



SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE LEARNING AND TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

By

Lindokuhle Precious Hlatshwayo

Student number: 3553881

A full thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Social Work in the Department of Social Work, Community and Health Sciences Faculty, University of the Western Cape.

Supervisor : Prof M.A. Van der Westhuizen

Co-supervisor : Mr. M. Safodien

Submission date : 1 November 2021

DECLARATION

I, Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo, declare that this dissertation titled “***Student social workers’ experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown***” is my own work and all sources that were utilised have been acknowledged in-text and in the reference list. This dissertation is being submitted for a Master of Social Work degree in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, Department of Social Work at the University of the Western Cape. This work has never been submitted to any other institution for examination.



Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo

DATE: 1 November 2021



DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to:

The community of Tshiame A, situated in Harrismith in the Free State Province, for grooming me to be the authentic leader that I am.

The Tshiame Youth Club,
established by Mr. Lekgotla Mokoena

The Queen Esther Movement,
established by Ms. Nomvula Twala

The generations of the following families:
Masiteng family and all the Batshweneng clans,

Hlatshwayo family

Ntshingila family

Msibi family

Manzi family

Gumede family

Mkhwanazi family

Twala family

Kekana family

Moletsane family

Maya family

Moloi family

May the grace to further education rest upon your children and their generations.

May the Lord exalt the horn of education in your families.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all those individuals who in one way or another helped bring this study to fruition:

- I praise and thank my Heavenly Father, who called me according to His good purpose, and for the grace and wisdom he bestowed upon me to complete this dissertation. Lord, you are faithful, and your word does not return to you without accomplishing your purpose. You gave me instruction and direction, and by your grace I obeyed – this dissertation is evidence of your hand on my life.
- I would like to thank the student social workers and educators from the UWC, Department of Social Work, for sharing their experiences and insight regarding online learning. Without your contribution, this study would not have been possible.
- A special thanks to my supervisor, Prof Marichen Van Der Westhuizen, for showing me that nothing is impossible. Your positive attitude served as great inspiration to me. I always looked forward to receiving feedback from you. Your support, dedication and commitment kept me motivated, and your valuable input and guidance enabled me to complete this study. On all occasions and at all times you were ready and willing to assist me; and your continued support, professional courtesies, and gentle manner in dealing with me was always appreciated.
- To my co-supervisor Mr. Mohamed Safodien, thank you for guiding me in the right direction.
- To Dr Sunday Onagbiye, Mr. Sibulelo Gawulayo, and Mr. Asandile Mandlana – thank you for your advice, support, and motivation.
- A heartfelt thanks is also expressed to my dear mother Sr Doris Nomusa Masiteng for her unconditional love and support. Thank you so much for believing in me, Mama.
- My sincerest gratitude goes to my amazing and loving husband, Phumlani Lungelo Hlatshwayo. Our union gave me the motivation to complete this dissertation. Thank you for being my peace, and ensuring that I complete this dissertation.
- My gratitude is also extended to Ms. Sizakele Hlatshwayo (my loving mother-in-law), Mamkhulu Lilly Masiteng, Mamkhulu Mpume Gumede, Khulekani

Hlatshwayo, Ms. Nomvula Twala, Mr. and Mrs. Maya, Mrs Kekana, Shonny Nkuna and Zintle Dotwana words alone cannot express how grateful I am for your love and support.

- Thank you, Dr Lee-Anne Roux, for editing this dissertation, you did an excellent job.
- To all my family, friends, and whoever I have not mentioned by name, I appreciate your unique contributions.



ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged higher education institutions to close their campuses for the purpose of managing and controlling the spread of the coronavirus during the national lockdown. Institutions had to migrate from blended learning and teaching to emergency online learning and teaching only, posing challenges to the learning experiences of student social workers. This study aimed to explore and describe the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the influence of socioeconomic factors on student social workers' academic experiences. The study was conducted from an interpretive research paradigm and followed a qualitative approach. A combination of the contextual, explorative, and descriptive research designs supported the choices of research methodology. The population consisted of student social workers and social work educators. The non-probability sampling method and the purposive sampling technique was used to select full-time registered third-year student social workers at the University of the Western Cape who had experience with blended learning and teaching prior to the pandemic, and full-time employed social work educators who taught at third-year level in the Department of Social Work at the University of the Western Cape with experience of blended learning and teaching. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were employed as data collection methods. Data was thematically analysed using Tesch's (1990) eight steps of data analysis. This research study was ethically approved by The Humanities Social Science Research Ethics Committee. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was utilised to verify the research findings. Ethical considerations included debriefing, voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, and the management of the research data. The findings illuminate student social workers' economic, psychological and social realities and their academic experiences during the pandemic. It also describes the learning and teaching resources and support for online learning and teaching during the pandemic, and provide suggestions for blended learning and teaching post the pandemic. The findings of this research study resulted in recommendations for social work education post the pandemic, and also for focus areas post the pandemic.

KEYWORDS: Social Work Education, COVID-19, Flexible Learning and Teaching, Blended Learning and Teaching, Online Learning and Teaching

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	II
DEDICATION.....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
ABSTRACT	VI
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	XII
LIST OF TABLES.....	XIII
LIST OF ANNEXES.....	XIV
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	XV
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS.....	2
1.2.1 <i>Social Work Education</i>	2
1.2.2 <i>COVID-19</i>	3
1.2.3 <i>Flexible Learning and Teaching</i>	3
1.2.4 <i>Blended Learning and Teaching</i>	3
1.2.5 <i>Online Learning and Teaching</i>	4
1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW	4
1.3.1 <i>COVID-19 Pandemic</i>	4
1.3.1.1 National lockdown	5
1.3.2 <i>Social Work Education and Training</i>	6
1.3.2.1 Blended learning and teaching.....	7
1.3.3 <i>Online Learning and Teaching</i>	9
1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	10
1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	11
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	12
1.7 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	12
1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	13
1.9 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS	14

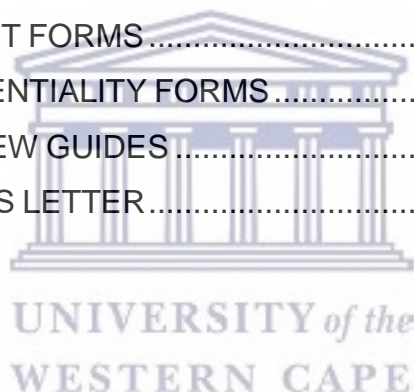
1.10 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER	14
CHAPTER 2	15
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	15
2.1 INTRODUCTION	15
2.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM.....	15
2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH.....	16
2.4 RESEARCH DESIGNS.....	17
2.5 RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES	18
2.5.1 <i>Population and Sampling</i>	18
2.5.1.1 Data saturation.....	19
2.5.2 <i>Data Collection</i>	21
2.5.3 <i>Data Analysis</i>	23
2.5.4 <i>Data Verification</i>	25
2.5.4.1 Credibility	25
2.5.4.2 Dependability	25
2.5.4.3 Transferability.....	26
2.5.4.4 Conformability.....	26
2.6 ETHICS	26
2.6.1 <i>Avoidance of Harm and Debriefing</i>	27
2.6.2 <i>Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent</i>	27
2.6.3 <i>Anonymity, Confidentiality and Privacy</i>	28
2.6.4 <i>Data Storage and Management</i>	28
2.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	29
2.8 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER	30
CHAPTER 3	31
LITERATURE REVIEW	31
3.1 INTRODUCTION	31
3.2 SOCIAL WORK	31
3.2.1 <i>Social Work Education and Training</i>	33
3.2.1.1 The Bachelor of Social Work.....	34
3.2.1.2 The Global Standards for Social Work Education	40
3.2.1.3 The Norms and Standards for Social Work Education	43



3.2.2 <i>Psychosocial and Academic Challenges of Student Social Workers Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic</i>	53
3.3 THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	56
3.4 LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES	58
3.4.1 <i>Flexible Learning and Teaching</i>	58
3.4.2 <i>Blended learning and teaching</i>	59
3.4.3 <i>Online Learning and Teaching</i>	61
3.5 CONCLUSION TO THE CHAPTER	63
CHAPTER 4	64
RESEARCH FINDINGS	64
4.1 INTRODUCTION	64
4.2 PARTICIPANT PROFILE	64
4.2.1 <i>Student Social Workers</i>	65
4.2.2 <i>Social Work Educators</i>	67
4.3 FINDINGS	68
<i>Theme 1: Student Social Workers' Economic, Psychological and Social Realities During the Pandemic</i>	70
Sub-theme 1.1: Economic realities.....	71
Category 1.1.1: Economic challenges of students' families	71
Category 1.1.2: Sources of funding	72
Sub-theme 1.2: Psychological realities	74
Category 1.2.1: Trauma due to COVID-19 deaths and sickness	74
Category 1.2.2: Mental health.....	75
Sub-theme 1.3: Social realities.....	77
Category 1.3.1: Home environment.....	77
Category 1.3.2: Isolation from family and human interaction	78
Category 1.3.3: Roles within the household	79
<i>Theme 2: Student Social Workers' Academic Experiences During the Pandemic</i>	82
Sub-theme 2.1: Study environment.....	82
Category 2.1.1: Lack of access to campus	82
Category 2.1.2: Lack of access to academic resources	83
Sub-theme 2.2: Academic participation.....	85

Category 2.2.1: Motivation.....	85
Category 2.2.2: Engagement.....	86
Category 2.2.3: Time management	87
Sub-theme 2.3: Academic performance.....	88
<i>Theme 3: Learning and Teaching Resources.....</i>	<i>88</i>
Sub-theme 3.1: Learning and teaching material.....	89
Category 3.1.1: Material that supported learning and teaching	89
Sub-theme 3.2: Learning and teaching tools.....	91
Sub-theme 3.3: Learning and teaching platforms.....	92
Category 3.3.1: iKamva	92
Category 3.3.2: WhatsApp.....	93
Category 3.3.3: Google Meet.....	94
Sub-theme 3.4: Methods of communication	95
Category 3.4.1: Different methods of communication with different role- players.....	95
Category 3.4.2: Challenges regarding communication methods	98
Sub-theme 3.5: Assessment methods	99
Category 3.5.1: Preferred methods of assessment	100
Category 3.5.2: Challenges experienced by students	101
<i>Theme 4: Support for Online Learning and Teaching During the Pandemic...</i>	<i>103</i>
Sub-theme 4.1: Formal support.....	103
Sub-theme 4.2: Informal support.....	104
Category 4.2.1: Support from peers	104
Category 4.2.2: Support from family	105
<i>Theme 5: Suggestions for Blended Learning and Teaching Post the Pandemic</i>	<i>106</i>
Sub-theme 5.1: Access to data and devices	106
Sub-theme 5.2: Access to facilities that support blended learning and teaching	107
Sub-theme 5.3: Availability of training and tutorial videos for using online learning and teaching tools	109
4.4 CONCLUSION.....	110
CHAPTER 5	111

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	111
5.1 INTRODUCTION	111
5.2 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	112
5.2.1 Summary	112
5.2.2 Conclusions	121
5.2.3 Recommendations	124
5.2.4 Recommendations for further research.....	127
5.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS	127
REFERENCE LIST	129
ANNEXURE A: ETHICS APPROVAL	156
ANNEXURE B: REQUEST AND APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.....	157
ANNEXURE C: INFORMATION SHEETS	161
ANNEXURE D: CONSENT FORMS	167
ANNEXURE E: CONFIDENTIALITY FORMS	168
ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW GUIDES	169
ANNEXURE G: EDITOR'S LETTER.....	171



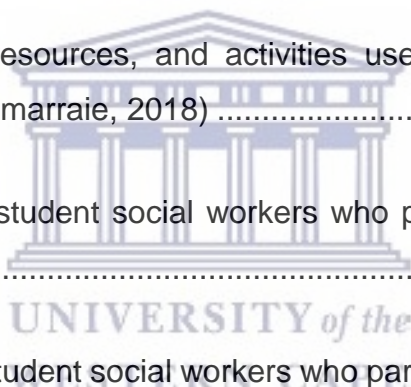
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A meaningful learning experience.....	8
Figure 2: Blended learning and teaching modes (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019).	60



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The inclusion criteria	19
Table 2: The implementation of Tesch’s eight steps of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2014).....	24
Table 3: Values and ethical principles of social work practice	33
Table 4: BSW core standards, applied competence and skills & context and conditions for assessment (CHE, 2015, pp. 10–14).....	35
Table 5: BSW norms and standards (SACSSP, 2020)	43
Table 6: Tools, material, resources, and activities used in blended learning and teaching (Baragash & Al-Samarraie, 2018)	61
Table 7: Demographics of student social workers who participated in the individual interviews.....	65
Table 8: Demographics of student social workers who participated in the focus groups	67
Table 9: Demographics of social work educators who participated in Focus Group 3	68
Table 10: The study’s themes, sub-themes and categories.....	69



LIST OF ANNEXES

ANNEXURE A: ETHICS APPROVAL.....	166
ANNEXURE B: REQUEST AND APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.....	168
ANNEXURE C: INFORMATION SHEETS.....	172
ANNEXURE D: CONSENT FORMS	180
ANNEXURE E: CONFIDENTIALITY FORMS.....	181
ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW GUIDES.....	182
ANNEXURE G: EDITOR'S LETTER	184



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLT	Blended Learning and Teaching
BPS	Bio-Psycho-Social
BSW	Bachelor of Social Work
CHE	Council for Higher Education
CHS	Faculty of Community and Health Sciences
COVID-19	Coronavirus
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DHE	Department of Higher Education
F2F	Face-To-Face
ELT	Experiential Learning and Teaching
FLT	Flexible Learning and Teaching
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GS	Global Standards
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IASSW	International Association of Schools of Social Work
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
IT	Information Technology
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OLT	Online Learning & Teaching
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning

RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professions
SAQA	South African Quality Authority
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SETA	<i>Sector Education and Training Authority</i>
UCT	University of Cape Town
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNIVEN	University of Venda
UNQSW	Unemployed Newly Qualified Social Worker
USA	United States of America
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VoIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity
WHO	World Health Organisation



CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, was first observed in Wuhan, China, during 2019. The outbreak of the virus quickly spread to the rest of the world, and in 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (WHO, 2020a). In response to the spread of the virus in South Africa, the government announced a national lockdown on 26 March 2020 (Ramaphosa, 2020). This then resulted in higher education institutions (HEIs) having to adhere to social distancing regulations through the urgent conversion to and implementation of online learning and teaching (OLT) activities. In South Africa, only the University of South Africa (UNISA) is an open distance education institution (Letseka, 2020; Qayyum & Zawacki-Richter, 2019), while the other universities make use of blended learning and teaching (BLT) methods, which consist of online platforms and traditional classroom methods (Bosch et al., 2020; Ubah et al., 2019). The COVID-19 lockdown came about quickly, which questions the preparedness and readiness of HEIs to migrate from BLT to OLT within a short period of time.

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (RSA, 2013) was introduced by the South African Department of Higher Education (DHE), emphasising a flexible learning and teaching (FLT) approach within the South African context. The aim is to obtain a user-friendly, transformative, accessible, and diverse post-school education and training system. Previously, Kaminer and Shabalala (2019) and Webb and Cotton (2018) asserted in this regard that the different socioeconomic backgrounds of students might affect access to resources and skills needed for OLT as a form of FLT, since most students enrolled in HEIs come from poverty-stricken backgrounds. This meant that students with socioeconomic challenges might not be able to access technology-supported options for learning and teaching.

This study aimed to investigate how the sudden conversion to OLT affected the learning experiences of student social workers. Social work is known as a helping

profession that has to do with direct services, requiring not only academic knowledge and skills, but also personal attributes (Graf et al., 2014; Dârjan & Thomita, 2014). Therefore, student social workers are required to develop and consolidate a professional identity as a social worker to understand the self as an important instrument of intervention (Council for Higher Education [CHE], 2015). This study was interested in how student social workers experienced the movement to OLT with regards to their preparation for social work practice.

As an introduction, the key concepts related to the present study will be defined and described. This will be used as a backdrop to the preliminary literature review that will be presented, followed by the theoretical framework underpinning this study and the research problem that informed this study's focus. The research questions that were identified based on the research problem will be provided together with the research aims and objectives. The chapter concludes with a description of the significance of the study and an outline of the forthcoming chapters.

1.2 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

This section defines the key concepts used in this study, namely: *social work education*; *COVID-19*; *flexible learning and teaching*; *blended learning and teaching*; and *online learning and teaching*. These are described in more detail below.

1.2.1 Social Work Education

Social work education involves learning and teaching activities that are based on trusted, scientific, and reliable professional knowledge and skills aimed at developing competent social work practitioners (Cabiati, 2017). All education and training activities are further aligned with professional and academic standards consistent with practice (Austin et al., 2016). In this study, social work education refers to the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) standards described by the CHE (2015), which support the integration of theory and practice.

1.2.2 COVID-19

The WHO (2020b) refers to *COVID-19* as the Coronavirus disease 2019, which causes a respiratory tract infection. This virus spreads easily through human-to-human contact. Thus, social distancing is one way to prevent or slow down the spread of the virus. In line with this description, on 26 March 2020 South Africa's President announced a national lockdown to limit social contact to flatten the curve of infections (Ramaphosa, 2020). Papu and Shreyasi (2020, p. 1) assert that the need for social distancing and the fact that little is known about this virus and the treatment thereof requires different sectors in society to find "a new normal". This study focused on how the national lockdown impacted on the learning and teaching activities of student social workers who are used to blended learning, and who now, due to the pandemic, had to vacate the university campuses and convert to OLT.

1.2.3 Flexible Learning and Teaching

Veletsianos and Houlden (2019) view *flexible learning and teaching* as a model characterised by learning and teaching activities that are not limited by time and place. In addition, the authors assert that this pedagogy is student-centred and allows students to learn at their own pace without restricted access to course content. It uses online tools to maximise learning and teaching and offers students a variety of learning choices (Huang et al., 2020). In this study, the pedagogy of FLT was used as a theoretical framework to better understand student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown.

1.2.4 Blended Learning and Teaching

Bryan and Volchenkova (2016) describe *blended learning and teaching* as a combination of theoretical approaches and models to learning and teaching and modes of delivery. Similar to a FLT pedagogy, the aim is to provide students with a variety of learning experiences and options through the use of traditional classroom learning and teaching activities in combination with information and communication technologies (ICT). Some advantages are that students have more time to engage with learning material through online options, and that they can also develop digital skills (Lalima & Dangwal, 2017). In this research study, it refers to the learning and

teaching activities at residential HEIs that combine face-to-face (F2F) classroom and online activities.

1.2.5 Online Learning and Teaching

Online learning and teaching comprise online or web-based learning and teaching methodologies where ICT facilitates the learning procedure, and students and educators are not required to be accessible simultaneously (Valente & Marchetti, 2019). As such, online learning and teaching is believed to be simpler than the F2F method, as it allows students to participate and access course content in their own time and place (Tasira, 2020). For the purpose of this research, OLT refers to web-based learning and teaching activities that can be accessed at any time and from anywhere by students and educators.

The key concepts above were used to guide the review of literature to identify a suitable theoretical framework and to formulate the research problem for the present study.

1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on social work education and training informed the focus of this study. In the sections below, attention will be given to the COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown, followed by a discussion of social work education and training and traditional BLT practices. The literature review will conclude with a description of OLT that had to be implemented during the pandemic.

1.3.1 COVID-19 Pandemic

The term 'pandemic' refers to a global outbreak of a deadly disease in a short period of time (MacIntyre, 2020; Surico & Galeotti, 2020; Qiu et al., 2017). In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid increase in confirmed cases influenced the pandemic to become a global public health emergency, which required immediate attention (Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2020). Therefore, the South African government declared a national state of disaster and introduced effective measures to reduce and control the

spread of the virus. The regulations and directives to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus included, among others, restrictions on international travel, prohibitions of mass gatherings, and closure of schools and HEIs. In addition, restrictions on social distancing and the introduction of personal hygiene practices include social distancing of at least 1.5 metres and staying at home unless in need of essential services (Ramaphosa, 2020).

1.3.1.1 National lockdown

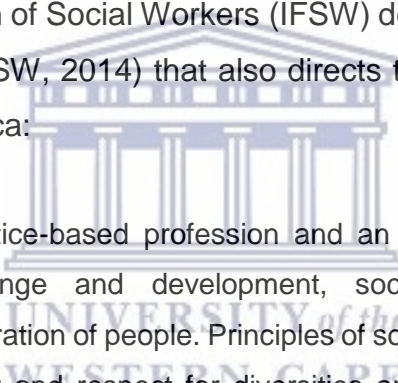
On the 23rd of April 2020, the President of South Africa announced five alert levels for the gradual resumption of economic activities from the 1st of May 2020. *Level 5* was characterised by strict measures required to control the spread of the virus and save lives. In *level 4*, some activities could resume subject to extreme precaution measures to limit the transmission of the virus. *Level 3* involved easing of certain restrictions such as work and social activities. In *level 2*, a further easing of restrictions took place, but with high maintenance of social distancing and physical restrictions. In *level 1*, normal activities resumed subject to precaution measures and adherence to health guidelines (RSA, 2020). The latter level still required social distancing, meaning that in certain spaces, such as classrooms, a limited number of people could be allowed.

Following President Ramaphosa's announcement on alert levels, Dr. Blade Nzimande, the South African Minister of Higher Education, declared a gradual and phased approach by the DHE (Republic of South Africa. Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, 2020). This meant that universities would follow the guidelines of the national alert levels regarding learning and teaching in HEIs. Nzimande (Republic of South Africa. Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, 2020) emphasised that, while no students would be allowed on campuses during level 5, in level 4 medical students and other categories of students were allowed to return to campus. These included students who were in their final year of study and had to complete laboratory or practical work. Students who had adverse home circumstances or lack of learning resources such as devices, data, and access to libraries were allowed to return to residences and campus. These students, which included student social workers, continued to participate in OLT and did not return to

F2F instruction or practice. Level 3 was characterised by a return of 33% of the student population across all HEIs. In level 2, a further 66% of the student population were allowed to return to campus. It is only in level 1 that 100% of the student population would be allowed to return to HEIs, directed by the continuation of social distancing practices. However, most HEIs motivated for remote and OLT for the remainder of the second semester of 2020, and the first and second semester of 2021 due to the COVID-19 third wave. It was envisioned that this phased approach would enable an easing of the return of students to campuses. In addition, due to the uncertainties related to how the spread of the virus would occur, no timeframes could be provided to indicate when on-campus learning and teaching would resume.

1.3.2 Social Work Education and Training

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) developed the following global definition of social work (IFSW, 2014) that also directs the education and training of social workers in South Africa:



Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being (IFSW, 2014).

In South Africa, the academic discipline for social work consists of theoretical and fieldwork modules that are underpinned by standards for the BSW, as set out by the CHE (Poggenpoel, 2018; CHE, 2015). These standards are aimed at promoting education and training in terms of knowledge and skills, and also in terms of the personal and professional self (CHE, 2015). All theory and practice modules are informed by these standards, which should result in competencies related to nine core areas, namely:

- 1) The development and consolidation of a professional identity as a social worker,
- 2) Application of core values and principles of social work,

- 3) Holistic assessment and intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities,
- 4) Demonstrated competence in the use of codes of ethics vis-à-vis the moral impulse,
- 5) Working with a range of diversities,
- 6) Ability to undertake research,
- 7) Knowledge, practice skills and theories,
- 8) Policy and legislation, and
- 9) Writing and communication of professional knowledge.

The IFSW and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) compiled a document that outlines Global Standards (GS) for the Social Work Education & Training curriculum (IFSW & IASSW, 2020:10). The two international bodies stated that schools of social work must adhere to the following standards:

1. The curricula and methods of instruction are consistent with the school's programme objectives, its expected outcomes, and its mission statement.
2. Clear mechanisms for the organisation's implementation and evaluation of the theory and field education components of the programme exist.
3. Specific attention to continuous review and development of the curricula.
4. Clear guidelines for ethical use of technology in practice, curriculum delivery, distance/blended learning, big data analysis, and engagement with social media.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown, traditional residential social work education and training used a BLT approach.

1.3.2.1 Blended learning and teaching

BLT make use of a combination of online tools and traditional F2F instruction (Stein & Graham, 2020; Dziuban et al., 2018; Kintu et al., 2017). Hrastinski (2019) agrees that the conceptualisation of BLT highlights that students get to experience some aspects of online learning, as well as F2F instruction. BLT in social work education and training is guided by Kolb's theory of experiential learning and teaching (ELT), which implies

that students learn from experiences (Poggenpoel, 2018). The theory is based on a four-stage learning cycle, namely:

- Concrete experience,
- Reflective observation,
- Abstract conceptualisation, and
- Active experimentation (Kolb, 2015; Poggenpoel 2018).

The following learning cycle supports the emphasis on the integration of theory and practice in the BSW programmes, as well as the development of the self (CHE, 2015). According to Roberson (2019), this basically means that effective and meaningful learning occurs through experiencing, thinking, reflecting, and doing, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

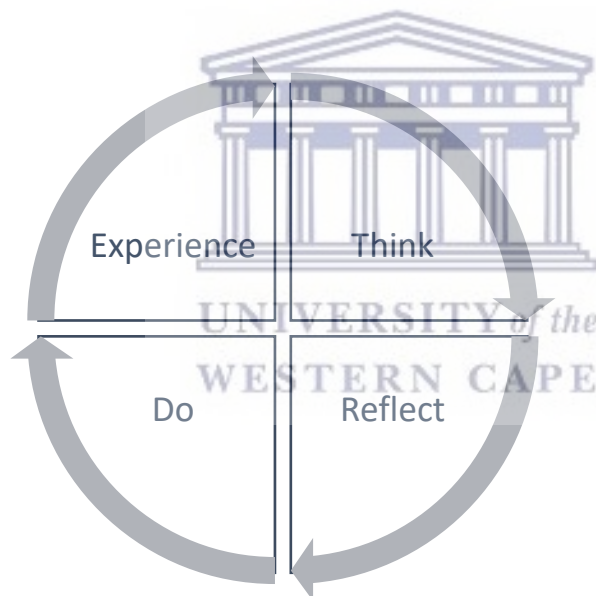


Figure 1: A meaningful learning experience
(Roberson, 2019)

Roberson (2019, p. 1) further argues that “while the instructor may create the experience, it is the learner who engages in the cycle and, thus, plays the primary role in the learning process”. The ELT is central to students’ preferred way of learning (Kolb, 2015), while learning styles play an essential role in assisting them to adapt to online learning environments (Salloum et al., 2019; Truong, 2016). Therefore, one

assumes that exposure to BLT prior to the COVID-19 pandemic could have supported students' ability to adapt to OLT during the pandemic.

1.3.3 Online Learning and Teaching

Through the use of ICT, OLT is conveyed through online tools only. OLT, also known as *electronic learning*, centralises the concepts 'learning' and 'technology' that are employed in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills (Al-Fraihat, 2020; Aparicio et al., 2016). In this case, ICT enables the learning and teaching process through online learning systems (Aparicio et al., 2016).

Online learning systems make use of various electronic tools to enhance the process and experience of learning and teaching (Al-Fraihat, 2020; Pham et al., 2019). Aparicio et al., (2016) reiterate that online learning tools include:

- Writing technologies,
- Communication technologies,
- Visualisation, and
- Storage.



In terms of advantages, OLT improves education access, as it is not limited by time or place. Students and instructors only need a device and Internet connection to be able to access course content (Pham et al., 2019).

Most South African HEIs implement a BLT approach, and often the main focus is on F2F learning and teaching, with ICT as a tool that is used from time to time (Bosch et al., 2020; Ubah et al., 2019). The sudden move to OLT posed a variety of challenges, leading to heated debates. It has been reported that the divide between so-called historically privileged and historically disadvantage universities became more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown. Also, students could be divided into three groups, namely:

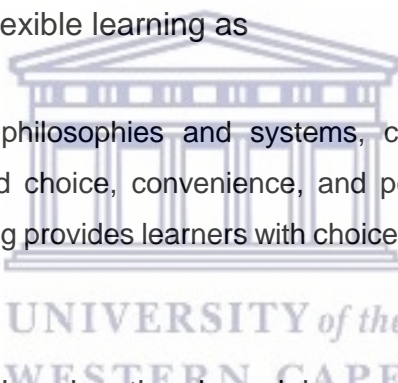
- 1) Students who were immediately able to engage with OLT.
- 2) Students who were able to engage online while also being faced with issues such as access to good quality devices and data.

- 3) Students who are not able to engage because of a variety of reasons that are mainly poverty related (Kaminer & Shabalala, 2019; Shay, 2020; Webb & Cotton, 2018).

Looking at the BSW standards, it raises the question of how social work education and training were affected by the move to online learning and teaching. In order to explore student social workers' experiences of OLT during the COVID-19 national lockdown, FLT as a theoretical framework was viewed as relevant. This will be discussed in the next section.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Joan (2013, p. 37) defines flexible learning as



a set of educational philosophies and systems, concerned with providing learners with increased choice, convenience, and personalisation to suit the learner. Flexible learning provides learners with choices about where, when, and how learning occurs.

Research conducted on this educational model goes back as far as the 1980s (Veletsianos & Houlden, 2019). FLT have become an essential model for online education (Joan, 2013), and often a response to higher education policy demands (Palmer, 2011). This is in line with the South African White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (RSA, 2013) that emphasises FLT with the aim to ensure a learning experience that is:

- User-friendly,
- Transformative,
- Accessible, and
- Diverse.

The above aim relates to the enhancement of access and the quality of online education as advantages of FLT (Andrade & Alden-Rivers, 2019; Joan, 2013).

However, FLT has been mostly criticised for the lack of consideration given to the impact of social factors on learning (Veletsianos & Houlden, 2019). In this study, FLT was used as the theoretical framework from which the social factors of student social workers that impacted their learning experiences during the national lockdown was explored. In addition to the inclusion of socioeconomic factors that impacted on learning and teaching, the researcher used the following dimensions of flexibility associated with this pedagogic approach to learning and teaching, as described by Huang et al., (2020), to guide the present study:

- When and where the learning occurs,
- What and how students will learn,
- How to deliver instruction,
- What strategies could be used for organising learning activities,
- What types of learning resources should be provided to students,
- What technologies are truly useful for learning, teaching and administration,
- When and how to provide assessment and evaluation, and
- What kind of support and services should be provided to students and educators?

The preliminary review of the literature, within the theoretical framework of FLT, informed the problem statement for this study.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research studies are informed by a problem that needs to be investigated to add to the existing knowledge base and/or practice. It requires a preliminary review of literature on the research topic to identify what is known and what needs further exploration (Taylor et al., 2016). The focus of this study was on OLT that replaced BLT in social work education and training during the COVID-19 national lockdown. A preliminary literature review was conducted to explore this focus, and to identify a theoretical framework that could support the study. The literature review supported the researcher to identify the following research problem to be addressed through this study.

Theoretical and fieldwork modules underpinned by the BSW standards form an integral part of social work education in South Africa (CHE, 2015). As such, social work education requires specific learning and teaching methods to accommodate the BSW standards (Poggenpoel, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic posed a demand for HEIs to migrate from blended to online learning and teaching only (Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2020), posing specific challenges for higher education in general, and for social work education specifically. In order to address these challenges not only during the pandemic, but also by reflecting on the use of technologies in social work education and training going forward, an understanding of experiences related to social work education and training during the COVID-19 pandemic was needed. The FLT approach was viewed as a suitable framework from which to explore the experiences of OLT. In addition, it was important to include the socioeconomic realities of students to contribute to the discourse on FLT (Veletsianos & Houlden, 2019).

The research problem guided the researcher to formulate the research questions, aims and objectives.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions emanate from the research problem and provide a specific focus for a research study (Neuman, 2014). The above research problem resulted in the identification of two research questions, namely:

- 1) What are the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown?
- 2) How did socioeconomic factors influence student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown?

1.7 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The research questions above provided a focus for this study. This then supported the researcher in formulating the research aims and objectives. Kumar (2011) asserts that the aim directs what will be researched and what the desired outcome of the research

would be. The objectives have to do with the application of relevant methodology to attain the aim.

