Remote Teaching and Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences of Lecturers and Students in Private Higher Education Colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa

By

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic caused disruptions in higher education in South Africa, with institutions transitioning to remote teaching and learning. Literature reveals that the pandemic affected lecturers' and students' teaching and learning processes, yet there is limited research examining and comparing lecturers' and students' perceptions. Henceforth, this study examined and compared the experiences of lecturers and students on remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study was guided by the interpretivism paradigm and employed a qualitative methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten (10) lecturers and sixteen (16) students. Major findings of this study were that (a) Lecturers and students provided a mixed review of their remote teaching and learning experiences, highlighting positive and negative aspects (b) Some lecturers and students commended remote teaching and learning for its convenience and cost-effectiveness, (c) Lecturers and students also had to confront shared difficulties such as limited internet connectivity or lack of Wi-Fi, communication issues, limited work/study space, and mental health concerns, all of which had a detrimental impact on the quality of remote teaching and learning. Hence, the conclusions and recommendations drawn from this study emphasise the significance of reducing the inequalities in digital access and opportunities in private higher education colleges.

Key words: Remote Teaching, Remote Learning, Covid-19 Pandemic, Private Higher Education Colleges, Lecturers, and Students.

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.

                                                        07 April 2024
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SIGNATURE   DATE

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDC	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
CHE	Council of Higher Education
Covid-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LMS	Learning Management System
MS Teams	Microsoft Teams
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa
VARK	Visual, Auditory, Reading, and Kinaesthetic
WHO	World Health Organisation

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic caused disruptions in various sectors throughout the world, including in South Africa (Xiang, Rasool, Hang, Javid, Javed & Artene, 2021; Anyanwu & Salami, 2021). The education sector is no exception, radical changes were implemented in teaching and learning during the pandemic (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Primary and secondary schools changed from full-time to rotational teaching and learning per grade, to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Meanwhile, HEIs transitioned from face-to-face to remote teaching and learning (Chedrawi, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic intensified the use of online or remote teaching and learning in HEIs (Chedrawi, 2021). The objective of this study was to explore and compare the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus was on private higher education colleges situated in Johannesburg, South Africa.

1.2. Background of the Study

Covid-19 is caused by a coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2 (WHO, 2020). SARS-CoV-2 affects humans by causing respiratory diseases. These range from a common cold to more serious diseases, which include severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (WHO, 2020). The first case of Covid-19 was reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City, China. The original source of the outbreak had been traced back to a virus introduced into the human population. This could have occurred via an animal source in the marketplace, or an infected person introduced the virus to the marketplace, where it spread to other areas (WHO, 2020).

On the 23rd of March 2020, Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of South Africa announced a nationwide lockdown, effective from the 26th of March 2020. This was to last for 21 days. The lockdown was the initial measure implemented to address the spread of Covid-19 in the country. During the national lockdown, individuals were prohibited from

leaving their homes, except under strict conditions and circumstances (Kiewit, Harper & Macupe, 2020). These circumstances included seeking urgent medical care, buying food, medicine, and any other supplies, or collecting social grants. Some emergency and essential personnel exempted from the lockdown included health workers, police officers, traffic officers, soldiers, banking services, and people responsible for the production, distribution, and supply of food and goods (Republic of South Africa, 2020). The lockdown significantly impacted all spheres of the economy. Most companies had to take steps to operate remotely, in a short time (Bayane, 2020; Kiewit et al., 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic also impacted teaching and learning, particularly in primary, secondary, and higher education (Chaka, 2020; Mustafa, 2020; Bayane, 2020). In HEIs, teaching and learning changed from primarily contact (face-to-face) to exclusively online (remote). This remote teaching and learning were conducted through online platforms such as Blackboard, Zoom, and video conferencing (Chaka, 2020). However, Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) highlight that learning during the pandemic was challenging because students had no access to the necessary resources. Students suffered when learning moved from face-to-face to online platforms due to digital exclusion (Soudien, Reddy & Harvey, 2021). Many students could not participate in remote learning opportunities because they were economically, technologically, and geographically disadvantaged (Soudien et al., 2021). College students were most vulnerable because they lacked access to digital technology. This hindered their ability to participate effectively and meaningfully in remote teaching and learning (Du Plessis, 2014).

Similarly, lecturers also struggled with the shift from face-to-face to remote teaching due to the limited resources (Mpungose, 2020). Mahlaba & Mentz (2023) add that lecturers experienced difficulties adjusting from the shift of face-to-face classes to remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic because they had to adapt and learn a new set of skills that would enable them to teach remotely. Online teaching was different from face-to-face classes, as lecturers could not read the facial expressions of their students. Hence, lecturers could not establish if students understood the

content, they taught (Adu et al., 2022). In addition, lecturers encountered other challenges such as not having functional devices, poor Internet connectivity, power issues, and communication barriers (Lee, Saavedra & Chakroun, 2021). Research highlights both lecturers and students encountered challenges with remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges faced by both lecturers and students form part of their experiences. Therefore, this study focused on the experiences of lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges located in Johannesburg, South Africa.

1.3.   Problem Statement

HEIs were negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (Du Plessis, Carel, Van Vuuren, Simons, Frantz, Roman & Andipatin, 2021; Aristovnik, Kerzic, Ravselj, Tomazevic & Umek, 2020; Dubey, Biswas, Ghosh, Chatterjee, Dubey, Chatterjee & Lahiri, 2020). These institutions had to implement multiple strategies to ensure the continuity of their academic programmes. These strategies included universities and colleges moving from face-to-face to remote teaching and learning, working-from-home arrangements for staff, and the reallocation of the existing approved budgets (Du Plessis et al., 2021). In line with the shift to online education, lecturers struggled with adapting to remote teaching and the sole use of technology during the Covid-19 pandemic (Adu et al., 2022; Du Plessis et al., 2021). Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic also changed the lives of students in various ways. These included displacement from their homes and campuses, financial challenges, loss of internship opportunities, as well as the need to learn and engage with new technology while learning new subjects (Du Plessis et al., 2021; Kanyumba & Shabangu, 2021; Germiston CityNews, 2020; Motala & Menon, 2020). Yet, current literature shows that a comparison of lecturer's and student's experiences on remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges in Johannesburg is an under-researched area. Hence this study also aims to cover that gap.

1.4. Rationale

Limited literature focuses on the comparison of the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning in private higher education colleges situated in Johannesburg, during the Covid-19 pandemic (Grange, 2020; Gumede & Badriparsad, 2022). This study sought to contribute to the empirical knowledge on remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges, from the perspectives of both lecturers and students. Education is a basic human right for all (UN, 2020). However, the Covid-19 pandemic increased the existing gap in meeting the educational needs of the world population (UN, 2020). The pandemic disrupted education and impacted students at different levels (primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities (UN, 2020). Three main types of HEIs exist in South Africa, namely, colleges, universities, and technikons (SA College of Technology, 2019). This study focused on private higher education colleges because they are privately owned and receive minimal state funding and support (SA College of Technology, 2019). Therefore, differences exist regarding the resources available for students in private and public institutions (Fundiconnect, 2022). Additionally, remote teaching and learning in private colleges during the pandemic is under-researched. Literature contains more research focused on public HEIs (see Chaka, 2020; Chedrawi, 2021; Marongwe & Garidzirai, 2021). Therefore, it is paramount to compare the experiences of lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic, in Johannesburg.

1.5. Research Aim, Questions, and Objectives

1.5.1. Research Aim

The study aimed to explore and compare the remote teaching and learning experiences of lecturers and students during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study also examined the challenges experienced by lecturers and students with remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.5.2. Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to address the main aim of the study:

- What are students' experiences on remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges?
- What are lecturers' experiences on remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges?
- What are the challenges faced by lecturers and students in adapting to remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges?

1.5.3. Research Objectives

To address the research aim and questions in this study, the following objectives were formulated:

- To examine students' experiences with remote learning in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To explore lecturers' experiences on remote teaching in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To investigate challenges faced by lecturers and students in adapting to remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges.

1.6. Key Concepts of the Study

Covid-19 – is caused by a coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2, which belongs to a large family of viruses (WHO, 2020).

Remote instruction – during the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face classes were halted and substituted by remote teaching and learning. Remote instruction is the physical separation of the lecturer and the student, in which virtual teaching and learning occur using online platforms (Lindner et al., 2020).

Remote learning – the student and the lecturer are provided an opportunity to remain connected and engaged with the teaching and learning content while working remotely. This temporary solution is achieved by using online platforms. Learning can either be synchronous (students watch their lecturers live), or asynchronous (students watch lecturer recordings after the lecture) (Fabriz, Mendzheritskaya & Stehle, 2021; Jensen, Smith, Bowers, Kaloi, Ogden, Paary, Payne, Fife & Holt, 2022).

Remote teaching – this occurs outside a physical classroom, meaning that the student is separated from their lecturer by distance and time. Remote teaching occurs using online platforms. It can be delivered to students synchronously (students watch their lecturers live) or asynchronously (students watch lecturer recordings after the lecture) (Fabriz et al., 2021, 2022; Jensen et al., 2022).

Student – refers to a person who is registered at a HEIs (DHET, 2022). HEIs can either be public (universities) or private (colleges). This study focused on students enrolled at private higher education colleges.

Lecturer – denotes an academic employee who teaches at a HEI (DHET, 2001). HEIs can be public universities/technikons or private colleges. This study was limited to lecturers at private higher education colleges.

Teaching and learning – Teaching is a process of imparting knowledge, and learning is a process of acquiring knowledge (Hasa, 2017).

1.7. Methodology of the Study

This study used a qualitative approach to understand the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Creswell (2007), a qualitative research approach is a means of examining and understanding the meaning that individuals and groups ascribe to a social or a human problem. The qualitative research approach helps with understanding human experiences in a specific setting (Babbie, 2021). The qualitative research approach

also provides a detailed description of human experiences, feelings, and opinions that helps interpret the meaning of the participants' actions (Babbie, 2021). Hence, the qualitative approach helped the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding and compare the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants in this study were selected by using convenience and snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from 26 participants (ten (10) lecturers and sixteen (16) students at private higher education colleges). Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data which were subsequently categorised into themes.

1.8. Theoretical Frameworks

This study adopted two theories, namely, the intersectionality theory and the transactional distance theory. The intersectionality theory was useful in this study because of its direct connection to and the impact on remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The intersectionality framework explores how multiple social categories and affiliations such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and so forth are interconnected with the individual (Crenshaw, 1991). In this study, the individual is a lecturer or a student, whereas society at large is represented by private higher education colleges (Gandolfi, Ferdig & Kratcoski, 2021). Intersectionality was suitable for this study as it was used to analyse such identities as gender, race, and socio-economic status. The analysis also covered the contribution of these identities to the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the intersectionality framework was used to analyse the challenges faced by lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Literature has revealed that the transactional distance theory, coined by Micheal Moore in the 1970s has an adverse impact on lecturers' teaching experiences and students' learning experiences, especially in the context of remote teaching and

learning (Ilagan, 2020). This is linked to the geographical, pedagogical, and psychological gaps applicable to the transactional distance theory. These gaps refer to the distance separating the lecturer and the student in the context of remote teaching and learning. The use of technology for remote teaching and learning widened the gaps associated with the distance learning theory. Hence, this theory was used to analyse the transactional gaps in remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is done through three dimensions, namely, structure, dialogue, and autonomy (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

1.9.   Structure of the Report

This research report is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One: Introduction. This chapter introduced the study by providing an overview, with a specific focus on a brief background of the Covid-19 pandemic and the conceptualisation of remote teaching and learning in the higher education sector. Additionally, the chapter outlined the problem statement, rationale, research aim, research objectives, research questions, and the key concepts of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. This chapter begins by reviewing the literature on the history of teaching and learning in higher education and the conceptualisation of remote teaching and learning. This chapter further explores the Covid-19 pandemic from a global to a local perspective. This is followed by an examination of the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic in the education sector. The challenges experienced by lecturers and students, as highlighted in the literature, is also explored. The research gaps are outlined, explaining how the study sought to address them.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Frameworks. This chapter draws on the transactional distance theory and the intersectionality theory to analyse the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic. These theories were also used to examine the challenges faced by lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology and Methods. The following paragraphs outline the methodology and methods used in this study. In this chapter, the researcher explains and justifies the choice of the methodology and methods used for collecting and analysing data. A qualitative research methodology was used in this study. Access to the participants was achieved through convenience and snowball sampling. Thereafter, the participants who included both lecturers and students were interviewed. The choice of the research site is also explained. Finally, the chapter explains how reflexivity was maintained in this study.

Chapter Five: Remote Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences of Lecturers. This chapter draws from ten lecturers interviewed and thematically presents findings on their experiences and challenges concerning remote teaching in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter Six: Remote Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences of Students. This chapter thematically presents the findings drawn from interviews conducted with sixteen students to comprehend their experiences and challenges regarding remote learning in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings. This chapter discusses the findings presented in chapters five and six, focusing on lecturers and student's experiences on remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges. This chapter significantly links the findings with literature.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendation. The chapter concludes the study with a brief discussion of the findings and answering the main research questions. Finally, this chapter provides a summary of the main arguments, concluding remarks, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2:   Remote Teaching and Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic in South Africa

2.1.   Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature relating to the Covid-19 pandemic and the education sector, with a specific focus on HEIs in South Africa. The Covid-19 pandemic is descriptively conceptualised from a global to a local context. The chapter further analyses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on South Africa's education sector, from primary to high schools, and especially on private higher education colleges. Finally, the chapter discusses remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, looking at factors influencing remote teaching and learning and support structures that were available to lecturers and students.

2.2.   Conceptualisation of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Coronavirus is the most widespread disease in the world and was first discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (Zhu, Wei & Niu, 2020). Coronavirus causes the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), which spreads through human-to-human transmission. The rapid spread and mutation of the disease resulted in the WHO declaring Covid-19 a global pandemic in 2020. The human coronavirus disease or Covid-19 is the fifth documented pandemic in the world, since the flu pandemic that irrupted in 1918 (Liu, Kuo & Shih, 2020).

According to the (CDC, 2022), people infected by the Covid-19 virus experience a variety of symptoms. These may range from a person experiencing mild symptoms to more severe illnesses that may result in a person's death. Symptoms appear 2-14 days after a person has been exposed to the virus. Older people and individuals who have underlying medical conditions, such as heart diseases, are at a higher risk of becoming extremely sick from Covid-19, possibly resulting in death (CDC, 2022; Hamid, Mir & Rohela, 2020). Some of the possible symptoms of Covid-19 range from minor symptoms such as "fever or chills, cough, fatigue, muscle, or body aches,

headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea to more severe symptoms such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing" (CDC, 2022, para.1). People who experience these symptoms are infectious and contagious which makes it easier for the virus to spread from one person to the next.

The infectious nature of Covid-19 has led to a global impact; hence, Covid-19 has been referred to as a pandemic (BBC, 2020). The first case reported outside China was a Chinese tourist visiting Thailand. This tourist was diagnosed with a new, pneumonia-like virus that infected many people in Thailand (BBC, 2020). The virus took a few weeks to spread across the globe, notably to South-East Asia, Australia, Iran, the United States, and India (The Times of Indian, 2021). Italy was the hardest hit by the pandemic and the first Covid-19 pandemic outbreak was reported on the 18th of February 2020, in the small town of Codogno. The virus was carried by a 38-year-old male athletic who experienced breathing problems. However, he was turned away by doctors and hospitals, without being tested. Thus, he unknowingly spread the virus to many people within a short time. The virus spread from towns situated north of the city of Milan. This led to an explosive outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (McKenna, 2020). Thus, the virus spread throughout the world. The documentation of Covid-19 in South Africa dates to March 5th, 2020, when a South African male, who had recently been to Italy, presented symptoms that were consistent with Covid-19. The virus spread to the surrounding towns and throughout South Africa (Kiewit et al., 2020).

Although this chapter shows the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in some countries, it should be noted that this was a global pandemic. It is also significant to acknowledge the similarities in how the Covid-19 pandemic spread throughout countries across the globe. Covid-19 normally spreads among people in close contact with each other. The virus has the potential to be transmitted through respiratory droplets from an infected individual's mouth or nose when they cough, speak, or even breathe (WHO, 2020). The other person contracts the virus through the liquid particles contained in the air, when this contaminated air is inhaled at a short range. This is known as short-range

aerosol or the short-range airborne transmission. The virus also spreads when the infectious particles are in direct contact with the eyes, nose, or the mouth of the other person, this is known as droplet transmission (WHO, 2020). People may also become infected with the virus in poorly ventilated areas, or in crowded indoor areas. This is because the virus spreads through the aerosols that remain suspended in the air or through those that travel farther than the conversational distance. Another way a person can become infected with the virus is when they touch their organs of sight, smell, or taste after touching surfaces or objects that contain the virus (WHO, 2020).

It is challenging to compare different countries, as the virus did not arrive in all countries at the same time. Therefore, absolute numbers are extremely incomparable, since the population sizes and susceptibility to death differ from country to country (Middelburg & Rosendaal, 2020). Although countries implemented similar strategies (testing, social distancing, wearing masks, hand sanitising, and lockdowns) to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the biggest difference between them was the intensity and timing of the strategies adopted (Pearce, Lawlor & Brickley, 2020). Covid-19 had devasting social and economic ramifications globally.

Due to the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, countries around the world implemented lockdowns, as part of the measures to flatten the spread of the pandemic. A lockdown is an emergency protocol implemented by authorities, preventing people from leaving a specified area (Business Insider India, 2020; Haider, Osman, Gadzekpo, Akipede, Asogun, Ansumana, Lessells, Khan, Hamid, Yeboah-Manu & Mboera, 2020). A full lockdown means that people must remain in a specified area where they are. They must not enter any other building or area (Business Insider India, 2020; Haider et al., 2020). The lockdown assisted in achieving the following: slowing down the transmission rate in communities; expanding the health system capacity as more people had to be hospitalised; preparing, equipping, and training healthcare workers to deal with the pandemic; increasing Covid-19 testing; and implementing further prevention strategies (Sault, 2021).

South Africa introduced the five-level Covid-19 alert system that assisted in managing the easing of the lockdown (South African Government, 2020). The alert levels were guided by several criteria. These included the infection rate, the transmission rate, the capacity of the health facilities in dealing with the number of cases, the economic and social impact of the continued restrictions, at each level. The alert levels were used to determine the level of restrictions necessary to maximise safety in the country. At the highest alert level, people had to stay at home and work remotely. As the alert level was reduced, the restrictions were lessened (South African Government, 2020).

Alert Level 1 was implemented from 21 September 2020 to 28 December 2020 and, again, from 1 March 2021 to 30 May 2021. This period was characterised by a low Covid-19 spread and a high health system readiness to respond to the pandemic. During Alert Level 1, normal activity could take place, with the necessary health guidelines being implemented and followed by all. Alert Level 1 allowed all economic sectors to trade, including retail. Restaurants had to implement social distancing measures. The curfew was lifted, and interprovincial movement was allowed, including domestic air travel. Public gatherings were still prohibited under this alert level (South African Government, 2020). Alert Level 2 was implemented from the 18 August 2020 to 20 September 2020 and, again, from the 31 May 2021 to 15 June 2021. During this period, a moderate Covid-19 spread was observed. This was because of a high health system readiness to respond to the pandemic. During this level, social distancing and restrictions on leisure and social activities were implemented (South African Government, 2020).

Alert Level 3 was implemented from 29 December 2020 to 28 February 2020 and, again, from 26 July 2021 to 12 September 2021. In this period, a moderate Covid-19 spread was recorded, reflecting an equally moderate health system readiness to respond to the pandemic (South African Government, 2020). During this level, several workplace and social restrictions were implemented. Alert Level 4 was implemented from 1 May 2020 to 31 May 2020, and from 28 June 2021 to 25 July 2021. This period was characterised by a high Covid-19 spread and a low health system readiness to

respond to the pandemic. At this level, extreme precautions were taken. All movements were limited, except shopping, going to work, and seeking medical attention. Alert Level 5 was implemented from 26 March 2020 to 30 April 2020. This period witnessed a high Covid-19 spread and a low health system readiness to respond to the pandemic (South African Government, 2020). At this stage, a national lockdown was effective in South Africa. A national lockdown meant that peoples' movements were restricted. Students were not allowed to attend their classes full time. Education institutions had to resort to remote teaching and learning and employees had to work from home (Bayane, 2020). The different alert levels had dire impacts on society and the economy.

In addition to the lockdown, preventative health measures were also implemented. These would help people to stay healthy and thus limit the spread of the virus. These measures included washing hands with soap and water and using alcohol-based sanitisers (The Conversation, 2020). Using alcohol-based sanitisers or soap, when washing your hands, is most effective in killing germs (Blignaut, 2020; The Conversation, 2020). Social distancing required people to maintain a one metre space between people. Maintaining this space assisted with reducing the risk of the spread of the virus-containing droplets onto one's face, eyes, nose, or mouth (Blignaut, 2020; UVAHealth, 2022). People were encouraged to avoid touching their faces, eyes, noses, and mouths, which are entry points for the virus (Blignaut, 2020). Wearing masks became mandatory. As a result, these measures limited the spread of droplet transmission from one person to the next (Blignaut, 2020).

However, it was not always possible to ensure the full implementation of these measures because not everyone had fair access to resources. For example, people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds struggled to buy alcohol-based sanitisers (Mulaudzi, Sepeng, Lavhelani & Nesengani, 2022). Moreover, in rural areas, not all people had access to basic services such as clean running water (Huddleston, 2020). This made it very difficult to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, additional governance structures were established to curb the spread of the pandemic. These

include the Inter-ministerial Committee on Covid-19, the Emergency Operation Centre, and the National Command Council (Sekyere, Bohler-Muller, Hongoro & Makoae, 2020). These structures were established to assist with managing the local consequences of the pandemic. The next section covers the global consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.3.   The Global Consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected various sectors (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The transportation industry was severely impacted because of the complete shutdown of public-usage of cars, trucks, airlines, ships, and trains. More than 110 countries implemented travel restrictions that prevented travellers from entering these countries (Schuler, 2020). During this period, no international travels, for business or leisure activity, were allowed. Consequently, the commercial flight activity declined (Schuler, 2020). The demand for the usage of cars, buses, and trains reduced dramatically due to people working remotely (Parsoya & Perwej, 2021; Sung & Monschauer, 2020). Therefore, the transport industry suffered a financial loss (Parsoya & Perwej, 2021; United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2020).

Additionally, the pandemic significantly affected the entertainment industry, notably cinemas, tour companies, and hospitality establishments (Parsoya & Perwej, 2021; Adgate, 2021). For instance, in 2019, the entertainment market in the United States totalled $36.1 billion, but only $32.2 billion in 2020 (Adgate, 2021). The pandemic severely impacted this industry, as attested by the significant drop in revenue. The implications for the entertainment industry ranged from low attendance in cinemas, to the cancellation of events such as shows and festivals. In addition, to comply with Covid-19 regulations, entertainment hubs had to shut down completely. These included cultural sites and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Moon, 2020). Similarly, around the world, the ripple effect of the pandemic led to a declined trend in the entertainment industry's revenue.

According to Parsoya & Perwej (2021), the demand and supply of daily consumables and other products were negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The shutting down of factories resulted in many businesses being unable to source supplies to meet the demands (Magableh, 2021). These disruptions in the supply chain affected the profitability of such businesses due to the direct and indirect impacts of these disruptions on the economy, notably their effects on imports and exports worldwide (Parsoya & Perwej, 2021). Businesses struggled to maintain a continuous supply of goods during the Covid-19 pandemic (Magableh, 2021). For instance, in the United States, during the pandemic, a 40% increase in the usage of toilet paper was recorded. Yet, because factories were closing, it was impossible for the supply to meet the demand. This led to many Americans clearing toilet paper from the shelves (Helper & Soltas, 2021).

The hospitality industry was also significantly affected during the Covid-19 pandemic, more so during the lockdown. The strategies implemented during the lockdown, to flatten the curve, included restaurants having to limit their operations. This entailed providing take-out options to customers which led to restaurants increasing the usage of delivery services, which came at extremely high costs to both restaurants and customers. With the easing of lockdown restrictions, restaurants were allowed dine-in options with a reduced capacity and social distancing measures (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the size of the hospitality industry declined significantly, with its workforce size remaining below the pre-pandemic levels (Wiener-Bronner, 2023).

