CHALLENGES FACED BY ADULT LEARNERS IN A TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE IN THE UTHUKELA DISTRICT OF KWAZULU-NATAL SOUTH AFRICA

by

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DECLARATION

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation in loving memory of my late family. My father, my hero Premlah Mohan, who taught me to value of education. My aunt Shelah Mohan, who's role was a supportive mother that shaped me into the person, I am today. And last but not least my brother Ashley Mohan, the humblest person I had the honour of knowing.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the challenges that adult learners are facing in a TVET college in the uThukela District in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa.

The researcher employed the qualitative research technique approach to guide this study, which was carried out on-site at a TVET college. Participants were selected using the purposeful sampling method and the data was collected from participants via semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed using the thematic analysis method, from which themes and subthemes were derived to support the findings of the study. Prominent scholars such as Malcolm Knowles's theory on andragogy and Mezirow's transformative learning theory was used to form the framework of the research.

Most adult learners attending the TVET college do so with the hope of improving their lives, as many of them come from low-socio economic backgrounds. TVET colleges release the financial burden of studying on learners, by offering bursaries for them to complete their studies. Additionally, adult learners attend TVET colleges because the curriculum offered in the courses are supposed to be more practically oriented. However, these very reasons that compelled adult learners to attend the TVET college, created its own challenges.

The study revealed that the major challenges facing adult learners in the TVET college were as a result of financial constraints due to late bursary payments, adult learning styles, academic barriers and family responsibilities. These challenges in turn exacerbated absenteeism, a lack of focus during teaching and learning and led to a lack of academic motivation and interest.

In lieu of the fact that most of the adult learners rely upon the bursary, the study recommends that the parties that are managing bursary payments adhere to timeously scheduled payments. Furthermore, lecturers need to be capacitated in order to respond to the different learning styles of adult learners. Additionally, adult education

workshops on how to reconcile family obligations and academic pursuits are a resource that student support services can employ.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET	Adult Educational Centre
CETC	Community Education and Training Colleges
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HET	Higher Education and Training
NCV	National Certificate Vocational
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PALC	Public Adult Learning Centres
SASA	South African Schools Act
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction and background

This dissertation focused on investigating the challenges that adult learners faced while studying in a Technical Vocational and Education and Training (TVET) college, located in the uThukela District in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. This chapter explores the justification for the investigation, the research problem, and the goals and objectives of the study. The researcher provides a summary of the study's methodology and research design. The study's research question is also indicated by the researcher. The researcher also provides a brief outline of the study.

The researcher is a full-time employee and has been working in the higher education sector for over a period of time, and observed an increase in the number of adults enrolling to and attending the particular TVET college. Chong, Ding and Ho (2015) assert that adult learners are embracing higher education more especially due to the widespread need to upgrade their education in recent years. Furthermore, Chong et.al., articulates that the number of adult learners has dramatically increased and the popularity of and interest in adult education has spread throughout many nations. Williams (2016) supports the view that indeed, there has been a growth in the number of adult learners attending institutions of higher education. Intriguingly, so far, not much has been published on the challenges faced by the adult learners who attend some of the institutions of higher education. Therefore, this researcher investigated and documented findings on challenges that were faced by adult learners who were students in a selected TVET college in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa.

The education system in South Africa is structured into three parts that is, General Education and Training (GET), Further Education and Training (FET/TVET), and Higher Education and Training (HET). These clusters are further divided into levels and sectors. Of the three, TVET colleges offer an instructional methods or approaches called the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) and is aligned to levels two, three, and four of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (UNESCO,

2014). In order for students to qualify for a National Certificate (Vocational) which are offered in South African TVET colleges, they need to have passed Grade 9 that is, Grades 10, 11, and 12 are not compulsory for learners. TVET colleges were formed largely through merging fifty (50) of the erstwhile Technical colleges that were mandated by the Further Education and Training Act, No. 98 of 1998. The resultant TVET colleges are directly under the custodianship of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (Akoojee, 2009). Data shown by the DHET (see FIGURE 1.1) reveal that a total of 705,397 learners had enrolled in TVET colleges in the 2016 academic year. 635 247 of these learners were between the ages of 20 – 40 years (DHET, 2016).

FIGURE 1.1 Number of student headcount enrolment in TVET colleges in 2016, categories are: qualification category and age group.

Qualification Category	<15	15 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 39	≥40	Total
NC(V)	2	15 916	111 196	40 543	6 976	1 864	764	177 261
Report 191 (N1-N6)	3	50 507	298 573	89 503	30 639	13 183	9 618	492 026
Occupational Qualifications	2	1 285	4 702	2 874	1 796	1 111	1872	13 642
Other	4	2 431	8 980	5 283	2 664	1 224	1 882	22 468
Total	11	70 139	423 451	138 203	42 075	17 382	14 136	705 397

Source: TVETMIS 2016, data extracted in January 2018.
Note 1:   Report 191 refers to the NATED programmes, N1 to N6. It is a part-qualification.
Note 2:   NC(V) refers to the National Certificate (Vocational) Levels 2-4.
Note 3:   "Occupational Qualifications" are those qualifications associated with a trade, occupation or profession, resulting from work-based learning and consisting of knowledge, practical and work experience components. Accreditation by a SETA (and QCTO) is linked to these qualifications.
Note 4:   "Other" refers to all other programmes offered d in TVET colleges, for example skills development and short courses. It also includes programme enrolment numbers that were misreported.

[SOURCE:https://www.dhet.gov.za/DHET%20Statistics%20Publication/Statistics%20on%20PostSchool%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa%202016.pdf]

According to Silliman and Schleifer (2018), there is a significant number of adults that have either not completed high school, college or university. As a result, the basic and higher education system has made strides to assist them to complete their education and such initiatives are crucial as they contribute towards South Africa's development. Tawiah and Ngmenkpieo (2018:57) assert that Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programmes were intended for "educationally disadvantaged individuals". Keeping this in mind, ABET programmes in South Africa offer a second opportunity to some adults who did not complete their education levels to do so through studying to acquire skills in various occupational and entrepreneurship programmes (Danke & Mkhize, 2021).

Despite the positive role they play in the lives and economy, Aitchison and Land (2019) draws attention to the fact that for a long time, South Africa's adult educational systems have been neglected and as a result, lack the basic support. Danke and Mkhize (2021) accentuate that the neglect has occurred due to a number of reasons including the lengthy time it is taking to address social injustices left by the apartheid system as well as the current administration's limited transformational and emancipatory approach to ABET. Unfortunately, these have caused certain negative learning experiences. The negative learning experiences have consequently led to many adults deciding not to enrol in ABET programmes while some of those who do, drop out in large numbers (Rakoma & Schulze, 2015). Therefore, many adults in South Africa are left with no form of skills or education and have turned to TVET colleges to gain these skills to compete in the labour market.

1.2. Rationale for the study

The purpose of this research was to investigate the challenges that adult learners faced in the selected TVET college. The researcher has been employed in this sector for more than ten years and during this time, witnessed contrasting trends on registration: first, there was an increase in the number of adults enrolled at the college, however, this was followed by an increase in the number of drop outs or students who did not meet the requirements to complete their studies. On face value, one could say that the decrease in enrolment could be caused by various challenges that are faced by adult learners. By their nature, adults have certain characteristics that are associated with them as an adult, however, some of these very characteristics could be seen as a challenge to them. Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoç and Cagiltay (2019), agree that the distinctive characteristics of an adult learner tend to pose educational challenges for them. This research sheds light into the particular and at times unique or rarely reported challenges faced by adult learners studying at the selected TVET college. This can benefit other adult learners, educators and policy makers so that they would make informed decisions on how to cope, teach or effect changes in TVET colleges. In particular, such studies could reveal new data that could be useful to educators such that they become aware of the challenges experienced by adult learners and therefore be able to alter their approaches in teaching to adopt some that accommodate and/or support adult learners.

1.3. Research problem

Adult learners attend TVET colleges to acquire an education or a skill that would enable them to gain entry into the labour market and/or to start their own businesses. As Spaull (2013) asserts, people between the ages of 18 - 24 years who do not have some form of post-secondary education struggle to find full-time employment thus rendering them economically destitute. Most adult learners that attend TVET colleges do so largely because they have no other means of acquiring an education or skill. However, once studying in TVET colleges, many face challenges which unfortunately go unnoticed and therefore not addressed. Some of these challenges are so impactful that some of these learners leave the system feeling dissatisfied, at times even with their achievements. It was on this background that this research study was conducted, to evaluate and report some of the challenges that are faced by adult learners in one of the TVET colleges in South Africa.

1.4. Research design and methodology

The researcher focused more on the humanistic aspect in the research and therefore used the qualitative research method. Pathak, Jena, and Kalra, (2013:192) affirm that qualitative research strives to understand "people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions". These beliefs and practices are then interpreted in meaningful contexts by qualitative researchers as they believe that social reality is created by humans (Baskarada, 2014). The researcher collected data directly from adult human participants who responded to questions while in the natural setting that is, the TVET college as MacMillan and Schumacher (2014) stresses that when using the qualitative research approach, data ought to be collected in the natural settings of the interviewee.

1.4.1. Population and Sampling

MacMillan and Schumacher (2014) assert that a research population can be referred to as a group of entities that have a particular criterion that researchers intend on making generalisations about, also known as a target group. In the case of this study, the researcher's target group consisted of ten (10) adult learners from

a TVET college, who were eighteen (18) years and older, and comprised males and females.

The researcher employed the purposeful sampling method given that the participants were selected based on certain characteristics required for participation in this research study. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) maintains that purposeful sampling is based on the idea of focusing on persons with specific qualities that would be of a particular use and assist on a certain research study.

1.4.2. Data collection tools

Semi-structured interviews were used as a method to collect data from the participants. McIntosh and Morse (2015) assert that semi-structured interviews are made to obtain people's subjective reactions to a specific circumstance or occurrence that they would have encountered. The researcher used an interview guide approach which allowed for the setting and selecting of certain the questions beforehand. Therefore, the format of the semi-structured interview was guided by the set interview questions and centred around the responses of each participant (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

1.5. Research aim and objectives

Aim

The aim of this study was to explore the challenges faced by adult learners in the TVET college.

Objectives

 The aims of the study were accomplished through the following objectives:

- To identify the challenges faced by adult learners enrolled at the TVET college.
- To determine what coping mechanisms were used by adult learners to overcome their challenges.
- To recommend strategies to assist adult learners to overcome their challenges.

1.6. Research questions

Main research question

- What challenges do adult learners who study in a TVET college face?

 Sub questions

- How do these challenges affect adult learners in their studies?
- What coping mechanisms are adult learners using to overcome their challenges?
- What strategies can be recommended to assist adult learners overcome their challenges?

1.7. Overview of the study

This research inquiry comprises of five chapters which are structured as follows:

Chapter one: Overview of the study

Chapter one (1) introduced the background and context of the research study as well as the motivation behind the study. The researcher also described the research problem and provided an overview of the research design and methodology used in the study. To conclude, the research aim and objectives as well as the research question and sub-questions were listed.

Chapter two: Literature review

Chapter two (2) synopsises published literature that is related to the study which frames it theoretically. Also, the researcher discussed the background of adult learners and in other sections, described their challenges.

Chapter three: Research methodology

The researcher discussed the research design and methodology used in the study. It was explained how the participants were selected and described the methods used to collect the data. The approaches that were used to uphold the research ethics and the strategies that were implemented to ensure the credibility and validity

of the study were explained by the researcher. Lastly, the chapter was concluded with details on how the data was analysed.

Chapter four: Data analysis and presentation

In this chapter, the researcher analysed the data that was collected from the participants and interpreted it. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrated how the data was coded as well as explained how themes and subthemes were derived from the interviews with the participants.

Chapter five: Summaries, recommendations and conclusions

The researcher concluded the research study in this chapter. This chapter provided a summary of the findings in chapter four (4) and made recommendations based on related studies.

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter included the research's: background and context, rationale, problem, design and methodology, as well as the main research question and sub questions. The chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters for this dissertation. A review of the published literature is given in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Preceding this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of the research study. In this chapter, the researcher explored literature on concepts that provided an outline of an adult learner, adult education learning theories and the challenges faced by adult learners. The literature on the educational learning theories was identified to contribute useful knowledge to the study, increase the understanding of it and to develop ties to the research. Alderman (2014) emphasises that a literature review is an important aspect of a research project and it is executed by evaluating previous research that has been conducted on a particular topic. Alderman further notes that the most important reason for effecting a literature review is to create a foundation on what is already known on a topic before further investigating it. The above statement has been reiterated by Hart (2018:3), a "literature review is the analysis, critical evaluation and synthesis of existing knowledge relevant to your research problem". A good research synthesis can provide researchers with the most dependable answers to particular review questions and identify gaps in information that require further investigation (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016).

"Adult education has never been more important or urgent than it is today" (Jesson and Newman (2020:1). Many South Africans have been greatly disadvantaged in their education due to the inequalities largely meted out by the apartheid government. The apartheid system fragmented the education system in South Africa, leaving mostly people of African origin with low level skills (Danke & Mkhize, 2021). According to Danke and Mkhize, although the country has progressed through two decades after the demise of that system, the current government is still faced with challenges in shaping an education system that address the systemic legacies.

Danke and Mkhize (2021), posit that the premise for the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) system was to educate particularly historically disadvantaged and marginalised adults who were illiterate, semi-literate and who came from low socio-economic backgrounds. Akoojee (2016) asserts that historically, basic adult literacy and numeracy were traditionally offered at Adult Education Centre's (AETs) also

known as ABET Centre's and at Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) which, as of 2013 are now known as Community Education and Training Colleges (CETs). However, these CET colleges are few and far in between thus limiting access and paving the way for learners to access Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions instead.

2.2. Concept of an adult

The researcher has noted from previous literature that there are several different definitions of an adult and it differs based on the society a person belongs to as well as the country they reside in. On the one hand, Merriam and Brockett (2011) assert that if adulthood is defined by biological age, then there are many cultures that would consider puberty as an admittance into adulthood and that legal definitions of adulthood are usually based on the age of an individual. Merriam and Brockett also mention that adulthood is deliberated by a socio-cultural construction, meaning that who an adult is, is determined by a particular society and culture at a specific time. However, Hubackova and Semradova (2014) indicate that the social definition of an adult would be a person who has accepted new roles socially with regards to their occupation, starting a family, and on a psychological level refers to the adult's conduct, thought and life experiences.