In order to answer the research questions, the aims of this study were:

- To explore and describe the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown.
- To explore and describe the influence of socioeconomic factors on student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The objectives that support the attainment of the aims were:

- To conduct focus group interviews with student social workers and educators regarding their experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown.
- To describe the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown.
- To conduct individual interviews with student social workers to explore their experiences of the influence of socioeconomic factors on their online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- To describe the influence of socioeconomic factors on student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is that it provided social work educators with the opportunity to explore and develop an understanding of what worked and what did not work when learning and teaching activities took place online only. This study was framed within the theory of FLT to inform learning and teaching pedagogy in social work education and training. To further contribute to FLT, the influence of socioeconomic circumstances of students was explored to determine the impact this has on OLT.

1.9 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

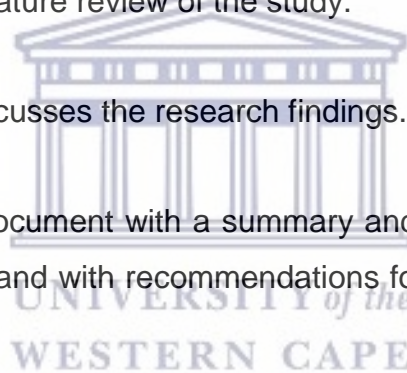
Chapter 1 introduced the research study to provide a background of the research topic. This was done by defining the key concepts used, a preliminary review of the literature, and an explanation of the theoretical framework that underpins the study. In addition to this, the problem statement, research questions, aims and objectives, and the significance of the study that explains the motive and value of this research were discussed.

Chapter 2 presents the research methodology that was employed. This will be discussed in terms of the choices that were made and the implementation thereof.

Chapter 3 presents the literature review of the study.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research findings.

Chapter 5 concludes the document with a summary and conclusion of the research methodology and findings, and with recommendations for social work education and training.



1.10 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 1 served as an introductory chapter. In addition to describing the topic under investigation, the main elements of the research process were outlined.

Attention now shifts to the methodology that was used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, the focus of this study was presented by means of a preliminary literature review, the theoretical framework that was used during this study, the research problem, and the research questions, aims, and objectives. This, then, served as the basis for the choices regarding the methodology that was implemented in this study, which will be elaborated on in this second chapter.

This chapter describes the research paradigm, the research approach, and the research designs that were chosen, as well as the sampling, data collection and analysis, and data verification methods and techniques that were used in this study. This will be presented in terms of the choices that were made, the reasons behind the choices, and the implementation thereof. An explanation of the research ethics that guided the research will also be provided, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study and the conclusion of the chapter.

2.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is a worldview that enables the researcher to see or to study the research topic in a scientifically sound manner. It informs the choices of research strategies so that the study would be reliable and credible (Günbayi & Sorm, 2018). The researcher conducted this study from an interpretive research paradigm. It supported her to explore the subjective experiences of participants in the social work education and training context, and to include different perspectives of people associated to the specific field of interest, namely, student social workers and social work educators (Bryman, 2016). Their viewpoints were then interpreted to inform the findings of this study.

2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The researcher followed a qualitative research approach to explore the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding OLT during the COVID-19 national lockdown, as well as the influence of socioeconomic circumstances on the learning and teaching that took place. In line with the interpretive paradigm, the qualitative approach allowed her to explore in-depth experiences of individuals or groups of people (Carey, 2013).

Berg and Howard (2012) refer to the following characteristics of the qualitative research approach that were viewed as relevant for this study. It is interested in descriptions of meanings provided by people who have knowledge about the research topic, and also focuses on the natural settings in which the research problem occurs. De Vaus (2014) supports the above description, and adds that it provides data about real life situations that can be used to interpret into findings. The qualitative data therefore provides researchers with descriptions that guide interpretations, and can therefore be seen as a bottom-up approach to develop knowledge and understanding (Daniel, 2016). Daniel (2016), however, warns that qualitative findings are dynamic and not static, and that on-going research is required to ensure that findings reflect current needs, experiences, and viewpoints. This present study is interested in the experiences of student social workers and social work educators regarding the current pandemic to ensure that it is incorporated in the learning and teaching practices, and acknowledges that new research might be needed in the future.

The researcher specifically employed this approach because it primarily involved verbal data that provided a better understanding of how student social workers and their educators experienced OLT, which informed the interpretation of the findings in this study. In addition, the interpretation of the findings included the descriptions of student social workers regarding the influence of socioeconomic aspects on their learning and teaching experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

2.4 RESEARCH DESIGNS

The researcher used a combination of the contextual, explorative, and descriptive research designs to support her to make choices regarding the research methods and techniques to incorporate in this study. The use of these designs will be presented in terms of the reason for using each design, and how each design supported the choices of research methods.

- **The contextual research design:** This design, in line with the description of the qualitative research approach above (cf. De Vaus, 2014), aims to interpret findings in specific contexts (Ormston et al., 2014). Leavy (2017) refers to this as contextually rich research findings. The contextual research design was particularly relevant because the researcher was interested in the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning and teaching within the context of HEIs and social work education. As such, the design supported her to identify a population, as well as sampling methods and techniques that reflected the lived experiences of student social workers and their educators in South African HEIs.
- **The explorative research design:** Cohen et al., (2018) assert that this design is used when little knowledge about a topic of interest exists, and that it is aimed at developing new knowledge that could contribute to a specific field or discipline. Building on the choice of a contextual research design discussed above, the researcher took note of the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in a conversion to OLT is a new experience, which highlighted a need to explore how OLT affected learning and teaching, as well as how the socioeconomic contextual realities of student social workers need to be considered when OLT is explored. As such, the explorative research design was used to support the researcher to gain new insights in a new phenomenon of which little is known. Similar to the contextual research design, this design supported the researcher's choices of sampling and data collection methods and techniques (Nassaji, 2015).
- **The descriptive research design:** Taylor et al., (2016) link the explorative and descriptive research designs and argue that when one explores a new topic, the aims should be to develop not only new knowledge, but also a new understanding. In this study, the descriptive research design was used to complement the

explorative design in that the researcher wanted to develop an understanding of the experiences of student social workers and their educators through rich descriptions by the participants. As such, this design directed the researcher's choice of method for data analysis to be able to provide a description of the participants' experiences that were used to interpret the findings (Ritchie & Ormson, 2014).

This combination of research designs guided the researcher to choose and apply relevant methods and techniques for the research study. This will be described next.

2.5 RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Research methods and techniques represent a series of processes and steps taken to carry out the research. According to Maruster (2013), qualitative research methods and techniques are applied for the purpose of accurately obtaining knowledge that addresses the research question concerning social phenomena and contexts. In this section, the researcher will outline the methods and techniques that were chosen and implemented to collect and analyse data for the purpose of ensuring the credibility of the research findings and answering the research questions.

2.5.1 Population and Sampling

A *research population* refers to a well-defined group of people or objects that are used as the focus of the research study to gain knowledge about the phenomena (Asiamah et al., 2017). In other words, it is a unit that represents the majority of the population of a particular setting or context. This research inquiry consisted of two population groups, namely: 1) student social workers, and 2) social work educators who have experienced OLT at undergraduate level at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) during the COVID-19 lockdown. The research setting was the UWC campus, and specifically the Department of Social Work.

A *non-probability sampling* method was applied, which refers to the ability to draw samples from a large population without requirements of random selection (Devlin,

2018). This means that a representative sample was drawn purposefully to be able to answer the research question best, while all the members of the population did not have the same chance of being selected to participate. Therefore, the *purposive sampling technique* was implemented to draw samples of student social workers and social work educators as participants for this study. Participants were selected according to attributes of the population and the aim of the study (Ritchie et al., 2014). Table 1 below provides a description of the inclusion criteria for sampling purposes in this study.

Table 1: The inclusion criteria

Population of Student Social Workers	Population of Social Work Educators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full-time students ▪ Registered for the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) ▪ On third-year level ▪ With experience in blended learning and teaching (BLT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full-time social work educators ▪ Appointed in the Department of Social Work at the UWC ▪ Lecturing in the undergraduate programme ▪ With experience in blended learning and teaching (BLT)

In line with the research objectives, the aim was to select participants who would provide insight into their experiences of OLT. The reason why the researcher focused on third-year students is that they would have had two years of BLT experience and therefore could reflect on moving from BLT to OLT during the pandemic. The criteria for lecturers were based on the fact that they must have had experience in BLT, so as to compare this with the emergency OLT that took place during the pandemic. For confirmability reasons, the researcher focused on the third-year level for both samples.

2.5.1.1 Data saturation

In order to guarantee credibility and make sure that the findings will represent an in-depth description of the answers to the research questions, the researcher collected data until data saturation was reached, that is, when no new information came to the fore (Jensen, 2016). The sample size was 15 student social workers for individual interviews and three focus groups. One focus group had six student social workers and the second group had four student social workers and the third group had four social work educators attending.

Data saturation was observed after 13 individual interviews and two focus groups with 10 student social workers. Two more individual interviews were conducted to ensure that no new information was shared by the participants. One focus group was conducted with educators.

The researcher obtained ethical approval from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the UWC to conduct the research (see Annexure A). The researcher then requested permission from the UWC registrar to approach students to participate in the study (see Annexure B). After obtaining permission the researcher, through a lecturer in the relevant year-level, provided students who adhered to the inclusion criteria with an information sheet and an invitation to participate, and requested those who were willing to participate to contact her via email. These students, then, were provided with an opportunity to ask questions if needed, and to sign consent forms. The social work educators were contacted by e-mail and provided with an information sheet (see Annexure C) that contained all the relevant information of the study. 15 student social workers were selected out of 96 third year student social workers, to participate in individual interviews. Due to the sensitive nature of discussing socioeconomic challenges, the researcher emphasised that participation was voluntary and that debriefing opportunities were available should participation leads to any form of discomfort.

Once the participants agreed to participate, they were requested to sign informed consent forms (see Annexure D) and confidentiality agreements (see Annexure E) for the focus group discussions. The times and dates for the interviews and focus groups were arranged according to the needs and preferences of the participants. This, however, was influenced by the COVID-19 infection rates in the Western Cape province, which meant that interviews took place on the Google Meet platform to protect participants from being exposed to the virus during the third wave. Once the times and dates were agreed upon, the researcher proceeded to collect the data.

2.5.2 Data Collection

Qualitative data collection relies on the verbal descriptions offered by participants. Interviews and focus groups are therefore often used as methods to collect data (Kumar, 2011). In terms of the setting, as mentioned previously, the researcher was guided by the COVID-19 regulations. She therefore made use of an online meeting platform, namely, Google Meet – also regarded as one of the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)-mediated technologies for data collection (Purwanto & Tannady, 2020; Archibald et al., 2019).

The researcher made use of individual interviews to collect data from the students on the socioeconomic factors that influenced their learning experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown. The reason for this was that the discussions focused on sensitive and personal information, where privacy and confidentiality were of particular importance. It was also considered that students might not be comfortable to fully discuss and disclose these factors among peers (Devlin, 2018). As part of the information they received, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the interviews at any time and that debriefing would be available to them.

To explore the OLT experiences of both students and educators, the researcher made use of focus groups consisting of either students or educators. The reason behind the choice of focus groups is that the researcher hoped that interaction between participants would stimulate an in-depth exploration of the research question pertaining to the focus groups (Harding, 2019). As previously mentioned, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, health and safety protocols as prescribed by the South African government and the UWC guided the procedures that were followed for data collection. This implied that student social workers and social work educators were requested to meet the researcher on an online platform. Data was recorded on this platform and stored on Google Drive with encryption on a password protected computer.

During both the interviews and focus groups, the researcher followed a semi-structured approach. It means that she provided participants with open-ended

questions that explored the research questions, while not limiting the participants' contributions (Harding, 2019). The questions were compiled in an interview guide (see Annexure F), which was piloted through one interview and one focus group. The participants were also provided with the interview guide prior to the interviews or focus groups as part of informed consent.

The following questions were asked during the **interviews with student social workers** to guide the discussion and ensure that the research aims would be attained:

- Can you tell me about your economic and social situation during the COVID-19 lockdown?
- How do you think these circumstances negatively influenced your ability to do online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown?
- What supported you with online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown?
- Who supported you with online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown?

The following questions were asked during the **focus groups with student social workers and social work educators**:

- What online learning and teaching tools were used to support the online learning and teaching?
 - What tools worked well? Why?
 - What tools did not work well? Why?
- How did communication between the lecturer and students take place during the online learning and teaching?
 - What worked well? Why?
 - What did not work well? Why?
- How did assessments take place during the online learning and teaching?
 - What worked well? Why?
 - What did not work well? Why?
- How did students communicate with each other during the online learning and teaching?
 - What worked well? Why?
 - What did not work well? Why?

- Thinking back, what of the online learning and teaching experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown should be incorporated once learning and teaching continues on campus?
- Do you have any suggestions on how students and staff can be prepared to have the skills to engage with emergency online learning and teaching should the need occur in future?

Through the pilot interview and focus group, the researcher collected the data by using the interview guide. The data was analysed to determine if the method of data collection was effective, and if the questions are sufficient to be able to reach the research aims of this study (Majid et al., 2017; Bryman, 2016). The analysis pointed to the fact that the research questions were indeed answered.

Permission was obtained from the participants beforehand to record the interviews and focus groups. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked to check the field notes for accuracy (Harding, 2019). The interviews and focus groups that were recorded were transcribed immediately after the interview or focus group, and field notes of non-verbal information were included. Participants were assured that their identity would be protected, and that their personal details would not be shared in the research report. The researcher explained that all documents and recordings would either be stored in a locked safe or on a password protected computer.

Following data collection, the researcher analysed the data that was gathered from the interviews to gain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of the student social workers and social work educators.

2.5.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups for the purpose of discovering main themes, sub-themes and categories, which enabled her to describe the findings and answer the research questions (Tesch, 2013). Thematic data analysis is a method of managing large volumes of data without losing context (Yegidis et al., 2018). The eight steps of Tesch (1990), as described by Creswell (2014), were applied by both the researcher and the

independent coder to analyse the data. Table 2 outlines the data analysis process that was followed, and how it was implemented in this study.

Table 2: The implementation of Tesch’s eight steps of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2014)

Steps	Application
<i>Step 1:</i> Forming an overall picture of the data and identifying ideas that emerge.	The researcher transcribed the data in a table with an empty column on the right, and then proceeded to read through all the transcripts. She made notes of all the ideas that she identified on a separate page to obtain an overall picture of the data.
<i>Step 2:</i> Identifying main ideas in each transcript and indicate this in the margin.	Each transcript was read while the researcher wrote down keywords that related to the research questions in the right column.
<i>Step 3:</i> Listing all the topics indicated in the margins. Similar topics are grouped together into columns, which consist of main topics and sub-topics.	The researcher listed all the keywords on a separate sheet. She then grouped them in terms of main topics. Once she completed this, she looked for sub-topics under each topic. The topics and sub-topics were then listed with their related keywords.
<i>Step 4:</i> Returning the list of topics and sub-topics to the transcripts.	Next, the researcher went back to the transcripts and put the topic or sub-topic name next to the keywords in the transcripts.
<i>Step 5:</i> Describing the main themes, and identifying the sub-themes related to each main theme.	The main topics were listed as themes, and the sub-topics were listed as sub-themes. The researcher now also looked for categories under each sub-theme. Each theme and sub-themes were described. A table with themes, sub-themes and categories was compiled.
<i>Step 6:</i> Deciding what themes would best answer the research questions.	The researcher read and compared the research question with the themes, sub-themes, and categories to ensure that they would address the aims of the research and answer the research question.
<i>Step 7:</i> Placing corresponding data under each theme and sub-themes.	The researcher used direct quotes from the transcripts under each theme, sub-theme, and category to be able to present the findings.
<i>Step 8:</i> Verifying the themes and sub-themes with literature.	The researcher compared and contrasted the themes, sub-themes and categories with existing literature to ensure the credibility of the findings.

The methods and techniques discussed above were also aimed at data verification through a scientific research process to ensure accuracy and quality of the findings. This will be elaborated on in the next sub-section.

2.5.4 Data Verification

To maintain the quality of the data that inform the findings, Hadi and Closs (2016) and Morse (2015) argue that rigour must be applied through the implementation of a scientific research process. In this study, the researcher focused on the components of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* to support the rigour of the study (Hadi & Cross, 2016). Each component will be described and related to this study in the discussion below.

2.5.4.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree of truth of the findings, based on methods of data collection and analyses, as well as the interpretation of the data (Jordan et al., 2015). In order to achieve credibility, the researcher made use of Tesch's (1990) eight steps of data analysis as cited in Creswell (2014) to guarantee that the findings represented the inputs of the participants and not her own viewpoints. Data obtained from the digital recordings and field notes were transcribed and participants' experiences were accurately captured. Direct quotations were used to describe the experiences and insights of the participants. The researcher also made use of supervision as a form of peer debriefing. She also made use of triangulation of data sources by including student social workers and social work educators. In addition, she made use of triangulation of data collection methods by collecting data through interviews and focus groups to ensure the credibility of the findings (Anney, 2014).

2.5.4.2 Dependability

The credibility of the data is underpinned by the *dependability* of the research findings. Therefore, dependability strengthens the credibility of the research findings. Dependability refers to the consistency or stability of the findings (Anney, 2014). Using the suggestions by Anney (2014), the researcher provided descriptions of the choices behind, and the implementation of the research methods and techniques in this chapter. This could be viewed as an audit trail. She also made use of literature to ensure that the identified themes, sub-themes, and categories are being compared and contrasted with existing literature. Moreover, the researcher's supervisors oversaw the process and implementation of the research methodology, the outcome

of the analyses, as well as the interpretation and documentation thereof to further increase the dependability of the findings.

2.5.4.3 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other participants (Anney, 2014). In this study, the findings were contextual in nature. The researcher provided a clear description of the sampling method and technique that was employed, the inclusion criteria, as well as the implementation of the research methodology, which supported the transferability of the findings (Anney, 2014). This means that researchers in other contexts can follow the research methods that were applied and compare the findings.

2.5.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the findings represent the experiences and perceptions of the participants and not the researcher's biases (Anney, 2014). The researcher made use of direct quotes from the data collected without disclosing the identity of the participants to describe the relevant themes, sub-themes, and categories. She also made use of an independent coder to affirm that the findings are a true reflection of the inputs of the participants. In addition, the researcher made use of *reflexivity* to guarantee the confirmability of the findings. Berger (2015) advises that the researcher must regularly reflect on how her own interpretation of the research topic might influence the outcome of the study, and also reflect on how the research methods enabled her to ensure that the findings represent the stories of the participants. The researcher therefore made use of peer debriefing in the supervision sessions to reflect on these aspects to support confirmability in this study.

Ethical considerations were adhered to in the research process making sure that no harm was inflicted on the participants and that the findings represent the participants' experiences and perceptions in the most accurate manner.

2.6 ETHICS

Debriefing, informed consent, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, and the management of the data were aspects that were considered and implemented in this study. The researcher consistently considered the fact that an online platform was used, and therefore included this aspect in the ethical considerations for this study.

2.6.1 Avoidance of Harm and Debriefing

Brew et al., (2013) assert that it is the responsibility of the researcher to minimise risks and increase opportunities for the participants to provide reliable and valid input. This means that the researcher must ensure that the participants are protected from physical and emotional harm.

In this study, the researcher arranged the times and dates in terms of what suited the participants best, which minimised inconvenience. She was also cognisant of the fact that the discussions could lead to emotional responses, and therefore arranged for a registered social worker to be available online for debriefing should the need arise. However, no participant reported a need to be debriefed.

2.6.2 Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent

Informed consent means that the participants received all the needed information to make an informed decision to participate or not. Therefore, participation was based on a *voluntary* decision that was informed by knowledge about the purpose and nature of the study. Voluntary participation includes the freedom to withdraw from participating at any point, which was emphasised in this study (Harding, 2019; Devlin, 2018). Before deciding to participate or not, all the participants were provided with an information sheet (see Annexure C) that comprised information regarding the research aims, the nature of their participation, and how anonymity, confidentiality and privacy would be upheld. The researcher also emphasised that participation was voluntary, and that debriefing opportunities were available if needed. In addition, the possible risks and benefits were explained to the potential participants. Those who agreed to participate were then requested to sign an informed consent form (see Annexure D).

2.6.3 Anonymity, Confidentiality and Privacy

Anonymity implies that the data collected cannot be traced to individual participants. *Confidentiality* and *privacy* have to do with protecting the personal information of the participants (Harding, 2019). These concepts were dealt with in an interrelated manner in the present study.

The transcripts did not include the personal information of the participants. A code that includes a data set and a number was assigned to each participant, for example, *Participant 1, II* (Individual Interview), and was included on the transcripts. Individual interviews were referred to as II; focus group interviews with students as F1 and F2; and focus group interviews with educators as F3. Therefore, the independent coder did not have access to personal details to link data to a specific person. The researcher did not link verbatim responses to participants when disseminating the findings. In addition, confidentiality agreements (see Annexure E) were signed by the participants to ensure that the discussions and input of the individual participants are not discussed with others after the focus group discussions.

2.6.4 Data Storage and Management

Webster et al., (2014) explain that data storage and management has to do with ensuring that personal information are not available to anybody else other than the researcher. In this study, only the researcher and her supervisors had access to the documents, recordings, and the digital interviews that included the personal information of the participants. All documents were stored in a locked safe, and the recordings and digital interviews were safely stored on password protected computer accessible only to the researcher. The data will be disposed of in an appropriate manner after five years.

As with all research studies, limitations are encountered. These are described next.

2.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019) highlight that researchers need to consider weaknesses, which are mostly aspects outside the researcher's control that could impact the findings. The authors advise that researchers should report on these limitations, as well as on how it affects the finding or how it was managed. Three primary limitations were experienced during the implementation of this study.

Firstly, this study only included student social workers at one South African university. The findings are therefore context-related. However, the description of the implementation of the research methodology may contribute to further research to be conducted at other universities, and in other study programmes, to compare and contrast the findings.

Secondly, the sample size for social work educators is small, but represented all the social work educators involved in third-year learning and teaching in the Department of Social Work that participated in the study.

Thirdly, the COVID-19 pandemic required that certain regulations had to be followed to prevent the spreading of the coronavirus. This meant that the researcher could not plan ahead for collecting the data, and had to arrangement times and dates for data collection shortly before commencement. The researcher was able to manage this challenge due to the fact that the lecturers could support her with access to student social workers on the online platform via inclusion on the learning and teaching platform of one module. In this way, the researcher could provide students with relevant information and invite them to participate. The student social workers and educators were comfortable with the use of the online platform by the time data was collected.

2.8 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 2 described the methods and techniques used to conduct the study. It outlined the research paradigm and the qualitative research approach that was followed, as well as the combination of the contextual, explorative, and descriptive research designs that were employed. The population and sampling methods were explained, followed by descriptions of data collection, data analysis, and data verification. The ethics considerations adhered to were discussed, and the limitations of the study acknowledged.

The next chapter presents the literature review of the study.



CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To recap, Chapter 1 explored the research topic by means of a preliminary literature review to discover what is known and not known about the topic, to identify a suitable theoretical framework, and to formulate the research problem, questions, aims and objectives (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Chapter 2 presented in-depth descriptions of the choices made and the processes followed regarding the research methodology. In this chapter, an in-depth literature review will be conducted to 1) build on the preliminary review of literature, 2) develop an understanding of the current descriptions of terms related to this study, and 3) compare and contrast the qualitative findings with existing literature (Creswell, 2014).

This chapter will be introduced by a description of the social work profession in terms of key concepts, principles, and values. This will be related to social work education and training, which will also be framed within the GS and the norms and standards for social work education. Psychosocial and academic challenges experienced by student social workers prior to the COVID-19 pandemic will be described, followed by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The literature review concludes with a presentation of learning and teaching approaches relevant to this study, namely: FLT, BLT, and OLT approaches.

3.2 SOCIAL WORK

The Global Definition of Social Work outlines three focus areas of social work as an academic discipline and a practice-based profession, namely: (1) social change and development, (2) social cohesion, and (3) the empowerment and liberation of people (Jaswal & Kshetrimayum, 2020; Bhatt & Sanyaal, 2019; IFSW, 2014). These components are supported as follows in recent literature as the core aspects of social work.

- Rambaree (2020) asserts that the social work profession is known for being transformational and developmental in its very nature.
- Focusing on social cohesion, Lofredo (2020), Fonseca et al., (2018) and Gearhart and Joseph (2018) explain that social work aims to create a willingness among members of society to work together for the purpose of promoting peace and prosperity. Kyllönen (2019) further argues that members of socially cohesive societies do not necessarily share identical values and beliefs. In contrast, the author postulates that community members benefit from diversity in a society where social cohesion is experienced. Therefore, social workers facilitate the process of creating a sense of belonging for members of society and strengthen relationships among community members (Lofredo, 2020).
- The empowerment and liberation of the oppressed and marginalised is described by Brophy (2020) and Bragg (2018) as the key focus of the social work profession. Social work's interventions aimed at empowerment are focused on issues of unemployment, healthcare, discrimination, poverty, and social injustices (Joseph, 2019; Toft & Calhoun, 2020). It involves empowerment strategies to advocate for access to resources, services, and equal opportunities to all people (Joseph, 2019). However, Stark (2018) notes that neoliberal influences have shifted the key focus of the social work profession from empowering people to monetarising welfare services and withholding resources from the vulnerable. This viewpoint was highlighted by the way in which inequalities became more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic (Arndt et al., 2020). Notwithstanding that, social workers are trained to advocate for social justice, human rights, as well as value collective responsibility, and respect for diversities (Bhatt & Sanyaal, 2019).

According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (NASW, 2008, cited in Moore et al., 2018), social justice is one of the core values of social work. Social justice enables members of societies to become responsible members who can all share and enjoy human rights (Alseth, 2020). The promotion of human rights is linked to social work activism by Briskman (2020). Collective responsibility is an ethical collaboration to develop and contribute to the well-being of the society (Le Fevre, 2020; Giubilini & Levy, 2018).

The NASW (2017) provides ethical principles for social work practice. The ethical principles are embedded in the revised Code of Ethics that was first approved in 1996, and are based on the core values of social work practice, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Values and ethical principles of social work practice
(NASW, 2017)

No.	Values	Ethical Principles
1.	Service	The primary goal of social workers is to help people in need and to address social problems.
2.	Social justice	Social workers challenge social injustice.
3.	Dignity and worth of the person	Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of all people.
4.	Importance of human relationships	Social workers recognise the central importance of human relationships.
5.	Integrity	Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner.
6.	Competence	Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.

Social work practice is guided by the above values and ethical principles. On the one hand, each ethical principle is informed by a specific value, while on the other hand, the respect for these values is seen in the implementation of the ethical principles in social work practice.

The above-mentioned components, principles, and values guide the education and training of student social workers. The next section will discuss the components of social work education and training in more detail.

3.2.1 Social Work Education and Training

The Global Definition of Social Work (IFSW, 2014) discussed above informs the focus and content of social work education and training. In terms of the promotion of social change and human development, Rambaree (2020) asserts that student social workers are equipped with knowledge, values, and skills to improve human well-being.

Similarly, Smith and Rasool (2020) argue that student social workers are trained not to maintain inequalities, but to be change agents that support the well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities through interventions that support social justice and social cohesion. In addition, social work education and training equip student social workers to be able to work with diverse groups of people using anti-oppressive and non-discriminatory approaches to empower communities (Nunev, 2019; Pack & Brown, 2017). As such, they develop competencies to advocate against social injustices aimed at social transformation (Moore et al., 2018). In essence, student social workers are provided with knowledge, understanding, and skills to restore the value of human rights that have been taken for granted or exploited (Laidlaw et al., 2020) through the development of collective responsibility (Gotea & Roşculeţ, 2019).

Vandekinderen et al., (2020) posit that, in order to be able to work within the Global Definition of Social Work, student social workers are taught to ethically challenge diverse social problems experienced by individuals, families, groups, and communities. In line with this viewpoint, Mehrotra et al., (2019), Drechsler et al., (2019) and Pitner et al., (2017) argue for social work education and training that support students to embrace diversity and difference in practice. In this regard, Pitner et al., (2017) recommend that student social workers acquire the following attributes to understand and embrace diversity: 1) cultural humility, 2) commitment to learn about different cultures and societies, and 3) continuous reflection of one's own culture, background, feelings, and identity.

In this section, social work education and training will be discussed in terms of the South African BSW degree programme, and linked to the Global Standards for Social Work Education and the South African Norms and Standards for Social Work Education.

3.2.1.1 The Bachelor of Social Work

The social work qualification was introduced in South Africa in 1937 (De Jager, 2013). The qualification evolved over the decades, and currently the BSW is a four-year degree programme, which is equivalent to an Honours qualification. This qualification

prepares students at the undergraduate level to be able to conduct research at a master’s level (Faculty of Community and Health Sciences [CHS], 2015; De Jager, 2013). It is also designed to prepare students for professional practice, with a diverse range of careers (CHS, 2015). The BSW programme is aimed at the development of nine core areas of applied competence and skills that are assessed in a specific context under particular conditions, as listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4: BSW core standards, applied competence and skills & context and conditions for assessment (CHE, 2015, pp. 10–14)

Core standard 1: The development and consolidation of a professional identity as a social worker
Knowledge, understanding & skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding the power of process and building sound relationships; ▪ demonstrated ability in advancing human rights, and working with and for the most disadvantaged groups in society; ▪ commitment to work towards social justice and egalitarian societies; ▪ understanding the self as an important instrument of intervention; ▪ commitment to caring, building humane societies and mutual inter-dependence; ▪ use of validation as one of the core empowerment strategies in working with individuals, families, groups and communities; ▪ willingness to be for the Other, and ability for empathic entry into the life worlds of people; ▪ demonstrated skills in critical thinking and scholarly attitudes of reasoning, and openness to new experiences and paradigms; ▪ commitment to professional ethics and to on-going professional development; ▪ ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity and to think on one’s feet; ▪ understanding of social work as a context-embedded, proactive and responsive profession; ▪ ability to use supervision effectively in practice; ▪ demonstrated ability to understand the links between the personal and the professional dimensions of life and the relationship between the micro- and the macro-aspects of students’ lives and the lives of people with whom they engage.
Core standard 2: Application of core values and principles of social work
Knowledge, understanding & skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrated ability to respect the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings; ▪ demonstrated understanding that every person has the ability to solve his/her problem; ▪ demonstrated ability to separate acceptance of the person while challenging and changing conditions and behaviours that are self-destructive or harmful to others; ▪ upholding the value of doing no harm and practising beneficence;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understanding the mutual inter-dependence among human beings and between human beings and other living entities, and a commitment to inter-generational equity and continuity (third generation rights) as advocated by 'green' social work; ▪ respecting the rights of people to inclusion in decision-making and in the planning and use of services; ▪ respecting rights to self-determination (with due consideration to potential structural constraints); ▪ respecting rights to confidentiality within legislative constraints.
Core standard 3: Holistic assessment and intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities
Knowledge, understanding & skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognising humans as bio-psycho-social (BPS) beings, as the biological, psychological and social (including the spiritual) dimensions of life are interconnected and mutually reinforcing; ▪ undertaking holistic BPS assessments to facilitate holistic intervention directly and/or through referrals to appropriate professionals and resources; ▪ understanding of the Person-in-Environment gestalt, appreciating that the environment consists of the natural, geographic environment and the various social systems, both proximate and distal, that surround and impact individual and family functioning; ▪ understanding of how historical and contemporary BPS approaches impact on human functioning and capabilities development; ▪ ability to undertake appropriate interventions ranging from direct protective/therapeutic/educational interventions with individuals, families and groups to broader community interventions, including education, social activism and/or advocacy at local, regional and/or international levels; ▪ ability to use a range of strategies to monitor and evaluate interventions.
Core standard 4: Demonstrated competence in the use of codes of ethics vis-à-vis the moral impulse
Knowledge, understanding & skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness of international, regional and national statements of ethical principles and codes of ethics; ▪ critical engagement with codes of ethics; ▪ recognising the interrelatedness between the moral impulse and codes of ethics; ▪ awareness of the boundaries of professional practice and what constitutes unprofessional conduct; ▪ understanding of principled ethics and feminist relational ethics, and skills of negotiating ethical decision-making through discourse ethics and dialogue, and through peer consultation and supervision.
Core standard 5: Working with a range of diversities
Knowledge, understanding & skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate self-awareness regarding personal and cultural values, beliefs, traditions and biases and how these might influence the ability to develop relationships with people, and to work with diverse population groups;

- awareness of self as individual and as member of collective sociocultural groups in terms of strengths and areas for further development;
- competence in non-discrimination on the basis of culture, nationality, ethnicity, religion, language, race, gender, language, physical status, and sexual orientation;
- ability to minimise group stereotypes and prejudices and to ensure that racist, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic behaviour, policies and structures are not reproduced through social work practice;
- ability to form relationships with, and treat all persons with respect and dignity irrespective of such persons' cultural and ethnic beliefs, gender, nationality, language, religion, disability and sexual orientation;
- ability to serve as cultural mediators through the use of constructive confrontation, conflict-mediation, discourse ethics and dialogue where local cultural values, traditions and practices might violate universally accepted human rights, as entrenched in national, regional and international human rights instruments;
- awareness of the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration and teamwork across disciplines and among social service professionals

Core standard 6: Ability to undertake research

Knowledge, understanding & skills

- Demonstrate appropriate skills in the use of qualitative and/or quantitative research methods;
- ability to recognise and apply the ethical requisites of social work research;
- ability to use research to inform practice and vice-versa;
- appreciate the value of practice-based research, of practice as research, and of research as practice;
- ability to document and communicate research findings to professional and non-professional audiences.