In South Africa, the lockdown also significantly impacted all spheres of the economy. Most companies had to operate remotely, in a short time (Bayane, 2020; Kiewit et al., 2020). In a survey conducted by (StatsSA, 2020), 95.6% of the respondents had worked from non-residential buildings and only 1.4% of the respondents had worked from home, prior to the lockdown. During the Covid-19 pandemic, 77.9% of the respondents who worked during the lockdown did so remotely, and 15.1% worked from non-residential buildings (StatsSA, 2020). These statistics show the shift from

office-based work to remote working. This affected the nature of businesses and the performance of remote work. Further findings revealed that 8.1% of the respondents lost their jobs; or their businesses closed due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (StatsSA, 2020). This shows the significant impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the economy and people's lives. This was especially the case for those who had lost their jobs and family members to the pandemic.

Globally, 6 737 889 people died from the Covid-19 pandemic, with 102 588 in South Africa (Covid-19 Statistics, 2022). Although South Africa ended the National State of Disaster on the 04th of April 2022, 750 days after the initial lockdown on 15 March 2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2022), statistics still showed the continued spread of the virus and sustained deaths. These deaths had significant impacts on the economy, and remote teaching and learning. Therefore, students who lost their families', breadwinners, to Covid-19 deaths lacked financial support. As a result, they were unable to buy data, and could not participate in remote teaching and learning.

The other sectors impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic included the sports, ports, meat processing, construction, workers providing home- or institution-based care, urban passenger transport, media, and culture (International Labour Organisation, 2023). The pandemic also affected forestry, the public sector, road transport, public emergency services, the automotive industry, food retail, textiles, clothing and footwear, health, maritime shipping and fishing, tourism, as well as the agriculture and food security sector (International Labour Organisation, 2023). The similarities between most of these sectors resulted in a steady decline in business as due to the lockdown, some of them had to shut down. The remote working option was not viable in these sectors because some work that needed to be physically performed could not be done remotely, resulting in job losses. Businesses were also forced to close because they were unable to sustain themselves to operate remotely. In the health sector, hospitals, clinics, and doctors experienced an increased use of their services.as a result of the rapid spread of Covid-19. Nurses had to work overtime, to meet the high demands related to the sick patients admitted into hospitals.

2.4. The Education Sector in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The education sector was forced to undergo rapid transformation during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was to ensure the continuity of education provision to all students across the globe. The education sector moved from face-to-face classes to remote teaching and learning. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic was regarded as a catalyst of the use of technology in remote teaching and learning (Smith & Hill, 2019; Medina, 2018; Clark, Jit, Warren-Gash, Gutrie, Wang, Mecer, Sanderson, Mckee, Troeger & Ong, 2020). The shift to remote teaching and learning engendered various challenges and burdens to the education system for both lecturers and students due to the lack of resources available to deliver remote teaching and learning equally and fairly to all.

2.4.1. Primary and Secondary Schools in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions were particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (Chaka, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). In South Africa, all primary and high schools were closed on 18 March 2020. Some schools reopened in early June 2020; however, they had to shut down again at the end of July 2020, due to the rapid rise of Covid-19 cases. A phased return of all students was fully implemented by 31 August 2020 (Amnesty International, 2021).

During the pandemic, primary and high schools implemented the following time-tabling models: daily rotation, weekly rotation, and hybrid teaching and learning. Learners had classes on platforms such as Teams; they also attended contact and platooning classes. Platooning meant splitting the school day into two different sessions consisting of five hours and four and a half hours to allow all learners to attend all classes (ILO, 2020; Sithole, 2021). The models described above reduced the number of learners attending classes at the same time. In this way, schools were able to ensure that social distancing was implemented and enforced, to allow for the continuation of remote teaching and learning. This resulted in schools stretching their

resources far beyond their means, which were already lacking in many schools. The splitting of the school day and the enforcement of social distancing entailed less students in classes. More teachers were needed to teach the split groups. These were temporary solutions to enable the continuation of remote teaching and learning during the pandemic. They were devised to avoid losing out on the 2020 academic school year.

2.4.2. Higher Education Institutions in South Africa during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Higher education is defined as "all types of studies training or research training at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent state authorities" (Abad-Segura, González-Zamar, Infante-Moro & García, 2020: 6). The higher education sector in South Africa consists of 26 public universities, 50 technical, vocational education and training (TVET) colleges, and 93 registered private higher education colleges (Abad- Segura et al., 2020; Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2022). The higher education sector is regarded as one of the most significant sectors of an economy because of its role in socio-economic development, as well as the researching, enhancing, spreading, and utilising of knowledge (Abad-Segura et al., 2020; Pouris & Roula, 2014). Without the education sector, a significant gap would exist in the economy, because it would be handled by uneducated and unskilled employees or employers. This would lead to a poor economic climate with little to no development (Schleicher, 2020).

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, tertiary institutions adopted the face-to-face or the blended approach to teaching and learning. Face-to-face learning involved teaching a group of students through an instructional method using learning material and course content (Gherhes, Stoian, Farcasiu & Stanici, 2021). Typically, this method included a live interaction between the lecturer and the student. The face-to-face method was predominately teacher centred and the most popular method used in the classroom (Murphy, Eduljee & Croteau, 2021). For students living in the information age, the face-

to-face approach to teaching and learning was no longer relevant and feasible, as more interactive approaches were required (Van Wyk, Du Preez, Christian, Legodi, Seremo & Erasmus, 2018). As the education sector evolved, new teaching and learning methods were established, such as the blended approach. The latter was explained as learning opportunities involving a combination of learning methods that could occur inside or outside a classroom (Pankin, Roberts & Savio, 2012; Chibuwe & Munoriyarwa, 2023). Blended learning was further broken down into four categories: a) web-based technologies, b) pedagogical approaches, c) using instructional technology together with face-to-face instruction, and d) instructional technology with actual job tasks (Driscoll, 2001).

Thus, Covid-19 changed the operations of higher education, particularly teaching and learning. From the 15th of March 2020 to the 30th of April 2020, under lockdown Alert Level 5, all contact academic activities were suspended at all public and private universities and colleges across the country, to lower the infection curve (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). As a result, HEIs had to discontinue face-to-face teaching and implement alternative education systems and strategies (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). These institutions had to make decisions to execute remote teaching and learning, bearing in mind several factors such as the socio-economic status of students (Du Plessis, Carel, Van Vuuren, Simons, Frantz, Roman & Andipatin, 2021). The impact of the pandemic revealed complete differences concerning students' socio-economic statuses.

All private and public HEIs had to ensure that the required facilities and infrastructure were ready for the reopening of institutions and campuses (Du Plessis et al., 2021). The required infrastructure included isolation and quarantine facilities for students and staff displaying Covid-19 symptoms, completed risk assessment for all staff and students returning to campus, and sanitation provisions (Du Plessis et al., 2021). Daily screenings of staff, students and members of the public visiting these institutions, and the provision of masks were also undertaken. Furthermore, each institution had to have a Covid-19 response task team to manage any on-campus emergencies (Government Gazette, 2020).

Under Alert Level 4 lockdown, from 1st May 2020 to 30th May 2020, an exception was made for the controlled return of final year Clinical Training (medical) students (Maphanga, 2020). During this level of the lockdown, all the other students were supported through remote teaching and learning, until their return to campus. Under Alert Level 3 of the lockdown, from 1st June to 17th August 2020, a maximum of 33% of the student population could return to campus. These were all final year students, students under clinical training, and postgraduate students who required technical or laboratory equipment (Government Gazette, 2020). Under Level 2 of the lockdown, from 18th August 2020 to 20th September 2020, a total of 66% of the student population could return to campus. These were students in all years of study who needed laboratory and technical equipment, first-year students, and all years of studies that required practical placements (Chibuwe & Munoriyarwa, 2023). Under Level 1 of the lockdown, from 21st September 2020, 100% of the student population could return to campus under strict health and safety protocols (wearing of masks, social distancing, and sanitising of hands) (Government Gazette, 2020). The education sector had to make relevant operational adjustments discussed in the next section.

2.5. The Three Phases of Higher Education's Response to the Pandemic

HEIs responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by using ICT platforms as it helped to facilitate remote teaching and learning (CHE, 2020). In addition, ICT platforms were used to deliver learning material to students and to provide students with the necessary support (CHE, 2020). The response from the HE sector was mainly categorised into three phases, which are examined below.

2.5.1. Higher Education Phase 1

During this first phase, South Africa was under Alert Level 5 lockdown and, later, moved to Level 4. Phase 1, in the higher education sector, was characterised by emergency planning. This planning phase involved establishing how the sector was to continue educating students during the pandemic (CHE, 2020). To bridge the digital divide gap, the DHET provided devices and data to public universities and colleges.

These devices were distributed to staff and students. Working collaboratively, the DHET and individual HEIs negotiated deals with Internet service providers to secure low-cost data, or a zero-rating of institutional websites (Vermeulen, 2020). Crucial to this phase was the involvement of academic staff in tailor-making the curriculum to be delivered remotely. Thus, the alternative approach used during the Covid-19 pandemic was emergency remote teaching and learning (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020). This was regarded as a temporary solution which mirrored normal activities such as attending virtual lectures and tutorials, as part of student support. In April 2020, the HEQC approved all HEIs previously accredited for the contact, or the distance mode of delivery. These HEIs were now regarded as accredited for the blended and online teaching and learning modes for the 2020 academic year (CHE, 2020).

2.5.2. Higher Education Phase 2

Phase 2 was aligned to the lockdown Alert Level 3. It was described as the consolidation phase of remote teaching and learning in the higher education sectors. Remote teaching and learning occurred for the 2020 academic year and, to a limited extent, the 2021 academic year (CHE, 2020; Krull & De Klerk, 2021). Many students had access to devices and data, to work remotely from home. Students who did not have access to devices or data, printed materials were made available to them for courses and learning programmes (CHE, 2020). In addition to remote teaching and learning, assessments had to be adapted to emergency remote assessments. This meant that assessments had to happen online (not invigilated) and remotely (CHE, 2020; Padayachee & Matimolane, 2021).

2.5.3. Higher Education Phase 3

Phase 3 involved planning the new normal for higher education students (CHE, 2020). HEIs had to prepare for the move from emergency remote teaching and learning to the traditional face-to-face classes. These disruptions in the education system had made institutions think about incorporating the Fourth Industrial Revolution, artificial

intelligence, and digitisation into remote teaching and learning (Motala & Menon, 2020). The three different phases implemented by the DHET assisted lecturers in preparing and planning to adapt to the shift from contact classes to remote teaching and learning in a short time. Nevertheless, these phases did not address the digital divide among students, placing many of them at a disadvantage as all students did not equally benefit from remote teaching and learning. The remote teaching and learning platforms used during the Covid-19 pandemic are further examined in the next section.

2.6.   Teaching and Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Remote teaching and learning were adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic in higher education institutions. The word "remote" originated from the Latin word *removere*, which was then changed to *remotus*. The word *remotus* has various meanings, including to "move away, move back", or "removed" (Harms, Hussain, Newell, Piot, Schein, Shneiderman, Turner, Zhang, Harms, Hussain & Newell, 2014:5). In its basic form, the word "remote" means "far-flung (or far afield), isolated and distant (from the actual source or epicentre)" (Harms et al., 2014:5). In this study, the word "remote" is very significant because the study focuses on the transitioning from the traditional face-to-face classes to remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Distance education, or remote learning, occurs when students are removed from a physical classroom and teaching happens through online platforms (Lei & Gupta, 2010). Hence, learning occurs outside the traditional face-to-face classes (Lei & Gupta, 2010). A distance learning programme can be hybrid, this is a combination of online and traditional face-to-face learning (Tabor, 2007). Online education is covered under the distance education umbrella term. The delivery of online education occurs over the Internet and is referred to as e-learning (Al-Mawee, Kwayu & Gharaibeh, 2021).

A student-centred approach to teaching and learning relies on student's past experiences of the learning process and encourages active participation, which

promotes life-long learning (Hirumi, 2002). Therefore, this approach fosters a move away from the traditional teacher-centred approach as the teacher is at the centre of the teaching and learning process. Conversely, in the student-centred approach, the student is central to the learning process (Neumann, 2013). The student-centred approach to learning is associated with benefits such as increased motivation, as well as the fostering of independent learning through active learning and understanding. Remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic promoted a student-centred approach as technology was used intensively. However, the student- centred approach was best suited to context where students had the necessary resources such as Internet connectivity, data, electricity, books, and a device (Nkoala & Matsilele, 2023). The digital disparities evocative of an unequal education system meant that only certain students benefitted from the student-centred approach.

Private higher education colleges implemented synchronous or asynchronous learning during remote teaching and learning (Hrastinski, 2008). Examples of synchronous learning include videoconferencing, interactive learning models, the virtual world, and chat rooms (Er, Ozden & Arifoglu, 2009). In this type of learning, students can watch their lecturers in real time (Korkmaz & Mirici, 2021). The success of synchronous learning depends on three key features, namely, student engagement, synchronous collaboration, and instruction pacing (Shandra & Chystiakova, 2021). In this type of a learning environment, student engagement and interaction are crucial. The role of the lecturer is to facilitate, guide, and motivate students through a learning process involving feedback and collaboration (Diaz & Entonado, 2009). Instructional pacing ensures that students are provided with personalised learning opportunities that enable them to express themselves freely (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005).

Asynchronous learning is one where students can participate actively in their own learning which occurs through learning activities that prompt students to apply their knowledge or skills (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2012). According to Meloni (2010), asynchronous learning provides significant benefits. These include enriched student products and portfolios, lecturer-student collaboration, and learning

based on meeting the needs of the students. Student portfolios increase student engagement and interaction based on feedback from their lecturers (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). In lecturer-student collaboration, the role of the lecturer is to develop and facilitate the student's learning experience. This provides the student with an opportunity to synthesis their learning (Diaz & Entonado, 2009).

In asynchronous learning, individualised pacing is achieved, since lecturers can assess their students', ability based on the student portfolio submitted. However, students struggle to work on their own and remain motivated in completing their portfolios (DeMarchi, 2023). It becomes evident that both synchronous and asynchronous learning types have advantages and disadvantages. However, in remote learning, these two types of learning can increase student engagement, foster interactions between lecturers and students, and improve learning outcomes (Simonson et al., 2012; Shier, 2020). To mitigate the limitations in each of these learning types, a combined approach should be adopted to support the needs of students in an online environment (Er et al., 2009).

During the Covid-19 pandemic and the related national lockdown, universities and colleges were forced to deliver remote teaching and learning, as face-to-face classes were suspended. It was through remote teaching and learning that all lecturers and students were able to complete the 2020/2021 academic year (Simelane, Onwuegbuzie & Ojo, 2022). The online platforms used to facilitate remote teaching and learning included Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas, Adobe Connect, Zoom, WhatsApp groups, and Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) (Chaka, 2020; Landa, Zhou & Marongwe, 2021). These platforms were crucial in shifting from traditional face-to-face classes to remote teaching and learning. The implementation of remote teaching and learning involved the use of different technologies and pedagogical approaches.

The following three elements are essential in the design and implementation of remote teaching and learning (Commonwealth of Learning, 2020). The first is learning resources. Designed content must suit self-learning and have clear objectives and outcomes. Learning resources must be easily accessible to all students, using different

media such as a cell phone, laptops, or tablets (Commonwealth of Learning, 2020: section 2. 2). The second element is pedagogy. Teaching and learning are based on pedagogical principles. These include guided didactic conversations in which two-way communication occurs by using tools and technology that support dialogue and communication (Holmberg, 1983). The various levels of interactions occur between students and students, between lecturers and students, as well as between students and the content (Baber, 2020; Bernard, Abrami, Borokhovski, Wade,Tamim, Surkes & Bethel, 2009). The third element is student support, which entails providing psychosocial and emotional support. The strengthening of student support is key to academic success and creates an environment conducive to student learning, as student isolation is limited through engagement (Simpson, 2013). However, although the key elements were in place for the design and implementation of remote teaching and learning, implementation was still difficult based on the various challenges outlined below, which were experienced by most lecturers and students.

2.7. Challenges During Remote Teaching and Learning

This section explores the challenges experienced by lecturers with remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, to ensure a holistic representation of the challenges, it is also important to examine the challenges faced by students. Hence, this section also considers the challenges experienced by students with remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.7.1. Challenges Experienced by Lecturers During Remote Teaching and Learning

Lecturers encountered various obstacles while adapting to remote teaching amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. This section delves into the specific difficulties that lecturers encountered during this unprecedented time. Among the challenges faced by lecturers were the absence of a dedicated home office space and a lack of training, which hindered their ability to effectively conduct online classes and engage with students.

Additionally, many lecturers struggled with mental health issues as they navigated the new demands of remote teaching, such as increased screen time and feelings of isolation.

2.7.1.1. Lack of Home Office Workspace

The work-from-home model was a new concept for academic staff, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The work-from-home model engendered mixed views from lecturers because it presented advantages and disadvantages. Lecturers enjoyed the flexibility of working from home, limited travelling to work, reduced infection rate, and ability to undertake work tasks in the comfort of one's home were some of the advantages (Parham & Rauf, 2020; Iwu, Okeke-Uzodike, Anwana, Iwu & Esambe, 2022). The disadvantages far outweighed the advantages such as academics were less productive, not all lecturers had adequate resources to participate in remote learning, lecturers could not adapt to online pedagogies resulting in an increased workload.

Lecturers found working from home challenging. The call to work and study remotely did not consider the circumstances of many lecturers in terms of the lack of a dedicated workspace. Therefore, led to difficulties in balancing the home and work lives of lecturers (Landa et al., 2021). The difficulty associated with remote teaching is that if the demands in one of the domains (work or home) is not managed effectively, this impacts on other domains. This depletes all the resources available in those domains (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Naidu & Modise, 2021). Therefore, creating an imbalance in lecturers' home and work lives.

Lecturers faced the challenge of adapting their daily routines to accommodate the demands of remote teaching requiring them to make necessary adjustments. This transition blurred the boundaries between work and personal life, as their homes became their new workplace (Makwembere, Matarirano & Jere, 2021). Shareena & Shahid (2020) discovered that this shift often resulted in stress, discomfort, and disruptions. Moreover, the presence of partners and children at home added to the complexity, as lecturers had to fulfill their family responsibilities while also managing the additional workload imposed by institutional changes due to the Covid-19

pandemic (Makwembere, Matarirano & Jere, 2021). These challenges were further emphasized by Kim & Asbury (2020), who highlighted the tensions experienced by lecturers in balancing their work and family life during the early stages of the pandemic. The unprecedented circumstances brought about by the pandemic necessitated lecturers to dedicate extra hours to cope with the extraordinary workloads imposed upon them, as highlighted by Zapata-Garibay, Gonzalez-Fagoaga, Cauich-Garcia & Plascencia-Lopez (2021). This increased workload not only proved to be physically demanding but also clashed with their personal lives. Marshall, Shannon & Love (2020) further emphasized the strain experienced by lecturers as they struggled to find a balance between their professional obligations and their personal well-being. The challenges faced by lecturers during this period were multifaceted, requiring them to navigate the complexities of their work responsibilities while also attending to their family commitments (Makwembere, Matarirano & Jere, 2021).

2.7.1.2. Mental Health Issues Faced by Lecturers During the Covid-19 Pandemic

It emerged that lecturers were facing psychological, emotional, and social dilemmas (Newlin & Israel, 2021). These had a negative impact on lecturers' mental and physical wellbeing. Mental strain resulted from the lack of e-resources such as data and devices that would allow lecturers to teach remotely (Newlin & Israel, 2021). Other factors that hindered lecturers' psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing included minimised teaching and learning efficacy, technology-related burnout, and social adjustment demands (Newlin & Israel, 2021).

The technological limitations of remote teaching negatively impacted the wellbeing of lecturers. The latter were worried and frustrated about the limitations of virtual platforms in terms of teaching. Such limitations included minimised interaction between lecturers and students, inability to see students' facial expression which assists in determining if they understood the content, and the incapability to use

illustrations and demonstrations, hence causing increased anxiety among lecturers (Newlin & Israel, 2021; Piccoli, Ahmad & Ives, 2001; Hlatshwayo, Zondi & Mokoena, 2023). Technological limitations also related to the technology-induced burnout experienced by lecturers, influenced by the abrupt move from the traditional face-to-face approach to remote teaching and learning. The rapid manoeuvre meant that lecturers were not ready for remote teaching. They had no skills suitable for remote teaching, as e-learning platforms were foreign to many lecturers. Therefore, they felt lost and depressed (Chisango & Marongwe, 2021).

Evidence from a study of selected universities in South Africa, conducted by Iwu et al. (2022), shows that academics faced social adjustment challenges. These related to working-from-home arrangements. Lecturers experienced emotional ill-health and stress. Lecturers further experienced feelings of anxiety, depression, isolation, loneliness, and uncertainty alluding that the lecturers had trouble adapting to the new working arrangement. They had unpleasant experiences with remote teaching.

2.7.1.3. Lack of Training Faced by Lecturers During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Lecturers had to facilitate remote teaching and learning without any prior training (Mahlaba & Mentz, 2023). As a result, lecturers spent more time preparing for online classes. This increased lecturers' workload because they had to develop new material suitable for remote teaching. to ensure that quality teaching and learning occurred. New assessment components had to also be developed, in line with remote teaching (Legg-Jack & Ndebele, 2022; Iwu et al., 2022).

According to Alex (2022), the rapid implementation of remote teaching and learning accounts for its limited efficiency. There was insufficient time for preparation as this resulted in a lack of understanding and digital skills essential in engaging with online resources or platforms for lecturers. Hence, remote teaching was challenging for lecturers. They were unfamiliar with online interfaces and had to adapt to them (Ofusori, 2021). The lack of experience with remote teaching resulted in lecturers questioning the effectiveness and quality of online learning (Ofusori, 2021). Most

universities had support personnel available to assist lecturers. However, support staff was inadequately trained and not always available to assist (Mpungose, 2020; Legg-Jack & Ndebele, 2022). This caused a delay and discouraged lecturers and students from using the online LMS. Lecturers and students resorted to other means such as WhatsApp (Mpungose, 2020; Legg-Jack & Ndebele, 2022). Lecturers were also inadequately equipped for remote teaching (Gumede & Badriparsad, 2021). Mukuna & Aloka (2020) add that lecturers faced additional challenges because of students' lack of participation made remote teaching and learning even more difficult. Lecturers were not adequately equipped with the knowledge and skills required to effectively employ different pedagogical methods in the context of remote teaching.

2.7.2. Challenges Experienced by Students During Remote Teaching and Learning

Remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic posed numerous challenges for students. These challenges encompassed a wide range of factors, including issues related to ICT and the digital divide, the home environment, self-regulation, and communication difficulties. This section aims to explore in detail each of these individual challenges. By delving into these obstacles, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties students faced while adapting to remote learning.

2.7.2.1. ICT-Related Factors and the Digital Divide

For Hedding, Greve, Breetzke, Nel & Van Vuuren (2020), remote teaching and learning requires access to core resources. These include computers, reliable networks, Internet connectivity, and electricity. Public universities distributed devices such as laptops to financially disadvantaged students. These universities also gave students access to data-free educational websites (Hedding et al., 2020). However, due to students' differing socio-economic statuses, not everyone had access to these resources. Hence, participation in remote teaching and learning was not equitable (Esterhuizen, 2022). Students had different experiences with remote learning (Prifti, 2022; Anthonysamy, Koo & Hew, 2020; Bowyer & Chambers, 2017). For instance,

rural-based students reported a lack of electricity, which hampered their ability to participate in online classes. Hence, their experience was regarded as negative (Mukuna & Aloka, 2020).

South Africa is a developing country and since ICTs are still transforming, they pose certain challenges (Malinga, 2019). The lack of ICT infrastructure is one of the challenges prevalent in rural schools and communities (Masonta, Ramoroka & Lysko, 2015). ICT infrastructure plays a crucial role in delivering remote learning to all students (Masonta et al., 2015). The lack of ICT infrastructure prevented the delivery of remote learning, which resulted in some students being left behind, as they were unable to participate due to the various challenges such as lack of computers and access to data (Masonta et al., 2015).

The challenges to remote learning were compounded by most students' dependence on financial assistance for their basic needs. Consequently, these students were unable to meet the demands of high data costs and the acquisition of the devices needed to participate in remote learning (Hedding et al., 2020). Additionally, rural-based students experienced network challenges that hampered consistent access to online lectures (Ngubane, 2020; Mpungose, 2020). Alternative resources such as Internet cafés were inaccessible due to the lockdown (Dube, 2020). Poor network connectivity resulted in high data usage, making Internet access expensive for students (Matarirano, Gqokonqana & Yeboah, 2021; Ngubane, 2020). Students reported high data costs to access the Internet. This rendered remote learning difficult (Ngubane, 2020; Du Plessis, 2014). However, urban-based students experienced fewer challenges with network connectivity. These students were able to attend online classes (Ngubane, 2020).

Furthermore, rural-based students reported a lack of electricity, which hampered their ability to participate in online classes (Mukuna & Aloka, 2020). It was also difficult for these students to move to a different location, to access electricity due to the limited movement of people during the lockdown (Kiewit et al., 2020). As such, students living in rural areas and informal settlements did not have a home environment conducive

to remote learning, nor did they have laptops or smartphones to access remote learning (Marongwe & Garidzirai, 2021; Matarirano et al., 2015). Therefore, the Covid-19 pandemic posed various challenges that made remote learning difficult, especially for those living in rural areas.

The digital divide further marginalised and excluded many students from participating in remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The digital divide was influenced by factors such as access to devices such as laptops, tablets, or cell phones; stable and reliable Internet connectivity; and students' access to affordable data bundles (Maphalala, Khumalo & Khumalo, 2021). These factors played an instrumental role in the delivery of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. They also contributed to the unequal participation of students in remote learning due to the lack of resources. (Hedding, et al., 2020). However, due to students' different socio-economic backgrounds, many students did not have access to the necessary resources. Consequently, all students did not participate in remote learning fairly.

Furthermore, students were unprepared for remote learning, as no training was provided on the use of online platforms. This resulted in minimum participation on the part of the students (Legg-Jack & Ndebele, 2022; Halsall, 2020). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, students were already using social media platforms. As such, they were experienced in using technology, although their proficiency was limited to the use of social media platforms (Sokhulu, 2020). This means that students were not equipped to use technology for remote learning. Students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds struggled more because they had no to limited exposure to digital learning platforms (Moonasamy & Naidoo, 2022).

2.7.2.2. Describing Student's Home Environment

Most students had to return home during the national lockdown because universities and colleges were closed (Obuaku-Igwe, 2020). This impacted negatively on remote learning as many students had to move from urban to rural areas. Remote learning was challenging because of poor or non-existent infrastructure to engage with online

platforms (Obuaku-Igwe, 2020; Hlatshwayo, 2022). The home environment was a supportive and comfortable space for some students. However, for other students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, the home environment hindered their remote learning experiences (Obuaku-Igwe, 2020). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds did not have dedicated or quiet spaces and therefore this affected their ability to concentrate on their studies. Furthermore, these students had to assume additional family responsibilities when they were back home. These factors impacted negatively on these student learning experiences and participation via online platforms (Landa et al., 2021; Moodley, 2022; Obuaku-Igwe, 2020; Otu, Ehiane, Maapola & Olumoye, 2023).

2.7.2.3. Self-Regulation Issues Faced by Students During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Self-regulated learning requires students to play an active role in the knowledge-construction process and take charge of their studies. This entails setting learning goals, monitoring the learning process, as well as taking control of their knowledge, motivation, and behaviour (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). Self-regulation consists of five important components that relate to the online learning context. These are motivation, Internet self-efficacy (experience with using technology and the Internet), the study environment, time management, and learning assistance management. Remote learning requires students to study independently due to the limited technology-based teaching and the lack of resources. Hence, students were more self-directed towards their studies which often led to self-regulation issues such as low motivation to engage in their studies and ineffective communication with fellow students as well as with lecturers (Rannastu-Avalos & Siiman 2020; Wan Hassan, Ariffin, Ahmad, Sharberi & Nor Azizi & Zulkiflee, 2020; Zhang , Mestre, Serodio, Prada & Gao, 2020).

Students experienced challenges related to low motivation levels during remote learning, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Students associated low motivation levels with the lack of lecturer immediacy (Baker, 2004), and the absence of interaction with

peers (Paechter & Maier, 2010). Internet self-efficacy was not identified as a challenge during remote learning; however, the study environment constituted a major challenge for students. The ideal study environment entails a quiet, dedicated, space that is conducive to studying as well as having access to the necessary technology and resources. These include devices, data, good network connection, and electricity (Shim & Lee, 2020).

Concerning time management, procrastination was common in both the traditional face-to-face and the remote teaching and learning approaches (Rabin, Fogel & Nutter-Upham, 2011). Procrastinators were less likely to succeed in the online environment as student had low motivation levels and poor time management skills (Gurung & Stone, 2023; Knoetze & du Toit, 2022). The student assistance management concept refers to students' quest for the necessary assistance to optimise their remote learning (Lynch & Dembo, 2004; Knoetze & du Toit, 2022). This was lacking during remote learning, as students were unable to ask questions during and after classes. Students also lacked a relationship with their lecturers. Hence, students did not reach out to their lecturers for the required assistance, when they did not understand the content (Shim & Lee, 2020; Knoetze & du Toit, 2022).

The components of self-regulation discussed above are all interlinked and impact one another. The lack of motivation is directly connected to students' increased procrastination levels (Zimmerman, 2008; Knoetze & du Toit, 2022). Lack of resources and poor study environments also affect motivation (Ontong & Mbonambi, 2021; Knoetze & du Toit, 2022). Students experienced a combination of these self-regulation components that negatively affected their remote learning experiences. Therefore, it was important for HEIs to provide the correct support to students. This was key in mitigating the challenges experienced by students regarding the self-regulation components. This could be done by providing additional academic support to students, opening further channels of communication, availing resources, and offering motivational workshops/talks to students.

2.7.2.4. Lack of Communication Experienced by Students During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The inability to engage with fellow lecturers and students is among the challenges experienced by higher education students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Aini, Budiarto, Putra & Rahardja (2020) conducted a study exploring students' challenges during Covid-19 pandemic. The study reported that students felt alienated, as they did not receive individual support and attention from lecturers. In other words, students found remote learning during Covid-19 difficult, because it limited their physical interaction with lecturers (Dabaj & İşman, 2004).This is re-iterated in another study conducted by Moodley (2022), who mentions that students could not engage with fellow students as they also experienced online learning fatigue because of the time they spent studying on their own. In addition, students complained that they did not receive sufficient feedback from their lecturers as they did not have an opportunity to engage with their lecturers in real-time. Learning online also did not meet the need for experiential learning or learning through practice. Video or audio tuition was limited; hence, students found alternative ways to learn and prepare for assessments (Du Plessis et al., 2021; Moodley, 2022).

2.8. Support Initiatives During the Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about a novel approach to education, with the implementation of remote teaching and learning. This shift was an unfamiliar territory for both lecturers and students, requiring them to adapt to a new mode of instruction. Consequently, it becomes imperative to analyse the support mechanisms put in place to assist lecturers and students in overcoming the various challenges they encountered during this unprecedented time.

2.8.1. Support Provided to Students in Higher Education

To allow students to continue with their academics, with minimum disruptions, necessary measures were implemented to support students during the pandemic. The

2020 academic calendar was revised as students needed an extended break during the national lockdown. This was to give HEIs the opportunity to plan for the implementation of remote teaching and learning using different platforms (Stellenbosch University, 2020). For example, the University of Stellenbosch used a dedicated website known as SUNlearn, which contained information, guides, and tools to assist students in transitioning from face-to-face learning to remote learning (Stellenbosch University, 2020). The implementation of remote learning meant that students could continue with their academic year, remotely.

To assist students in this regard, HEIs had to implement relevant measures (CHE, 2020). These measures included procuring laptops and other devices which had to be distributed to students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds lacking online learning resources (Chikasha, 2022). HEIs also entered into agreements with telecommunication companies. This was to implement a zero-rate access to browsing on university websites and LMS (CHE, 2020). Thus, students were able to access these sites and the LMS free of charge.

As the pandemic had contributed negatively to the psychosocial well-being of students, HEIs had to ensure that students were supported. The holistic approach to support included academic aspects, student mental health, and physical well-being (Olawale, Mutongoza, Adu & Omodan, 2021, Stellenbosch University, 2020). One type of support service available to students during Covid-19 was access to counselling. Such services were made available either telephonically or virtually, during the lockdown. For example, if a student experienced any challenges that affected their well-being, such as the death of a family member, the student could access this service. Another type of support service available to students was academic assistance. This was provided through virtual platforms (Stellenbosch University, 2020). Other institutions also adopted a similar approach to ensuring the psychosocial well-being of students. This entailed availing online counselling facilities peer counselling, and group support initiatives to students (Visser & van Wyk, 2021).

2.8.2. Support Provided to Lecturers in Higher Education

Academic staff were protagonists during the Covid-19 pandemic. They played an instrumental role in the delivery of remote teaching and learning (Vincent-Lancrin, Romaní & Reimers, 2022). However, Legg-Jack & Ndebele (2022), emphasise that academic staff were not equipped to teach remotely and were unprepared. Thus, to prepare and support academic staff accordingly, training was required. This would help lecturers to develop additional online material to support remote teaching, as well as to develop new assessments (CHE, 2020).

Lecturers needed to receive the necessary support and guidance to implement and facilitate remote teaching during the pandemic. The CHE (2020) recommended that HEIs invest adequate resources in the development of staff and the provision of additional support to lecturers. This was to ensure the effective implementation of remote teaching (Motala & Menon, 2020; CHE, 2020). Examples of support provided included the fact that retired instructional designers and retired academics were considered for employment as contractors, to assist where additional staff was required. The CHE availed resources on its website, as a means of supporting academics. Blended resources were provided to academics. In addition, new resources were designed, to assist academics with remote teaching (Motala & Menon, 2020; CHE, 2020).

Research outputs were reduced, including community engagement. This was reassessed by the CHE and was either discontinued or adjusted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some community engagement activities could be conducted online. This change supported academics, as they could focus on remote teaching initiatives. Academic support and administration staff needed assistance to change services and systems, in line with the implementation of remote teaching. The assistance required was to foster an effective, efficient, and supportive emergency remote learning environment for students (CHE, 2020; Iwu et al., 2022).

2.9.   Conclusion

The chapter delved into the Covid-19 pandemic, shedding light on its effects from a local and global standpoint. While the outbreak of Covid-19 was initially linked to China, its repercussions were felt worldwide. However, the primary focus of the chapter was on examining how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted lecturers and students at private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. The shift from traditional face-to-face teaching to remote teaching and learning was a direct result of the pandemic, presenting both lecturers and students with a myriad of challenges to overcome. As higher education institutions grappled with the sudden transition to remote teaching and learning, various support programs were implemented to assist lecturers and students during this challenging period. These initiatives aimed to address the unique needs and difficulties faced by individuals in adapting to the new learning environment brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. By exploring the ways in which lecturers and students were supported throughout the pandemic, the chapter provided valuable insights into the resilience and adaptability of the higher education sector in the face of unprecedented challenges. The next chapter will provide insight into the theoretical frameworks, which are the intersectionality theory and the transactional distance theory that inform this study. These theoretical frameworks will serve as guiding principles for the study, shedding light on the complex interplay of various social identities (intersectionality) and the distance between lecturers and students (transactional distance).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks: Intersectionality and Transactional Distance Theory

3.1. Introduction

The study aimed to examine and compare lecturers' and students' experiences of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. Intersectionality and transactional distance theories were adopted to analyse the experiences of lecturers and students of remote teaching and learning in private higher education colleges. Intersectionality was a suitable theoretical framework to understand factors that shaped lecturers' and students' experiences of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the transactional distance theory complemented intersectionality by focusing on the impact of the physical, pedagogical, and psychological gaps between lecturers and students on remote teaching and learning brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter sets the context for both theoretical frameworks and links it to the studied phenomenon.

3.2. Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality originated in the 1960s and 1970s, influenced by the writings and experiences of women of colour. Intersectionality was coined by Kimberly Crenshaw, to examine the experiences of women of colour and how multiple factors shape these experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality, therefore, was used to advocate for the inclusion of a broader group of women. Inclusivity involves gender and feminism, which are embedded and linked to racism and classism. These terms play a role in contributing to impact negatively on access to fair and equal opportunities as well as social justice (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). As such gender cannot be used as the only analytic framework as it does not enable a holistic exploration of how other factors such as race, migration, history, and social class impact, influence, and shape women experiences (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). Covid-19 and remote teaching and

learning are good examples of the intersectional phenomenon. The latter describes the impact of the multiple inequalities caused by the pandemic at an individual and community levels (Maestripieri, 2021).

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, using an intersectional lens facilitated the shift from being limited to single-risk factors, or a defined group of people. This fosters a holistic examination of multiple inequalities and disadvantages that engendered discrimination faced by individuals and communities during the Covid-19 pandemic (Hankivsky, 2020). The various interacting social factors (see Figure 3.1 below) resulted in people belonging to more than one social group. For example, a foreign national lecturer with a disability may be disadvantaged in several different ways, from a Covid-19 pandemic perspective (Molenaar, 2021).
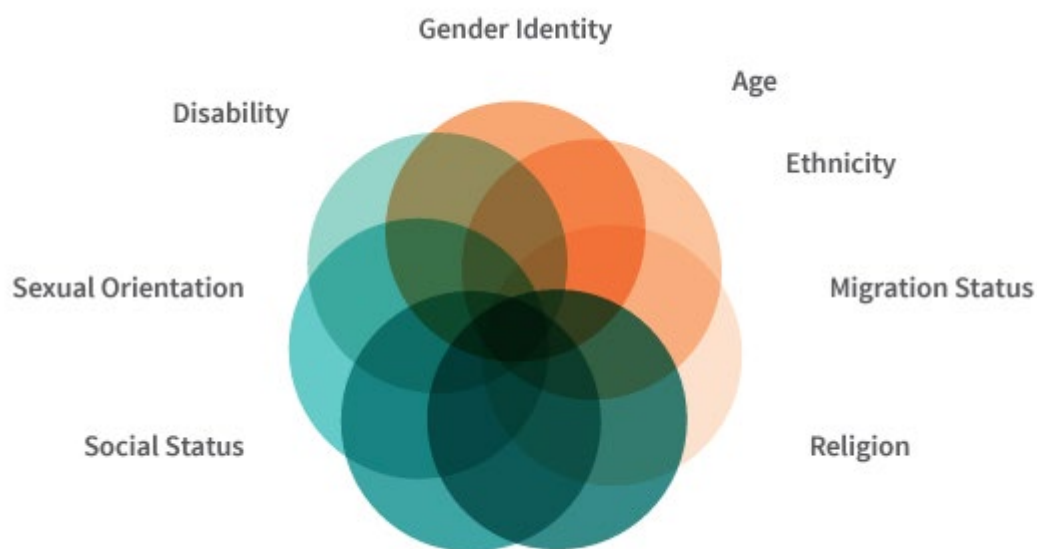
FIGURE 3.1: INTERSECTIONALITY THEORY AND THE INTERACTING SOCIAL FACTORS (Molenaar, 2021)

The visual representation shown above presents a comprehensive overview of the various social factors that intersect and overlap, influencing both individuals and communities. To analyse the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on remote teaching and learning for lecturers and students, it is essential to consider each social factor's

contribution to their experiences and challenges, considering their unique identities. Consequently, factors such as race, gender, class, disability, and geography can significantly shape how lecturers and students experience remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is crucial to consider how these factors intersect and overlap to ensure that remote teaching and learning is equitable and accessible for all lecturers and students, regardless of their identity.

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the inequalities prevalent in South Africa's higher education sector (Mtshweni, 2022). The pandemic engendered lockdown restrictions, in 2020 and 2021, which prompted the implementation of remote teaching and learning in the higher education sector. The rapid switch meant that HEIs and households were unprepared for the transition from face-to-face to remote teaching and learning. Studies further argue that the transition to remote teaching and learning exposed the extent of existing inequalities (Mudaly & Mudaly, 2021; Visser & Law-Van Wyk, 2021; Van der Westhuizen & Hlatshwayo, 2023). For instance, many students did not have access to the necessary resources such as functional laptops and access to Internet for remote learning (Mtshweni, 2022).

For Mpungose (2020), the intersectionality of exclusion during remote teaching and learning was shaped by socioeconomic factors. These included race, social class, gender, age, and geographical location, and they created socio-economic inequalities. Mpungose (2020) further noted that during the Covid-19 pandemic, most students did not have access to the necessary resources for remote learning. Literature has revealed that the geographic locations either rural or urban had different impacts on students (Marongwe & Garidzirai, 2021; Matarirano et al., 2021). For example, students in rural areas struggled with the scarcity of resources, network connectivity, and a lack of electricity (Marongwe & Garidzirai, 2021; Matarirano et al., 2021). These factors hindered students in rural areas from participating fairly in remote learning. Lecturers in rural areas also experienced the same issues faced by students. Data access was another challenge faced by lecturers who often had to use their own money to buy data, to connect to remote classes (Ofusori, 2021).

Socioeconomic class is among the other factors that contributed to student's experiences of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic (Maphalala et al., 2021). Many students were unable to afford a device to participate in remote learning and those who had a device could not afford data (Maphalala et al., 2021). Despite the South African government's efforts in trying to assist public colleges and universities with devices and data, students still struggled which was mainly due to Internet connectivity issues and the lack of electricity. During the Covid-19 pandemic, all students had to vacate campus residences and study remotely, at home. For example, students with a lower socioeconomic status went back home to the rural areas with poor network signal. These students' inability to connect to the Internet led to their lack of participation in remote learning initiatives (Maphalala et al., 2021).

Learning from home was difficult for Black African female students who had to undertake additional traditional and cultural activities at the home. These included household chores and caring for family members, which constituted an obstacle to their academic progress (Awung & Dorasamy, 2015; Pillay, Khosa, Campbell, Nyika & Sheik, 2021). For example, instead of engaging and participating in remote learning during the day, African female students cleaned family houses and cared for children. Therefore, these students spent less time engaging in their studies. Female lecturers also struggled to work remotely, as some lecturers did not have dedicated workspaces. They also had to accomplish additional household chores and rear their children which had an adverse impact on remote teaching, as it affected the delivery of lessons to their students (Landa et al., 2021).

The "#Rhodes Must Fall" protest is a typical example of a student movement analysed from an intersectionality perspective. This study examined different intersectionality categories. These included race, gender, class, power dynamics, and social inequalities within the movement (Daniel, 2021). This suggests that these students understood intersectionality as a form of oppression. Intersectionality was used as a tool to uncover various forms of discrimination, which led to various protests (Daniel, 2021). Similarities can be drawn between the "#Rhodes Must Fall" protest and this

study as intersectionality categories excluded many students from participating in remote teaching and learning initiatives. Thus, intersectionality can be understood as a practice foregrounding inclusivity (Daniel, 2021).

Intersectional pedagogy is a theoretical approach to education that recognises how different identities intersect and influence each other. It is essential to note that people who share the same identities may still have different experiences due to their unique contexts. For instance, two students may identify as women, but one may face additional challenges because of their race, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Similarly, two lecturers may identify as queer, but one may have a partner who is accepted by their family, while the other may face rejection or discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). Therefore, intersectional pedagogy emphasises the importance of acknowledging and addressing these differences to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all as the experiences of marginalised people are shaped by multiple identities and factors. These are gender, class, race, geographical location, and many others (Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, intersectionality was suitable for this study as it helped to analyse the multiple identities that play a significant role in the experiences of lecturers and students.

3.3. Transactional Distance Theory

Intersectionality was paired with the transactional distance theory, to understand the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, in private higher education colleges. The transactional distance theory was coined by Michael Moore in the 1970s and is predominantly used in studies on distance education and remote teaching and learning (Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Lufungulo, Mwila, Mudenda, Kampamba, Chulu & Hikaambo, 2021; Falloon, 2011). The transactional distance theory examines the physical, pedagogical, and psychological gaps between the lecturer and student, or between a student and other students, which negatively affects the quality of remote teaching and learning (Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Moore, 2013). Although the above-mentioned gaps exist in face-to-face learning; however, they are more prevalent in remote teaching and learning.

Therefore, this theory is essential in understanding the transactional gaps in remote teaching and learning and how remote teaching and learning has shaped the experiences of lecturers and students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The transactional distance theory consists of three dimensions, namely, structure, dialogue, and autonomy. These dimensions were used to explain the nuances in the experiences of remote teaching and learning between lecturers and students (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

Structure focuses on how a remotely taught course is organised within its framework, including course objectives, presentations, and assessments (Lufungulo et al., 2021). Structure further refers to the extent to which an educational programme or course taught remotely can respond to the students' individual needs. According to Moore (1997), the more structured a course is, the more constrained students feel. This ensures that students are more focused and directed toward the course. Remote teaching and learning increased the transactional distance which is the psychological separation between the lecturer and the student. As a result, lecturers and students felt less connected to each other and less motivated. This engendered reduced student engagement in remotely taught courses. The separation in space is also a cause of potential misunderstanding between the lecturer and the student (Lufungulo et al., 2021).

According to Falloon (2011) dialogue is the interaction between lecturers and students, which can occur in the form of words, actions, ideas, and other interactions. Here the interaction between the lecturer and student occurs using technology and is a vital component of communication. Students who lack basic skills to use the communication medium spend more time learning the medium instead of the content. Hanekom (2020) emphasises that lecturers and students had difficulty adapting to remote teaching and learning. Hence, this highlights a lack of digital literacy among lecturers and students (Hanekom, 2020). Autonomy is a student's sense of self-direction or self-determination and is based on the dialogue between lecturers and students, which was impacted negatively during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, students felt less connected and less motivated (Lufungulo et al., 2021).

A student-based case study conducted at the University of South Africa (UNISA) posed a critical question: "How can we harness mobile technology as a tool to reduce the distance between the student and the educational instructor in a distance education context?" (Mafenya, 2014). Teaching and studying remotely using the method and technologies suited to the instructional tasks, combined with student-student interactions and lecturer-student interactions, can be just as effective and impactful as face-to-face teaching (Viljoen, Du Preez & Cook, 2005). Providing support to students who are geographically isolated from their lecturers was a major challenge. Students were separated from their sources of information and their peers, which increased the transactional distance gap between lecturers and students (Mafenya, 2014).

In relation to remote teaching and learning and the Covid-19 pandemic, Moore's three dimensions, namely, structure, dialogue, and autonomy (Moore & Kearsley, 2011) were impacted negatively based on the geographical location of rural students. Their locations engendered many challenges, such as the lack of devices due to unaffordability, connectivity issues, data expenses, and lack of electricity (Hedding et al., 2020; Ngubane, 2020). Hence, immediately affecting structure, dialogue, and autonomy. Consequently, students were unable to connect to online platforms and therefore, this widened the transactional gap between lecturers and their students. Students were left without any support or guidance, as they were not connected to their lecturers. This influenced their academic performance.

A study by Ilagan (2020) explored online classes on Programming for Business students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings showed that transactional distance had a negative influence on student learning. Ilagan (2020) illustrated that remote teaching and learning magnified the distance, as lecturers and students do not meet physically. He further compared classroom dynamics before the pandemic, when students were attending face-to-face classes, with those of remote teaching and learning during the pandemic. The aim was to show the transactional gaps (Ilagan, 2020). The paragraphs below reflect on students' classroom engagement before and during the pandemic.

Moore (1989) differentiates between the various interactions that occurs in distance education. These constitute the transactional distance between lecturers and students, students and students, and students and content (Moore, 1989). This was further explored in a study by Ilagan (2020), involving students in a programming class. During the face-to-face programming classes, the student-lecturer engagement was more enhanced and felt more real and genuine. Students were provided with the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarity from their lecturers, face-to-face, and received feedback instantaneously. Lecturers were able to give students an opportunity to reflect on and respond to questions. There was also an increased student-to-student engagement. Students were able to share their solutions freely with the class. These solutions related to any questions raised by the lecturer which stimulated discussions with classmates. Regarding the student and content interaction, students were also able to discuss their programming assignments in class, providing support to each other (Ilagan, 2020; Weidlich & Bastiaena, 2018).

During remote teaching and learning, the same students from the programming class reflected on their experiences of remote teaching and learning (Ilagan, 2020; Weidlich & Bastiaena, 2018). Concerning the student-content interaction, students believed that there was no structure. Moreover, many students complained that lecturers provided them with additional work such as assignments and extra readings. Students' workload increased significantly; they felt that they could not cope with the extra pressure and stress. The student-lecturer interaction as well as the student-student interface were ineffective as students received minimum communication and interacted less with lecturers and other students. Students found it extremely difficult to ask questions virtually, and to receive immediate responses (Ilagan, 2020; Weidlich & Bastiaena, 2018). During remote teaching and learning, the transactional gaps between lecturers and students as well as that between a student and other students increased because of the physical separation of students from their lecturers. This separation was caused by technology. Students preferred face-to-face classes, as corroborated by the findings of this study.

To minimise transactional gaps during remote teaching and learning, it was important that HEIs use the best software. These would help to deliver instructions and manage interactions, as these have an impact on student satisfaction and experience (Thoms & Eryilmaz, 2014). This can be done using diverse platforms, instead of relying solely on one platform. Diversity increases interactions among students, between lecturers and students, as well as between students and the content. An example of transactional distance learning where dialogue, structure and learner autonomy are balanced is described below.

