic interviews. The following section outlines thematic analysis as used in the data analysis phase of the study.

3. 5 DATA ANALYSIS

Sandelowski (2000, as cited in Hunter et al., 2018:5) recommends content analysis in an exploratory, descriptive design. However, Stebbins (2001, as cited in Hunter et al., 2018:5) mentions other exploratory-descriptive designs utilising content analysis, thematic analysis and the constant comparative method. Based on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), the preferred method for data analysis in EDQ is thematic analysis (Hunter et al., 2018:5). In EDQ research, thematic analysis is preferred as the data analysis method because EDQ intends to “explore and describe the experiences of participants in relation to phenomena under study” (Hunter et al., 2018:5). Thematic analysis thus identified the core statements from participants, which the researcher used to form generalisations.

As a data analysis tool, thematic analysis is not tied to a specific theoretical framework and thus works with different frameworks. “Thematic analysis can be a method, which works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’” since it can be an essentialist method or a realist method that reports on the experiences, reality and meanings of research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006:9). Therefore, thematic analysis as a data analysis tool was regarded as the best option for this study. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (Section 2.6), it is crucial to provide contextualised evaluations and interpretations of motherhood, considering the essentialist debate on femininity and motherhood that has shaped feminist conversations of women's lives for decades (Mohanty 2003:527, as cited in Jilek, 2020:4). A linear-sequential approach was used in doing thematic analysis after collecting all data. The researcher first collected all data before the commencement of analysis (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018:49).

The first three steps in the Critical Incidents Technique were discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 3.4.2.4). Step 4, ***the analysis of the data,*** will now be discussed. The data analysis aims to describe and summarise the information obtained to use the data effectively. The data analysis is not concerned with improving the detail or comprehensiveness of the participant responses but with reporting inferences and comparisons to answer the research question. The frame of reference for this study was on working student mothers engaged in a social curriculum, and the analysis thus focused on critical incidents related to their personal experiences and the potential benefit or hindrances caused by the social curriculum in their contexts. The small

sample used in the research relates to the frame of reference selected (Flanagan, 1954:344). The initial categories were subdivided into smaller subgroups where similar responses were placed together.

The analysis was conducted according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, as shown in figure 3.2 below.

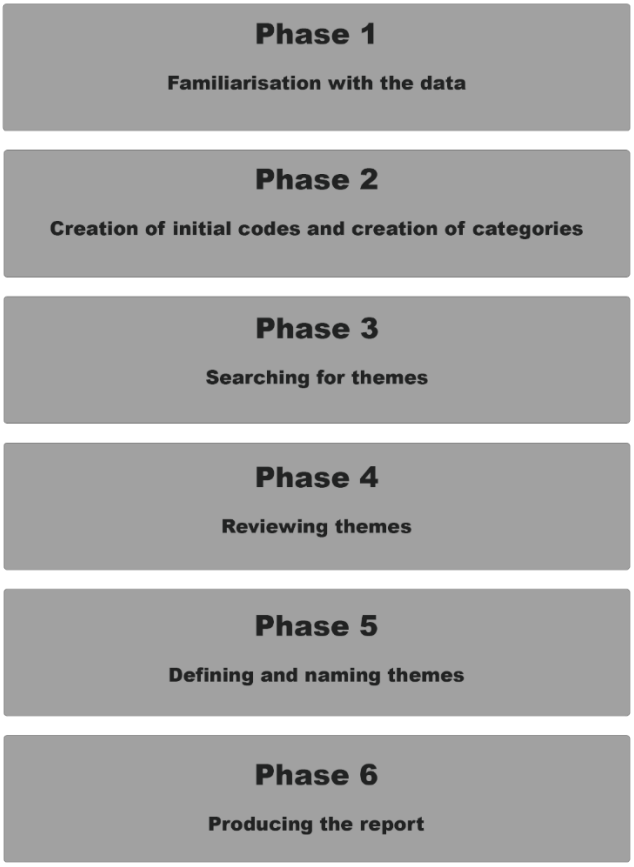

Figure 3.2: Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

(Source: Researcher's own)

In the first phase, ***familiarising with the data***, the researcher started with prior knowledge of the online questionnaire and interview data. After diligent inspection of both the summary version and individual responses of the online questionnaire, the researcher contacted the participants who volunteered to be interviewed to elaborate on the responses provided in the online questionnaire. In the second phase, ***initial coding and category creation***, both sets of data were inspected to create a preliminary list of ideas to produce codes and organise data of interest to the researcher into groups. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:18), "coded data differs from the units of analysis (your themes) which are (often) broader". Coding is reliant

on the themes being either data-driven or theory-driven. When researchers create data-driven themes, the coding relies on the data gathered during the interviews and questionnaires. When the theme is theory-driven, the researcher uses particular questions to code around the data. In this phase, the researcher followed a systematic process to identify patterns through the data set manually. The telephonic interviews were transcribed (see APPENDIX F) by first listening to the conversations again, then typing the conversations out to keep the context of the information intact (Braun & Clarke 2006:19). In the third phase, **searching for themes**, the list of codes was evaluated to find emerging themes and collate the coded data within the recognised themes and sub-themes using tables and figures. In the fourth phase**, theme review**, the identified themes were refined to ensure coherent and meaningful themes that had identifiable distinctions using a thematic map. In phase 5, **theme definitions and naming**, the researcher took the thematic map and refined the themes to ensure extracts presented were presentable and that the researcher could elaborate on their importance and interest (Braun & Clarke 2006:22). A detailed analysis was conducted to ensure that the themes relate to the research question and aim and that sub-themes could provide structure to the main themes and add value to the researcher's understanding of emerging themes in the study. In phase 6, **report creation**, the clearly defined themes were converted to tell the story of the collected data in a convincing manner that was concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and exciting to validate the analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006:23).

3. 6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Whittemore et al. (2001, as cited in Hunter et al., 2018:5) suggest four primary trustworthiness criteria in EDQ: credibility, authenticity, criticality and integrity.

3. 6. 1 Credibility

In Chapter 1 (Section 1.9), the researcher discussed the techniques used in the study to establish credibility, namely, triangulation, member checking and transferability. Triangulation suggests the utilisation of diverse data sources. The researcher included questionnaires and interviews with selected participants who participated in the social curriculum to acquire several viewpoints on the effectiveness of the social curriculum

for working student mothers (Roulston & Choi, 2018:243). Member checking or participant validation required the researcher to return the study findings to the research participants to ensure their views and opinions were accurately interpreted by the researcher (Birt et al., 2016:1802). Transferability's fundamental purpose is not to generalise to an educated and decontextualised populace; it aims to determine if findings obtained in instances of a specific setting can be applied to instances in different contexts. Thus, the degree of transferability between cases depends on the likeness of the particular contexts (Schreier, 2018:86). Credibility relates to the research's ability to achieve the purpose and aim of the study, and authenticity is achieved when participants can freely express themselves while being interpreted correctly. Through a level of critical appraisal, researchers can gauge the overall integrity and increase the rigour of the research by reflecting on personal biases and respondent validation. The reflectivity increases the rigour of the findings (Milne and Oberle, 2005, as cited in Hunter et al., 2018:5).

Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:530) recognised credibility as a paramount objective of qualitative research, suggesting the relativistic nature of legitimacy claims in the interpretivist tradition. To guarantee credibility, a deliberate effort is needed to verify the confidence in and value of the interpretation of data (Carboni, 1995, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:530). The research results must thus reflect the understanding of the participants or the context in a credible manner (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:530).

3. 6. 2 Authenticity

Due to vagueness in interpretive perspectives, the authenticity of the person or situation becomes an essential criterion for validity. Therefore, an attempt to stay true to the experience under study is vital (Hammersley, 1992, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:530). Therefore, the researcher paid attention to the tone of voice of the interviewees and allowed them to speak without influencing their responses to allow for biases, misrepresentation and misunderstanding to ensure the quality of the collected data.

3. 6. 3 Criticality

According to Marshall (1990, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:531), reflexiveness, critical analysis, open inquiry, and other facets of investigation contribute to the validity of qualitative research. Researcher ambiguity should be discovered and established, and a range of suitable techniques should be helpful to verify the research findings. The evidence should corroborate the researcher's interpretations to protect against possible misrepresentation or assumption (Maxwell, 1996, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:531).

3. 6. 4 Integrity

The evidence of integrity in the research is essential to guarantee that the analysis is valid and substantiated within the data. Integrity and criticality are characterised through recursive and continuous inspections of understandings (Ambert et al., 1995, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:531) and a respectful presentation of results and conclusions (Thorne, 1997, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:531). Threats of researcher bias in validity occur when researchers are not attentive to contradictory data and do not contemplate complementary interpretations. In an ideal world, knowledge statements made by researchers establish integrity and criticality through a conscientious and validated scientific process (Smith, 1990, as cited in Whittemore et al., 2001:531).

3. 7 ETHICAL MEASURES

The ethical measures tie into the trustworthiness of the study. Guba and Lincoln (1989, as cited in Maxwell, 2018:23) recognised principles linked to better research quality to conduct ethical qualitative research. Qualitative researchers deal with many ethical challenges in the design and conduction of data collection, especially in obtaining informed consent from participants during the collection process. Issues connected to the ethics of specific data collection methods include digital data, research design and transcription. Since ethical issues plague qualitative research, the researcher paid particular attention to the accurateness of data collected, the time expended during data collection, the measures for consistency, informed consent and the consequences of the scale in which the research took place (Flick., 2018:41). In

addition, measures were taken to ensure ethical clearance, confidentiality and informed consent, which will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

3. 7. 1 Ethical clearance

The researcher received ethical clearance from the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee (REF: 2021/08/11/48402346/12/AM) to conduct the empirical research (see APPENDIX A). In addition, to conduct the research using the institution's students, the researcher also obtained approval from the Private Higher Institution's Programme and Ethics Committee (see APPENDIX B).

3. 7. 2 Confidentiality

A core principle of research ethics is the protection of the study participants' privacy; therefore, the demographic characteristics of the participants were reported as group data in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.1) (Morse & Coulehan, 2015:151).

Confidentiality was also guaranteed for participants who were not available to be interviewed. No personal or identifiable information was requested in the online questionnaire, except for the participants that voluntarily shared their names, cellphone numbers and email addresses to partake in the telephonic interviews.

The participant information and interview recordings were saved in a dedicated and password-protected Google Drive folder that will not be shared with any person, organisation or institution. The information will be safeguarded for five years, after which the information and the Google account will be permanently deleted.

3. 7. 3 Informed consent

The process of obtaining informed consent is central to the insurance of ethical conduct when research is conducted with human subjects. Informed consent is the procedure of informing prospective participants about the essential components of the research and what their contribution and input will involve (University of Michigan, 2021). As discussed below, informed consent was obtained during the online questionnaire and telephonic interviews.

3. 7. 3. 1 Online questionnaire

Informed consent was obtained from research participants during the online questionnaires (see APPENDIX C), where they were given all the information relating to the study and had to click on the “consent” button before continuing to fill in the questionnaire.

3. 7. 3. 2 Telephonic interviews

After the questionnaires were reviewed, the researcher communicated with the participants who voluntarily gave their contact details via email and WhatsApp messenger to make appointments for the telephonic interviews. The researcher informed participants that the telephone call would be recorded with their permission, and the recordings would never be shared with anyone. They were also informed that the recording would only be used to transcribe the conversation after the interview. Verbal consent was obtained from the six interviewees.

3. 7. 4 Risk concern

According to the risk categories obtained in the Guidelines for CEDU REC application (2021), the risk concern for this study fell into category 2: Low risk. According to the category, the study involved human participants, but the only foreseeable risk was an inconvenience due to the participants not being a vulnerable population and that no sensitive information was collected from them. Participants partaking in the value-added social curriculum were requested to complete a questionnaire on the effectiveness of the value-added social curriculum in empowering them. The information gathered was not of a sensitive nature, and all participants were over the age of 18.

3. 8 CONCLUSION

Chapter three outlined the rationale for the empirical research and how it is tied into the research problem, research question and research aim concerning the literature discussed in chapter two. The research design is discussed as the systematic guide that directs the investigation on the value-added social curriculum and its effectiveness in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution. The chapter also

discussed the research paradigm concerning epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology. The research approach was identified as an exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) approach, and the research type as a case study. Research methods used in critical research are selected based on what works for the critical enquiry. The researcher also emphasises that the methods chosen should enable critical study conditions from different perspectives. The researcher opted for a purposeful random sampling technique due to the geological separation and no data on the parenthood status of students engaged in the social curriculum. The open-ended questionnaire and telephonic interview design elicited in-depth responses on topics relevant to the research questions and aim. The rationale for using the research instruments and a pilot study was also discussed. Chapter three also discussed the Critical Incidents Technique and Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis. The researcher highlighted trustworthiness and the four primary validity criteria in EDQ, namely, credibility, authenticity, criticality and integrity. The chapter concluded with the ethical measures taken to ensure ethical clearance, confidentiality and informed consent while also discussing the risk concern for the research.

Chapter four covers the data analysis, findings and discussion of the themes.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4. 1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 discussed the rationale for the empirical research, research design, research methods, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical measures. This chapter offers the thematic analysis and the findings to answer the research questions.

The researcher discussed the first three steps in the Critical Incidents Technique in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4.2.4) and step four in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5). Step 5, ***interpreting and reporting***, explains that "in many cases, the real errors are made not in the collection and analysis of the data but in the failure to interpret them properly" (Flanagan, 1954:345). The researcher aimed to avoid faulty generalisations and interpretations by reviewing the nature of judgements made during the collection and analysis of the data (Flanagan, 1954:345) to ensure inferences were made concerning the degree of credibility of the findings.

4. 2 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings will be presented, covering the participants' profiles, before proceeding with the themes and the thematic analysis.

4. 2. 1 Participants' profiles

The study focuses on working mothers studying through an ODL institution engaged in the value-added social curriculum. Because the researcher had no data on students' parenthood or employment statuses, purposeful random sampling was employed by distributing 325 online questionnaires to students who completed the value-added social curriculum and indicated that the institution might use their information for marketing purposes.