Core standard 7: Knowledge, practice skills and theories

Knowledge, understanding & skills

- Ability to make judicious selection from the wide range of available knowledge and theories to facilitate conceptualisation at higher levels of abstraction;
- ability to select from a range of theoretical perspectives and practice skills to facilitate effective interventions at the level of the individual, family, group, organisation and community;
- demonstrate an understanding of the structural determinants of people's lives and how criteria such as race, class, gender, language, religion, geographic location, disability and sexual orientation might constitute sources of privilege and/or oppression.
- demonstrate an understanding of the complex relationship between the power of structural determinants and the power of human agency, and the relationship between freedom and responsibility;
- show awareness of strategies to facilitate praxis and consciousness-raising to enable people to understand and challenge structural determinants of normalisation, and of oppression and/or privilege;
- demonstrate critical understanding of how socio-structural inequalities, discrimination, oppression, and social, political, economic, and environmental injustices impact on human functioning and development at all levels.

Core standard 8: Policy and legislation	
Knowledge, understanding & skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate an understanding of how social welfare policy and legislation influence the conception of issues as social problems, interventions, and resource allocation; ▪ ability to analyse, formulate, evaluate and advocate for policies that enhance human well-being and environmental sustainability; ▪ demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between law and social work; ▪ applying knowledge of global, regional and national declarations, policies and legislation relevant to social welfare and social work; ▪ applying knowledge of national, provincial and local governance structures, and the general laws and charters governing social welfare policy and social work services in South Africa; ▪ identifying understanding the historical, political, and economic dimensions of welfare policies. 	
Core standard 9: Writing and communication of professional knowledge	
Knowledge, understanding & skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to write coherent, logical, grammatically correct and well considered reports/memos, whether for internal or external use; ▪ awareness of the ethical and legal aspects of report writing; ▪ awareness of the targeted audience of any particular communication; the central messages to be communicated and how these are to be communicated, for example, probation reports; reports for children's court enquiries, divorce settlements, referrals for medical/psychiatric assessment and treatment; support for a social action campaign; ▪ demonstrate clear, coherent and engaging oral communication skills; ▪ ability to apply interviewing skills; ▪ ability to record and disseminate social work research findings and knowledge; ▪ ability to function in a multilingual context and to use oral and/or written translation and interpretation when necessary. 	
Context & conditions for assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A variety of assessment strategies, including summative and formative assessment, is used on a continuous basis to monitor students' progress. ▪ Assessment of practice includes a range of forms from simulated teaching on real life issues to work-based learning in field placements, the latter being mandatory to achieve all the graduate attributes. ▪ Assessment is done by appropriately qualified institutional and/or field supervisors who have adequate infrastructural resources available in order to achieve the purpose of the qualification. ▪ An adequate student: staff ratio is available to ensure that students receive individual and group supervision on a continuous basis to facilitate their personal and professional development. ▪ Mechanisms are in place for peer and self-assessment, particularly with regard to field practice. ▪ A scaffolded approach to assessment from first to fourth-year of study is adopted to ensure the incremental integration of theory and practice and the capacity for reflexive practice.

While Standards 2 and 4 specifically emphasise the core values and principles of the social work profession (cf. NASW, 2017), as well as the code of ethics, Standard 1 (professional identity) relates to integrity and service. Standard 3 (holistic assessment and intervention) aligns with the dignity and worth of the person and also with the importance of human relationships, while Standard 5 (working with diversities) has to do with social justice, the dignity and worth of people, and the importance of human relationships. Standards 6 (research), 7 (knowledge, skills and theories), 8 (policy and legislation) and 9 (writing and communication skills) relate to both service and competence.

The purpose of the BSW degree programme is to provide a thoroughly grounded and inclusive professional education and training. As such, the programme includes a practice or fieldwork component that is designed to prepare students to “be broad and flexible enough to be responsive to different contexts” (CHE, 2015, p. 6). In line with the above discussed Global Definition of Social Work, the BSW degree equips and enables students to promote social change and social cohesion, and to liberate, empower, and develop people and the environment from micro to macro level. It is grounded on principles of respect for human dignity and diversities, social justice, and the promotion of human rights (Laidlaw et al., 2020; Stepney & Thompson, 2021).

Since social work is a practice-based discipline and profession, the theory taught needs to be applicable in practice. However, concerns have been raised about the existing gap between theory and practice in social work education and training (Alpaslan, 2019). It has been highlighted that social work programmes do not foster the necessary skills and knowledge required for practice (Morley & Stenhouse, 2021; Alpaslan, 2019; De Jager, 2013). For example, participants in research conducted by De Jager (2013) reflected on their undergraduate training in the BSW programme, acknowledging the fact that they lacked the confidence and ability to implement legislation in practice, and reporting that they felt underprepared for practice post the attainment of the BSW qualification. Alpaslan (2019) conducted a study that focused on social work employers’ perspectives of the employability of newly qualified social workers. It was discovered that factors such as lack of passion for the profession,

inability to function independently, lack of exposure to statutory work, poor report writing, and inability to integrate theory in practice hampered unemployed newly qualified social workers (UNQSWs) to be viewed as employable (Alpaslan, 2020). This calls for a review of social work curricula to ensure that students are equipped with the required knowledge, understanding, and skills needed in the profession of social work (Laidlaw et al., 2020).

To reflect on what the focus of social work education and training could entail, the following section will outline the Global Standards for social work education.

3.2.1.2 The Global Standards for Social Work Education

Social work education and training in South Africa is underpinned by the Global Standards for Social Work Education set out by IFSW and IASSW (2020). The main objectives of the GS are set to:

- Facilitate consistency in the provision of social work education while appreciating and valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Ensure that social work education adheres to the values and policies of the profession as articulated by the IFSW and IASSW.
- Support and safeguard staff, students, and service users involved in the education process.
- Guarantee that the next generation of social workers have access to excellent quality learning, and opportunities that also incorporate social work knowledge deriving from research, experience, policy, and practice.
- Nurture a spirit of collaboration and knowledge transfer between different social work schools and between social work education, practice, and research.
- Support social work schools to become thriving, well-resourced, inclusive, and participatory teaching and learning environments (IFSW & IASSW, 2020).

The main aim of the GS is to promote the universality of social work values through three interrelated components that will be discussed below (IFSW & IASSW, 2020).

- **Component 1: School.** This term refers to those HEIs where social work education and training takes place in schools, departments, or institutes. The GS focuses on the structures, administration, governance, and resources of schools. Related to this study, the IFSW and IASSW (2020) assert that OLT should not permanently replace the F2F mode of learning, and advise that F2F learning and teaching is essential in social work education and training. Contrary to this, Reamer (2019) argues that technology has transformed social work education and training significantly. Boddy (2016), however, suggests that policies and standards need to be developed with regards to how student social workers and educators should engage in online platforms for educational purposes.

- **Component 2: People.** This component includes educators and students. In accordance with the GS, schools of social work are expected to appoint qualified educators with adequate experience in social work practice and research. Educators must be included in the decision-making processes related to the development of the programme and its main purpose. Alarming, in a recent study regarding social work educators' perspectives on challenges of social work education in India, Baikady et al., (2020) discovered that social work educators were unable to provide a clear definition of what social work entails as a practice-based profession. Findings in a study examining competencies among social work educators in Malaysia by Zuraiju et al., (2020) indicated that continuous training and long-life learning are pivotal strategies to ensure that social work educators remain competent in social work knowledge and practice. Furthermore, Wenocur et al., (2020) noted that new social work educators face a number of challenges, such as carrying out their responsibilities, managing workloads, and managing student trauma. The latter may also relate to students' experiences during the pandemic. This points to a need for the development of a social work educator workforce in terms of knowledge and skills that include educational practices of student centredness. This is also highlighted in the GS, which emphasises that students must be provided with opportunities to increase and develop self-awareness regarding their personal life experiences and how that has the potential

to impact how they develop relationships with diverse groups of people in the profession.

Schools of social work are tasked with setting and providing transparent and sound admission criteria for the BSW programme (IFSW & IASSW, 2020). This is supported by Street et al., (2016) and Street (2018), who contend that admission in social work education plays an important role in affording students the opportunity to enrol in the BSW programme. In the South African context, Khan (2020) argues that academic admissions and selection processes into HEIs are based on the country's political and socioeconomic history. HEIs have a responsibility to maintain high academic standards while increasing access, equity, and social justice for students who fall under previously disadvantaged groups (Khan, 2020; Mahlangu, 2020). A concerning aspect is that, according to Mahlangu (2020), most HEIs in South Africa use basic selection criteria that is based on the merit of the prospective student. In this regard, Matsepe et al., (2020) argue that merit-based selection criteria favour students from racially privileged backgrounds. On the other hand, the findings of Khan's (2020) study revealed that potential student social workers at the University of Cape Town (UCT) were only required to meet the basic requirements in order to be enrolled in the BSW programme; this improved access into the BSW programme.

- **Component 3: Profession.** To uphold a shared understanding of the profession, the GS stipulates that schools should associate with the necessary stakeholders, including regulators and regional associations of the social work profession and education. Social work education in South Africa is regulated by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and CHE (Nkomo, 2020). Schools should also ensure registration of students and staff with the regional professional bodies. In South Africa, student social workers and social workers are required by The Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 (RSA, 1978) to register with the SACSSP (Nkomo, 2020).

The norms and standards for social work education in South Africa are outlined below.

3.2.1.3 The Norms and Standards for Social Work Education

The SACSSP (2020) has set the minimum norms and standards for social work education and training in South African HEIs to maintain the quality education of the BSW programmes. The aim is to ensure that the BSW programmes offered in HEIs produce well-equipped social workers who are well-educated about the profession, its principles and values, and ethics (SACSSP, 2020). According to the SACSSP (2020), the quality assurance applied by the SACSSP to evaluate BSW programmes focuses on what is being offered, how it is being offered, and by whom. To assess the quality assurance of BSW programmes, the SACSSP uses an Assessment Tool that focuses on five components, namely: (a) admission, (b) academic programme management and resources, (c) curriculum content and teaching, (d) practice experience, and (e) assessment.

Table 5: BSW norms and standards (SACSSP, 2020)

Admission (SACSSP, 2020, pp. 7–9)	
Norms	Standards
The admission procedures are sufficiently clear to give both the applicants and the institutions information they require to make informed decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information provided to market the programme spells out the entry requirements. ▪ Full costs of the programme and bursaries, if any, are provided. ▪ Non-discrimination and equal access to the programme are ensured. ▪ Funding arrangements, e.g., loans and bursaries, are stipulated. ▪ Accommodation arrangements are described. ▪ Duration and content of the programme are stated. ▪ Length of field instruction and who is responsible for travelling costs are disclosed. ▪ Information is provided for international students
Admission criteria indicate selection and entry criteria, including evidence of English language proficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Admission criteria are clearly stated. ▪ The requirements for vetting of students are aligned with the SACSSP requirements for registration of a social worker and are clearly stated. ▪ The implications if an applicant does not pass the vetting requirements are clearly stated and alternative educational options identified. ▪ Proficiency in English is compulsory. Applicants are required to have obtained at least 50% in their final Matric examination for English.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The admission procedures allow for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior learning and other inclusion mechanisms.
Education criteria are set out clearly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A typical applicant has at least a minimum National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 4 qualification, equivalent to matriculation (bachelor) with a full exemption or an appropriate access-route qualification approved by the HEI. ▪ Applicants with the Certificate in Social Auxiliary Work (NQF Level 4) are considered for entry into the BSW programme.
Screening is done to ensure 'fit and proper' social work students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prospective students are required to produce documentation required by the SACSSP for registration at the time of BSW registration or by the time they apply for SACSSP student registration, in accordance with the SACSSP's Policy on the Fit and Proper Person Requirement (2017). This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Police Clearance Certificate ○ National Child Protection Register (Part B) clearance ○ Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Form 30) ○ Register of persons convicted of abuse of older persons (Older Person's Act 13 of 2006). ▪ Screening mechanisms, such as character reference from a credible source or echometrically-valid tests, are conducted.
Equality and diversity standards are aligned with South African standards.	There is a policy on diversity, non-discrimination, and equal access to the programme and how it is implemented and monitored.
Enrolment is planned in line with workforce requirements.	An enrolment strategy is available and takes into consideration the employment of programme graduates.
Academic programme management and resources (SACSSP, 2020, pp. 10–14)	
Norms	Standards
The programme is securely located in the institution's academic programme offering or other relevant strategic documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a commitment for long-term provision of adequate resources by the institution for programme delivery. ▪ There are minimal institutional risks or threats to programme delivery to ensure maximum support, and response plans to deal with unforeseen disasters.
The programme is managed effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The management structure, attendant roles and responsibilities, and linkages to practice placement providers are reflected in an organogram.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are administrative, human resource and financial systems in place to manage the programme. ▪ In instances where there are teaching and learning partnerships, partnership agreements or contracts are in place.
Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are integral to the programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ M&E systems are in place to ensure programme effectiveness. ▪ M&E focuses, inter alia, on lectures, practice placements, supervision, access to information and safety. ▪ Mechanisms to utilise M&E data to improve the programme and its delivery are in use.
There is a suitably qualified and experienced person to manage the programme overall.	The person responsible for overall professional responsibility (Head of Department or BSW Coordinator) is a registered social worker with appropriate qualifications and experience.
At least 75% of lecturers have at least three years of practical experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ratio of full-time equivalent (FTE) students per FTE lecturer (including part-time teaching staff but excluding supervisors) should not exceed 35:1. ▪ Lecturers (both full-time and part-time) are social workers registered with the SACSSP. ▪ Quality checks are in place in instances where specialist visiting lecturers, including non-social workers, are engaged. ▪ At least three-quarters of lecturers have at least three years of practice experience. ▪ All practice supervisors are SACSSP-registered social workers. ▪ Supervisors of first to third-year students have at least two years' practice experience. ▪ Supervisors of fourth-year students have at least three years' practice experience. ▪ There is adequate administrative, management, technical and pedagogical support for staff. ▪ The staff complement, across the ranks, is diverse in terms of race and gender, and well-represented by South Africans.
Continuing professional development is ensured through staff development programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a staff development policy and availability of accessible staff development opportunities. ▪ Staff have a suitable Continuing Professional Development [CPD] portfolio and meet the requirements of the Policy on continuing professional development policy (CPD) for social workers and social auxiliary workers (2019).

<p>Adequate provision is made for resources to enhance student learning in all settings to support the required learning and teaching activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sufficient and useful resources are available, including student handbooks and module guides, Information Technology (IT) and related facilities, academic and support staff, student supervisors, remedial support, texts and journals, equipment and materials. ▪ Provision is made for ease of access to these resources. ▪ These resources are up to date, and there should be budgets to replace stocks. ▪ Infrastructure is available and appropriate for the delivery of the programme, including lecture theatres, tutorial rooms, presentation equipment, specialist labs, computer laboratories, Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi), studio space and equipment. ▪ All facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. ▪ Mechanisms are available to monitor the utilisation of resources.
<p>There are adequate and accessible facilities to support the welfare and well-being of students in all settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilities are available for student support, e.g., counselling services, health centres and medical advice. ▪ Students are informed about these facilities and how to access them. ▪ A system of academic guidance and counselling support, including support, is available for students with learning difficulties and students with disabilities. ▪ Supervisors and lecturers monitor the mental health and psychosocial well-being and functioning of students and refer them for services where appropriate.
<p>A student complaints process is in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are formal student complaint processes in respect of all areas of teaching and learning. ▪ Policies and systems are in place to handle cases of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence within the university and practice placements (i.e., involving lecturers, supervisors, students, etc.). ▪ Students are informed about these processes.
<p>Student throughput is monitored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The department draws annual data on student throughput. ▪ The department discusses and makes plans to address any concerns regarding student throughput.
<p>Curriculum content and teaching (SACSSP, 2020, pp. 16–20)</p>	
<p>Norms</p>	<p>Standards</p>
<p>The curriculum is set out clearly in accessible HEI documentation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The curriculum is described in the University, Faculty, or Department's Yearbook or Prospectus. ▪ The curriculum lists the mandatory social work and elective (ancillary) modules that students must/may take. ▪ The total credit load of the BSW is at least 480 credits. ▪ The ratio of social work to non-social work modules increases over the four years.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least 50% of the BSW credits derive from social work modules
Curriculum content is organised in course outlines (e.g., study or learning guides and/or learning/teaching plans) that ensure the ease of flow and enhance the understanding of content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Module titles and codes are stated. ▪ Learning objectives and outcomes are stated clearly. ▪ Methodology for the delivery of content is stated clearly. ▪ Assessment tasks and marking criteria are stated and reflect the levels of proficiency intended by the module. ▪ There is alignment between course titles, outcomes, content, and assessment criteria. ▪ Students are given paper or digital copies of the course outlines.
Social work's philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge are reflected in the curriculum.	The programme reflects the profession's philosophy, core values, knowledge and skills and their relationship to the values enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996), and in the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 and accompanying regulations and policies.
Core social work knowledge is addressed adequately across the curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All the core knowledge domains, as set out in the CHE BSW Standard, are covered by the curriculum. ▪ Each area of knowledge is addressed more than once and over at least two different years. ▪ Knowledge increases in complexity over the four years. ▪ Significant use is made of South African literature (i.e., Western literature does not dominate the curriculum). ▪ Indigenous, local and/or African knowledge is taught. ▪ Curriculum content draws on and reflects a variety of theories relating to all aspects of social work.
Theory-practice integration is at the core of the curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The design of the programme indicates how theory is reflected in practice, i.e., demonstrates how theory impacts on practice and also how the practice is informed by theory. ▪ There are quality assurance mechanisms to enhance theory integration.
The curriculum is relevant to current practice in local contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curriculum development keeps pace with practice contexts as they change over time. ▪ Relevant current research impacts curriculum development. ▪ Recent and local peer-reviewed journal articles and books are used to enrich and enhance curriculum content. ▪ Recommendations from Quality Assurance reports are integrated to improve curriculum content. ▪ Inputs from placement agencies and supervisors are elicited and incorporated into curriculum development.
The curriculum ensures student understanding of the implications of the SACSSP's standards of conduct, performance, and ethics.	Knowledge and understanding of professional ethics and standards as set out by the SACSSP are fostered and firmly located in the curriculum.

<p>The delivery of the programme supports and develops independent and reflective thinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The programme encourages student activities about, e.g., self-appraisal, individual and group discussions, practice simulations and debriefing, reflective diaries or logs, professional development portfolios or personal development plans and practice placement reviews. ▪ Multiple ways of evaluating autonomous, systematic analysis and reflective thinking are utilised.
<p>The delivery of the programme encourages evidence-informed practice.</p>	<p>Students can demonstrate evidence-informed learning in their practice modules.</p>
<p>The range of learning and teaching approaches used is appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum.</p>	<p>A variety of learning and teaching approaches are utilised towards the delivery of intended outcomes.</p>
<p>Where interdisciplinary or multi-professional learning is indicated, the profession-specific skills and knowledge of each professional group are adequately addressed.</p>	<p>In instances where interdisciplinary learning is indicated, content affords students the ability and opportunity to work with other professionals and teamwork.</p>
<p>Sound teaching practices are applied</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The department and individual staff members have an articulated teaching philosophy for the BSW. ▪ Each module is allocated to one or more module lecturer(s). ▪ Attendance registers are kept for all classes. ▪ Tutorial (discussion, supplementary instruction) classes are held at least for first-year level
<p>Practice experience (SACSSP, 2020, pp. 21–26)</p>	
<p>Norms</p>	<p>Standards</p>
<p>Practice experience is integral to the programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A departmental policy on field instruction is available that addresses, among others, hours per year, skills development activities, number of sessions of micro/meso/macro practice per level, reporting requirements, supervision, and a scaffolding approach. ▪ The practice placement component of the BSW is overseen by the Head of Department or Programme Leader and forms an integral part of the department's management activities. ▪ Theory and practice are integrated at all levels. The theoretical modules are aligned with field instruction modules at each level. ▪ Integrated field instruction is offered to students from the first-year to the fourth-year.

<p>Practice experience appropriately supports the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Over the four years, students complete and provide evidence of at least 700 hours of actual social work in the field (excluding report writing). ▪ Placements are structured in such a way that students can cover all areas of the set outcomes and have access to a wide range of learning experiences in a variety of practice environments which reflect the practice setting of social work practice. ▪ Students have multiple opportunities (i.e., at more than only one year of study) to practice at each of the micro, meso and macro levels. ▪ The placements are well structured per year/level, to facilitate increasing levels of practice complexity and proficiency and time in the field. ▪ Logbooks are used in the entire field instruction experience of a student. ▪ All second-level social work students are registered with the SACSSP before the commencement of their field instruction placement. ▪ Students are oriented to each new placement. ▪ Each student is assigned a suitable supervisor for the duration of the placement, such that all work is done under supervision. ▪ Students get experience at different placements each year. ▪ Students who are more than one year over time have an individualised educational development plan.
<p>The practice placement setting provides a safe and supportive environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The organisations where students are placed have a safety policy in place and conduct periodic risk or safety assessments to ensure adherence to their policy. ▪ Students are oriented to the placement's safety policy. ▪ Cases that are allocated by the organisation to a student are appropriate to his/her level of skill and competence, and to the learning requirements of that level of study. ▪ Placements have a policy regarding the safety of students on aggression and sexual harassment from service users and placement staff. ▪ HEIs monitor the incidence of violence (muggings, assaults, rapes, etc.) as students move between the HEI and practice placements. ▪ HEIs make efforts to reduce the likelihood of these incidents and to improve responsiveness to these incidents.

<p>The HEI must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice placement selection criteria and the accreditation process of placements are documented. ▪ The programme has on-going documented partnership arrangements (e.g., Memoranda of Understanding) with agencies, setting out the roles and responsibilities of the agency, supervisors, HEI and student. ▪ Individual student placement contracts are in place for each student placement pairing that sets out expectations, limitations, rules, rights, and grievance procedures. ▪ A process for monitoring placements is documented and applied. ▪ Student placements are terminated by the HEI at the end of the student placement. ▪ Case files are appropriately and ethically stored, and cases are referred at the termination of placements. ▪ Placements are terminated or re-contracted by the end of each academic year.
<p>The placement providers have equality and diversity policies concerning students, together with how these will be implemented and monitored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The placement provider has proof of implementing the Employment Equity Policy about its staff profile. ▪ Students are informed about the policies of the organisation on diversity, how to gain access to them and to utilise them if they feel that they are discriminated.
<p>Adequate numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced staff are available to offer students appropriate supervision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only SACSSP-registered social workers with at least two years' (three less than stipulated in the national Supervision Framework) practice experience supervise students, except for supervisors of fourth-year students who require at least three years' practice experience. ▪ Supervisors are oriented to the practical training requirements of the social work programme. ▪ Supervisors receive regular in-service training from the HEI or agency relevant to supervision and/or the competencies required for the year group they are supervising. ▪ Supervisors who are involved in both formative and summative assessment are provided with appropriate training and guidance, which is CPD accredited. ▪ Supervisors are provided with opportunities for professional development to enhance the quality of supervision (e.g., access to the university library, provision of course-related readings, CPD activities).
<p>There are appropriately enough mandated staff at the HEI to manage field experience of social work students at all levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sufficient academic staff are tasked to work on the field instruction programme. ▪ Staff are mandated, according to workload allocation and authority, to coordinate and/or run the field instruction programme.
<p>Unethical conduct is managed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students are not permitted to practice as student social workers until they are registered as student social workers with SACSSP.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supervision and practice workshops address ethical conduct in practice. ▪ Supervisors receive training on the ethics of providing supervision and the accountability of supervisors for student conduct. ▪ Mechanisms are in place to deal with unethical conduct by student social workers and by academic staff, supervisors, or placement agency staff. ▪ Service users are protected from unethical or unprofessional conduct by student social workers. ▪ Severe cases of ethical misconduct are reported to the SACSSP.
The field has the opportunity to contribute to the quality of the BSW programme.	Supervisors and practice placements are invited (at least annually) to give feedback on various aspects of the BSW programme, including field placements, supervision, preparation of students for practice, theory, course content, ethics, HEI-placement relations, and community projects.
Assessments (SACSSP, 2020, pp. 28–30)	
Norms	Standards
Each HEI has an assessment and moderation policy as adapted from the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The policy includes the assessment of theoretical knowledge, values or attitudes and practical skills. ▪ University procedures for submitting marks to the next level are available and applied.
Assessment strategy and design ensure that students who complete the programme have met the standards for proficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The strategy includes a direct reference to graduate attributes in the CHE BSW Standard and methods of assessments. ▪ Each module includes how it is assessed. ▪ Learning outcomes and assessment criteria are included in the learning programme before learning takes place. ▪ Students are not permitted to attempt a field instruction module more than twice.
Learning achievements of students are appropriately moderated (internally or externally).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For summative assessments, primarily where more than one marker is involved, internal moderation is undertaken to ensure assessment procedures are fair, authentic, valid, and reliable. ▪ External moderators are suitably experienced and registered social workers. ▪ All fourth-year modules are externally moderated.
Assessment policy specifies the right, requirements, and procedure for students to appeal assessment results.	Information is provided to students about the HEI's appeals procedure. The appeals procedure outlines how a student can ask for a review of a decision made on assessment, progression and achievement, including how the procedure works, is judged, and who is responsible for it.

<p>Sound assessment practices are applied.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Academic staff who teach the module design; and implement formative and summative assessments of students' competencies for recording results and feedback to students. ▪ Procedures are in place and followed to receive, record, mark and return assignments within a time frame that allows students to benefit from feedback before the submission of further assessment tasks. ▪ Assessment tasks address a wide range of academic and professional competencies using a variety of assessment methods. ▪ Assessment tasks are meaningfully aligned to the module topic and outcomes, the CHE BSW Standard and the relevant NQF level. ▪ Students are informed of what assessment tasks they are required to complete and how they will be assessed. ▪ Opportunity is provided for students to learn from their assessments through meaningful and individualised feedback on assessment tasks. ▪ Assessment of practice competencies draws on the insights of the supervisor, the staff at the practice placement (even if not social workers), and the lecturer and student, to provide a comprehensive picture of the students' competencies. ▪ Lecturers take responsibility for the final mark allocation of assessments, even when others (e.g., supervisors) contribute to the assessment, to ensure the maintenance of a sound and level-appropriate academic standards.
--	--

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Norms and standards for **admission** into the BSW programme direct how information related to applications and selections are provided; the selection and education criteria for admissions; how equality and diversity should be upheld; and how admissions should reflect the needs and requirements of the social service profession's workforce. This component for the **academic management and resources** relates to the human and material resources and processes that should be in place for the proper management and implementation of the BSW programme.

The norms and standards provide guidelines in terms of the programme's placement in the university structures, the management and M&E of the programme, the staff component, resources for learning and teaching, support to students, and the assurance that successful throughput is facilitated. The norms and standards of **curriculum content and teaching** for the BSW programme relates to the quality of

the curriculum content, and how teaching and learning should take place. Specific focus is placed on the integration of theory and practice, the use of indigenous knowledge and local literature, and the importance of the relevance to the practice context. Curriculum development is viewed as an integral part of social work education and training, and it should be demonstrated in social work teaching and practice to develop competent social work candidates who are knowledgeable about social work principles, values, knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the profession.

The norms and standards of **practice experience** highlight the need for practice education to be an integrated part of learning and teaching. Descriptions are provided to guide the selection of placement settings, supervision and lecturing, and the management of unethical conduct. **Assessments** are guided by the norms and standards to ensure the quality of the qualification. It requires assessments to be based on the HEI's assessment and moderation policies that should be aligned with that of the SAQA assessments and moderations to be conducted by skilled staff; and that an appeal process is in place.

The next part provides a discussion on academic and psychosocial challenges experienced by student social workers prior to and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2.2 Psychosocial and Academic Challenges of Student Social Workers Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The process of attaining a tertiary education in general is said to pose psychosocial and academic challenges on students (Dlamini et al., 2020; Govender, 2020; Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018). Zondi (2018, p. 1) posits that “life and academics stress” often impact students’ psychosocial well-being and academic performance negatively. This author explored factors that generate stress in the lives of university students at the University of Venda (UNIVEN), and identified four factors: 1) *Personal factors*: This includes financial problems, anxiety about the future, and poor time-management. 2) *Relationship factors*: This involves established poor relationships with family, partners and friends, university roommates and lecturers. 3) *Academic factors*: This comprises the fear of failure, fear of not qualifying for examinations, and

fear of not adapting to the university environment. 4) *Environmental factors*: This refers to poor accommodation facilities, poor academic facilities, climate related stress, and changes in students' personal lives. A number of studies (Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018; Karaman et al., 2017; Hetolang & Amone-P'Olak, 2017) have identified academic factors as a primary contributor to stress, which also impacts on personal and relationship factors (Barker et al., 2018).

Van Breda (2018) notes that a number of students at South African universities are psychosocially vulnerable due to poverty, loss of family members and high levels of crime, and that these adversities negatively impact their academic progress, resulting in students failing or dropping out of tertiary education. Walker (2020) describes poverty and a lack of income as a threat to students' well-being. Focusing on opportunities and inequalities experienced by low-income students who migrate from rural areas to urban universities, Walker and Mathebula (2020) highlight that they experience serious challenges to afford university accommodation, study materials, food, transport, and clothes. This, then, results in students working part-time, which affects academic progress and mental well-being (Baglow & Gair, 2018). A term associated with poverty among students is that of 'food insecurity'. In the United States of America (USA), Miles et al., (2017) found that female Black student social workers were more susceptible to food insecurity; Raskind et al.'s (2019) study found a relation between food insecurity and poorer psychosocial health, and Weaver et al., (2019) drew a link between food insecurity and academic performance. In Nigeria, Ukegbu et al., (2019) found that students need multiple sources of income to address food insecurity successfully. In the South African context, Sabi (2018) found that food insecurity was more prevalent among male undergraduate students, contrary to Miles et al.'s (2017) finding mentioned above. Sabi (2018) also found a link between food insecurity and academic engagement and progress. The costs of tertiary education are seen as a challenge for low-income South African families (Bitzer & De Jager, 2018), resulting in national student protests such as the 2015/2016 #FeesMustFall Movement (Hendricks, 2018; Naidoo & McKay, 2018), where students demanded free education (Cini, 2019). However, although some students are funded by the National

Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and other independent bursaries, the majority of students are not funded (Naidoo & McKay, 2018).

In social work education and training, field work placement is an essential component of the BSW programme, which allows students to develop skills and to integrate theory and practice (Amadasun, 2021; Wu, 2020). Malka and Langer's (2019) study illuminated the importance of the development of the core social work values to build a rapport with clients in certain cultural contexts. In Nigeria, Amadasun (2020) indicated that some of the challenges that were experienced by student social workers in their fieldwork placements included a lack of supervision resulting in self-doubt, and inadequate report writing skills training resulting in feelings of incompetence.