On the other hand, Tight (2012) contends that an adult can be merely defined in terms of age and that the age of adulthood differs from country to country whereby in industrialised countries, adulthood is legally defined in terms of age and in developing countries, it may be a situation of local cultural tradition. Similarly, in South Africa, adulthood is determined by the age of the person. According to the Children's Act of 38 of 2005, Section 17, a child, whether male or female, is considered an adult once they have reached the age of eighteen (18).

2.3. Concept of an Adult learner

According to Falasca (2011), literature is abounding with various definitions of an adult learner and these are based on the different perceptions from academics who derive such opinions by concentrating on certain aspects of an adult. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have documented that an adult learner is a person who is considered an adult by the

society to which they belong. Adults can engage in a learning process to develop their skills, improve their knowledge or develop their technical or professional qualifications (Martínez de Morentin de Goñi, 2006). Deschacht and Goeman (2015) highlight that an adult learner is a person who has re-joined the education system after a period of being away and differs from the traditional learner due to work or family responsibilities.

Hubackova and Semradova (2014) offer a contrasting view and assert that adult learners differentiate themselves from traditional learners by having attained certain qualities in life. Such qualities include a definite level of maturity socially, being level-headed, having stability in life, embedded with a sense of values and being practical about having genuine goals (Hubackova & Semradova, 2014). Additionally, Kapur (2015) articulates that an adult learner can be described as a person that is socially acceptable as an adult by the society they live in, who is engaged in some form of a structured learning process, be it formal or informal. Kapur also quotes Knowles (1984) who expresses adult learners as being self-directing.

2.4. Adult learners as self-directed learners

Tennant (2019) has affirmed that self-directed learning is part of the vital foundation for an adult learner. Tennant (2019:7) states that self-directed learning is related to terms such as "learner-centeredness, independent learning, self-teaching, autonomy, freedom and need meeting", which describes the emergent character of an adult learner. Morris (2019a) maintains that self-directed learning empowers adult learners to adjust to challenging social changes and prepares them for the occupational world, with Morris (2019b) echoing that social conditions are changing at a rapid rate.

According to Loeng (2020), self-directed learning involves the learners taking initiative for their learning and being responsible in setting goals for themselves. Morris (2019b) states that one of the key features of self-directed learning is that goals are based on the individual and the circumstances at that point in their life. Furthermore, Robinson and Persky (2020) describe self-directed learning as an opportunity that enables learners to choose the information they want to become skilled in. Loeng asserts that self-directed learning can happen either inside or out

of an educational establishment and maintains that educators must act as facilitators as opposed to transmitters. Tennant (2019) posits that adult educators have a responsibility to help adult learners improve their skills. Keeping this mind, adult learners have unique characteristics that requires them to obtain knowledge differently from the traditional learner and therefore have different learning styles.

2.5. Learning styles of adult learners

Biabani and Izadpanah (2019) maintain that learning styles can have serious effects on the learning processes of an adult learner and is dependent on individual variances. Seiler (2011) argues that adult learners learn in diverse ways, and it would be ineffective to offer teaching that would only suit one learning style. Seiler accentuates the importance of educators accepting the different learning styles and creating a learning situation that offers the best education to all learners. David Kolb's experiential learning theory, which is a comprehensive theory of learning and adult development, underpins the learning styles model. Kolb developed the experiential learning theory that was a fundamental contributor to the education process and signified the four learning styles of adults known as: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating (ALQahtani & Al-Gahtani, 2014).

FIGURE 2.1 Summary of the four learning styles as illustrated by Kolb.

[Source:
https://www.eduolog.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Kolb-Learning-Cycle.png]
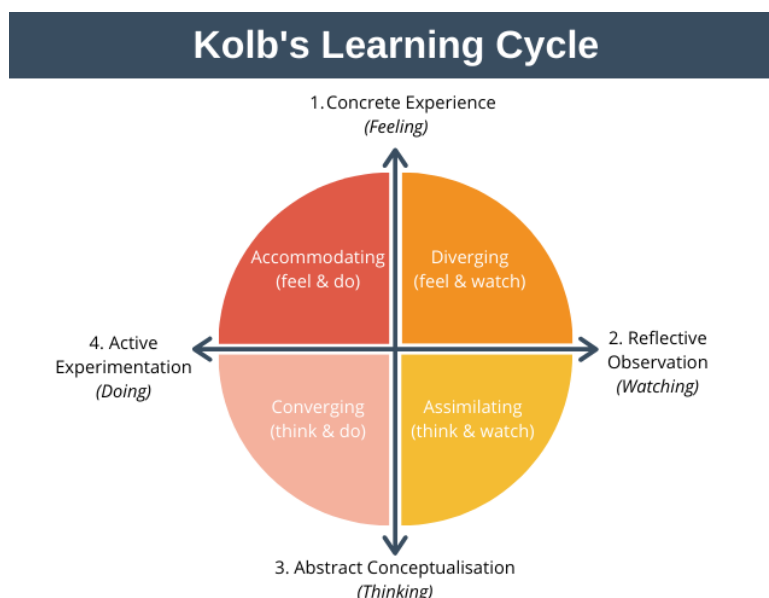
2.5.1. Diverging learning style

Chen (2015) suggests that learners in this learning domain are recognised for their thinking skills and often use their thoughts and feelings when establishing concepts. They are also known for obtaining information through their intuition and also rely on their imagination (Seiler, 2011). Ata and Cevik (2019) enunciates that divergent learners have different views on concrete situations and are more of observers and tend to take a long time to act in a situation. They emphasise that one of the negative aspects in this type of learning is that divergent learners tend to have difficulty when making decisions, making choices and are at times unable to access learning situations.

2.5.2. Assimilating learning style

According to Ibrahimoglu, Unaldi, Samancioglu, and Baglibel (2013), learners with this learning style have a high capability of making plans and solving problems. Adult learners tend to focus more on abstract ideas and use reasoning when understanding a problem (Gurpinar, Bati & Tetik, 2011). However, Ibrahimoglu et al., comment that much of the aforementioned capabilities depend on the educator because learners rely on the educator for their expertise and view them as the most important source in disseminating information.

2.5.3. Converging learning style

Seiler (2011) posits that a learner who possess a converging learning style is capable of thinking sensibly, concretely, remaining unemotional and are highly capable of applying their ideas practically. According to Chen (2015:97) convergent learners tend to perform excellently in "decision making, problem solving, logically analysing ideas and systematic planning."

2.5.4. Accommodating learning style

Ibrahimoglu, Unaldi, Samancioglu, and Baglibel (2013) assert that individuals with this learning style tend to have extensive leadership abilities with the ability to use interpersonal relationships and personal information in the learning process. ALQahtani and Al-Gahtani (2014) are of the opinion that, such learners are capable of recognising information through real experiences and processing it by action.

They are very open-minded and tend to easily adapt in situations (Ibrahimoglu et al., 2013).

2.6. Characteristics of an adult learner

As previously mentioned adult learners have certain character traits that make them unique as learners and different from the traditional learner which can influence their learning process. Cozma (2015) maintains that adult learners acquire knowledge differently from their younger counterparts and highlights the characteristics of an adult learner can either be favourable or challenging for the adult learner. Cozma classifies the characteristics of adult learners as cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural.

2.6.1. <u>Cognitive characteristics</u>

Cozma (2015) references Harmer (2007) who accentuates that adult learners have more complex cognitive abilities than a younger learner and are more capable of engaging in abstract thought. Conversely, Tennant (2019) contends that an adult learner's cognitive abilities are markedly lower compared to that of their younger counterparts and in particular, this is with regards to their ability to use and consolidate information which could be attributed to biologically deteriorating factors. However, Tennant also quotes Labouvie Vief (1977) who states that this deficiency is compensated by the life experiences accumulated by the adult.

Jameson and Fusco (2014) allude to Mezirow (2000) who states that adult learners engage in transformative learning which leaves them open to change and reflective thought. The researcher concurs that adult learners need to be in a certain state of mind especially, that which allows them to accept change because they have their own set of views and transformative learning provides that opportunity for them to embrace change. Kirstein, Schieber, Flores and Olswang, (2013) suggests that adult learners are more cognitively involved in their studies when they are required to exert more effort into completing challenging course materials, engage in critical thinking, and apply concepts to real-life cases. Falasca (2011) quotes Knowles (1980) who mentions that adult learners are more problem-centred in their learning rather than subject-centred. This is evident in adult learners as they use diverse learning approaches in assessments as opposed to the younger learner (Deggs,

2011). However, Deggs mentions that adult learners are not very confident in their cognitive abilities.

2.6.2. Attitudinal characteristics

Some of the very important aspects to successful learning are motivation and having a positive attitude. Sogunro (2015) confirms that adult learners learn best when they are motivated. Falasca (2011) cites Knowles (1980) who asserts that adult learners are motivated intrinsically. Ping, Shu-juan and Lin (2016) quote Lieb (1991) who posit that adult learners have particular goals about their lives or careers that they want to achieve by educating themselves. Therefore, whatever studies they undertake must be of interest to them (Ping, et al., 2016).

2.6.3. Behavioural characteristics

Adult learners have a need to be respected not only for their ideas but also as individuals in the learning environment. They are more disciplined than younger learners because they take the learning process more seriously and are willing to cooperate in class in order to achieve their educational goals more easily (Cozma, 2015).

2.7. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is a structure that underpins a research study. This framework refers to an existing theory that describes and explains the nature of the research problem. Osanloo and Grant (2016) describe a theoretical framework as the basis for the knowledge created in a research study and asserts that it provides a support structure for the research. For the purpose of this research, the researcher selected the following adult learning theories, andragogy by Malcolm Knowles (1970's), and Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1978), as the theoretical framework to form the foundation of the research study. The researcher chose the aforementioned learning theories because Mezirow's transformation learning theory showed how adult learners were able to modify their perceptions of the world and how it affected their learning, while Malcolm Knowles theory on andragogy focused on adult learning. These theories were explored further in the next sections.

2.8. Malcolm Knowles learning theory - Andragogy

Chan (2010) purports that the word andragogy has evolved throughout history. According to Henschke (2011), Malcolm Knowles attained the word 'andragogy' from Dusan Savicevic in 1966 and imbued it with his own meaning from his experience in adult education. Henschke posits that Malcolm Knowles effectively tested and developed his theory in several settings. Malcolm Knowles (1980:43) cited in Chan (2010:27) defines andragogy as the "art and science of helping adults learn", in contrast to pedagogy which is the art and science of helping children learn". Chan (2010) quotes Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) as well as Forrest and Peterson (2006) who contend that Malcolm Knowles's perception of andragogy was founded on six assumptions. These assumptions are known as self-concept, role of experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, internal motivation and a need to know why (Chan, 2010).

2.8.1. Self-concept

Cochran and Brown (2016) quotes Knowles (2005) who asserts that an adult's self-concept is based on them being responsible for their lives and for the decisions they make in their lives. In addition, Alajlan (2015) emphasises that an adult's self-concept motivates them to be self-directed and autonomous as learners. Greene and Larsen, (2018) posit that while seeking out opinions and information from others, a self-directed person is ultimately capable of making their own choices and accepting the consequences. The researcher supports this view that adult learners need to be responsible and make decisions about what they want to learn, where they want to learn and when they want to learn. However, not all students have the urge to be independent and self-directing when it comes to studying, which could provide difficulties. Alajlan confirms that there are learners who are more dependent on their facilitators and therefore self-directing is somewhat limited. He further makes reference to Knowles (1984) who articulates that adults have a psychological need to be seen by others as having the capability to be self-directed.

When an educational institute does not create an atmosphere that encourages learners to be self-directed and independent in their learning the learners become "dependent and passive" (Ozuah, 2016:84). Furthermore, Ozuah mentions that this

can lead to a role of dependency for adults which can manifest into feelings of conflict within the learner, between the prospect of being taught as a child or the psychological need to self-directed.

2.8.2. Role of experience

The life experiences that adult learners bring to classroom settings is what makes them poles apart from traditional learners. Chinnasamy (2013) purports that as adults grow and mature, they accumulate a wealth of life experiences that can contribute significantly to the educational situation for the learners and educators. Alajlan (2015) stresses that an adult learner's experiences should not be ignored by the educator as this would make them feel side-lined. Malik and Khaliq (2017) assert that new ideas and skills should be created based on the learner's experiences by using schema activation which can be facilitated by the educator pre-teaching, explaining concepts and group discussions. This is affirmed by Maddalena (2015:4) who articulates that "coaching provides the opportunity to evaluate what we have learned, what we should retain or change, and what we could learn".

Chinnasamy (2013) cites Knowles (1984) who claimed that learners learned best from each other's experiences, and so he encouraged learners to work together and facilitated group discussions between them. On the contrary, Malik and Khaliq (2017) state that instructors must only use a learner's experience that is relevant to a topic as it is imperative to understand that the length of the learner's life experience does not essentially equate to its richness.

2.8.3. Readiness to learn

Purwanti (2017) believes that adult learners are keen to learn and improve their skills. When adult learners make a sound decision to educate themselves, they are usually ready for the learning process and the enrichment it would add to their lives. Alajlan (2015) concurs that adult learners become motivated to learn when they are ready to learn and do not simply do it because they are told to do so by society or their parents. Adult learners develop a readiness for learning when the topic they are learning is relevant to them and they are certain that it would help them deal with their problems effectively in real-life situations (Ozuah, 2016). Sumule (2018)

suggests that an adult's readiness to learn is related to them developing according to their societal role to perform more efficiently in some part of their life. Purwanti suggests that when adult learners have reasons to learn, they become mindful of their learning orientation.

2.8.4. Orientation to learning

Alajlan (2015) purports that the significance of orientation to learning is for adults to adapt to the learning situation straightaway as the learning process in problem-centred as opposed to subject-centred. Cochran and Brown (2016) state that learners should be given realistic learning activities to engage in, as this is important for their success. Adult learners are motivated to learn when they know that the knowledge they are acquiring will assist them to face challenges in real-life situations (Ozuah, 2016). Therefore, according to Ozuah (2016:84), adults learn best when "new knowledge, skills and attitude are presented in the context of real-life situations".

2.8.5. Internal motivation

Purwanti (2017) states that adult learners are characterized by either internal or external motivators. Purwanti additionally mentions that as a person develops maturely, their motivation to learn becomes internal. Alajlan (2015) posits that adult learners are not required to be in the classroom, they have made a choice to be there. Therefore, learners need to be aware of their reasons for learning and associate it with internal or external motivators, as it is this motivation that drives them to pursue new studies (Purwanti, 2017). Although adults are internally motivated, the facilitators have to play a vital role in encouraging the learner. Facilitators can help motivate a learner by creating a positive environment for the learners and encouraging them to participate in their learning (Abdullah, Chamid & Khamim, 2021). Alajlan (2015:152-153) quotes Wlodkowski (2008) who states that the "five pillars of a motivating instructor are experience: the power of knowledge and preparation, empathy: the power of understanding and compassion, enthusiasm: the power of commitment and expressiveness, clarity: the power of organisation and language and cultural responsiveness: the power of respect and social responsibility". Adults need to feel acknowledged and respected as it helps to build self-esteem for them to reach their goals (Chinnasamy, 2013).