The questionnaire was designed to disqualify students based on their completion of modules, parenthood status (only mothers) and employment status (working full-time or part-time). The first section of the questionnaire was designed to acquire consent

from participants and collect demographic information of participants who responded. The demographics of all participants who responded are presented in tables 4.1 to 4.4 below.

Table 4.1: Ages of all participants who replied to the study invitation

Age of participants	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
22	1	3.7%
23	1	3.7%
27	3	11.1%
29	3	11.1%
30	1	3.7%
31	3	11.1%
32	2	7.4%
33	2	7.4%
35	1	3.7%
37	3	11.1%
39	1	3.7%
41	2	7.4%
42	2	7.4%
47	1	3.7%
48	1	3.7%

Table 4.1 summarises the ages of participants who responded to the study invitation. From the responses, the median age of 33.8 years was identified.

Table 4.2: Ethnicity of all participants who replied to the study invitation

Ethnicity	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Black	19	70.4%
Coloured	2	7.4%
White	6	22.2%
Indian	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Table 4.2 summarises the ethnicities of the participants, with 19 being black, six being white, and two being coloured.

Table 4.3: Sex of all participants who replied to the study invitation

Sex	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Female	22	81.5%
Male	5	18.5%

Table 4.3 summarises the gender of the participants, with 22 being female and five being male.

Table 4.4: Location of all participants who replied to the study invitation

Location of participants	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Gauteng	13	48.2%
Mpumalanga	1	3.7%
Eastern Cape	1	3.7%
Free State	3	11.1%
KwaZulu-Natal	3	11.1%
Limpopo	2	7.4%
Northern Cape	0	0%
North West	2	7.4%
Western Cape	2	7.4%

Table 4.4 summarises the location of participants within the nine provinces of South Africa. Of the participants, 13 were located in Gauteng, three in Free State, three in KwaZulu-Natal, two in Limpopo, two in North West, two in Western Cape, one in Mpumalanga, and one in Eastern Cape.

The second section confirmed whether the participants partook in the social curriculum, with the results presented in tables 4.5 and 4.6 below.

Table 4.5: Completion of Social Curriculum modules of all participants who replied to the study invitation

Completed	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	23	85.2%
No	4	14.8%

Table 4.5 summarises the completion of the social curriculum modules. This finding is interesting because all participants invited to participate in the study were selected based on their feedback after receiving a certificate of participation for a completed

module. Therefore, this number should have been 100%. Possible reasons for this could be that participants did not read the question before answering, they were not interested in continuing with the questionnaire, or they confused Do Life, the name of the social curriculum, with the modules (Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Moola, Do Digital, Do Complete Well-being and Do Personal Branding).

Table 4.6: Modules completed by all participants who replied to the study invitation

Modules	Number of completed modules	Percentage
Do Personal Brand	18	78.3%
Do Moola	20	87%
Do Complete Well-being	16	70%
Do Career	15	65.2%
Do Entrepreneurship	15	65.2%
Do Digital	13	56.5%

Table 4.6 summarises the modules completed by the 23 participants who engaged in the value-added social curriculum. The participants completed modules in Do Moola (20), Do Personal Brand (18), Do Complete Well-being (16), Do Career (15), Do Entrepreneurship (15) and Do Digital (13).

The third section of the questionnaire collected information on the parenthood status of the participants, as shown in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Parenthood status of participants who replied to the study invitation

Parenthood status	Number of participants	Percentage
Mother	16	69.6%
Father	2	8.7%
Currently expecting (Mother)	0	0%
Currently expecting (Father)	0	0%
No	5	21.7%

Table 4.7 summarises the parenthood status of the 23 participants who engaged in the social curriculum, with 16 being mothers, two being fathers, five being childless, and none being expecting parents.

In the third section of the questionnaire, all participants who were not mothers were disqualified. Finally, in section four, the researcher collected information regarding the number of children they have, the ages of their children and their employment status

where all mothers who are not employed were disqualified, as presented in Tables 4.8 to 4.10 below.

Table 4.8: Number of children of mothers

Number of children	Number of participants	Percentage
Currently pregnant with first child	0	0%
One child	3	18.75%
Two children	5	31.25%
Three children	7	43.75%
Four or more children	1	6.25%

Table 4.8 summarises the number of children the 16 mothers had, with mothers who responded having three children (seven), two children (five), one child (three), four or more children (one) and currently pregnant with the first child (none).

Table 4.9: Ages of children for mothers who participated

Ages of children	Number	Percentage
Currently pregnant	0	0%
0-2 years	3	18.8%
3-5 years	5	31.3%
6-10 years	7	43.8%
11-15 years	8	50%
Older than 16 years	6	37.5%

Table 4.9 summarises the ages of the children of the 16 women who participated in the study. Three have children between the ages of 0-2 years, five have children between the ages of 3-5 years, seven have children between the ages of 6-10 years, eight have children between the ages of 11-15 years, and six have children older than 16 years.

Table 4.10: Employment status of mothers who participated

Employment status	Number of participants	Percentage
Full-time (Employed)	13	81.25%
Part-time (Employed)	0	0%
Unemployed	3	18.75%

Table 4.10 summarises the mothers' employment status who participated in the study, with 13 employed full-time, none employed part-time, and three unemployed.

Section five asked participants if they would be available to engage in a telephonic interview to discuss their answers given in the questionnaire in more detail. The information is presented in Table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11: Availability for telephonic interviews of mothers who participated

Available	Number of participants	Percentage	Interviewed	Not interviewed	Reasons	
					1	2
Yes	8	61.5%	6	2	The researcher could not make an appointment	The researcher made an appointment, but the participant did not reply
No	5	38.5%				
Total			**6 out of 13 interviewed (46.2%)**			

Table 4.11 indicates the number of qualifying participants who voluntarily gave their contact information to be telephonically interviewed, with eight indicating they would be available and five indicating that they would not be available for an interview. Of the eight, only six were interviewed, with the reasons for the two participants not being interviewed given in the table.

Table 4.12 presents the information of the 13 qualifying participants [1]indicating their age, ethnicity, location, the modules they completed, the number of children, the ages of the children, and whether they were interviewed.

[1] Qualifying participants are working student mothers engaged in the social curriculum.

Table 4.12: Summary of all participants who qualified for the study

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Location	Modules completed	Number of children	Ages of children	Interviewed
Par 1	31	White	Gauteng	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being, Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Digital	2	3-5 years, 6-10 years	No
Par 2	47	White	Gauteng	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being, Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Digital	3	Older than 16	Yes
Par 3	33	Coloured	Western Cape	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being	3	3-5 years, 10-15 years, Older than 16 years	No
Par 4	41	White	Free State	Do Moola	2	10-15 years, Older than 16 years	No
Par 5	41	Black	Gauteng	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being, Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Digital	4 or more	3-5 years, 10-15 years, Older than 16 years	No
Par 6	42	Black	Gauteng	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being	2	6-10 years, Older than 16 years	No
Par 7	30	White	Free State	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being, Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Digital	2	6-10 years, 10-15 years	No
Par 8	32	Black	Mpumalanga	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being, Do Career	3	6-10 years, 10-15 years	Yes

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Location	Modules completed	Number of children	Ages of children	Interviewed
Par 9	29	Black	Gauteng	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being, Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Digital	3	0-2 years, 3-5 years, 10-15 years	Yes
Par 10	29	Black	Gauteng	Do Moola, Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship	1	0-2 years	Yes
Par 11	31	Black	Gauteng	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being, Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Digital	1	10-15 years	Yes
Par 12	37	Coloured	Western Cape	Do Personal Brand, Do Moola, Do Complete Well-being, Do Career, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Digital	1	Older than 16 years	Yes
Par 13	37	Black	Eastern Cape	Do Personal Brand, Do Entrepreneurship, Do Digital	2	6-10 years, Older than 16 years	No

Table 4.12 summarises the demographic information of the 13 qualifying participants who have engaged in the value-added social curriculum, are mothers and are employed. In order of completion date, the researcher gave each participant a number ranging from Par 1 to Par 13 and did not disclose the names of the participants who shared their names for the telephonic interview.

4. 2. 2 Discussion of the themes

The researcher identified four themes and eight sub-themes from the thematic analysis to respond to the study's research questions. Table 4.13 presents the themes and sub-themes with questions to the participants. The questions were included in the online questionnaire and used during the telephonic interviews to elicit more in-depth answers.

Table 4.13: Themes and sub-themes

Theme 1: Working mothers, furthering their education, perception on the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study	
Sub-theme 1: Pressure the women experience	• What does motherhood mean to you? • How would you describe your sense of self as a working mother and student? How does this affect your state of mind? • As a working mother furthering your education, how do you perceive the pressure to work and study like you have no children and raise children like you do not work or study? • What are the societal and cultural views on women studying, working, and raising children in your context? How does this enable or hinder you from attaining your future goals?
Sub-theme 2: Work-life balance	• Would you still be able to find time to engage in the DO LIFE modules if you had limited time available? • As a woman with multiple roles, do these modules help you deal with the high demand on time and resources you face, or did they place a higher demand on you? • How did you find the time to complete the modules with family, study and work responsibilities? • What are the limitations or barriers you face as a mother?
Theme 2: The relevance of the modules regarding working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles	
Sub-theme 1: Formal and informal educational needs	• Do you think there is a need to provide students with additional units of study related to everyday life?
Sub-theme 2: The importance of education for the women	• Do these modules help you deal with the struggles you face in life?
Theme 3: The extent of support the additional modules on practical aspects of life give women in dealing with the challenges they face	
Sub-theme 1: Support required to achieve aspirations	• What are your future aspirations?

	• Do the DO LIFE modules and your studies give you a better chance of reaching your future goals? • Does the institution provide you with the necessary support to succeed in your studies?
Sub-theme 2: The importance of support to manage multiple roles	• Describe the support system you have at home and work?
Theme 4: A value-added social curriculum to empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution	
Sub-theme 1: The effectiveness of life skills gained in a distance setting	• Did you notice any changes in self, motherhood, career and studies after engaging in the social curriculum? • Would you recommend the DO LIFE modules to other working mothers?
Sub-theme 2: Practical, real-life application of skills gained	• How effective are the DO LIFE modules in providing you with practical information that you can use?

4. 2. 3 Thematic analysis

The data presented in this mini-dissertation were analysed using thematic analysis to identify, analyse and report on patterns recognised in the collected data. The thematic analysis allowed for theorisation on the impact of the patterns and the broader implications and meanings derived from them (Sitho, 2015:29). This method of data analysis offered the researcher theoretical freedom through its flexibility and usability in supplying a complex account of valuable and detailed data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:5). The data corpus (data collected for a particular research project) included the information of all participants who completed the online questionnaire, the data set (all data from the corpus being used for analysis), included the data of the working student mothers who completed the questionnaire (Braun & Clarke, 2006:5). The data items included individual questionnaires and interviews used to create data extracts. The data extracts are coded portions identified and extracted from the data items (Braun & Clarke, 2006:6). The themes and sub-themes discussed in the following sections guided the researcher in answering the question: how effective is a value-added social curriculum in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution?

4. 2. 3. 1 Theme 1: Working mothers, furthering their education, perception on the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study

During the formulation of the research problem in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), it was identified that women's multiple roles as wife, mother, student, employee and business owner are becoming universal phenomena; consequently, researchers have noticed a conflict between the numerous roles and well-being of women due to the sheer number of women balancing these roles concurrently (Dako-Gyeke & Ibrahim, 2012:400).

This theme relates to the research question: How do working mothers, furthering their education, perceive the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study?

Sub-theme 1: Pressure the women experience

The first sub-question identified in Chapter 1 (Section 1.4) is grounded in critical feminist theory focussing on the action, power relationships, shifting beliefs, voice, personal understanding and socially created knowledge (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1996; Tisdell, 1995, as cited in Howell, Carter & Schied, 1999:1). To gauge the pressures the women experience, the researcher asked four questions.

Question 1: What does motherhood mean to you?

The women partaking in the study placed their role as a mother as the most critical role they have to play in life. When asked what motherhood means to the women, there was an overwhelming consensus with keywords like love, protection, friends, eternal, nurture, being present, responsibility and passing on knowledge.

Par 1 explains that:

> *Being a mother is the most important role I have ever had in my life. I do everything for my children, and they always come first. Being a mother means that I will always do my best to give them a safe and happy life.*

Par 3 states,

> *It means the world to me: headaches and lots of laughter.*

Par 6 explains that a mother is *"someone who cares and nurtures her children with the deepest love".* Par 10 says that motherhood is *"the ability to care and have time for someone else besides yourself. Teaching and passing on knowledge in general to my child."*

During the interview, Par 8 emphasised how the social curriculum has empowered her in the motherhood role to set a better example for her children and become a better role model.

Par 8 says:

> *As a mother, I bought my children a piggy bank and started teaching them how to save because when I missed your first call, we were actually at the mall, and they were using their own money, not my money. They were using the money we had been saving for them with the R5 or R10 we gave them. This morning they wanted to go to the mall to use their saved money. My oldest had R1300, the youngest had R800, and the other one only had R600, so we had to add for him because the eldest was spending a lot. We went to the bank to exchange the coins for notes. They could buy clothes and still had money to go and play some games at the mall. So now they are learning from saving. Even with my husband, who was buying 12 bottles of alcohol a day, I told him that we could buy bricks with that money, and he could still drink on weekends and buy bricks Monday to Friday.*

Sound mother discourses are presented to mould mother identities and the meaning of motherhood for women, creating and identifying how mothers feel. Through dialogues on intensive mothering, "a good mother would never simply put her child aside for her own convenience. And placing material wealth or power on a higher plane than the well-being of children is strictly forbidden" (Hays 1996:150, as cited in Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010:6). According to the response received from Par 10, that she experiences *self-doubt and mom guilt*, the intensive mothering ideology points to feelings of guilt due to media portraying a mother to fit in a specific mould having nothing to do with the meaning of being a mother. This is pure love and a genuine need to be a great mother. All these mothers are sacrificing time and energy to better themselves for their children. Being a mother is more about doing your best than being the best, as seen in the answers to the next question.