Similarly, a study by De Bie et al., (2020) explored the experiences of racialised, indigenous, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ), and disabled students in social work field placements. Findings highlighted concerns about vulnerability to discrimination, a lack of proper supervision, and inadequate training of basic skills, such as report writing. A study by Thobela (2020) focused on male student social workers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) experiences regarding field practice with school learners. Some of the challenges experienced by these students comprised of gendered stereotypes, gendered perception, and stigma from the learners and society since social work is mistakenly considered to be a feminine profession (Labra et al., 2018; Thobela, 2020). In this regard, Malka and Langer (2019) assert that social work educators need to be aware of the emotional experiences of student social workers during field practice. Tarshis and Baird (2019) proffer that supervision can be utilised as a platform to support students to deal with trauma exposure in the field practice. Other support systems offered by universities are also needed to provide students who experience challenges, such as disabilities, with academic and personal support to ensure academic success (Sellmaier & Kim, 2020). Zondi (2018) and Hetolang and Amone-P'Olak (2017) recommend that universities' health promotions can support students to develop stress-management skills. Turner and Price (2020), referring to personal factors of past trauma, affirm that students need

to be supported and counselled before they can provide support to others in field placements.

In terms of the development of the self and a professional identity, Keesler (2019) explored student social workers' experiences and attitudes towards people with psychiatric, physical, and developmental disabilities. Findings indicated that education and life experiences were influential factors that contributed towards their understanding about disabilities. Therefore, Keesler (2019) proposes that social work educators promote dialogues and teachings about different types of disabilities to empower students on how to respond to and support people with disabilities.

The next section will expand on the discussion of psychosocial and academic challenges by focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3 THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Flynn (2020) asks for a transnational practice approach to successfully address the challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic imposed by globalisation. In terms of social work education and training, Amadasun (2021) challenges stakeholders in Africa to reimagine and rebrand social work education and training due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. McLaughlin et al., (2020) argue that while the pandemic brought about tremendous change in the administration of social work education and training, it also sparked innovation and challenged social work programmes to be delivered via online platforms.

This study focused on the OLT experiences of student social workers and their educators during the pandemic. In addition, considering the factors identified as stressors to academic success identified by Zondi (2018) described above, the researcher was also interested in the influence of socioeconomic factors on the learning and teaching experiences. It has been reported that the socioeconomic inequalities in South Africa became illuminated during the pandemic, and that it was also visible among previously disadvantaged and previously advantaged universities

and their students (Czerniewicz, 2020). It becomes essential to understand the psychosocial influence on students to be able to identify what is needed for academic success, also during a pandemic.

In a developing country like South Africa, access to technology and technology literacy interfere with the effective implementation of BLT (Cloete, 2017). Van der Westhuizen et al., (2021) argue that, prior to the pandemic, some student social workers were challenged by a lack of technological skills and access to resources. This, then, had a negative impact on the transition to online learning platforms. The challenges experienced by students and educators must therefore be viewed in terms of the existing issues of social capital, poor living conditions, high data costs, limited bandwidth, and psychosocial factors that adversely affect students from lower socioeconomic groups (Motala & Menon, 2020; Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe, 2020).

In terms of the academic programme, the SACSSP (2020) provided interim ethical guidelines for social workers in South Africa regarding technology-supported social work services. These guidelines serve as a framework for the development of knowledge and skills of student social workers. The following aspects were highlighted:

- Inclusion and updating of emerging knowledge and skills needed for the utilisations of technologies that support e-social work.
- The use of consultation and supervision when using technologies in social work practice to protect the client system.
- Developing technological skills based on best practices supported by research findings.
- Technological skills development to use a variety of platforms and applications, to ensure that security matters are in place, and to document information in an ethical manner.

These guidelines point to the need to include the development of technological skills in the BSW programme, but it does not focus on how learning and teaching on an online platform could support the development of technological knowledge and skills.

This study explored the online experiences of both student social workers and educators.

The learning approaches relevant to this study will be discussed next as a conclusion to the literature review.

3.4 LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES

3.4.1 Flexible Learning and Teaching

Most HEIs in South Africa have temporarily put on hold on-campus learning and teaching activities to limit and manage the spread of the coronavirus, by opting for a FLT approach. FLT promotes uninterrupted learning and teaching (Huang et al., 2020), and furthermore, supports access to quality learning even during disruptions (Andrade & Alden-Rivers, 2019). As outlined in Debnath et al., 2013:37), FLT comprises of the following characteristics:

- It is a student-centred learning and teaching approach,
- Flexibility is seen through choices offered in the following learning dimensions: time, location, methods, learning styles, content, organisational infrastructure, and entry requirements.
- Learning and teaching is flexible rather than fixed,
- Promotes easy, engaged, and effective learning and teaching,
- Learning is self-paced.

In a study conducted by Abenes and Caballes (2020:65), results show that students used the following gadgets, also known as devices, to engage in FLT:

- Smartphone
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Desktop computer

Findings also revealed that they accessed the Internet using the following sources of Internet connection (Abenes & Caballes, 2020:65):

- Mobile data
- Wi-Fi

In addition, Abenes and Caballes (2020, p. 67) found that students preferred the following learning platforms when engaging in FLT:

- Zoom
- Google Classrooms
- Google mail (Gmail) and Yahoo mail
- Hangouts
- Viber
- Facebook Page/Messenger

The following section outlines the characteristics of BLT and resources used in the learning and teaching process.



3.4.2 Blended learning and teaching

The rapid development of IT has provided educators with creative ways to teach course content through F2F and online platforms, to improve student learning (Anthony et al., 2019). BLT has two instructional components: 1) A F2F learning and teaching mode (which formally takes place on campuses), and 2) an OLT mode (which takes place via the Internet through online learning platforms).

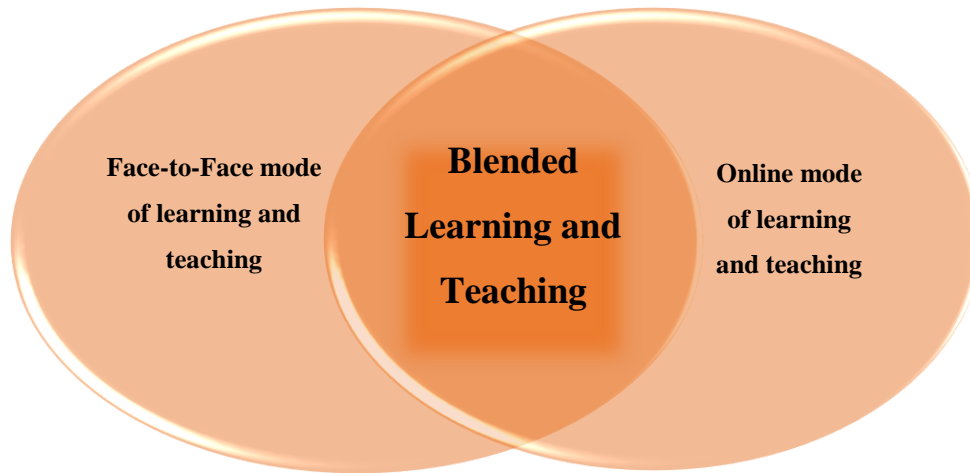


Figure 2: Blended learning and teaching modes (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019).

The above figure illustrates BLT as it relates to F2F and online modes of learning and teaching. Educators use both modes to foster quality learning and teaching experiences, and in addition to produce a coherent unified course (Soomro et al., 2018; AlKhaleel, 2019). During the online mode of learning and teaching, the educator makes use of technologies to distribute the relevant knowledge and to upload the course resources (Edward et al., 2018). Anthony et al., (2019) and Evans et al., (2019) pointed out that the effectiveness of the online component of BLT depends on the educator's ability to navigate and interact with different technologies. A systematic review of challenges in the online component of BLT by Rasheed et al., (2019) also confirms that one of the challenges of the online component relates to educators' ability to use technology for teaching. However, Van der Westhuizen et al., (2021) acknowledged the value of the online component in BLT, as it offered student social workers and social work educators with diverse modes of learning and teaching. F2F, also referred to as the *offline mode* by Sun and Qiu (2017), is a learning and teaching interaction that formally takes place in a lecture room environment. The educator facilitates learning which allows students to engage in discussion, ask questions, and provide instant feedback on course content (Anthony et al., 2019). The F2F mode has proven to increase interaction and participation among students which result in the promotion of quality learning and teaching experiences (Baragash & Al-Samarraie, 2018; Anthony et al., 2019; Rasheed et al., 2019). According to Baragash and Al-

Samarraie (2018), educators and students make use of the following preferred tools, material, resources, and activities when participating in BLT:

Table 6: Tools, material, resources, and activities used in blended learning and teaching (Baragash & Al-Samarraie, 2018)

Tools and Material	Human Resources	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E-mail ▪ Discussion forum ▪ Lecture slides ▪ Virtual classroom ▪ The Interactive e-book ▪ Recoded Lectures ▪ Printed Textbook ▪ YouTube ▪ WhatsApp ▪ Facebook ▪ Twitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lecturer ▪ Fellow classmate ▪ Family ▪ Graduate students ▪ Tutors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussions ▪ Weekly assignment ▪ Quizzes ▪ Examination

Both components of BLT need tools, material, resources, and activities to balance the combination of the two components for the purpose of increasing quality and access to learning and teaching, and for effective delivery of course content. The technological tools listed above might have played a valuable role in exposing students and educators to OLT. The following section explains the characteristics of OLT.

3.4.3 Online Learning and Teaching

The electronic or OLT approach allows students and educators to make use of digital technologies to enhance the delivery of course content and interaction between students and educators, and peers, for the purpose of learning and teaching (Ferri et al., 2020; O'Doherty et al., 2018). Universities across the globe responded to the disruptions in learning and teaching caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing the OLT approach to sustain and maintain learning and teaching during this difficult period (Ferri et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Panergayo & Almanza, 2020). The following are characteristics of OLT taken from 'Online learning design options (moderating variables)' cited in Hodges et al., (2020, p. 5):

- **Modality:** Learning takes place fully online and can allow for web-based F2F.

- **Instructor role online:** The educator actively provides instructions online with minimal presence online.
- **Student role online:** Includes listening and reading, problem solving or answering questions, exploring simulation and resources, and collaborating with peers.
- **Pace:** Learning and teaching is self-paced, class paced, or self-paced with a blend of class paced.
- **Source of Feedback:** Feedback is automated or provided by the educator or peers.
- **Online Communication Synchrony:** Communication and engagement between students and educator is asynchronous only, or synchronous only, or a blend of both.

Though Hodges et al., (2020) noted that the move to OLT increased the flexibility of learning and teaching anywhere and anytime, O'Doherty et al., (2018) argue that the transition from BLT to OLT has not been without challenges. Therefore, Van der Westhuizen et al., (2021) recommended that students need to be prepared for technology-based learning and teaching in HEIs. Findings by Panergayo and Almanza (2020, p. 6603) revealed the following tools as educational technology tools for ELT:

- Office Productivity Tools (Microsoft Office, LibreOffice, etc.).
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).
- Online Collaboration Tools (Google Docs, OneDrive, etc.).
- Virtual Classroom (Google Classroom, Edmodo, Schoology, etc.).
- Messaging Tools (Gmail, Yahoo mail, Messenger, etc.).
- Video sharing sites (YouTube, Vimeo).
- Videoconferencing applications (Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc.).
- Statistical Tools (SPSS, Stata, MS Access).
- Programming Tools (Windows Movie Maker, OBS).
- Video and image editing tools (Adobe Photoshop, Canva).

Panergayo and Almanza (2020) assert that familiarity and capability to use the educational technology tools makes ELT effective. Some concluding remarks follow next.

3.5 CONCLUSION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter reviewed existing literature on the topic under investigation to enable the researcher to answer the research question and compare and contrast the study's findings. The literature reviewed components related to social work education and training, including psychosocial and academic challenges experienced by student social workers, as well as the impact of COVID-19 upon student social workers. The chapter concluded with a review of the learning and teaching approaches, namely: FLT; BLT; and OLT.

The following chapter presents a discussion of the research findings.



CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to explore and describe the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding OLT during the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in a national lockdown. This exploration also included a focus on the influence of socioeconomic factors on academic experiences. As such, this study afforded social work educators and students an opportunity to explore and describe what worked and what did not work when learning and teaching activities took place online during the pandemic, while also reflecting on how students' personal circumstances affected their academic experiences. It was envisaged that their descriptions can contribute to learning and teaching pedagogy in social work education and training post the pandemic, which will also acknowledge the socioeconomic realities of students during pandemics in the future.

The first three chapters presented an introduction to the research study, the research methodology, and an extended literature review. The current chapter presents the research findings of the study. The first section provides a description of the profiles of the participants, while the section thereafter presents and discusses the findings of the study, supported by participant excerpts.

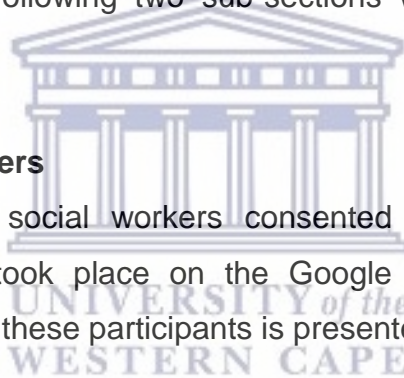
4.2 PARTICIPANT PROFILE

This research inquiry consisted of two samples, namely, third-year student social workers and third-year social work educators who had experienced OLT at undergraduate level at the UWC during the COVID-19 lockdown. The intention was to select participants who could reflect on and compare experiences of F2F and BLT prior to the pandemic, and experiences of moving to OLT during the pandemic.

The data was collected from student social workers through individual interviews and two focus groups, and from the educators through a focus group. The data sets will be referred to as:

- 1) Individual interviews with students, indicated as Participant (x = 1, 2, 3 etc.) and Individual Interviews (II) – Px, II
- 2) Student focus group 1 – F1
- 3) Student focus group 2 – F2
- 4) Educators focus group – F3

In total, 15 students participated in individual interviews. In addition to that, three focus groups were conducted. The first focus group had six student social workers and the second group had four student social workers and the third group had four social work educators attending. The following two sub-sections will describe the biographic profiles of the participants.



4.2.1 Student Social Workers

Fifteen third-year student social workers consented to voluntarily participate in individual interviews that took place on the Google Meet online platform. The demographic information of these participants is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Demographics of student social workers who participated in the individual interviews

Participants	Gender	Age Group	Marital status	Home Province	Home Town
Participant 1, II	Female	40-49	Married	Western Cape	Parow
Participant 2, II	Female	30-39	Married	Western Cape	Ravensmead
Participant 3, II	Female	20-29	Single	Western Cape	Philippi
Participant 4, II	Female	Prefer not to say	Single	Western Cape	Bellville
Participant 5, II	Female	20-29	Single	Eastern Cape	Grahamstown

Participant 6, II	Female	20-29	Single	Eastern Cape	Mdantsane, East London
Participant 7, II	Female	20-29	Single	Northern Cape	De Aar
Participant 8, II	Female	20-29	Single	Western Cape	Paarl
Participant 9, II	Female	20-29	Single	Western Cape	Kuils River
Participant 10, II	Male	20-29	Single	Eastern Cape	Queenstown
Participant 11, II	Female	20-29	Single	Western Cape	Brackenfell
Participant 12, II	Female	30-39	Married	Western Cape	Khayelitsha
Participant 13, II	Male	Preferred not to say	Single	Eastern Cape	Not disclosed
Participant 14, II	Female	20-29	Single	Western Cape	Montagu
Participant 15, II	Female	20-29	Single	Western Cape	Crawford, Athlone

Thirteen females and two males were interviewed individually. The number of female participants, as compared to the male participants, mirrors the social work profession being viewed as a 'female-dominated profession', which is contrary to what Labra et al., (2018) alluded concerning the social work profession being *mistakenly* considered a feminine profession. Khunou et al., (2012), referring to the South African context, confirms that traditionally more female students enter social work studies than males. These authors ask for more attention to recruitment and retention strategies to ensure that male students are encouraged to enter the profession. Two-thirds of the participants were single females who were in the age group of 20 to 29. Khakimjanovna (2021) looked at the psychosocial profile of undergraduate students and affirm that most female undergraduate students are in this age group. Furthermore, most students were from the Western Cape Province, followed by the Eastern Cape Province and the Northern Cape Province. The findings therefore represent students who had to move to their provinces when the national lockdown was implemented.

Table 8 presents the demographics of the student social workers who participated in the two focus groups, F1 and F2.

Table 8: Demographics of student social workers who participated in the focus groups

FOCUS GROUP 1 (F1)			
Participants	Age Group	Gender	Nationality
Participant 1, F1	Not disclosed	Male	South African
Participant 2, F1	40-49	Female	South African
Participant 3, F1	30-39	Female	South African
Participant 4, F1	20-29	Male	South African
Participant 5, F1	30-39	Female	South African
Participant 6, F1	20-29	Female	South African
FOCUS GROUP 2 (F2)			
Participant 1, F2	20-29	Female	South African
Participant 2, F2	20-29	Female	South African
Participant 3, F2	20-29	Female	South African
Participant 4, F2	20-29	Female	South African

Focus Group 1 consisted of six participants, two males and four females. This focus group included different age groups; 1 participant in the age group 40 to 49, two in the age group 30 to 39, two in the age group 20 to 29, and one participant who preferred not to disclose their age. Focus Group 2 had four female participants who were between the ages of 20 to 29.

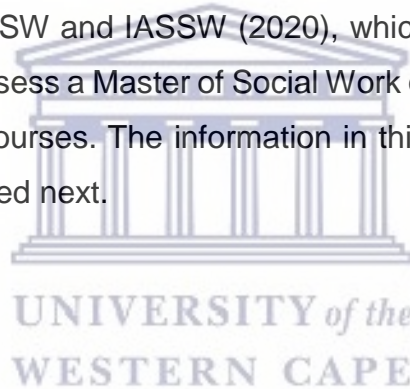
4.2.2 Social Work Educators

Four social work educators participated in Focus Group 3. Their demographic information is presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Demographics of social work educators who participated in Focus Group 3

FOCUS GROUP 3 (F3)				
Participants	Age Group	Gender	Nationality	Highest Qualification Obtained
Participant 1, F3	50-59	Female	South African	PhD
Participant 2, F3	30-39	Female	South African	PhD
Participant 3, F3	50-59	Female	South African	PhD
Participant 4, F3	50-59	Female	South African	PhD

All of the educator participants were: females; three were between the ages of 50 and 59, and one was between the ages of 30 and 39; South African nationals with a PhD qualification in social work. This is in line with the Global Standards for Social Work Education set out by the IFSW and IASSW (2020), which stipulates that social work educators must at least possess a Master of Social Work qualification in order to teach social work modules and courses. The information in this section contextualised the findings that will be presented next.



4.3 FINDINGS

Data was collected on the Google Meet platform, and then thematically analysed using Tesch’s (1990) eight steps of qualitative data analysis, as explained in Chapter 2 (Creswell, 2014). Based on the analysis, the findings are presented in the form of themes, sub-themes, and categories. In terms of the ethical considerations mentioned in Chapter 2, the participants were informed that their identity would be protected throughout the research process, including when explaining the findings. Therefore, the findings are described as a collective story through themes, sub-themes, and categories identified during the data analysis phase of the study. Verbatim quotations are used to support the findings, and pseudonyms are used to conceal the participants’ identities. Table 10 presents the themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the data analysis.

Table 10: The study's themes, sub-themes and categories

Theme	Sub-theme	Category
Theme 1: Student social workers' economic, psychological and social realities during the pandemic	Sub-theme 1.1: Economic realities	Category 1.1.1: Economic challenges of students' families
		Category 1.1.2: Sources of funding
	Sub-theme 1.2: Psychological realities	Category 1.2.1: Trauma due to COVID-19 deaths and sickness
		Category 1.2.2: Mental health
	Sub-theme 1.3: Social realities	Category 1.3.1: Home environment
		Category 1.3.2: Isolation from family and human interaction
		Category 1.3.3: Roles within the household
Theme 2: Student social workers' academic experiences during the pandemic	Sub-theme 2.1: Study environment	Category 2.1.1: Lack of access to campus
		Category 2.1.2: Lack of access to academic resources
	Sub-theme 2.2: Academic participation	Category 2.2.1: Motivation
		Category 2.2.2: Engagement
		Category 2.2.3: Time management
	Sub-theme 2.3: Academic performance	
Theme 3: Learning and Teaching resources	Sub-theme 3.1: Learning and Teaching material	Category 3.1.1: Material that supported learning and teaching
	Sub-theme 3.2: Learning and Teaching tools	
	Sub-theme 3.3: Learning and Teaching platforms	Category 3.3.1: iKamva
		Category 3.3.2: WhatsApp
		Category 3.3.3: Google Meet
	Sub-theme 3.4: Methods of communication	Category 3.4.1: Different methods of communication with different role-players

		Category 3.4.2: Challenges regarding communication methods
	Sub-theme 3.5: Assessment methods	Category 3.5.1: Preferred methods of assessment
		Category 3.5.2: Challenges experienced by students
Theme 4: Support for online learning and teaching during the pandemic	Sub-theme 4.1: Formal support	
	Sub-theme 4.2: Informal support	Category 4.2.1: Support from peers
		Category 4.2.2: Support from family
Theme 5: Suggestions for blended learning and teaching post the pandemic	Sub-theme 5.1: Access to data and devices	
	Sub-theme 5.2: Access to facilities that support blended learning and teaching	
	Sub-theme 5.3: Availability of training and tutorial videos for using online learning and teaching tools	

The themes follow a storyline that focuses on : (1) the economic, psychological, and social realities during the pandemic; (2) academic experiences; (3) learning and teaching resources that were available, or not, during the pandemic; (4) the support received, or not, for OLT during the pandemic; and (5) finally, suggestions for BLT post the pandemic will be presented.

Theme 1: Student Social Workers' Economic, Psychological and Social Realities During the Pandemic

Previous studies have emphasised that the process of attaining a tertiary education in general poses both psychosocial and academic challenges for students (Dlamini et al., 2020; Govender, 2020; Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018). The researcher considered that challenges might have been different during the pandemic. Therefore, this study was interested in the nature of both psychosocial *and* academic realities during the pandemic. Theme 1 highlights the challenging realities that student social

workers experienced economically, psychologically, and socially during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown period. This theme is based on data obtained from the individual interviews with the student social workers.

Sub-theme 1.1: Economic realities

This sub-theme captures the challenging economic realities described by the student social workers during the individual interviews. These challenging realities include the economic challenges of their families and the participants' sources of funding. The findings resonate with the conclusions made by Czerniewicz (2020) who alluded that the socioeconomic inequalities in South Africa became illuminated during the pandemic, and that it was also visible among previously disadvantaged and previously advantaged universities and their students.

Category 1.1.1: Economic challenges of students' families

The student social workers described how their families were economically challenged during the pandemic, as illustrated by the following comments:

“Economically it was a bit tough. Umh, why I say this is because my aunt lost a job, and she has a 15-year-old daughter. So, it was a bit tough cause my grandparents are pensioners” (Participant 8, II).

“My cousin lives next door; I think he’s two years older than me. He has been unemployed since end of March. And he recently found a job ... But then he has been unemployed so obviously that affected all of us. Cause we see what he’s going through and how he’s suffering” (Participant 9, II).

In addition, another participant explained that the situation worsened over time:

“Even though my parents were not working, they were still getting paid. There was no problem at first but again the problem started when they had to like half the salary and stuff. So, we had to go to the bank to make settlements and stuff. So, it became a problem there. And then again, this year we had to like sell the other house because my brother couldn’t pay it” (Participant 10. II).

The findings from this sub-theme pointed out that the students' family members became unemployed, which led to loss of income for the family. This, then, put pressure on other family members to provide support and help fill the gaps. It was also highlighted that the situation became worse as the pandemic continued. The participants' descriptions resonate with statements made by Nwosu and Oyenubi (2021) and Jain et al., (2020) who reported on how the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in employment losses, which also led to the loss of household income in South Africa. The participants' descriptions further highlighted how extended family members were also impacted. The category below describes the sources of funding that were or were not available to the participants.

Category 1.1.2: Sources of funding

The *sources of funding* referred to by the participants were not only for their studies, but included sources that assisted their family economically. A participating student social worker identified the NSFAS as a primary source of funding in the following words:

"I mean, I still had my NSFAS which was coming out every month. That was quite helpful" (Participant 5, II).

Another student confirmed the value of the NSFAS financial support and included further financial assistance from the government:

"Yah and then I am funded with NSFAS... that was a huge help. And then I'm receiving a SASSA grant for my son" (Participant 9, II).

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is aimed at providing social grants to citizens with specific challenges (South African Government, 2021). Family income was another source of funding identified through the following statement:

"So we basically just have to rely on my husband's salary and obviously the money that I get from NSFAS" (Participant 2, II).

Bitzer and de Jager (2018) emphasise that the cost of tertiary education is particularly challenging for low-income South African families. In this regard, Yende (2021)

confirms the significance of the NSFAS in that it funds many students from marginalised communities in South Africa who cannot otherwise afford to pay for tertiary fees. The findings in this study alluded to the fact that the NSFAS became a form of income for families who were challenged during the pandemic.

Contrary to the above description of sources of funding as support, other participants described challenges of payments that have not been received, applications that have been rejected, and not having family who can support them financially:

“I actually applied for NSFAS for this year because things did start to get a little tough with COVID when my mom couldn’t work. So, I got accepted but I haven’t received any payments yet” (Participant 11, II).

“I am a full-time student so obviously I wasn’t working. I was rejected, my application by NSFAS was rejected. They say it is because I have a previous qualification. So, they rejected me on that. So, I didn’t have any funding also. But then I applied to the university, their funding ... I don’t know but I got a bursary by Sector Education and Training Authority [SETA]” (Participant 1, II).

“As you see I’m a matured student right. And at home there isn’t anyone like sending me money in terms of taking care of basic things” (Participant 13, II).

Participant 1, II alluded that the UWC supported her to find alternative funding, which addressed the challenge. However, *Participant 2, II* and *Participant 11, II* revealed that payments were late, or that the NSFAS does not cater for students who already have a qualification. Naidoo and McKay (2018) mention that while some students are funded by the NSFAS, others receive independent bursaries, and the majority are not funded. The statement above by *Participant 13, II* resonates with the conclusions made by Walker (2020) regarding how a lack of income threatens students’ well-being. Walker and Mathebula (2020) also note that low-income students who migrate from rural areas to universities often experience serious challenges to afford university accommodation, study materials, food, transport, and clothes. The loss of income during the pandemic exacerbated the financial situation of the students, impacting on

their well-being, including their psychological well-being. This is discussed in more detail below.

Sub-theme 1.2: Psychological realities

Van Breda (2018) notes that, prior to the pandemic, a number of students at South African universities were psychosocially vulnerable due to poverty, loss of family members and high levels of crime, and that these adversities impacted their academic progress negatively, resulting in students failing or dropping out of tertiary education. With this in mind, this sub-theme focuses on the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student social workers that may have affected their academic engagements. The categories below describe the participants' experiences of trauma due to COVID-19 deaths and sicknesses, and the impact on their mental health.

Category 1.2.1: Trauma due to COVID-19 deaths and sickness

One student reported that she lost her grandparents during her examination in the following words:

“My grandparents unfortunately passed away due to COVID. They passed away in a space of a week from each other. And that was in November during my exam time, which was the worst” (Participant 5, II).

This loss was related to the impact on her ability to engage with her academic work during a time of grief. Another student shared how she got infected with COVID-19, while also losing some of her colleagues, friends of the family when she was working as an auxiliary nurse during the pandemic:

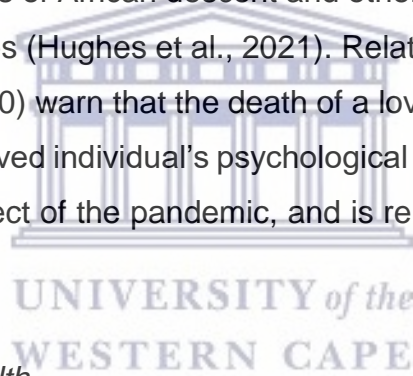
“It was very difficult, I lost colleagues and also got sick. There were times when I was working and one of my colleagues would die on my shift or I would get to work and I would be there and family friend of family would pass away on my shift” (Participant 8, II).

This excerpt also shows that the student worked to support herself, related to category 1.1.2 above, while attempting to engage with academic work. However, the nature of the work impacted on her psychological well-being.

Focusing on becoming infected with COVID-19 together with family members, a participant reported the following:

“Actually, also I think what was really traumatic for me during the mid-year exams, was that my mom had COVID and nearly died. My dad had a heart operation, got COVID in the hospital and almost died. And then subsequently everyone in my house also got COVID and we were sick” (Participant 2, II).

All of the above statements indicated the link between being traumatised by losses, fear of losing loved ones, and being sick and the effect on academic engagements. South Africa recorded 125,744 COVID-19 related deaths between May 2020 and January 2021 (Okonji et al., 2021). The infection rates in South Africa have been noted to be high among individuals of African descent and other minority populations due to social and health inequalities (Hughes et al., 2021). Related to the descriptions in this category, Morris et al., (2020) warn that the death of a loved one can have a negative lifelong impact on the bereaved individual’s psychological health. This could be viewed as a possible long-term effect of the pandemic, and is related to mental health which will be discussed next.



Category 1.2.2: Mental health

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered increased levels of fear and anxiety among individuals, resulting in major disruptions in behaviour and psychological well-being (Sherman, 2020). The participants in this study reported on how the pandemic affected their mental health as follows:

“Yes, yes and it's tough. Last year I felt like I was gonna have a breakdown” (Participant 1, II).

“Another thing that made me panic the most, the other day I was sitting in a room, I have to share this. I was sitting in a room there at home, neh, and I was watching the news, I was reading, yah it was on WhatsApp, it was those stats, the COVID-19 stats. As I was reading through them a quick thought came to my mind. That thing about the future, my academics and everything. Actually, it my first time having a panic attack.

I've heard people saying that they've had panic attacks, but I had a panic attack so much that I had to literally stand up, go outside and try to breathe because I was so overwhelmed. So, I decided I need to cut on these stats, I need to cut on the news. I need to focus more on the positive things that are happening around me" (Participant 13, II).

"I was fine but where I was starting to get worried was I would suddenly just breakdown and cry, then I would not know why" (Participant 8, II).

When reflecting on their psychological and mental well-being, the students reported experiencing what they described as a 'breakdown' and 'panic attack' during the COVID-19 lockdown which they had not experienced before the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, Zondi (2018) voiced a concern about the fact that academic and environmental factors are some of the major stressors that impact on students' psychological well-being. The statements illustrate the interplay between living in the pandemic and academic experiences. Students added how academic pressure heightened their level of anxiety during the pandemic. One participant explained that "*anxiety would peak up*". Other participants reiterated that academic pressures added to their anxiety during the pandemic, which was expressed as follows:

"I get anxious before my tests mostly. Like I write psych [referring to psychology] now, probably gonna cry before I write it" (Participant 15, II).

"I went through such a phase where I would, wait, I would literally feel my heart racing when I get a notification on my phone [referring to academic notifications]" (Participant 9, II).

The findings above highlight how academic demands, together with dealing with losses and illness, resulted in anxiety that was described as breakdowns and feeling panicked. Similarly, previous studies identified academic challenges as a primary contribution to increased stress and anxiety (Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018; Karaman et al., 2017; Hetolang & Amone-P'Olak, 2017). During the pandemic, Hsu and Goldsmith (2021) concur that academic performance and pressure to achieve academic goals contributed to increased stress and anxiety among tertiary students. Thus, Zondi (2018) and Hetolang and Amone-P'Olak (2017) recommend that tertiary

institutions should empower students to develop stress-management skills. This, according to the findings, becomes even more essential during the pandemic. The social realities of student social workers will be discussed next in sub-theme 1.3.