2.8.6. Need to know why

According to Cochran and Brown (2016) before an adult decides to learn, they need to know why. Adults also have to be aware of the worth of the material they are studying before they make the decision to study it (Ozuah, 2016). Ozuah quotes Tough (1979) who states that, adults put effort into determining the benefits of a particular learning programme as well as the consequences of not pursuing it. It is only sensible that adult learners would consider the value of a learning program because they would be investing time and energy into their studies considering all the other responsibilities and activities they are engaged in on a daily basis. Cochran and Brown (2016) mention that adults are motivated to learn when they have knowledge of what they are expected to learn. Abdullah, et al., (2021) advises that if facilitators explain the purpose of an assignment to adult learners with the end result, they will more likely be motivated to complete their tasks.

2.9. Criticism of Knowles theory of adult learning - Andragogy

Loeng (2018) mentions that there was an impression from practitioners that they had welcomed Knowles's theory on andragogy as they finally had a theory that was relevant to adult learning. However, Staff (2011) has mentioned that Malcom Knowles' theory on andragogy had received criticism from Brookfield (2003), who referred to it as "culture blind". Loeng quotes Sandlin (2005) who states that Knowles totally ignores that there is a relationship between the adult and society by not considering how race, gender and class affect the learning process. Knowles assumed that all people from different cultures have the same ideologies that are based on individualism, self-realization, independence and self-direction (Loeng, 2018). Furthermore, Clapper (2010:5) confirms that Knowles was also criticised for assuming that all adult learners approach learning in the same way and ignored the "systems of oppression" and how culture effects the learning process as well as development.

2.10. Mezirow's transformative learning theory

Brock (2010) asserts that the transformative learning theory has played a major role in the development of adult education, ever since it was offered by Jack Mezirow many years ago. According to Calleja (2014), Mezirow's original study was

purely concentrated on women who returned to formal education after a period of absence. Calleja highlights how this led to understanding how adults learn as well as the influence of prior learning on adult education. Illeris (2014:148) cites Mezirow (2006) who defines transformative learning as the "transformation of the learners' meaning perspectives, frames of reference, and habits of mind". Christie, Carey, Robertson, and Grainger (2015) further states that Mezirow's theory on transformative learning describes how adult learners make sense of their life experiences and how societal and other structures affect the way they interpret that life experience.

Staff (2011:2) quotes Mezirow (2000) who states that "transformative learning is a rational process", meaning that as adult learners debate on their notions about the world, that there is often a change in the way they view the world. However, Staff argues that in order for adult learners to change their views of the world, they need to be challenged and encouraged by other individuals before changing their views. Similarly, to the theory of Malcolm Knowles on Andragogy, adult educators that aspire to use Mezirow's transformative learning theory need to adhere to the following factors that include; creating an atmosphere that supports transformative learning, knowing the learners and the type of learning activities they are interested in, and using learning activities that would allow learners to explore their worldviews (Staff 2011). Watkins, Davis and Callahan (2018) suggest that the theory of transformative learning has and will continue to influence our understanding of how adults learn.

2.11. Criticism of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow's transformative learning theory has been widely accepted and used in the field of adult education however, it has also faced its fair share of criticism. Mezirow has been criticised for not emphasising aspects that initiates the transformative learning process in a consistent way (Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021). Biasin (2018) notes that the first real criticism of Mezirow's theoretical model emerged in the early nineties. According to Biasin, Clark and Wilson's (1991) critics of the model, found that Mezirow's definition of transformative learning lacked contextual elements. The transformative learning theory, according to Mehmet (2018), primarily considers an individual's transformation and ignores their social transformation. Mehmet further argues that transformative learning focuses more

on cognition. Biasin concurs that Mezirow's transformative learning theory focuses more on cognitive aspects and should be more comprehensive to include extra-rational perspectives.

2.12. Challenges facing adult learners

While education systems have progressed over time and there are many opportunities for adult learners, it is evident that they face various challenges during their educational progression including in TVET Colleges. Pennacchia, Jones and Aldridge (2018) confirm that there is evidence that indicates adults face many challenges that make them less likely to participate in the learning process. Safford-Ramus, Misra and Maguire (2016) mention that some of these challenges include working multiple jobs as well as reduced amount of social structures on which they can rely. Baharudin, Murad and Mat (2013) agree that there are challenges that hinder the adult learning process and they cite Cross (1981) who identifies three barriers experienced by adult learners namely, situational, institutional, and dispositional. In addition, Baharudin et al., mention that Potter and Alderman (1992) highlight academic factors as a fourth barrier.

2.12.1. Situational barriers

Baharudin et al., (2013), Mahlangu (2018), and Yasmin and Sohail (2018) posit that situational barriers are the circumstances that may prevent a learner from accessing a learning opportunity. Mahlangu asserts that a major causative factor in adult learners dropping out of the education system is due to situational barriers. Yasmin and Sohail refer to Cross (1981) and explain that situational barriers are the sum total of the learners' current situation in life. Roosmaa and Saar (2011) believe that situational barriers are external and are beyond adult learners' control, due to their circumstances.

Shelton (2021) mention that, situational barriers emanate from the adult individual's life and are kinds of barriers that a traditional student need not consider. This is confirmed by McKay (2018:395) who maintains that situational barriers "arise from and are linked to an individuals' life-stage". Examples of such barriers include, but are not limited to, responsibilities of the home, family responsibilities, children and

other dependents, the lack of a functional support structure, and time constraints (Baharudin et al., 2013; Shelton, 2021).

According to Mahlangu (2018), adult learners are sometimes unable to shoulder the financial challenges of funding their own education, given their own and otherwise family responsibilities. Many adult learners who opt to study at TVET Colleges do so mainly due to financial reasons. Fundamentally, they choose to do so because they are funded by bursaries which cover the tuition as well as textbooks and even if learners are not awarded bursaries, the courses are much more affordable compared to university fees. For some adult learners, time is also a situational barrier because as adult learners simply have no extra time to be able to dedicate towards their studies (Yasmin & Sohail, 2018). Shelton (2021) asserts that we should be mindful of the fact that these barriers are part and parcel of the everyday life of an adult learner.

2.12.2. Institutional barriers

McKay (2018) elucidates that institutional barriers are directly related to challenges that are associated with educational institutions which mainly impact those who are less educated or do not have sufficient resources. Pennacchia, et al., (2018) asserts that the institutional barriers arise when educational institutions are unresponsive and are rigid when it comes to scheduling or content delivery. Furthermore, Baharudin et al., (2013) points out that institutional barriers are those that limit the way educational institutions deliver and administer learning content and are unfair against the adult learner. Additionally, Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoç, and Cagiltay, (2019) note, that institutional barriers that deter adult learners include learning materials that are often unsuitable and challenging, and programmes that are too demanding on the adult learner.

Baharudin et al., offers that several institutional barriers relate to the lack of provision for financial support and lack of resources needed for learning. Makibinyane and Khumalo (2021) suggest that the institution facilitates a very important role in a learner's academic performance. During their study, Makibinyane and Khumalo established that the infrastructure in some TVET colleges was insufficient for both lecturers and learners to engage in teaching and learning. It was discussed by Makibinyane and Khumalo that learners require

libraries or media centres to study or conduct research. However, the researcher has observed that despite their importance, not all TVET colleges have such infrastructure. For many adult learners, the library is an important resource they benefit from, to study in during their free time because they may be unable to study at home due to other responsibilities.

Shelton (2021) posits that the bureaucratic nature of educational institutions informs the policies, procedures and operations of these institutions, which in turn have unintended consequential barriers. Furthermore, the researcher is of the view that the qualifications of their lecturers can contribute to institutional barriers because of its implication with the delivery of the curriculum. Buthelezi (2018) asserts that many lecturers have TVET-associated qualifications, however not all of them are skilfully qualified as teachers and when NCV was introduced, majority of lecturers felt that they were not sufficiently qualified. This could attribute to adult learners facing dispositional barriers.

2.12.3. <u>Dispositional barriers</u>

Mavropoulos, Pampouri, and Kiriatzakou, (2021) purport that dispositional barriers are associated with an individual's negative attitude and sensitivities towards furthering their education. Such feelings may emanate due to their low self-esteem or because they may have previously performed poorly in academics (Mavropoulos et al., 2021). Pennacchia, et al., (2018) states that adult learners may lack the confidence to learn because they may feel they are too old to study. Furthermore, in a TVET college, the classes comprise of adult learners and younger learners and this dynamic can affect the different groups "pedagogically, emotionally and psychologically" (Buthelezi, 2018:10). This can be a contributing factor to adult learners feeling that they are too old to be learning. Baharudin et al., (2013) continues that dispositional barriers are the feelings, attitude, and motives of the inner self of the learner "in conjunction with the learners' perceptions to register, attend, and successfully complete their learning" (Baharudin et al., 2013:775).

Osam, Bergman and Cumberland (2017) affirm that dispositional barriers are as a result of the characteristic of a person such as being afraid of underachieving, their attitudes towards mental acuity, and their aspirational levels. Baharudin et al., (2013: 775) furthermore cites Rogers (2002) who outlines some ways adult

learners can overcome these barriers and learn to 'adopt and adapt', which Rogers terms 'ego-defence'. They contend that some of the ways adult learners can deal with challenges are "fantasy, compensation, identification with others, projection onto others of our own impulses and traits, rationalisation, repression, sublimation, displacement, negativism and reaction formation" (Baharudin et al., 2013:775).

2.12.4. <u>Academic barriers</u>

Kakai (2020) suggests that in order to cope and make progress, adult learners need to possess definite skills otherwise their absence may lead to academic barriers. Kakai, mentions that these skills include "literacy skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking" (Kakai, 2020:33). Baharudin et al., (2013) additionally states that when adults lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, computer related skills, do not have the ability to understand information, and are unable to think critically and reflectively, it creates academic barriers. Furthermore, Baharudin et al., quotes MacKeracher, Suart and Potter (2006), who contend that when academic skills are not understood in the early years of an adult's life, it tends to formulate as problems later on in life.

The researcher has experienced that many of the adult learners that attend the TVET colleges have dropped out of the schooling system, therefore have inadequate skills and as a result, they are unable to achieve the learning objectives set out by the curriculum. O'Neill and Thomson (2013) confirm that some adult learners have insufficient skills that are needed for an educational situation. Makibinyane and Khumalo (2021) purport that academic performance is an important aspect for learners in a TVET college and for learners to be successful in their studies they must be managing academically. However, Makibinyane and Khumalo are of the view that learners are not coping academically due to the following reasons: learners do not have enough information about TVET colleges and once they are registered as students, they realise how demanding and extensive the curriculum is.

2.13. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher reviewed relevant literature that explained the concept of an adult and adult learner. Adult education learning theories were

explored in the theoretical framework and the chapter concluded by discussing the challenges faced by adult learners. In the next chapter the researcher discusses the research methodology and design used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The main objective of this study, as mentioned in chapter one, was to explore challenges faced by adult learners in TVET colleges. In the preceding chapter, the researcher explored pertinent literature that would establish links to the researcher's study. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the approach and design that were selected to investigate the aim and objectives of this study. The researcher details the method utilised to gather data from the participants as well as the effective research tool that was employed. The researcher also describes in this chapter how credibility was ensured and what was achieved to guarantee that ethics were upheld throughout the study.

According to Snyder (2019), a research approach should be unambiguous, controlled and organised in order for a researcher to obtain the most valid results. Nayak and Singh (2021) also highlight that there are several research methodologies that are available and no research methodology can be solely pertinent to all research problems and with each research methodology comes its own strengths and weaknesses. Pathak, Jena and Kalra (2013:192) accentuates that the qualitative research method is "used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions", thus concentrating more on the humanistic approach. Therefore, the researcher deemed the qualitative research approach as most suitable for this study as it focuses on people and their life experiences.

3.2. Qualitative research approach

One of the reasons that convinced the researcher to select the qualitative research approach was because it investigates the intricacies of people in their social world especially those that are less noticeable and further, the approach explores the meanings that people ascribe to their life experiences in their own language (Tuffour, 2017). Oun and Bach (2014) purport that the purpose of a qualitative research is to accumulate as much information as possible about people's behaviour and the events that lead to that conduct. Keeping this in mind, the

researcher can appreciate and analyse the different points of view from participants (Van den Berg and Struwig, 2017). Additionally, qualitative research allowed the researcher flexibility to accommodate unexpected circumstances because it is an emergent design (Macmillan and Schumacher, 2014). The researcher conducted the study at a selected TVET college which is the natural environment of the participants and it has been emphasised by Aspers and Corte (2019) that qualitative researchers tend to investigate phenomena in the natural situations of the participants aiming to understand events in terms of meanings that persons attribute to them. Furthermore, the uniqueness of this type of research is that it seeks to understand the complex relationships between phenomena and events that are directly related to it (Tuffour, 2017). Van den Berg and Struwig (2017) highlights that the best approach for qualitative researchers to understand a phenomenon is to generate questions as the researcher becomes more familiar with the research setting. The researcher in this study felt this would be beneficial to the study as the questions were applicable and supportive in collecting relevant data. Therefore, employing a qualitative research approach helped the researcher understand the challenges the participants were facing.

Creswell and Poth (2016) posit that a researcher's decision to conduct qualitative research is based on five philosophical assumptions. According to Creswell and Poth, these assumptions are ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical, and methodological and they have also recommended that, a researcher must decide on their position with regards to the assumptions as it has practical ramifications for designing and performing the research. Based on the above statement, the researcher in this study opted for the ontological approach because the researcher will be reporting on multiple realities of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

3.2.1. Ontology

According to Khan (2014), ontology is known as the study of nature's reality. Bleiker, Morgan-Trimmer, Knapp and Hopkins (2019) accentuates that ontology is considered as the philosophical starting point for an inquiry. Furthermore, Bleiker et al., state that while many people are familiar with the idea of truth as something that objectively depicts fact or reality, not all philosophers agree. In fact, others contend that truth is dependent on subjective opinions and circumstances. Khan (2014) cites Creswell (2007) and Punch (1998) who agree that reality is subjective,

and researchers and participants view it differently. However, in this study the researcher recognised the individuals' challenges as being important and agreed with their perception of reality.