Question 2: How would you describe your sense of self as a working mother and student? How does this affect your state of mind?

The data shows that although the participants loved and enjoyed their children, it was not always easy being a working mother and student. However, when asked how they would describe their sense of self as a working mother and student, there was a clear sense of resilience and pushing on for themselves and their children.

Par 13 said:

> *Honestly, it is not easy. Most of the time, I must steal family time and work; I cannot remember when last I had "me time" or went out with my husband. My life is all about work, studies, kids and homework. I am always under pressure, so I do not have weekends.*

Par 4, Par 6, and Par 7 explain the difficulties they experience with their sense of self and how that affects their state of mind and elaborate on how difficult it is to hold the multiple roles in their lives and pursue their dreams. The researcher believes that these women develop resilience and value within their struggle to have it all and excel in their duties, responsibilities and dreams, which aligns with the statement on Marx's view on gender and family by Brown (2014), "As human beings interact with nature through labor, both the individual and nature is changed. This occurs because human beings exist as part of nature, and the labor process provides the means for such a temporary unity. Since both nature and society are not static entities, Marx argued that there can be no transhistorical notion of what is "natural." The women's interaction with the world through their work, studies, family, and society is fluid, where adaptability and changing responsibilities allow for perseverance in a changing world and sense of self.

Par 4 stated, '*It is very difficult, and you cannot reach your full potential, but your mindset must do its best. That is all.'* Par 6 said, "*Sometimes I wanted to quit, but something on my other side said no, keep on going."* Par 7 said, "*It is not easy, and it is hard work."*

Mothers take on the ambitions, customs and requirements expressed by broader political forces and, through a method of subjectification in the post-structuralist sense, engage in the dual-task of following the prescribed standards while self-regulating

(Spigel & Baraister 2009, as cited in Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010:6-7). This is, in its fundamental nature, the "power of the good mother: mothers want to be good" (Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010:6-7).

Par 2 states:

> *Sometimes tired, but I like what I am doing"* … *"it helps you create a better future, sometimes it is difficult to make time, but I do make time to spend with my children.*

Par 1 says:

> *I am proud to be a working student mother, it gives me a sense of pride, and I feel like I am setting a good example for my children.*

Par 8 tells the researcher that:

> *It does not affect my mind. I always plan time for kids and time to study; then at work, I do concentrate since I am a consultant I have to focus while I am at work; at home, I am a wife and a mother, when it comes to my books or online modules, I am there, I multi-task if needed.*

Par 5 believes that *"it refreshes me and inspires my children",* and Par 9 says she is *"always thinking of achieving my goal*". Par 9 further elaborates in the interview that:

> *I have a purpose in my heart to improve my life. I only have Grade 12. I can be something in my life. I want to grow and do what I am expected in my life. To upgrade until my education is sorted to move to a higher level.*

Par 11 mentions that she is *"self-motivated and I am always ready for challenges",* and Par 12 notes that *"I keep my eye on the prize and my feet on the ground."*

Par 10 explains that:

> *This gives me the confidence to know that being a mother does not mean I should let go of my dreams and aspirations; it boosts my confidence in a way that I know I can constantly improve my life and know that I am not stuck"*, and goes further to say in the interview that, *"now you are not just thinking about yourself; you are thinking about your kid and the advancement of your career if you do have one".*

When it comes to the women's sense of self and the effect on their state of mind, they find pride in their accomplishments and sacrifices to better their lives and their children's lives. They do not shy away from the hardships they experience in gaining a sense of self in managing their roles but also do not shy away from the challenge and rewards they will reap by keeping their eyes on the prize and taking on what they have to advance in life. According to Brown (2014), Marx's "second concept of productive labour focuses on the production of use values. Here, labor is valued as such if it produces something that can be used by individuals or society at large". The concept offers a base for reevaluating women's work.

Question 3: How do you, as a working mother furthering your education, perceive the pressure to work and study like you have no children and raise children like you do not work or study?

With internal feelings of staying motivated even though they tire and struggle to make time for everything, the women's reaction to their perception of the pressures to work and study like they do not have children and raise children like they do not work or study, indicated a real effort to make time for everything and ensure they schedule their time.

Par 1 maintains that *"it is hard to juggle the roles and be good at everything at the same time".* Par 3 adds, *"I do not know how I manage as I work full-time, study part-time and sell stuff part-time"*.

Par 4 shared the following advice:

> *When at home, do home. When at work, leave the family stuff at home. Put time aside and lock yourself in your room until you studied the time set aside for studies on your time register. It is difficult, but you soon get used to it.*

Par 6 mentions:

> *My current situation pushed me to study hard and achieve better; I come from a low-income family in a rural area with no income from my parents. So, I told myself, I do not want to be like our parents; I want to study hard to make life better.*

Par 9 indicates that:

> *It is not easy, but if you have a purpose in your life, you can make time for being a mother, working mother and a student as I did.*

Par 12 states:

> *I do not allow my decisions to be compromised. Simultaneously, I do not allow my priorities to interfere with family time unless otherwise unexpected.*

Par 11 referred to discipline, time management and balance in all aspects of life in the questionnaire and continued to say in the interview:

> *When I started studying, I knew exactly what I wanted, and I had to prepare myself mentally knowing that I was going to be working, I am going to have to make time for my work, I am going to have to make time for my studies, and I am going to have to make time for my kids. So, I had to discipline myself if I was going to do that to develop myself. So, I do much personal development, and it keeps me going and keeping up with everything going on to balance work-family and studies.*

Par 10 emphasises the importance of a support system to manage all the roles. During the questionnaire, she stated that *"It has become simpler to juggle both work and my studies with a great support system and family",* and elaborated during the interview:

> *There is pressure for women every day, but I try not to think like that because then I will go crazy. I feel like we do need help and a sound support system, but that pressure does exist as much as you would be like, no, I have a nanny and what, but you still want to do some things because you feel your peers are leaving you behind, so yes I feel like there is so much pressure.*

According to an article by Thompson (2015), *Marxist Feminist Perspectives on Family Life,* "all of the chores associated with the traditional, expressive role, such as domestic labour, childcare and emotion work are necessary to 'keep the family going'" putting the women under tremendous pressure to ensure the well-being of the family and her well-being and personal development.

Question 4: What are the societal and cultural views on women studying, working and raising children in your context? How does this enable or hinder you from attaining your future goals?

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.1), while women have overcome the right to skilled work and obtain an education, it is still expected of them to be obedient to men and be in charge of the household and care for their children (Biasoli-Alves, 2000, as cited in Sanches De Almeida, 2012:316). The intention of question four was to establish if this is true for the women partaking in the study.

The perception Par 5 has on her community's views are that *"they feel it is a total waste of time."*

Par 11 explains in the questionnaire that:

> *I am a woman who always believed in studying further and being a better person; I believe in educating myself. However, there are still many stigmas around women being oppressed for working and studying. Because back in the days, women were not allowed to work for themselves but rather be at home raising kids. However, I am one of those women changing the views; besides, we live in the 21st century, so things have changed. Women are now equal to men, and they can work, study, be wives and mothers and still run their companies simultaneously (Power to women).*

Par 11 further elaborates in her interview that:

> *I think things have changed now, and things are different from before. However, you still get people, especially men, who think that we as women need to look after the children and work in the house. However, things have changed; women are getting educated and working to better themselves and our households to give our children a better future.*

Par 13 states that:

> *In my culture, this is more like a norm. A woman works ten times harder than a man but is still not being recognised. I am used to it, and I always want to succeed in everything I set my mind on. I want to lead by example for my kids and the society at large.*

On the other hand, Par 1 says:

> *I think it is necessary for women to study and get good employment opportunities because socio-economic factors make it impossible to survive on only one income. My family encourages me to study, and with the support, I am more likely to attain my future goals.*

Par 2 states in the questionnaire that the message she receives from the community is *"believe in yourself and you can achieve anything"* and in the interview goes on to say:

> *I do not believe a woman belongs only in the kitchen. She has the right to do what she wants and to achieve what she wants, and people in my community view it that way as well. Because a woman is equal to a man, we can do everything they can, just better.*

According to Wilson and Huntington (2006:59, as cited in Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010:8), 'the pattern of higher education, the establishment of a career and then (perhaps) starting a family for contemporary middle-class women have gradually become normative'. Based on the responses the researcher received from the participants, women want to be educated and successful in their careers, and although not all of them receive the support they need, it has become normative to WANT to pursue education, careers and family. The women and society know it is not easy to study, work and raise children, which is evident from Par 7, where the message seems to be more of admiration and disbelieve that she can juggle all her roles, stating in the questionnaire that her community asks:

> *How can you do both? And why? However, I did it.*

This disbelief and admiration allow the researcher to make inferences on the community's views of the types of women who pursue further education regardless of their current or historical circumstances. Par 8 thoroughly explains the issues she sees in her community regarding the role of women and women succeeding. According to Par 8:

> *In my area, I am a strong woman. If you find an orphan, they will tell you I have five children with different fathers; I did not go to school, if my mother were here, I would have done this and done that. My mother passed when I was doing*

> *standard 5; I think grade 7 if I am not mistaken. And my father passed when I was doing standard 7; it is grade 9. Then no one ever told you, no one woke you up in the morning to tell us to go to school. So, we said we would go to school and build our own thing to leave it for our children. In my society, you see young girls dating old guys to get cash to go out and drink. They do not know where the cash comes from by dating these men. I think work for what you have and work hard to achieve more. I am not sure what these women think of me, but I know I inspire my children. They look at what I am achieving and changing and want to be like me.*

The explanation of the women in her community that date different older men as a means of accessing finances ties into benevolent sexism, “the balance of power between the sexes is typically complex, reflecting the coexistence of male structural power and female dyadic power” (Harris, 1991; Stockard & Johnson, 1992, as cited in Glick & Fiske, 1996:492). Reproduction provides women with "dyadic power" that emanates from relationship dependences where men rely on women to bear children and, commonly, fulfil sexual desires. Although benevolent sexism proposes an instinctively positive view of women, it shares general assumptions with hostile sexism, that women occupy regulated household roles and are "weaker" than men (Guttentag & Secord, 1983, as cited in Glick & Fiske, 1996:492). As the researcher mentioned in the previous paragraph, inferences can be made that communities view those women who pursue further education and careers outside of the household as *strong* women.

Par 10 explains in her questionnaire that:

> *It can depend on the society that one is brought up from, in my case, it is highly encouraged that mothers, young or old, study further and do not view their children as setbacks, in terms of career and goals”,* and elaborates during the interview to say, *“I think in my community, things have definitely shifted from the traditional women being in the kitchen. I feel like now women are freer to do what they want and chase their dreams, although they still have the pressure to do well in each of those areas.*

Par 12 feels that *“we are in great need of empowerment for various reasons”* and explains in her interview:

For me, I am lucky thinking of how things used to be and the beliefs that used to exist; it is, in my opinion, how it affected us in any way. I cannot own a cultural view that was before my time. However, I can take on everything without cultural beliefs that stops me. That path has been paved for women like me already. That is an empowerment mechanism on its own. In a nutshell, there is no excuse.

The view of the participants is in line with the poststructuralist feminist deconstruction of biological sex that releases women from the biological determinism that reinforces the male-controlled ideology of female subordination. This view shows that women's subordination is historical rather than organic and thus can be shifted as history continues. Moreover, the deconstruction of biological sex may accelerate radical changes in the discussion of sex and gender and thus may ultimately eradicate the opposition of sex and gender (Xu, 2003:61).

Sub-theme 2: Work-life balance

When it comes to finding time to complete all the tasks required from the roles the women already had, it was essential to know if the social curriculum would place an additional burden on them or if they would still find time to engage in the social curriculum with the limited time they have. According to Boakye et al. (2021:2), “although working parents perform numerous roles at work and home, which complicates their chances of successfully experiencing work-life balance, mothers who are studying in addition to their professional work are more at risk”.

Question 1: Would you still be able to find time to engage in the DO LIFE modules if you had limited time available?

All 13 participants indicated that they would still find the time to complete the social curriculum modules in this question.

Par 1, Par 7, and Par 13 said, *“yes, they are very short and easy to complete.”* Par 3 stated, *“yes, I am a full-time working mother of three and still try to make time to go through the modules but not as often as I like.”* Par 2 also said, *“yes, because I like it and to learn more.”* She also elaborated in the interview that *“I did not find it hard to complete the modules because I made time. I believe that if you want to do something, you can do it.”* Par 6 answered, *“yes, because I still want to learn more.”* Par 10

indicated that the *"platform is easy to navigate, which saves one plenty of time"* and goes on to say in the interview that:

> *I think I will still find time to do them even if I do not have time. We are always on our phones, so I do not believe that people do not have any time for anything. You make time for what you think is important, so I would definitely make time. Everybody has time. They choose what they do with it.*

Par 11 explains that *"the day I started with Do Life, I never wanted to stop, I kept coming for more and more learning... It is so amazing how it kept me going."* Par 12 felt that *"priority is key and equals time management principles."*

According to Raymore (2002, as cited in Woodside, Caldwell & Spurr, 2006:259) and the ecological systems theory, people's thoughts and actions can only be described correctly when the context of the micro- and macrosystem of the individual is understood. Furthermore, their interaction with others and society and their experiences in those interactions determine the value they place on specific actions. Thus, the participants would make time in their busy schedules to participate in the value-added social curriculum because they view it as easy and beneficial.

Question 2: As a woman with multiple roles, do these modules help you deal with the high demand on time and resources you face or did it place a higher demand on you? Why?

Although the women had or made time to engage in the social curriculum, the researcher wanted to know if the modules assisted them with the high demand or placed a higher demand on them trying to navigate an additional task in their already packed schedules.

From the responses, it is clear that there was an extra burden for some women, but the pay-off assisted them in the end. Par 4 said, *"you battle at first, but somehow you just cope; what helped me was praying and the Lord's help."* Par 9 shared during the interview that *"it is a bit hectic when you are a mother, working, a student and wife. You have to manage everything and work hard. When it comes to learning Do Life and my subjects, you have to manage. I do. I was very interested, and I used my phone to do everything. Now I have two children, and I managed everything."*

For others, the social curriculum aided in relieving some of the burdens.