Sub-theme 1.3: Social realities

This sub-theme captures the students' family life during the COVID-19 lockdown period. It focuses on three aspects, namely: 1) students' home environment; 2) isolation from family and human interaction; and 3) students' roles within the household. This sub-theme resonates with a previous study by Lee et al., (2020) who concur that COVID-19 indeed provided family members with opportunities to strengthen emotional ties. However, some family members experienced relational problems in their home environment.

Category 1.3.1: Home environment

Concerning the home environment, the students acknowledged that their home environments were not conducive for learning, which was expressed as follows:

“So, it’s like a storing place basically where the washing machines are, so I was able to set up a little study situation, but the problem was that it was winter right, and that room doesn’t have any lighting. So, it’s a matter of I have to like be using flash lights and things like that, and I don’t have the greatest eye-sight. So, that was definitely the biggest challenge” (Participant 7, II).

“You know when people are in each other’s faces for too long. Arguments eventually start, you get irritated with each other. I think just like with everything that is happening, everyone is on edge, and it just not pleasant at the stage. We all got used to tolerating each other, everyone was working from home and obviously I was studying from home. So, everyone just kept to themselves” (Participant 11, II).

“It was very difficult focusing, especially since I have other people around me and I’m not at Res [referring to the university residence] alone where I can do my stuff at whatever time I please. At home there’s a routine that

*I have to follow and chores that have to be done so it was very difficult”
(Participant 6, II).*

The findings from this category reveal that students struggled with the following: 1) studying from home during the COVID-19 lockdown period due to a lack of space; 2) forming healthy relational ties with some of their family members; and 3) adjusting from the campus environment to the home environment. Lee et al., (2020) agree that many homes had to accommodate other major activities such as working, studying, and quarantining during COVID-19, resulting in dysfunctional home environments, as people did not have enough time to prepare their homes for the sudden adjustment. Although the outbreak of COVID-19 forced people to work and study from home, it is important for families to establish relational boundaries and working schedules to improve their homes to healthy environments for working and learning.

Category 1.3.2: Isolation from family and human interaction

In contrast to the comment made above about the lack of personal space, the participating students also described how the outbreak of COVID-19 increased isolation from family and human interactions, which was expressed as follows:

“I have a big brother that stays here in Cape Town, in Khayelitsha. So, I would randomly visit them. Though I knew that was risky for them. Umh in terms of things I would need, I would go to them. But eventually I had to make a decision that, because they had a small baby at the time, so I made a decision of staying on campus” (Participant 13, II).

“So, I stay at KOVACS, it’s a Res here on campus. So, the thing is with KOVACS everybody has a single room in my floor, and I didn’t have any friends or anything like that right. So, it was a matter of I was always cooped up in my room. There was a lack of human interaction and I feel like at some point I had a mini breakdown. Because it was a matter of I go to the library, I go to Res life, I work, work, work, work. There wasn’t much interaction with people. I wasn’t going to my mom as often as I would have liked to. And it was just like me being cooped up in my room and doing schoolwork” (Participant 7, II).

“Well, I think like the fact that I don’t usually go out that much and then COVID happened, and then I just ended up isolating myself from everyone as well. Well, it kind of had an impact” (Participant 4, II).

A study by Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2021) noted that prolonged isolation and lack of human interaction among young people can lead to loneliness. Consistent with their findings, the researcher’s findings suggest that loneliness was a major challenge among young people during the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa.

Category 1.3.3: Roles within the household

Student social workers who participated in this study described three roles they play within their families that impacted on their social well-being: Parental, spousal, and provider roles.

In terms of *parental roles*, Dotterer et al., (2021) report that student-parents experience a number of struggles that negatively impact their academics as they balance the roles of being parents and students simultaneously. In this study, the participants described the challenges of balancing academics and parenting during COVID-19 lockdown as follows:

“So last year was very overwhelming and also with [son’s name] not being able to go to school. I woke up in the morning and I had to sit with him, and I would write out a programme. This is what you gonna do. Luckily for me, he has his own laptop. So, he had online learning and things like that, it was called Worksheet Cloud9. So, then I would go in and type in that. I would first have to sort him out and then after that I can sit with myself” (Participant 9, II).

“I’m sometimes in my pyjamas the whole day sitting with my laptop and stuff. You don’t make time for yourself, and you just get up, make something for the kids to eat, then they come with their stuff, and you have to sit with them. I must say that being on campus does make a big difference. Because you break away from all these distractions and you

can focus there on your academics. But now you at home, you have all the distractions” (Participant 1, II).

Ajayi et al., (2021) explain the motivation behind parents being students, saying that, once they have obtained their qualification, they will be able to secure financial and economic securities not just for themselves but also for their children. In addition to that, their education will enable them to reduce socioeconomic and political inequalities in society. In corroboration with these findings, Masilela (2019) suggests that guidance, assistance, and support should be provided to student-parents by families and the university.

Spousal roles were, according to the participants, affected by the financial burdens of being a student. The participants verbalised this as follows:

“Because also now that I am still a full-time student, we are like one income home. So, we basically just have to rely on my husband’s salary and obviously the money that I get from NSFAS” (Participant 2, II).

“I am married. I have two boys. Just after the first lockdown my husband couldn't continue working because he works in construction and stuff like that. And I am a full-time student so obviously I wasn't working” (Participant 1, II).

The findings highlight the fact that the married student cannot contribute to the family’s finances. When spouses lost employment due to the pandemic, it had a serious impact on the family’s well-being. This is supported by Azonuche (2021) who in their study pointed out that the marital roles and family size of married students did not impact on their academic performance, but rather their socioeconomic status.

In terms of *family provider roles*, the participating student social workers explained how they attempted to support their families financially. In line with sub-theme 1.1 above, a participant explained how the NSFAS monthly allowance was used to support their family:

“I’m a NSFAS recipient. NSFAS always came through also to assist. Though you know some of us senior students also assist at home with these allowances that we get from NSFAS. So, part of it was going there” (Participant 13, II).

Other students explained that they found employment to support the family that was affected by financial hardship related to the pandemic, and also how this supported professional development:

“Mmh, my husband ran a business. His business wasn’t the same. There were some changes to his business. But then we had some savings and also the fact that I got a job during the lockdown, it helps a lot. It did help us a lot with finances, so we didn’t struggle with finance” (Participant 12, II).

“But luckily for me, before I started doing social work, I qualified and enrolled as [a] nursing auxiliary. So, I worked for Mediclinic for 4 years before I started doing this. So, I could go work and the nice thing was that I actually got capped as a COVID nurse. So now I can put that in my CV because I only work with COVID patients that’s what I do. So, I could work. I worked throughout all the waves” (Participant 8, II).

The latter statements are supported by Baglow and Gair (2018) who concur that poverty and a lack of income led students to seek employment, which impacted their academic progress and mental well-being. According to these authors, the added role can be viewed as a challenge. Chinyakata et al., (2019) agree that working while studying is a global phenomenon among tertiary students; students who study and work simultaneously are associated with poor academic performance due to stress and fatigue. In this study, the last statement above, however, also accentuates how working contributed to professional development.

This theme highlighted specific personal realities experienced by student social workers, and also pointed to the impact thereof on their academic experiences. This is discussed in the next theme.

Theme 2: Student Social Workers' Academic Experiences During the Pandemic

Hermanto et al., (2021) note that the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on students' attitude and motivation in general. The participating student social workers also described how the pandemic affected their motivation and engagement in learning and teaching activities, and referred to being challenged by time management. They also described how the change in study environment affected their academic experiences. This will be unpacked in the discussion below.

Sub-theme 2.1: Study environment

The rapid move to OLT and the national lockdown regulations announced at the start of the pandemic (cf. Ramaphosa, 2020; Republic of South Africa. Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, 2020) resulted in students having to swiftly vacate their university campuses in a short period of time. De Haas et al., (2020) reported that during this time students were dissatisfied with not having access to conducive study environments, such as campuses, as they missed interactions with their peers and educators. Moreover, Kapasia et al., (2020) referred to the limited study conditions in their homes, such as a lack of Internet access, as impacting on their academic experiences during the pandemic. In this study, the participants particularly referred to the lack of access to campus and academic resources, which indicates how the change in study environment affected them.

Category 2.1.1: Lack of access to campus

The participating students expressed their dissatisfaction with their home study environments as compared to the campus environment. In reflecting on their lack of access to campus, they lamented the following:

"I must say that being on campus does make a big difference. Because you break away from all these distractions and you can focus there on your academics. But now you are at home, you have all the distractions"
(Participant 1, II).

"Whereas if I was on campus I could go to the library, go to Res, like I could go work in my room like regardless of the time" (Participant 7, II).

The participants explained that while they were able to move between study areas throughout the day, for example, the library or the rooms in the residences, while on campus, their study environments at home became distracting during the pandemic. A participant concluded that, even in terms of OLT, the campus provided a more conducive environment: *“Honestly, being on campus is the best environment for you to learn. Also, when it comes to online learning”* (Participant 13). The literature also alludes to the fact that a lack of Internet connectivity and data had an impact on learning and teaching, despite universities providing devices and data to students (Chisadza et al., 2021; Mpungose, 2020).

In an effort to address the challenges in the study environment experienced during the pandemic, a participant reported the following:

“I applied for my permit, and I received my permit. I’m like just to sit there you know, to get out of the house. So, I really think I missed that environment” (Participant 9, II).

The findings in this category point out that although campus closure was aimed at protecting students from community transmission, it impacted on access to a study environment that supports learning and teaching. Both Wilczewski et al., (2021) and Oluka et al., (2021) confirm that unfavourable home conditions prevented students from full engagement in online learning, and that the pandemic highlighted how a conducive environment and access to campus infrastructure promotes learning. According to the participating students, a lack of access to campus environment resulted in a lack of access to academic resources. The latter is discussed next.

Category 2.1.2: Lack of access to academic resources

In this category, the participants drew a link between a lack of access to campus and a lack of access to academic resources. In confirmation, Di Pietro et al., (2020) note that students from low-income backgrounds may face more challenges than their peers from affluent backgrounds due to a lack of digital skills and limited resources. A participant explained how the lack of access to human resources, such as educators, became frustrating during the COVID-19 national lockdown:

“Because we know what it’s like to be on campus to have the help right now. I could have physically run to a lecturer’s room, knocked on the door, asked my question, gotten the answers and left, you know what I mean?”
(Participant 2, II).

Furthermore, another student explained that the lack of access to the library was a challenge:

“And the fact that I was at home, I guess it kinda impacted the fact that you can’t even get access to library, now you have to Google everything, just everything is online” (Participant 10, II).

This statement points to a lack of skills to access the online library services. This is in line with Van der Westhuizen et al., (2021) who assert that prior to the pandemic some student social workers were challenged by a lack of technological skills. Other previous studies explain that such a challenge must be viewed in terms of the existing issues of social capital, poor living conditions, high data costs, limited bandwidth, and psychosocial factors that adversely affect students from lower socio-economic groups (Motala & Menon, 2020; Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe, 2020).

A student explained that economic realities, as discussed in Theme 1, and finding a conducive study environment led to difficult decisions that had to be made:

“So, it was a struggle for me because they [family members] had offered that how about I leave campus and go and stay with them. But I had to weigh between the comfort of having everyday meal[s] versus the comfort of having daily Wi-Fi so that my academics would continue” (Participant 13, II).

In this study, the participants also reflected on their own participation in OLT during the pandemic. This is discussed in the next sub-theme.

Sub-theme 2.2: Academic participation

Maqableh and Alia (2021) concur that some of the challenges experienced by students concerning OLT involves time management, distractions, and reduced focus. The participants in this study, confirming this viewpoint, referred to motivation, engagement and time management as aspects that influenced their academic experiences. This is described in the categories below.

Category 2.2.1: Motivation

The student social workers reflected on how the lack of resources discussed above and emotional challenges (see Theme 1) negatively affected their motivation to engage in online learning. One student participant explained how not having data and Wi-Fi resulted in demotivation to complete academic assignments:

“It kinda made me lazy. Like it put me in the mind-set of like I don’t actually have to do this thing. Cause of the data and the not having Wi-Fi itself. Cause of those implications, I ended up not feeling like doing the assignments. Cause how am I even gonna be able to do the assignments if I don’t have the resources and stuff” (Participant 14, II).

Other students further explained how emotional difficulties negatively impacted their ability to engage in online learning. *Participant 11, II* proclaimed how she felt like doing nothing during moments of being emotionally overwhelmed, and *Participant 1, II* described how she almost gave up on the study programme in the following words:

“Okay, I can say that once I’m down, I have the motivation to do absolutely nothing. I just wanna lie in bed all day. I don’t wanna speak to anyone. Don’t wanna do anything” (Participant 11, II).

“I must say that it had a negative impact on me because I felt like giving up also. I really felt like giving up” (Participant 1, II).

The descriptions in this category are confirmed by Visser and Law-Van Wyk (2021) who explain that students experienced emotional difficulties and discomfort in adjusting to OLT during the COVID-19 lockdown. Students’ demotivation also resulted

in lack of engagement in online learning. This forms the topic of the next category below.

Category 2.2.2: Engagement

The participating student social workers viewed the lack of data and balancing work with studies as the main factors that contributed to them missing classes and not being able to engage fully in OLT. One student participant made the link between a lack of data and academic engagement when stating the following:

“Umh, there was a bit of difficulty with my online learning. First of all, I would miss classes because of data” (Participant 6, II).

While South African universities did attempt to provide students with devices and data, the economic challenges faced in lower-income areas still affected access to such resources (Chisadza et al., 2021; Mpungose, 2020).

As highlighted in Theme 1, some students started to work to address economic challenges. These participants described how balancing work with studies negatively impacted their academics:

“So, then I would work a 12-hour shift, come home and I’d be tired. Sometimes I didn’t even attend classes or tutorials” (Participant 8, II).

“Also, I didn’t have time to, if I’m at work, I didn’t have time to engage with other students for that certain time” (Participant 12, II).

The statements above indicate that economic challenges resulted in students finding employment, which then affected their ability to engage with OLT. This study was framed within a FLT model. Within this model, students are provided with more choices to cater for a diversity of needs (Joan, 2013). The participants in this study, however, indicated that their socioeconomic circumstances limited their ability to engage with choices (cf. Veletsianos & Houlden, 2019). Recognising the fact that students might be affected by socioeconomic realities, Batbaatar and Amin (2021) advise that education needs to include students’ ability to control their motivation to assist them to manage time and ignore setbacks.

Category 2.2.3: Time management

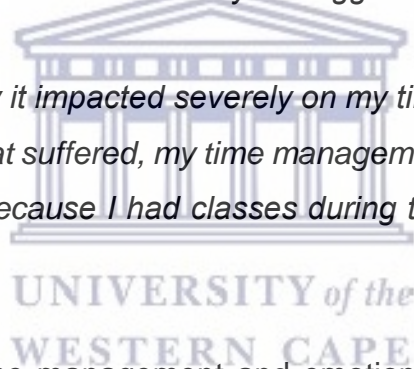
Time management plays a crucial role in online learning. Djidu et al., (2021) note that time management is one of the difficulties that students experience when engaging in online learning. Again, pointing to the link between personal realities and academic experiences, the participants described how procrastination, studying from home, and working to provide for their families were factors that contributed to the mismanagement of time allocated to their academic work:

“So, I was unmotivated, and I procrastinated like a lot. That was a challenge, that’s really a challenge for me” (Participant 6, II).

“Like I’d always end up leaving things to the very last minute and in turn get even more stressed” (Participant 11, II).

“So, I couldn’t really fully allocate my time to my academics like when I am at res. So, I think that was definitely the biggest challenge” (Participant 7, II).

“Well, I’d have to say it impacted severely on my time management. That was the one thing that suffered, my time management because I was only working night shift because I had classes during the day” (Participant 8, II).



Drawing a link between time management and emotional realities, as described in Theme 1, *Participant 6, II* and *Participant 11, II* indicated that procrastination led to mismanagement of time, which resulted in increased stress levels among students. Batbaatar and Amin (2021) confirm that procrastination is dysfunctional behaviour that results in undesirable outcomes. Online learning is self-paced (Hodges et al., 2020) and therefore, from a FLT approach, time management skills are needed to ensure academic progress. In addition, *Participant 8, II* emphasised that working to provide for families or to pay for studies can place a burden on the student, which could be supported by the development of time management skills. However, Djidu et al., (2021) argue that students cannot perform academically well when they are overburdened, as this causes time management difficulties. The discussion in this theme will conclude with the participants’ descriptions of how they experienced their academic performances.

Sub-theme 2.3: Academic performance

Student academic performance is measured through to student's overall marks gathered from assessments allocated in a course within a particular period of study (Adebola, 2021). Reflecting on academic experiences during the pandemic, the participants referred to experiences of performing lower than during the time prior to the pandemic:

“So, in my head I wasn't really failing, but I was failing. So that was the negative impact. I wasn't getting the marks that I usually get” (Participant 7, II).

“If I compare my marks for the first year and start of second year you know, much better, much better. It's been going down slightly but it's not bad” (Participant 15, II).

Confirming the findings above, Chisadza et al., (2021) found low academic performance among students who experienced difficulties with transitioning to OLT during the COVID-19 lockdown. Yuan et al., (2021) argue that one of the factors that contribute to students' low academic performance is the fact that students do not review academic feedback from lecturers and therefore remain ignorant of areas they need to improve in. This was confirmed by a participant who echoed the following:

“I would have liked to do better. But I just feel like if I had maybe gone through the feedback that my marks and my performance would've been better” (Participant 11, II).

In this theme, a lack of resources was included in the descriptions of academic experiences during the pandemic. However, during the focus group discussions the participating students and educators described the learning and teaching resources they utilised during the pandemic. This forms the focus of the next theme.

Theme 3: Learning and Teaching Resources

The first two themes reflected the student social workers' descriptions of how they were affected by the pandemic in terms of their personal and academic experiences. The themes that follow describe the experiences of both the student social workers

and educator participants. Focusing on the topic of learning and teaching resources in this theme, the participants referred to learning and teaching material, tools, platforms for communication, and assessments.

Sub-theme 3.1: Learning and teaching material

Previous studies confirm that OLT is supported by the use of e-tools to enhance the experience of online learning and teaching (Al-Fraihat, 2020; Pham et al., 2019). In the categories below, material that supported OLT, as well as challenges that were experienced by the participants are discussed.

Category 3.1.1: Material that supported learning and teaching

Baragash and Al-Samarraie (2018) refer to printed textbooks as traditionally used in BLT. Similarly, the findings in this study revealed that students valued textbooks as sources of information for OLT tasks:

“I still have textbooks from the first year and very few from second year, so I think they were also able to help me. They were able to give me more information” (Participant 3, II).

“I have some books. I still have some books” (Participant 14, II).

In terms of online resources, the following descriptions by student participants point to YouTube videos, online tutorials, and online literature as valuable learning material:

“We could access tutorials, videos on YouTube, we could also go to other sites to get more books and more readings and more PDF text, articles on whatever subject we were doing” (Participant 3, F2).

“I now and again made use of YouTube videos that were in line with the module or the subject of the module that we're discussing at that time” (Participant 1, F1).

Although students experienced challenges with adjusting to OLT due to a lack of resources (see Theme 2), the findings in this category indicate that students were able to maximise available BLT material to complete OLT activities. In addition, the educators referred to narrated PowerPoints and videos as material they found

valuable for students to use as a guide. One participant, however, mentioned that converting the PowerPoint to a video did not work effectively.

“So, I made a little video of my narrated PowerPoint. It took me an hour or more, and then the students alerted me that it's a disaster. They could not hear anything. But it was nice that we could pick this up in the online chatroom and that was a nice thing. I felt it was more interactive than I expected” (Participant 1, F1).

A participating social work educator further spoke about the value of narrated PowerPoint slides to help students adjust to OLT:

“Initially, we were encouraged to use predominantly text and narrated PowerPoints. Until students basically comfortably transition into this online and teaching and learning platforms (Participant 3, F3).

This participant referred to being flexible to find out what works best to successfully engage students with learning and teaching material. This is supported by Essel et al., (2021) who concur that learning and teaching that is underpinned by FLT makes use of flexibility to explore learning and teaching material that meets the needs of students, instead of having a fixed set of material. In addition, another educator described how narrated PowerPoints assisted students with disabilities:

“Also, we have a student who's partially sighted, and narrated PowerPoints assisted her. I got a lot of positive feedback from her how the PowerPoints helped her” (Participant 3, F3).

The value of the narrated PowerPoints was confirmed by a participating student social worker:

“The PowerPoint slides. I really enjoyed the narrated voiceovers of the PowerPoint slides. That really helped me a lot to go back to listen how lecturers would make example so that you're not reading from the slides, but they would actually try to make examples. I feel like I understand it better that way” (Participant 6, F1).

Sub-theme 3.2: Learning and teaching tools

While students referred to textbooks that they had access to in sub-theme 3.1, they also reflected on how access to mobile data assisted them to be active in the OLT activities:

*“I didn't really have resources but the data that UWC sent helped a lot”
(Participant 1, II).*

“One thing that really helped was the data that we received. So obviously I would hotspot my laptop” (Participant 9, II).

While the above statements focus on the value of support by the university regarding access to data, a participating student also shared a laptop from the university assisted her:

“Okay, umh, firstly I received the laptop from the university. And also, I received the data for every month” (Participant 12, II).

Salubi (2021), referring to university support to students to have access to devices and data, mentions that this was done to prevent a digital divide among students from low-income backgrounds. Pather et al., (2021) and Abenes and Caballes (2020) also, in support of the participating students' descriptions, assert that the implementation of FLT requires students to have devices such as smartphones, laptops, tablets, or desktop computers. These authors also stress the importance of access to mobile data or Wi-Fi for effective FLT.

Furthermore, a participating student described that she used her cell phone and laptop for academic purposes in that it supported her with contact to get support from supervisors and peers:

“I would say my laptop and my cell phone. They are my besties. Because when we were still on campus, I would use only my laptop to type, and I'd use Ikamva there and there. But like I would attend lectures, lecturers and supervision. But now I had to like go online [referring to having contact with supervisors and peers on her cell phone]. The phone became very important to me” (Participant 3, II).

This student explained how the lack of F2F contact was managed via contact with supervisors and classmates via a cell phone. The next sub-theme further elaborates on platforms that were used for learning and teaching.

Sub-theme 3.3: Learning and teaching platforms

The official iKamva learning and teaching online site, WhatsApp, and Google Meet were identified as platforms that fostered OLT during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Category 3.3.1: iKamva

iKamva is the UWC zero-rated learning and teaching platform. It enables educators to engage with students through OLT activities. Students are able to access learning and teaching content on this platform, while they can also engage interactively with social work educators and other students, and upload their academic work on the platform for assessment purposes (Petersen, 2020). A participating student described the benefit of having free access to the iKamva platform:

“We know that iKamva now is zero-rated. So, there isn't data that a person needs to access it and you do not have to worry if you have enough data.”

(Participant 1, F1).

The educator participants also referred to the iKamva platform as valuable to share information with students and to structure modules according to lesson plans:

“I think iKamva was a big help. I think what I enjoyed was the lesson plans, setting out lesson plans very nicely on iKamva” (Participant 3, F3).

“And so, what worked well, obviously was the iKamva, like announcements to be sure all the students will receive the information” (Participant 2, F3).

The descriptions in this category are confirmed by Lawrie et al., (2017) who explain that it is the responsibility of the institution to promote inclusive education by addressing the needs of diverse students, such as providing access to platforms that will ensure participation.

Category 3.3.2: WhatsApp

WhatsApp was identified as a valuable platform. Similar to the description regarding how access to data supported learning and teaching discussed in sub-theme 3.2, a participant reported the following:

“I would say WhatsApp definitely worked well for me, because it's very convenient. As much as the messages were a bit too much at times ..., because tutorials were held there, lectures were held there. And they were like also the group discussions. But regardless of that, I would say it really worked out well. And another thing is WhatsApp doesn't really consume a lot of data” (Participant 2, F2).

This description points out that this was a communication platform for tutors, lecturers, and peers. Another participant explained that, on the one side, it is flexible in nature as students can communicate at different times on the platform, while on the other side, communication was, according to the participant, smoother and faster than with other platforms:

“I find WhatsApp very, very convenient. I feel like you can access it at a later stage and not miss out on anything. Also, everyone responds a bit faster than they do via the discussion, the then discussion forum or via e-mail” (Participant 1, F2).

Another participating student liked the fact that WhatsApp was user friendly and affordable:

“But like, because everyone is on WhatsApp, it's easier to communicate there than anything else. Because people even though there was Google Meet as an option, and any other ones, but because of data issues it's not okay. WhatsApp is easier. So most of our work was done through WhatsApp” (Participant 4, F2).

The above description of the value of WhatsApp by student participants was echoed by the participating educators:

“WhatsApp became the most accessible platform to reach students, to get information out additionally to the other platforms that you would use. So, then we started using WhatsApp, because WhatsApp also has the option to attach documents to send text, to add a video or recording, to add a normal voice recording. So, it was also those options that kind of expanded the standard or the ability to reach students to access students, to get information out, to get lecture content out, and things like that” (Participant 2, F3).

The descriptions in this category point out that WhatsApp is: 1) convenient and affordable for learning and teaching, 2) user friendly, 3) quick and flexible, and 4) easily accessible to students and educators. Descriptions in this category are confirmed by Mabaso (2021) who found that WhatsApp was an essential learning and teaching platform for students and educators during prior periods of disruption, such as student protests at universities in South Africa. Recognising the impact of WhatsApp as a FLT platform, Nyembe (2021) suggests that increased collaboration on WhatsApp can improve learning and teaching outcomes.

Category 3.3.3: Google Meet

The participating educators described their satisfaction with the Google Meet platform and also their dissatisfaction with other platforms, which are similar but posed a number of challenges towards the implementation of FLT. They described their satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the following statements:

“And so, Zooming became sort of a limitation to us even though it’s quite big and quite popular for meetings, training and things like that. But teaching with a bigger group wasn’t ideal. Later on, I discovered for myself that I felt like Google Meet lectures then became a better suited option. And that was then predominantly what I used” (Participant 2, F3).

“What didn’t work well was the blue button [on the iKamva site]. We wanted to use it on the iKamva platform, but it did not work. So, we, you know, then went on to Google Meet, which worked very, very well for us” (Participant 3, F3).

During an individual interview, a participating student mentioned that she used Google Meet for collaborative discussions with her peers as well as for learning and teaching consultation with social worker educators:

“And then Google Meet of course made things very easy for us because now we were able see each other. And then the lecturers were able to teach and explain things using Google Meet” (Participant 3, II).

Various authors describe Google Meet as a video conferencing tool that provides a F2F experience between students and educators without physical contact (Bunt, 2021; Panergayo & Almanza, 2020). In an attempt to enhance FLT, Panergayo and Almanza (2020) explain that familiarity with and capability of using educational technology tools is what makes OLT effective. The ability to use OLT platforms, according to these authors, does affect the methods of communication between students and educators. This is discussed further in the next sub-theme.

Sub-theme 3.4: Methods of communication

Previous studies concur that methods of communication between students and educators can affect students' academic engagement, participation, and performance (Kgabo, 2021; Lumadi, 2021). This sub-theme focuses on 1) students' methods of communication with their peers and academic staff members, and 2) students and educators' challenges regarding communication methods.

Category 3.4.1: Different methods of communication with different role-players

One student participant described some social work educators' preferred methods of communication with students as follows:

“Okay, so I think it differs between which model meets which module we're talking about. Because some lecturers, we communicate with them through e-mail, and then some lecturers communicate through e-mail and through the class reps” (Participant 3, F2).

An educator confirmed different methods used to communicate with students, while class discussions or communication between students was encouraged in the following statement:

“And they could e-mail me, or they could message me via their class reps. They could tell the class reps what is the issue. And if they felt comfortable with it, if it was not a confidential issue, the class reps would just send me a message and say this is the issue that has been discussed. So, in terms of the challenges in the class they had to go through the Class Reps and talk about it if there were any challenges, if they wanted time changes, if they wanted an extension and so forth, so forth” (Participant 2, F3).

This statement points to a specific structure that was followed, which is also supported by Fajrie and Arianto (2021) who advise that there should be communication ethics and guidelines in place so that communication between students and social work educators is not disrupted.

The participating students also described the significance of communication via e-mails and WhatsApp to tutors as follows:

“I'm saying, yeah, I think e-mail worked really well. I know last year, I personally struggled. I'm not sure if everyone had this problem. But I know, the response rate was a bit slower, I think because the lecturers were very overwhelmed with the amount of e-mails that they got. At that stage, we didn't really have our tutors to mediate or be the messenger, because I know now, I can message my tutor to ask my lecturer before I speak to my lecturer directly” (Participant 1, F2).

“And one thing that worked for me was the tutors that we have, they were the person connecting us to the lecturers. And I feel that because we have, we meet weekly or even more than once a week, you have more [of] a bond with your tutor maybe than with a lecturer, and that helps. So, if I needed clarity, instead of e-mailing the lecturer, I would WhatsApp or, you know, speak to my tutor, which will then, you know, just reassure me or be like, look, I'll get back to you as soon as possible” (Participant 6, F1).

Tutors were described as intermediaries who connected students and educators, while also providing reassurance during OLT throughout the pandemic. The participating students also referred to clarity that was provided. The above descriptions are in line with Maré and Mutezo (2021) who found that academic engagement between students and tutors increases academic performance among students. Thus, Tella et al., (2021) suggest that tutors should continue to use ICTs to support the students' learning and teaching process post the pandemic.

As mentioned above, communication between students was coordinated by class representatives, who are selected by the majority of the class members to communicate with the lecturer on behalf of the class. A participating social work educator described how helpful class representatives became during the early days of lockdown in locating students' whereabouts:

"But in those early days when students had to leave the campus immediately, when we wouldn't know who was where, that was wonderful to ask the class reps. Can you just talk to your classmates and tell us where they are, what is happening? And that was really something that worked well" (Participant 1, F3).

However, a student participant described how this resulted in the class representatives being overburdened with having to communicate on behalf of the class:

"Some, of the lecturers advised that we should, because of the number that we are as students, right, we should send our communication via our class reps, which, now that my colleagues are mentioning it, we didn't think that the same load that will be going to lecturers now will be going to our colleagues" (Participant 1, F1).

Sosibo (2021) reiterates the value of class representatives as key role players in keeping students informed with learning and teaching information through the use of low-technology strategies, such as WhatsApp platforms. However, as mentioned by an educator above, sensitive issues cannot be addressed in this way. Sosibo (2021) also concurs that students may feel dissatisfied with having their challenges

addressed by class representatives instead of direct contact with the lecturer. Other challenges experienced regarding communication during the pandemic are unpacked below.

Category 3.4.2: Challenges regarding communication methods

Miscommunication was reported by the student social workers as an aspect that led to them feeling panicked:

“The only thing where I had a bit of an issue was the miscommunication between the lecturers, and then maybe supervisors and tutors. So, the lecturer would tell us do this, do that. Now we do what the lecturer says, and then the supervisor and tutors expect something else. So that is the only thing that didn't work for me, the miscommunication” (Participant 2, F1).

“Another thing that happened is that you would get that in different supervision groups, a different communication was sent or different understanding was established. And then you get some students who panic because they are not sure which is the right information” (Participant 1, F1).

Previous studies emphasise that the role of a lecturer is to support learning and teaching through supervision and tutoring with an aim to increase students' academic performance (Eloff et al., 2021; Lumadi, 2021). This normally took place on campus. During the pandemic, according to the findings, a challenge was to ensure that the lecturer, supervisors, and tutors are on the same page. The above statements highlight how crucial clear communication between social work educators, tutors, and supervisors is. In addition, a participating student also described how communication between students and the class representatives became a challenge:

“It was tricky in the sense that some lecturers didn't want to be contacted by students directly. So, they would prefer to communicate with the class reps, meaning that the class reps are in between the students and lecturers. And that was really, it was really challenging because everyone

would contact the class reps. And it was it was very difficult for the class reps to get all the information on time and all of that” (Participant 4, F1).

A social work educator reflected on how the allocation of mobile data (night time data) affected communication between students and educators, saying that:

“When the students had the night time data they say, they only log on at 12 o'clock. And then they would send through their messages or e-mail or WhatsApp, or whatever it might be. And I responded, I was up at night working, bedtime, you know. So, I think it was the realities around students' circumstances, which allowed them to communicate at certain times, and our flexibility and abilities also to respond and be available at that particular time frames. I think those were some of the things that that really impeded on communication with me personally. And I think it was really draining the communication part of things” (Participant 2, F3).