Swift and Tischler (2010) contend that researchers who believe that there is a single and stable reality are known as having a realist ontological position. This is in contrast to researchers who do not depend on a single, stable reality but rather believe that reality is socially constituted and are described as being in a relativist ontology position. A perspective on relativist ontology has been adopted by the researcher. The researcher also focused on using ontological questions to collect data that details challenges faced by the participants. Such questions included "What are the challenges you are experiencing as a student at the TVET College?" How is it impacting your studies as a student?"

3.3. Qualitative research design

Wahyuni (2012) believes that the purpose of the research as well as the research questions can assist the researcher in selecting the appropriate research design for the study. According to Baskarada (2014:3), the research design "can be seen as the blueprint of the research project and should address the research questions". For this study, the case study methodology was used by the researcher. One of the most popular research design methods used with qualitative research is the case study (Yazan, 2015).

3.3.1. Case study

The case study method was employed by the researcher because it allowed for the collection of extensive data from a number of participants (Arseven, 2018). According to Ahumada-Newhart and Eccles (2020), a case study is a research approach and empirical investigation that examines a phenomenon in its natural setting. Yin (2018) asserts that case studies provides the researcher with a chance to concentrate closely on a situation while maintaining a comprehensive view of the wider world. Boton and Forgues (2018) state that a case study entails a thorough examination of a bounded system and its underlying principles, allowing scholars to grasp the complexities of a given situation. Furthermore, Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh (2011) concur that researchers employ a case

study as a research strategy to assists a researcher to gain a thorough, multi-faceted understanding of a complex topic in its real-world context. The researcher used a case study to produce a thorough, multifaceted knowledge of a complicated topic in its actual context. The case study enabled the researcher to investigate the challenges that adult learners were experiencing in a TVET college.

Baskarada (2014) further highlights that a case study can contribute to a researcher gaining a complete view of the research problem in its social setting. Boton and Forgues (2018) highlight that case studies can be descriptive, explanatory or exploratory. The researcher made use of an exploratory case study as it is considered to be a flexible design that enables researchers to investigate what was going on, ask questions, gain new insights and re-evaluate phenomena (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Using an exploratory case study also provided the researcher with data that was in-depth and rich as well as descriptions, all which were needed for the study (Khan, 2014).

3.4. Data collection

3.4.1. <u>Sampling</u>

Oppong (2013) accentuates that sampling is a process whereby participants are selected to take part in a research study and provide the researcher with suitable data pertaining to the research. Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, and Nigam, (2013) assert that only a proportion of the population is selected as representation of a larger population because the entire population cannot be selected to participate in a research study. As a result, using a sample of the population reduces the cost of the study, the time needed to conduct the research as well as manpower (Acharya et al., 2013). Oppong mentions that the nature of a study tends to affect the decision on whom to select to participate as well as the number of participants to be used. Smith and Noble (2014) highlights that recruiting individuals who meet the study's objectives is the first step towards a successful study.

For this investigation, the non-probability sampling method was used. Whitehead and Whitehead (2020) purports that when using non-probability sampling, participants do not have an equal chance of being selected for the study but are instead purposefully chosen by the researcher based on the qualities they possess as well as the nature of the study. According to Whitehead and Whitehead,

qualitative non-probability sampling can be categorised as snowball, purposeful, convenience and theoretical sampling. The researcher preferred purposeful sampling as it allowed for the selection of participants based on the criteria selected. Sharma (2017) adds that purposeful sampling is a technique that is based solely on the researchers' judgement. According to Sharma, one of the advantages of using this method in a study is that it would give the researcher a justification to make generalisations of the total population from the sample group used.

In this regard, the researcher selected 10 (ten) participants from a TVET college in the uThukela District of the KwaZulu-Natal province based on the following criteria. Due to the nature of the study, the sample consisted of participants that were 18 (eighteen) years and older, male and female and from the NCV programme at the college. Smith and Noble (2014) have asserted that biasness in sampling procedures must be taken into account. To reduce chances of being biased in this study, the researcher ensured that there was a fair representation of the participants.

3.5. Research instruments and data strategies

3.5.1. Semi-structured Interviews

One advantage of using a qualitative research approach is that the researcher can better understand the human experience by conducting semi-structured interviews (Bearman, 2019). According to Adams (2015) semi-structured interviews are executed conversationally with one participant at a time and allows for a combination of open and closed ended questions which can lead to the researcher further probing for more information. McIntosh and Morse (2015) confirm that semi-structured interviews are designed to elicit subjective answers from people in particular situations. An added advantage of using semi-structured interview in this study is that it reduced chances of exhaustion on both the researcher and participant during the interview as Adams (2015) asserts that an hour is a reasonable time for a semi-structured interview.

Therefore, the researcher believed that semi-structured interviews assisted them to collect the appropriate data on the challenges faced by adult learners in the TVET college. The researcher used an interview guide for the semi-structured interview.

Lopez and Whitehead (2013:128) mention that "semi-structured interviews have an interview guide providing a set of questions for discussion". The purpose behind setting the questions was to guarantee that the objectives of the interview were met. However, the interview guide provides flexibility to ask questions in any order, permitting the researcher to clarify responses or seek elaboration from the participants (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

3.6. Credibility and trustworthiness

"Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the systematic rigor of the research design, the credibility of the researcher, the believability of the findings, and applicability of the research methods" (Rose & Johnson, 2020:3). According to Cope (2014), qualitative research presents a significant challenge to researchers that strive for the utmost quality when conducting and reporting on studies. However, Cope highlights that credibility can be attained when a researcher verifies the findings of a research with the participants. The researcher in this study undertook the five strategies listed in the next sections that ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of the research.

3.6.1. Member Checking

Brear (2019) asserts that member checking provides the participants with an opportunity to check the accuracy, comment or mend the research data. The researcher met with the participants twice to verify and gain clarity on the data received from them, as Harper and Cole (2012) assert that member checking is a significant practice in qualitative research because participants receive an opportunity to verify their responses.

3.6.2. Participant Review

The researcher may request participants to review the researcher's synthesis of the interview for accuracy and the participants may amend any information to be accurate (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Following the transcription of the recordings, the researcher asked the participants to evaluate the transcripts, following which she made the required corrections.

3.6.3. <u>Peer debriefing</u>

Peer debriefing is a method whereby a researcher discusses the research process with an experienced qualitative researcher who has no direct involvement in the particular research project (Hadi & José, 2016). Amin, Nørgaard, Cavaco, Witry, Hillman, Cernasev, and Desselle (2020) accentuate that the researcher should answer any questions by the peer debriefer so that the researcher can reflect on any biasness that can affect the research process. Furthermore, Anney (2014) emphasises that the feedback from peers can assist the researcher to improve the quality with regards to the findings of the research. Based on the information mentioned in the preceding sentences, the researcher discussed the research process with a colleague who had experience in qualitative research. The researcher's colleague offered insightful advice on the gathering and processing of data, which increased the research's credibility.

3.6.4. <u>Rich thick description</u>

Hadi and José (2016) posit that a researcher is required to provide an extensive set of details about a particular research process so that it can be evaluated by the reader and that the deductions made can be transferable to other people or circumstances. The researcher ensured that a rich thick description was provided in the research discussion that would enable other researchers to repeat the study by utilising alike circumstances in other settings (Anney, 2014).

3.6.5. <u>Multimethod Strategies</u>

MacMillan and Schumacher (2014) mention that many qualitative researchers apply various data collection methods however choose one significant method to collect the appropriate data. The researcher used semi-structured interviews as the primary approach for collecting data and used a variety of other techniques to assure the validity of the study. Apart from permitting the participants with an opportunity to clarify the data collected during the interview process, participants also reviewed the transcripts that allowed them to correct any data that was transcribed incorrectly.

3.7. Ethical considerations

Qamar (2018) confirms that research ethics rule the conduct of research from the beginning right up to the conclusion and publication of the results and even beyond. Qamar emphasises that educational researchers must treat participants involved in the study with respect, dignity and sensitivity. The researcher applied the following ethical research techniques during the research process.

3.7.1. Informed consent

Formal consent was obtained from the participants prior to conducting this research. Erickson (2012) highlights that when consent is sincerely obtained from participants, that is, without pressure from the researcher, it decreases the threat of social harm to the participants. The participants were made aware of the study's objectives and the expectations of them during the research. According to Erikson, participants become anxious when they do not have knowledge about the purpose of the study.

3.7.2. Confidentiality and Anonymity

Svalastog and Eriksson (2010) affirm that the purpose of confidentiality is to protect a study's participants from having their personal information abused. The personal information of the participants in this study was only used for the purpose of the research and the researcher ensured that no other parties had access to the information. Peter (2015) maintains that researchers must also desist from collecting data that is not pertinent to the study as to avoid collecting sensitive data. The researcher assured anonymity of the participants by using pseudonyms. The researcher also omitted personal features that would allow the participant to be identified (Traianou, 2020).

3.7.3. Privacy

MacMillan and Schumacher (2014) assert that if participants are deceived in any form with regard to a research study, this would violate their consent and privacy. The privacy of the participants was safeguarded, and the researcher did not breach the consent. The participant's trust was always maintained by the researcher.

3.7.4. Protection from harm

Traianou (2020) purports that the possibility of harm is a major concern with regards to ethics and it is not easy to identify what may cause harm to a participant because harm can come in many forms. During the time of the study, the world was facing a Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the researcher needed to take precaution to avoid causing harm to the participants. The researcher protected the participants by ensuring that during the interviews the participants were wearing masks. The researcher also ensured the participants sanitised their hands before entering the interview room and implemented social distancing between the participants and researcher. Interviews were also conducted in a well-ventilated room.

The researcher followed the ethical clearance processes by the University of South Africa (UNISA). The researcher completed and submitted an application form to the College of Education (CEDU) Research Ethics Committee (REC). All the documentation necessary for the application process was attached and these included letters requesting permission to conduct the study to the relevant people, consent forms for the intended participants, and data collection tools.

3.8. Data analysis

For this study, the researcher used the thematic analysis method because like many other qualitative analytical approaches, it made provision for sorting and sifting of data to help identify alike patterns or relationships (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). It also permitted the researcher to work with a wide range of research questions, and analyses large or small quantities of data (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). Furthermore, Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015) concur that this method is used to identify, analyse and interpret patterns into themes within the data. Additionally, the researcher selected the thematic analysis method for data analysis due to its accessibility and flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Thematic analysis allows for research results to be accessible to a comprehensive audience and its flexibility permit for the analysis to be "conducted in a number of different ways" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:58). Thematic analysis uses systematic phases that aids in creating a transparent process for both the researcher but most importantly for the person reading the report (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). The

six (six) steps of the thematic analysis approach that were used in the data analysis process are as follows:

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

According to Brown and Stockman (2013), the researcher needs to familiarise themselves with the research data collected by reading or listening to the audio recordings and writing down notes or ideas. Javadi and Zarea (2016) highlight the importance of researchers repeatedly reading or listening to the audio recordings of the data is so that they can become more familiar with it before coding as this assists the researcher in gaining complete understanding of the research. Prior to transcription, the researcher listened to the audio recordings of the interviews. The researcher carefully studied the transcripts of the audio recordings after it had been transcribed, noting any significant details and commonalities.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Clarke and Braun (2013) assert that coding involves creating labels (codes) for the significant attributes of the data collected with relevance to the research question. Lester, Cho and Lochmiller (2020) emphasises that a code can be a short, descriptive word or phrase that gives meaning to the data in relation to the research. However, Clarke and Braun (2013:3) mention that coding is not merely a method to reduce data, but rather an analytical process so the codes must "capture both asemantic and conceptual reading of the data". The researcher commenced the coding process by using the information collected in phase 1. Thereafter, assigned the relevant codes (labels) to the data by using descriptive or interpretative phases. This phase was concluded by the researcher organising all the codes and the data extracts.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

Labra, Castro, Wright and Chamblas (2020) defines a theme as a series of words that can serve as a concise and accurate representation of the meaning that interviewees assign to an object, phenomena, or circumstance. Braun and Clarke (2012) mention that this process includes the grouping of the codes together that share similarities, so that it can reflect a comprehensible and meaningful pattern in the data. Labra et al., indicates searching for themes is very open-ended and

results become dependent on how well phases 1 and 2 are carried out in the thematic analysis. Therefore, during this process, the researcher created a set for codes that were similar, and a meaningful name was allocated to each set, creating themes and subthemes.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), this phase is significant as it compromises quality checking especially because researchers largely work with large sets of data. They assert that the reviewing of themes involves a process whereby the development of themes is examined in light of the coded data and the complete data set. Javadi and Zarea (2016) stress that this phase is completed in two levels whereby in the first level, the researcher needs to review the themes to check if it formed a systematic pattern. The themes were examined by the researcher to see whether any logical patterns emerged. In the second level, Javadi and Zarea suggest that it is important to take into account a theme's applicability to the entire set of data if it develops systematic patterns. The researcher also verified that the themes applied to the complete set of data. After reviewing the study's themes, the researcher was able to recognise the distinct themes and show how it was combined to tell a narrative using the data.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Friese, Soratto, and Pires (2018) articulates that when researchers are allocating a name to a theme, they need to be aware of what each theme is about, the fundamental message and the crucial elements of the theme as this assists the researcher to derive a name that is concise and informative. Brown and Stockman (2013) highlight that the name of the theme must immediately give the person who is reading the report a sense of what the theme is about. The researcher allocated names to the themes and subthemes that was referenced to the focus of the studies research questions.

Phase 6: Writing up a report

Clarke and Braun (2013) assert that writing up a report is an important component of the analytical process in qualitative research and it compromises of interlinking

the analytic narrative and data extracts to convey to the reader a cogent story about the data in relation to the literature. Braun and Clarke (2012) contend that researchers must be mindful that writing does only begin at the end of the analysis process but it a process that is continuous throughout the qualitative research. Utilising all the information stated in the above phases, the researcher produced a comprehensive discussion that was accurate, consistent, and logical.

FIGURE 3.1 Provides a summary of the thematic analysis process:

Phase 1	• Familiarising yourself with the data. • Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, jotting down initial ideas.
Phase 2	• Generating initial codes. • Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Phase 3	• Searching for themes. • Collating codes into potential themes, gathering the data relevant to each potential theme.
Phase 4	• Reviewing themes. • Checking the themes application in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic "map" of the analysis.
Phase 5	• Defining and naming themes. • Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall narrative by the analysis; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
Phase 6	• Producing the report • The final opportunity for analysis. Selecting vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report on the analysis.