Par 1 said,

> *It helped me organise my life better, and I think it is important to make the time to learn, whether it is informal or formal studies. We should never stop learning.*

Par 2 felt,

> *It helps me deal with it because of the things we face and the difficulties in life but believe in yourself to achieve anything.*

Par 5 stated,

> *They really help as sometimes we do not pause to find answers for what we face daily.*

Par 10 noted,

> *They help me deal with a high demand on time.*

Par 13 elaborated,

> *They make things easier; you just watch a short video and complete activities to double-check your understanding, and you are done. I wish all modules were like that instead of reading the whole textbook. What is in the textbook is different from what is needed in the workplace, and Do Life modules provide you with current information.*

Par 11 said,

> *I feel that I can do more in life, and I have grown to become a better version of myself.*

Knowing that the women would make time for the social curriculum and that it helped them manage their time, the researcher probed to ask how they made time for work, family, studies and the social curriculum.

Question 3: How did you find the time to complete the modules with family, study and work responsibilities?

Par 1 explained that *"I did them on my phone before I went to bed at night and sometimes during my lunch hour."* Par 3 did the modules *"during my lunch breaks and late at night when the family is sleeping.*" Par 4 planned for them through *"timetables*

and time management." Par 7 also planned by *"working on a schedule."* Par 12 said, *"I prioritised a set time frame to study, take care of work responsibilities and family time."*

Par 13 further explained that:

> *Time management is very important, although it is not easy. Planning ahead and being organised are more important to me, and I always try to meet deadlines.*

For some women, support was a great asset in completing the modules. Par 10 expressed that *"with a great support structure, for example, I make time after work when the baby is with the grandparents."* Par 6 explained that "*commitment is the best; I draw a learning strategy and get support from my husband and children."* Par 8 said, *"sometimes the kids help me with my modules, especially the Do Moola one and as for working, I always plan my day."*

Par 8 further explained during the interview that:

> *I started these modules when I started with my formal course. I would do them after work when I finish all my housework, then after that, I check the app and take a few minutes to do them or after lunch when I am bored. Sometimes I do it with the kids, and that is how they could give answers to their teachers because even when we are sitting watching TV, my children would ask me to borrow my phone to do a module today. I would be reading with the kids, and they would be giving me answers. If we got it wrong, we would reread the module. It became a family thing, and my husband would also say that now he is bored, he wants to join the kids and me.*

With time clearly a daily hurdle, the researcher wanted to know what other limitations and barriers they face as working student mothers.

Question 4: What are the limitations or barriers you face as a mother?

Par 3, Par 8, and Par 11 felt that they had no limitations as mothers, with Par 11 stating, *"I do not see any limitation or barriers at all, the sky is the limit, and I will conquer any obstacle that comes my way to reach my goals."*

Time and financial resources were the main limitations mentioned by Par 1, Par 4, Par 7, and Par 13. For Par 5, the most significant limitation was the number of roles she

has, "*you can never plan your time with books; you always have to mix it with one or more things to do.*" Par 6 identified her most significant limitation as a *"lack of knowledge."* Par 2 saw her most significant limitation as *"I could not give my children a better future to study further because I am a single mother."* Finally, for Par 10, it is *"self-doubt and mom guilt."*

According to Rotkirch and Janhunen (2010:90), "cultural expectations of extensive and perpetual high-quality maternal investment or the "motherhood myth" induced guilt in mothers." Maternal guilt varies with social and cultural context as seen in the responses given by Par 2, Par 10 and Par 12 (below), where they indicate their limitations as a single mother, a mother who doubts herself, or a mother who is determined to give her child a future by sacrificing time with that child.

Par 12 mentioned in the questionnaire that her limitation was not *"being able to supervise my daughter throughout her growing up."* and explained in the interview that she is:

> *Very strict-minded, so putting a schedule in place becomes automatic because a deadline becomes a priority. I find it easy because I have a deadline. In order for us to reach the next level, I have to meet the deadline. So come what may, irrespective of how my day went or how tired I am, I follow a schedule. I do not compromise. I never made room for excuses or a means of settling a problem I faced. The personal structure is very important. It brings about a personal level of discipline, so hopefully, we walk through life with that discipline and never use anything within our personal capacity as an excuse not to achieve.*

According to Copeland and Harbaugh (2019:28), mothers actively adapt to the demands and challenges in the dynamic and evolving motherhood role influenced by personal, cultural, social and environmental experiences. The researcher believes that although three of the participants indicated that they do not have any limitations, it does not mean they do not exist. On the contrary, their ability to adapt and cope with life makes their barriers (seem) less limiting. The next theme will determine the relevance of the modules to the struggles women face and their educational needs.

4. 2. 3. 2 Theme 2: The relevance of the modules regarding working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles

In Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), problem formulation, the researcher mentions that education is crucial to individual and society's well-being and socio-economic development. It lessens constraints and empowers women to reach their full potential (Lumadi, 2017:1). If more women are encouraged to learn critical social skills needed to succeed in domestic and professional roles, they can set an example for women thinking they need to choose between their family and career roles (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:13).

This theme relates to the research question: How relevant are the modules to working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles? Since these women are already studying formal qualifications through the institution, the researcher wanted to understand their views on the importance of giving them life skills outside of the formal curriculums they are engaging in. Their views are presented below.

Sub-theme 1: Formal and informal educational needs

According to De Saxe (2012:1), critical feminist theory should be framed as a distinct methodology to actualise and work towards liberation education. De Saxe (2012:2) further references Freire (1970:48) by saying that the individual or group of individuals experiencing a collective form of oppression should be examined to tackle the issue and free them from the oppression.

Question 1: Do you think there is a need to provide students with additional units of study related to everyday life?

All 13 participants responded that it is crucial to provide students with additional units of study related to everyday life. Par 1 said that *"people are currently under much pressure, and the information is valuable."*

Par 2 feels that:

> *It helps me a lot, especially with today's stress in the society that we live in, because everything is a rush. So, it helps me a lot to cope with that mainly. I did all of the modules, and they help you prepare your life better.*

Par 3 explained that *“there was a lot I learned about my personal branding and credit score which I did not know before.”* Par 5 felt that they receive *“advice on daily issues of life.”*

Par 9 thought:

> *It is very important because we learn many things in Do Life, especially as mothers. For example, you learn how to manage parenting and education when you are a parent.*

Both Par 10 and Par 13 mention the lack of life skills in the basic education curriculum, with Par 10 stating that *“the standard basic education curriculum does not offer life-related modules.”*

Par 12 says in her interview that:

> *In my opinion, it just makes it much easier to understand what you are doing, whether it is in the workplace or if you are an entrepreneur. For example, looking at what the Do Life programme did for me, it gave me a better view and broader understanding of the workplace itself. We tend to do it because we are supposed to do it but having a broader and in-depth understanding of why it is being done draws you more towards entrepreneurial skills if you want to go on with that in your life. Also, because I come from an entrepreneurial background, I may see things on a deeper level.*

With the burden women experience with the pressure and stress of everyday life, feminist theorists have emphasised the importance of incorporating ‘the everyday’ worlds of women. Some critical feminists argue that the direct interactions in dealings have arisen by acknowledging the fundamental lived difference in the socio-spatial organisation of women and that the social connectedness of women in everyday practices has fostered ways of knowing that are different from those of men (Nast, 1994:54-55).

Sub-theme 2: The importance of education for the women

The researcher confirmed in previous questions that the social curriculum assisted the participants in dealing with the high demand on time and resources they face but needed to know if these modules also help them deal with the struggles they face.

Question 1: Do these modules help you deal with the struggles you face in life?

The women all agreed that the social curriculum helped them face struggles they experience in their everyday lives. Par 1 said, *"I get practical advice and examples on how to better myself."* Par 7 felt that the social curriculum helped her *"cope with it".* Par 6 explained that the social curriculum *"helps me with how to deal with a struggle and make it happen, no one is perfect without trials and at the end of the day all broken pieces will stick back together."*

After engaging in the social curriculum, some women made real-life changes, especially in their finances. For example, par 11 learned *"how to use or save money."*

Par 13 has engaged in the budgeting module and stated that:

> *It was straightforward. I managed to create my monthly budget. Unlike the textbook, they show you what to do and how to do it.*

Par 3 shared,

> *My credit score was very low, and I improved so much since doing the course. My score went from 490 to 650 in less than a year.*

Par 8 said in the questionnaire that:

> *I managed to make arrangements for my debt, and I even saved a lot. So now I am starting my own company.*

Furthermore, continued during the interview to share that:

> *When I started doing the Do Life courses, I learned a lot. At first, I was not paying my debts, and I spent my salary within a day. So, when I started doing the Do Life courses, I started budgeting, paying and making arrangements for my debts, settling some other accounts, started my own business and got offices in town. Of course, I have to now buy supplies for the company, but because of the budgeting module, I can buy them as I can and on credit.*

For Par 10, the biggest struggle the social curriculum assisted with was *"having a proper CV to send off when you are looking for a job. Most of us do not learn that, and it helped a lot if you want to advance in your career or move around in your career."*

Par 12 went into detail during the interview on how the emotional intelligence module assisted her,

> *I found the emotional intelligence module extremely intense because of my character on an emotional level. For me, it goes deep coming from childhood as someone who did not have emotional nurturing growing up, so basically, being an adult and not having emotional strengths because of a lack of exercise in that regard growing up. It makes it very difficult to cope as an adult if you have not had emotional nurturing growing up. When I was exposed to that module, I had to go back and start over because there was information I had to face. I did not realise it was a wound I was going to have to face and take myself through the process of feeling the feelings that need to be dealt with in order to find an outer growth that has been within yourself forever, but you just never realised it because of a lack of nurturing from adults or whatever the case might be. I would generally be the person walking away holding on to some emotion that is not necessary, and rejection caused that. Being someone that grew up with rejection, rejection became part of my life. I quickly saw little things as being rejected and took that on myself because I was being rejected from my emotional level. Emotional intelligence teaches you to let it go, but 'let it go' is three words. It runs much more profound. You actually find an inner emotional skill to bypass so many things and not keep it with you. I told my fiancé that this course is doing me so much good. I wish I had done it a long time ago.*

The fundamental changes made by the women ties into the feminist poststructuralist research, which focuses on the prospect of affecting what is already known and understood by women (Davies & Gannon, 2005:319). The idea of a feminist poststructuralist investigation is to upset that which is taken as unquestionable truth. Not only does the woman move in location or situation, but the meaning of each location or situation changes over space, time and context.

4. 2. 3. 3 Theme 3: The extent of support the additional modules on practical aspects of life give women in dealing with the challenges they face

During the formulation of the problem in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), the researcher mentions that women experience a lack of support and resources to acquire

empowering information and succeed in multiple roles while studying online (Lazou, 2019:8). However, if institutions expose women to relevant and practical information through digitised learning, education becomes more than theoretical knowledge (Riyad et al., 2020:5080). As a result, women will challenge their role in society, and working mothers can further educate themselves, have a career, enjoy motherhood and manage the family-work trade-off more efficiently (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001:13).

This theme relates to the research question, to what extent will additional modules on practical aspects of their lives support women in dealing with the challenges they face?

Sub-theme 1: Support required to achieve aspirations

In order to answer the question on the extent of support the women felt they received through the social curriculum, the researcher had to find out what their future aspirations are, if the social curriculum gave them a higher chance of reaching their goals and whether the institution is providing them with the support they need in a distance education setting.

Question 1: What are your future aspirations?

There was a clear indication through the answers that these participants wanted to create a future for their children. One of the most remarkable outcomes of poststructural feminist work in academic research has been the distinction given to the concept ‘identity’ and the social and informal activities of identity creation (McLeod, 2008:7). The researcher observed that participants' aspirations aligned with their identity as a mother and a ‘strong’ woman.

Par 1 said, *“I just want to give my children the best life I can, be happy and reduce my financial stresses through gaining a better education and, in turn, better employment opportunities.”* Par 7 wants *“to be great at my job and be a wonderful mother.”* Par 3 stated, *“I encourage my children to do better than what I did. So they can learn from all my mistakes.”* Par 5 said, *“I wish to better my children's future.”* Par 9 explained that she wants *“to be a good mother to my kids.”* Par 10 wants *“to continue learning and developing new skills and use my time to improve my life and those around me constantly.”* Par 11 stated, *“believe in yourself, never stop learning and chase your dreams, above all, pass the information to your kids and teach them while they are still young.”* Par 8 explained, *“I want to build them a legacy.”*

Par 8 further elaborated during the interview that:

> *My parents were entrepreneurs. When they passed away, they did not leave us anything, so building this security company for my children so that they can rely on that company and look up to me and say, "mama, you did it". So, although I do not know what will happen to them, some will finish school and some might not, and if they do not find jobs, they can come to the company and continue with what I am building now.*

For the other women, their aspirations focused more on their personal development, with Par 2 stating that *"I want to study further."* Par 6 said, *"I am a leader. I want to put my knowledge and skills to good use. Motivation is the biggest key to my academics; I have the drive to move forward."* Par 4 wants *"to do a skilled course in child development."* Furthermore, Par 12 stated, *"owning my own business."*

As Tripses and Lazaridou (2020:1) state, "Women have always played influential leadership roles in society in general and education specifically, but cultural notions have frequently limited women's roles to behind-the-scenes contributions. The result is that the female voice and wisdom have not been fully appreciated by subsequent generations". The researcher agrees with this statement when examining the responses from participants. Women have a desire to gain and share their wisdom with the next generation to make a positive impact on the lives of their children.

Question 2: Do the DO LIFE modules and your studies give you a better chance of reaching your future goals?

There was a unanimous yes on this question, with all 13 participants believing that the social curriculum gives them a higher chance of reaching their goals.

Par 9 explains in her interview that:

> *Most people do not believe they can manage. For example, I did not know if I could manage, but I decided to try, and I managed to look after my work and children. So, most people want to believe they cannot do all these things, but I can say I have babies, work and manage.*

Par 10 describes the social curriculum as:

> *A stepping stone to what I want to do, it is a good start if I want to study even further to work and advance my career and future in most aspects of life.*

Question 3: Does the institution provide you with the necessary support to succeed in your studies?

It was essential to establish if the women feel that the institution supports them in their studies and if they viewed the social curriculum as a support mechanism provided by the institution. “In line with the ecological systems theory, women will require more institutional support to maintain healthy well-being successfully. This finding challenges previous results that contend that women with children rather need much institutional support to achieve work-life balance” (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005, as cited in Boakye et al., 2021:3).

Par 1 felt that *“by giving the extra information on how to navigate life better, they are helping and supporting all the students.”* In addition, par 3 said, *“there is a lot of communication and resources available.”* Par 4 mentions that the institution provides her with the necessary support, *“but due to my time schedule, I could not meet all the requirements.”* Par 8 was *“not sure of the support, but the module was simple.”*

Participants who commented outside the social curriculum and more on general support mentioned the following. Par 5 said, *“the lecturers are always there to answer any questions and help wherever we need help.”* Par 6 said that *“they assist a lot with uploading the videos on iCan to get full instruction on how to answer the questions.”* Par 12 stated that “*the online communication platform was an excellent choice, to begin with.”* Finally, par 11 said, *“I love the iCan Platform. It is so straightforward to use, easy to understand the navigation around it, so indeed”.*

As a methodology, the critical feminist theory does not provide detailed or textbook explanations on creating and transforming areas. The theory requires the reconsideration of current understandings of power, knowledge and areas of empowerment. Through this cautious method of continuously reframing and re-examining the exact nature of thinking processes, institutions can implement transformation initiatives like the social curriculum (De Saxe, 2012:198).

Sub-theme 2: The importance of support to manage multiple roles

Although the institution's support is critical, the researcher wanted to establish these women's support systems at home and how that affects their capabilities to engage in all these activities while navigating their familial responsibilities.

Question 1: Describe the support system you have at home and work?

Of the women who felt supported, Par 1, Par 9, Par 6, and Par 13 mention the support of their spouses. Par 1 says that:

> *I have a loving husband that helps me a lot when it comes to childcare and household duties. My mother also assists during exams and assignment times.*

Par 9 said,

> *Duties that my husband can help me with, he does.*

Par 6 tells that:

> *I get support from my work team; also, I get support from my family. For example, my husband used to cook if I was busy with my books and look after the small one.*

Par 13 explains that:

> *My husband is very supportive, and he sometimes does my chores. My colleagues are very resourceful, and our weekly planning meeting makes things easy for me.*

The first four participants above spoke about their husbands taking over some of their responsibilities which indicates that parental role stereotypes are developing, with numerous men seemingly engaging in different roles in their homes, most of which previously were not attributed male roles (Murthy & Shastri, 2015, as cited in Boakye et al., 2021:3).

Par 2 says:

> *My support is mainly from my family. They are always behind me and believe in me.*

Par 7 feel that her family is *"100% behind me".* Par 10 said in the questionnaire that *"because I work from home, I have my mother taking care of the baby while I am in the home office working until I am done."*

Par 10 also elaborated during the interview that:

> *I think they help me do what I need to do, that is why I can study and work and all these things. It is because of the support. If I did not have the support, I could continue with Do Life because it is not too much. It does not take too much of your time. However, it would be much harder, and I would have to schedule my time correctly. I would have to do everything on a schedule if I still wanted to continue with everything.*

Par 11 makes specific reference to her working environment during the interview stating,

> *In my work environment, my boss is fantastic and adds a lot of value to my studies, which makes my work so much better because when you know what you do, and you love what you do, that makes things… I would not say easy, but you can actually tackle the challenges. And also, at home, my kids were constantly reminding me that I had assignments due. 'Have you started with it?' They kind of kept me going in a sense; I take it as motivation because, at night, we can actually not go to bed without touching my books. If I remind them of their schoolwork, they also tell me that I have schoolwork. That drives me so much, and I think it is a form of support, and they might not realise that.*

Although some participants have great support systems in place, others indicated that they did not receive the support they needed from home and the workplace. For example, Par 3, Par 4 and Par 5 indicated that they do not have support, with Par 3 saying, *"No support system, but I push through."* Furthermore, Par 4 states, *"I do not have any support, my parents and family are not close to me, so I battled, it is not easy but if I can do it so can anyone."*

Par 2 feels the support from her family but not from her colleagues, stating:

> *My family inspired me a lot, but my work asked, 'Why?' because I would never use it. I proved them wrong.*

Par 8 explained in her questionnaire:

> *At home, they are very supportive. Even now, I am sitting with them, and at work, they are supportive colleagues; they know I like reading, so even supportive business-wise.*

Par 8 elaborated during the interview that:

> *Some of my family members did not believe in me and said I would fail. Now that they see me and see that I could do this, they said OKAY and have input now, but they did not support me initially. When you have a goal or a plan, you also need a deadline to achieve that goal. I would still have done it without the support of my family. I intend to do it for my children and provide for them, but I also like and want it for myself. I am adding strength, and without education, you cannot succeed in life.*

According to Cohen, Gottlieb and Underwood (2000:4), social support refers to the social resources the women perceive to be available or that are available to them in the context of informal relationships and formal support. In 1985, Cohen and Wills concluded that the perceived availability of social resources and social support acted as a stress buffer if the support or perceived support matched the needs stimulated by the stressful event.

4. 2. 3. 4 Theme 4: A value-added social curriculum to empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution

As mentioned in the problem formulation, Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), the researcher could not find any articles or books on how providing working student mothers with trustworthy and bite-sized modules on finances, personal branding, entrepreneurship, career, well-being, and digital literacy can empower them to manage and perform in the different roles they hold.

This theme relates to the research question, how can a value-added social curriculum empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution?

Sub-theme 1: The effectiveness of life skills gained in a distance setting

To be empowered, change in self, motherhood, career and studies need to have happened after engaging in the social curriculum. Although specific changes in

financial and emotional intelligence behaviour were mentioned, the researcher wanted to probe deeper to discover the participants' opinions on the changes they noticed after engaging in the social curriculum and if they would recommend the social curriculum to other mothers.

Question 1: Did you notice any changes in self, motherhood, career and studies after engaging in the social curriculum?

Par 11 said, *"yes, indeed there are changes, and it is mostly positive changes."* She also said in the interview:

> *I am a very self-motivated young woman, and I believe in learning and becoming better because if I get better, that is for myself, and I can pass that on to my kids and make them realise they can also be better in life. I invest in myself. Before I started working on myself and studying, I was so isolated; once I started studying and getting more information, I started to grow and find it easier to socialise with other people. You find that confidence to get out of the box and engage with other people.*

Par 1 mentioned that:

> *I felt more empowered to make financial and social media decisions and take better care of myself. I also used the information on interviews to get a better job.*

Par 2 mentioned that she was promoted to *"assistant manager"* and explained in the interview that *"I can budget better, I was the type of person that would help others and shoot myself in the foot, but now I can manage better."* Par 3 said, *"I started my own part-time business selling goods, and I am doing pretty well thus far".* Par 4 felt that the social curriculum assisted her with stress management because "*your mood and health can suffer due to stress levels."* Par 5 mentioned that *"I changed a lot as I was motivated and had the vision and passion for my career and future."* Par 6 made a bold statement, *"I am fully developed physically and mentality".* Par 7 felt like the social curriculum gave her hope because at *"times I have lost all hope."* Par 10 said that *"one becomes more open-minded to change and to doing things differently"* and continued in the interview:

> *I started to take my finances very seriously and started with a budget every month. So, I can see a difference, see where my money is going now and make*

personal changes to my budget. And also, career-wise, research about the career that I am in and how I will grow if I want to grow and it opens your mind up to things you are already doing but are just like doing more research to see what your career is about and what your finances are about not being so ignorant as before.

Par 12 indicated that

I am more motivated to spend time with my daughter and talk about personal branding.

Question 2: Would you recommend the DO LIFE modules to other working mothers?

All participants would recommend the social curriculum to other working mothers. Par 1 stated that *"it provides you with valuable information that you can use to better yourself."* Par 2 said yes, *"because it teaches you how to deal with stress and everyday coping in life and the rush we live in."* and continued to mention in the interview that:

They would benefit most by completing the well-being modules with the COVID-19 going around because many people are losing their jobs. It is stressful with everything also getting expensive. However, on the other hand, it gives you hope and a better understanding of life. I am very grateful I had the opportunity to complete them and maybe want to see more of it and continue with my formal studies because when I was younger, I did not have the opportunity to study and now that I have the opportunity, I will continue learning where I can.

Par 3 stated, *"I would. They can do it in their free time with no pressure, and the best part is it is online".* According to Par 4, *"it can be possible if you moved your schedules."* Par 5 feels that *"it gives you more knowledge".* Par 6 emphasised that the *"modules build knowledge and allow for successful engagement with your skills".*

Par 9 mentions in the interview that:

I recommend it to everyone out there, mothers out there. They can do it no matter where no matter what, nothing is impossible. However, if you want to do it, you have to put it in your mind to do it.

According to Par 10, the reason to engage in the social curriculum is *"because they help you with basic life skills that are not sometimes included in the basic education curriculum."* She also explains during the interview:

> *For people my age, it is tough for us to never learn about, let us take financial literacy. Only now, as adults, we are trying to figure out financial literacy, how to save, and how to open a business. I think it is necessary even for kids in grade 11 or 12 going to varsity. There are a lot more that we need to learn that we do not.*

Par 11 states that she *"personally took the Do life as a preparation assessment to my studies, and I used it to warm up my brain to keep going."* Par 12 said that the social curriculum helps students *"find that connection with oneself through the course"* and explains in the interview that the greatest benefit the social curriculum offers is:

> *Personal self-control, but it does not stop there. I could look at the Do Life, and another woman can look at it and have a completely different view. The programme can take you to a place of peace in your own coconut. If you voice it, you are on your road to recovery. If you do not voice it, it will take more than Do Life to actually help yourself. It can be used as a starting point or introduction to who I am, who I can be and where I can improve in my personal life. It is personal. You can present it to anyone. It is what I am going to do with it. It speaks to the mother looking for a way out. Suppose you are doing it to get it done. It will not have the impact on you it could have had. It is for everybody but also not for everyone.*

Par 13 believes that:

> *We do not have much time, but we must keep up with technology to learn new skills to assist our families better, and we are problem solvers, so we need to be informed to make better decisions.*

Feminist poststructuralist provides a means of understanding the world of women through a variety of expressions and viewpoints, which may lead to better acknowledgement and construction amid individuals with competing perspectives and finally, may prompt social and educational transformation (Baxter, 2002:5, as cited in Fardon & Schoeman, 2010: 308).

Sub-theme 2: Practical, real-life application of skills gained

The researcher wanted to understand if the social curriculum was just another information pamphlet that students had access to online or if the social curriculum provided students with sufficient practical learning experiences in the forms of exercises, plans, downloadable templates and links.

Question 1: How effective are the DO LIFE modules in providing you with practical information that you can use?

All of the participants felt that the social curriculum effectively provided practical information. For example, par 3 explained, *"I think it helped me to achieve my goals in what I want to do in life."* Par 8 said, *"I did not have information before, but now I am knowledgeable I know a lot",* and in the interview, mentioned:

> *I think they are fine, and I do not feel they should change anything; the short modules give you enough information. For example, I did not know the difference between assets and depreciation and the long-term investment of a house vs a short-term investment like a car.*

According to Par 11, *"I am currently running my small business with the help of Do Entrepreneurship",* and added in the interview,

> *I went through a lot of information and found it valuable for my small business and not just successfully running it.*

Par 12 stated that *"in many aspects, it is extremely helpful and the personal growth is awesome",* and Par 13 said, *"they are very useful, e.g. if I want to start the business they provide you with the steps to take and a list of documents you will need and where to find those documents".*

The ecological systems theory describes how development is affected by various environmental systems. Development happens over a period as part of an intricate process requiring a system of connections within the person and amongst the person and the environmental settings (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017:2 of 7). The researcher can thus infer that in terms of the ecological systems theory, the interaction of the participants with the social curriculum positively affected the environmental systems of the participants after engaging in the social curriculum.

The summary of the findings will be presented in the next section.

4. 3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

"Feminist pedagogy encourages students, particularly women, working-class students and members of underrepresented ethnic groups, to gain an education that would be relevant to their concerns, to create their meanings and to find their voices concerning the material" (Johnson, 2004; Maher & Tetrault, 1994, as cited in Lazou, 2019:8). In reading feminist text, members of the educational community reconsider the present understandings of oppression and what this means in the context of education communities. These numerous distinct sources of empowerment renew vital conversations. The social curriculum alone might not ensure a concrete transformation in these women's lives, but what it will do is provoke conversations for radical and transformative change—in other words, looking at transformative education through a critical feminist view (De Saxe, 2012:199).

4. 3. 1 Theme 1: Working mothers, furthering their education, perception on the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study

Table 4.14 summarises the findings of theme one on the multiple roles of women, focusing on two sub-themes, 1) pressure the women experience and 2) work-life balance of the women.

Table 4.14: Theme 1 findings summary

Theme 1: Working mothers, furthering their education, perception on the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study	
Sub-theme 1: Pressure the women experience	All participants take their role as a mother earnestly. When talking about their sense of self and state of mind, four participants indicated how hard it is and how hard it is to keep going. The women experience pressure to study, work and raise children, but they have goals and the resilience to reach them. Three women describe the community as a demotivator with themes of time wastage, stigmas and sexism. One participant mentioned how communities expect women to work and raise children. One mentioned the necessity to work, study and raise children due to

	socio-economic factors. One mentioned that women can do it all, and two mentioned a shift in society and cultural views, making it possible for women to do what they want.
Sub-theme 2: Work-life balance	All 13 participants would find time to complete the social curriculum. Two participants noted that the social curriculum initially placed additional burdens on them, and all 13 participants found the social curriculum helpful. Two mentioned using mobile devices to complete the social curriculum modules, and three mentioned finding time during their lunch breaks; three said they did them after the family went to bed, one even did it with the family. Time management and scheduling were mentioned by six participants and support by three. Three of the participants indicated that they do not have limitations as mothers, four said that time and finances were the most significant limitations they experienced. Other limitations in the findings included giving children a better future, multitasking, lack of knowledge, self-doubt, mom guilt and supervision of children.

4. 3. 2 Theme 2: The relevance of the modules regarding working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles

Table 4.15 summarises the findings of theme two on education as a means of empowerment, focusing on two sub-themes, 1) formal and informal educational needs and 2) the importance of education for women.

Table 4.15: Theme 2 findings summary

Theme 2: The relevance of the modules regarding working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles	
Sub-theme 1: Formal and informal educational needs	All participants felt the need to provide students with information on everyday life. Themes that came out in the study regarding the social curriculum's need in students' educational experience included stress-management, coping mechanism, financial literacy, managing parenthood and education, and a better understanding of life and business in general.
Sub-theme 2: The importance of education for the women	All participants noted that the social curriculum is essential in their educational journeys. In addition, the practical advice and examples help them cope better. Six of the participants gave tangible examples of the role of the social curriculum in dealing with the struggles they face.

4. 3. 3 Theme 3: The extent of support the additional modules on practical aspects of life give women in dealing with the challenges they face

Table 4.16 summarises the findings of theme three on institutional and familial support, focusing on two sub-themes, 1) support required to reach aspirations and 2) the importance of support to manage multiple roles.

Table 4.16: Theme 3 findings summary

Theme 3: The extent of support the additional modules on practical aspects of life give women in dealing with the challenges they face	
Sub-theme 1: Support required to achieve aspirations	For the women to reach their aspirations, they do require support. Seven participants linked their future aspirations to their children's well-being or success. All participants felt that the social curriculum gave them a better chance of obtaining these goals. The participants also felt that the institution supports them better by providing extra information on navigating life better.
Sub-theme 2: The importance of support to manage multiple roles	Four of the women mentioned the support of their husbands; one participant mentioned the support of her boss, five participants indicated the support of their families, and three mentioned that they had no support. Finally, the researcher noted the extent of the perceived support Par 3, Par 4 and Par 5 feel they receive from the institution and social curriculum compared to the little social support they receive from family and friends.

4. 3. 4 Theme 4: A value-added social curriculum to empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution

Table 4.17 summarises the findings of theme four on life skills and the social curriculum, focusing on two sub-themes, 1) the effectiveness of life skills gained in a distance setting, and 2) practical, real-life application of skills gained.

Table 4.17: Theme 4 findings summary

Theme 4: A value-added social curriculum to empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution	
Sub-theme 1: The effectiveness of life skills gained in a distance setting	All 13 participants noticed a positive change after engaging in the social curriculum. All 13 also indicated that they would recommend the social curriculum to other mothers. Three participants

	cautioned other mothers regarding the time it would take and the need to actively engage with the content.
Sub-theme 2: Practical, real-life application of skills gained	All 13 participants experienced the social curriculum as practical and informative.

4. 4 CONCLUSION

Working student mothers experience extreme pressure to succeed and thrive in all their roles in life, but they can manage these everyday stressors and struggles better through initiatives from institutions. This prompts research related to providing social skills and information to students outside of the formal qualifications they are pursuing to support students holistically and not purely in their academic endeavours. This chapter provided the study's findings related to the research problem to answer the research question. The researcher structured the chapter to provide the reader with the profiles of the participants firstly. Secondly, the themes and sub-themes related to the research question and derived from the data analysis were presented. Thirdly, the themes and sub-themes were discussed, including the questionnaire and interview data and relevant literature related to the study's theoretical framework (Figure 2.1). Finally, the findings were summarised according to the themes and sub-themes to guide Chapter 5 in providing recommendations and concluding the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. 1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 provides the reader with the literature and empirical study summaries. After that, a synthesis of the research findings is presented, where the similarities and contradictions are discussed. The conclusion concerning the research questions will provide the reader with the final findings of the participant's responses. The study's limitations, recommendations and suggestions for further research will also be presented. Finally, the chapter ends with a conclusion and a list of references.

5. 2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review was presented in Chapter 2. First, the research on the multiple roles of women (Section 2.2) was discussed, focussing on the pressures placed on women (Section 2.2.1), the meaning of motherhood (Section 2.2.2), women empowerment (Section 2.2.3), the well-being of women (Section 2.4), and motherhood skills and the working environment (Section 2.2.5). In this section, the literature highlighted how women are viewed in society regardless of their motherhood status. The literature explains how women are inclined to contribute their earnings to the household and highlights their problems in balancing their responsibilities and interests. The section further explains the time, money and energy they have to devote to their roles, the importance of motherhood, the components of empowerment and well-being, the cultural prevalence of intensive mothering and managing their roles in different areas of their lives. The section also looked at the importance of motherhood skills and how they can be transferred to the working environment.

Next, education as a means of empowerment (Section 2.3) was examined, where the researcher concentrated on distance education as a means of empowerment (Section 2.3.1). In this section, education was described as an effective instrument in fighting poverty and empowering the communities. It was also determined that it is vital to provide students with general digital skills, inspire lifelong learning and improve their personal and professional development, especially for populations like working

mothers and women who have been enrolling in college-level education and joining the economy. Women experience conflicting goals of attaining independence and developing an identity without rejecting the importance of the roles they hold. When discussing distance education, the literature highlighted the importance for women with multiple roles who require flexibility and better access to quality learning.

Institutional and familial support was highlighted in Section 4, separating familial and spousal support (Section 2.4.1) and institutional support (Section 2.4.2). The literature showed that working mothers who do not receive emotional, informational and instrumental support could not balance work and family life. This support is necessary for all aspects of their lives, including the working environment, home and study institution. Support relates to self-efficacy that allows women to believe in themselves and their ability to perform tasks and solve problems. The section also determined that spousal support is one of the most important determining factors of success for working student mothers, and the many physiological and mental health benefits documented in receiving social support were mentioned. The importance of institutions catering for the well-being of their diverse students was also discussed in reducing potential issues and enhancing their probability of success in their studies and life in general.

The literature review ended with life skills and the social curriculum (Section 2.5), where skills needed in addition to specialisation course areas were discussed. The researcher discussed the literature on initiatives utilising mobile devices to offer students additional educational opportunities and increase self-efficacy. Life skills were defined, and the source of life-related information and why it is essential to receive such information from reputable and expert sources were discussed in tackling the fundamental personal requirements of students through a comprehensive set of out-of-the-classroom services.

5. 3 SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL STUDY

The research design chosen for the qualitative empirical study included a critical research paradigm using an exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) approach in a case study research type. In addition, the researcher decided on a purposeful random sampling technique to select participants due to no previously attainable data on the

parenthood and employment statuses of prospective participants. Data collection for the study included online questionnaires and telephonic interviews. Of the 27 students who responded, 13 qualified for the study, and six participants made themselves available to be interviewed. The researcher applied the Critical Incident Technique in the telephonic interviews to gain insight into the participants' experiences as working student mothers and employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis to analyse the data. Since the institution's employees also have access to the social curriculum, a pilot study was conducted using mother employees of the institution to test the collection instruments and build confidence in the researcher when conducting telephonic interviews.

Credibility was established using triangulation, member checking and transferability to ensure the study's trustworthiness. The researcher focused on the authenticity, criticality and integrity of the study by allowing participants to speak their minds during the interviews without guiding or influencing their responses. In addition, the researcher applied reflexiveness to be mindful of her feelings of being both a mother and a student working full-time, not to interfere with the interpretations of the collected data and presenting the valid data with integrity and without biases. The ethical measures taken during the study were presented in Chapter 3 (Section 3.7), where the ethical clearance from both UNISA and the Private Higher Education Institution whose students were used in the study was obtained (see APPENDICES A and B). The researcher also discusses the measures for confidentiality (Section 3.7.2), informed consent (Section 3.7.3) and risk concern (Section 3.7.4) in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 presented the research findings, where the participants' demographic profiles, both who qualified and did not qualify, were discussed and presented in table format (Section 4.2.1). The themes and sub-themes with the questions posed to the participants were discussed in Section 4.2.2. The researcher identified four themes with accompanying sub-themes for each central theme.

Theme 1: Working mothers, furthering their education, perception on the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study, yielded two sub-themes, 1) pressure the women experience and 2) the work-life balance of the women. In theme 1, motherhood played the most crucial role in the participants' lives. The participants found it

challenging to manage their roles simultaneously, but they did it through resilience for their own and their children's futures. Although some women experienced additional strain during the engagement with the social curriculum, they found it valuable in dealing with the everyday struggles they faced.

Theme 2: The relevance of the modules regarding working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles yielded two sub-themes 1) the formal and informal educational needs and 2) the importance of education for the women. All participants thought that they needed additional information on everyday life and that the social curriculum provided them with helpful information to deal with the struggles they faced.

In Theme 3: The extent of support the additional modules on practical aspects of life give women in dealing with the challenges they face, the sub-themes identified where 1) support required to achieve aspirations and 2) the importance of support to manage multiple roles. The researcher found that all the participants have future aspirations and require support to achieve those goals while juggling multiple roles. The extra support given by the institution through the social curriculum gives them a better chance of reaching their goals, and the support of spouses and family is equally important in attaining aspirations.

Finally, in Theme 4: A value-added social curriculum to empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution, the sub-themes included 1) the effectiveness of life skills gained in a distance setting and 2) the practical, real-life application of the skills gained. In gauging the effectiveness of the life skills, all participants noted positive changes in their lives after engaging in the social curriculum and would recommend the social curriculum to other mothers. The findings also indicated that the content is practical with useable information to implement in the different areas of life. However, it was also noted that the social curriculum would only benefit those who attentively engage with the information and apply it to their lives.

5. 4 SYNTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section synthesises the research findings and compares the findings to the literature review discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, the researcher highlights the

similarities and contradictions found in the comparisons made between the participant's views and the literature.

The researcher found two contradictions between the findings and the literature review. Firstly, according to Szastok et al. (2019:12), Women face a dilemma; if they commit to a profession, they are viewed as inadequate mothers; but if they commit to childcare, they sacrifice their professional credibility. These concepts thus clearly suggest that women cannot have professional and family lives if they want to be viewed positively in their traditional roles by society. However, from the responses, being a working mother is encouraged or even expected in their cultures. This trend has become the norm for most women in their communities.

Secondly, Paré and Dillaway (2005, as cited in Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1261) found that the opposing views on mother employees stem from their perceived selfishness due to their focus on their own versus child successes. Contrary to these findings of negativity towards self-enrichment, women that work out of financial necessity were viewed more positively by society (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005, as cited in Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1261). These findings exaggerate the view that women are always self-sacrificing in the mother role and will be judged more harshly on their motivations to continue or return to work due to a sense of self and longing for professional and personal development than due to familial and financial difficulties (Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1261). According to the responses, these women work and study for themselves and their children. They also mention that they are expected to work and that their communities encourage them to continue studying and working while raising their children. Therefore, the study's findings contrast with the literature in that women are not viewed as selfish if they pursue a professional career and study to better themselves for reasons other than being forced to work.

The researcher found countless examples of participants' responses that link to the literature review in terms of similarities. For example, in research by Fambely (2019:19), respondents indicated that being a mother was the most critical role before they enrolled in higher education courses. The role of the wife was second and the homemaker third. However, once they started their academic journey, motherhood remained the first priority, with the role of student taking the second slot. This finding aligns with what the women said. Albeit not all the women were married, their children

came first, and their studies were made a priority; some enlisted the help of their spouses to ensure household duties were not neglected.

The work and family conflict perspective, drawn from the scarcity approach (Moore, 1963, as cited in Woo, 2009:5) of the multiple role theory, sees time and energy as scarce resources. The more time a woman devotes to a role, the less time she has available to perform the other roles (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000, as cited in Woo, 2009:5). The literature aligns with the study findings that these women see time and energy as scarce resources, which should be managed carefully to meet their expectations. This finding also ties into the literature that good mothers should "expend a tremendous amount of time, energy and money in raising their children" with their behaviour guided by a "logic of unselfish nurturing" (Hays, 1996:x, as cited in Ellis & Gullion, 2015:152).

Although the literature indicated that society tells women that they should (without needing to be asked) be successful career women while simultaneously sacrificing mothers (Douglas & Michaels, 2004, as cited in Sahlar & Ustundag-Budak, 2020:117), the researcher both agrees and disagrees with the literature. Yes, some women did indicate that society expects more from them in terms of employment and childrearing. However, these women also expect to achieve their aspirations and be good mothers. They do not do it because of the pressures of society; they do it because they want to better themselves and, in turn, create better futures for their children. The literature further emphasises the finding on the "Mother-Pole" phenomenon that describes mothers as sincere and kind-hearted, simultaneously capable, balanced and strong (Hryciuk & Korolczuk, 2012, as cited in Szastok et al., 2019:2). According to the responses and views of the participants, the literature is correct in stating that women do not feel the need to clarify their decisions in having a "sense of pride in their ability to transmit their progressive and egalitarian values and beliefs to their children" (Dunn et al., 2011:17, as cited in Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1262). Thus, growing gender ideologies toward egalitarian approaches where women can confidently and proudly make decisions regardless of being misunderstood and judged by others (Rushing & Sparks, 2017:1262).

The clear thread of resilience and perseverance that stood out in the responses indicates that the study's findings correlate to the literature when referring to education

as the most significant way to empower women (Meenambigai, 2018:21). Ghasem and Hosein-Chari (2013, as cited in Moghadam et al., 2017:7) held that a robust sense of self-efficacy enabled performance, as well as increased resilience. Student mothers who acquire this resilience have a better inclination to face challenges head-on (Leaman, 2015, as cited in Moghadam et al., 2017:7). Lazou (2019:7) correctly points out that although education is a means for women to claim their independence, there is a repeated sense of contradiction as women feel guilt towards other aspects of their lives for wanting their own identity.

Many responses mentioned the need for flexibility and studying online at odd hours to meet deadlines they have, and this aligns with Khatoon's (2010, as cited in Munawar & Akhter, 2017:72) statement that distance education fulfils an essential role in the increase of women education at a higher level, due to its flexibility, particularly for women to improve their academic position. It also emphasises the fact that for women with children and a full or part-time job, this route allows them to (1) eliminate the physical distance and time required to get to and attend classes, (2) study and do assignments at a time convenient to them and that works for their schedule, (3) make it possible to study regardless of other commitments and responsibilities, (4) save money and get a cost-effective education and (5) pursue lifelong learning (Meenambigai, 2018:24).

As Meenambigai (2018:19) mentions, working mothers who pursue further education need family members to take pride in their success and endeavours rather than see it as an obstacle for family life and dynamics. Most participants received support from their families and indicated that it would be harder or impossible to continue without support. Of the three women who indicated they did not receive support, one could not meet all the requirements set by the institution, which further exaggerates the importance of support for women managing multiple roles. Spousal support is one of the most important determining factors of successful participation and the completion of these women's studies due to the unnegotiability of their work commitments. Therefore, her domestic duties must be lessened or revaluated during crucial study periods like assessments, assignments and exams (Meenambigai, 2018:19). Four participants mentioned how their spouses took on some of their responsibilities to support them in their studies.

When institutions become mindful of different student populations and account for their goals, barriers and needs, they take positive steps towards open dialogue that contribute to student success (Fambely, 2019:23). The women indicated that the support provided by the institution through the social curriculum would aid them in achieving their aspirations, facing their barriers and positively making changes to their lives. The responses also tie in with the literature stating that developing and acquiring life skills should be a lifelong pursuit, whether it is done so in a formal or informal setting (Roup, 1994; Bender & Lombard, 2004, as cited in Taute, 2008:41) due to the ever-changing demands and challenges of modern life. To meet these demands and succeed in all endeavours they take, they need the right skills and knowledge to overcome their challenges (Taute, 1992, cited in Taute, 2008:41).

One of the participants mentioned the need for support, especially during the stressful time dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and all the additional challenges faced during the pandemic. This response aligns with the literature where experts warn that students may need more support than previously anticipated due to new stressors affecting their psychological, social and economic health. In addition, students may experience less academic motivation as the dynamics of work commitments and family needs amplify and become more unbalanced than before the pandemic (Blankstein et al., 2020; Fishman & Hiler, 2020; Hinton, 2020, as cited in Bouchey et al., 2021:31).

From the gender perspective, distance education has given women the prospect to maintain their studies, irrespective of the personal, domestic or professional obligations, consequently empowering them to accomplish their dreams (Lazou, 2019:3). Furthermore, practical knowledge empowers women towards action that can change their lives and give them a greater sense of autonomy (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2011:3567). After engaging in the social curriculum, the findings show multiple changes in finances, self-care, career and emotional intelligence. It, therefore, relates to the literature stating that distance education and practical knowledge empower them to accomplish their aspirations and gain a sense of autonomy.

5. 5 CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The dissertation of limited scope focussed on the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum in empowering working student mothers. The researcher will discuss the findings by addressing the four sub-questions and the main research question that guided the study, as identified in Chapter 1 (Section 1.4) below.

5. 5. 1 Sub-question 1: How do working mothers, furthering their education, perceive the pressure to work and study like they have no children and raise children like they do not work or study?

All participants in this study took their role as a mother earnestly. They feel that it is the most critical role they have in life and that most of what they do for themselves is directly or indirectly done for the children. When talking about their sense of self and state of mind, four participants indicated how hard it is to keep going. However, there was also a sense of pride and inspiration in juggling all the roles to better their future and confidently fulfil their purpose. The women experience pressure to study, work and raise children, but all indicated that they have goals and the resilience to reach them. Although some women face challenges in their communities, most feel that communities encourage women to study, work and raise children. As a result, the women develop resilience and value within their pursuit to excel. This notion is supported by Marx's view on gender and family by Brown (2014). As they interact with nature, they change with nature. Since they and their communities are not static beings, Marx argued that there can be no notion of "natural." Their interaction with their work, studies, family, and community is fluid, which allows for adaptability and perseverance in life and a sense of self.

All 13 participants would still find time to complete the social curriculum with limited time. These responses align with Raymore (2002, as cited in Woodside et al., 2006:259) and the ecological systems theory that their actions can only be correctly described when the women's context is understood. Their interactions and experiences determine the value proposition of the action; thus, if they deem it beneficial, they will make time for the activity. Although the social curriculum initially placed additional burdens on two participants, all of them found the social curriculum

exciting and very helpful in dealing with their everyday lives. There was a clear thread running through the responses that the women wanted to learn as much as possible and that the social curriculum provided them with helpful information that assisted them in different areas of their lives. The mothers take on the desires and approach articulated by society through a method of subjectification in the post-structuralist sense; they participate in the dual-task of ensuing the proposed standards while self-regulating (Spigel & Baraister 2009, as cited in Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010:6-7). In its fundamental nature, this is the “power of the good mother: mothers want to be good” (Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010:6-7). The women made time to complete the social curriculum modules by engaging with the social curriculum via mobile devices, during lunch breaks, after the family went to bed or even with the family. They also indicated that time management was an important factor in completing the modules. Three of the participants indicated that they do not have limitations as mothers, four said that time and finances were the most significant limitations they experienced. Other limitations in the findings included giving children a better future, multitasking, lack of knowledge, self-doubt, mom guilt and supervision of children. The women actively adjust to the stresses and challenges in the changing and dynamic motherhood role influenced by personal experiences, culture, and environment. While three of the women implied that they do not have any limitations as mothers, the researcher is of the opinion that they do exist. The women’s capacity to adjust and deal with life makes their barriers (seem) less limiting.

5. 5. 2 Sub-question 2: How relevant are the modules to working student mothers' educational needs and personal struggles?

All participants felt there is a need to provide students with information on everyday life. Themes that came out in the study regarding the social curriculum’s need in students' educational experience included stress-management, coping mechanism, financial literacy, managing parenthood and education and a better understanding of life and business in general.

All participants noted that the social curriculum is essential in their educational journeys and helps them deal with their struggles in life. The feminist poststructuralist investigation upsets that which is taken as unquestionable truth. Not only do the women evolve in their interactions, but the meaning of each interaction changes over

space, time and context (Davies & Gannon, 2005:319). The practical advice and examples help them cope better with their struggles in the different areas of their lives. Six participants gave tangible examples of the role of the social curriculum in dealing with the struggles they face—the examples related to finances, entrepreneurship, interviews, career progression, and increasing emotional intelligence.

5. 5. 3 Sub-question 3: To what extent will additional modules on practical aspects of their lives support women in dealing with the challenges they face?

For the women to reach their aspirations, they do require support. Seven participants linked their future aspirations to their children's well-being or success, indicating the need to be good mothers and provide their children with a legacy. The researcher identified themes regarding further education, knowledge, skills and entrepreneurship. All participants felt that the social curriculum gave them a better chance of obtaining these goals and referred to the social curriculum as an introduction or steppingstone. The social support theory refers to the social resources the women perceive to be available or that are available to them in the context of informal relationships and formal support (Cohen et al., 2000:4). The participants felt that the institution supports them better by providing extra information on navigating life better.

Four of the women mentioned the support of their husbands; one participant mentioned the support of her boss, five participants indicated the support of their families, and three mentioned that they had no support. The researcher noted the extent of the perceived support Par 3, Par 4 and Par 5 felt from the institution and social curriculum compared to the little social support they received from family and friends. An interesting observation made by the researcher was that although Par 4 indicated that she did receive support from the institution, she could not meet all the requirements. Par 4 also mentioned that she focused only on the house, kids and family when she was home and on work when she was there and that it was difficult, but she also mentioned that she became used to it. This posed the question of whether it is possible to segregate these roles. Why couldn't she meet the requirements if she did manage to separate her work, studies and home life? Moreover, does the institution’s support alone assist in meeting the demands of everyday life or does familial support play a more prominent role?

5. 5. 4 Sub-question 4: How can a value-added social curriculum empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution?

All participants noticed a positive change after engaging in the social curriculum. The researcher noted that changes included increased confidence, empowerment in finances, social media decisions, self-care, career advancement, entrepreneurial endeavours, stress-management, personal and mental development, increased hope, and more open-mindedness. The women, therefore, all indicated that they would recommend the social curriculum to other mothers due to the valuable information that assisted them in dealing with everyday stresses, especially during the COVID pandemic and gave them a better understanding of life. However, there was an underlining “caution” included by the women that the researcher observed, and that was that they would recommend the social curriculum to other mothers if, and only if, the mothers were willing to make time for it and were willing to commit to doing them to learn. Therefore, if students were going to engage in the social curriculum with the pure purpose of receiving the certificate of participation, it would not yield the benefits it would if they were to engage with the social curriculum attentively.

All participants experienced the social curriculum as practical and informative. They have used the practical information in their finances, businesses and personal growth.

5. 5. 5 Main research question: HOW EFFECTIVE IS A VALUE-ADDED SOCIAL CURRICULUM IN EMPOWERING WORKING MOTHERS STUDYING AT AN ODL INSTITUTION?

Based on the views of thirteen working student mothers studying at an HDEI and engaging in a value-added social curriculum, the study's findings exposed the effect such an initiative has on this student population. It was determined that the participants are lifelong learners and eager to learn no matter the challenges or constraints they face. The students are purpose and goal-driven and willing to absorb all new and applicable knowledge shared with them. Although overwhelmed by multiple roles, the women will take any opportunity to educate themselves further, whether in a formal or informal setting. In line with Marx’s second concept of productive labour, the women value their efforts in these multiple roles to add value to their own lives and the lives

of those around them, especially their children. All participants made positive changes to their lives using the practical information gained in the social curriculum and found the modules to be relevant to their current struggles. The women also viewed the social curriculum as an added support structure in assisting them to succeed in their studies. The researcher can thus conclude that the social curriculum is highly effective in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution, but only when they actively engage in the material and apply the knowledge to their everyday lives.

The limitations of the study are presented in the following section.

5. 6 LIMITATIONS

The dissertation of limited scope centred around the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum in empowering working student mothers. The study's limitations included the number of willing participants to be interviewed after completing the online questionnaire. The researcher found exciting themes in the answers provided by some of the participants who did not disclose their contact information that the researcher would have wanted to explore further. The study was also conducted through an institution that does not engage in research and has no research channels to work through. Thus finding ways to contact students limited the researcher’s scope of possible participants in the study. The researcher also had limited time to conduct the study due to the aforementioned issues.

5. 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's recommendations are based on the findings and specifically on the themes identified in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2), in line with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 (Section 2.6). In investigating whether a value-added social curriculum can empower working student mothers studying at an ODL institution, the findings during the online questionnaires and telephonic interviews yielded recommendations for institutions to support working student mothers with additional practical information on everyday life and how they can manage their struggles better.

5. 7. 1 Recommendations for institutions

Institutions can holistically support their students by providing additional content to enhance their students' real-world knowledge. The information provided in the life-related modules should be informative and practical to ensure the usability of the information. The modules should be short, concise and to the point. The information should be focused on one specific area with no unnecessary reading or elaboration. When institutions implement such an initiative, it should be adding value and not a compulsory part of their studies. Because every student's struggles are unique, they should have the choice of which modules they want and need to complete in order for them to empower themselves with the provided information. As soon as this becomes compulsory, students will do it with the mindset of *getting it done* rather than reaping the intended benefits of the social curriculum. It should be easily accessible online with no time limits to ensure students can complete them anytime and anywhere to ensure that students never miss the opportunity to learn from these modules. The content should apply to the current struggles and information needs of students. Therefore surveys need to be completed regularly to probe additional needs of students to ensure modules are developed with a purpose and not just to expand the portfolio of the social curriculum.

5. 7. 2 Recommendations for students

Students need to strive to be life-long learners, whether in a formal or informal setting. Through being life-long learners, students can take full advantage of the course areas in this value-added social curriculum. They should engage in introspection, acknowledge their shortcomings in their personal, professional and academic lives, and take advantage of the information provided to them. Students should actively engage in the modules to learn and gain the full scope of available information. They should not complete the modules with the pure aim of receiving a certificate of participation. Apart from just receiving the information and practical applications of each area, the students should apply these principles and steps to their lives in order for the modules to positively impact their lives. To expand the portfolio and applicability of the social curriculum, they should also take the time to complete the feedback surveys to inform the institution of struggles or information needs that are not covered in the social curriculum.

5. 8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The dissertation of limited scope was a study conducted at one HDEI, including 13 student working mothers engaged in a value-added social curriculum. The researcher recommends that further research on other populations in the student body be conducted to examine the effects of a value-added social curriculum on all types of students. In addition, further research can be conducted on the specific information needs students studying through an ODL institution have and what additional course areas or modules would empower them in their lives, careers and studies. Additional research can also be conducted to establish the effects of the social curriculum on students prior, during and after completion of the modules to establish the long-term outcome of providing students with practical life skills and determine the differences in finances, career, well-being, entrepreneurship and digital literacy between those who did participate versus students who did not engage in the social curriculum. Finally, research should further explore work-life initiatives for higher education institutions to ensure that quality resources are available to students to shape a beneficial work-study-life culture (Bryan & Wilson, 2015:51).

5. 9 CONCLUSION

The study aimed to determine the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum in empowering working mothers studying at an ODL institution. First, chapter 5 gives the reader an overview of the research study by summarising the literature and empirical study. Then, a synthesis of the research findings discussed the contradictions and similarities of the study findings compared to the literature. Finally, a conclusion on the findings was presented with limitations and recommendations for institutions and students and further research.

Work and life challenges are real, and institutions must react to these challenges to enable success and value for students. Thus, although the research is focused on working mothers, we should not view the value-added social curriculum in the sole province of working mothers but as a broad intervention that benefits all students regardless of gender, ethnicity, age or employment status. With feminism facilitating the belief that women can "have it all", the notion that having a career and family are attainable if they are determined to make it work has become popular. Therefore, there

is a need to equip working mothers with education to face the obstacles and challenges of working life and compete satisfactorily in the labour market. Additionally, formal and informal education is crucial for women to overcome the obstacles they face in exercising their rights within society and the economy and restore their identities and representation through education (Koko & Osuji, 2018:211). Education is the starting point for advancement in any sector, and ODL has increasingly endorsed a resolution for deprived groups, like women, to get the information needed for advancement (Munawar & Akhter, 2017:70). The rigidness of traditional education systems was a hindering factor for student mothers to manage their roles simultaneously. Distance education is a multi-dimensional approach that attracts employees, wives and mothers from all over the country to engage in educational activities autonomously (Mahsud, Akram & Ahmad, 2018:3). It is an option for women who find it challenging to balance their professional and non-professional roles (Russum, 2019:125).

Due to the numerous life commitments many working women face, online learning can provide women with career development prospects. The flexibility, cost-effectiveness, time-saving and location-independent education offer an ideal environment for women to develop their strengths while working on their limitations, challenges and prospects for the workplace (Sixl-Daniell & Wong, 2015:5). Ananchenkova and Kuznetsov (2017:329) explain how distance education benefits women by allowing them the opportunity to acquire their desired professional level through remote and convenient learning times according to their children's regimes. The relatively fixed and socialised gender roles regarding women's education and the attitudes surrounding a woman's place in the home still linger, although changes in women's labour market participation and marriage patterns undermine these views and female positions of power (Eden, 2017:21). Women find value through a sense of belonging and confidence in their academic abilities. However, these aspects can be remarkably elusive to them in the unfamiliarity of Higher Education.

Therefore, institutions implement policies and practices to support students from diverse groups to partake positively in Higher Education, which often consists of initiatives to expand intellectual confidence and belonging (Mozley et al., 2020:65). The study revealed that providing working student mothers with additional practical information and modules on everyday life empowers them to face the challenges they

experience in managing their roles. The women view such an initiative as additional support from their institution that they can use as a steppingstone in bettering their lives. After engaging in the social curriculum, multiple positive and real-life applications emphasised the need for institutions to provide holistic support to students rather than only providing them with academic support.

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APPENDIX A: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNISA university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/08/11

Ref: **2021/08/11/48402346/12/AM**
Name: Mrs JM Van der Merwe
Student No.:48402346

Dear Mrs JM Van der Merwe

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2021/08/11 to 2024/08/11

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs JM Van der Merwe
E-mail address: 48402346@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 081 277 8820

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof. G van den Berg
E-mail address: vdberg@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 429 4895

Title of research:

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A VALUE-ADDED SOCIAL CURRICULUM TO EMPOWER WORKING MOTHERS STUDYING AT AN ODL INSTITUTION

Qualification: MEd ODL

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/08/11 to 2024/08/11.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/08/11 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/08/11**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2021/02/10/90160487/12/AM** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
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Prof PM Sebate
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APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM INSTITUTION

RESPONSE TO THE APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL OF
CONFIDENTIAL RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN RESPONDENTS

iQ Academy hereby acknowledges the application for ethical clearance as set out above by the researcher:

Name and Surname	Jennifer Michelle van der Merwe
Student Number	48402346
Institution	UNISA
Telephone Number	012 333 0596
Cellphone Number	081 277 8820
Email Address	Jennifer900119@gmail.com
Postal Address	1204 Mvuli Street, Moregloed, Pretoria, 0186

After consideration by iQ Academy and its Ethical Committee the following has been decided:

1. We grant the ethical approval needed to conduct the study.	
2. We decline the ethical approval needed to conduct the study.	
3. We grant the ethical approval needed, with stipulations.	✓

Stipulations (if applicable):
Approval is subject to no reference being made to the company or it's employees

Signed by:

Ernst Kriek (CEO) Date: 08 / 10 / 2020

Danie Vlok (Academic Head) Date: 14 / 09 / 2020

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Mass Message:

Research is currently being conducted on the effectiveness of the DO LIFE modules on empowering students, focusing on working mothers. If you have engaged in the DO LIFE modules and are willing to partake in the study (whether you are a mother or not), please click on the link – https://forms.gle/ff4oPDBjkAu8y5Bw5

Dear Prospective Participant,

You are invited to participate in a questionnaire conducted by Jennifer van der Merwe under the supervision of Geesje van den Berg a Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, towards a Med in Open Distance Learning at the University of South Africa.

The survey you have received has been designed to study the effectiveness of a value-added social curriculum (Do Life) to empower working mothers studying at an ODL institution. You were selected to participate in this survey because you are a registered student at iQ Academy and have completed Do Life modules. By completing this survey, you agree that the information you provide may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

It is anticipated that the information we gain from this survey will help us determine if the Do Life modules effectively empower working mothers. You are, however, under no obligation to complete the survey, and you can withdraw from the study before submitting the survey. The survey is developed to be anonymous, meaning that we will have no way of connecting the information that you provide to you personally except if you make yourself available to be interviewed telephonically/electronically. If you make yourself available to be interviewed, your personal information will be safeguarded by the researcher and not shared or disclosed to anyone according to law.

Should you choose not to disclose your contact details for a follow-up telephonic/electronic interview, you will not be able to withdraw from the study once you have clicked the send button based on the anonymous nature of the survey. If you choose to participate in this survey, it will take up no more than 15 minutes of your time. You will not benefit from your participation as an individual; however, it is envisioned that the findings of this study may give insight into how a social curriculum like Do Life can empower working mothers studying through an ODL institution. We do not foresee that you will experience any negative consequences by completing the survey. The researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of our possession and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual. The electronic records will be kept for five years for audit purposes; whereafter, they will be permanently destroyed.

The research was reviewed and approved by the UNISA Ethics Review Committee. The primary researcher, Jennifer van der Merwe, can be contacted during office hours at 081 277 8820. The study leader, Prof. G van den Berg, can be contacted during office hours at 012 429 4895. Alternatively, you can report any serious unethical behaviour at the University's Toll-Free Hotline 0800 86 96 93.

You are deciding whether or not to participate by continuing to the next page. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time before clicking the send button.

APPENDIX D: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

https://forms.gle/ff4oPDBjkAu8y5Bw5

1. Age:
2. Ethnicity:
3. Sex:
4. In which Province are you located?
5. Have you completed any of the Do Life modules? (If no, end of questionnaire)

QUESTIONS applicable to any respondent:

1. Please select the DO LIFE modules you have completed from the list below.
2. Do you think there is a need to provide students with additional units of study related to everyday life? Explain your answer?
3. Do these modules help you deal with the struggles you face in life? Why?
4. How effective are the DO LIFE modules in providing you with practical information that you can use?
5. Please list the personal benefits you have derived from completing the DO LIFE modules?
6. Would you still be able to find time to engage in the DO LIFE modules if you had limited time available? Why?
7. Are you a parent? (If not a mother or currently expecting, end of questionnaire)
8. How many children do you have?
9. Age of child/children?
10. What does motherhood mean to you?
11. What are your future aspirations?
12. Do the DO LIFE modules and your studies give you a higher chance of reaching your future goals?
13. Employment status: (If not employed part time or full time, end of questionnaire)

QUESTIONS applicable to working student mothers:

14. How do you, as a working mother, furthering your education, perceive the pressure to work and study like you have no children and to raise children like you do not work or study? Explain.
15. How would you describe your sense of self as a working mother and student? How does this affect your state of mind?
16. As a woman with multiple roles, do these modules help you deal with the high demand on time and resources you face, or did it place a higher demand on you? Why?
17. How did you find the time to complete the modules with family, study and work responsibilities?
18. Describe the support system you have in place at home and work?
19. Does the institution provide you with the necessary support needed to be successful in your studies? Explain.
20. Did you notice any changes in self, motherhood, career, and studies after engaging in the social curriculum?
21. What are the societal and cultural views on women studying, working, and raising children in your context? How does this enable or hinder you from attaining your future goals?
22. What are the limitations or barriers, you as a mother, face?
23. Would you recommend the DO LIFE modules to other working mothers? If yes, why?
24. Would you be available for a telephonic/electronic discussion on the answers you provided?
    a. Name and surname:
    b. Telephone number:
    c. Email address:

APPENDIX E: TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TELEPHONIC/ELECTRONIC INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Good day (name), my name is Jennifer van der Merwe. How are you?

The reason for my call today is to discuss your responses in the independent research on the DO LIFE modules offered by iQ Academy. You indicated that you would be available for this interview. Do you still consent to this?

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study which would help us better understand the struggles of working mothers and how to better assist them in empowering themselves. Please note that this interview is being recorded.

(The questions and further discussion will be based on the types of information given by the participant in the questionnaire).

Thank you again for your time; please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at 0812778820. Have a fantastic day further and good luck with your studies and the future.

APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

1. Do you think there is a need to provide students with additional units of study related to everyday life? Explain your answer?

Very important.

When I started doing the do life courses, I learned a lot. At first, I was not paying my debts, and I spent my salary within a day. So when I started doing the do life courses, I started budgeting, paying and making arrangements for my debts, settling some other accounts, opening a company, opening my own business and getting offices in town. I have to buy supplies now for the company, but because of the budgeting, I can buy them as I can and on credit

2. How effective are the DO LIFE modules in providing you with practical information that you can use?

I think they are fine, and I do not feel they should change anything; the short modules give you enough information. Like I did not know the difference between assets and depreciation, and the long-term investment of a house vs a short-term investment like a car.

3. Are there any other benefits you have experienced?

With the do life modules, a cousin could not go to school, I introduced him to these modules, and he managed to get two certificates which he is going to put on his CV underachievement. My kid told me that the teacher was asking them something in class, and I could give her the answer, so even my children benefit from the information I am giving to them that was provided to me by the institution through these modules. Furthermore, what I like about it is that it is for free, you get the certificate, and you can add it to your CV as an achievement.

4. How did you find the time to complete the modules with family, study and work responsibilities? Also family support

So I started these modules when I started with my formal course. I would do them after work when I finish all my housework, then after that, I check the app and take a few minutes to do them, or after lunch when I am bored. Sometimes I do it with the kids,

and that is how they could give answers to their teachers because even when we are sitting watching TV, my children would ask me to borrow my phone to do a module today. I would be reading with the kids, and they would be giving me answers. If we got it wrong, we would reread the module. So it became a family thing, and my husband would also say that now he is bored, he wants to join the kids and me. Even my 13-year-old wanted to join, but I told her to wait a little bit, let her cousin finish them first, and they could assist their cousin in doing the modules.

5. What does motherhood mean to you?

As a mother, I bought my children a piggy bank and started teaching them how to save because when I missed your first call, we were actually at the mall, and they were using their own money, not my money. They were using the money we had been saving for them with the R5 or R10 we gave them. This morning they wanted to go to the mall to use their saved money. My oldest had R1300, the youngest had R800, and the other one only had R600, so we had to add for him because the eldest was spending a lot. We went to the bank to exchange the coins for notes. They could buy clothes and still had money to go and play some games at the mall. So now they are learning from saving. Even with my husband, who was buying 12 bottles of alcohol a day, I told him that we could buy bricks with that money, and he could still drink on weekends and buy bricks Monday to Friday. How will the kids learn if we are not good role models by buying booze and not saving, so everyone starts saving?

6. What are your future aspirations? You said you want to build a legacy for yourself and your children; can you elaborate on that?

My parents were entrepreneurs. When they passed away, they did not leave us with anything, so my father had a policy we used for finishing school, and no one was waking us up to go to school—so building this security company for my children so that they can rely on that company and look up to me and say mama you did it. So although I do not know what will happen to them, some will finish school, and some might not, and if they do not find jobs, they can come to the company and continue with what I am building now.

Some of my family members did not believe in me and said I would fail. Now that they see me and see that I could do this, they said okay and have input now, but they did

not support me initially. When you have a goal or a plan, you also need a deadline to achieve that goal.

7. What are the societal and cultural views on women studying, working, and raising children in your context? How does this enable or hinder you from attaining your future goals?

In my area, I am a strong woman. If you find an orphan, they would tell you I have five children with different fathers; I did not go to school, if my mother were here, I would have done this and done that. My mother passed when I was doing standard 5, and I think grade 7, if I am not mistaken. And my father passed when I was doing standard 7. It is grade 9. Then no one ever told you, no one woke you up in the morning to tell us to go to school. We told each other that we wanted to finish school, and we were not going to fight the family for inheritance because some were fighting for it. So we said we would go to school and build our own thing to leave it for our children. It was a lesson. They did not leave us with anything, my father had a business, but they took everything. So, the lesson was that you should write everything down to ensure that the things you have go to the right people in life. In my society, you see young girls dating old guys to get cash to go out and drink. I do not even drink or have friends, which is a good thing because, in life, you have to work for everything and know where the money comes from. They do not know where the cash comes from by dating these men. So I have to start my own thing to buy what I need. I think work for what you have and work hard to achieve more.

I am not sure what these women think of me, but I know I inspire my children, do not go out a lot, and do not have friends, so people do not know me. However, my children know me and are looking at what I am achieving and what I am changing, and those children are seeing me want to be like that.

8. What are the limitations or barriers you face as a mother?

I am lucky because I have done many things with different courses at different institutions. With those modules, I do not know how I am doing everything, but I received all my tuition money back for my first course in which I received 100% and decided to take that money and enrol for a second certificate. So I am reading all the time, but I still manage to do it and play with my children. So I think I am lucky because others are struggling more than I am.

9. Describe the support system you have in place at home and work?

I would still have done it without the support of my family. I told myself I would finish school and build something for my children. Whether they were supporting me or not, I would have done it, I intend to do it for my children and provide for them, but it is also something I like and want for myself. I am adding strength, and without education, you cannot succeed in life.

APPENDIX G: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

AD VERBUM
Pure Language...Pure Excellence

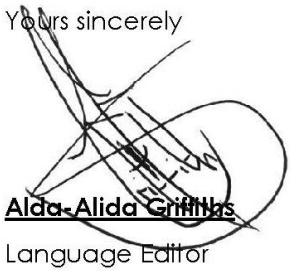
CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

24 January 2022

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that editing and proofreading had been done for the **Master's** dissertation: **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A VALUE-ADDED SOCIAL CURRICULUM TO EMPOWER WORKING STUDYING MOTHERS AT AN ODL INSTITUATION** submitted to **Ad Verbum** by **Jennifer Michelle van der Merwe**.

Yours sincerely



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