Another social work educator described how social work educators were challenged by student expectations:

“And I have to say, with respect, that students took their frustrations out on us. And you were on the receiving end of quite a lot of disrespect and disregard, of which I experienced” (Participant 4, F3).

Naidu and Modise (2021) also reported on the night time data provided to students during the pandemic, and how this resulted in academics working beyond office hours. With regards to the reference to students being disrespectful during online communication, Boddy and Dominelli (2016) suggest that policies and standards need to be developed with regards to how student social workers and educators should engage in online platforms.

Sub-theme 3.5: Assessment methods

Assessments in social work education are guided by the norms and standards of social work to ensure the quality of the qualification (SACSSP, 2020). This, then, guides the assessment methods and content. In this study, the participants reflected

on preferred methods of assessment, as well as on challenges that were experienced, which will be presented in the categories below.

Category 3.5.1: Preferred methods of assessment

During the pandemic, examinations had to be changed from the traditional examinations that took place on campus at a specific time and venue to an examination that had to be conducted online, known as a *take-home examination*. This method supported the use of limited data due to the fact that it took place on the university's zero-rated platform (cf. Ngqondi et al., 2021; Pather et al., 2021). The student participants reported the following on this aspect:

"For me, the take-home tests worked very well. And honestly, between a take-home test and a sit-down exam, I'd choose a take home-test any day. That doesn't mean that I don't want to return to face-to-face classes, I missed that environment" (Participant 1, F1).

"I just want to say the take-home exams are working well for me, because we have more time to work on them. And I can just do one question and feel like okay, this is overwhelming me, I can take a break" (Participant 3, F2).

"Let's just say I like the take-homes, they're more convenient. It's not that it's easier. But you have time to breathe" (Participant 4, F2).

A participating educator reflected on how she was able to adjust to redesigning take-home examinations based on experience:

"If you guys can remember, just before this COVID lockdown there was this intense taxi striking period happening. Before that in 2015, 2016, 2017 we had, the Fees Must Fall. And we also had to do things differently. I remember that sit-down exams were cancelled that particular year. And we then had to redesign our examination format into a take-home exam. And that's when I was initially introduced [to] the take-home exam. And when COVID hit and when we had to do our summative assessments, I could tap into that" (Participant 2, F3).

Naidoo and McKay (2018) also refer to how alternative learning and teaching had to take place during previous disruptions in South Africa. Educators were able to manage and sustain learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown using prior experience and knowledge (Ngqondi et al., 2021).

Another educator shared about group work activity as an assessment activity in her modules and how students found it challenging:

“They found group work as an assessment activity challenging. So, if you group the certain students together, you'll find that maybe one or two are not performing. And also, we found what was evident was that students learn differently. And some students don't want to be part of a group, they want to just work on their own” (Participant 2, F3).

Group work is a crucial aspect of social work education and training, and therefore Thomas and Brown (2021) acknowledge that the frustrations experienced should be explored further to find solutions for OLT in groups.

Category 3.5.2: Challenges experienced by students

Landa et al., (2021) assert that OLT can be overwhelming to students accustomed to BLT. This was confirmed in this study, where the participating students asserted that they felt overburdened with assessments during the pandemic. Their viewpoints are expressed in the following statements:

“What I didn't like, was the amount of assignments that we got in such a short period of time. It's like we got more work during the pandemic than we would do during class. We could sometimes get like two to three assignments which are due in the same week. And on top of that still attend classes as well on online platforms. It's quite a lot. It's stressful because all you're thinking about is I need to hand in my work” (Participant 4, F2).

“I feel like last year there was a lot of pressure in terms of assignments since we were adapting to online learning. So, we had deadlines almost every week. It was really draining” (Participant 4, F1).

“It's difficult because we had over 30 submissions this semester. So basically, I'm living from submission to submission, and there's no time to actually like, comprehend the work that I studied. So, the only time I actually get to my lectures is when I have to do an assessment or assignment or writing exams” (Participant 1, F2).

Similar to the descriptions above, Almossa (2021) concurs that sources of academic pressure emanate from fast delivery of content, which results in a heavy workload. While the take-home examinations were identified as a preferred method of assessment, other students felt that it was a challenge:

“I really feel like lecturers, take advantage of the fact that these are not sit-down exams. So, I wouldn't say I like the fact that we're doing online exams” (Participant 2, F2).

“They definitely make the take home exams harder, because we have more time to work on it” (Participant 3, F2).

The findings above resonate with conclusions made by Guangul et al., (2020) who found that the challenge with take-home examinations is that they are designed in such a way that answers cannot be easily and directly found in sources such as websites or textbooks. A participating educator described how student challenges should be considered:

“So in terms of the assessments, I think for me, it's all about looking at how did you assess your student taking all their challenges into consideration as well” (Participant 3, F3).

This participant, however, raised a concern regarding the amount of time available to students for the take-home examination:

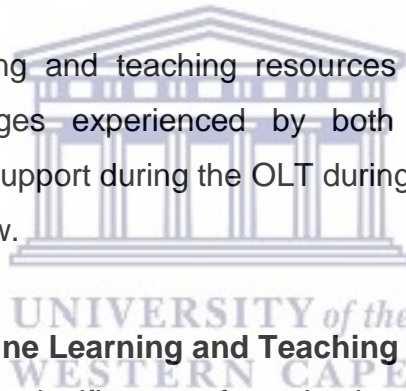
“And for me, it's just about the time aspect, how long do we allow them to do it? A take-home test for three days? Can't we just have it for one day or two days and all of those things?” (Participant 3, F3).

This statement pointed to a concern regarding quality assurance. Another educator spoke about the pressure emanating from ensuring academic integrity, which is captured in the following statement:

“I would like us to just think about assessments. Online assessments have a lot of risks. And so that also put[s] a lot of pressure on us to make sure that there’s some protection built into our assessments” (Participant 1, F3).

In line with the above concerns, several studies allude that further research should be conducted on how authenticity, honesty, quality and integrity in OLT assessment methods can be maintained (Aplin-Snider et al., 2021; Mavundla & Mgutshini, 2021; Nabee et al., 2021).

The descriptions of learning and teaching resources used during the pandemic highlighted some challenges experienced by both the lecturer and student participants. This required support during the OLT during the pandemic, which will be discussed in Theme 4 below.



Theme 4: Support for Online Learning and Teaching During the Pandemic

Several studies refer to the significance of academic and social support to enable students to overcome challenges and achieve academic during academic disruptions (Brubacher & Silinda, 2021; Eloff et al., 2021). This theme focuses on formal and informal support to students during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Sub-theme 4.1: Formal support

Uleanya (2021) asserts that academic staff play a crucial role in supporting students throughout the course of their academics. During individual interviews, students reflected on how academic staff such as social work educators, tutors and supervisors supported them during OLT:

“And lecturers of course. The lecturers were very supportive. Whenever you need to ask a question, you just e-mail, and they will respond. So, they were very supportive” (Participant 3, II).

“And also, the lecturers and tutors and our supervisors” (Participant 1, II). “But a lot of lecturers especially my 201 lecturer, he’s very nice. He was always so nice to us. He started joining our WhatsApp group when he spoke to us. Even when we had our lectures online. Everything was very convenient to all of us. So, we were all capable, able to complete our assignments and if we didn’t understand we could ask easily” (Participant 14, II).

“It’s actually our lecturers, and mostly our lecturers, supervisors and also other students” (Participant 12, II).

The descriptions point to social work educators, supervisors, and tutors as key role players in students’ academic life. Participants specifically mentioned quick responses and availability as aspects that were valued. *Participant 14, II* referred to this support that made academic performance possible, which is confirmed by Adebola (2021). The latter statement also refers to support from peers, which will be discussed next.

Sub-theme 4.2: Informal support

The informal support identified by the participants includes peers and family members, which is described in the categories that follow.

Category 4.2.1: Support from peers

The participating students described how their peers from the university supported them:

“Okay, so at university we have the small group of friends, we four friends, four females. So that was my biggest support from the university side in terms of people, the individuals. The four of them helped me a lot” (Participant 8, II).

“And then my classmates, they were also supportive. I have a few classmates that I am quite close with, they live not far away from my house. We would meet at a community centre to discuss some assignments, tests” (Participant 3, II).

The descriptions above are in line with the viewpoint of Baragash and Al-Samarraie (2018) that friends and classmates are social resources that have been proven to improve academic outcomes. Sekonyela (2021) thus recommends that universities formalise peer support structures.

Another student referred to both friends and family members who assisted her: *“And I had to ask for a lot of assistance from my friends sometimes and my family. They were very nice in order to just reach out a hand and help”* (Participant 14, II). The support from families is further unpacked in the next category.

Category 4.2.2: Support from family

A student participant described how her husband supported and encouraged her when she wanted to quit:

“I just have to mention that my husband was and is an amazing supporter. I wanted to quit studying so many times since lockdown started. And he’s always like, it’s almost finished man, it’s almost finished, just don’t quit. And so, like he puts no pressure on me to do anything in the house for instance, you know what I mean?” (Participant 2, II).

Another student reflected on how her family supported her emotionally. Due to their understanding, she was able to continue with her studies, which she succinctly expressed as follows:

“Yoh, my family first. They were very supportive of course emotionally not like academic wise. They were very supportive. They always made sure that like I was studying. They gave me my space” (Participant 3, II).

Another participant described how her family supported her to engage in OLT:

“As I said, online learning is a little bit difficult because like it made me hesitant to ask for help like from lecturers. So, I could always go to my family. My parents, like my stepmother is a social worker. I could always get help easily and they motivated me quite well” (Participant 4, II).

Brubacher and Silinda (2021) and Wainwright and Watts (2019) concur that family members are valuable sources of social support in dealing with academic challenges and life uncertainties.

The findings in this theme highlighted the role and significance of academic and social support. Students were academically supported by educators, tutors, and supervisors. Social support was also provided by peers, friends, and family members during the pandemic. The final theme describes the suggestions made for BLT post the pandemic.

Theme 5: Suggestions for Blended Learning and Teaching Post the Pandemic

The participants expressed the need to have F2F classes, as described by the following statement: *“I would love for UWC to avail the live class again, this will make learning so much easier”* (Participant 1, F2). In line with this sentiment, the participants reflected on the further use of BLT post the pandemic, and identified what is needed for BLT to be effective. They referred to (1) access to data and devices, (2) access to facilities that support BLT, and (3) availability of training and tutorial videos for using OLT tools.

Sub-theme 5.1: Access to data and devices

The importance of access to data was highlighted in Themes 2 and 3 above. In this sub-theme, a participating student social worker reiterated that for BLT to work effectively, data as well as devices must be provided:

“The university will have to provide the necessary devices that students may need. And the data ... because even though they give us data, it's not necessarily enough, because there's a lot of classes. We need to attend this main lecture classes and tutorials. And then there's attached to what lecturers sometimes give us which are like videos to watch, that also costs data as well. So, I think the university will have to give us more data” (Participant 4, F2).

During a focus group discussion, another participant echoed the need for sufficient data to be provided by the university: *“Definitely, UWC needs to add more data because the data we get now is too little for everything that we have to do online”* (Participant 3, F2). The data provided to students, according to the above statements, must therefore be related to the OLT activities.

Two concerns were raised, namely: (1) data that ensures daytime learning and teaching, and (2) continued provision of data post the pandemic. An educator participant referred to the night time data that affects interactive learning and teaching activities:

“So, if the students receive night owl data, it means that they need to work in the night, and the lecturer cannot be available day and night. Going forward, a better structure is needed to ensure all students can be active at the same time” (Participant 1, F1).

A student raised a concern that the provision of data during the pandemic will not continue post the pandemic, and that it will impact on the ability to engage with BLT:

“But my only concern is, if we do return to normal campus life, I don't know, if the university would still provide everyone with that data. And I feel like in order to learn online, you need that data” (Participant 1, F2).

Sub-theme 5.2: Access to facilities that support blended learning and teaching

In order for BLT to be effective, the participating students referred to access to the online library as well as the library on campus. A participating student suggested for the online library to be more user-friendly:

“There should be a tutorial on how to use certain things, like using the library, for example. You know, you're not really sure where to look for a certain book or something like that. You could have a tutorial of that as well, how to use the online library or the online library platform” (Participant 4, F2).

Another student spoke about access to the library on campus, and also highlighted the value of textbooks, as discussed under category 3.1.1 (cf. Baragash & Al-Samarraie, 2018):

“I would love for UWC to open the library again. Textbooks are very, very expensive. And some people don't have a means buy the textbooks, especially the students who are not funded or financially inclined” (Participant 1, F2).

In support of the above statements, Walsh and Rana (2020) acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted access to library services on campus. They further suggest that libraries should digitalise material that was previously only available in hard copies.

The participants also referred to technology within classrooms as an important aspect for BLT to be effective. A participating student explained this aspect as follows:

“The option of using the technology more ... even if we are going back to class, our university should consider buying good material ... mics and cameras that will record a lecture while it's happening so that some of the students that cannot be there can attend the class online. Probably people have different issues. One might be sick, for example” (Participating 1, F1).

This statement refers to the aim of FLT to be accessible to students. Van der Westhuizen et al., (2021) agree that it offers students and educators with diverse modes of learning and teaching. A participating educator echoed that for learning and teaching to take place on campus, venues need to be upgraded to manage the pandemic:

“The problem is for that to happen our building needs to be revamped. We cannot go into our building at the moment simply because it's not ventilated” (Participating 1, F3).

Sub-theme 5.3: Availability of training and tutorial videos for using online learning and teaching tools

BLT require digital skills from both students and educators. A participating student suggested that educators should increase their knowledge of online platforms and students should be offered tutorial training:

“Our lecturers should upgrade their knowledge when it comes to these different platforms and the technological devices that we are using. And also, there should be training that are done also for students so that we can work online better” (Participant 1, F1).

As captured below, another student also suggested tutorial videos:

“So yeah, definitely tutorial videos on how to use these platforms. Because sometimes you need to see what he [the person doing the tutorial] was doing visually and follow all the steps that he is doing” (Participant 3, F2).

Evans et al., (2019) further argue that the effectiveness of the online component of BLT depends on students and the educators' ability to navigate and interact with different technologies.

Prior knowledge and skills about the online platforms and tools were accentuated by an educator who referred to the use of what was learned during the pandemic going forward:

“So, I'm thinking blended learning in the future... we are in a digital world. We are much better equipped now to use these tools. We should really reflect, I think we've learned to do blended learning in a much more creative and pedagogical sound manner for the future” (Participant 1, F3).

As a conclusion to the findings, another educator described the value of the future use of the BLT approach in terms of flexibility, as follows:

“Some students learn differently, and some lecturers teach differently. And so, I would like to see more flexibility. I'd like to see elements of face-

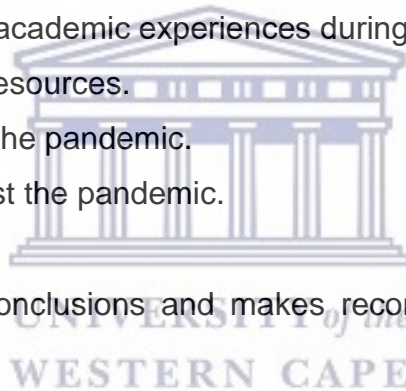
to-face and online being infused in future modules. I don't think we now can go back. We've learnt a lot along the way" (Participant 4, F3).

4.4 CONCLUSION

The first part of this chapter described the biographic profile of the participating student social workers and social work educators. The second part presented the findings of the study arranged under five overarching themes and a number of related sub-themes and categories that emerged from the analysis of the data. These were supported by verbatim quotes and comparisons with the literature in terms of:

- 1) Student social workers' economic, psychological, and social realities during the pandemic.
- 2) Student social workers' academic experiences during the pandemic.
- 3) Learning and teaching resources.
- 4) Support for OLT during the pandemic.
- 5) Suggestions for BLT post the pandemic.

The next chapter draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings of the research.



CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section briefly summarises the main points of the five chapters of this study.

Chapter 1 introduced the topic under investigation as well as described the background and purpose of this study. A preliminary literature review was also carried out and an explanation of the theoretical framework underpinning this study was provided. In addition to this, the research questions, aims, and objectives of the study were clearly stated. Moreover, the research problem was highlighted, and revealed what the researcher ought to do to answer the research questions and achieve the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 provided thick descriptions of the choices of research methods and techniques implemented in this study. The research methodology was chosen based on the research problem, and supported the researcher to achieve the aims and objectives of the study. The research methods and techniques provided in this chapter informed the researcher of how to select the participants, how to collect and analyse the data, and to present and confirm the research findings using the literature review in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 presented the literature review and theoretical framework underpinning the study. The main concepts of this study were explored and described to support and confirm the research findings in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 discussed the research findings as a collective story of the participants' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The themes, sub-themes and related categories that emerged from the data analysis were presented and discussed further in this chapter.

Chapter 5, the current chapter, provides a summary of the previous chapters as well as of the study's findings. Recommendations are made based on the insights of the research, conclusions are drawn, and some final remarks bring the study to a close.

5.2 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarises the study's findings, and draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on these findings.

5.2.1 Summary

Theme 1 focused on the student social workers' economic, psychological, and social realities during the pandemic, which were described in terms of three sub-themes:

Sub-theme 1.1 described the economic realities of the participating student social workers. The loss of employment by family members was highlighted as a challenge, as it impacted on the rest of the family who needed to provide added support. This was also affirmed by Nwosu and Oyenubi (2021), Jain et al., (2020) and Czerniewicz (2020) who referred to the economic impact of the pandemic and how the loss of employment affected households. A category identified the sources of funding of students during the pandemic, which included NSFAS bursaries, SASSA child grants, and the salaries of spouses. However, late payments by the NSFAS and a lack of student funding were identified as challenges. This was confirmed by Naidoo and McKay (2018) who agree that there is a need for alternative student funding in HEIs since some students do not meet the requirements of NSFAS funding.

Sub-theme 1.2 focused on the psychological realities of student social workers. COVID-19 infections and the loss of family members, friends, and colleagues were identified as contributing factors to increased trauma among student social workers. This study discovered that students were being traumatised by the abovementioned losses, fear of losing loved ones, and fear of being sick, or family members and themselves being sick. These factors affected students' academic engagements

negatively and contributed to increased levels of anxiety. This was confirmed by Morris et al., (2020) who explain how the loss of a loved one can have a permanent effect on the psychological well-being of an individual. The participants reported to also have experienced emotional breakdowns and panic attacks during the lockdown period. Academic pressure combined with loss and illness were identified as factors that heightened stress and anxiety among participating students. While the participants referred to the mentioned combination, several authors identified academic challenges and pressure to achieve academic outcomes as primary factors that contribute to increased stress and anxiety (Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018; Karaman et al., 2017; Hetolang & Amone-P'Olak, 2017). Stress-management skills were thus recommended for students dealing with increased stress and anxiety (Zondi, 2018; Hetolang & Amone-P'Olak, 2017).

Sub-theme 1.3 discussed the social realities of student social workers, which included students' home environments, isolation, lack of human interactions, and roles occupied by students within the household setting. Regarding the home environment, participating students reported that their home environments were not accommodating learning and studying. Contributing factors include lack of space, relational challenges with family members, and adjusting from campus to home. This was affirmed by Lee et al., (2021) who indicated that the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic put many families at a disadvantage as they had to accommodate additional activities such as learning and working from home. The authors proposed that family members need to find ways to accommodate and respect one another in the home environment.

The participating students also described how the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic increased isolation from family and significantly reduced human interactions. This was conferred by Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2021) who mentioned isolation and lack of human interaction during the COVID-19 lockdown period and how it resulted in loneliness among young people when prolonged. The participating students described three roles they play within their families that impacted on their social well-being, namely: parental, spousal, and provider roles.

Concerning *parental roles*, student-parents described the challenges of balancing academics and parenting duties during COVID-19 lockdown. Although the evidence from this study shows that student-parents are susceptible to more challenges compared to non-student-parents, Ajayi et al., (2021) identified a link between student-parents' resilience, motivation, and the desire to obtain a formal qualification so as to be able to provide for themselves and their children. Additional support to student-parents was suggested by Masilela (2019) who asserts that support from family and the institution of learning can help student-parents achieve their academic goals.

Second, in addition to this, students also described occupying *spousal roles*. Regarding spousal roles, financial burdens placed on the spouse due to studies was highlighted as a major challenge. This finding was supported by Azonuche (2021) who contends that students' academic performance was challenged by their socioeconomic status, rather than their marital roles.

Third, in terms of *family provider roles*, the findings indicate that financial hardships related to the pandemic forced students to find employment to support their families while juggling academics. The evidence of the study indicate that students used two sources of income to support their families, namely: NSFAS monthly allowance and salaries from their employment. It was highlighted that students' academic progress and mental health was affected during the process of balancing academics with employment. This was confirmed by previous studies, which refer to the implications of working while studying and how poor academic performance was noted among students who study and work simultaneously due to lack of income and poverty (Chinyakata et al., 2019; Baglow & Gair, 2018). On the contrary, working was also noted as a key factor that contributes to students' professional development.

Theme 2 captured student social workers' academic experiences during the pandemic. Three sub-themes emanated as follows:

Sub-theme 2.1 described the study environment with the focus on the lack of access to campus, and the lack of access to academic resources. In terms of the lack of

access to campus, the participating students described how their home environments were not conducive for studying when compared to the campus environment. The home environments at times became distracting during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Previous studies noted the lack of Internet connectivity and mobile data as challenges that hampered the effectiveness of OLT, regardless of HEIs providing students with devices and data (Chisadza et al., 2021; Mpungose 2020).

In addition to this, the findings indicated that campus closure impacted on access to a study environment that supports learning and teaching. This was conferred by both Wilczewski et al., (2021) and Oluka et al., (2021) who argue that unfavourable home conditions hinder students to fully engage in online learning. The authors further explain that the pandemic has underlined the value of a conducive environment and access to campus for learning and teaching activities. The participating students identified the following challenges regarding the lack of access to academic resources, which included (1) educators, (2) the library, and (3) a conducive study environment. This is confirmed by Van der Westhuizen et al., (2021) and Di Pietro et al., (2020) who highlight that the pandemic had a greater impact on students from low-income backgrounds compared to students from affluent backgrounds due to the lack of technological skills and limited resources.

Sub-theme 2.2 focused on academic participation. Three categories emerged from this sub-theme, namely: *motivation*, *engagement*, and *time management*. The participating students described how the lack of resources, summarised above, and emotional difficulties had an adverse impact on their motivation to engage in online learning. These findings were supported by Visser and Law-van Wyk (2021) who point out that the majority of students experienced emotional difficulties and discomfort during the adjustment from BLT to OLT. The mentioned lack of mobile data and balancing work with studies resulted in students missing classes and not being able to engage fully in OLT during the pandemic. This was confirmed by Batbaatar and Amin (2021) who suggest that students need to be self-motivated to prevent academic setbacks. Students' time mismanagement was associated with socioeconomic realities, psychological realities, and academic realities. The participating students

ascribed demotivation, procrastination, lack of planning, and balancing work with academics to their inability to manage time allocated to their academic activities. This was confirmed by several authors who agree and explain that students who engage in OLT often experience challenges with time management due to factors such as procrastination and self-paced learning (Batbaatar & Amin, 2021; Djidu et al., 2021). In addition to this, Hodges et al., (2020) emphasise the need for students to be equipped with time management skills to improve academic engagement since OLT is self-paced in nature.

Sub-theme 2.3 described the participating students' academic performance. The participating students reported that their academic performance deteriorated during the pandemic. They noticed how their aggregate marks had declined since the beginning of the pandemic. These findings were supported by authors who discovered that low academic performance was associated with students who (1) experienced difficulties in transitioning to OLT, and (2) did not review educators' feedback and thus remained ignorant of areas where they needed to improve (Chisadza et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2021).

Theme 3 focused on the learning and teaching resources, which were described in five sub-themes. These are summarised below:

Sub-theme 3.1 captured the OLT material that was used during the pandemic. In terms of material that supported learning and teaching, the participating students pointed to printed textbooks, YouTube videos, online tutorials, and online literature as valuable learning material. In addition to this, the participating educators also mentioned how they found narrated PowerPoints and videos as material valuable for both students with and without disabilities to use for learning purposes. The findings of the study were supported by Essel et al., (2021) who refer to the characteristic of FLT and how it makes use of flexible methods to explore learning and teaching material that meets the needs of students, instead of having a fixed set of material.

Sub-theme 3.2 described the learning and teaching tools that were utilised. The participating students described that the provision of mobile data and devices, and the use of laptops and smartphones supported them to participate in OLT during the COVID-19 lockdown. This was corroborated by previous research, which affirmed the use of digital devices for the effective implementation of FLT (Pather et al., 2021; Abenes & Caballes, 2020). In addition to this, the student participants also acknowledged the sponsorship of mobile data and devices by the university. In further support of this, Salubi (2021) mentions that most HEIs in South Africa provided students from low-income backgrounds with devices and mobile data during the pandemic. This author underscores the value of access to the Internet for continued FLT.

Sub-theme 3.3 focused on the learning and teaching platforms that were used. iKamva, WhatsApp, and Google Meet were identified as platforms that fostered OLT during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The participating students and educators identified the following benefits of using iKamva: (1) it is zero-rated, (2) valuable to share information with students, and (3) valuable to structure modules and setting lesson plans. This was confirmed by Lawrie et al., (2017) who contend that efforts to promote inclusive education are the institution's responsibility and should be reflected in how the institution ensures access to learning and teaching platforms for increased participation.

In relation to WhatsApp, descriptions by students and educators point out that WhatsApp is 1) convenient and affordable for learning and teaching, 2) user friendly, 3) quick and flexible, and 4) easily accessible to students and educators. This was confirmed by previous studies which attested to WhatsApp as being a valuable learning and teaching platform, especially during periods of disruption in learning and teaching activities, and that the use of WhatsApp contributes to improved learning and teaching outcomes during such times (Mabaso, 2021; Nyembe, 2021).

In terms of Google Meet, the participating educators reported to have used Google Meet for teaching weekly lessons and students indicated using it for collaborative discussions with their peers. This was validated by authors who acknowledged that Google Meet provides a F2F experience without physical contact for educators, students, and peers (Bunt, 2021; Panergayo & Almanza, 2020). The literature, however, emphasises the importance of familiarity and capability to use OLT platforms, and how that makes OLT effective.

Sub-theme 3.4 reported on the methods of communication. The first category focused on various methods of communication with different role-players, and the second category focused on the challenges regarding communication methods. Communication between students and educators took place through class representatives and tutors, using platforms such as e-mails and WhatsApp. Regarding communication, Fajrie and Arianto (2021) highlight the importance of having communication ethics and guidelines in place to improve communication between educators and students. Concerning class representatives, Sosibo (2021) acknowledges the key role they play in keeping students updated with learning and teaching information through accessible platforms, such as WhatsApp. Referring to the significance of tutors, Maré and Mutezo (2021) mention that tutors increase students' engagement, which results in high academic performance.

Challenges regarding communication methods included: (1) miscommunication from educators and supervisors to students, (2) students' communication through class representatives that created a burden on the class representatives, (3) allocation of night owl data that affected communication between students and educators during study hours, and (4) disrespectful attitudes from students to educators. The findings in this study were confirmed by Naidu and Modise (2021) who recognise the disadvantage of night owl data, particularly how it forces educators to work beyond prescribed working hours, and Boddy and Dominelli (2016) who highlight the need for policies and standards that guide educators and students on how to communicate respectfully on online platforms.

Sub-theme 3.5 focused on the assessment methods that were implemented. Students reported that they prefer to be assessed through take-home examinations since more time is allocated for the completion of the assessment as compared to the traditional sit-down exam. Ngqondi et al., (2021) and Pather et al., (2021) who mention that, due to the pandemic, educators had to find quality alternative assessment methods that use low-data consumption. Past experience was also found to be an advantage for educators when they had to redesign take-home examinations during the pandemic. Naidoo and McKay (2018), referring to the advantage of prior disruptions, such as national student protests that inspired educators to design take-home examinations to ensure the continuation of assessments, assert that educators were able to draw ideas from those experiences and were able to manage and continue learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, group work activities were reported to be challenging for students during the lockdown.

In terms of group work activities, Thomas and Brown (2021) advise that solutions for group collaboration in OLT should be further explored. Challenges experienced by students regarding assessment methods include heavy workloads and difficulty levels of take-home examinations. Regarding heavy workloads, Almosa (2021) confirms that the fast delivery of content can result in heavy workloads due to academic pressure. In addition, Guangul et al., (2020), referring to one of the disadvantages of take-home examinations, highlight that such examinations are designed to be difficult to foster innovation and critical thinking among students. Educators also reported their concerns regarding assessments. These included the duration allocated to take-home examinations and the pressure to maintain quality assurance emanating from ensuring academic integrity. Several studies suggest that further research should be conducted to explore how integrity can be maintained in OLT assessment methods (Aplin-Snyder et al., 2021; Mavundla & Mgutshini, 2021; Nabee et al., 2021).

Theme 4 reported on support for online learning and teaching during the pandemic. This was described in two sub-themes as follows:

Sub-theme 4.1 described the formal support that students received during COVID-19 lockdown. The participating students reported that they received support from social work educators, supervisors, and tutors. The participants acknowledged how academic staff provided quick responses to their queries and were available to assist them. This is confirmed by Adebola (2021) who remarks that academic support makes academic performance possible. Students reported that their friends from university and classmates also supported them during the COVID-19 lockdown. These findings were supported by Baragash and Al-Samarraie (2018) who identify friends and classmates as social resources within the academic environment that improve student academic performance, Sekonyela (2021) thus recommended formalised peer support structures for universities.

Sub-theme 4.2 focused on support from family. Family members were reported as an effective support system for students. This finding correlates with previous studies that found families to be significant sources of social support in dealing with academic and life challenges (Brubacher & Silinda, 2021; Wainwright & Watts, 2019).

Theme 5 provided suggestions for BLT post the pandemic which was described in terms of three sub-themes.

Sub-theme 5.1 described the importance of access to data and devices for BLT to be effective. The participating students suggested that the university should continue to supply them with mobile data post the pandemic to support engagement with BLT. In addition, the student participants suggested an adjustment to ensure an increase in the amount of mobile data to enable daytime learning and teaching. In terms of connectivity in FLT, Abenes and Caballes (2020) noted that mobile data enables students to have Internet access, which is needed in the online component of BLT.

Sub-theme 5.2 focused on access to facilities that support BLT. The participating students suggested increased access to the online library, as well as the library on campus. Walsh and Rana (2020) advise that university libraries should find ways to digitalise learning and teaching material that is only available in hard copy. In addition

to this, latest technology in lecture rooms was also suggested to enhance BLT. This was further supported by Van der Westhuizen et al., (2021) who acknowledge that the online and F2F components of BLT provide students and educators with diverse modes of learning and teaching, and increases access to education that will support FLT. Thus, it was also suggested that in order for learning and teaching to take place on campus, venues need to be upgraded.

Sub-theme 5.3 highlighted the need for the availability of training and tutorial videos for using OLT and platforms. The student participants suggested that (1) educators should increase their knowledge regarding online platforms, and (2) students should be offered tutorial training. This was conferred by Evans et al., (2019) who, referring to the online component of BLT, stress that for BLT to be effective, students and educators need to be trained on how to use and interact with the latest technologies.

Next, the conclusions based on the findings are provided.

5.2.2 Conclusions

Theme 1 highlighted how a lack of income in the family puts pressure on students, who then attempt to find access to finances through bursaries or work. Students who are forced to work to provide for their families and their studies are under pressure to manage their academic workloads. Similar to the latter statement, Djidu et al., (2021) conclude that unmanageable workload affects students' academic performance negatively. On the one hand, FLT is aimed at providing different spaces for students where they can work at times that are suitable for them. BLT, on the other hand, merges F2F and OLT activities, which requires students to attend either the online or the on-campus class. This means that students who are working will experience challenges to engage with BLT if they are unable to attend classes.