This case study adopted an on-campus, blended teaching approach using e-learning activities and resources. The blended approach accommodated over 200 students, as opposed to the eight-student approach as the blended approach replaced the practical classes regarding tablet-making (Benson & Samarawickrema, 2009). Lecturers implemented videotaped segments about the production process of tablets. Lecturers also included online lecture materials and revision quizzes on institutional websites which provided structure to the alternative practical classes (Benson & Samarawickrema, 2009). Students demonstrated low levels of autonomy, as the dialogue opportunity was restricted to face-to-face instruction. This e-learning design was tailored to the characteristics of students and their learning contexts. In relation to Moore's explanation of the transactional distance theory, this was a holistic approach that minimised transactional gaps. Hence, it was regarded as successful.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter provided insight into the Covid-19 pandemic and highlighted the challenges experienced by lecturers and students based on both the intersectionality and transactional distance theoretical frameworks. Lecturers and students' socioeconomic status played a pivotal role in the implementation and delivery of remote teaching and learning. Lecturers and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were unable to participate fairly and equally in remote teaching and learning. This adversely affected their academic performance, due to the challenges they faced. Conversely, lecturers and students from higher socioeconomic statuses

were not negatively impacted by the transition from the traditional face- to-face classes to remote teaching and learning. The transactional distance learning theory regarded technology as a tool for creating the transactional gaps between the student and the lecturer, between a student and other students, and between a student and the content. When the best software is used, it can assist in closing the transactional gaps and thus improve the experiences of students. The next chapter delves into the research methodology and the various methods employed in conducting this study. It provides a detailed explanation of how the research was carried out, including the specific techniques and approaches utilised to gather and analyse data. This chapter, therefore, serves as a roadmap for understanding the research process and the rationale behind the chosen methodology.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore and compare the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges located in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm. An explorative approach and qualitative methodology were adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon (Sarantakos, 2005; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2014). Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and analysed by means of thematic analysis. The thematic analysis technique is best suited to qualitative data as it involves the identification of common themes (Caulfield, 2019; Rosenthal, 2016). The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the research methods used in conducting this study. Detailed information on and the justification of the methodology adopted in this study are provided. The chapter further describes the various stages of the research process. This includes reflections of the research approach and methodology, the research site, the selection and access to the research participants, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, reflexivity, and ethical considerations.

4.2. Research Paradigm, Approach and Methodology

This study was guided by the interpretivist research paradigm. Interpretivism foregrounds different ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different social and cultural contexts (Hammersley, 2013; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). As such, knowledge is socially constructed, based on people's reality and the meanings they attach to events (Eliaeson, 2002; Chowdhury, 2014). Moreover, interpretivists seek meanings and reasons for people's actions (Chowdhury, 2014; Baynes, 2016). Hence, the interpretive approach consists of two main features: meanings and interpretations. Meanings relate to how people make sense of their daily life experiences. As for interpretation, it is the process of making sense of phenomena or events (Putnam & Banghart, 2017). Interpretivism assisted in contextualising remote teaching and

learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges. This was achieved by probing participants about their experiences of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interpretive approach further contributed to knowledge production from people's experiences and perceptions, so therefore in understanding these experiences and perceptions interpretivism has been useful in this study.

An explorative research approach was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon (Sarantakos, 2005; Bless et al., 2014). Exploratory research is conducted to gather new insights, learn new ideas, and to increase knowledge regarding a phenomenon (Bless et al., 2014). This study also used a comparative strategy, to establish the possible links between the experiences of lecturers and those of students. A comparative study analyses phenomena by putting them together, to establish points of differences and similarities (Miri & Shahrokh, 2019). The comparative approach was used to understand and compare the experiences of lecturers and those of students concerning remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This strategy further assisted in comparing the challenges faced by lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the support they received.

The study adopted a qualitative research methodology. This was deemed suitable as the study explored and compared the experiences of lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. According to Creswell (2007) a qualitative research approach is a means of examining and understanding the meanings that individuals and groups ascribe to social or human problems. The qualitative research approach helps in understanding human experiences in a specific setting (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The qualitative research approach also provides a detailed description of human experiences such as feelings, opinions, and experiences that assists with the interpretation of the meaning of the participants' actions (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Thus, the qualitative approach helped the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the investigated phenomenon. The qualitative

approach allowed the researcher to gather additional information on the researched topic. This was achieved by asking the necessary probing questions to the participants, to address research questions and objectives of this study.

4.3. Research Site

This study was based in the City of Johannesburg, South Africa. Johannesburg is in the Gauteng Province, which has three metropolitan municipalities, namely, the West Rand District Municipality, the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (Yes Media, 2021). Gauteng has an estimated 93 registered private higher education colleges (DHET, 2022). However, the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality has the greatest number of private higher education colleges among the three metropolitan municipalities cited above; hence, it was the selected study area. The Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality consists of seven regions (see Figure 4.1). Private higher education colleges are found in four regions: Region A, Region B, Region C, and Region E. However, only two colleges were selected for this study. The participants were selected from one college in Region A and Region B as these regions have the greatest number of private higher education colleges and the largest student population. These institutions offer face-to-face classes, and, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, they transitioned to remote teaching and learning (DHET, 2022).
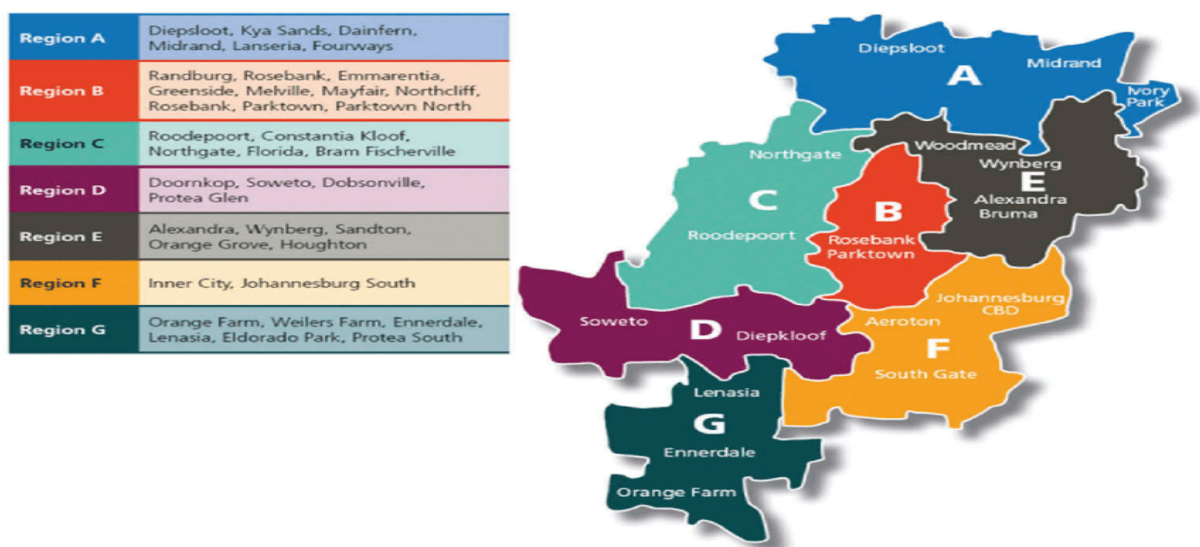
FIGURE 4.1: JOHANNESBURG REGIONS (YES MEDIA, 2021).

4.4. Sampling and Selection of Study Participants

Non-probability sampling methods, which are convenience, and snowball sampling, were used to select participants for this study. Non-probability sampling is a technique used to select samples that are not suggested by probability sampling (Babbie, 2021). For Elmusharaf (2018), convenience sampling refers to selecting individuals who are easily accessible or available, rather than those who are truly representative of the entire population. These individuals are convenient and easily accessible to the researcher (Elmusharaf, 2018). Snowball sampling technique refers to a process where initial participants are asked to recommend potential research participants (Babbie, 2021). For this study, the researcher began accessing participants by requesting permission and a list of lecturers and students from campus principals using emails. However, the researcher was informed that such information cannot be shared due to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA).

Thereafter, the researcher decided to directly approach lecturers and students from the identified colleges. The researcher travelled to identified and selected private higher education colleges and stood next to shopping malls closer to college campuses and approached lecturers and students during their lunch time. Participants were asked whether they are students or lecturers. Once lecturers and students were identified, the researcher introduced herself and explained the purpose of the study and the role of the potential participants. In addition to this convenience sampling, the researcher used the snowball sampling entailing referrals. Referrals occurred as the researcher approached one person who matched the characteristics of the study. Thereafter, the researcher requested to be referred to other participants who match the characteristics of this study. The interviewed participants subsequently referred the researcher to others, and this assisted the researcher in accessing further participants.

The sample of the study comprised 26 participants in total. The student sample size consisted of 8 male and 8 female students, to ensure gender balance. The lecturer sample size consisted of 5 male and 5 female lecturers. The sample sizes of the

lecturers and the students differed because the student population is larger than the lecturer population. However, the interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached. Data saturation is a stage at which enough data has been collected to reach the necessary conclusions and additional data does not add value to the study (Quantiles, 2021). Data saturation was reached with the nineth lecturer participant and the fifteenth student participant. Although data saturation was reached, the researcher continued to interview all the participants included in the sample size, to ensure the validity of the study.

The selection of participants was based on several characteristics. The student target populations were first year, second-year, third year, fourth-year or alumni students that studied during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown in 2020/2021 academic year and were between the ages of 20 and 35 years old. The lecturer target population comprised lecturers who had been employed before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and were between the ages of 30 and 50 years old. The above characteristics also allowed the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of the experiences of lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The selected participants matched the characteristics set by the researcher for this study, except for 2 participants – one female lecturer who was 28 years old and one male student who was 42 years old.

4.4.1. Profile of the Participants

The present section presents an overview of the individuals involved in this research. The participants are categorized into two groups: lecturers (as shown in Table 4.1) and students (as displayed in Table 4.2). These tables offer a comprehensive breakdown of the participants, shedding light on their respective profiles and characteristics.

#	Name	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Race	Modules taught during the pandemic	Area College Situated
1.	Mahindra	35	Male	Single	Indian	Accounting, Planning and Control, Sales, and Marketing	Sunninghill
2.	Thobeka	28	Female	Single	Black	Culinary Arts	Sunninghill
3.	Bongani	33	Male	Married	Black	Hospitality Operations and Food and Beverage Management	Sunninghill
4.	Ester	39	Female	Married	Black	French	Sunninghill
5.	Susan	42	Female	Married	White	Front Office and Housekeeping	Sunninghill
6.	Mary	30	Female	Married	White	Food and Beverage management, introduction to housekeeping, management and then accommodation management.	Sunninghill
7.	Samuel	50	Male	Married	Black	Taxation and Cost Management	Randburg
8.	Alfred	37	Male	Single	Black	Economics and Statistics	Randburg
9.	John	46	Male	Married	Black	Commerce: Risk Management and Business Management	Randburg
10.	Happiness	42	Female	Single	Black	Risk Management and Supply Chain Alignment	Randburg

TABLE 4.1: PROFILE OF LECTURERS

The sample consisted of ten lecturers. Interviews were conducted with five male and five female lecturers from private higher education colleges. The study sample of lecturers was selected from two private higher education colleges situated in the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, Region A (Sunninghill) and Region B (Randburg). The age range of the nine lecturers were between 30 and 50 years, except for one female lecturer who was 28 years old. In further analysing the profile of the participants, four of the participants were single and six were married. In addition, seven of the participants were Black, two White, and one Indian. Of particular interest to this study is the different qualifications taught by the various lecturers. This is also cross-referenced by the modules taught by these lecturers. Hospitality qualifications are structured into a theoretical component and a practical component. The practical component consists of practical cooking sessions and demonstrations (on-campus) and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) (off-campus). This provides students with an

opportunity to gain practical experience by putting their academic knowledge into practice (Johannes, 2023). The Bachelor of Commerce qualifications are more theoretical in nature. However, certain modules are more practical. This means that graphs, drawings, and calculation steps are required. What is also significant in this study is the gender differences between the male and female lecturers interviewed. Naidu and Modise (2021) add that work-home balance between male and females were different because females had additional responsibilities at home.

#	Name	Age	Gender	Race	Marital Status	Qualification	Area College Situated	Source of Funding for studies	Spending allowance
1.	Kamehelo	22	Male	Black	Single	Higher Certificate in Hospitality Management	Sunninghill	Parents	R1000-R9000
2.	Musa	26	Male	Black	Single	BBA in Hospitality Management	Sunninghill	Mother	R 500
3.	Kabelo	22	Male	Black	Single	BBA in Hospitality Management	Sunninghill	Mother	R 1500
4.	Julio	24	Male	White	Single	Diploma in Hospitality Management- AHLEI	Sunninghill	Father/campus bursary(15%)	R3600-R4000
5.	Nishaana	22	Female	Indian	Single	Diploma in Professional Cookery and Kitchen Management (DPCKM)	Sunninghill	Parents	R 500
6.	Carmen	22	Female	White	Single	BBA in Hospitality Management	Sunninghill	Student loan	R 6000
7.	Chanel	23	Female	Indian	Single	Diploma Hospitality Management	Sunninghill	Dad	R 1200
8.	Michelle	26	Female	White	Married	BBA in Hospitality Management	Sunninghill	Grandparents /Dad(50%)	R10000-R150000
9.	Micaela	20	Female	Coloured	Single	BCOM- Marketing and Business Management	Randburg	Parents	R1000
10.	Pertunia	21	Female	Black	Single	Diploma in Supply Chain Management and Logistics	Randburg	Father/Brother	R0,00
11.	Karabo	24	Female	Black	Single	Diploma in Business Management	Randburg	Mother	R1500
12.	Kushi	35	Female	Indian	Single	Higher Certificate in Project Management	Randburg	Self-sponsored & assisted by family	R5000
13.	Kyle	22	Male	White	Single	BCOM- Marketing and Business Management	Randburg	Parents	R1200
14.	Sesona	22	Male	Black	Single	Diploma in Supply Chain Management and Logistics	Randburg	Father	R4000
15.	Seneliso	24	Male	Black	Single	BCOM- Marketing and Business Management	Randburg	Not disclosed	R5000-R6000
16.	Lebogang	42	Male	Black	Single	BCOM- Marketing and Business Management	Randburg	Self-sponsored	R1200

TABLE 4.2: PROFILE OF STUDENTS

The sample consisted of sixteen students. Interviews were conducted with eight male and eight female students from private higher education colleges. The study sample of students was selected from two private higher education colleges located in the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, Region A (Sunninghill) and Region B (Randburg). The age range of the sixteen students was between the ages of 18 and 35 years, except for one male student who was 42 years old. In further analysing the profile of the participants, fifteen of them were single and one was married. In addition, eight of the participants were Black, four White, three Indian, and one Coloured. What is interesting is the difference in spending allowances of these students, which is also cross-referenced by their sources of funding. The spending allowance can be used as an indicator of the socioeconomic status of the students. It helps to determine whether students had additional funds to access the resources required such as data for remote learning.

4.5. Data Collection

Fieldwork commenced in March 2023 and ended in May 2023. The timeframe for completing fieldwork was approximately two months. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for this study, and this entailed a structured dialogue between the researcher and the participants (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins & Peng, 2014). Interviews are effective in providing a holistic snapshot of participants' thoughts, feelings, and opinions (George, 2023). Although there are some disadvantages associated with them, the disadvantages might outweigh them hence, due to the research objectives and aims interviews were necessary. Interviews are more effective when asking complicated questions and using probing (George, 2023). Probing prompted the participants to provide more information regarding a specific question, or it helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of a particular issue. Interviews also yielded a higher response rate, as participants felt that they were taken more seriously. Allowing the participants to talk freely about their experiences and feelings led to a more reliable data collection process (George, 2023). For these reasons, interviews were considered as the most suitable tools for collecting data from the participants in this study.

The researcher used an interview guide, which consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions (see Appendix D and Appendix E) (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The use of semi-structured interviews assisted the researcher with probing, to gain an in-depth understanding of the new points raised during the interviews. The participants were also provided with an opportunity to be interviewed in a vernacular language. However, all the participants opted to be interviewed in English. The interviews were all conducted virtually, via MS Teams. The interviews lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes each.

A brief synopsis of the interview sessions was as follows. Once a potential participant volunteered to partake in the study, virtually, the researcher requested their email address and discussed, via WhatsApp, the suitable time and date of the interview. The researcher then emailed the MS Teams link to the participants, inviting them to attend the meeting at the indicated date and time. Once the participants joined the meeting, a brief introduction was done. Thereafter, the researcher discussed the information sheet/letter with the participants; this was followed by a discussion of the informed consent form. Both forms were shared with the participants, on the screen. The participants opted for the researcher to sign the informed consent form on their behalf. The researcher provided the participants with an opportunity to ask questions regarding any aspects that needed clarity. Once this was concluded and the participants were satisfied, the researcher commenced with the questions, using the interview schedule. The questions asked were based on the participants' demographics, their experiences of remote teaching and learning, the challenges they experienced during remote teaching and learning, as well as the support that was available to both lecturers and students during remote teaching and learning. The researcher also asked probing questions, at times, to gain a deeper understanding of some aspects raised by the interviewees. At the end, the participants were thanked for their time and participation in the study. At the end of each interview, the researcher asked the participants if they knew any other lecturer or student who would be willing to participate in the study. Some potential participants declined to participate in the study, without providing any reasons. Other potential participants did not join the

scheduled MS Teams meeting. Several similar rejections led to the researcher only having 26 participants. One student and one lecturer fell outside the required age for this study.

The researcher also used a notebook to capture all the information shared. Nonetheless, the interviews were disturbed by interruptions such as load-shedding and poor network connection. The researcher had to re-schedule interrupted interviews at the convenience of the participants. The researcher requested permission from the participants to record the interviews on MS Teams. The interviews were recorded and saved on the I-Cloud and were only accessible to my supervisor and myself. The information sheet/letter (see Appendix B) and the informed consent form (see Appendix C) were discussed with the participants virtually on MS Teams, prior to the start of the interview. The information sheet/letter contained full information on the nature of participation in this study, the risk level, and the benefits of participating in the study. This enabled lecturers and students to choose to participate voluntarily, without being coerced or deceived. The researcher gained verbal and recorded consent, virtually on MS Teams, to sign the informed consent form on behalf of the participants. This also served to confirm the interviewees' voluntary participation in this study.

4.6. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process of systematically searching and arranging the information gathered by a researcher, to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process involves making sense of data, identifying significant patterns, and drawing meaning from the data. The aim is to build a logical chain of evidence (Patton, 2002). Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the collected data. This technique was suitable as the study sought to understand the investigated phenomenon by using an in-depth interpretation of data (Alhojailan, 2012). Thematic analysis was used to present data in categories and themes. The latter were then connected to the whole content.

Data analysis in this study started during the data collection process. Pre-analysis occurred by identifying the possible themes and ideas that the researcher was able to identify during the data collection process. This fostered probing for more information. The study followed Rosenthal's (2016) suggested data analysis steps. These included transcription and familiarisation, coding, identification of themes, and report writing.

Step 1: Transcription and familiarisation – the researcher had a broad overview of the data collected. The interviews were conducted virtually on MS Teams and were also recorded and transcribed on MS Teams. The researcher read through the interview transcripts several times, for familiarisation purposes. The researcher listened to the transcribed recordings, to establish the accuracy of the transcription of recordings. She made notes that assisted in getting ideas for the codes describing the content of the data collected.

Step 2: Coding – this is the second step of the thematic analysis technique. Coding consisted of the researcher re-reading each transcript and then identifying recurring ideas (Rosenthal, 2016). The researcher then used an Excel spreadsheet (see Figure 4.2) to capture the responses of the participants to each question asked on the interview schedule. The researcher highlighted and colour-coded important phrases and sentences. Colour-coding allowed the researcher to organise and categorise data into themes and subthemes.

1.1. Name	1.2.Age	1.3.Gender	1.4. Race	1.5. Marital Status	1.6. Year of study	1.7. Qualification	1.10. Residence Prior to Covid	1.11. Residence during pandemic	1.12. Source of funding	1.13. Funding Covered	1.14. Spending allowance	2.1.Pandemic Taught you	2.2.Prepared for shift
Sesona	22	Male	Black	Single	1st year in 2020	Diploma in Supply Chain Management and Logistics	Randburg	Fourways	Father	Books, Tuiton and Travel	R 4,000	taught me self-discipline	Not really. I wouldn't say they prepared us because I personally think that all, most of us here in South Africa covered just took us by shock. We were not expecting it, didn't expect that sudden life change. Because it just came and happened so fast.
Karabo	24	Female	Black	Single	2nd year in 2021	Diploma in Business Management	Randburg	Brits	Mother	Books, Tuiton and Travel	R 1,500	it's about you.It's not about anyone else.So you need to be responsible for everything,attending basically taught me responsibility and it's hard to me	No, I don't think so.I don't think so because of when I started my first year, we didn't have anything online at all.The only thing that we had there was online was receiving emails, but it was even difficult to receive those emails.So we didn't have a student portal, so when COVID-19 came it was very difficult for us to adjust and be able to understand what's going on.

FIGURE 4.2: DATA ANALYSIS USING EXCEL SPREADSHEET

Step 3: Themes – the researcher used the coding identified in Step 2 to develop themes. These were used to understand the data and relate them to the overall research question (Rosenthal, 2016). Some of the identified themes were that students' experience of remote learning was viewed as both positive and negative, for various reasons. The similarities in students' experiences are highlighted in the two interview excerpts below:

"It is good and bad. It was good as it was cost efficient. The bad part is that we had difficulties with staying motivated during remote learning because I would get easily distracted at home" (Musa, April 2023).

"It had a good and bad side. The negative side is because you are dealing with technology and everything is online, so it means there are online issues. However, it was also a good experience because at that time I did not realise what it was teaching me. Now that I am working, I do see that I can adapt much easier to a different working environment and a different setting. I feel like it did help me in that aspect" (Nishaana, April 2023).

The two interview excerpts are colour-coded in green and red to show the different themes emerging. The green highlights show the positive experiences with the reasons as to why the experience was positive. The red highlights show the negative experiences with the reasons as to why the experience was negative.

Step 4: Writing up – the final step of the data analysis process is the interpretation of the findings discussed in detail in each theme and its subthemes, organised logically to write a structured report (Rosenthal, 2016). The main themes and findings of this study are presented in chapters 5 and 6. The researcher interpreted data based on the themes and subthemes identified. These were, at times, validated by going back to the recordings and listening to verbal cues and expressions.

4.7. Ensuring Rigour

Rigour is defined by Anney (2014) as trustworthiness maintained by four criteria. These are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, which will be examined below.

A) Credibility

Credibility is described as the "fit" between the views of the participants and the researcher's representation of these views (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The duration of my fieldwork was approximately two months. A maximum of two days was spent visiting shopping malls close to College 1 and College 2, within the specified study area. This assisted me to gain access to potential participants from the two colleges. This allowed the researcher to observe their practices in different periods of time and on different days. The triangulation strategy was also used to verify the findings and to further test them for validity.

The above was implemented to ensure the credibility and authenticity of the study. The participants in this study were lecturers and students, since the study sought to explore and compare the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning at private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data was collected using semi-structured interview guides. The interviews happened virtually on MS Teams. The participants were recorded using MS Teams and the data were transcribed on MS Teams. The researcher analysed the transcriptions for accuracy and made the necessary changes. Data were captured onto an Excel spreadsheet and were further analysed thematically (see Figure 4.2 above). The researcher highlighted common themes on the Excel spreadsheet. Data was then interpreted based on the themes and subthemes.

B) Transferability

Transferability means that the findings of a study will be the same as those of other

similar studies and are therefore generalisable (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016). Transferability is facilitated through 'thick description', where the complete research process – from data collection to the final write-up of the report – is explained. Chapter 4 provides a detailed explanation of how the study was conducted, and the challenges experienced. This can assist future researchers in ensuring that similar findings are generated.

C) Confirmability

Confirmability demonstrates that the data collected represent the participants' viewpoints and not those of the researcher (Cope, 2014). My position as the researcher did not affect the interviews, as the study related to the experiences of lecturers and students. However, a reflexive journal was used to take notes regarding the researcher's personal feelings, biases, and insights after the interview process. This allowed the researcher to remain neutral in the study. The findings presented in the study are based on the views of the participants. The latter were interviewed, recorded, and the interviews were transcribed. The data were analysed, interpreted, and presented in themes and subthemes. From these emerged the findings regarding the experiences and challenges of the participants interviewed in this study.

D) Dependability

This process requires the researcher to examine if the research process was logical. This entailed an audit trail, which ensured that this process was well-documented. The researcher described the data collection process and used the findings, interpretation, and conclusions to determine if these were supported by the data collected (Cope, 2014). Chapter 4 describes the processes followed in conducting this study. Any changes made were reported under the audit trail. Fieldnotes were also kept ensuring the researcher's reflexiveness in this study.

4.7.1. On Being Reflexive when Conducting the Study

Interviewing lecturers was a difficult process because they felt that sharing information about their experiences of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic would jeopardise their jobs. Nonetheless, they were reassured of their confidentiality and anonymity in the study. Interviewing students was also a difficult process as they could not freely share their experiences due to feelings of jeopardising their studies. The researcher also sensed reluctance when she asked probing questions to both lecturers and students. Multiple factors shaped the relationship between the researcher and the participants. This impacted the quality and content of the information collected (Malterud, 2001). The factors that influenced the quality of the interviews and the interactions between the researcher and the participants are gender, ethnicity, age differences, language, and socio-economic status (Manderson, Bennett & Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2006).

The factors associated with gender, ethnicity, age, and language influenced the collection of information concerning the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the interviews with males, the researcher had to often encourage them to express their feelings, as they avoided discussing emotions. Older participants in this study reflected on life experiences, to frame difficult questions, as opposed to younger participants (Manderson et al., 2006). The researcher had to probe to bring those older participants back to their experiences of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was to ensure that their responses were not based on their life experiences. Concerning ethnicity, and language, the different frames of references (researcher and participant) influenced what was asked by the researcher and how stories were told by the participants. This was mitigated by the researcher's objectivity and neutrality. These factors led to the participants declining to partake in the study or not joining the scheduled MS Teams meeting. During the interviews, the researcher also noted the tone of voice, including the changes in the responses of the participants and therefore endeavoured to ask

questions from the interview guide less formally. The researcher faced challenges in effectively communicating with the participants due to language barriers. These barriers could have stemmed from various factors such as cultural differences, limited language proficiency, or unfamiliarity with technical jargon. To overcome these obstacles, the researcher had to modify the interview questions by simplifying the language used, avoiding ambiguous terms, and ensuring clarity in the phrasing. By doing so, the researcher aimed to bridge the gap between themselves and the participants, facilitating a more comprehensive and meaningful exchange of information. The researcher further engaged in reflexivity by writing notes regarding the participants comments and the researcher's thoughts during the interviews (Haynes, 2012). Reflexivity encouraged the researcher to be cautious in transcribing the interviews and in analysing the data. This was done by listening to the interview recordings and by acknowledging the role of the researcher in influencing the interview interaction (Haynes, 2012).

4.7.2. Keeping an Audit Trail

An audit trail, in qualitative research, is a record of how qualitative data collection was conducted and how the researcher reached the conclusions. This is further achieved by providing a detailed description of the steps followed in the research process and supported through the collection of documentation throughout (Carcary, 2020). The researcher kept all field notes and documents, to ensure that she was reflexive when collecting and analysing data. During the process of data analysis, the researcher referred to the field notes and the recordings. This enabled her to reflect on the possible impact the researcher had on the participants in this study. Keeping an audit trail ensured that the researcher was able to maintain reflexivity throughout the study. The researcher had to make changes to the regions that were originally identified for this study. The reason for this was the difficulty in reaching lecturers and students. The study focused on one college in Region B and one other in Region A. The originally identified study area was Region C. This change was necessary as it was easy to gain access to the participants in Region A. All interviews were also conducted virtually because the participants declined face-to-face interviews. The participants felt that

being interviewed virtually created a lesser risk of being identified as having participated in this study. It was easier to remain anonymous in this way.

4.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues may arise during a study; therefore, it is important that a researcher anticipates ethical dilemmas and makes the necessary provisions to address these challenges in the study (Bless et al., 2014). The University of South Africa's College of Human Science Ethics Committee granted the ethical clearance for this study (see Appendix F). The researcher only commenced with data collection after receiving the ethical clearance, and once the supervisor had approved the final interview guides.

It was important to ensure that the participants were not harmed or injured by participating in this study. The researcher also needed to account for intentional or unintentional harm. In doing so, she needed to be aware of any adverse events that occurred during the study. As participants had to recall their experiences of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, this study could have caused minor harm and inconvenience to the participants. All participants confirmed that their participation in this study did not cause any harm or inconvenience to them.

The principle of autonomy incorporates individuals' freedom of actions, choices, and decision on whether they would be involved in a study. The participants should not be forced overtly or covertly into any study. Key to the principle of autonomy is that the participants have a right to participate voluntarily in a study or decline to participate (Bless et al., 2014). In this study, the researcher explained the information sheet/letter before starting the interviews, to ensure that the participants were informed about the nature of the study. This was so that all the participants were able to make an informed decision concerning their participation. Hence, the participants were provided with clear and sufficient information. They were also given an opportunity to ask any questions relating to the study. Furthermore, the informed consent form was fully explained to the participants. The explanation covered the nature of the study, its

associated risks, and benefits, as well as the expected outcomes, before the participants agreed to participate (Bless et al., 2014).

The researcher obtained verbal and recorded consent from the participants, for the researcher to sign the consent form on behalf of the participants. The participants were provided with assurance that they were allowed to withdraw from this study at any point, without any prejudice, regardless of a signed consent form. The anonymity of all participants was further assured as participants were identified by pseudonyms. This was at the request of the participants; therefore, when the research results are published, the participants will not be identifiable. The participants were also informed that the data collected would be used solely for this study. They were further advised that the data collected would be kept under secure conditions, to maintain confidentiality. The collected data are kept on the I-Cloud and are only available to the researcher and her supervisor for a period of five years. The researcher acknowledged and implemented Unisa's ethical policies in this study.

4.9. Challenges Experienced while Conducting the Study

This study had a few limitations. The first is that the researcher could not find the proposed number of participants, due to the difficulty in accessing potential participants. The second constraint is that two of the interviewees fell outside the inclusion age for this study. The third limitation is that the researcher could not conduct the research in the one specified study area, identified as Region C in the City of Johannesburg. This was because campus principals declined the request for their lecturers and students to participate in the study. Hence, the study focused on Region A and Region B of the City of Johannesburg. The fourth restriction is that the researcher scheduled virtual interviews with potential participants. However, most of them cancelled while a few did not join the virtual interview and did not give any notice. The fifth shortfall of this study is that the researcher had to schedule interviews based on the convenience of the participants when South Africa was plunged into stage 6 of

load-shedding. This was challenging for both the participants and the researcher. The sixth limitation is that most participants felt more comfortable with their video cameras turned off during the interviews. As such, the researcher could not see the facial expressions and the social setting of the participants.

4.10. Conclusion

This chapter played a vital role in shaping the research methodology. The qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate for this specific study due to its focus on exploring the depth and nuances of the subject matter. The data collection process involved engaging with participants who possessed a strong understanding of the topic under investigation. This deliberate choice resulted in more precise and insightful responses, ultimately leading to the generation of credible and reliable results. In the upcoming chapter, we will delve into the intricate process of data analysis, where the researcher will thoroughly examine the findings related to the experiences and challenges faced by lecturers in private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to remote teaching.

Chapter 5: Remote Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Experiences of Lecturers at Private Higher Education Colleges in Johannesburg

5.1. Introduction

This study aimed to explore and compare the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges in the City of Johannesburg, South Africa. As such, this chapter thematically presents lecturers experiences of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data emanates from ten (10) interviews conducted with male and female lecturers employed at private higher education colleges in Johannesburg. The first theme focuses on lecturers' experiences of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the platforms and strategies used to navigate remote teaching. The second theme delves into the experiences of lecturers working remotely. The third theme discusses the challenges experienced by lecturers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The fourth theme reflects on the institutional support provided to lecturers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The fifth theme explores lecturers' perceptions of the effectiveness of remote teaching. Lastly, the chapter covers the lessons learnt by lecturers at private higher education colleges concerning their experiences of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.2. Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching and learning in higher education – including private higher education colleges – was conducted face-to-face. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in teaching and learning being conducted remotely in HEIs. The findings of this study demonstrate that lecturers at private higher education colleges had negative experiences of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviewed participants described remote teaching during the pandemic as difficult, due to various reasons. Alfred[1], a 37-year-old lecturer, noted:

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[1] All names used in this findings chapter are pseudonyms

"I will say it is difficult to teach online. That is the term I will use. It is a big process, and it is challenging to teach online because you cannot really monitor your students as much as you can monitor them in face-to-face classes" (Alfred, April 2023).

Alfred emphasised the challenges faced by lecturers during the Covid-19 pandemic when it came to teaching. The shift to remote teaching necessitated the use of online platforms to conduct classes, which posed difficulties in effectively monitoring students' progress. Therefore, Alfred's preference was the traditional face-to-face teaching, as it allowed for better supervision and observation of students' engagement and understanding within the classroom setting. The challenges of teaching during the pandemic were echoed by other interviewed participants. For instance, Happiness, a 42-year-old lecturer, shared:

"When you are teaching your students on campus it is easier. You get to see them, and you can see their facial expressions. If students are not focusing it is easier for you to notice this in face-to-face classes. However, if you are teaching them remotely, they can simply log in to sign the attendance register and not be available. As a lecturer you cannot see if they are interested in the content, or if they are participating or getting something out of the remote session" (Happiness, May 2023).

Happiness also emphasised that teaching prior to the pandemic was good as she could observe students' responses to what was being taught in face-to-face classes. However, teaching remotely was challenging because as a lecturer, she could not see how students responded to the content taught because students joined online classes with their cameras off, to save data. As such, lecturers at private higher education colleges found remote teaching difficult. Adding to the debate, Susan, a 42-year-old lecturer reflected on teaching practical modules. She said:

"I would say face-to-face classes is much better than remote teaching because the subjects that I had to teach were more practical and discussion

based. I prefer face- to- face classes. As I am in the Hospitality Industry, I believe students do better when they attend face- to-face classes as there is more interaction. Students relied much better on face- to- face classes" (Susan, May 2023).

Susan describes teaching practical modules during the Covid-19 pandemic as challenging. She teaches hospitality modules which required students to attend face-to-face classes and do practical beverage demonstrations and cooking practicals. As such, remote teaching made teaching challenging, especially for lecturers teaching practical modules and those who needed to do demonstrations during classes. Alfred added that teaching remotely was challenging for him as well, as he was unable to navigate the online platforms to demonstrate calculations to his students. He observed that:

"With numerical subjects, it is very difficult, especially to show all the calculations, steps, drawings and graphs because the online platforms do not have these type of facilities" (Alfred, April 2023).

Even though teaching remotely was challenging for private higher education college lecturers, they used various platforms and strategies to excel in remote teaching. The participants in this study used various teaching methods or platforms such as MS Teams. Samuel, a 50-year-old lecturer, describes the platform he used to teach remotely during the pandemic thus:

"We were using MS Team and links of the video recordings that were posted on the student portal. Students accessed the link from there. MS Team had so many tools to use. There is a whiteboard that you can use, and you can also do a share screen or upload your presentation there and explain to your students" (Samuel, April 2023).

The excerpt above describes the platforms to which private higher education college lecturers had access to and used remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Samuel alludes that he used MS Teams to host online classes, and shared links to enable his students to access the recordings of online classes. These recordings were posted on the student portal for those who missed the online classes. This suggests that students were supported during the pandemic. Recordings and presentations were shared with students, to enable them to watch at their convenience. A 30-year-old lecturer, Mary, used the following strategies and platform to teach her students during the pandemic:

> *"One of the methods that we used were the pre-recordings of videos on PowerPoints. At some stage live support sessions were on Zoom, where students had the opportunity to log into that specific session"* (Mary, May 2023).

The main style of teaching adopted by Mary from this private higher education college was the use of pre-recorded videos. These were sent to students via a link, to enable them to access the recordings on the YouTube application. This meant that students could also access and watch these videos at any point. Support sessions happened via the Zoom platform, where students could engage with their lecturers about the content of the video. The platforms and teaching strategies used were crucial as they had an impact on student performance. Mary also explained the teaching strategy she used during the pandemic. She confessed:

> *"When it came to distance learning at that stage, I was not in the distance learning space for very long. But what I tried to do is, I brought in videos, activities, visual aids, examples during these sessions when it came to explaining specific things to the students. I, literally got up during a session and walked into my kitchen cabinet to go and grab some examples of specific ingredients or items that we were discussing so that they can understand that specific ingredient. We were discussing soya based texturized meat and I gave them an example literally from my own pantry"* (Mary, May 2023).

Mary effectively maintained the attention and active participation of her students during her online classes. She employed a variety of strategies, including the utilisation of

videos and interactive activities, to achieve this goal. By incorporating these methods, Mary ensured that her students remained engaged and interested in the subject matter being taught. One notable aspect of Mary's teaching approach was the practical component that involved the use of ingredients. This hands-on approach not only enhanced the students' learning experience but also provided them with a tangible understanding of the concepts being taught. By actively involving the students in the learning process, Mary fostered a deeper level of comprehension and retention of the material. It is evident that different visual, auditory, reading, and kinaesthetic (VARK) styles were evoked among the various students in Mary's remote class.

Lecturers have expressed that they have not made any alterations to the learning content or material used for remote teaching. Despite this, they have made significant modifications and adaptations to their teaching strategies to effectively deliver their lessons in a remote setting. This implies that while the core content remains unchanged, the methods and approaches employed by lecturers have been adjusted to suit the remote learning environment. This is reflected in the extract below from an interview with a lecturer. This lecturer explained that:

> *"We were not allowed to modify content, but how teaching strategies went from contact to remote is where we recorded lessons, we never had recorded lessons previously. I would, therefore, say that there were modified teaching strategies"* (Susan, May 2023).

Susan's excerpt above illustrates that she did not make any alterations to the content when transitioning to remote teaching. Nevertheless, she found herself in a position where she needed to pre-record lessons for her students, leading her to believe that her overall teaching approach had indeed been adjusted.

In an interview with Mary, she shared her views regarding the learning content, the learning material, and her teaching strategy. These related to remote teaching during the pandemic. This lecturer elaborated:

"I would not have adapted the content. I added to the content just to bulk up what I am explaining by using examples. I was bringing in more videos and visual aids to the scenarios and making sure that the students understood. However, it is very important when you are teaching in any situation that you are a subject matter expert and stay up to date with the trends of what you are teaching and bringing industry examples whether you are teaching in contact sessions or in distance learning mode" (Mary, May 2023).

In order to enhance the learning experience for Mary's students, she decided to supplement the content with additional material, such as using, videos, and visual aids to provide a more comprehensive explanation. Mary ensured that students grasped the concepts being taught, as this was crucial, and as a lecturer, it was imperative for her to maintain expertise in the subject matter. Staying updated with industry trends and incorporating real-world examples into the curriculum, whether in traditional classroom settings or online learning environments, is fundamental to keeping the content relevant and engaging for students. By being a subject matter expert and utilising effective teaching methods, she aimed to create a dynamic and enriching educational experience that empowers students to succeed.

Remote teaching was therefore challenging for lecturers at private higher education colleges. With online classes, they were unable to monitor and observe students' behaviour and reaction to what was taught. Hence, the participants commended face-to-face teaching because they could see students' engagement with what was covered in class, unlike online sessions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, lecturers found teaching practical modules remotely difficult as online platforms did not allow for practical teaching. For instance, lecturers teaching modules such as hospitality experienced challenges as such modules entail students displaying their cooking skills, which is done better in face-to-face classes.

Lecturers had to adjust to the shift from face-to-face classes to remote teaching. The new way of teaching involved the use of technology and online platforms, which entailed synchronous or asynchronous learning. In addition, the learning content and

material remained unchanged by lecturers during the pandemic. They only adjusted their teaching strategy. The lecturers used learning material and content provided by the institution. The teaching strategy was improved by using various methods or platforms as well as by using relevant examples, more videos, and visual aids. This helped to enhance the teaching experience and ensured that students understood the content that was delivered.

5.3. Working Remotely During the Covid-19 Pandemic

As teaching and learning transitioned from face-to-face to remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, lecturers also had to work from home. As such, it is significant to explore lecturers' experience of working from home. The participants in this study did not like remote working. In this regard, Susan lamented:

*"You missed that little bit of stability of being in the office. Talking from my experience, from a concentration point of view and having everybody (my family) in the same house, between four walls, it can get a lot, while you are trying to work. When you are at work, you are surrounded by people with the same interests and the same goals. When you are at home, there are your kids, your family, everyone is under the same roof" (*Susan, May 2023).

Susan explains that remote working was challenging because her family's presence was disturbing. She could not fully concentrate on her work. Hence, she prefers working from the office. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic did not only affect lecturers teaching but also their way of working. Working from home was a bit difficult. This was reflected in the interview with Happiness. She said:

*"Obviously with changes, this brings about some discomforts. Remote teaching was something that I was not ready for as it was new to me. So, I was not happy about remote teaching since I was using my own resources to take these online classes" (*Happiness, May 2023).

The response provided by Happiness in the above excerpt shows that she was unhappy with working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic and the primary reason was that she had to use her own resources to teach remotely. This created difficulties for Happiness, and, as a result, she preferred face-to-face classes. Nonetheless, other participants found remote working good for various reasons. These included minimised expenses regarding travelling to their offices. Ester a 39-year-old lecturer said:

"You are not moving out of your home. You are in the comfort of your own home. There are less expenses as you do not have to drive and therefore you save petrol" (Ester, April 2023).

Ester enjoyed working remotely because she was in the comfort of her home. She further highlighted that remote work was beneficial for her as it reduced her expenses. She did not have to worry about petrol, to travel to the office and back home. It is clear that, as much as some lecturers found remote teaching difficult, others found it advantageous in terms of working from home and reduced expenses. Mary also shared her good experience of remote teaching. She narrated:

"I would say the fact that it really gave me a different set of skills. It pushed me into learning how to conduct distance classes. It was a situation that one falls into, the teaching and learning space of what you get used to, what you do on a daily basis. So, remote teaching challenged me, and I believe that it was good for me going forward in my academic career" (Mary, May 2023).

For Mary, remote teaching afforded her the opportunity to learn new skills involved in conducting remote classes. She further explains that teaching during the pandemic took her outside of her comfort zone, which was the face-to-face classes. Remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic challenged Mary to learn new aspects of teaching. It also allowed Mary to grow in her academic career. Mahindra, a 35-year-old lecturer, identified the same advantage:

"Learning a new skill of doing things remotely and learning to problem solve" (Mahindra, April 2023).

For Mahindra, remote teaching also allowed him to learn new skills associated with teaching remotely as he was used to the traditional face-to-face classes. Hence, he learnt to use MS Teams and various other teaching methods that differed from the face-to-face-approach. He further learnt skills that helped him to solve student problems or resolve their queries remotely. The Covid-19 pandemic taught Mahindra to be more creative when teaching and troubleshooting students' problems. He found these new skills advantageous to his professional growth.

5.4. Lecturers' Challenges During the Pandemic

The preceding section demonstrated that most private higher education college lecturers found teaching remotely and working from home generally challenging. As such, this section presents the findings regarding the teaching challenges lecturers faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings are presented thematically: lack of fibre or Internet, absence of a home-office workspace, and mental health issues.

5.4.1. Lack of fibre or Internet for work

The lecturers involved in this study faced multiple challenges pertaining to remote teaching and working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants emphasised the lack of the Internet required for remote teaching. This was their primary challenge experienced during the pandemic. When asked about some of the challenges experienced with Covid-19 and remote teaching, Bongani a 33-year-old lecturer said:

"Not everybody had fibre. My employer assumed that I had facilities such as Wi-Fi accessibility to teach remotely. Further to this the employer presumed that the petrol that was used to go to work will be used towards Wi-Fi costs. I used far more money on Wi-Fi or Internet then I did on petrol" (Bongani, April 2023).

This excerpt demonstrates that private higher education college lecturers encountered Internet-related challenges at the commencement of remote teaching. Bongani explains that he did not have a budget for Internet or fibre. Yet, the employer assumed that every lecturer had access to the Internet; hence, teaching was expected to continue as usual. This shows that lecturers and their employers had no contingency plan for the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants alluded that they first struggled with the transition from face-to-face to remote teaching. Thobeka, a 28-year-old lecturer, noted that:

"Lecturers could not afford data and often experienced issues with poor network connectivity" (Thobeka, April 2023)*.*

Thobeka also highlighted that she could not afford data, particularly for remote teaching. At times, she experienced network connectivity issues which interfered with her job. It is clear, in Bongani's and Thobeka's responses, that private higher education college lecturers were not ready for remote teaching. Hence, lecturers experienced challenges such as the lack of Internet for remote teaching. Lecturers also experienced poor network connectivity, which affected their online teaching. Happiness reiterated the data issue thus:

"Having to do remote teaching for the first time, I was not comfortable because I am not used to remote teaching. So, everything to be expected and required to do the remote teaching was bit strange. For example, data. If you do not have enough data or stable Wi-Fi you might not be able to cover your class in full, so you might have to run around and try to buy data quickly, which is also inconveniencing the students and at the same time the lecturer. You look unprofessional when you have data issues during classes" (Happiness, May 2023)*.*

It becomes evident that data constituted a challenge. This was because remote teaching was new. Happiness did not know how much data she required to teach a class remotely. She risked running out of data in the middle of her class. Happiness

could not afford Wi-Fi; she used prepaid data. Thus, she was only able to top up when required. In some cases, she was unable to afford prepaid data. This impacted negatively on the remote teaching and learning experiences of this lecturer and her students.

5.4.2. Lack of a Home Office Space

The lack of a home office workspace hindered lecturers' ability to perform their jobs effectively. They had to deal with distractions and disruptions, when working from home. The participants in this study reflected on this issue. Bongani described his experience of working from home thus:

"When Covid first hit, we had to do recordings at home. My workspace was not duplicated in my home space to do recordings and have virtual classes" (Bongani, April 2023).

In this case, Bongani required a home-office workspace to conduct Zoom sessions and to record the videos. Bongani and other lecturers interviewed could not perform their jobs effectively due their lack of a dedicated home-office workspace and other related resources. Lecturers were forced to cope with teaching remotely using whatever resources they had. These challenges impacted negatively on the quality of the delivery of remote teaching, as lecturers were often distracted and interrupted at home. The lack of a home-office workspace was echoed by other participants. Mahindra elaborated:

"I had distractions because we did not have a home office workspace. You needed to have a conducive environment for working and teaching. In our case we had to figure out at home where, what, and how, to do remote teaching. There are other people living with you as well. We cannot just own the whole place, you know? So, there are animals sometimes in the house, so outside there are neighbours, because you are at home, you are not in a workplace. People come by to visit you or your family. So that was a challenge but, people

started to understand that in a meeting or in a class you will hear the dog barking, for example, or you will have somebody walking in the room or you will hear somebody's voice in the background every now and again" (Mahindra, April 2023).

Mahindra described the lack of a home-office workspace as a serious challenge when he taught remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic. He was left to determine how to conduct classes remotely. He did not live alone, which often meant that he was not focused when conducting classes remotely. There were animals, visitors, and people forming part of his household around him. Evidently, the home environment was unsuitable for remote teaching.

5.4.3. Mental Health Issues

The Covid-19 pandemic also affected the wellbeing of lecturers negatively, which influenced remote teaching. Lecturers were unable to perform their duties to the highest standards as they experienced psychological, emotional, and social dilemmas that adversely affected their physical wellbeing. Mahindra expounded:

> *"With lecturers, the same thing applied depending on what they went through, what were their personal problems, whether they were having issues, the so-called cabin fever, whether they got Covid-19 and recovered, or they knew somebody who got Covid-19. It impacted our whole life. It gave us a wakeup call, because even now as I sit, if I put my hand on the desk, and if I feel that it is not clean, I want to immediately wash my hands. If I go somewhere that is busy, I want to immediately go home and have a bath. You want to immediately sanitise your hands. So, all these things have impacts on our mind and the way we think. This impacted our whole life because before that we were never conscious of any of that. So, therefore this has impacted the way we think and how paranoid we are"* (Mahindra, April 2023).

The Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacted Mahindra's entire life and engendered changes in his personal lifestyle. The pandemic taught Mahindra not to take life for granted. The pandemic sensitised him to become more conscious about hygiene. He realised the need to continue with these Covid-19-related practices even after the restrictions have been lifted. This affected his life and the way he thinks, even beyond the pandemic. Another lecturer spoke about the pressure and stress she felt during remote teaching. She was faced with the responsibility of creating video recordings that students needed for remote learning. She narrated her experience thus:

> *"In our college, we had to spend all our time recording all our lessons because we were not fully prepared to go completely online. So, it was a lot of pressure to start recording. It was new to everybody. We had to create new facilitation decks using these specific facilitation decks. It was quite a challenge when you must upload this on SharePoint. It took extremely long because you know depends on your Wi-Fi connection and it is stressful because you have a deadline"* (Susan, May 2023).

Susan linked the stress and pressure she faced during remote teaching to factors such as the unavailability of the resources she needed for her video recordings. Although Susan had Wi-Fi, the connection was often slow. This impacted on the dissemination of the videos to students, which caused stress. As the facilitation decks (video recordings) was also a new concept to Susan, it initially caused her stress as she had to learn this new method of delivering content to her students remotely.

Lecturers raised the different challenges they experienced during remote teaching. These included the lack of Internet, the absence of a home office, and mental health challenges. Each of these issues played a role in shaping the experiences of lecturers. However, one of the major challenges faced by lecturers was the lack of Internet, which was crucial because without data, lecturers could not teach remotely. This created other challenges such as not completing the teaching content. The lack of a home office workspace affected lecturers during remote teaching as they faced

disruptions and distractions caused by children. Findings of this study reveal, lecturers did not have a dedicated workspace and therefore they could not focus on their remote teaching. This negatively impacted the quality of teaching. Lecturers also experienced wide-ranging mental health issues such as paranoia, stress, and pressure which also influenced their experiences of remote teaching.

5.5. Support Provided by the Employer

It is important to understand the support provided to lecturers, since remote teaching was a new concept for them. Lecturers required assistance from their employers to implement remote teaching effectively. The support provided to lecturers related to two aspects. These are resource allocation as well as support and training.

5.5.1. Resource Allocation Support Provided to Lecturers

It was necessary to understand the resources that were available to lecturers to enable them to teach remotely during the pandemic. Hence, the study explored resources provided to the lecturers from private higher education colleges. Two lecturers noted:

> *"I was using my old laptop, and I was buying my own data. I had no support. In terms of resources, I was not provided with any resources from my employer"* (Happiness, May 2023).

> *"They did not give us data, so we had to use our own data"* (Susan, May 2023).

According to the above excerpts, lecturers affiliated with private higher education institutions encountered a lack of essential resources. These resources encompassed data and laptops that would have facilitated the process of remote teaching. Instead, lecturers were compelled to rely on their personal resources, which frequently proved inadequate for the purpose of remote teaching. To illustrate, Happiness, one of the lecturers, resorted to utilising an outdated laptop, which frequently posed challenges when attempting to log into MS Teams during her remote classes.

Considering the above circumstances, it becomes evident that lecturers from private higher education colleges faced significant obstacles due to the absence of necessary resources. The unavailability of data and laptops specifically designed for remote teaching hindered their ability to effectively conduct online classes. This not only impeded the smooth flow of instruction but also created additional challenges for both the lecturers.

5.5.2. Training Support Provided to Lecturers

Despite the multiple challenges of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic discussed in the preceding sections, lecturers had to ensure the continuity and delivery of the academic content. Lecturers received minimum support and little to no training to implement remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. They had to learn new skill sets on their own. John, a 43-year-old lecturer from one of the private higher education colleges, said:

> *"No support was provided by the employer. The employer just asked do you have data; can you conduct class online? No orientation, no pretraining. So, they just basically asked you if you have the resources and then left you on your own to do everything else"* (John, May 2023).

The response from John shows that no training and adequate support were received from the employer. The employer did not provide training on the new LMS, nor provided any training to lecturers on how to conduct remote classes. Lecturers had to grapple with two new concepts at the same time. Lecturers were not prepared to teach remotely; they had to instantly learn to do so. The lack of training, preparation, and support had a negative impact on the quality of remote teaching. One lecturer noted that:

> *"It was an abrupt change with systems that were not thorough. So basically, the employer was also learning as they go, and which created frustrations for the lecturer when they employer themselves did not understand their own systems*

and processes and how we are going to go about doing the things that we were doing" (Bongani, April 2023).

Bongani's response shows that the employer was learning at the same time as lecturers and was therefore unable to provide the necessary support and training to its employees. These left lecturers feeling unsupported and improperly trained. This further added to the frustration that Bongani felt. One lecturer concurs thus:

"Support was received sometimes when the LMS was not working well. You can contact the technical department for support. That was the only support or when one of the student's cannot see one of their assessments on their own portal, so that is the support that I received "(Ester, April 2023).

Ester's response reveals that she received minimum support from the employer concerning the technical aspects of the LMS, compared to Bongani who received no support. The lack of support and training by the employer were demoralising for lecturers. They felt that they were left alone to ensure the continuity of the academic year. The process and rollout of remote teaching could have been alleviated if employers trained their staff and provided the required support.

5.6. The Effectiveness of Remote Teaching

The effectiveness of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic is probed in this section. This is achieved by examining the responses from the lecturers from private higher education colleges. One lecturer elaborated:

"Remote teaching was our only option available during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our students listened to the recordings during their own time, we put it to the students to now be interactive on a digital platform and majority of the time we found that students were not engaging. For those students that are not academically strong, it was a bit of a challenge for them because you do not provide that added assistance because they would not necessarily ask for help

So, remote teaching was not necessarily the best way to go about it, but it was a needed way to go about as it was the only option" (Bongani, April 2023).

The above excerpt from Bongani demonstrates that during the Covid-19 pandemic, remote teaching was the only available option for HEIs. He further shows that students from this private higher education college were provided with video recordings to watch remotely. This affected the lecturer-student interaction and engagement. The recordings ensured a form of asynchronous learning, as students watch lecturer recordings at a later point. Mary from the same college as Bongani shared the same sentiments concerning the effectiveness of remote teaching. This is reflected in the below interview excerpt:

"I do not think at that stage it was effective for me because it was not in a case like, for instance, other universities or private institutions where you would still have the interaction despite it being remote teaching. It was more a situation that we had the opportunity to record or prerecord our classes, but we did not really get feedback from students or any interaction during those sessions. We had the LMS discussion forums where students can, ask questions, but it did not feel like it was effectively executed at that stage. I felt like the students got lost in the process of virtual classes" (Mary, May 2023).

The above extract further describes asynchronous remote teaching. Certain advantages and disadvantages of asynchronous teaching influence the effectiveness of remote teaching. Bongani's and Mary's responses highlight the disadvantages of remote teaching. John, a lecturer from the other private higher education college, reflected on the effectiveness of remote teaching and learning. He stressed that:

"It was not very effective although we had live interactive sessions. Remember there are several challenges. Challenges like data and not having devices. Inability to use the learning management platforms. Students expressed dislike about remote learning as it was something new and they were not used to this kind of system" (John, May 2023).

This private higher education college adopted the synchronous approach to remote teaching, as described by John. Nonetheless, this approach was also not effective, due to the prevailing challenges. Synchronous remote teaching occurred using online platforms where students interacted and watched their lecturers live. In the same interview, John highlighted challenges such as students not having access to data. This approach disadvantaged students due to the lack of flexibility, as students had to rely on technology. Remote teaching was described as ineffective by the lecturers from private higher education colleges. It did not matter which approach had been adopted. Both the synchronous and the asynchronous approaches to remote teaching were ineffective due to the challenges they resented.

Crucial to the effectiveness of remote teaching and learning was the LMS that lecturers and students relied on during the Covid-19 pandemic. The LMS enabled students to receive communication from lecturers, learning material, and links to recordings. It also constituted the channel for submitting assignments and writing tests and examinations remotely. There were different LMSs used at the private higher education colleges selected for this study. These were CANVAS and Moodle. Susan related of her experience with CANVAS:

> *"In the beginning, everybody was very new to it because, it was actually rolling out during Covid-19 pandemic, so this was not the best time to roll it out, there were also some issues with the LMS"* (Susan, May 2023).

Susan's response above reveals that the LMS used at the private higher education college where she worked was new. It had just been rolled out around the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, remote teaching and the LMS were new to Susan and thus presented their own challenges. Likewise, narrating his experience of Moodle, Samuel said:

> "*It was effective because it allowed you to be able to post whatever that you had prepared in terms of notes, additional notes and so forth, then you could*

also post it per week. You need to post and update on my class so that your students have access to the additional information. Students do assignments, tests, and exams on Moodle" (Samuel, April 2023).

The responses from lecturers show two different views on the use of the LMS. Samuel found the LMS to be effective, as it helped him communicate with his students. Conversely, Susan initially struggled with the LMS, as it was new and had just been introduced to staff and students during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was important to have an LMS that operated effectively and supported lecturers' teaching.

5.7. Lessons Learnt about Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic posed challenges. However, it also brought valuable lessons and prompted lecturers to gain technological knowledge and skills. This was evident in the interview with Bongani. He shared his experience of the changes prompted by the pandemic thus:

> *"The Covid-19 pandemic taught me the variation in teaching tools that one can utilise when we were so used to face- to face- classes. It taught me the various ways in which you can make teaching interactive, even if it was an on a digital format. It further taught us that we do not necessarily need to be in class anymore to be able to provide quality education"* (Bongani, April 2023).

Bongani explains that the Covid-19 pandemic and the related remote teaching helped him to diversify the teaching tools and methods he used. He also acquired other skills such as making remote teaching classes more interactive. Thus, lecturers gained experience from remote teaching and used their newly acquired skills to enhance their teaching experience. This is echoed by Mary:

> *"Well, it opened me up to a different scope of teaching and extending myself to remote teaching as a young lecturer. At that stage I was quite used to contact teaching and it challenged me to investigate different scopes of*

teaching and get used to the concept of not only distance but also to the concept of hybrid teaching now" (Mary, May 2023)*.*

Mary highlights that remote teaching broadened her overall experience of teaching, as she had to experiment with new teaching methods. Bongani and Mary expressed similar views on the lessons they learnt from remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Other lecturers also expressed their views on what the pandemic had taught them. Two lecturers noted:

"To be flexible in order to be able to teach face- to -face classes as well as to teach remote classes" (Alfred, April 2023).

"The pandemic taught me to be resilient and to adapt to any situation as a lecturer. You adapt to your surroundings as well as your methods of teaching" (Ester, April 2023).

Based on the responses from Alfred and Ester, lecturers learnt different lessons from the pandemic-induced remote teaching. Alfred learnt to be more flexible and adaptable, while Ester learnt to be more resilient and adaptable to any situation. These were valuable soft skills that assisted these lecturers in dealing with the pandemic and making the best of remote teaching, despite the challenges experienced. If these lecturers did not develop these attributes, they would have experienced more difficulties in implementing remote teaching.

5.8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discussed lecturers' experiences of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter also explored the challenges experienced by lecturers and probed the support provided by institutions. Lecturers' experiences of remote teaching were difficult due to the sudden and rapid transition from the traditional face-to-face to remote teaching and its associated challenges such as the

lack of proper preparation and planning by the institutions and the lecturers. The main challenges experienced by lecturers include the lack of fibre or Internet to work from home, the absence of a home-office workspace, and mental health issues. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on lecturers during remote teaching would have been minimised if the correct institutional support, training, and resources had been provided to lecturers by the private higher education colleges. Nonetheless, the support provided to lecturers was viewed from two lenses. The first lens considered resource allocation. The second lens examined training support. The findings of this study showed that lecturers lacked resources and training support. If lecturers received sufficient support, they would have mitigated several of the challenges they faced. This would have made their experience easier and much more positive. This, in turn, would have played a crucial role in the implementation and delivery of remote teaching. Ultimately, this would have contributed positively to students' experience of remote learning. The next chapter delves into the firsthand accounts of students navigating remote learning amidst the Covid-19 crisis at privately-run institutions of higher education.

Chapter 6: Remote Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic: The Experiences of Students at Private Higher Education Colleges in Johannesburg

6.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter focused on lecturers' experiences of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The current chapter thematically presents and discusses students' experiences of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter draws from sixteen (16) interviews conducted with male and female students studying at private higher education colleges in Johannesburg. The first theme focuses on students' experiences of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the learning strategies they used. The second theme delves into the challenges experienced by students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The third theme discusses the support provided to students by their private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic. Lastly, the chapter reflects on the lessons learnt by students in private higher education colleges regarding remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

6.2. Learning Remotely During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Remote learning was an alternative contingency plan implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic by HEIs to save the 2020/2021 academic year. Participants interviewed in this study described their experiences of learning remotely as both positive and negative, for various reasons. In the words of Kamohelo[2], a 22-year-old student:

> *"It is both good and bad. It was good as it was cost efficient. We managed to save the academic year during the Covid-19 pandemic as classes happened remotely. The bad part is that we had difficulties with staying motivated during remote learning because I would get easily distracted at home"* (Kamohelo, April 2023).

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[2] All names used in this findings chapter are pseudonyms.

Kamohelo described remote learning in two ways. Firstly, it was cost-efficient as he did not have to travel to campus to attend classes. Instead, he attended classes remotely, in the comfort of his home. However, he described the other side of remote learning as difficult as he was not motivated to study, due to distractions and disruptions in his home environment. These distractions and disruptions often hindered Kamohelo's ability to focus on his studies. He was often interrupted by his siblings or parents. Sometimes, he would log into the remote classes and continue with other things in the background. Consequently, he was not always able to understand the content. Julio, a 22-year-old student echoed Kamohelo's account, in describing his experience of remote learning as simultaneously positive and negative. He said:

> *"Remote learning had its negatives and positives. It was quite difficult because we all had our different setbacks and traumatic experiences. Some of us lost relatives, close friends during that time and then to have to wake up and meet deadlines of submitting assignments, writing tests and exams. But looking back, I also feel like it made me stronger as a person. It helped me with my current job, it helped me with time management"* (Julio, April 2023).

Julio's narrative described the negative side of remote learning in terms of difficulty. He shared the trauma caused by the loss of family members and friends to the Covid-19 pandemic, in some instances. This trauma affected his concentration and ability to focus on his academics as he was still expected to submit assignments, as well as write tests and examinations. He had to keep up with the demands of his studies. This shows that his college did not show any sympathy or provide any support during Julio's traumatic experiences. Nonetheless, his experience of remote learning made him stronger, as he had to manage his time to meet his deadlines. He was also able to work under immense stress and pressure, which is now helping him in the role he is assuming in his current job.

All two participants reflected on the positive and negative aspects of remote learning, although their reasons differed. Moreover, it becomes necessary to describe the

learning strategies that students from private higher education colleges used during remote learning. Learning during the national lockdown occurred via online platforms including MS Teams and Zoom. Students also had access to video recordings to watch in their own time. Learning during the Covid-19 pandemic differed from student to student. Charnel, a 23-year-old student, described her learning strategies thus:

> *"I used to read the chapter we were doing for the day on my own and then I would go to the video and then just piece it altogether. It was challenging, but that is the way I did it. I had to set up my own timetable because you know, parents were working from home as well. So, during the day it used to be a bit noisy. So, I had to find times that would work for me. I found that doing my assignments during the day was much better and then studying at night because of quieter and a peaceful environment. So, that is how I just had to figure it out on my own"* (Charnel, April 2023).

Charnel used the self-regulated learning strategy. This became clear when Charnel set goals for herself, to read specific chapters for the day and watch the relevant videos. Charnel had created her own timetable. In this way, she managed her time effectively. She completed her assignments during the day and studied at night when it was quiet. Charnel found this strategy useful to her studies, as she was able to submit her assignments timeously and had sufficient time to study. Another student also described his learning strategies during remote learning. He said:

> *"I tried different learning strategies because remote learning was different, from face-to-face classes. You had to learn in your own time and pace. So, therefore I had to try new things. I tried self-paced learning. Informational learning by watching documentaries and listening to podcasts"* (Kamohelo, April 2023).

Kamohelo understood that remote learning was different from face-to-face learning. Thus, he used different learning strategies. He diversified his learning strategies by introducing informational learning, where he watched documentaries and listened to

podcasts, to supplement the online classes. He found this beneficial as it helped him understand and widen his knowledge on the content taught by his lecturer. He felt that research and additional resources played a valuable role in his studies during remote learning. Carmen, a 22-year-old student from the same college as Kamohelo expressed the same sentiments when she described her learning strategy during the Covid-19-engendered remote learning. She shared:

> *"I was doing research and finding new ways to study during remote learning. So, I attended my lectures for the day, and I would also take notes during all those lectures. Once the classes were done, I would have an hour or a two-hour break and then go back and do additional research on the lessons that were presented on that day"* (Carmen, April 2023)*.*

From the above excerpt, it can be concluded that although Carmen attended all her remote classes for the day and took notes, she felt that she could not rely exclusively on remote sessions. Hence, she explored other avenues to widen her knowledge. This entailed conducting additional research on the topics presented on a particular day. This method adopted by Carmen helped her tremendously to understand the topics discussed. It increased her current knowledge of those topics, making her more comfortable and confident regarding her studies.

In concluding this section, students had both positive and negative experiences of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although all students expressed similar views that characterised remote learning as simultaneously positive and negative, these views were based on different reasons. Some of the highlights of remote learning as a positive initiative are that it was cost-efficient and allowed students to adapt to any situation. Conversely, some of the identified disadvantages of remote learning were challenges with the use of technology and remaining motivated to study. Students' views are well-balanced; however, these disadvantages had a negative impact on remote learning. To adapt to the new mode of learning remotely, students had to adopt new learning strategies such as additional research

and listening to podcasts. These helped to enhance their understanding of the content taught.

6.3. Student Challenges During the Pandemic

This section discusses the findings concerning the challenges faced by students regarding remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of this study identified lack of Wi-Fi or Internet, communication issues, lack of a dedicated study space, and mental health as the main challenges faced by students. Each of these challenges is discussed below.

6.3.1. Lack of Wi-Fi or Internet

Institutions implementing the rapid shift from face-to-face to remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic did not consider certain factors. These included students having access to Wi-Fi or Internet connectivity, which were key in ensuring equitable access to remote learning. The findings of this study show that students faced challenges such as the lack of Wi-Fi or Internet, and network connectivity challenges. The participants described their remote learning challenges regarding the lack of Wi-Fi or Internet connectivity thus:

> *"We did not have access to fibre at the time. It was not in our area. So, we were buying gigs and gigs of data to make sure that we could have access to the Internet. It was a bit expensive for us"* (Charnel, April 2023).

The responses from Charnel were echoed by other participants that were interviewed in this study. Participants struggled with the amount of data they had to purchase, to attend classes remotely. Data were described by participants as expensive. The high data costs led students to often miss online classes. Likewise, Pertunia, a 21-year-old student, described the challenges she experienced regarding the lack of data. She confided:

"I did not have data to log into the MS Teams or Zoom platform. So that was that was the biggest problem because I could not attend the remote classes" (Pertunia, May 2023).

Pertunia also indicated that she could not afford data and was unable to participate in any remote learning classes. This was extremely difficult as she was "left behind", in the remote learning process. The findings of this research also show that students experienced network connectivity issues during remote learning. This had an impact on the quality of remote learning. Nishaana, a 22-year-old student expressed her challenges with network connectivity issues thus:

"There were times where my Internet was buffering or was very slow. So even though the communication received from my lecturer was quite delayed, I had to wait for the Internet to come back up and ask my lecturer to repeat themselves. You would have other students from time to time that would randomly drop from the call because they Wi-Fi went down and then they will have to rejoin. The lecturer will have to do a quick recap session for them. So, it was like a constant issue in terms of the actual lectures happening via the platforms and then with our actual exams and tests being written online. Students had issues with either logging in or completing their exams online because the system would kick them off" (Nishaana, April 2023).

Nishaana explained that she experienced network connectivity issues. These encompassed slow or buffering Internet. As a result, she and other students had to constantly ask lecturers to repeat themselves. This situation often caused frustration on the side of either the lecturer or the other students which meant that the lecturers was sometimes unable to cover the full lesson, as the lecturers had to repeat what had already been covered. Poor network connection was not limited to the remote lecturing experiences. It also extended to online examinations and tests. This created stress and anxiety among students, as they were unable to complete their examinations and tests. Micaela, a 20-year-old student, highlighted her experience with network connectivity issues during remote learning. She noted:

"There were a few times where I experienced network issues, and I was not able to fully engage with online classes. There were a lot of other students who experienced similar issues and eventually started to drop out, so the students became few. There was one class, whereas I was the only person in there for a whole month. No one else came to the classes "(Micaela, May 2023)*.

Micaela experienced similar issues with network connectivity. Due to the poor network connection and the lack of interventions at these private higher education colleges, some students dropped out. This means that these students did not want to continue with their studies remotely. Furthermore, for the students who continued with their studies, poor class attendance and low-class participation were prevalent.

6.3.2. Communication Issues

Students experienced communication issues with their lecturers during remote learning. Lecturers were central to the process of remote teaching and learning. Therefore, any lack of communication from lecturers resulted in misunderstandings and miscommunication with their students. This is reflected in the responses of the below participants. Karabo, a 24-year-old student, noted:

"There was a lot of misunderstanding between the lectures and the students. Sometimes the lectures did not show up for classes" (Karabo, May 2023).

Karabo highlights the prevalence of misunderstandings between lecturers and their students during remote learning. He added that the misunderstandings often led to confusion. For example, lecturers would change the schedules for certain remote classes; yet students would still log in for those sessions. These misunderstandings and miscommunication were echoed by other participants. For instance, Carmen described her experience thus:

"There was often miscommunication or misunderstanding between lecturers and students. Example, if I type an e-mail to the lecture or ask questions online,

the lecturers will not normally see my facial expression, so they perceive my question as something else than what I was meant to have said" (Carmen, April 2023).

Carmen's experience shows that she also faced challenges when communicating with her lecturers and that this often led to misunderstandings and miscommunication. Carmen did not blame her lecturers for the poor communication as she realised that when she was attending in-person classes, she did not experience any communication issues with her lecturers. Carmen believed that it was the use of online platforms or remote learning that created the misunderstandings and miscommunication. Indeed, her lecturers could not always see her facial expressions. Pertunia also narrated the challenges she faced with her lecturers. She said:

"I could not even understand the lecturers during remote learning. So, it was pointless for me to even access and attend remote classes. I did not understand what the lecturers were explaining, so, I had to self-study. The lecturers did not even notice if I attended classes or not "(Pertunia, May 2023).

Pertunia described her experience of remote learning as pointless as she could not understand the content that her lecturers were teaching during remote learning classes. She often had to self-study and preferred to not attend the remote learning classes, as she did not learn anything from them. Moreover, she found that lecturers did not acknowledge her class attendance. Pertunia felt that the remote learning classes were not beneficial to her as technology formed a barrier between her and her lecturers.

6.3.3. Lack of a Dedicated Study Space

The lack of a dedicated study space at home, during remote learning, prevented students from studying efficiently because they experienced distractions and disruptions. Julio narrated how the absence of a dedicated study space affected his studies. He lamented:

"Just finding a quiet place to do your studies with everyone at home was, for me, probably one of the biggest challenges. I would say with everyone being at home, it was difficult to find some quiet time when no one bothered you during the day. I could not focus as there were also a lot of outside distractions. Obviously, you cannot just tell the whole house to keep quiet. You are studying that is quite rude" (Julio, April 2023)*.*

Julio explained that studying from home was difficult because he lived with family members who often distracted him during the day. As a result, he could not concentrate on his studies. He preferred to study at night, when there were minimum distractions, as his family was sleeping. Julio had to change his study patterns to adjust to his surroundings, in the absence of a dedicated study space. Kamohelo also reflected on the issue of studying at home. He elaborated:

"So, my home was basically not a well-structured learning environment for a student. This is because at home, you easily get distracted. For example, if you are staying with your family, your little sisters or brothers make noise because they do not understand that you are studying. It is not needed when you are studying and when you are focusing. You also get difficult parents that need your help. They also do not understand that whatever you are doing is important and they do not give you opportunity to focus. The setup as well is not ideal, as it is near your bed. You want to join the online sessions while you are on your bed, and you do not focus as sometimes you are still sleepy (Kamohelo, April 2023).

It is clear that Kamohelo experienced difficulties studying. This was due to the distractions caused by his siblings and his parents. Both his parents and his siblings did not understand the importance of his studies and often interrupted him. Often, he could not concentrate or focus on his studies. Adding to these difficulties, Kamohelo attended remote learning classes and studied on his bed, which often led to him falling asleep.

6.3.4. Mental Health Issues

The Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the wellbeing of students. This influenced remote learning, as students were unable to concentrate on their studies. Seneliso, a 24-year-old student, described the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic and remote learning had on his mental health. He confided that:

> "Remote learning affected me as mentally my headspace was not in college. It caused stress and anxiety for me. This is because I was not in a tertiary environment, so therefore I lacked in terms of doing my academic work. The Covid-19 pandemic and remote learning further messed with me mentally because I also had to focus on college as well as other responsibilities at home" (Seneliso, April 2023).

Seneliso indicated that remote learning had a negative impact on his mental health due to him not being in a tertiary environment, but rather been in a home environment. As such, he could not separate his academic and work responsibilities. He felt that college was an additional burden during the Covid-19 pandemic. Likewise, Charnel indicated that Covid-19 mentally affected students and stressed that psychological support was needed. She said:

> "I think some sort of mental support, was needed for students at the college. A lot of colleges had psychologists that students could speak to about the difficulties they were facing during this time. So, I think that would have been a great addition for a lot of students, including myself" (Charnel, April 2023).

Charnel narrated students, including herself, faced difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, students lost family members due to the pandemic; yet, they had to adjust to remote learning. Having access to a psychologist during this time, to provide students with support in dealing with these issues, would have assisted. It would have helped students to cope or deal with these challenges. This private higher education college did not provide the necessary psychological services to students.

The multiplicity of challenges experienced by students such as the lack of Wi-Fi or Internet, communication issues, the lack of dedicated study space, and mental health issues made remote learning challenging. Each challenge contributed to students' remote learning experiences. The identified challenges contributed negatively to students' experiences. These would have improved if students' private higher education colleges had been able to assist them with data, improve communication between lecturers and students, and provide support for students' mental wellbeing.

6.4. Support from the College and Lecturers

Due to the number of challenges faced by students during remote learning, it was also important to understand the support provided by their private higher education colleges. The findings of this study showed that, during remote learning, the participants were provided with the same resources used for face-to-face classes. Kyle, a 22-year-old student deplored that:

"No extra resources provided except study guides that were made available. Sometimes students could go to campus to use the Wi-Fi" (Kyle, April 2023).

Kyle indicated that his college only provided him with study guides. There were no additional resources such as data and devices to assist Kyle to participate in remote learning. He was responsible for ensuring that he had the necessary resources, to participate in remote learning. Certain times, Kyle could go to the campus to use the Wi-Fi. However, during the lockdown, this was not permitted. Consequently, Kyle sometimes struggled to attend remote classes, as he could not always afford data. The issue at hand was echoed by another participant. Kabelo, a 22-year-old student, elaborated:

"Resource wise, the college gave us a module guide that was used throughout our course for that specific module. For example, Accounting had its own guide and had its own recommended sources and assignments. The college did

provide us with Wi-Fi to use at the campus. However, during Covid-19 there was no extra support provided for students to survive in remote learning" (Kabelo, May 2023).

It is also clear that the only resources that Kabelo received from the college were study guides and the additional material used by lecturers during their remote learning classes. The college did not provide resources such as data and devices to make remote learning more accessible to all students. However, students were able to use on-campus Wi-Fi once lockdown restrictions were lifted. No extra support and resources were provided to students to assist them in accessing remote learning. This made learning very difficult for Kabelo. He had to use his own means to ensure that he was connected remotely. Nonetheless, other participants commended lecturers for the additional support provided. Through the additional support provided by lecturer's, students easily understood the module content and were able to complete their assignments and examinations. Karabo observed that:

"They would make time for certain topics or sections that we did not understand. They would take their own time from their busy days and explain to us"(Karabo, May 2023)*.*

Kushi, a 35-year-old student from the same college, stated:

"My lecture was always in contact with us if we ever needed help with anything. There was never a time, he was not available to us. The lecturer was very good at that, but from the institutional side, I am going to have to say not from their side, but only from the lecturer's side." (Kushi, May 2023)*.*

The responses from the above participants show that lecturers assisted students outside their working hours. This was to ensure that students understood the content. This dedication also demonstrates that lecturers went the extra mile to assist their students and such extra support were greatly appreciated by their students. For

example, lecturers assisted students by holding individual MS Teams sessions during the weekend. Michelle, a 26-year-old student, shared the same sentiments as Kushi and Karabo. She noted that:

"The lectures were upfront about being able to provide us with support. They always said if you guys have questions, feel free to e-mail us. So, we always knew that we had their support, and we could always talk to them about our concerns or questions or anything" (Michelle, May 2023).

From the above excerpt, Michelle knew that she had the support of her lecturers. The lecturers assisted her with her academic work. This was important for Michelle who realised that she was not alone and that if she needed assistance, she could count on her lecturers. Michelle felt comfortable with her lecturers. She could discuss anything that was bothering her, and her lecturers were always willingly to listen.

The above discussion reveals that students received no support from their college concerning the resources required for remote learning, namely, data and devices. Students had to secure these resources on their own, for them to access remote learning classes. If students could not afford data, they were unable to connect to remote classes. As a result, some students were lost in the process and struggled to understand the content taught. However, despite the lack of resources, lecturers were commended for providing exceptional support to students during remote learning. Lecturers assisted students who fell behind. Lecturers' patience in assisting students to understand the content was also highlighted.

6.5. Lessons Learnt during Remote Learning

Although learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was challenging, students mentioned that the pandemic taught them valuable lessons regarding flexibility and openness to change. This was evident in the interview with Lebohang, a 42-year-old student. He

shared his experience of what the pandemic taught him about being a student. He outlined the lessons learnt as follows:

> *"The Covid-19 pandemic taught me that you need to be flexible, open to change and be resilient to change. You also need to be able to adapt to change and the sooner you adapt to change the better it is. Not just with studying, but with life in general"* (Lebohang, May 2023).

Lebohang narrates above that the Covid-19 pandemic taught him several valuable lessons. These include being flexible, open to change, and resilient. Adapting to change is the ability to integrate new information and experiences. Thus, learning entails adapting to a changing environment. This fosters the adoption of new behaviours that helps to cope with the occurring changes. This is reflected in the lessons learnt by Lebohang during the Covid-19 pandemic. Another student, Charnel, outlined the lessons that the Covid-19 pandemic had taught her. She confided:

> *"I could not rely on my lecturers as much anymore, although they were giving us support. I had to fight the battle on my own. I had to motivate myself, at home, so laziness would not set in. It taught me to be more independent, not rely on anyone else and to put my mind on what I wanted to achieve"* (Charnel, April 2023).

Charnel stressed that she could no longer rely solely on her lecturers. This made her more independent in her studies. Although her lecturers provided support, she took the responsibility of motivating herself. This allowed her to succeed academically. Despite the difficulties that the pandemic brought in relation to remote learning, students also learnt valuable lessons. These lessons, which differed from one student to the next, encompassed being more independent, flexible, and adaptable to new and different situations. The lessons learnt were regarded as having a positive impact on the lives of students as they were able to foster personal and professional development.

6.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discussed students' experiences of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter further explored the challenges faced by students, the support private higher education colleges provided to them, and the lessons students learnt during the pandemic. Students' experiences of remote learning have been described in terms of a combination of negative and positive feelings. The negative experiences resulted from the sudden and rapid transition from the traditional face-to-face to remote learning. This led to several challenges for students, including the lack of motivation and technological issues. However, the positive experiences were associated with the convenience of remote learning, notably attending classes in the comfort of one's home and saving travel costs. Nonetheless, the negative experiences outweighed the positive. As shown by the findings of this study, the participants were negatively impacted academically by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The challenges faced by students also contributed adversely to students' experiences. The highlight of the main challenges experienced by students included the lack of fibre or Internet, network issues, lecturer challenges, lack of a dedicated study space, and mental health issues. The difficulties experienced by students during remote learning could have been minimised. This would have been possible if higher education institutions had provided the necessary resources. These included data and devices that would have given all students fair and equitable access to remote learning. The findings of this study revealed that students received the same resources, from their colleges, which were used in face-to-face learning. These were unsuited for remote learning. However, lecturers provided additional support to their students. Regardless of the challenges, students capitalised on the opportunity provided by the pandemic to learn valuable lessons. The forthcoming chapter will focus on a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the results concerning the experiences and challenges encountered by lecturers and students in private higher education colleges amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, regarding remote teaching and learning.

Chapter 7: Discussion of Findings

7.1. Introduction

This study aimed to explore and compare lecturers' and students' experiences of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. This chapter provides a summary of the key findings which are systematically related to the literature, in addressing the research objectives and answering the guiding questions. The research objectives were 1) to examine students' experiences of learning at private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic; 2) to explore lecturers' experiences of teaching at private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic; and 3) to investigate the challenges faced by lecturers and students in adapting to remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges.

7.2. Remote Teaching: Lecturers' Experiences of Teaching at Private Higher Education Colleges During the Pandemic

The findings of this study echoed literature on the challenges of remote teaching. The findings revealed that lecturers experienced difficulties during remote teaching (Simpson, 2013; Landa et al., 2021). Lecturers were unable to monitor students' interactions and participation during remote teaching. This is mainly because students were not turning their cameras on as an attempt to reduce bandwidth usage and data costs. Therefore, lecturers were unable to see if students were focused and engaged during remote teaching sessions. In addition, lecturers could not see students' facial expressions, making it difficult to establish if students understood the content. Monitoring students was crucial in the remote teaching process because it served as an indicator of student engagement.

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted face-to-face classes that had been taken for granted by lecturers. Although classes resumed remotely, a crucial element was

missing from remote teaching (Halsall, 2020). This missing element encompassed students' interaction point and participation rate, which were not the same in remote teaching and traditional face-to-face classes. Baber (2020) as well as Bernard et al., (2009) identify three types of classroom interaction, which are students' interaction with lecturers, students' interaction with peers, as well as students' interaction with the content. In remote teaching, the interaction was mostly between lecturers and students, and was limited due to its online nature. The findings of this study show that lecturers faced difficulties regarding students' remote interaction, as this often resulted in miscommunication and misunderstandings.

The three types of interaction listed above are directly linked to Moore's & Kearsley's (2011), transactional distance theory previously explained in the literature review. The transactional distance theory evaluates the effectiveness of the remote teaching environment in generating quality discussions. It considers the internal and external structural aspects involved in classroom learning (Moore, 2013). In the online environment, lecturers and students are represented by text messages on a screen. These features of an online environment are far different from those of traditional face-to-face classes (Piccoli et al., 2001).

The findings of this study reveal that lecturer's further experienced difficulties in teaching numerical and practical modules online. Remote teaching was not suitable for numerical and practical modules, because online platforms did not have the necessary features. Lecturers experienced these difficulties because remote teaching was a new concept that responded to the Covid-19 pandemic that unsettled existing norms. Literature indicates that, during remote teaching, lecturers who struggled to teach practical modules had to find alternative means to teach students. A blended approach was adopted, whereby lecturers used both online (such as MS Teams) and offline teaching methods (such as additional tasks). Lecturers prioritised the teaching

of practical and numerical modules when students returned to the campus. This was when colleges and universities implemented the phased-return approach (Chibuwe & Munoriyarwa, 2023).

7.3. Remote Learning: Students' Experiences of Learning at Private Higher Education Colleges During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The findings of this study reveal that students had mixed feelings about remote learning. They described their experiences as positive and negative. Students felt that their experiences of remote learning were positive based on certain factors. The first factor is that remote learning was cost efficient, as students did not need to travel to campus. The second factor is that remote learning was convenient because students submitted their work online and did not need hard copies. The third factor is that remote learning engendered an element of comfortability, as students studied in the comfort of their homes. The fourth factor is that remote learning increased students' adaptability. This factor highlights how the shift to remote learning has forced students to become more flexible and resilient in their approach to learning.

Furthermore, the findings showed that students who described their experiences of remote learning as negative based this on the difficulties they had encountered. Many students struggled to remain motivated because of the various distractions in their home environment. These students also experienced different setbacks and traumas, which affected their experiences of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic differently. Utilising online platforms and studying remotely was predominantly a negative experience for these students, alluded by Crenshaw (1991) in the intersectionality theory. He maintained that several social factors intersect and overlap, affecting both individuals and communities, therefore these factors were responsible for shaping the experiences of students.

Literature relating to students' experiences of remote learning offers numerous descriptions (Prifti, 2022; Anthonysamy et al., 2020). This is because of the array of student perceptions, from various institutions (Bowyer & Chambers, 2017). This was corroborated by the research findings above characterising students' experiences as positive and negative. The amplification of the divide between traditional face-to-face and remote teaching and learning has received significant attention from various studies (Smith & Hill, 2019; Medina, 2018). It is argued that the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown forced HEIs to explore various other modes of interaction with students (Clark et al., 2020). Remote learning played a pivotal role in assisting students and institutions in saving the 2020/2021 academic year. This is evident in the number of students who graduated and how institutions transitioned from face-to-face classes to remote teaching and learning (Simelane et al., 2022).

Comparing the experiences of lecturers and students in this study revealed that lecturers had a more negative experience of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, they experienced multiple difficulties since they were responsible for teaching students. The difficulties faced by lecturers resulted from the dissociated and disconnected nature of remote teaching and learning, alluded by Micheal Moore (1980) in the transactional distance theory. He argued that the transactional distance learning theory views technology as establishing gaps in communication between students and lecturers, students and other students, and students and the course material. Therefore, resulting in a lack of student participation, interaction, and limited contact with lecturers. Conversely, students had a more balanced experience of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. They described their experiences as positive and negative. Students' well-rounded view is attributed to their status as recipients of remote learning.

7.4. The Challenges Faced by Lecturers and Students in Adapting to Remote Teaching and Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic at Private Higher Education Colleges

The findings of this study show that lecturers faced challenges during remote teaching. Such challenges included the lack of Internet and a home-office workspace, as well as mental health issues. These challenges contributed to lecturers' negative experience of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, as supported by literature (Newlin & Israel, 2021, Maphalala et al., 2021, Landa et al., 2021). Previous studies show that lecturers experienced difficulties in transitioning from face-to-face lectures to remote teaching as they were not provided with the prerequisites required for the remote teaching process such as data and devices (Gumede & Badriparsad, 2022). In this study, lecturers concurred that they did not have sufficient data and suitable devices to use for remote teaching.

Remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic came with many challenges. This was because HEIs and lecturers were unprepared for the shift from face-to-face to remote teaching. Given these challenges, all lecturers did not respond in the same way to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some lecturers had more resources such as data and devices and were more motivated than others (Mahlaba & Mentz, 2023). Lecturers experienced mental health issues such as trauma, stress, and anxiety. These issues played a critical role in the remote teaching experiences of lecturers (Naidu & Modise, 2021; Mahlaba & Mentz, 2023).

The Covid-19 pandemic compelled lecturers to continue teaching their students at home, regardless of whether they had the necessary resources and a dedicated workspace (Naidu & Modise, 2021). The major sources of distraction were family members who needed attention and assistance with household tasks. Therefore, lecturers struggled to manage the work-home balance, due to home distractions (Iwu, et al., 2022). The next paragraphs look at the challenges faced by students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The overall findings of this study show that students also faced challenges during remote learning, and these included the lack of Wi-Fi or Internet, network connectivity issues, communication challenges, lack of a dedicated study space, and mental health issues. These typical challenges characterising students' experiences of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic are congruent with literature (Moonasamy & Naidoo, 2022; Maphalala et al., 2021; Olawale et al., 2021). Although students expressed both positive and negative views of remote learning during the pandemic, their overall experience was far more negative.

During the lockdown, students had to leave the places at which they resided while studying. These places had the necessary resources to assist students with their studies such resources included learning spaces, access to data, and stronger Internet connectivity, which would contribute to students' academic success (Maphalala et al., 2021). Socioeconomic conditions played a significant role in remote learning and students' academic performance as households living below the poverty line either did not have or had limited access to water, sanitation, and electricity. Consequently, these unfavourable circumstances posed a hindrance to the smooth execution of academic tasks and hindered students' overall performance (Machika & Johnson, 2015). Learning spaces were a big concern for students from poor rural and urban areas, as houses were often small and overcrowded. This meant that students did not have dedicated study spaces. Literature has shown that a dedicated study space increases productivity (Shier, 2020).

As South Africa is a developing country it failed to secure appropriate ICT infrastructure before the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic for remote learning to all students (Hlatshwayo, 2022; Sokhulu, 2020). As a result, most students had to fend for themselves, when the lockdown was announced. Students from poor rural and urban areas had no or little access to communication infrastructure such as Wi-Fi or the Internet. They had poor network connections and lacked appropriate work devices (Hlatshwayo, 2022; Sokhulu, 2020). The huge digital divide in South Africa, caused by privatisation and poor state regulation of the ICT infrastructure, disadvantaged most students during the pandemic as South Africa did not realise

that the integration of the much-praised technological revolution into remote teaching and learning would marginalise impoverished communities (Hlatshwayo, 2022). Therefore, findings in this study show all students did not benefit equally from remote learning due to the various resource-related challenges experienced by students based on their differing socio-economic statuses and affordability levels.

The findings of this study also unearthed that student's faced mental health challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. These mental health issues encompassed stress and anxiety, which engendered a lack of academic concentration. Literature shows that the anxiety, stress, and frustrations that students experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic were not caused exclusively by academic and technical challenges. Those feelings were also triggered by the domestic responsibilities that students had to fulfil while studying remotely (Otu et al., 2023). Therefore, many households were not best suited and viable for remote learning. Hence, they impacted negatively on students' mental wellbeing. Moreover, many rural communities and townships in South Africa are plagued with domestic violence, including the gender-based violence that increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic (Otu et al., 2023). Students living in households where domestic violence is rife perform poorly academically as domestic violence has a major negative impact on mental health (Otu et al., 2023).

Another finding of this study showed an increased lack of communication between lecturers and students and among students, which often led to misunderstandings and miscommunications. As discussed, in Chapter 3, the transactional distance learning theory explained how the physical, pedagogical, and psychological gaps between lecturers and students and among students increased, fostering miscommunication. The communication barriers existing in many communication processes were evident in remote learning due to factors such as the physical distance, the lack of technological skills, limited interaction time, and a general lack of experience with remote learning (Dabaj & İşman, 2004). In comparing the challenges experienced by lecturers and students, based on this study, it is clear these participants had similar issues during remote teaching and learning. The

challenges experienced by students directly impacted lecturers and vice versa. The impacts felt by lecturers or students affected their overall experience of remote teaching and learning and influenced their respective performances.

The findings of this study show that lecturers found remote teaching ineffective due to the related challenges. Remote teaching was hindered by factors such as the point of interaction between lecturers and students, the lack of additional support for students who were struggling academically, the absence of data or Internet, the lack of a devices, and issues with the LMS. These factors contributed to the ineffectiveness of remote learning. A study by Legg-Jack & Ndebele (2022) emphasised that the effective implementation of remote teaching and learning requires that lecturers are trained to use the various online platforms and have all the essential resources, such as laptops and the Internet. The lack of training and resources hampered remote teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the type of remote teaching and learning, which was synchronous or asynchronous employed at private HEIs had an influence on the outcomes. One private higher education college in this study adopted asynchronous learning, which presented certainly disadvantages and advantages. The disadvantages include the absence of immediate in-class feedback, the lack of personal interactions, as well as students' general inability to work independently and remain motivated (DeMarchi, 2023). The advantages of asynchronous remote teaching and learning encompass learning at your own pace, reducing social barriers, and providing an accessible form of learning (DeMarchi, 2023). Students could go back and watch the videos at any time, provided they had devices, Internet connectivity, and electricity. The other private higher education college in this study adopted a synchronous approach to remote teaching and learning, which was also ineffective due to the prevailing challenges. Synchronous remote teaching and learning happens on online platforms and entails students watching their lecturers live (Korkmaz & Mirici, 2021). The advantages of this type of instruction include structured learning, increased interaction, and direct instructions. Its disadvantages encompass the lack of flexibility, holding students back, and reliance on technology (Shandra & Chystiakova, 2021). Hence, remote teaching and learning was described as ineffective by lecturers from the two colleges. It did not

matter whether the remote teaching and learning strategy adopted the synchronous or asynchronous approach as both approaches were ineffective due to their associated challenges.

The overall findings of this study showed that students deemed remote learning ineffective due to the technical challenges it presented. Students preferred face-to-face classes as this fostered better interaction than remote learning did. A survey conducted by Juta focused on HEIs such as universities in South Africa. It established that students viewed the quality, effectiveness, and learning resources required for remote teaching and learning as important issues (Esterhuizen, 2022). More than half of the participants in the Juta survey indicated that remote teaching and learning were less effective than face-to-face classes. The main reason was the scarcity of the resources necessary for remote teaching and learning. To this must be added the lack of software to facilitate remote teaching and learning. Overall, 32% of students from the Juta survey in South Africa struggled to access content as they did not have constant access to a computer and Internet, as they could not afford data (Esterhuizen, 2022).

The Juta survey emphasised that effective remote teaching and learning was crucial (Esterhuizen, 2022). The key contributors to effective remote teaching and learning were supportive lecturers, engaged students, as well as lecturers' and students' access to suitable technology. The survey stressed that lecturers played an important role. This was particularly the case for lecturers who had high subject-content knowledge (expert knowledge), the technical skills required to use technology, supporting resources, and the necessary pedagogical techniques. These lecturers were more successful in implementing effective remote teaching and learning sessions (Esterhuizen, 2022). Comparing the views concerning the effectiveness of remote teaching and learning, both lecturers and students found remote teaching and learning to be ineffective during the Covid-19 pandemic. Both lecturers and students also provided the same reasons for the inefficiency of remote teaching and learning.

The overall students-related findings of this study are two-fold. Firstly, students felt that they did not receive support regarding resources from their higher education colleges to assist with remote learning. Secondly, students acknowledged that they had received additional support from their lecturers concerning remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants also felt that their lecturers had gone the extra mile to ensure a smooth transition from face-to-face to remote learning by providing them with the additional support required. However, students' educational institutions did not make the same effort in ensuring that remote learning was accessible.

Students who received the necessary support from their lecturers and had the relevant resources, such as data and devices, had a far more overall positive experience of remote learning. Conversely, students who lacked support from their colleges had a predominantly negative experience of remote learning (Chikasha, 2022). In this study, particularly, the lack of resources affected students' experiences of remote learning, although they received additional support from their lecturers. The digital divide resulting from the lack of resources, due to financial constraints, excluded students from participating in remote learning. The Covid-19 pandemic accentuated the inequalities in the South African education system. The pandemic also exacerbated the digital divide between students who had and those who did not have the necessary resources.

Lecturers expressed concerns about the lack of support they received in terms of training and resources to facilitate the shift from traditional face-to-face teaching to remote instruction. They believed that with proper assistance, the transition could have been smoother and more effective. The absence of necessary resources and training hindered their ability to deliver high-quality remote teaching, impacting the overall outcome of the educational experience for both lecturer and students. On the other hand, students acknowledged the efforts made by their lecturers to provide additional support during the transition to remote learning. However, despite the assistance received, students highlighted the negative impact of the lack of resources on their learning experiences. The absence of essential tools and materials affected their

ability to fully engage with the remote teaching format, leading to a less than optimal educational experience. This disparity in perceptions between lecturers and students underscores the importance of comprehensive support systems and resources to ensure a successful transition to remote teaching and learning.

7.5. Conclusion

The remote learning experiences of students were a mix of positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, students appreciated the cost-saving benefits of not having to commute to campus daily. Additionally, being able to study from the comfort of their own homes provided a sense of convenience and flexibility. However, on the negative side, students faced challenges such as a lack of access to reliable data connections and the absence of a dedicated study space. These factors contributed to making the remote learning experience more difficult for students, impacting their overall academic performance and well-being. In contrast, lecturers encountered their own set of challenges with remote teaching. One of the main difficulties they faced was the lack of student participation and interaction during online classes. This hindered the effectiveness of their teaching methods and made it harder to engage students in the learning process. Despite these challenges, lecturers received minimal support from the colleges in terms of resources, such as data and devices. While they did receive some training on how to adapt their teaching methods to an online format, the overall lack of support made it more challenging for them to deliver quality education to their students. On the other hand, students received exceptional support from their lecturers, who went above and beyond to ensure that their students were able to navigate the challenges of remote learning successfully. The forthcoming chapter will provide readers with an overview of the research's findings, including a condensed summary of all chapters. Furthermore, the chapter will delve into providing a summary of the main findings, analysing their significance and implications. To foster further exploration, the chapter will conclude with recommendations for potential areas of future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1. Introduction

This study explored and compared lecturers' and students' experiences of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study also examined the challenges experienced by lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the study conducted, outlining how the study addresses the research questions posed at the beginning. The chapter delves into the findings and conclusions drawn from the data collected, providing a clear picture of the outcomes of the study. In addition to summarising the key findings, chapter eight also offers valuable insights for future research endeavours in the field of remote teaching and learning. The concluding remarks underscores the importance of further exploration and investigation into the various aspects of remote teaching and learning, suggesting potential areas for future studies to focus on. Recommendations are put forth to guide researchers in designing and conducting studies that could build upon the current research findings and address any gaps or limitations identified in the study. Overall, this chapter serves as a crucial component of the study, providing a synthesis of the outcomes of this study, and paving the way for future research in the field.

8.2. Summary of Chapters

This research report comprises of eight chapters. The first chapter of the dissertation set the stage for the study by delving into the background of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also shed light on the shift from traditional in-person classes to remote teaching and learning. Moreover, this chapter underscored the lack of research on private higher education colleges in terms of how lecturers and students navigated remote instruction during the Covid-19 crisis. The focus has predominantly been on public universities and colleges, leaving a gap in understanding the unique challenges and experiences faced by those in private institutions. The exploration of Chapter One provided a

comprehensive overview of the context in which the study is situated. By examining the transition to remote teaching and learning in response to the pandemic, the chapter highlighted the need for further investigation into the specific dynamics at play within private higher education settings. The chapter's emphasis on the scarcity of literature in this area underscores the importance of filling this gap to gain a more holistic understanding of the impact of remote teaching and learning on both lecturers and students in private higher education colleges during the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter Two delved into the historical background of the Covid-19 pandemic, aiming to analyse and grasp the utilisation of remote teaching and learning within the educational sector, particularly focusing on private HEIs in South Africa. The chapter transitioned from a global perspective to a local one, providing a comprehensive understanding of the pandemic within the South African context. Various impacts of the pandemic on different sectors were outlined in this chapter, shedding light on the multifaceted consequences it brought about. Moreover, the chapter elaborated on the hurdles faced by both lecturers and students in the realm of remote teaching and learning. It was emphasised that the challenges encountered by lecturers and students were closely intertwined, affecting each stakeholder in distinct ways. Existing literature corroborated the notion that these challenges had a detrimental effect on the perceptions and experiences of remote teaching and learning for both parties. Furthermore, the chapter examined the support mechanisms accessible to lecturers and students, underscoring their crucial role in mitigating the obstacles faced by lecturers and students alike. These support structures were instrumental in fostering a conducive environment for effective remote teaching and learning practices.

In Chapter Three, an in-depth discussion was provided on the two fundamental theories that form the foundation of this study. Specifically, the intersectionality theory and the transactional distance theory were explored to investigate and evaluate the remote teaching and learning encounters of both lecturers and students amidst the Covid-19 crisis. By utilising these theories, a comprehensive analysis was conducted to gain insights into the various challenges faced by lecturers and students in the

context of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The intersectionality theory, which focuses on the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, gender, and class, was instrumental in understanding the diverse experiences of individuals in remote teaching and learning settings. On the other hand, the transactional distance theory, which emphasises the psychological and communication gap between lecturers and students in distance education, provided valuable insights into the dynamics of remote teaching and learning during the pandemic. By applying these theories, the study was able to shed light on the complexities and nuances of the challenges encountered by both lecturers and students, offering a deeper understanding of the implications of remote teaching and learning in the face of unprecedented circumstances.

Chapter Four discussed the research design and methodology adopted for this study. Interpretivism informed the qualitative research approach and helped to understand the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The benefit of using a qualitative research approach is that it helped the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning at private higher education colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study was conducted in two regions of the City of Johannesburg, Region A (Sunninghill) and Region B (Randburg) as these institutions offer face-to-face classes and, because of Covid-19, transitioned to remote teaching and learning. The convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used to select the participants for this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. At the end of the fieldwork, a total of 10 lecturers had been interviewed: 5 males and 5 females; and a total of 16 students: 8 males and 8 females were also interviewed. The data was analysed through thematic analysis. The researcher used reflexivity to understand the impact that her position had on the study. This enabled the researcher to be cautious, when analysing the collected data, to ensure that the researcher kept an audit trail.

Chapter Five presented the findings of the study and described the experiences of lecturers regarding remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges in the City of Johannesburg, South Africa. The overall experiences of lecturers concerning remote teaching were described negatively, as remote teaching had its limitations. Such limitations included the platforms used for remote teaching as some of these platforms did not have the necessary features to aid the teaching of numerical subjects. This made it difficult for lecturers to teach and for students to learn. In many instances, lecturers had to improvise different teaching methods and strategies. This study showed that lecturers experienced challenges regarding remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Such challenges included technical issues, course development, Internet connectivity, and many more. These challenges directly affected lecturers' ability to teach remotely. Some indirect challenges experienced by students affected the role of lecturers and ultimately that of students. These challenges included Internet connectivity, infrastructure, electricity, and others. Coupling with these challenges, lecturers did not receive sufficient support from their institutions. Lecturers' experiences were further affected by the unavailability of resources, which hindered teaching. These factors contributed to the experiences of remote teaching and for these very reasons, lecturers also found remote teaching ineffective and preferred face-to-face classes, as opposed to remote teaching.

Chapter Six presented the findings of the study, describing the experiences of students concerning remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges in the City of Johannesburg, South Africa. Remote learning had advantages and disadvantages. Hence, students' overall experiences of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic were varied. However, they could be classified into two groups: students who had access to resources and those who did not. Students who did not have resources experienced challenges relating to connectivity, data affordability, and access to a device. This hindered their ability to participate in remote learning classes. Students who had access to resources during remote learning also experienced a few challenges. These included load-shedding and network issues. Face-to-face classes fostered a student-centred approach. However, due to the

platforms used and the urgency to cover content, lecturers reverted to a teacher-centred approach to teaching and learning. This resulted in students using a self-regulated approach to learning and self-motivation. Although students gradually adapted to remote learning, this learning mode was ineffective. Students preferred face-face-classes over remote learning.

In Chapter Seven, an in-depth analysis and discussion were provided on the results obtained from exploring the perspectives of lecturers and students in relation to remote teaching and learning amidst the Covid-19 crisis. The chapter aimed to shed light on the various experiences, challenges, and successes encountered by both lecturers and students during this unprecedented period of remote teaching and learning. The focus of chapter seven was to unpack the data collected and present a comprehensive overview of the findings, drawing connections between the experiences shared by lecturers and students. By examining the nuances of remote teaching and learning practices during the pandemic, the chapter aimed to offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of online education. This chapter addressed the main research questions of this study.

Chapter Eight presents the final chapter of this study and wraps up the investigation by delving into the results and addressing the primary research questions. The chapter serves as a platform to tie up any loose ends and provides recommendations for further exploration in the field. This chapter further serves as a critical component of the research paper, bringing together the various elements discussed throughout the study. By providing a comprehensive overview of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, this section aims to encapsulate the essence of the research and guide future research endeavours in the field.

8.3. Summary of Key Findings and Concluding Remarks

Firstly, the study found that the overall experiences of lecturers regarding remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic were mostly described as difficult. Secondly,

the study revealed that the overall experiences of students concerning remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic differed from student to student. These experiences were described as both positive and negative. The main argument linked to the experiences foregrounded the challenges faced by both lecturers and students. Students who experienced challenges had an overall negative view of remote learning. Conversely, students who experienced no to little challenges had a positive view of remote learning. Similarly, lecturers who faced challenges had difficulty implementing remote teaching due to the lack of institutional support and resources. This hindered the effective implementation and delivery of remote teaching and learning.

Lastly, the findings revealed that, from a lecturer's viewpoint, the platforms used during remote teaching were ineffective mainly due to the sudden transition from face-to-face classes to remote teaching and learning. The sudden shift to and the rushed commencement of remote teaching and learning classes led to the lack of preparation. This was from the side of HEIs and thus affected lecturers' preparation. Ultimately, this impreparation hampered students' learning process. Further findings revealed, from a student's perspective, that remote learning was inefficient as it is attributed to the challenges faced by students and the lack of student resources such as Internet connectivity and a digital device. Students relied on their families for the necessary resources as their educational institutions provided limited resources. Therefore, students did not have adequate access to remote teaching and learning platforms.

Concluding remarks of this study that is supported by literature show that remote teaching and learning were described as "impractical and elitist" in South Africa (Meyer, 2020). Remote teaching and learning suited lecturers and students who could afford or had access to the required resources to participate in remote teaching and learning. Without these resources (electricity, data, devices), challenges arose as students could not participate in either synchronous or asynchronous remote teaching and learning initiatives. Therefore, this influenced the experiences of lecturers and students concerning remote teaching and learning. Remote teaching and learning can effectively occur when certain keys aspects are covered. These include preparedness,

personal choice, and competence (Tanga, Ndhlovu & Tanga, 2020). Additional factors to consider are access to resources and the home environment. However, due to the sudden shift from face-to-face to remote teaching and learning, limited time was provided for the training of staff and students, which led to students struggling with the transition (Tanga et al., 2020).

The transition to remote teaching and learning was not a smooth process as South Africans did not have reliable information and communication technologies. Moreover, the digital divide presented challenges for lecturers and students from working-class and poor households. Although the world and South Africa are at the brink of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, this exposed that working-class and poor household South Africans are not ready to embrace the transition from the Third Industrial Revolution to the Fourth Industrial Revolution due to the lack of resources and infrastructure. Furthermore, literature reveals that South Africa did not fully embrace the Third Industrial Revolution (Hlatshwayo, 2022).

This study demonstrated that the challenges faced by lecturers and students during remote teaching and learning shaped the experiences of lecturers and students regarding remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. The study borrowed from the theory of digital age, often referred to as the connectivism theory. It is based on the premise that knowledge is dispersed across a network of connections meaning that learning basically consists of the ability to either construct or navigate the network (Downes, 2007). This theory assumes that students and lectures already have access to the basic resources. This presupposes that learning, from the perspective of the connectivism theory, is a smooth process. In other words, students and lectures face no challenges and have a more positive experience of remote teaching and learning. However, this is not the case in the South African context due to the digital divide and the lack of resources. However, this study focused on the transactional distance theory and the intersectionality theory. These theories revealed that lecturers and students experienced difficulties during remote teaching and learning due to social factors such as age and gender which affected their overall

experiences. The transactional gaps between lecturers and students, students, and their peers, as well as content and student also affected the experience of remote teaching and learning.

To contribute to the ongoing debate on the Fourth Industrial Revolution in South Africa, specifically focusing on the education system, this study found that in order for the Fourth Industrial Revolution to be successfully implemented, the basic resource needs that currently deny access to the majority of South Africans must be appropriately addressed. The study further identified the lack of basic resources as one of the major reasons for the inefficiency of remote teaching and learning. Remote teaching and learning were temporary emergency modes used to ensure the sustainability of learning through digital platforms. However, remote teaching and learning needs to be tailored to the specific needs of lecturers and students, to ensure fair and equal access. A one-size-fits-all approach cannot accommodate the diversity of the South African population in the education sector.

8.4. Recommendations

This study explored remote teaching and learning experiences of lecturers and students during the Covid-19 pandemic at private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalised, they can be used as a foundation for other studies regarding remote teaching and learning at private HEIs.

To expand the work started in this study, the following recommendations can be considered: bridging the disparities in digital access and opportunities and adopting a mixed methods approach in future studies. In order to bridge the disparities in digital access and opportunities, it is imperative for universities to equip both lecturers and students with the essential tools and resources to support a blended learning environment. This need is especially pronounced in private HEIs, where the onus falls

on the institution to ensure that all stakeholders have access to the technology and infrastructure required for effective hybrid learning. By investing in resources such as high-speed Internet, digital devices, and online learning platforms, private HEIs can create a more inclusive and equitable educational experience for their students. Public HEIs made efforts to secure the necessary resources for their students.

Future research on the remote teaching and learning experiences of lecturers and students during the Covid-19 pandemic should be considered using a mixed method approach involving both quantitative and qualitative aspects. This would enable researchers to establish the extent of the experiences and challenges faced by lecturers and students. This does not imply that qualitative research was unsuitable for this study. On the contrary, it enabled the researcher to build a foundation on which to base the exploration of remote teaching and learning experiences of lecturers and students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Permission Letter

Permission Letter

Research Title:

Remote Teaching and Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences of Lecturers and Students in Private Higher Education Colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Researcher:

(Ashika Maharaj)

Request for Permission to Conduct Research at [College Name]

"Remote Teaching and Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences of Lecturers and Students in Private Higher Education Colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa."

Date

Dear Sir/Madam

Physical Address of College

Contact number

Email address

I, Ashika Maharaj, is currently doing research with Mr. Percyval Bayane, a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology. This research is towards the fulfilment of completing my Masters' Degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled Remote Teaching and Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences of Lecturers and Students in Private Higher Education Colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The aim of the study is to explore and compare the experiences of lecturers and students of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study will also examine the challenges experienced by lecturers and students in remote teaching and learning during the pandemic.

Your institution has been selected because lecturer and students would have been directly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore are able to share experiences of remote teaching and learning.

The study will entail interviewing lecturers and students on their experiences of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study will provide valuable information as college students are the future economic builders and contributors of the country, if we do not have interventions in place to negate the effects of Covid-19, this can affect the future workforce and economy of the country. The findings will therefore assist in understanding the different challenges faced by lecturers and students so that the gaps can be addressed in the event of another pandemic. Adding further value to this study is to draw a holistic picture of online teaching and learning activities during the pandemic period. This includes establishing the linkage between online teaching and learning processes and the lecturer and student performance in the South African education system amid the Covid-19 outbreak. This study will therefore further suggest ways to curb future disturbances in academia.

The level of risk of your participation in this study is very low involving minor harm caused by reliving your experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic and the inconvenience caused by the interview schedule. This may cause emotional and psychological effects to the participants by reliving experiences. If any of the participants suffer these risks, the researcher will debrief the participants by providing emotional and psychological support. Participants will thereafter be referred to the nearest Department of Health for counselling.

Feedback procedure will entail submission of a full dissertation and after the study has been conducted a meeting will be held with all participants. The researcher will also reach out to the principal of the private colleges to share findings of this study.

Your sincerely

Ashika Maharaj
Principal Researcher

Appendix B: Information Letter/Sheet

Information Letter/Sheet

Project Title: Remote Teaching and Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences of Lecturers and Students in Private Higher Education Colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Researcher Name: Ms. Ashika Maharaj

> This information letter and the informed consent form may include words that are not familiar to you. Please feel free to ask questions about anything you do not understand or is unclear for you to understand. You can also ask questions about anything you want to learn more about in this study.
>
> You may take home an unsigned copy of the consent form for you to think about or discuss any of the contents with family or your friends before deciding to take part in this study.
>
> If you agree to take part in this study, you will be required to sign your name or make a mark on the informed consent form anonymously. You will also be offered a copy to keep.

Introduction

Hello, my name is Ashika Maharaj. I am a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am conducting this research as part of Master's degree under the supervision of Mr. Percyval Bayane and would like to invite you to take part in this study. You have been selected to participate in this study because you are matching the characteristics of this study, which is experiences of lecturers and students of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Voluntary Participation

For you to participate in this study and to make an informed decision, I would like to explain the purpose, risks, and benefits, what is expected of you as well as what you can expect from me. It is up to you to decide if you would like to participate in this study and you may choose to leave this study at any time without providing a reason. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Aim of the Study

The proposed study aims to explore and compare the experiences of lecturers and students of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in private higher education colleges in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study will examine challenges experienced by lecturers and students in remote teaching and learning during the pandemic. Although there is relevant research related to this topic, there is little research that explores the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the student's and the lecturer's experiences in a South African context, therefore the findings of this study will empirically add to the literature in the higher education sector.

Research

I will be conducting semi-structured interviews, and I will be using an interview guide that consists of open-ended and closed-ended questions about your experiences, and challenges and looking at the resources and support available to you during remote teaching and learning. The interview will be approximately 40-60 minutes long and will be conducted either face-to-face or virtually. During the interviews, I will write down what you are saying and record. The recording will be used to ensure that your words are exactly as you are saying them. The notes and the recordings will not contain your name or any other identifying information. The information and the recordings will be stored on I-Cloud, which will be password protected and destroyed after a period of five years.

What Are My Rights as a Participant?

You are free to decide if you want to take part in this study and your participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate, or you can choose to stop participating at any time without providing reasons.

Are There Any Risks or Discomforts Involved in the Interview Process?

If you decide to choose to participate in this study, you will be required to share your experiences and challenges you experienced of remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The information you share may be sensitive and this may cause mental health issues such as trauma and therefore you will be referred to the nearest Department of Health for counselling.

Are There Any Benefits to this Study?

Participating in this study, will not benefit you materially as there are no rewards offered for your participation. Your participation will contribute by adding to the literature in the higher education sector as there is little research that explores the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the student's and the lecturer's experiences in a South African context.

Are There Any Costs to Taking Part in the Interviews?

The only cost that may be incurred is if you decide to participate in a virtual interview you will be required to buy your own data. There will be no costs associated with face-to-face interviews as I will meet you at your college.

Will I be Paid?

You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

Will What I Tell You Remain Confidential?

Confidentiality will be maintained in this study as information shared during the interview process will not be shared with anyone and will only be accessible to myself as well as my supervisor – Mr. P Bayane. You have a right to privacy and therefore your anonymity will also be maintained by using a pseudonym to protect your identity in this dissertation or any other academic publication.

Ethical Approval

This study proposal has been submitted to the University of South Africa (UNISA) College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Problems Or Questions

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact:

Researcher's Contact Details

Email address: 17018013@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Telephone: 084 5430 103

Supervisor Contact Details

Email address: <u>bayanp@unisa.ac.za</u> or Telephone: 012 429 6577

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about my involvement in this research and further consent to the following:

- I have received, read, and understood the contents of the information sheet regarding this study.

- I am aware and understand that what I say will be written down and or recorded for the purposes of this research.

- I consent that data collected during this study will be processed in a protected manner

- I am aware that I may at any stage, without prejudice, rightfully withdraw my consent and participation without providing a reason.

- Sufficient opportunity has been provided to me to ask questions and I am of my own free will, declare that I am ready to participate in this study.

Signatures

I have read this consent form, and all my questions and concerns have been answered to my satisfaction. My signature below confirms that:

□ I agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant

Signature: _____   Date: _____

□ I do consent and give the research staff permission to sign on my behalf of my voluntary participation in this study.

Researcher Signature: _____   Date: _____

Permission to Audio Record:

My signature below confirms the following:

□ I do not give the research staff permission to audio-record my interview.

□ I give the research staff permission to audio-record my interview.

Participant Signature:

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix D: Interview Guide for *Students*

Section A

1. Demographic questions

   1.1.   Pseudonym Name of Participant………………………………………………………

   1.2.   Age……………………

   1.3.   Gender………………………

   1.4.   Race…………………………

   1.5.   Marital Status………………

   1.6.   Year of Study………………

   1.7.   Qualification Studying

          towards………………………………………………………

   1.8.   Name of Private Higher Education College…………………………………………

   1.9.   Area in which your college is situated………………………………………………

   1.10.   Your Place of residence during your studies…………………………………

   1.11.   Your Place of residence during the Covid-19 pandemic………………………

   1.12.   Source of funding for your studies…………………………………………………...

   1.13.   What your funding covered towards your studies………………………………

   1.14.   Your monthly spending allowance in Rands…………………………………...

Section B

2. Remote Learning Experiences

   2.1.   What do you feel the Covid-19 pandemic taught you about been a student?

   2.2.   Do you feel that your institution of learning has sufficiently prepared you to shift from face-to-face learning to remote learning?

         • If yes, please explain how you were prepared for the shift

         • If no, please explain why you were not prepared for the shift?

2.3.   Describe how effective remote learning has been for you during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- If remote learning has been effective, explain why?
- If remote learning has not been effective, explain why?

2.4.   What did you like about remote learning?

2.5.   What did you not like about remote learning?

2.6.   How were you learning during the Covid-19 pandemic?

2.7.   Did the above-described mode of learning affect your academic performance?

- If yes, please explain how your academic performance was affected?
- If no, how did you maintain the same pace in terms of academic performance?

2.8.   What was your overall experience of remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic?

3. Challenges of Remote Learning During The Pandemic

3.1.   What challenges did you experience during remote learning?

- If there were challenges, how did you cope?
- If there were no challenges, why was that the case?

3.2.   Did you feel that the lecturer could have delivered remotely teaching and learning differently during the pandemic?

- If yes, please tell us how?

- If not, why is that the case?

3.3.   Explain how you adapted from face-to-face classes to remote learning?

4. Support and Resources

4.1.   Describe how you completed your assignments during remote learning?

4.2.   Explain how you completed your examinations during remote learning?

4.3.   Describe any resources that your institution provided to you during remote learning?

4.4.   What additional support has your institution or lecturers provided to you during remote learning?

5. Accessing and Using Technology

5.1.   Please explain how you access the Internet for your academic work during remote teaching and learning?

5.2.   Did you experience any challenges with accessing the Internet?

- If yes, please explain how you overcame this challenge?
- If no, please explain?

5.3.   How much money did you spend a month for Internet access?

5.4.   What device did you use to participate in remote learning?
- How did you get access to this device to participate in remote learning?

5.5.   Did you have access to all your learning modules during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- If no, please explain?
- If yes, please explain?

5.6.   Describe your level of proficiency with using the online platform used by your institution during the pandemic?

5.7.   What tools or technology did your lecturer use during remote learning?
- Describe how did it go?

5.8.   Describe how often you attended classes during the remote teaching and learning sessions?

5.9.   Describe how learning from home affected your relationship with the lecturers?

5.10.   Please explain how you navigated the sudden change of seeing your lecturers for face-to-face classes to online classes?

5.11.   How were you consulting with your lecturers if you had challenges during Covid-19 pandemic?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix E: Interview Guide for *Lecturers*

Section A

1. Demographic Questions

1.1. Pseudonym Name of Participant……………………………………………………

1.2. Age………………………

1.3. Gender………………………

1.4. Marital Status……………….

1.5. Race…………………………………………………………...

1.6. Modules teaching………………………………………………………

1.7. Name of Private Higher Education College……………………………………….

1.8. Area in which your college is situated……………………………………………

1.9. Your Place of residence while lecturing contact classes ………………………

1.10. Your Place of residence during the Covid-19
pandemic.……………………….

Section B

2. Remote Teaching and Learning Experiences

2.1. What do you feel the Covid-19 pandemic taught you about been a lecturer?

2.2. Do you feel that your employer has sufficiently prepared you to shift
from face-to-face learning to remote teaching?

- If yes, please explain how you were prepared for the shift
- If no, please explain why you were not prepared for the shift?

2.3. Describe how effective remote teaching has been for you during the Covid-
19 pandemic?

- If yes, please explain why remote teaching has been effective?
- If no, please explain why remote teaching has not been effective?

2.4.   What did you like about remote teaching?
- Please explain, why did you like the above about remote teaching?

2.5.   What did you not like about remote teaching?
- Please explain, why you did not like the above about remote teaching?

2.6.   How were you teaching your students during the Covid-19 pandemic?

2.7.   So, did teaching during Covid-19 affect your students' academic performance?

- If yes, how did you notice that?
- If no, explain why is that the case?

2.8.   What remote teaching strategies did you use to incorporate different learning styles during the Covid-19 pandemic?

2.9.   How did you encourage student participation during remote teaching?

2.10.   What was your overall experience of remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic?

2.11.   Describe your experience of teaching your students remotely as compared to on-campus?

3. Remote Teaching Challenges Experienced During the Pandemic

3.1.   Please explain what was challenging for you when teaching during the Covid- 19 pandemic?

- If it was not challenging, why?
- Why was/were the above-mentioned challenging for you?

3.2.   What did you miss about teaching in person?

3.3.   How do you think your students adapted to remote teaching and learning?

3.4.   Describe what impact the pandemic had on your students?

3.5.   Describe what impact the pandemic had on you as a lecturer?

3.6.   How did the pandemic change the way you interact with students?
- If there was a noticeable change, how did you deal with it?
- If not, why is that the case?

3.7.   Which platforms did you use to deliver remote teaching to your students?

4. Support and Resources

4.1.   In your opinion, how do you think Covid-19 will influence the future of remote teaching and learning?

4.2.   What resources did the institution provide for teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic?

4.3.   What support did your employer provided you with during remote teaching?

4.4.   Describe any other factors that limited you from teaching remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic?

4.5.   What kind of support has your co-workers provided for you during remote teaching and learning?

4.6.   Please tell me how did you cope with not seeing your students during the Covid-19 pandemic?

4.7.   Please explain how the pandemic affected your relationship with your students?

4.8.   So, how did you support your students during Covid-19 pandemic?

4.9.   Discuss how you have modified your content, learning materials and teaching strategies for remote teaching?

4.10.   Did you face challenges with students that did not participate in remote learning, due to resource limitations – example not having data etc.?

- If yes, how did you manage this?
- If no, why is that the case?

4.11.   Explain how effective was the learning management system (LMS) used during the pandemic?

- If the LMS was effective, please explain why?
- If the LMS was not effective, please explain why?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix F: Ethical Clearance Approval

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COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

15 December 2022

Dear Ms Ashika Maharaj

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
17018013_CREC_CHS_2022

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 15 December 2022 to 15 December 2023

Researcher(s): Name: Ms. A. Maharaj
Contact details: 17018013@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Mr. P. Bayane
Contact details: bayanp@unisa.ac.za

Title: REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: EXPERIENCES OF
LECTURERS AND STUDENTS IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION COLLEGES IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA.

Degree Purpose: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The *low risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, 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(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

2. 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 College Ethics Review Committee.

Open Rubric

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. 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, accompanied by a progress report.

5. 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.

6. 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 require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**15 December 2023**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **17018013_CREC_CHS_2022** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature:

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP

Prof ZZ Nkosi
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