Source:(Braun & Clarke, 2006:35)

3.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher explained the research methodology that was used in this research study. Furthermore, described methods that were used to collect data during the study, how the study was validated as well as how ethics were considered during the course of the study. The chapter concluded with the researcher indicating how the data was analysed during and at the conclusion of the data collection process. The next chapter focuses on the analysis and presentation of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the research design, methodology and approach used in the study. In this chapter, analysis of the primary data collected through semi-structured interviews is conducted and the findings are presented. It is also detailed how the themes and subthemes were formed during the analysis of the data. The researcher investigated the challenges that adult learners studying in a TVET college in the uThukela district of the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa experienced. As explained in Chapter 3, the researcher employed a qualitative research approach that allowed participants to share their experiences on challenges affecting them. According to Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin (2020), qualitative researchers understand that some participants are more likely to be rich with information or insight, thus making them more pertinent and effective in reaching the study goals and addressing the research questions.

4.2. Research purpose and aim

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges experienced by adult learners at the TVET college. Its aim was accomplished through the following objectives:

- To identify the challenges faced by adult learners enrolled at the TVET college.
- To determine what coping mechanisms were used by adult learners to overcome their challenges.
- To recommend strategies to assist adult learners to overcome their challenges.

The study was guided by the main research question, "What challenges do adult learners who study in a TVET college face?", with the following sub-questions:

- How do these challenges affect adult learners in their studies?
- What coping mechanisms are adult learners using to overcome their challenges?

- What strategies can be recommended to assist adult learners overcome their challenges?

4.3. Description of participants

The researcher employed the purposeful sampling method which allowed them to identify ten (10) participants from the selected TVET college under study. Shaheen and Pradhan (2019) contend that a researcher can select information sources to help address the objectives of a research through the use of purposeful sampling. Thus, through using the purposeful sampling method, the researcher was able to select participants that were believed, would make a significant contribution to the study. Furthermore, it is essential to describe participants since doing this assists people to understand the research study and produce credible conclusions (Maceke, 2022). The participants were selected based on their age, and target adult learners with ages that ranged from eighteen (18) and older. For this study, the participants were females and males who were registered for a National Certificate Vocational (NCV) programme at the selected TVET college. Some learners were reluctant to engage in the study, which was disappointing to the researcher because she had hoped to include participants from a variety of NCV programmes. Herewith, the researcher gives a brief descriptive background on the participants.

Participant 1 was a twenty-two (22) year old male who was studying Office Administration (OA) at the TVET college. His highest qualification was a Level 3 certificate in OA. He had not completed Grade 12, resided in a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) with his parents and siblings, and had no children. Participant 1 had a part-time job whilst he was completing his studies. The participant also relied on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) bursary to fund his studies.

Participant 2 was a twenty-three (23) year old female who was studying Information Technology and Computer Science (IT) at the TVET college. Her highest qualification was a Level 3 certificate in IT. She rented a place near the college but was from a rural area in KZN, which was situated about fifty (50) kilometers from the TVET college. Participant 2 was unemployed and relied on the NSFAS bursary to fund her studies, and to supplement finances for her family back home.

Participant 3 was a twenty-nine (29) year old female studying OA Level 4 at the TVET college. Her highest qualification was a Level 3 certificate in OA, having not completed Grade 12. Participant 3 resided in a rural area in KZN, along with her grandparents, mother and siblings. She had a son that her grandmother helped care for whilst she was at college. Participant 3 was unemployed and relied on the NSFAS bursary to fund her studies.

Participant 4 was a twenty-one (21) year old male studying IT, and doing Level 4. His highest qualification was a Level 3 certificate in IT, and in addition to possessing a Grade 12 certificate. He resided in a cottage near the TVET college, as he hailed from a rural farming community in KZN. The participant had no children and was unemployed. He relied on financial assistance from his parent.

Participant 5 was a thirty-three (33) year old female enrolled in OA, Level 2. Having not completed Grade 12, her highest qualification was a Grade 11 certificate. She resided in a nearby township in KZN with her mother and her two children. She was unemployed and depended on her partner for financial assistance for her studies.

Participant 6 was a twenty-seven (27) year old female who was studying IT, Level 3/4. Her highest qualification was an IT Level 2 certificate. She resided in a nearby Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) area, with her mother and three (3) children in KZN. The participant had a part-time occupation and the NSFAS paid for her studies.

Participant 7 was a twenty-seven (27) year old male. He had completed a Grade 12 certificate and was studying IT, Level 3. Participant 7 rented accommodation in a nearby township as he was originally from a city located about one hundred and fifty (150) kilometers away from the TVET college in KZN. He was unemployed and his studies were funded through NSFAS however, funds from his parents supplemented his educational financial needs.

Participant 8 was a thirty-one (31) year old male studying OA, Level 2. The participant resided in a suburb near the TVET college in KZN. He lived with his father, brother and aunt. He had two (2) children that he supported. His highest qualification was Grade 10. He was unemployed and relied on the NSFAS bursary to fund his studies.

Participant 9 was a thirty-four (34) year old female who was studying OA, Level 3. She resided in a rural area in KZN with her mother and her three (3) children alongside her extended family. Participant 9's highest qualification was a Level 2 OA certificate. She was unemployed and relied on the NSFAS bursary to pay her tuition.

Participant 10 was a twenty-two (22) year old female. She was enrolled in OA, Level 3. The participant resided in a nearby township in KZN with her siblings and her son. Her highest qualification was OA Level 2. She was employed part-time and used her earnings to fund her studies.

Table 4.1 Summarised description of participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Residence	NCV Programme
Participant 1	22	Male	Rural area	OA
Participant 2	23	Female	Rural area	IT
Participant 3	29	Female	Rural area	OA
Participant 4	21	Male	Rural farming community	IT
Participant 5	33	Female	Township	OA
Participant 6	27	Female	RDP	IT
Participant 7	27	Male	Township	IT
Participant 8	31	Male	Suburb	OA
Participant 9	34	Female	Rural area	OA
Participant 10	22	Female	Township	OA

4.4. Data processing and analysis

The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews to collect primary data from the participants using a recording device. The interviews were transcribed and coded. Themes and subthemes were established using the data collected from the participants. The researcher employed the thematic analysis method to develop themes. Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015) emphasise that thematic analysis is a

technique for locating, examining, and deciphering meaningful patterns (or "themes") within qualitative data.

4.5. Discussion of themes arising from the analysis

The research questions and the interview guide that were utilised served as a guide for the development of themes and subthemes. The researcher deviated from the interview guide at times during the interview in order to obtain more pertinent information from the participants. As a result, the findings are not quantified per question but rather are summarised based on frequent and focused responses. Herewith are graphic representations of the themes and subthemes that emerged during the analysis of the data.

Figure 4.1 Schematic illustration of Theme 1 and subthemes

Theme 1 - Challenges raised by participants

Subtheme 1.1
Reoccurant financial constraints

Subtheme 1.2
Learning styles

Subtheme 1.3
Academic challenges

Subtheme 1.4
Family responsibilities
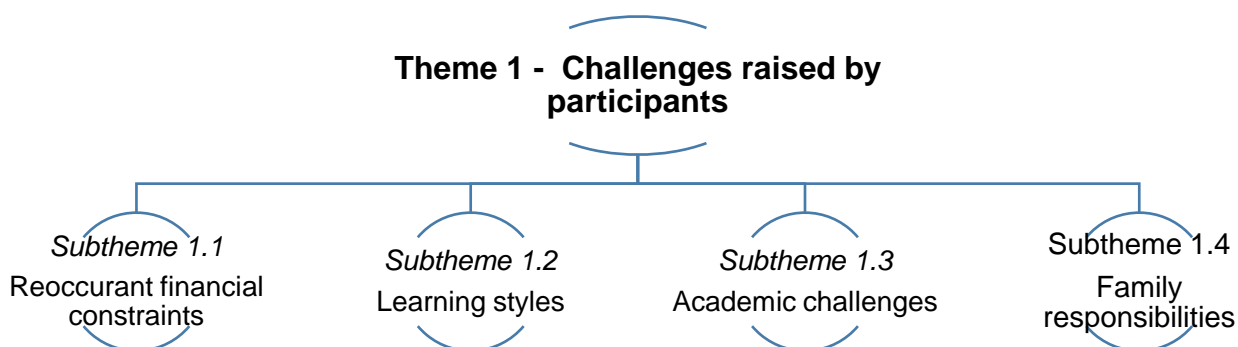
Figure 4.2 Schematic illustration of Theme 2 and subthemes

Theme 2 - Effects of the challenges on the participants

Subtheme 2.1
Absenteesim

Subtheme 2.2
Loss of concentration

Subtheme 2.3
Academic demotivation
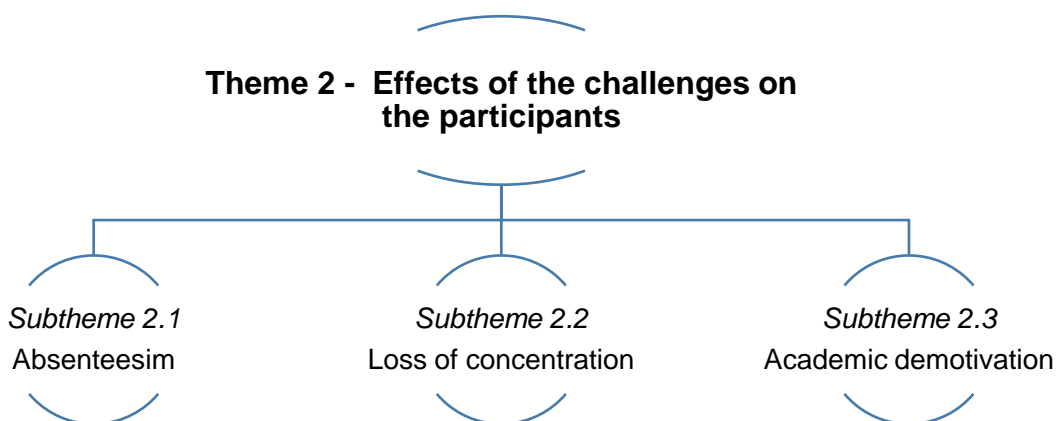
Figure 4.3 Schematic illustration of Theme 3 and subthemes

**Theme 3 - Participants' coping mechanisms
for navigating the problems**

Subtheme 3.1
Lecturer and peer support

Subtheme 3.2
Intrinsc motivation
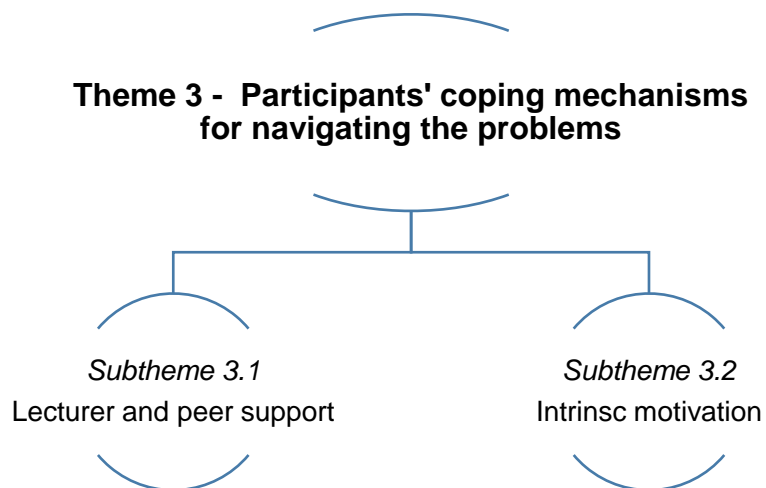
Figure 4.4 Schematic illustration of Theme 4 and Subthemes

**Theme 4 - Suggested strategies to
overcome challenges**

Subtheme 4.1
Fast track payments

Subtheme 4.2
Improve communication

Subtheme 4.3
Extra classes
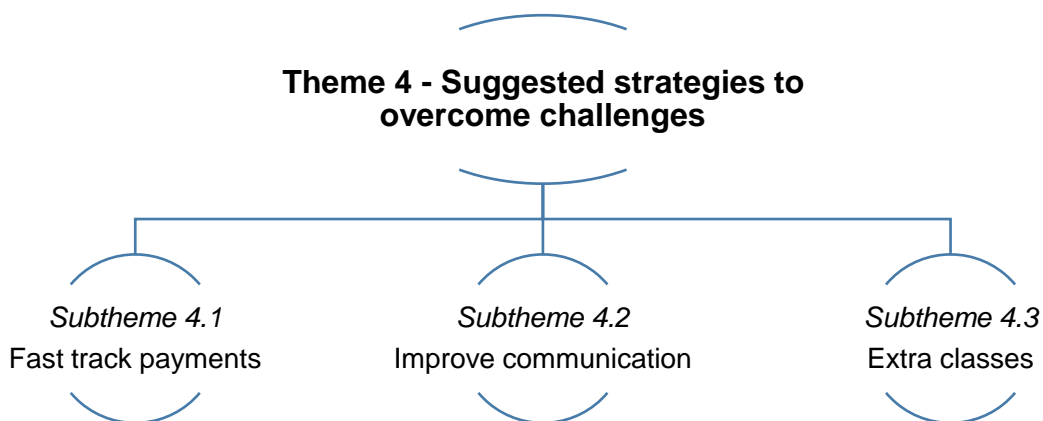
Figure 4.5 Schematic illustration of Theme 5 and subthemes

**Theme 5 - Factors that influenced participants
to study at the TVET college**

Subtheme 5.1
Better life opportunities

Subtheme 5.2
Second chances
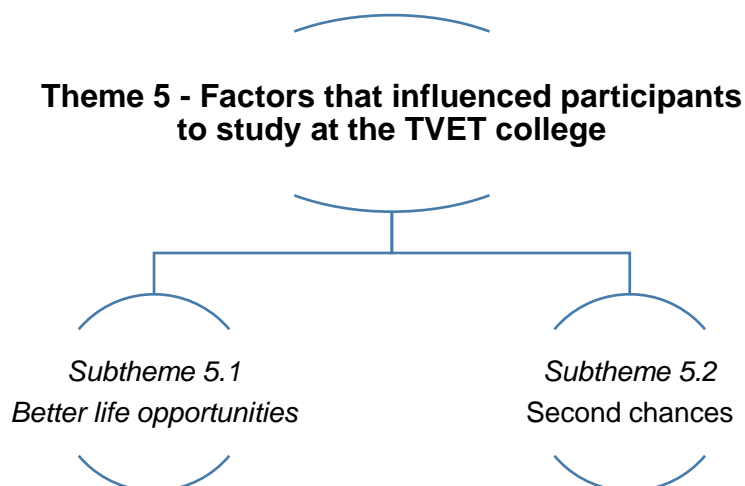
In the order listed above, these themes and subthemes are presented and discussed.

4.5.1. **Theme 1: Challenges raised by participants**

Theme 1 was derived from the data received during the interview process, along with the following subthemes. This section discusses issues regarding reoccurant finances constraints, learning styles, academic challenges, and family responsibilities that inhibited adult learners from giving their full effort to their academic activities. All the participants agreed that these challenges had a negative impact on their education.

4.5.1.1.   Sub-theme 1.1: Reoccurant financial constraints

This subtheme signified the financial constraints that were experienced by the participants during their time of study at the TVET college. Most of the participants that were interviewed indicated that they experienced financial hardships. Also, they resided in a rural area or township area. This suggests that the participants were predominately from a low socio-economic status backgrounds, in addition Eze, Odoh, Igwe, and Mgbanya (2019:8) contend that "poverty is considered severe in rural areas". Participants were also reliant on the NSFAS bursary for funding, however, it was not sufficient to cater for some of their basic needs. This was evident by the quotes from the participants:

"Ah, sometimes I don't have enough money to come because the bursary or they always pay us late so. The ticket is costly, so sometimes I don't have enough money to come to college". Participant 1

"Sometimes I come here having nothing on my stomach. Even at lunch I have no money to buy, so the periods that's come after break, I lose focus". Participant 2

"Uhm, finances, finances and this year",
"Firstly, sometimes it becomes difficult due to not having taxi fares". Participant 3

"I think it's mostly financially".

"My mother is not working on a high state, yes."

"We do have NSFAS the financial Institute, but its processes are a bit slow sometimes. Sometimes the money is in sometimes it's, it doesn't". Participant 4

"The problem is just the financial supports". Participant 6

"There's nothing for me to bring to college from home, NSFAS is not paying out so I can't buy food for myself". Participant 8

"Sometimes I don't because of money". Participant 9

On closer examination of the participants' responses, it was clear that the distribution of the NSFAS bursary was a key factor in the financial challenges experienced by adult learners. This led to them experiencing financial difficulties as the participants tended to rely on the bursary for basic needs such as transport and food. Participants 1 and 2 expressed emotions with regards to their financial hurdles. Participant 2 and 8 shared how she struggled to concentrate in college due to being hungry. Afridi, Barooah and Somanathan (2019), contend that students' performance might be negatively impacted by hunger and malnutrition by reducing their effort and cognition whilst in class. According to their research, short-term classroom engagement and effort was as a result of schools providing meals, which they considered as being a method by which better long-term learning results may be achieved in underdeveloped nations.

4.5.1.2. Sub-theme 1.2: Learning styles

The discoveries from the interviews indicated that some learners had different learning styles, thus creating a challenge for them. They mentioned that the teaching technique or lack thereof that was used to teach them and the problems it created for them. Below are some of the responses from the participants.

"I'm a student who mainly focuses or rather I say, I'm a student who takes things when I'm taught. So, you come into you, come into a class someday there's no lecturer to teach you or give you a scope or what's happening on a certain chapter".

"So that is a bit of a challenging for me, because I don't know where to start so. it is challenging". Participant 1

"I sometimes ask others there's a guy who's teaching the upgrading school, upgrading children, so I ask him to help me to understand because their ways of teaching are different. So, I asked him. I understand him better than the lecturer". Participant 2

"As I said, I'm more practical than theoretical so, I haven't been exposed more practically".
"I can't study on my own, I need a lecturer in front of me for me to hear everything". Participant 4

It was apparent from the responses of the participants that learning styles plays a vital role in the success of a learner achieving their academic goals. Willingham, Hughes and Dobolyi (2015) concur that according to learning style theories, every person thinks and learns best in a particular way. It is also important to note that these choices for processing information in a particular way are not variations in aptitude, but rather a preference (Willingham, Hughes & Dobolyi, 2015). Participant 1 indicated that he did not have a lecturer to teach him, which is an indication that in most cases, he learnt by himself, unguided. From Participant's 1 responses there was an indication that he needed to have face-to-face contact with a lecturer. Participant 2 indicated that she could not understand the lecturer and sought outside help to understand the content. Participant 4 indicated that he learnt better when the lesson is practical, however, he was not exposed to practical experiences and also needed to have face-to-face contact with his lecturers.

Participant 4 raised an important point, a point that has been the bone of contention with regards to the criticism of the NCV programme. According to Mashongoane (2015), TVET qualifications often call for a mix of classroom instruction and real-world work experience. However, there seems to be an over-reliance and more focus on the theoretical aspect of the NCV curriculum. In this regard, Du Plooy and Du Preez (2022) conducted a study where they found that there was an uneven distribution of theoretical and practical training hours in NC(V) programs. Another major finding of their study was the dissatisfaction with the NC(V) program's mix of

practical and theoretical work, with a shared desire amongst students and even lecturers for considerably more practical work and much less theoretical work.

4.5.1.3. Sub-theme 1.3: Academic challenges

While responding to questions during the interview process, some participants mentioned that they had certain academic challenges, especially concerning specific subjects in their program of study. According to Baharudin, Murad and Mat (2013), academic challenges are related to the abilities required for effective learning. Some of the responses from the participants were as follows.

"My sister does support me here and there on mathematics because she knows that I lack in mathematics". Participant 1

"When it comes to mathematics, I'm really struggling". Participant 2

"Mathematics is one of the most of my weakest". Participant 6

"I am having a problem with Math's, Because I didn't know it even in high school, I was terrible in Math's." Participant 7

"ODP and Math's, they my weakest, weakest point". Participant 9

Based on the participants' responses, it was obvious that the common academic challenge for most of them was difficulties in learning Mathematics while one participant had a problem in Office Data processing (ODP). It is not debatable that learners face challenges in different learning areas at some point in their schooling lives, however, the sensation of struggle is also accompanied by a variety of emotional and motivating feelings, and some research indicates that challenges might lower engagement and motivation (Tulis & Fulmer, 2013). These feelings that are mentioned by Tulis and Fulmer were evident with Participant 9, who had indicated

"In Math's, I try to practice but it's useless because you don't even know if it's right what we are doing". Participant 9

4.5.1.4.   Sub-theme 1.4: Family responsibilities

During the interviews, it emerged that some participants, given their adult status, had dependents that they were responsible for. Dependents that were identified included their children and parent(s). Participants listed the responsibilities they carried regarding their families and how these affected their studies. The following were some of their views:

"What I can say is that I only take care of my mom and the children, mostly financially. Yes, maybe when I get NSFAS, I give them a little money". Participant 2

"And sometimes being a parent. Now it does have influence from me staying away from the college".
"Yeah, when there's parents meeting on this other hand, yeah". Participant 3

"So, this is why I'm not in college often and also one of my kids here she's got a problem, she gets too sick most at that time. So, I have to go send her to the hospital. Think four days there, then come back to college". Participant 6

The participants' responses make it clear that their responsibilities included caring for their children and/or parents. Participant 2 in particular indicated that she is providing financial assistance to her parent and child, albeit being a receiver of financial aid herself. Magubane (2017) alludes to this concept, whereby in South Africa, the term coined for adults who feel obliged to financially provide for their family is 'black tax'. For participant 2, this had a compounding effect, where in one of her previous responses, she had stated that:

"Sometimes I come here having nothing on my stomach. Even at lunch I have no money to buy, so the periods that's come after break, I lose focus." Participant 2

Participants 2 and 3 raised absences from class due to their parental-related responsibilities such as having to attend to school matters of their offspring or having to attend to a sick child at home. All the participants were concerned about how these impacted their studies. Lin (2016) agrees that family commitment is by far the most difficult of an adult's responsibilities, particularly for those with younger

children. Participants 3 and 6 proclaimed that they stayed away from college due to their parental responsibilities to their children.

4.5.2. **Theme 2: Effects of the challenges on the participants**

Theme 2 was derived from the data received during the interview process, along with the following subthemes. Participants discussed how the challenges they encountered as adult learners manifest themselves wherein some of the participants were absent from college, struggled to concentrate during lessons, and experienced being demotivated.

4.5.2.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Absenteeism

During the interviews with the participants, it emerged that the challenges they experienced led to their absenteeism. Responses from the participants were captured in this way:

"So, sometimes I don't have enough money to come to college. Then I have to stay and then look for a for a hustle job at home so that I can get money to go on the next day. And then it's on and on like that. So, that's why I'm saying I'm not always present in the College". Participant 1

"Sometimes I'm absent."
"Sometimes I get tired of walking".
"End up being absent". Participant 2

"No, I'm not always present. Firstly, sometimes it becomes difficult due to not having taxi fares". Participant 3

"Not most of the time, because I stay with the pensioner". Participant 5

"I come to College sometimes and as I'm walking sometimes I get tired". Participant 6

"No, but it's always. Sometimes I don't because of money". Participant 9

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"No, because some other time. I'm in shortage of transports". Participant 10

Most of the participants specified that the reason for their absenteeism was due to financial difficulties, particularly money they needed to pay for their transport. The findings are in line with those made by Mafunda (2021), whose study determined that a major contributing factor to student absenteeism was as a result of a lack of finances for transport. Participant 5 indicated that her absenteeism was due to her living with a pensioner, an indication that her responsibility to her family was a factor.

4.5.2.2.   Sub-theme 2.2: Loss of concentration

The lack of concentration and focus was listed among challenges that were experienced by the participants. Participants indicated that this particular challenge resulted in them missing on important aspects of what they were learning which limited their abilities to successfully complete their respective courses. They indicated that:

"I lose focus. I lose concentration. It ends up affecting my studies". Participant 2

"It affects me because sometimes I don't concentrate on what the lecturers are saying, sometimes they are. In my NVC, for example, my NVC exams have I failed because I couldn't concentrate". Participant 8

"And I'm old it's like, it's too much like but mental". Participant 9

"Yes, its bothering me because, I can't focus. I can't". Participant 10

From this data, it is clear that the participants felt compounded by the challenges they were encountering. Also, they struggled to focus and concentrate on learning the course content. Literature reveals that mediocre academic performance and quality of students are often brought on by poor concentration while they are studying (Sari, Fauziyah & Ghozi, 2021). Furthermore, the data generated in this research revealed that the participants were cognisant of its repercussions, as evidenced by the remarks made by participants 2 and 5. However, Participant 9

indicated that she struggled to understand due to her advanced age when compared to her peers.

4.5.2.3.   Sub-theme 2.3: Academic demotivation.

The data from the interviews revealed that participants felt academically demotivated because of the challenges they faced. Chong, Renandya and Ng (2019:64), define academic demotivation "as external and internal influences which can lead to a diminishing motivation to study". Their responses are indicated as follows:

"Yeah, it's challenging because I don't know where to start, so I'm just going to like when I reach home, even though at home I'm just going to leave my book there and say naw man, because there's no one to teach me. How am I going to do it alone? So, I'm just going to, actually it discourages me. Something that discourage me". Participant 1

"And in classroom, sometimes I feel that, why am I here. I don't, I don't, there is a word I am trying to think, I don't think I'm supposed to be here at the College anymore." Participant 8

It is evident from the above responses that participants 1 and 8 felt a strong sense of discouragement that left them demotivated on their studies. Participant 8's response shows that he was having feelings of doubt because of the challenges he was facing. It is apparent from the participant's responses that the challenges had a detrimental effect on them.

4.5.3. **Theme 3: Participants coping mechanisms for navigating the problems.**

Theme 3 resulted from the primary data collated during the interview process together with the following subthemes that the researcher discusses next. The researcher is aware that challenges and stress are an intrinsic part of our lives. According to Pascoe, Hetrick and Parker, (2020), if a coping mechanism is not employed, ongoing stress can trigger the emergence of more severe mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. Coping techniques is a psychological term that refers to the knowledge, abilities, and tactical actions that people employ

to control their emotional responses to stressful situations (de la Fuente, Amate, González-Torres, Artuch, García-Torrecillas & Fadda, 2020). Furthermore, the experience of stress and the adoption of stress-reduction techniques used by the participants can also be a part of the learning process. During the interviews, it emerged that the participants leaned on lecturers and their peers as well as motivating themselves in mitigating their stress.

4.5.3.1.   Sub-theme 3.1: Lecturer and peer support.

Participants in this study claimed that they coped with their challenges by turning to their peers for support. The participants understood the importance of regulating their stress if they wanted to avoid burnout. They said:

"Uh, for I've got a few students that I look up to. So, sometimes yes, all my peers sometimes where whenever I get stuck somewhere and then I'm going to phone him and say hey buddy, where are we? What are we doing here?" Participant 1

"I usually ask who was in class, what they did and trust, and then try to catch up so that when I come to class the following day I'll be able to catch up on the lesson". Participant 3

"Students to tell me what they're doing the rest of the day and yeah, I try to catch". Participant 4

It also became evident that learners also acknowledged some of their educators for providing them with support, not only in the subjects concerned, but also support in general. This is evidenced by the following remarks sourced from participants 6 and 7 respectively. They said:

"My lectures are very supportive, so they help us. If we've got any problem, they can ask you to come on their side and they can help you". Participant 6

"Only one of them in Math's literacy I ask for help because I don't understand Math's that much". Participant 7

Based on the responses shown by these participants, it became clear that having the support of their peers was an advantageous way of overcoming challenges they experienced. This affirms findings of a research study by Tzani-Pepelasi, Ioannou, Synnott and McDonnell, (2019) who found that that the peer or buddy technique in learning can enhance students' experiences and significantly influence their learning.

4.5.3.2.   Sub-theme 3.2: Intrinsic motivation

An additional coping mechanism used by the participants to deal with their challenges was to change their mindsets and motivate themselves. It is generally acknowledged that motivation is a key component of successful learning (Cozma, 2015).

"I can't say it hasn't come to a point where it motivated. I think it's the way I changed my mindsets that I needed change in, in, in, in the education level. I think that's the thing that's made me come here, yeah". Participant 5

"I sometimes I don't cope at all. Uhm, sometimes I just feel like just giving up. But I'm trying to be positive". Participant 8

"I told myself, listen here I must be strong". Participant 10

This suggests that the participants are aware that self-care is an important step in dealing with stress, which is a characteristic of becoming a mature adult. All the participants understood that managing their stress was their personal responsibility. This is in line with Purwanti (2017) who asserts as a person develops maturely, their motivation to learn becomes internal.

4.5.4. **Theme 4: Suggested strategies to overcome challenges**

Theme 4 was derived from the data received during the interview process, along with the following subthemes that the researcher discusses next. Participants shared some strategies they felt would help mitigate some of the challenges they were facing.

4.5.4.1. Sub-theme 4.1: Fast track payments

Participants emphasised that one of their biggest challenges was late payments from the NSFAS bursary scheme. The majority of student participants received funding from NSFAS, which covered their tuition, travelling and or accommodation expenses. During the interview processes, the researcher established that many of the participants were dealing with financial difficulties that were linked directly to the NSFAS bursary scheme. They made some recommendations with regard to this burning issue, shown below:

"Ah, I would say if the NSFAS can pay us a bit early so that we can, we can have enough time to get our ticket, then we can reach school. So I think for now he I would say, if the bursary can pay us early. Then I think it's going to be a bit easy to come and then cope with all the challenges". Participant 1

"Uh, I would really recommend that the NSFAS maybe pays on time". Participant 3

"I think if they can improve NSFAS". Participant 4

According to the data shared by the participants, the payment processes by NSFAS is a challenge and payments are made late to students. They shared their frustrations especially concerning receiving late payments and shared a common view that NSFAS should improve their payment system such that they would be able to fast-track payments which they believed would mitigate some of the challenges that they faced.

4.5.4.2. Sub-theme 4.2: Improve communication.

This sub-theme emerged from participants' responses where it became evident that there is a somewhat lack of communication between various stakeholders. Participants shared the following remarks:

"So I think the management should communicate more with student. Find out what's going on in the classes. And discuss and discuss everything so that maybe if we can have a solution or what's going on". Participant 1

"They should seek for help because sitting there with your problems at all. Sometimes it's good to talk to people you know, so they could understand like where you come. You know, most people do understand where who you come from by talking to them than by making them to understand the situation since". Participant 7

"To me with the students I feel like I can be included with their conversations". Participant 8

From the data, it is clear that there were communication barriers that existed. Participant 1 felt that the management team of the college should have opened communication channels where students could voice their concerns. Participant 7 concurred with participant 1 in that communication is an important tool in creating openness and cohesion in the institution. Participant 8's response reminded the researcher of the quote by John Donne (1624) cited in Donne and Fallon (1988:1), that "no man is an island", thus highlighting the importance of communicating with each other. Starbuck (2012) highlighted the importance of communication for organisations and contends that a professional community would not be able to function or even thrive without communications that are created for the purpose of work. The participants indicated that one strategy was that there needed to be more and/or better communication in order to help overcome the barriers they faced.

4.5.4.3. Sub-theme 4.3: Extra classes

This subtheme emerged during the interviews and was a clear indication that the participants felt that having extra classes could have eased their challenges. In their earlier responses, participants indicated that the academic challenges that they experienced included difficulties in understanding certain subjects and felt that having extra classes could be a strategy to help alleviate the challenges.

"Maybe extra classes can help me." Participant 2

"Have, more academical courses like math or something like that". Participant 8

"Study groups can help getting extra lessons from Math's Literacy". Participant 9

Based on the general responses from all the participants, they advocated for extra classes. Two of the participants indicated that the extra classes ought to have been for the subject Math's, as this was one of the academic challenges they had indicated was problematic. According to Sempe (2021), there exists a strong correlation between the success of the extra lessons and the students' performance after taking them. This posits that the TVET college engaging in extra classes for these adult learners, would in effect minimise some of the academic challenges faced by these learners.

4.5.5. **Theme 5: Factors that influenced participants to study at a TVET college.**

Theme 5 was derived from the data received during the interview process along with the following subthemes that the researcher discusses in the next sections. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has, since 2012, focused its attention and priority on TVET colleges to make them institutions of choice for tertiary studies (DHET, 2012). With these participants, it emerged that they were unable to complete their general education and thus sought the TVET college as an educational institution to help fulfill their career aspirations and to complete their general education. The following sub-themes explored the compelling reasons why these adult learners, enrolled at the TVET college.

4.5.5.1. Sub-theme 5.1: Better life opportunities

This subtheme emerged during the interviews and showed that these young adults were seeking 'greener pastures' and improved career opportunities. They said:

"It's family issues or situation that's we're living under". Participant 2

"For my kids".
"Yeah, better life". Participant 8

"I wanted a better future for myself and my kids because they are growing and we struggling". Participant 9

"Because I want to fulfill my skills and have a better future". Participant 10

The data revealed that students were encouraged to enroll at the TVET college, either through internal or external motivational factors. Participant 2 indicated that given the family situation and living conditions, she chose the TVET to help her attain a qualification in the hope of changing her situation. Participant 8 who previously alluded to his challenges, was also motivated by the desire to provide more for his children and to give them a better chance at life.

This viewpoint was also shared by participant 9 who expressed the desire for their children to experience a life without the same level of struggle(s) that she experienced. Participant 10 also felt that she had the capabilities and skills and looked to the education offered in the TVET college to afford them an opportunity to unlock and fulfil her potential. The responses by the participants affirm the findings reported by Lin and Wang (2015) as well as by Sokolova and Mohelska (2015), wherein their research found that, amongst other reasons, finding employment and improving their situation were among the reasons adult learners returned to the educational system.

4.5.5.2.   Sub-theme 5.2: Second chances

This subtheme that emerged during the interviews was that these young adults were seeking a second chance at their education, having not successfully completed grade 12 or matric. Participants had the following to share:

"For certain reasons, well at home where we are in the business, we are in a taxi business so. Once you once you reach matric, they make you a license and then they say take one of the taxis and go to work. But I didn't like that I didn't like being a taxi driver. I thought that I could still pursue my studies. So I failed my matric in 2017, so I decided I'm not going to give up, then I heard about the change in college and they say they offer these types of learning and I said no. Why not give? Why not give it a try and see how it goes? Yeah, so I think there's the passion that influenced me to come here so that there can be something in the future". Participant 1

"I think, like I've mentioned, that my certificate wasn't completed and it didn't have math's of which many jobs you're applying for". Participant 5

"Well, as I did not pass my matric, I stayed at home and I noticed that time is like goes and you have nothing really that you've achieved. So I decided, let me go back to school and further my studies". Participant 3

In South Africa, general education is compulsory from grade R up until grade 9, as per the guidelines mandated by the South African Schools Act (SASA), (Republic of South Africa 1996a). However, the gold standard is seen to be grade twelve (12) as it is the precursor to the world of higher education. Therefore, our educational system and society at large place an added emphasis on completing grade twelve (12). In this regard, the participants felt that the TVET system allowed and provided them with a second chance to be able to attain a higher level of education as they had not completed their grade twelve (12) certificate.

4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, data sourced from participants through semi-structured interviews were analysed, interpreted, and presented. The chapter also presented a discussion on themes and sub-themes. The researcher also indicated how the themes and subthemes were derived. The interviews led to the discovery of several challenges that adult learners were faced with at the TVET college. Chapter 5 presents a summary of conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARIES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Introduction

The researcher discussed the data analysis and the underlying themes and sub-themes in Chapter four. Chapter 4 discusses how the themes and subthemes were created utilising the interview guide's questions. A summary of the study's conclusions, recommendation, and findings are given in this chapter. The research question, "What challenges do adult learners who study in the selected TVET college face?" is addressed in the chapter's summary of findings and recommendations, which were developed from participant interviews.

5.2. Summarised findings of the research

5.2.1. Summary of theoretical frameworks

It was found that the theory of Andragogy by Malcolm Knowles plays a vital role in educating adults. In this study, the results show that learners were ready to learn. The participants indicated that they wanted to come to college but due to financial constraints, they were unable to at times. Purwanti (2017) alludes that this is in line with Knowles theory of readiness to learn. The theory of andragogy also pin-points that learners learn experientially. The study revealed that participants indicated that they learnt better through practical work rather than theory. This concurs with Alajlan (2015) who contends that adults adapt to a learning situation when the learning process is problem centred.

Adult learners need to know that what they are learning will contribute value to their lives. As many of the participants had indicated that they came to study because they wanted a better life. This is in line with (Ozuah, 2016), who purports that adults must be aware of the value of the subject matter before choosing to study it. From the study it was deduced that adult learners bring their own life experiences to an educational sitting. This is consistent with the argument put forward by Chinnasamy (2013), who asserts that as individuals develop and age, they amass a plethora of life experiences that may considerably improve the educational environment for both learners and teachers.

The challenges faced by the participants in the study manifested themselves as demotivation to study, with some expressing doubt that their situations would turn around. They perceived their challenges to be as a result of the way their experiences at the college are and the way they believed the world is. Christie, Carey, Robertson and Grainger (2015) highlight how Mezirow(s) theory explains how people struggle to change because their worldviews develop into unconsciously formed frames of reference created by habit.

5.2.2. Findings from the literature review

In the literature review, the researcher highlighted the challenges faced by adult learners according to Baharudin, Murad and Mat (2013). The challenges were classified as situational barriers, institutional barriers, dispositional barriers, and academic barriers.

5.2.2.1. Situational barriers

Based on the literature review, the researcher has established that situational barriers can be categorised as major contributing factors in adult learners' lives, that may preclude them from them participating in learning opportunities (Baharudin et al., 2013, Mahlangu, 2018, Yasmin & Sohail, 2018). It is clear that these obstacles are out of the adult learners' control and are frequently caused by events in their daily life. These barriers include but are not limited to: responsibilities at home, family responsibilities such as children and other dependents, lack of support, as well as financial and time constraints.

5.2.2.2. Institutional barriers

The researcher has noted from the literature review that institutional barriers are the challenges that are associated with educational institutions (McKay, 2018). It has been discovered from reviewing the literature that those with less knowledge or resources are disproportionately impacted by these barriers. Furthermore, the researcher has learnt that a learner's academic performance is significantly influenced by the educational institution. These institutional barriers comprise of but not limited to: unresponsive institutions, rigid content delivery, unsuitable and challenging learning materials, and courses that are too demanding for the adult learner.

5.2.2.3. Dispositional barriers

According to literature evaluation, the researcher has discovered that dispositional barriers are related to a person's unfavourable attitude and sensitivities against seeking higher education (Mavropoulos, Pampouri, & Kiriatzakou, 2021). In addition, such emotions may stem from their low self-esteem or from their previous academic performance and that adult learners could lack the confidence to learn because they might think they are too old to study. Also, the researcher established that in classes at the TVET college, older and younger students were mixed together, which may have had an effect on the various groups' andragogical, emotional, and psychological needs. Among these dispositional barriers are, but not restricted to: feelings, attitude, and intentions.

5.2.2.4. Academic Barriers

The researcher has drawn the conclusion from the literature review that adults must have specific capabilities or they create barriers to academic success (Kakai, 2020). These capabilities may include literacy skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. The researcher also discovered that when adults lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, computer related skills, don't have the ability to understand information and are unable to think critically and reflectively, it creates academic barriers.

5.2.3. **Findings from study**

5.2.3.1. Challenges faced by participants

Through interacting with the interviewees, the researcher has determined that the participants who attended the TVET college were facing the following challenges: financial constraints due to late bursary payments, impact of learning styles, academic challenges, and family responsibilities.

5.2.3.2. Effects of challenges on participants

The study revealed to the researcher that the participants' challenges were reflected in their frequent absences, lack of focus in class, and lack of academic motivation.

5.2.3.3. Coping mechanisms for participants

The study indicated that the participants relied on internal drive to cope as well as assistance from their peers and lecturers to deal with their challenges.

5.2.3.4. Strategies recommended by the participants

The participants had suggested that NSFAS needed to enhance the administration of the financial payments, the TVET college had to improve communication channels across various stakeholders, and add extra classes.

5.3. Discussion of findings

The research results from the study revealed the challenges that the participants were facing in the TVET college. The majority of the participants involved in the study resided in low-income areas and relied on the NSFAS bursary for financial assistance with their studies. However, participants on the bursary had highlighted that the NSFAS bursary payments were not always on schedule, which resulted in financial difficulties. Participants were directly impacted because many of them relied on public transportation to travel to and from the college and were unable to because they lacked the funds. Consequently, this resulted in them being frequently absent from class. This also had other un-intended consequences, for example, a few of the participants also mentioned how their inability to afford food had an impact on their ability to concentrate in class. Masehela (2018) contends that due to financial limitations, students from low-income households in particular still face barriers when joining higher education institutions.

Furthermore, the research discovered that the participants were duty bound to their responsibilities as adults, such as providing for their families and caring for their children. This implied that participants must manage their families, careers, and education at the same time (Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoç & Cagiltay, 2019). These factors, such as financial constraints, lack of transport as well as family and dependent responsibilities are categorised as situational barriers. Manger, Eikeland and Asbjørnsen, (2019) assert that these situational barriers are as a result of one's situation in life at any given point and are typically outside the locus of control for

the adult learner. The findings of the study clearly show that situational barriers had an impact on adult learners' academic experience at the TVET college.

According to Saunders (2019), the way an educational institution functions can sometimes hinder an adult learners' capacity to excel academically and are categorised as institutional barriers. During the study, it appeared that the institution was using a 'one size fits all' approach during teaching and learning. This is evident by views expressed by some participants that they had different learning styles. The participants expressed that the manner in which they were being taught was not favourable to them as they learnt differently. It also appeared that there was a lack of institutional leadership in managing lecturer absenteeism which resulted in participants trying to learn by themselves thus exacerbating their challenges. In addition, it was discovered that the method of curriculum delivery placed greater emphasis on the theoretical aspects of the syllabus rather than on practical and skills training, which in a way goes against the very tenets of vocational education. This implies a divergence from the intended outcomes of vocational education, with more theoretical work and less practical (Schnobel, 2019).

Another concern that was noted is the academic challenges that participants were facing, as result of learning difficulties. Participants indicated they were finding subjects like Mathematics and Office Data Processing challenging. This was another area that was highlighted by Ngwato (2020) who found that there are concerns about the NC(V) programmes difficulty level because students from traditional schools' struggle with the content offered in these courses. This becomes somewhat more problematic especially for adult learners who had not completed traditional mainstream schooling. According to Kisanga (2017), any barrier that prevents students from accessing the curriculum, teachers' instructions, learning and teaching resources, exams, and their participation in the teaching and learning process is referred to as an academic barrier.

Due to their particular experiences, adult students are impacted, which can lead to hurdles that affect both their experiences inside and outside of the classroom (Renner & Skursha, 2022). It became clear that participants felt academically demotivated as a result of their challenges. These are referred to as dispositional barriers and is manifested in ways such as internalised thoughts and feelings, such as lack of confidence and prior failures.

Despite the numerous challenges facing the participants, participants shared ways in which they used certain coping mechanism during their studies. These included peer and lecturer support and intrinsic motivation. A peer and social support system have been shown to effectively counter challenges faced by adult learners (Francisco, 2021). Participants also indicated that they employed the use of a positive mind-set in overcoming the barriers, they were encountering. These findings replicate the findings by Vaculíková (2021) whose study found that favorable feelings enhance motivation, aid in self-control, and have a positive impact on behavior and performance.

The participants had suggested some strategies to mitigate the challenges they were experiencing. The late payment of financial aid was highlighted frequently during the interviews and participants stressed the importance of NSFAS attempting to fast-track bursary payments to reduce financial constraints for the participants. Participants also suggested improving communication to develop the teaching and learning processes. It emerged that there existed communication barriers and participants were of the opinion, that communication channels should be created whereby learners would be able to highlight pertinent areas of concern which impacted their studies. In addition, participants spoke firmly about the inclusion of extra tuition classes to the academic calendar. It was found that most participants believed that taking more classes would assist them with their academic challenges and help them perform better academically.

5.4. Limitations of the study

This research study was limited to a small sample population, from a single campus of one TVET college within the uThukela district in KwaZulu-Natal, thus diminishing the capacity for the research findings to be generalised across all adult learners in other TVET colleges. Another limitation was the reluctance of some adult learners to participate and share their views. Participants had to be interviewed during their free lessons and or during their break time, which presented some challenges.

However, the study did convey insightful information into the challenges adult learners were facing in a TVET college. This study can be utilised to inform research in other TVET colleges.

5.5. Recommendations

In light of the above research findings, it is recommended that;

- NSFAS bursary payments be made timeously so that learners are able to procure adequate transport and purchase food for themselves.
- Lecturers need to be capacitated in order to respond to the various learning styles of adult learners.
- Colleges should develop a strategic academic plan, including the provision of extra-classes to assist adult-learners.
- Curriculum delivery should focus more on practical and acquirable skills and less on theory.
- Student support services can make use of educational workshops for adult learners on ways in which to balance family responsibilities and their educational studies.

5.6. Recommendations for future studies

This research study examined the challenges faced by adult learners in a TVET college in the uThukela district of the province of KwaZulu-Natal South Africa. The researcher envisions that this research study can be enhanced to include data from other TVET colleges in the district and province. Furthermore, the study can be extended to include other important stakeholders such as educational managers and lecturers.

5.7. Conclusion

The findings from the literature and the interviews were summarised in this chapter. It was clear from the research study that the adult learners wanted to better both their own and their families' quality of living. They had resorted to TVET colleges to complete their studies and become qualified to work. However, it was clear from the study's conclusions that they had faced some challenges. The study's findings indicated that adult learners had unique learning preferences, struggled in the classroom, and had to juggle family obligations along with financial limitations. These challenges are classified into institutional, situational, and academic challenges. To address these problems and enhance an adult learner's experience at a TVET college, the researcher offered recommendations. The recommendations include prompt bursary payments to students, training for lecturers to accommodate different learning styles, additional classes to accommodate learners with learning challenges, and educational workshops offered by student support services to assist students in striking a balance between their studies and family obligations.

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LIST OF ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2022/06/08

Dear Ms C Mohan

| **Decision:** Ethics Approval from 2022/06/08 to 2025/06/08 |

Ref: **2022/06/08/45265704/12/AM**
Name: Ms C Mohan
Student No.:45265704

Researcher(s): Name: Ms C Mohan
E-mail address: 45265704@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 078 618 4356

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr EM Nkoana
E-mail address: nkoanem@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 481 2767

> **Title of research:**
>
> **Challenges Faced by Adult Learners in a Technical Vocational Education and Training College in the Uthukela District of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa**

Qualification: MEd Adult Education

_____

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 2022/06/08 to 2025/06/08.

> The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2022/06/08 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.

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 **2025/06/08**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2022/06/08/45265704/12/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
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

ANNEXURE B: DHET APPLICATION FORM

higher education & training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DHET 004: APPENDIX 1:

APPLICATION FORM FOR <u>STUDENTS</u> TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

1. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1.1.	Title (Dr /Mr /Mrs /Ms)	Ms	
1.2	Name and surname	Charlotte Mohan	
1.3	Postal address	42 Jasmine Avenue Ladysmith 3370	
1.4	Contact details	Tel	
		Cell	078 618 4356
		Fax	
		Email	45265704@mylife.unisa.ac.za
1.5	Name of institution where enrolled	University of South Africa (Unisa)	
1.6	Field of study	Education	
1.7	Qualification registered for	**Please tick relevant option:**	
		Doctoral Degree (PhD)	
		Master's Degree	X
		Other (please specify)	

2. DETAILS OF THE STUDY

2.1	Title of the study
	Challenges Faced by adult learners in a technical vocational education and training college in the Uthukela District of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa.

2.2	Purpose of the study
	To investigate the challenges that adult learners are experiencing in a TVET college and make recommendations on how to overcome them

3. PARTCIPANTS AND TYPE/S OF ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE COLLEGE

Please indicate the types of research activities you are planning to undertake in the College, as well as the categories of persons who are expected to participate in your study (for example, lecturers, students, College Principals, Deputy Principals, Campus Heads, Support Staff, Heads of Departments), including the number of participants for each activity.

		Expected participants (e.g. students, lecturers, College Principal)	Number of participants
3.1	Complete questionnaires	a)	
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
		e)	
3.2	Participate in individual interviews	Expected participants	Number of participants
		a) Students	10
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
		e)	
3.3	Participate in focus group discussions/ workshops	Expected participants	Number of participants
		a)	
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
		e)	
3.4	Complete standardised tests (e.g. Psychometric Tests)	Expected participants	Number of participants
		a)	
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
		e)	
3.5	Undertake observations *Please specify*		
3.6	Other *Please specify*		

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

4. SUPPORT NEEDED FROM THE COLLEGE

Please indicate the type of support required from the College (Please tick relevant option/s)			
Type of support		**Yes**	**No**
4.1	The College will be required to identify participants and provide their contact details to the researcher.		X
4.2	The College will be required to distribute questionnaires/instruments to participants on behalf of the researcher.		X
4.3	The College will be required to provide official documents. *Please specify the documents required below*		X
4.4	The College will be required to provide data *(only if this data is not available from the DHET)*. *Please specify the data fields required, below*		X
4.5	*Other, please specify below*		

5. DOCUMENTS TO BE ATTACHED TO THE APPLICATION

The following 2 (two) documents must be attached as a prerequisite for approval to undertake research in the College	
5.1	Ethics Clearance Certificate issued by a University Ethics Committee
5.2	Research proposal approved by a University

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6. DECLARATION BY THE APPLICANT

I undertake to use the information that I acquire through my research, in a balanced and a responsible manner. I furthermore take note of, and agree to adhere to the following conditions:

a) I will schedule my research activities in consultation with the said College/s and participants in order not to interrupt the programme of the said College/s.

b) I agree that involvement by participants in my research study is voluntary, and that participants have a right to decline to participate in my research study.

c) I will obtain signed consent forms from participants prior to any engagement with them.

d) I will obtain written parental consent of students under 18 years of age, if they are expected to participate in my research.

e) I will inform participants about the use of recording devices such as tape-recorders and cameras, and participants will be free to reject them if they wish.

f) I will honour the right of participants to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and respect for human dignity at all times. Participants will not be identifiable in any way from the results of my research, unless written consent is obtained otherwise.

g) I will not include the names of the said College/s or research participants in my research report, without the written consent of each of the said individuals and/or College/s.

h) I will send the draft research report to research participants before finalisation, in order to validate the accuracy of the information in the report.

i) I will not use the resources of the said College/s in which I am conducting research (such as stationery, photocopies, faxes, and telephones), for my research study.

j) Should I require data for this study, I will first request data directly from the Department of Higher Education and Training. I will request data from the College/s only if the DHET does not have the required data.

k) I will include a disclaimer in any report, publication or presentation arising from my research, that the findings and recommendations of the study do not represent the views of the said College/s or the Department of Higher Education and Training.

l) I will provide a summary of my research report to the Head of the College/s in which I undertook my research, for information purposes.

I declare that all statements made in this application are true and accurate. I accept the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research and undertake to abide by them.
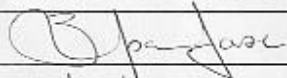
SIGNATURE	*Richan*
DATE	18 July 2022

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

FOR OFFICIAL USE

DECISION BY HEAD OF COLLEGE

	Please tick relevant decision and provide conditions/reasons where applicable	
Decision		**Please tick relevant option below**
1	Application approved	X
2	Application approved subject to certain conditions. *Specify conditions below*	
	as part of ethical clearance, to share research report with the college.	
3	Application not approved. *Provide reasons for non-approval below*	

NAME OF COLLEGE	Mnambithi TVET College
NAME AND SURNAME OF HEAD OF COLLEGE	Christopher Juba Ndlela.
SIGNATURE	
DATE	2022/07/18

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PERMISSION LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

Date: 14 April 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MNAMBITHI TVET COLLEGE

I, Charlotte Mohan am doing research under the supervision of Dr. Elvis M Nkoana, a senior lecturer in the Department of Adult, Continuing, & Community Education towards a Master's Degree in Adult Education at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "Challenges faced by adult learners in a Technical Vocational Education and Training College in the UThukela District of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa". The aim of the study is to explore the challenges that adult learners are facing in TVET Colleges and to make recommendations to assist adult learners to overcome some of these challenges.

I would like to request permission to conduct a qualitative research study at your institution. The study will entail an interview that will involve 10 (ten) students from your institution, that will last approximately 30 minutes per participant. The interviews will be conducted out of teaching time and will in no way infringe upon their studies.

The benefits of this study is that it will provide your institution with data on the challenges that adult learners are experiencing and provide recommendations to overcome these challenges. This will benefit the learners and improve their learning experiences.

No physical harm will come to the participants however; the country is currently experiencing a COVID-19 pandemic. Participants may be at risk of contracting the virus. To mitigate the risks involved the researcher will implement the following procedures:
- The interview will take place in a well ventilated venue.
- The researcher and participant will both be required to wear masks during the interview process.
- Sanitising of hands will be carried out prior to entering the venue.
- The furniture that will be used by the participants and researcher will be sanitised before usage.
- A bottle of sanitiser will be provided during the interview as well.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

The researcher will create a summary of the findings and send it via email to the institution.
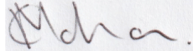
You are welcome to contact my supervisor, Dr EM Nkoana, at nkoanem@unisa.ac.za if you require more information with regards to the research involved.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

CHARLOTTE MOHAN
STUDENT NUMBER: 45265704

INFORMATION AND CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

UNISA | university of south africa

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

CHALLENGES FACED BY ADULT LEARNERS IN A TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE IN THE UTHUKELA DISTRICT OF KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

RESEARCHER NAME: CHARLOTTE MOHAN
CONTACT DETAILS: Email: 45265704@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Cell phone number: 078 618 4356

What is this research all about?

The aims of this study is to explore the challenges that adult learners are facing in a TVET college and to make recommendations to assist, adult learners to overcome some of these challenges. The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges, and how it affects adult learners in their studies. The aims of the study will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- To identify the challenges faced by adult learners enrolled at the TVET college.
- To determine what coping mechanisms were used by adult learners to overcome their challenges.
- To recommend strategies to assist adult learners to overcome their challenges.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research inquiry?

I have invited you to participate in this research study because you are an adult learner that is enrolled at a TVET college. You are also invited to participate in this study because of your experiences and challenges that you face as an adult learner at this learning institution.

Who is doing the research?

This research is done by Ms C Mohan as part of her studies to complete a Master's degree in Adult Education.

What will happen to me in this study?

Firstly, the researcher will seek your permission to be a participant in this research. You need to participate in an interview and if clarity is needed by the researcher then you will need to do a follow up interview.

Can anything bad happen to me?

No. The research is interested in you sharing your experiences. The interview and what will be discussed will be kept confidential and will not be shared.

Can anything good happen to me?

Yes. You will be contributing valuable information about the challenges you face as an adult learner in a TVET college. This data can assist many other learners who are experiencing similar problems and the recommendations provided can assist learners overcome some of these challenges.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

No, no one will know of your identity in the study. The researcher will use pseudonyms instead of your real name.

Who can I talk to about the study?

Ms Mohan. You can contact me using this cell phone number: 078 618 4356.

What if I do not want to do this?

Your participation in this research is voluntarily. You will not get paid or rewarded in exchange for information. You are however a valued participant and can withdraw from the study at any time you wish to do so.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the

person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential

benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

- I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).
- I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.
- I agree to the recording of the interview.
- I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print)

_____

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print)   _____

_____   _____
Researcher's signature   Date

ANNEXURE E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How old are you?

2. What is your gender?

3. What course are you studying and please state the level?

4. Where do you live?

5. How do you travel to college?

6. Whom do you live with?

7. Following up on question 4, do the people you live with, support you with regards to your academic studies.

8. Who is responsible for your education financially?

9. Do you have any children or dependants that you care for? If yes, who helps you care for them while at college?

10. What is your current highest qualification? Probe for reasons if qualification is incomplete.

11. Can you tell me what reasons influenced your decision to come to the TVET College to study?

12. Are there any factors that motivates you to stay at college as a student?

13. Are you currently employed? if employed, how do you manage your personal and academic responsibilities while attending college?

14. Are there any professional reasons that compelled or encouraged you to enrol at this TVET college like getting a promotion or increased salary etc?

15. Are you always present at college, if not why?

16. Do you receive extra academic support from your lecturers at college?

17. How do you feel about studying with peers that are younger than you?

18. What are the challenges that you are experiencing while attending college?

19. How are these challenges affecting your studies?

20. What coping mechanisms are you using to overcome these challenges?

21. What strategies do you think can be recommended to help overcome these challenges?

ANNEXURE F: PROOF OF EDITING
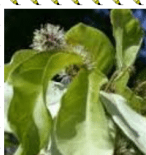
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<u>Proof of editing</u>

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Mpumalanga
South Africa
Cell.: 0603467091

Date: 15 October 2022

This is to certify that I have edited the Med dissertation of the following candidate:

Names and Surname: Charlotte Mohan

Student number: 45265704

Title: Challenges faced by adult learners in a Technical Vocational Education and Training

College in the uThukela District of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Maseko

Dr ST Maseko
Director
STMbondvo editing services

<u>Confidentiality</u>: *In editing academic documents, I understand that I have access to confidential data, that information contained in documents is confidential and for that, I agree not to divulge, publish, make known to unauthorized persons or to the public the data in documents.*

CHALLENGES FACED BY ADULT LEARNERS IN A TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE IN THE UTHUKELA DISTRICT OF KWAZULU-NATAL SOUTH AFRICA

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