In addition to this, students' experiences of trauma due to COVID-19 deaths and illnesses impacted on their mental health negatively. Students who lost loved ones or fell ill could not engage effectively in learning and teaching. As a result, their mental

health deteriorated due to increased stress and anxiety. The fears, stress, anxiety, and depression experienced must be considered in a post-pandemic learning and teaching environment. Furthermore, students' learning experiences were adversely impacted by the lack of conducive learning environments, isolation from family, and additional roles such as parental, spousal, and provider within their families. Although conclusions made by Andrede and Alden-Rivers (2019) highlight the characteristic of student-centredness in FLT, BLT on the other hand does not consider the social and psychological impact on students' learning experiences. The findings related to the financial, psychological, and social well-being of students during the pandemic highlight the need to include this in BLT activities in the future.

Theme 2 pointed out that the students' home environments were not conducive for learning due to the lack of access to resources that support OLT, which impacted their academic participation and performance. The impact of COVID-19 on students' academic participation and performance resulted in an interplay between students being demotivated to engage in academic activities, experiencing difficulties with time management, and low academic performance (cf. Chisadza et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2021). In FLT, students can engage in learning and teaching on a variety of digital devices that can increase motivation to complete academic activities without limitations of time and place (Abenes & Caballes, 2020). However, BLT offers students two modes of learning, online and F2F sessions. Thus, learning is not self-paced, instead it is a fixed process aimed at ensuring student participation that requires students to manage their time. Time management becomes an essential skill to effectively engage in BLT activities.

Theme 3 highlighted how access to a variety of learning and teaching material and platforms supported students and educators to engage in OLT. iKamva, WhatsApp and Google Meet are valuable learning and teaching platforms that enabled OLT during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Both pedagogies of FLT and BLT accommodate the use of e-tools for learning and teaching. Before the pandemic, students and educators made use of iKamva and WhatsApp only. However, the

Google Meet platform can be used in the online component of BLT to promote access to education and to encourage a F2F experience.

Online learning experiences during the pandemic highlighted the importance of communication between academic staff and students. A lack of communication guidelines for students and educators impacted on channels of communication, which is confirmed by Boddy and Dominelli (2016). This would require that a BLT protocol be developed to ensure clear, respectful, and effective communication. Additional support from supervisors, tutors, and class representatives makes communication possible, and is supported by Eloff et al., (2021) and Lumadi (2021). FLT allows for quick and large scale of communication. Academic staff and students can maximise on the online component of BLT to ensure effective and quick communication to promote academic engagement. During OLT student social workers were assessed through assignments, group work activities, and take-home examinations on the online platforms. In FLT, flexibility is seen in methods of assessment. Students are provided enough time to engage with and complete their online assessments. In BLT, students traditionally write examinations in a selected venue and submit hard copy assignments. Post the pandemic, and to support FLT, online assessments in BLT will need to be explored and monitored to ensure quality assurance and academic integrity.

Theme 4 pointed out the value of academic and social support, and how it helps students to overcome academic and personal challenges that impact on their well-being. The pandemic had an adverse impact on the well-being of students, which affected their academic progress and, as a result, increased stress and anxiety. For students, support from academic staff, family, friends, and peers enabled them to navigate their academics beyond the challenges they experienced during the COVID-19 lockdown (Adebola, 2021). In FLT, the availability of academic support reflects the characteristic of a student-centred learning and teaching approach. In terms of BLT, students will have access to academic staff physically and through online platforms.

Theme 5 highlighted the need for continued provision of data and devices to students post the pandemic should universities opt to encourage BLT going forward. Referring to the online component of blended learning and teaching, the provision of data and devices will enable students to engage in learning with ease. The need for tutorial training and revamped lecture rooms was also highlighted, in terms of preparations for BLT post the pandemic. The training of students and educators will improve their skills and knowledge to navigate the online component of BLT (cf. Baragash & Al-Samarraie, 2018). The latest technologies will have to be incorporated in lecture rooms to increase flexibility and access to education (Evans et al., 2019).

The conclusions were used to identify recommendations for the inclusion of a BLT approach post the pandemic.

5.2.3 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions above, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Students who find it difficult to leave employment due to continued unemployment and poverty post the pandemic will have to be considered. It is recommended that a flexible approach be considered to not exclude these students, while interactive participation is not compromised. This will require an institutional approach to FLT, on the one hand, and consideration for discipline specific requirements, on the other hand. Student social workers are required to do fieldwork and to work in groups, which could be compromised if students are not able to attend to these aspects of learning and teaching in social work. A recommendation is that employers are encouraged to support academic development.
- Students who lack income to afford basic needs or to assist their families should be considered for a work-study position by the institution. This will mean that students will be working on campus where they are close to academic infrastructure and resources. Students will be able to pay for their fees and sustain themselves throughout the study period. Their academic progress will no longer be disrupted.
- Students who experienced trauma and increased anxiety due to COVID-19 deaths and illness should be considered for bereavement and trauma counselling. It is

recommended that the institution's student support service should identify these students and provide counselling services based on students' psychological needs. Student social workers will be able to function well in their fieldwork if additional psychological support is provided.

- In terms of future pandemics, universities should consider how students who do not have conducive home study environments could be accommodated while health and safety protocols are taken into account. Consideration should be given to how students with such needs would be identified.
- Time management skills should be developed as a part of the curriculum. It is recommended that student support services together with departments provide on-going time management skill development sessions through webinars and F2F trainings. This will enable student social workers to manage the time allocated to their academic activities.
- iKamva, WhatsApp and Google Meet are valuable learning and teaching platforms. In terms of WhatsApp and Google Meet, it is recommended that the institution formalise these as learning platforms used by students and educators post the pandemic. These platforms accommodate a FLT approach and have been found to increase academic participation. These platforms can also be used to ensure communication and support to and among students.
- Guidelines to assist students and educators to engage in online platforms will have to be drafted to increase the effectiveness of communication between student social workers and educators. A protocol for communication in BLT should be developed to ensure the effective transfer of knowledge and the provision of support.
- Online assessments and examination have been found to decrease anxiety among student social workers. Students are able to complete take-home examinations within the allocated timeframe. It is thus recommended that online assessments be considered as part of the online component of BLT post the pandemic. Institutions, however, will have to evaluate the risks of online assessments for academic integrity and quality assurance purposes.
- Academic support has been reported to improve academic engagement and performance. It is recommended that more academic support training be

considered for social work educators, supervisors, and tutors on how they can continue to support students now and beyond the pandemic. This will encourage a holistic approach to support student well-being and development.

- Data and digital devices enabled students to engage in OLT effectively. To support BLT going forward, it is recommended that institutions continue to provide students with mobile data and the necessary devices. This will enable student social workers to engage in the online component of BLT effectively.
- There is a need for students and educators to learn how to use the latest technologies and online platforms. It is thus recommended that training on how to use the latest technologies be provided to students and educators. In addition to this, it is recommended that tutorial videos of such training be made available for students to access them at a later stage should they need to refer back to them. Skills to use these latest technologies will enable students and educators to adjust well to BLT.
- BLT will require lecture rooms to be upgraded for ventilation and provided with the latest technology that will make education accessible. The upgrade of technologies will enable educators to connect with students on virtual platforms and, in addition, record lectures that students can have access to, should the need arise.
- The findings also highlighted different role players that were essential for OLT during the pandemic. Apart from the student social workers and their educators, supervisors, tutors and class representatives became essential to ensure an effective learning experience. It is recommended that clear roles be assigned to these role players, and also that communication is structured and formalised to prevent miscommunication.

This section provided recommendations based on the study's findings to contribute to BLT in social work education and training. Recommendations for further research are presented next.

5.2.4 Recommendations for further research

It is recommended that further research should focus on:

- Support for employed students to actively participate in BLT activities.
- Guidelines for digital social work education and training methods and tools.
- Resources needed for BLT from a FLT approach to ensure that staff members have the capacity to manage the specific needs of students.
- How to ensure academic integrity in the online component of BLT assessments.
- Holistic support to student social workers which considers the impact of socioeconomic realities on students' learning experiences.

5.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this research study was to explore and describe the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding OLT during the COVID-19 national lockdown, and the influence of socioeconomic factors on student social workers' experiences of OLT during the COVID-19 lockdown. The researcher was interested in answering the following questions: (1) What are the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding OLT during the COVID-19 national lockdown? (2) How did socioeconomic factors influence student social workers' experiences of OLT during the COVID-19 lockdown? The findings provided insight into the student social workers' economic, psychological, and social realities, and the impact thereof on their academic experiences. Academic experiences were further described in terms of learning and teaching resources and support. Finally, the participants were able to make suggestions for what is needed to develop BLT strategies post the pandemic based on their experiences. The research questions of this study were thus sufficiently answered, which contributed to the conclusions and recommendations for social work education and training and future research.

The hoped-for outcome of this study is that it will assist schools of social work to improve the delivery of social work education and training from a BLT approach in a post pandemic era based on lessons learned. It is also envisaged that future social

work education and training will focus on the holistic well-being of student social workers, and that it will include the psychosocial well-being of the next generation of social workers.

Anthony J. D'Angelo's (n.d.) succinct statement aptly brings this study to a close:

“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow”.

The passion to learn and achieve, despite their often very challenging and difficult circumstances, was exhibited by all of the participants of this study. From them we derive inspiration.



REFERENCE LIST

- Abenes, F. M. D., & Caballes, D. G. (2020). Readiness of tertiary students in flexible learning approach. *CiiT International Journal of Automation and Autonomous System*, 12(3), 62-69.
- Adebola, O. O. (2021). Supplemental instruction as a tool for students' academic performance in higher education. *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, 4(2), 42-45. <https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.2021.4>.
- Ajayi, K. V., Odonkor, G., Sonya Panjwani, M., Aremu, O., Garney, W., & McKyer, E. L. J. (2021). *Social-ecological barriers to student-parents' academic success: a systematic review*. SocArXiv. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/m93eb>.
- Albiladi, W. S., & Alshareef, K. K. (2019). Blended learning in English teaching and learning: A review of the current literature. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(2), 232-238.
- Al-Fraihat, D., Joy, M., & Sinclair, J. (2020). Evaluating e-learning systems success: An empirical study. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 102, 67-86. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.08.004>.
- AlKhaleel, A. (2019). The advantages of using blended learning in studying English as a Foreign language at the University of Tabuk. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods (MJLTM)*, 9(2), 1-7.
- Almossa, S. Y. (2021). University students' perspectives toward learning and assessment during COVID-19. *Education and Information Technologies*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10554-8>.
- Alpaslan, N. (2019). Promoting social work graduates' employment through the social work curriculum: Employers' perspectives on the employability of Unisa's newly qualified social workers. *Social Work*, 55(3), 341-358. <https://dx.doi.org/10.15270/52-2-744>.
- Alseth, A. K. (2020). Human rights as an opportunity and challenge for social work in a changing Norwegian welfare state. *European Journal of Social Work*, 23(6), 920-932. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2020.1793110>.

- Amadasun, S. (2020). Is the signature pedagogy still worthwhile? An empirical study of field practice experience among social work students in Nigeria. *Social Work Education, 40*(2), 229-243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2020.1771300>.
- Amadasun, S. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic in Africa: What lessons for social work education and practice? *International Social Work, 64*(2), 246-250. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0020872820949620>.
- Andrade, M. S., & Alden-Rivers, B. (2019). Developing a framework for sustainable growth of flexible learning opportunities. *Higher Education Pedagogies, 4*(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2018.1564879>.
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 5*(2), 272-281. <http://jeteraps.scholarlinkresearch.com/abstractview.php?id=19>.
- Anthony, B., Kamaludin, A., Romli, A., Raffei, A. F. M., Abdullah, A., Ming, G. L., & Baba, S. (2019). Exploring the role of blended learning for teaching and learning effectiveness in institutions of higher learning: An empirical investigation. *Education and Information Technologies, 24*(6), 3433-3466. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-019-09941-z>.
- Aparicio, M., Bacao, F., & Oliveira, T. (2016). An e-learning theoretical framework. *Journal of Educational Technology and Society, 19*(1), 292-307. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jeductechsoci.19.1.292>.
- Aplin-Snyder, C., Buterakos, R., Creech, C., Schapel, S. A., & Feige, B. D. (2021). Academic integrity in online examinations in a graduate nurse practitioner program: Student perceptions and lessons for nurse educators. *Nurse Education Today, 107*, 105099. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2021.105099>.
- Archibald, M. M., Ambagtsheer, R. C., Casey, M. G., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 18*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1609406919874596>.
- Arndt, C., Davies, R., Gabriel, S., Harris, L., Makrelov, K., Modise, B., Robinson, S., Simbanegavi, W., Van Seventer, D., & Anderson, L. (2020). *Impact of Covid-19 on the South African economy: An initial analysis. Southern Africa –*

Towards Inclusive Economic Development (SA-TIED): Working Paper 111.
<https://www.ifpri.org/publication/impact-covid-19-south-african-economy-initial-analysis>.

- Asiamah, N., Mensah, H. K., & Oteng-Abayie, E. F. (2017). General, target, and accessible population: Demystifying the concepts for effective sampling. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(6), 1607-1621.
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol22/iss6/9>.
- Austin, A., Craig, S. L., & McInroy, L. B. (2016). Toward transgender affirmative social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 52(3), 297-310.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2016.1174637>.
- Azonuche, J. E. (2021). Influence of family background on the academic performance of married female students in clothing and textiles in Nigeria's universities. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 11(4), 124.
<https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2021-0082>.
- Baglow, L., & Gair, S. (2018). Australian social work students: Balancing tertiary studies, paid work and poverty. *Journal of Social Work*, 19(2), 276-295.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017318760776>.
- Baikady, R., Cheng, S. L., & Channaveer, R. M. (2020). Eight decades of existence and search for an identity: Educators' perspectives on social work education in contemporary India. *Social Work Education*, 48(8), 994-1009.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2020.1773780>.
- Baragash, R. S., & Al-Samarraie, H. (2018). Blended learning: Investigating the influence of engagement in multiple learning delivery modes on students' performance. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(7), 2082-2098.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2018.07.010>.
- Barker, E. T., Howard, A. L., Villemare-Krajden, R., & Galambos, N. L. (2018). The rise and fall of depressive symptoms and academic stress in two samples of university students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(6), 1252-1266.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-018-0822-9>.
- Batbaatar, N., & Amin, G. (2021, September 14). Students' time management during online class. *Proceeding of International Conference Universitas Pekalongan*,

Vol 1, No. 1, pp. 189-194.
<https://proceeding.unikal.ac.id/index.php/icunikal2021/issue/view/11>.

- Berg, B. L., & Howard, L. (2012). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. 8th edition. Pearson Educational Inc.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219-234.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>.
- Bhatt, S., & Sanyaal, S. (2019). Definitions of social work in past hundred years: A review. *Journal of Social Work Education, Research and Action*, 5(1), 1-23.
- Bitzer, E., & de Jager, E. (2018). The views of commerce students regarding "free" higher education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(4), 12-36. <https://doi.org/10.20853/32-4-2436>.
- Boddy, J., & Dominelli, L. (2016). Social media and social work: The challenges of a new ethical space. *Australian Social Work*, 70(2), 172-184.
<https://doi:10.1080/0312407x.2016.1224907>.
- Bosch, C., Mentz, E., & Reitsma, G. (2020). Cooperative learning as a blended learning strategy: A conceptual overview, in L. Kyei-Blankson, E. Ntuli & M. A. Nur-Awaleh (Eds.), *Emerging techniques and applications for blended learning in K-20 classrooms* (pp. 65-87). IGI Global.
- Bragg, J., Havig, K., & Muñoz, R. (2018). Absent in theory, invisible in practice: Queering HBSE for a more inclusive social work profession. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 28(1), 44-57.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2017.1383959>.
- Brew, A., Boud, D., Lucas, L., & Crawford, K. (2013). Reflexive deliberation in international research collaboration: Minimising risk and maximising opportunity. *Higher Education*, 66(1), 93-104.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23473595>.
- Briskman, L. (2020). The people's inquiry into detention: Social work activism for asylum seeker rights. *Journal of Sociology*, 56(1), 100-114.
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1440783319882540>.
- Brophy, L. (2020). Legal provisions, advocacy, and empowerment, in R. Ow, A. Weng & C. Poon (Eds.), *Mental health and social work* (pp. 497-516). Springer.

- Brubacher, M. R., & Silinda, F. T. (2021). First-generation students in distance education program: family resources and academic outcomes. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 22(1), 135-147. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v22i1.4872>.
- Bryan, A., & Volchenkova, K. N. (2016). Blended learning: Definition, models, implications for higher education. *Bulletin of the South Ural State University. Series Education. Educational Sciences*, 8(2), 24-30. <http://doi.org/10.14529/ped160204>.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. 5th edition. Oxford University Press.
- Bunt, B. (2021). Online teaching in Education for the subject group History under COVID 19 conditions. *Yesterday and Today*, 25, 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2021/n25a4>.
- Cabiati, E. (2017). Social work education: The relational way. *Relational Social Work*, 1(1), 61-79. <http://doi.org/10.14605/RSW111605>.
- Carey, M. (2013). *The social work dissertation: Using small-scale qualitative methodology*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Chinyakata, R., Raselekoane, N. R., & Mphahlele, R. R. C. (2019). Factors contributing to postgraduate students working and studying simultaneously and its effects on their academic performance. *African Renaissance*, 16(1), 65-81. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2019/v16n1a4>.
- Chisadza, C., Clance, M., Mthembu, T., Nicholls, N., & Yitbarek, E. (2021). Online and face-to-face learning: Evidence from students' performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. *African Development Review*, 33, S114-S125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8268.12520>.
- Cini, L. (2019). Disrupting the neoliberal university in South Africa: The #FeesMustFall movement in 2015. *Current Sociology*, 67(7), 942-959. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392119865766>.
- Cloete, A. L. (2017). Technology and education: Challenges and opportunities. *HTS Theological Studies*, 73(4), 1-7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4589>.
- Cohen, L. Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education*. 8th edition. Routledge.

- Council for Higher Education (CHE). (2015). *Qualification standard for Bachelor of Social Work*. South African Council for Higher Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4th edition. Sage.
- Czerniewicz, L. (2020). What we learnt from 'going online' during university shutdowns in South Africa. *PhilonEdTech*, <https://philonedtech.com/what-we-learnt-from-going-online-during-university-shutdowns-in-south-africa/>.
- Daniel, E. (2016). The usefulness of qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in researching problem-solving ability in science education curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(15), 91-100.
- Dârjan, I., & Tomita, M. (2014). Helping professionals: The blessing and the burden of helping, in M. Tomita & S. Cace (Eds.), *Proceedings of the second world congress on resilience: From person to society* (pp. 787-791). Medimond.
- De Bie, A., Chaplin, J., Vengris, J., Dagnachew, E., & Jackson, R. (2020). Not 'everything's a learning experience: racialized, Indigenous, LGBTQ, and disabled students in social work field placements. *Social Work Education*, 40(6), 756-772. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2020.1843614>.
- Debnath, A., Sarkar, P., & Roy, S. (2013). An ant colony optimization-based advice generation for curriculum sequencing under flexible learning system. In *Procedure of the International Conference on Computational Intelligence and Information Technology*, 36-45. <https://doi.org/03.LSCS.2013.6.144>.
- De Haas, M., Faber, R., & Hamersma, M. (2020). How COVID-19 and the Dutch 'intelligent lockdown' change activities, work and travel behaviour: Evidence from longitudinal data in the Netherlands. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 6, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2020.100150>.
- De Jager, M. (2013). How prepared are social work practitioners for beginners' practice? Reflections of newly qualified BSW graduates. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 49(4), 469-489. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15270/49-4-39>.
- De Vaus, D. (2014). *Surveys in social research* (6th ed.). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

- Devlin, A. S. (2018). *The research experience: Planning, conducting and reporting research*. Sage.
- Di Pietro, G., Biagi, F., Costa, P., Karpiński, Z., & Mazza, J. (2020). *The likely impact of COVID-19 on education: Reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets*. Publications Office of the European Union.
- Djidu, H., Mashuri, S., Nasruddin, N., Sejati, A. E., Rasmuin, R., Ugi, L. E., & Arua, A. L. (2021). Online learning in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era: Is our higher education ready for it? *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengkajian Ilmu Pendidikan: E-Saintika*, 5(2), 139-151. <https://doi.org/10.36312/esaintika.v5i2.479>.
- Dlamini, B. I., Tom, R. F., Nel, K. A., & Zogli, L. K. J. (2020). Adjustment experiences of first-year students in South Africa. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 24(2).
- Dotterer, A. M., Juhasz, A. C., Murphy, K. N., Park, S., & Boyce, L. K. (2021). Stress and family relationships among college student parents: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 38(3), 888-911. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407520975198>.
- Drechsler, K., Hessenauer, S., & Jaber-Wilson, L. (2019). Engage in diversity and difference in practice competency: Exploring the explicit curriculum and outcome measures of graduate social work programs. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 56(2), 341-353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1656571>
- Dziuban, C., Graham, C. R., Moskal, P. D., Norberg, A., & Sicilia, N. (2018). Blended learning: the new normal and emerging technologies. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 15(1), 3. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-017-0087-5>.
- Edward, C. N., Asirvatham, D., & Johar, M. G. M. (2018). Effect of blended learning and learners' characteristics on students' competence: An empirical evidence in learning oriental music. *Education and Information Technologies*, 23(6), 2587-2606. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-018-9732-4>.
- Eloff, I., O'Neil, S., & Kanengoni, H. (2021). Students' well-being in tertiary environments: insights into the (unrecognised) role of lecturers. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1931836>.

- Essel, H. B., Vlachopoulos, D., Adom, D., & Tachie-Menson, A. (2021). Transforming higher education in Ghana in times of disruption: flexible learning in rural communities with high latency internet connectivity. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 15(2), 96-312. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEC-08-2020-0151>.
- Evans, J. C., Yip, H., Chan, K., Armatas, C., & Tse, A. (2019). Blended learning in higher education: professional development in a Hong Kong university. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 39(4), 643-656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1685943>.
- Fajrie, M., & Arianto, D. A. N. (2021, March 6). *The influence of WhatsApp application towards the communication ethics between lecturers and students*. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Law, Social Science, Economics, and Education, ICLSSEE 2021, Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Ferri, F., Grifoni, P., & Guzzo, T. (2020). Online learning and emergency remote teaching: Opportunities and challenges in emergency situations. *Societies*, 10(4), 86. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc10040086>.
- Flynn, S. (2020). Globalisation and social work education in the Republic of Ireland: Towards informed transnational social work for transnational problems such as COVID-19. *International Social Work*, 63(4), 524-537. <https://doi:10.1177/0020872820930804>.
- Fonseca, X., Lukosch, S., & Brazier, F. (2018). Social cohesion revisited: a new definition and how to characterize it. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 32(2), 231-253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2018.1497480>.
- Gearhart, M. C., & Joseph, M. L. (2018). Social cohesion, mutual efficacy, and informal social control: Enhancing the conceptualization of collective efficacy. *Community Development*, 50(1), 3-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2018.1545793>.
- Giubilini, A., & Levy, N. (2018). What in the world is collective responsibility? *Dialectica*, 72(2), 191-217. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111%2F1746-8361.12228>.
- Gotea, M., & Roşculeţ, A. (2019). Corporate social responsibility and social work. *Interconnections Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Social*

Sciences and Law, 12(61), 127-138.
<https://doi.org/10.31926/but.ssl.2019.12.61.1.12>.

- Govender, C. M. (2020). Hopes, challenges and goals - Voices of first-year at-risk higher education students in South Africa. *South African Review of Sociology*, 51(1), 55-69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2020.1806919>.
- Graf, E., Sator, M., & Spranz-Fogasy, T. (2014). *Discourses of helping professions*. Benjamins.
- Grant, C. & Osanloo, A. (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your “house”. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice and Research*, 4(2), 12-27. <https://doi.org/10.5929/2014.4.2.9>.
- Guangul, F. M., Suhail, A. H., Khalit, M. I., & Khidhir, B. A. (2020). Challenges of remote assessment in higher education in the context of COVID-19: a case study of Middle East College. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 32(4), 519-535. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-020-09340-w>.
- Günbayi, I., & Sorm, S. (2018). Social paradigms in guiding social research design: The functional, interpretive, radical humanist and radical structural paradigms. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications*, 9(2), 57-76.
- Hadi, M. A., & Closs, S. J. (2016). Ensuring rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative research in clinical pharmacy. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, 38(3), 641-646. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11096-015-0237-6>.
- Harding, J. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: From start to finish*. 2nd edition. Sage.
- Hendricks, C. (2018). Decolonising universities in South Africa: Rigged spaces? *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity*, 13(1), 16-38.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/18186874.2018.1474990>.
- Hermanto, H., Rai, N. G. M., & Fahmi, A. (2021). Students' opinions about studying from home during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16(2), 499-510.
<https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v16i2.5627>.

- Hetolang, L. T., & Amone-P'Olak, K. (2017). The associations between stressful life events and depression among students in a university in Botswana. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 48(2), 255-267. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0081246317711793>.
- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. *Educause Review*. <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>.
- Hrastinski, S. (2019). What do we mean by blended learning? *Tech Trends*, 63, 564-569. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-019-00375-5>.
- Hsu, J. L., & Goldsmith, G. R. (2021). Instructor strategies to alleviate stress and anxiety among college and University STEM Students. *CBE – Life Sciences Education*, 20(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.20-08-0189>.
- Huang, R. H., Liu, D. J., Tlili, A., Yang, J. F., & Wang, H. H. (2020). *Handbook on facilitating flexible learning during educational disruption: The Chinese experience in maintaining undisrupted learning in COVID-19 Outbreak*. Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University.
- Hughes, G. D., Mbamalu, O. N., Okonji, C. O., & Puoane, T. R. (2021). The impact of health disparities on COVID-19 outcomes: Early findings from a high-income country and two middle-income countries. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 8, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-021-00999-5>.
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). (2014). *Global definition of social work*. <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/>.
- International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) & International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). (2020). *Global Standards for Social Work Education & Training*. IFSW & IASSW.
- Jain, R., Budlender, J., Zizzamia, R., & Bassier, I. (2020). *The labour market and poverty impact of covid-19 in South Africa*. SALDRU Working Paper No. 264. Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town.

http://www.opensaldru.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11090/980/2020_264_Saldr_uwp.pdf?sequence=1.

- Jaswal, S., & Kshetrimayum, M. (2020). Social Work and the changing context: Engagement in policymaking. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 50(8), 2253-2260. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcaa234>
- Jensen, E. A. (2016). *Doing real research: A practical guide to social research*. Sage.
- Joan, D. R. (2013). Flexible learning as new learning design in classroom process to promote quality education. *Journal on School Educational Technology*, 9(1), 37-42. <https://doi.org/10.26634/jsch.9.2410>.
- Jordan, C., Gust, S., & Scheman, N. (2015). *Shifting ground: Knowledge and reality, transgression and trustworthiness*. Oxford University Press.
- Joseph, R. (2019). Poverty, welfare, and self-sufficiency: Implications for the Social Work Profession. *Journal of Poverty*, 23(3), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10875549.2019.1616037>.
- Kaminer, D., & Shabalala, N. (2019). Developing a student mental health policy for a South African university: Consultation, contestation and compromise. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 33(5), 196-212. <http://doi.org/10.20853/33-5-3597>.
- Kapasias, N., Paul, P., Roy, A., Saha, J., Zaveri, A., Mallick, R., & Chouhan, P. (2020). Impact of lockdown on learning status of undergraduate and postgraduate students during COVID-19 pandemic in West Bengal, India. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 116, 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105194>.
- Karaman, M. A., Lerma, E., Vela, J. C., & Watson, J. C. (2017). Predictors of academic stress among college students. *Journal of College Counseling*, 22(1), 41-55. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocc.12113>.
- Keesler, J. M. (2019). Understanding emergent social workers' experiences and attitudes toward people with psychiatric, physical, and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 57(1), 85-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1661916>.
- Kgabo, M. V. (2021). Challenges experienced by lecturers in supporting students at an open distance e-learning institution. *Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training*, 19(4), 174-180. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n4p116>.

- Khakimjanovna, S. L. (2021). Psychological features of the personality of university student. *EPRA. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7(5), 172-174. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra2013>.
- Khan, L. (2020). *The perceptions of the teaching staff regarding selection for the Bachelor of Social work (BSW) program at the University of Cape Town (UCT)*. [Master's thesis, University of Cape Town].
- Khunou, G., Pillay, R., & Nethononda, A. (2012). Social work is 'women's work': an analysis of social work students' perceptions of gender as a career choice determinant. *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, 24(1), 120-135.
- Kintu, M. J., Zhu, C., & Kagambe, E. (2017). Blended learning effectiveness: the relationship between student characteristics, design features and outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 14(1), 7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-017-0043-4>.
- Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. 2nd edition. Pearson Education.
- Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. 3rd edition. Sage.
- Kyllönen, M. (2019). A new narrative for the future: Learning, social cohesion and redefining "Us". In J. W. Cook (Ed), *Sustainability, human well-being, and the future of education* (pp. 311-338). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Labra, O., Chamblas, I., Turcotte, P., & Dubé, N. (2018). Is it a man's world? An exploratory study of male students in social work: experiences from Chile. *British Journal of Social Work*, 48(3), 769-786. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx065>.
- Laidlaw, K., Cabiati, E., Henriksen, O., & Shore, C. (2020). Preparing students for social work practice in contemporary societies: Insights from a transnational research network. *European Journal of Social Work*, 23(6), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2020.1793108>.
- Landa, N., Zhou, S., & Marongwe, N. (2021). Education in emergencies: Lessons from COVID-19 in South Africa. *International Review of Education*, 67, 167-183. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-021-09903-z>.

- Lalima, K., & Dangwal, L. (2017). Blended learning: An innovative approach. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 5(1), 129-136. <http://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2017.050116>.
- Lawrie, G., Marquis, E., Fuller, E., Newman, T., Qiu, M., Nomikoudis, M., & Van Dam, L. (2017). Moving towards inclusive learning and teaching: A synthesis of recent literature. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 5(1), 9-21. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearningu.5.1.3>.
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. The Guilford Press.
- Lee, J., Chin, M., & Sung, M. (2020). How has COVID-19 changed family life and well-being in Korea? *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 51(3-4), 301-313. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.51.3-4.006>.
- Le Fevre, D., Meyer, F., & Bendikson, L. (2020). Navigating the leadership tensions in creating collective responsibility. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpcc-03-2020-0014>.
- Letseka, M. (2020). Stimulating ODL research at UNISA: Exploring the role and potential impact of the UNESCO Chair. *Open Learning Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 7, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2020.1724780>.
- Lofredo, M. P. P. (2020). Social cohesion, trust, and government action against pandemics. *Eubios Journal of International and Asian Bioethics*, 30(4), 182-189. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/323990225.pdf>.
- Lumadi, R. I. (2021). Enhancing student development through support services in an open distance learning institution: a case study in South Africa. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 35(1), 113-126. <https://doi.org/10.20853/35-1-4422>.
- Mabaso, N. (2021). *The utilization of WhatsApp for teaching and learning in an initial teacher preparation programme at a University of Technology*. [Master's thesis, Cape Peninsula University of Technology].
- MacIntyre, C. R. (2020). Global spread of COVID-19 and pandemic potential. *Global Biosecurity*, 2(1). <http://doi.org/10.31646/gbio.55>.

- Mahlangu, V. P. (2020). Rethinking student admission and access in higher education through the lens of capabilities approach. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(1), 175-185. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-04-2019-0135>.
- Majid, M. A. A., Othman, M., Mohamad, S. F., Lim, S. A. H., & Yusof, A. (2017). Piloting for interviews in qualitative research: Operationalization and lessons learnt. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(4), 1073-1080.
- Malka, M., & Langer, N. K. (2019). The implementation of photovoice as a tool for documenting the learning experiences of social work students on international field placement. *International Social Work*, 64(4), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0020872819835009>.
- Maqableh, M., & Alia, M. (2021). Evaluation online learning of undergraduate students under lockdown amidst COVID-19 Pandemic: The online learning experience and students' satisfaction. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 128, 106160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2021.106160>.
- Maré, S., & Mutezo, A. T. (2021). The effectiveness of e-tutoring in an open and distance e-learning environment: evidence from the university of South Africa. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 36(2), 164-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2020.1717941>.
- Maruster, L. (2013). *Qualitative research methods*. Sage.
- Masilela, B. (2019). *Black single student-mothers at uj: managing the demands of studying and parenting*. [Master's thesis, University of Johannesburg].
- Matsepe, D., Cross, M., & Fenyane, S. (2020). Equity in admissions policies of undergraduate students in post democracy in selected South African universities. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 9, 437-445.
- Mavundla, A. O., & Mgutshini, T. (2021). *Contexts during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. Covid-19: Interdisciplinary explorations of impacts on Higher Education*. African Sun Media.
- Mclaughlin, H., Scholar, H., & Teater, B. (2020). Social work education in a global pandemic: Strategies, reflections, and challenges. *Social Work Education*, 39(8), 975-982. <https://doi:10.1080/02615479.2020.1834545>.

- Mehrotra, G. R., Hudson, K. D., & Self, J. M. (2019). A critical examination of key assumptions underlying diversity and social justice courses in social work. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 30(2), 127-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1656571>.
- Miles, R., McBeath, B., Brockett, S., & Sorenson, P. (2017). Prevalence and predictors of social work student food insecurity. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 53(4), 651-663. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2017.1299062>.
- Moore, M., Ballesteros, J., & Hansen, C. J. (2018). The role of social work values in promoting the functioning and well-being of athletes. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 15(2), 48-61. <https://jswve.org/download/15-2/articles15-2/48-Well-being-of-athletes-JSWVE-15-2-2018-Fall.pdf>.
- Morley, C., & Stenhouse, K. (2021). Educating for critical social work practice in mental health. *Social Work Education*, 40(1), 80-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2020.1774535>.
- Morris, S. E., Moment, A., & Thomas, J. D. (2020). Caring for bereaved family members during the COVID-19 pandemic: before and after the death of a patient. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 60(2), e70-e74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2020.05.002>.
- Morse J. (2015). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(1), 1212-1222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315588501>.
- Motala, S., & Menon, K. (2020). In search of the 'new normal': Reflections on teaching and learning during COVID 19 in a South African university. *Southern African Review of Education*, 26(1), 80-99. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-sare-v26-n1-a6>.
- Mpungose, C. B. (2020). Emergent transition from face-to-face to online learning in a South African University in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 7(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-00603-x>.
- Mukhtar, K., Javed, K., Arooj, M., & Sethi, A. (2020). Advantages, Limitations and Recommendations for online learning during COVID-19 pandemic era.

Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences, 36(COVID19-S4), S27.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.12669%2Fpjms.36.COVID19-S4.2785>.

Nabee, S., Mageto, J., & Pisa, N. (2021). Investigating predictors of academic plagiarism among university students. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(12), 264-280.
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.12.14>.

Naidoo, A., & McKay, T. J. M. (2018). Student funding and student success: A case study of a South African university. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(5), 158-172. <https://doi.org/10.20853/32-5-2565>.

Naidu, K., & Modise, M. E. P. (2021). Lecturers' experiences of the blurring of time and space during COVID-19 in a South African ODeL University. *UnisaRxiv*.
<https://doi.org/10.25159/UnisaRxiv/000014.v1>.

Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), 129-132.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815572747>.

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2017). *Revised Code of Ethics*.
<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>.

Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 7th edition. Pearson Education Limited.

Ngqondi, T., Maoneke, P. B., & Mauwa, H. (2021). A secure online exams conceptual framework for South African universities. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 3(1), 100132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100132>.

Nkomo, T. S. (2020). Social work field instruction supervision and resilience during COVID-19 lockdown. In J. A. Smit, N. Ndimande-Hlongwa, N. Mkhize & L. Ramrathan (Eds.), *Learner and subject at the dawn of digital research-led teaching and learning in the time of COVID-19* (pp. 209-225). CSSALL Publishers.

Nunev, S. T. (2019). Club forms of activities and creation of educational environment promoting the development of social work students. *Social Work Education*, 39(3), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2019.1627309>.

- Nwosu, C. O., & Oyenubi, A. (2021). Income-related health inequalities associated with the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa: A decomposition analysis. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 20(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-020-01361-7>.
- Nyembe, B. Z. M. (2021). *Measuring mobile collaborative learning and academic achievement: WhatsApp and students in South Africa*. [Master's thesis, University of South Africa].
- O'Doherty, D., Dromey, M., Lougheed, J., Hannigan, A., Last, J., & McGrath, D. (2018). Barriers and solutions to online learning in medical education—an integrative review. *BMC Medical Education*, 18(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-018-1240-0>.
- Okonji, E. F., Okonji, O. C., Mukumbang, F. C., & Van Wyk, B. (2021). Understanding varying COVID-19 mortality rates reported in Africa compared to Europe, Americas and Asia. *Tropical Medicine & International Health*, 27(7), 716-719. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tmi.13575>.
- Oluka, A., Musaigwa, M., & Nomlala, B. (2021). Understanding the experience of accounting students during the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 15(7), 637-649. https://www.ijicc.net/images/Vol_15/Iss_7/15738_Alexander_2021_E1_R.pdf.
- Ormston, R. Spencer., L. Barnard, M., & Snape, D. (2014). The foundations of qualitative research. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. McNaughton Nicholls & R. Ormston, R. (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 1-26). 2nd edition. Sage.
- Pack, M., & Brown, P. (2017). Educating on anti-oppressive practice with gender and sexual minority elders: nursing and social work perspectives. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 29(2), 108-118. <https://anzswjournal.nz/anzsw/article/view/279>.
- Padmanabhanunni, A., & Pretorius, T. B. (2021). The unbearable loneliness of COVID-19: COVID-19-related correlates of loneliness in South Africa in young adults. *Psychiatry Research*, 296, 113658. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113658>.

- Palmer, S. (2011). The lived experience of flexible education: Theory, policy and practice. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 8(3), 1-16. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol8/iss3/2>.
- Panergayo, A. A. E., & Almanza, M. R. G. (2020). Exploring the online learning self-efficacy of teacher education students at the Laguna State Polytechnic University: Basis for transition to flexible learning system. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(12), 6598-6608. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.081224>.
- Papu, S., & Shreyasi, S. (2020). Braced for impact: Architectural praxis in a post-pandemic society. *Sage Submissions*. <https://doi.org/10.31124/advance.12196959.v1>.
- Pather, S., Brown, V., & Lawack, V. (2021). An evidence-based approach to learning and teaching during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. *Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*, 18-21. <http://hdl.handle.net/10566/6015>.
- Petersen, F. (2020). Towards student inclusivity during COVID-19: Testing the #datafree Moya Messenger. *Alternation Special Edition*, 32, 294-331. <https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp32a12>.
- Pham, L., Limbu, Y. B., Bui, T. K., Nguyen, H. T., & Pham, H. T. (2019). Does e-learning service quality influence e-learning student satisfaction and loyalty? *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 16(1), 7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0136-3>.
- Phaswana-Mafuya, N., Shisana, O., Gray, G., Zungu, N., Bekker, L.G., Kuonza, L., Zuma, K., & Baral, S. (2020). The utility of 2009 H1N1 pandemic data in understanding the transmission potential and estimating the burden of COVID-19 in South Africa to guide mitigation strategies. *South African Medical Journal*, 110(7), 576-577. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7196%2FSAMJ.2020.v110i7.14935>.
- Pitner, R. O., Priestler, M. A., Lackey, R., & Duvall, D. (2017). A dedicated diversity course or an infusion model? Exploring which strategy is more effective in social work pedagogy. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 54(1), 49-60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2017.1314839>.

- Poggenpoel, L. (2018). *Social workers' perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree*. [Master's thesis, University of the Western Cape].
- Purwanto, E., & Tannady, H. (2020). The factors affecting intention to use google meet amid online meeting platforms competition in Indonesia. *Technology Reports of Kansai University*, 62(6), 2829-2838.
- Qayyum, A., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2019). The state of open and distance education. In A. Qayyum & O. Zawacki-Richter (Eds.), *Open and Distance Education in Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (pp. 125-140). Springer.
- Qiu, W., Rutherford, S., Mao, A., & Chu, C. (2017). The pandemic and its impacts. *Health, Culture and Society*, 9, 1-11. <http://doi.org/10.5195/hcs.2017.221>.
- Ramachandiran, M., & Dhanapal, S. (2018). Academic stress among university students: A quantitative study of generation Y and Z's perception. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 26(3), 2115-2128.
- Ramaphosa, C. (2020). Coronavirus: President Ramaphosa announces a 21-day lockdown. *IN SESSION: Official Newspaper of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa*, Vol. 1, Issue 09, pp. 1-16. <https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Publications/InSession/2020-09/final.pdf>.
- Rambaree, K. (2020), Environmental social work: Implications for accelerating the implementation of sustainable development in social work curricula, *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 21(3), 557-574. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-09-2019-0270>.
- Rasheed, R. A., Kamsin, A., & Abdullah, N. A. (2019). Challenges in the online component of blended learning: A systematic review. *Computers & Education*, 103701. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2019.103701>
- Raskind, I. G., Haardorfer, R., & Berg, C. J. (2019). Food insecurity, psychosocial health, and academic performance among college and university students in Georgia, USA. *Public Health Nutrition*, 22(3), 476. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017%2FS1368980018003439>.

- Reamer, F. G. (2019). Social work education in a digital world: Technology standards for education and practice. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 55(3), 420-432. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1567412>.
- Republic of South Africa. (1996). *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. Act 108 of 1996. Government Printer.
- Republic of South Africa. (1978). *The Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Republic of South Africa. (2013). *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system*. South Africa: Department of Higher Education and Training.
- Republic of South Africa. (2020). *COVID-19 risk adjustment strategy*. South Africa: Department of Health.
- Republic of South Africa. Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation. (2020, May 23). *Minster Blade Nzimande: Implementation of measures by the post school education sector in response to Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic* [Media briefing]. South African Government. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-blade-nzimande-implementation-measures-post-school-education-sector-response>.
- Ritchie, J. Lewis, J., Elam, G., Tennant, R., & Nilufer, R. (2014). Designing and selecting samples. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. McNaughton Nicholls & R. Ormston, R. (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 111-146). 2nd edition. Sage.
- Ritchie, J., & Ormston, R. (2014). The applications of qualitative methods in social research. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. McNaughton Nicholls & R. Ormston, R. (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 27-46). 2nd edition. Sage.
- Roberson, C. J. (2019). *Simulation as pedagogy: An experiential teaching strategy for social work education*. [Doctoral thesis, Catherine University].
- Sabi, S. C. (2018). *Development of a framework for managing food security programme: An analysis of student food insecurity and the interventions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. [Doctoral thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal].

- Salloum, S. A., Al-Emran, M., Shaalan, K., & Tarhini, A. (2019). Factors affecting the E-learning acceptance: A case study from UAE. *Education and Information Technologies*, 24(1), 509-530. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-018-9786-3>.
- Salubi, O. G. (2021). Access and use of networked electronic devices for educational information management by undergraduates in South Africa. In C. T. Chisita, R. T. Enakrire, O. O. Durodolu, V. Wonderboy & J. M. Ngoaketsi (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Records and Information Management Strategies for Enhanced Knowledge Coordination* (pp. 165-175). IGI Global.
- Sekonyela, L. (2021). Student Challenges with the University Access Program in South Africa. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 8(1), 239-270. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/592>.
- Sellmaier, C., & Kim, J. (2020). Disability accommodation experiences of social work students in the United States. *Social Work Education*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2020.1738375>.
- Shay, S. (2020, May 03). Online remote teaching in higher education is not the problem. *Daily Maverick*. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-05-03-online-remote-teaching-in-higher-education-is-not-the-problem/#gsc.tab=0>.
- Sherman, A. (2020). Coronavirus Anxiety Scale: A brief mental health screener for COVID-19 related anxiety. *Death Studies*, 44(7), 393-401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1748481>.
- Smith, L., & Rasool, S. (2020). Deep transformation toward decoloniality in social work: Themes for change in a social work higher education program. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 31(2), 144-164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10428232.2020.1762295>.
- Soomro, S., Soomro, A. B., Bhatti, T., & Ali, N. I. (2018). Implementation of blended learning in teaching at the higher education institutions of Pakistan. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, 9(8), 259-264.
- Sosibo, L. Redressing inequalities while envisioning university student teaching during COVID-19 lockdown: Lessons from# RhodesMustFall and# FeesMustFall. In N. Mkhize, N. Ndimande-Hlongwa, L. Rammrathan, & J. A. Smit (Eds.), *Teaching and learning in higher education in the times of COVID-19* (pp. 162-

- 186). *Alternation African Scholarship Book Series (AASBS)*, Volume 3. <https://doi.org/10.29086/978-0-9869936-4-0/2020/AASBS03>.
- South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). (2020). *Interim ethical guidelines for social workers in South Africa regarding technology-supported social work services*. General Notice 6 of 2020. SACSSP.
- South African Government. (2020, September 7). *Grant-in-Aid*. <https://www.gov.za/services/social-benefits/grant-aid>.
- South African Government. (2021, September 7). *Grant-in-Aid*. <https://www.gov.za/services/social-benefits/grant-aid>.
- Stark, C. (2018). The neoliberal ideology, its contradictions, the consequences and challenges for social work. *Ljetopis Socijalnog Rada/Annual of Social Work*, 25(1), 39-63. Doi:10.3935/ljsr.v25i1.196
- Stein, J., & Graham, C. R. (2020). *Essentials for blended learning: A standards-based guide*. Routledge.
- Stepney, P., & Thompson, N. (2021). Isn't it time to start "theorising practice" rather than trying to "apply theory to practice"? *Practice*, 33(2), 149-163. <https://doi:10.1080/09503153.2020.1773420>.
- Street, L. A. (2018). Selective BSW admission: Experiences and expectations of students and alumni. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 23(1), 123-143. <https://doi.org/10.18084/1084-7219.23.1.123>.
- Street, L. A., MacGregor, C. J., & Cornelius-White, J. H. (2016). A stakeholder analysis of admission in a Baccalaureate Social Work program. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 55(1), 34-49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2018.1513877>.
- Sun, Z., & Qiu, X. (2017). Developing a blended learning model in an EFL class. *International Journal of Continuing Engineering Education and Life Long Learning*, 27(1-2), 4-21. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJCEELL.2017.080998>.
- Surico, P., & Galeotti, A. (2020). *The economics of a pandemic: The case of Covid-19*. Wheeler Institute for Business and Development. London Business School.
- Tarshis, S., & Baird, S. L. (2019). Addressing the indirect trauma of social work students in intimate partner violence (IPV) field placements: A framework for supervision. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 47(1), 90-102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-018-0678-1>.

- Tasira, Z. (2020). Online learning. In N. D. Nawi, K. S. Na, N. A. H. Sazalli, F. A. Phang, W. N. A. W. Adnan, W. F. W. W. Fakhruddin, A. H. A Rashid, M. S. Rosli, N. A. Atan, A. Abdullah, N. H. S. Noh & Z. Tasira, (Eds.), *A report on Fssh Utm's experience towards digitizing education* (pp. 10-15). Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2016). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. 4th edition. John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Tella, A., Tsabedze, V., Ngoaketsi, J., & Enakrire, R. T. (2021). Perceived usefulness, reputation, and tutors' advocate as predictors of MOOC utilization by distance learners: Implication on library services in distance learning in Eswatini'. *Journal of Library & Information Services in Distance Learning*, 15(1), 41-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1533290X.2020.1828218>.
- Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research analysis: types and software tools*. Philadelphia Falmer Press.
- Tesch, R. (2013). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software*. Routledge.
- Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2019). Limitations and delimitations in the research process. *Perioperative Nursing (GORNA)*, 7(3), 155-162. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2552022>.
- Thobela, Z. C. (2020). *University of KwaZulu-Natal third-year male Social Work students' experiences of group work practice with school children*. [Doctoral thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal].
- Thomas, C., & Brown, B. (2021). Formative assessment strategies used to support group work. *Education in the North*, 28(2), 134-155. <https://doi.org/10.26203/z6ab-rm62>.
- Toft, J., & Calhoun, M. (2020). The unexamined identity: Students' Conservative ideology, perspectives of poverty, and implications for practice. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 57(2), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2020.1713945>.
- Truong, H. M. (2016). Integrating learning styles and adaptive e-learning system: Current developments, problems and opportunities. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 55, 1185-1193. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.02.014>.

- Turner, D., & Price, M. (2020). Resilient when it comes to death' Exploring the significance of bereavement for the well-being of social work students. *Qualitative Social Work*, 20(5), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1473325020967737>.
- Ubah, I. J. A., Spangenberg, E., & Ramdhany, V. (2019). Blended learning approaches at higher education institutions to prepare mathematics pre-service teachers for practice: A review of literature. *African Academic Research Forum*, 125. ISBN 978-0-6399047-2-6.
- Ukegbu, P., Nwofia, B., Ndudiri, U., Uwakwe, N., & Uwaegbute, A. (2019). Food insecurity and associated factors among University Students. *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, 40(2), 271-281. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0379572119826464>
- Uleanya, C. (2021). Exploring undergraduates' perception on assessments and feedbacks at selected Nigerian and South African rural universities. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 9(4), 836-843. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2021.090417>.
- Valente, A., & Marchetti, E. (2019). Fables for teachers and pupils: Incrementally defined scenario-based, interactive and spatial stories. In P. Zaphiris & A. Ioannou (Eds.), *Learning and collaboration technologies: designing learning experiences* (pp. 206-224). Springer.
- Van Breda, A. D. (2018). Resilience of vulnerable students transitioning into a South African university. *Higher Education*, 75(6), 1109-1124. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0188-z>.
- Vandekinderen, C., Roose, R., Raeymaeckers, P., & Hermans, K. (2020). The DNA of social work as a human rights practice from a frontline social workers' perspective in Flanders. *European Journal of Social Work*, 23(5), 876-888. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2019.1663408>.
- Van der Westhuizen, M., Lukelelo, N., & Gawulayo, S. (2021). A reflective view of the introduction of technologies in social work fieldwork modules within the South African context. *Education and Self Development*, 16(1), 54-73. <https://doi.org/10.26907/esd16.1.06>.

- Veletsianos, G., & Houlden, S. (2019). An analysis of flexible learning and flexibility over the last 40 years of distance education. *Distance Education*, 40(4), 454-468. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2019.1681893>.
- Visser, M., & Law-Van Wyk, E. (2021). University students' mental health and emotional wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 51(2), 229-243. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00812463211012219>.
- Wainwright, E., & Watts, M. (2019). Social mobility in the slipstream: First-generation students' narratives of university participation and family. *Educational Review*, 73(1), 111-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1566209>.
- Walker, M. (2020). The well-being of South African university students from low-income households. *Oxford Development Studies*, 48(1), 56-69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2019.1672143>.
- Walker, M., & Mathebula, M. (2020). Low-income rural youth migrating to urban universities in South Africa: opportunities and inequalities. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 50(8), 1193-1209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2019.1587705>.
- Walsh, B., & Rana, H. (2020). Continuity of academic library services during the pandemic. The University of Toronto libraries' response. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 51(4), 237-245. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jsp.51.4.04>.
- Wangenge-Ouma, F., & Kupe, T. (2020, September 17). *Best-case to worst-case: UP experts predict four scenarios that could play out as SA universities build a new normal post-COVID-19* [Media Release]. University of Pretoria. <https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/799/2020/pdf/re-imagining-south-african-universities-to-build-a-better-future-post-covid-edited.zp194015.pdf>.
- Weaver, R. R., Vaughn, N. A., Hendricks, S. P., McPherson-Myers, P. E., Jia, Q., Willis, S. L., & Rescigno, K. P. (2019). University student food insecurity and academic performance. *Journal of American College Health*, 68(7), 727-733. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2019.1600522>.
- Webb, O. J., & Cotton, D. R. E. (2018). Early withdrawal from higher education: A focus on academic experiences. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 23(7), 835-852. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2018.1437130>.

- Webster, S., Lewis, J., & Brown, A. 2014. Ethical considerations in qualitative research. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. McNaughton Nicholls & R. Ormston, R. (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 77-110). 2nd edition. Sage.
- Wenocur, K., Page, A. P., Wampole, D., Radis, B., Masin-Moyer, M., & Crocetto, J. (2020). PLEASE be with me: benefits of a peer-led supervision group for early career social work educators. *Social Work with Groups*, 44(2), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01609513.2020.1836548>.
- Wilczewski, M., Gorbaniuk, O., & Giuri, P. (2021). The psychological and academic effects of studying from the home and host country during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 644096. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.644096>.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2020a). *Director-General's Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19-11*. Geneva. <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-openingremarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2020b). *(Clinical management of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) when COVID-19 disease is suspected*. WHO/2019-nCoV/clinical/2020.4. [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/clinical-management-of-severe-acute-respiratory-infection-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/clinical-management-of-severe-acute-respiratory-infection-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected).
- Wu, L., Huang, Y., Chen, Q., & Shi, Y. (2020). Social work students' experiences of ethical difficulties in field placements: A qualitative study in China. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 51(2), 505-523. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcaa174>.
- Yegidis, B. L., Weinbach, R. W., & Myers, L. I. (2018). *Research methods for social workers*. 8th edition. Pearson.
- Yende, S. J. (2021). Funding opportunities and challenges: A case of South African institutions of higher learning. *Journal of Public Administration*, 56(1), 70-79. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-ipad-v56-n1-a6>.
- Yuan, Y. P., Wei-Han Tan, G., Ooi, K. B., & Lim, W. L. (2021). Can COVID-19 pandemic influence experience response in mobile learning? *Telematics and Informatics*, 64, 101676. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2021.101676>.

Zondi, Z. P. (2018). *Factors contributing to stress among students at a selected university, South Africa*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Venda]. <http://hdl.handle.net/11602/1132>.

Zuraiju, S. N. E. N., Ah, S. H. A. B., & Omar, N. (2020). Competency of Social Work Educators in Malaysia: A Way Forward. *KnE Social Sciences/World Conference on Gender Studies*, 217-224. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v4i10.7409>.



ANNEXURE A: ETHICS APPROVAL



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



19 January 2021

Ms L Masiteng
Social Work
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS20/10/22

Project Title: Student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown.

Approval Period: 12 January 2021 – 12 January 2024

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

The permission to conduct the study must be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

Director: Research Development
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X 17
Bellville 7535
Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

ANNEXURE B: REQUEST AND APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2851, Fax: 27 21-959 2845

E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

Title of Research Project: Social work students' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown

The Registrar

University of the Western Cape

My name is Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo. I am a Masters in Social Work (MSW) student in the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. For the purpose of this degree, I am conducting a research study that has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The research aims are:

- To explore and describe the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown.
- To explore and describe the influence of socioeconomic factors on student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown.

I am requesting permission to gain entry into the students and staff at the Department of Social Work to ask them to participate in this study. Those who are interested will be provided with an information letter that will also be provided to you. Those who agree to participate will then be requested to meet with me to discuss the nature of the project, and to arrange a time and place for me to interview them. Please note that participation is voluntary and that ethical practice of limitation of harm, availability of debriefing opportunities, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity will be implemented. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, health and safety protocols as prescribed by the South African government and the UWC will guide the procedures that will be followed for data collection. This might imply that student social workers and the social work educators will be requested to meet the researcher on an online platform, as prescribed. Data will then be recorded on this platform and stored on a password protected computer.

Your willingness to support me will be much appreciated. I am also providing you with the information letter to the participants, as well as proof of ethical clearance for you to be able to make an informed decision to support me.

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen
Social Work Department
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag x17
Bellville
7535
Telephone: (021) 959 2851
E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za



Should you have any further questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9592851 E-mail: mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za
---	--

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

E-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS20/10/22

Thank you.

Kind regards.

Miss Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo

E-mail: 3553881@myuwc.ac.za





PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Dear LINDOKUHLE PRECIOUS HLATSHWAYO

This serves as acknowledgement that you have obtained and presented the necessary ethical clearance and your institutional permission required to proceed with the project referenced below:

Name of Researcher: LINDOKUHLE PRECIOUS HLATSHWAYO

Research topic: Student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown

Date permission is valid till: 01-12-2024 (or as determined by the validity of your ethics approval)

Ethics reference: HS20/10/22

Reference code: UWC4985434855619082301

Additional comments: No additional comments

You are required to engage this office in advance if there is a need to continue with research outside of the stipulated period. The manner in which you conduct your research must be guided by the conditions set out in the annexed agreement: Conditions to guide research conducted at the University of the Western Cape.

Please be at liberty to contact this office should you require any assistance to conduct your research or require access to either staff or student contact information.

Regards

Dr Ahmed Shaikjee

Deputy Registrar Academic Administration

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

ANNEXURE C: INFORMATION SHEETS



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2851, Fax: 27 21-959 2845

E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

INFORMATION SHEET: Social work students

Title of Research Project: Student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown

What is this study about?

This research project will be conducted by Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo for a Master's of Social Work degree at the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. The research aims are:

- To explore and describe the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown.
- To explore and describe the influence of socioeconomic factors on student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown.

You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as a person who could provide relevant information on the topic to assist the research to attain the aim of this study.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be requested to sign a consent form, which confirms your decision to participate voluntarily. The researcher will conduct an individual interview with you and you will be asked to participate in a focus group interview, which will last between 45 minutes and 60 minutes each. You will be asked to share your experiences and perceptions on the topic. Although you will be requested to participate in the interview and the focus group, you can decide if you want to only participate in one of the two, and you can withdraw your participation at any time. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, health and safety protocols as prescribed by the South African government and the UWC will guide the procedures that will be followed for data collection. This might imply that you will be requested to meet the researcher on an online platform, as

prescribed. Data will then be recorded on this platform and stored on a password protected computer.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

You will be asked permission that the researcher can audio-record the interview and focus group discussion. Should you choose not to give permission for this, your answers and contributions will be recorded by means of field notes. Should the interview or focus group take place online, the discussion will be recorded with your permission. The recordings will be transcribed immediately after the interview and focus group, and the recordings will be locked into a safe space to which only the researcher and her supervisors will have access. The researcher undertakes to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, your name will not appear on the transcript of the interview or focus groups. A number will be assigned to your name, for example 'Participant 1', and a list will be made that links the numbers to the identity of the participants. This list will be stored on a password computer to which only the researcher will have access. All documents will be destroyed five years after that study was completed. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, any disclosure of abuse or harm made during the research process by you or any other participant, has to be reported. In this event, I will inform you that I have to break confidentiality to fulfil my legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

What are the risks of this research?

Discussing personal experiences and perceptions carry some amount of risks. The researcher will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher to make recommendations for learning and teaching practices in social work education and training. In this way, social work educators, students and practice could benefit from your participation.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised in any way.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

Should you feel, at any stage during the interview uncomfortable or afraid to continue, your participation will be stopped even though you consented. Even

though your experience and insight are valuable to this research, the researcher will respect your decision to terminate. Should you wish to terminate your participation because you feel uncomfortable due to any form of disclosure, the researcher will refer you for counselling.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo under the auspices of the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research itself, please contact her at 0734036747 or at 3553881@myuwc.ac.za.

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen, Social Work Department

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17, Bellville, 7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2851

E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

Should you have any further questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9592851 E-mail: mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 Chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za
---	---

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

E-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS20/10/22



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2851, Fax: 27 21-959 2845

E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

INFORMATION SHEET: Social work educators

Title of Research Project: Student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown

What is this study about?

This research project will be conducted by Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo for a Master's of Social Work degree at the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. The research aims are:

- To explore and describe the experiences of student social workers and educators regarding online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown.

You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as a person who could provide relevant information on the topic to assist the research to attain the aim of this study.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be requested to sign a consent form, which confirms your decision to participate voluntarily. You will be asked to participate in a focus group interview, which will last between 45 minutes and 60 minutes each. You will be asked to share your experiences and perceptions on the topic. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, health and safety protocols as prescribed by the South African government and the UWC will guide the procedures that will be followed for data collection. This might imply that you will be requested to meet the researcher on an online platform, as prescribed. Data will then be recorded on this platform and stored on a password protected computer.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

You will be asked permission that the researcher can audio-record focus group discussion. Should you choose not to give permission for this, your answers and contributions will be recorded by means of field notes. Should the focus group take place online, the discussion will be recorded with your permission. The recording will

be transcribed immediately after the focus group, and the recordings will be locked into a safe space to which only the researcher and her supervisors will have access. The researcher undertakes to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, your name will not appear on the transcript of the interview or focus groups. A number will be assigned to your name, for example 'Participant 1', and a list will be made that links the numbers to the identity of the participants. This list will be stored on a password computer to which only the researcher will have access. All documents will be destroyed five years after that study was completed. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, any disclosure of abuse or harm made during the research process by you or any other participant, has to be reported. In this event, I will inform you that I have to break confidentiality to fulfil my legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

What are the risks of this research?

Discussing personal experiences and perceptions carry some amount of risks. The researcher will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher to make recommendations for learning and teaching practices in social work education and training. In this way, social work educators, students and practice could benefit from your participation.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised in any way.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

Should you feel, at any stage during the interview uncomfortable or afraid to continue, your participation will be stopped even though you consented. Even though your experience and insight are valuable to this research, the researcher will respect your decision to terminate. Should you wish to terminate your participation because you feel uncomfortable due to any form of disclosure, the researcher will refer you for counselling.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo under the auspices of the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any

questions about the research itself, please contact her at 0734036747 or at 3553881@myuwc.ac.za.

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen
Social Work Department
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag x17
Bellville
7535
Telephone: (021) 959 2851
E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

Should you have any further questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9592851 E-mail: mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za
---	--

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
Tel: 021 959 4111
E-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS20/10/22

ANNEXURE D: CONSENT FORMS



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2851, Fax: 27 21-959 2845

E-mail:

mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

CONSENT FORM: Student social workers

Title of Research Project: Student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown. The study has been described to me in a language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

I agree to participate in the research study _____

I do not agree to participate in the research study _____

I agree to be audio-recorded _____

I do not agree to be audio-recorded _____

I agree that the online interview/focus group can be recorded _____

I do not agree that the online interview/focus group can be recorded _____

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

Thank you.

ANNEXURE E: CONFIDENTIALITY FORMS



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2911 Fax: 27 21-959 2851

E-mail:

mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Research topic: Student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits. I understand that confidentiality is dependent on participants' in the focus group maintaining confidentiality. I hereby agree to the following:

I agree to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions in the focus group by not disclosing the identity of other participants or any aspects of their contributions to members outside of the group.

I agree to maintain confidentiality of what is being discussed in the focus group.

If you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor at the contact e-mail/number above.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW GUIDES



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2851, Fax: 27 21-959 2845

E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

Title of Research Project: Student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown

Individual interviews with students: Socioeconomic circumstances impacting on online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown

- Can you tell me about your economic and social situation during the COVID-19 lockdown?
- How do you think these circumstances influenced your ability to do online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown negatively?
- What supported you with online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown?
- Who supported you with online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown?


Focus groups with students and educators focusing on learning and teaching experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown

- What online learning and teaching tools were used to support the online learning and teaching?
 - What tools worked well? Why?
 - What tools did not work well? Why?
- How did communication between the lecturer and students take place during the online learning and teaching?
 - What worked well? Why?
 - What did not work well? Why?
- How did assessments take place during the online learning and teaching?
 - What worked well? Why?
 - What did not work well? Why?
- How did students communicate with each other during the online learning and teaching?
 - What worked well? Why?
 - What did not work well? Why?

- Thinking back, what of the online learning and teaching experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown should be incorporated once learning and teaching continues on campus?
- Do you have any suggestions on how students and staff can be prepared to have the skills to engage with emergency online learning and teaching should the need occur in future?



ANNEXURE G: EDITOR'S LETTER



PROOF-READING

PROFESSIONAL EDITING SERVICES

PHD PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (SU) • MTH PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (SU) • BA (HONS) PSYCHOLOGY (UNISA)
BTH (HONS) PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (UNISA) • BTH PASTORAL COUNSELLING (UNISA)

DR LEE-ANNE ROUX
EDITOR | PROOFREADER

+27 82 825 7325
leanne@proof-reading.co.za
www.proof-reading.co.za

19 October 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the dissertation titled:

Student social workers' experiences of online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 national lockdown

By

Lindokuhle Hlatshwayo

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux