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COUNSELLING AND DEVELOPMENT
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

JOURNAL OF
COUNSELLING AND
DEVELOPMENT IN
HIGHER EDUCATION
SOUTHERN AFRICA

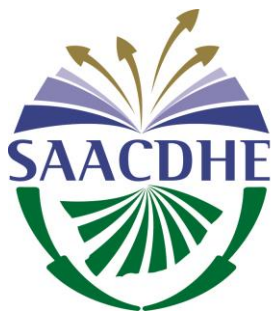
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Editorial

Henry D. Mason¹

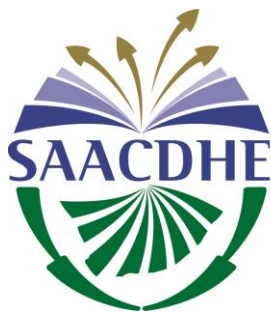
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It is with great excitement that we share the third volume of the Journal of Counselling and Development in Higher Education Southern Africa (JCDHESA) with you. I also want to take this opportunity in inviting members to submit their work from the previous conferences, which were hosted in the Free State (2012), Eastern Cape (2013), Vaal (2014), Cape Town (2015) and Swaziland (2016) for peer review and publication in the JCDHESA. As Chief Editor, I am offering to assist members in developing and finalising their manuscripts. Moreover, members who choose to publish their work in the JCDHESA will be assisted through the process of submitting their manuscripts on the online portal, editing their work and in addressing peer review feedback. In short, we will assist you from submission to publication.

To date, numerous members have found the process of submitting their manuscripts via the online website as challenging. Hence, the majority of peer reviews have been managed through the 'tried and tested' method of using email. However, from our next edition manuscripts will only be accepted if submitted through the SAACDHE website. In conjunction with the SAACDHE webmaster, Leza Deysel, we will make more information available to assist members in navigating their way through the online submission process.

With that being said, we invite you to work through this volume of the JCDHESA. May the material inspire you to publish and flourish.



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The need for and relevance of student-counselling and development services in higher-education institutions in Southern Africa

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Keywords: Access; access and success; awareness of counselling services; higher education; impact.

In 2005, when I was president of the then Society for Student Counselling in Southern Africa, I extended an open invitation to all members to join me in writing an article for an accredited journal with the same title as above, except for “Southern Africa” reading “South Africa”. The article was published in the *South African Journal of Higher Education* (2005, 19[1]: 73–88) under the authorship of HL Botha, HJ Brand, CD Cilliers, A Davidow, AC de Jager and D Smith.

Times, realities and challenges have obviously changed over the past 12 years but I strongly feel that we still need this type of continuous, scientifically-based evidence of our role and



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relevance. Against this background, here are my suggestions for possible areas to be addressed in an updated article (therefore, very limited references in this copy) similar to the above:

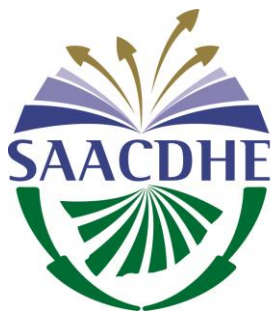
- **Why** should there be student-counselling and development services at tertiary institutions?
- **What** does contemporary benchmark research envisage as the focus of such services and what does it envisage for the 21st century?
- **Who** could address the above-mentioned areas effectively? (This would form an important component of the proposed article.)
- **How** should the above-mentioned areas be addressed and operationalised?

Given the international evidence of the increasing intensity and especially severity of presenting problems (Novotney, 2014), given the growing realisation of the need also to focus on the optimisation of potential (positive psychology) beyond mere remedial services (the deficit model) (Seligman, et.al ,2009; Seligman, 2011), given the importance of a deliberate holistic-systemic contribution towards staff and student wellness (Rusk & Waters, 2015), and given the unique needs of our clients (Millennials), we will again have to rethink and remotivate who should be part of the team of an effective centre in the 21st century.

To conclude, we should take part of the blame if we are not being optimally recognised, since we should continuously market the need for and relevance of our services.

In order to operationalise the above, I suggest the following:

- That the theme of the next conference of the Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education be “The need for and relevance of student-counselling and development services in higher education institutions in Southern Africa”. This theme should be repeated every 5 years.
- That posters and papers focus separately on the four subthemes listed in this opinion article (the “why”, “what”, “who” and “how”).
- That a panel of reviewers attend all the presentations and that they select the three best from each subtheme.
- That one whole morning be dedicated to a panel discussion with a mediator about all the above. Relevant managerial staff and student leaders from all tertiary institutions should also be invited. The whole event must be captured on video for the last step below.



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- That a formal press release follow as does the appointment of an editorial team to write the article based on the above and to send it to all the delegates for possible input and comment before submission to an acknowledged accredited journal.

The practice at Stellenbosch in recent years has focused on specific strategic focal points and innovation projects. The “gearing up” plan for 2013-2018 is called “The Impact Star for Success” – it was discussed and refined at our strategic sessions, presented as a article at a national terrain specific congress and visually summarised in a poster that is being displayed in every staff member’s office: to remind us that our work is crucial and our professional practice implementation relevant for the 21st century. The poster can be viewed on the next page.

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Partners for Student Success
The Impact story of success joins all the Centers for Student, Counselling and Development Stellenbosch University (2011-2016)

Overall student success in a diverse society	Scientific validation	Knowledge-based excellence	Knowledge-based excellence	Systemic sustainability
<p>Graduate attributes? WHO?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An inquiring mind An engaged citizen A dynamic professional A well-rounded individual A person continually looking to improve own wellness towards flourishing <p>Basis of the scientific validation</p> <p>HOW?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continued staff wellness promotion and competency development - 10 actions in place Continued staff competency development (example: Psychology CPD Well) Research concerning clients (Generations Y) publication and 2 posters at a national and international conference Co-authors of 2 articles focusing on the need for and relevance of student counselling and development in general (therefore why this service generically?) 2005 & 2010 Research based Empirically anchored Impact verified Cost effective 	<p>Graduate attributes? WHO?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An inquiring mind An engaged citizen A dynamic professional A well-rounded individual A person continually looking to improve own wellness towards flourishing <p>Basis of the scientific validation</p> <p>HOW?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continued staff wellness promotion and competency development - 10 actions in place Continued staff competency development (example: Psychology CPD Well) Research concerning clients (Generations Y) publication and 2 posters at a national and international conference Co-authors of 2 articles focusing on the need for and relevance of student counselling and development in general (therefore why this service generically?) 2005 & 2010 Research based Empirically anchored Impact verified Cost effective 	<p>Graduate attributes? WHO?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An inquiring mind An engaged citizen A dynamic professional A well-rounded individual A person continually looking to improve own wellness towards flourishing <p>Basis of the scientific validation</p> <p>HOW?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continued staff wellness promotion and competency development - 10 actions in place Continued staff competency development (example: Psychology CPD Well) Research concerning clients (Generations Y) publication and 2 posters at a national and international conference Co-authors of 2 articles focusing on the need for and relevance of student counselling and development in general (therefore why this service generically?) 2005 & 2010 Research based Empirically anchored Impact verified Cost effective 	<p>Graduate attributes? WHO?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An inquiring mind An engaged citizen A dynamic professional A well-rounded individual A person continually looking to improve own wellness towards flourishing <p>Basis of the scientific validation</p> <p>HOW?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continued staff wellness promotion and competency development - 10 actions in place Continued staff competency development (example: Psychology CPD Well) Research concerning clients (Generations Y) publication and 2 posters at a national and international conference Co-authors of 2 articles focusing on the need for and relevance of student counselling and development in general (therefore why this service generically?) 2005 & 2010 Research based Empirically anchored Impact verified Cost effective 	<p>Graduate attributes? WHO?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An inquiring mind An engaged citizen A dynamic professional A well-rounded individual A person continually looking to improve own wellness towards flourishing <p>Basis of the scientific validation</p> <p>HOW?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continued staff wellness promotion and competency development - 10 actions in place Continued staff competency development (example: Psychology CPD Well) Research concerning clients (Generations Y) publication and 2 posters at a national and international conference Co-authors of 2 articles focusing on the need for and relevance of student counselling and development in general (therefore why this service generically?) 2005 & 2010 Research based Empirically anchored Impact verified Cost effective
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*100% with 100% of students and staff 2011-2016. **100% with 100% of students and staff 2011-2016. ***100% with 100% of students and staff 2011-2016.



The Role of Education in Immunising against Radicalism

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Keywords: Education; logotherapy; radicalism.

“...the mission of education is not merely to pass on knowledge but to help refine their individual conscience so they become able to understand the meaning requirement of the specific moment.”

~ Joseph Fabry

Worldwide, parents and communities struggle with the concept of their young people succumbing to the slick social media campaigns of terrorists. Society questions the reasons why an individual chooses to join radical groups that engage in violent methods of torture, death, and destruction. What can be done to deter the radicalization of young people?

The first step is to understand why young people are vulnerable. Adolescents and young adults, by definition of their developmental state, are questioning who they are and what role they play in society. Struggling with feelings of inferiority magnified by the constant exposure to perfection displayed in the media, they search for meaning. Intimacy and purpose in the truest



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sense are craved. Instead, so often, the world teaches instant gratification through the acquisition of sex, money, and power provides success and happiness.

In addition, for many young people, parents and society have removed all obstacles in their world so that they automatically receive rewards. The term “helicopter parent” provides the image of parents who hover over their young to ensure success. Society creates an artificial environment in which everyone makes the team, wins the awards, and receives the accolades. Nevertheless, there is a hollow feeling within when the young person realises there is no challenge to be overcome when success is guaranteed. In summary, many young people have never felt the true disappointment of failure or the sincere exhilaration of success.

By removing important challenges, society has created the perfect incubator for adolescents and young adults to respond to the terrorists’ propaganda promising a life with meaning and purpose. Humans are not meant to simply exist, but to grow. Adolescence is meant to be a time of struggle, within the safe conditions of a healthy environment. At this age, individuals should learn to celebrate their successes and to grieve their disappointments. By identifying who “I” am, “I” learn myself. This provides the foundation for individuals to identify their uniqueness while integrating themselves into society in a productive manner.

It is this lack of a challenge that creates a void in the lives of many who turn to radicalism for answers. According to Arie Kruglanski (n.d.), psychologist and terrorism expert, the appeal of extremism can be seen in two areas. First, extremism defines the world in either black or white, right or wrong. Secondly, by joining this cause, each is defined as a unique piece of a much bigger and meaningful whole. Kruglanski (n.d.) explains the radical belief system appeals to the young who “lack a clear sense of self-identify and are craving a larger significance.” They respond to the promise of a life with challenge and meaning.

Krauglanski (n.d.) continues that young people who are attracted to radicalism are searching for what he defines as cognitive closure. Cognitive closure is “a disposition that leads to an overwhelming desire for certainty, order, and structure in one’s life to relieve the sensation of gnawing---often existential---doubt and uncertainty” (Krauglanski, n.d.) and inferiority. Individuals, who need this closure, are predisposed to seek an ideology that provides it. Young people, who have never developed the skills for dealing with frustration and failure, have no tools to search for meaning within their world. They turn to a radicalism to provide an answer, a purpose.



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Although there is not a single answer preventing the radicalization of our youth, education can provide a strong deterrent. Education in this sense is not merely a transfer of knowledge based on facts and data, but instead, a system that challenges the individual to learn, to think, and to reason using the facts and the data of specific subjects. The concepts presented briefly are based on Viktor Frankl's theory of Logotherapy.

The foundation of Logotherapy is based on three premises: life has meaning under all circumstances, our main motivation for living is our will to find meaning in life, and the freedom to find meaning in what we do and what we experience, or at least in the stand we take when faced with a situation of unchangeable suffering, is always available. It is within the *noös*, the spiritual essence of the individual that the search for meaning originates. A person is spirit; a person has a body and mind (Barnes, 2000). It is this noetic dimension that the system of education must address.

When an individual's search for meaning is ignored or repressed, an "existential vacuum" may manifest itself. An existential vacuum develops when a person suffers frustration and inner emptiness in his search for meaning manifesting itself as boredom, increasing idleness, a tendency toward aggression, discontent, feeling of meaninglessness, lack of interest, and a deep desire to fill this emptiness with unhealthy behaviours (Frankl, 2006).

Frankl observed those students who perceive that life has no meaning have no internal motivation for finding meaning through traditional education nor the place it prepares them for in society. Educators must address this issue by making the system provide appropriate instructions for life (Hearn, 2002). The goal of education should be to provide students with the tools to identify the values necessary to make responsible choices and to accept the consequences of those choices.

To do this, the system of education must allow teachers the freedom to modify curriculum to meet the unique needs of each student by encouraging them to discover their personal purpose. Subject matter should be the material used to challenge students to think critically and engage in five areas Frankl identified as resources of the human spirit (*noös*): uniqueness, choices, responsibility, self-discovery, and self-transcendence. Each of these areas can be nurtured through the curriculum.

Furthermore, the discovery of meaning incorporates the development of conscience, a fundamental component to Frankl's theory. "Frankl defined conscience as an intuitive capacity to



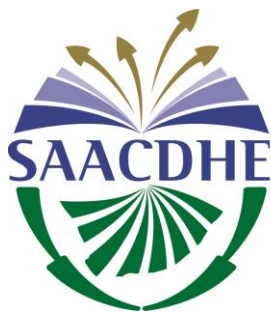
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find, to ‘sniff out’ the unique meaning (Gestalt) inherent in a situation; ‘what is meant’ in a specific situation” (Fabry, 2013, p. 65). Conscience is “as much a part of reality as body and psyche” (Fabry, 2013, p. 67). Educators can provide scenarios in which students learn to listen to the conscience and base their actions on perceived meaning as identified through their values. Because the conscience is intuitive and students are learning to listen, wrong decisions will be made. Teachers can guide them in learning that allows them to grow from these failures, to reassess the decisions, and to modify their actions. They learn to listen to their conscience and understand the connection of choices and resulting consequences.

Ultimately, as each individual is responsible for the choices and actions taken, our youth are responsible for the decisions they make. However, educators can and should provide the opportunities for the development of the noetic dimension. By providing possibilities in a safe environment for the elaboration of the resources of the spirit and for the chance to learn to listen to their conscience, educators can inoculate against the message of radicalism. Young people can learn to listen to their inner voice that moves them toward a life of authentic meaning that is beneficial to society. Knowing that life is filled with challenges, our young people can choose to live a meaningful life with courage, based on values that benefit not only the individual but also all of humanity.

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Utilisation of counselling Unit Services Offered at the University of Botswana: A follow-up study

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Keywords: Access; utilisation; awareness of counselling services; marketing strategies; residence counsellor; collaboration



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ABSTRACT

The University of Botswana Careers and Counselling Centre offers students, staff and staff dependents with an opportunity to access professional counselling services so that they may better develop and fulfil their personal, psychological, social and academic needs. This qualitative study was conducted to find out how the university population perceives access to and utilisation of counselling services. The research is a follow up of a study that was conducted in 2005. It aims at exploring barriers to utilising the counselling services by staff and students of the University of Botswana. The research also aims at exploring what has been done to promote counselling services; that is the accessibility of counselling services, marketing strategies used, as well as information dissemination and collaboration within and outside the university. Collection of data was done through focus group discussions and the participants of the study comprised of staff and students. The results highlight achievements, challenges and recommendations. Challenges that were identified included accessing counselling services, the effect of the existence or absence of residence counsellors, as well as the publicising and marketing of counselling service.

INTRODUCTION

In Botswana, the guidance and counselling services started in 1963 when it was introduced into the Botswana education system (Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of Guidance and Counselling in Botswana's Education System, 1996). At that time counselling services within the university context services were limited to career guidance. However, a fully-fledged Guidance and Counselling programme in Botswana schools was introduced in 1985. This programme was immediately implemented after a Policy Direction Seminar in Guidance and Counselling in Education was conducted in 1987 by the Ministry of Education. After the Policy Direction Seminar in Guidance and Counselling, the Ministry of Education and Skills Development established the Guidance and Counselling Unit within the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation.

The establishment of both the fully-fledged Guidance and Counselling programme in schools, and the Guidance and Counselling Unit, were in recognition of the fact that young people in Botswana faced many challenges. These challenges included limited opportunities for further training, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy and poverty.

The proponents of guidance and counselling services in Botswana also recognised that the traditional social structures and services provided by the extended family network and other



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community agencies were disintegrating and were no longer coping with changes taking place at the time. Since gaining independence in 1966, the country has experienced rapid socio-economic changes which impacted the social and cultural structures and general life of Botswana. The changes included rapid urbanisation, modernisation and migration to towns. This rendered the primary cultural resources that took care of the psychosocial challenges, insufficient or irrelevant in some cases. The introduction of guidance and counselling services in the education system paved way for the development and growth of counselling services in Botswana in general.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The University of Botswana Careers and Counselling Centre was established in 1993 to provide psychosocial and career counselling services to students, members of staff and their dependants, as well as to the community outside the university (Alao et al. 2005). As a multi-faceted Centre, the Counselling Unit within the Department of Careers and Counselling Centre (CCC) offers services that synchronise psychosocial, development, career services and job placement opportunities. Services are offered through a multi-faceted approach. The services offered are; counselling, guidance and career related issues, training of peer counsellors, and the collection of psychosocial and educational information and its dissemination to the university community. The Careers and Counselling Centre staff is a team comprised of qualified, licensed and experienced professionals with diverse backgrounds. Professionals in the Centre include Clinical Psychologists, Social Workers, Counsellors, Pastoral Counsellors and Marriage and Family Therapists.

These professionals use a variety of counselling theories and techniques to empower their clients. The counselling service is offered freely to students and to staff and their dependents. The community outside the university receives the services for a nominal fee. Counselling is meant to enhance self-understanding and assist students in the acquisition and development of positive attitudes towards self and others. Clients are self-referred, referred by friends, peer counsellors, members of the University community or by other agencies with whom the Centre collaborates or is affiliated to.

Individual counselling, group counselling and psycho-education are the main counselling modes used. Additionally, the Centre provides crisis counselling on request, orientation assistance for new students, production of counselling materials, psychological testing, and training on diverse psychosocial issues within and outside the university. The Centre also engages in



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consultancies on various psychosocial issues for the government and various non-governmental organisations and private companies.

In 2005, under the leadership of Professor Alao, the counselling staff at the UB Careers and Counselling Centre investigated the extent to which customers accessed the services offered by the UB Careers and Counselling Centre. The study analysed the efficacy of service delivery.

FACTORS AFFECTING ACCESS TO COUNSELLING SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

The population of the University of Botswana has been increasing over the years to include international students from all over the world. In 2005 the total University enrolment was 15715, while in the 2013/2014 academic year the total enrolment increased to 18161. 10372 of the 2013/2014 enrolment were female and 7789 were male (UB Institutional Planning Office). The counselling needs of clients have been increasing and are varied in nature. This is evident in the types of issues brought to counselling sessions and annual statistics collected by the Centre. However, it appears that the counselling services offered by the Centre are underutilised. This is highlighted when comparing the centres' annual statistics to the University population.

In 2005, Alao et al. studied the dynamics of the Centre's operations and utilisation. They examined the influence of factors such as the location of the Centre, clients' demographic characteristics, clients' attitudes, clients' needs, the benefits that clients derive from the Centre's services, barriers and issues related to access and the lack of access to information about the existing counselling services. The results of the 2005 study revealed that 34.7% of the surveyed population did not visit the counselling Centre because they felt they could handle their own problems, 24.1% sought spiritual intervention to their problems whilst 30% indicated fear of breach of confidentiality and privacy as an inhibiting factor. Not knowing the existence of the Counselling Centre was cited as a barrier, by 31% of students who participated in the study.

The location of the Centre was not cited as a problem. Instead 38% of participants, mostly students, cited busy schedules as a barrier in seeking counselling. They did acknowledge that failure to seek help resulted in building up of unresolved issues which subsequently led to crisis and breakdown. In the same study, there were no differences on the rating of counselling services between male and female clients. Differences were noted with respect to education levels; with undergraduate students being more satisfied with services compared to postgraduate students.



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Furthermore, the results showed that the University staff was underutilising the counselling services. Reasons cited by staff included not knowing that counselling services were open to them. Like students, it was noted that some staff members were generally sceptical about the value of counselling and the maintenance of confidentiality.

It is important to note that the 2005 study focused more on help seeking behaviours and less on access and utilisation of services. So far, no study has explored the impact of marketing strategies or innovative activities such as having a residence counsellor and Peer Counsellors, on the utilisation of counselling services. It therefore, becomes important to explore how these strategies and activities have enhanced service delivery and uptake of the counselling services.

APPRAISAL OF COUNSELLING SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

The 2005 study highlighted the need to examine UB staff and student perspectives on the necessity for counselling services, the relevance and the importance of the services, and customers' level of satisfaction. The study further looked into help seeking behaviours i.e., who seeks counselling and what motivates help seeking behaviour. The current study was more of an evaluation. It explored the changes that have occurred since 2005 regarding the utilisation and access to counselling services. UB has evolved into a multicultural University comprising of students and staff from all over the world.

The Counselling Unit is challenged to be responsive and accommodate culturally diverse clientele. The Unit has followed this trend and evolved as well. It is hoped that this study will shed light on the impact of the numerous activities offered by the Counselling Unit such as SMS, telephone and online counselling, the presence of a 24 hour residence counsellor as well as provision of seminars at the hostels, amongst others. It is hoped that this study will provide baseline information and an understanding of the benefits and importance of counselling services in a University challenged by social and community problems such as alcohol and substance abuse and serious mental health problems. Furthermore, this study will influence the policy formulation, development and review of Counselling standards.



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THE PRESENT STUDY

This qualitative study was undertaken to explore student and staff related barriers to the utilisation of the counselling services; to explore efforts taken to promoting and marketing the counselling services and programmes as well as the extent of collaboration and information sharing; to identify participants' suggestions on what should be done to increase uptake of counselling services is to identify how counselling services have been promoted, with a view to effecting changes where necessary. A qualitative approach was chosen because counselling services utilization is complex phenomena influenced by internal and external factors such as shame, doubt, fear, stigma and lack of knowledge about counselling services (Flansburg, 2012). Any robust, useful exploratory research needs to capture these dimensions, and incorporate uncertainty and ambivalence. Its soundness will ultimately depend upon asking the right questions and respondents feeling that the questions are oriented around meaningful categories and dilemmas. Due the diversity within the university, e expected that there might be a strong influence of cultural norms which respondents might not be able to articulate clearly but could emerge from their discourse.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

What Counselling is and what it is not?

McLeod (2013) emphasises that there are different definitions of counselling. However, he is of the view that "counselling is a purposeful, private conversation arising from the intention of one person...to reflect on and resolve a problem in living, and the willingness of another person to assist in that endeavour" (p.7). By this definition, the author recognises the importance of mutual willingness of the counsellor and the client in working together to facilitate resolution of the client's issues. He further considers a client to be an active participant in the counselling process. Counselling is also seen as a purposeful process; there has to be something which needs to be attended to, which the person seeking help has failed to resolve on their own. According to this user-centred definition, counselling cannot be imposed onto an individual; it is not a one-sided process and it cannot happen without a mutually developed relationship.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

This study utilised Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which places emphasis on children's interpretation of their environment or their surroundings. According to Bronfenbrenner's



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ecological theory, an individual's behaviour can be best accounted for if their transaction with their current environment is inter-related (Berk, 2000). According to the model the student's environment should be the principal area of concentration for data gathering (Murray, 2005). Taking cognisance of the fact that the student's decision to seek or avoid seeking help in the form of counselling could be influenced by a variety of environmental factors, this study will be conducted using an ecological perspective, which puts emphasis on people's milieu.

According to Murray (2005) the aspects requiring consideration in data gathering are the person's intrinsic qualities such as temperament, sex, age, etc.; the physical environment such as places of residence, the manner of interaction with others within their environment e.g. fellow students, professors, etc.; and time, that is, the formulation of norms and establishing social networks over the period of being at the university. The levels of systems reflected and related to the ecological theory are; the microsystem (school, classroom, home, peer group, etc.), mesosystem (university, residence hall, counselling Centre, etc.), macrosystem (institution's administration, faith/belief system, university policies, etc.), the exosystem (parents' workplaces, university management policies, etc.) and the chronosystem (changes over time e.g. changing residence, degree of workload) (p.355). Relating this to university students, the theory suggests that due to their interaction with a variety of environmental contexts and other factors, students' time at the institution is likely to be affected in unique and varying ways.

The focus group method used in data collection enabled researchers to collect data that is rich and inclusive. The questions addressed the systems by asking the participants to share their experiences with regard to the levels of the ecological theory.

A university student's decision to access or avoid counselling services cannot be explained by looking at a student's life or experience from a single perspective. On the contrary, a student's decision is influenced by an amalgam of factors, and the extent of their behaviour is influenced by where they are. The ecological theory emphasises the importance of assessing an individual and their choice of action by considering all of the factors at work and their interaction with their environment.

Enrolment in a university brings opportunities for young people to achieve personal growth, but their emotional well-being may also be threatened by the same process. The university experience and new knowledge may challenge the students' existing level of self-awareness and development. In addition, the learning process in a university can also expose students to risk of



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temporary or permanent loss of the psychological balance with which a student was accustomed to and result in distress (Setiawan, 2006). The university counselling services were established to help students cope with their personal challenges and to also help them to work towards personal development (Morgan, Ness & Robinson, 2006).

According to Setiawan (2006), studies have shown that counselling has a positive impact on retention by addressing some underlying psychological development concerns. It has been found that the students who attend counselling appeared to be better equipped to adjust to the social and academic demands of the university environment. Van-Brunt (2008) validates this observation by making reference to a longitudinal assessment which found that one in five students who sought counselling had considered withdrawing from the university because of personal problems and not academic concerns. He further emphasised that students who dropped out of the universities, are often found to have done so due to socio-emotional problems that should have been addressed, had they been proactive and sought counselling services. However, counsellors' experience and literature suggest that only a minority of university students who experience psychological distress seek professional counselling (Raunic & Xenos, 2008). This is despite the fact that most universities provide free access to counselling services for the students.

Factors Encouraging and Inhibiting Access and Utilisation of Services

Topkaya (2015) established that the only meaningful factor which explains the willingness of individuals to seek counselling services is the individual's perception of how necessary it is for them to receive psychological help. Satiawan (2006) identified other factors as being the availability of information about psychological help; the location of the counselling centres; confidentiality policies and the confidence by the students that, counsellors understand their world and thinking styles. Vogel, Wester and Larson (2007); Topkaya (2015), identified factors which discouraged help seeking behaviours as social stigma, fear of emotion and self disclosure as well as lack of knowledge about psychological help process.

A study conducted in Zambia, sought to uncover the reasons for students' underutilisation of counselling services at the University of Zambia. According to Keteule (2014) the students were aware of existence of Counselling centre, but they stated that some of these reasons they did not visit the centre were a lack of knowledge about the services offered, and lack of privacy due to the centres central location. They shared that they feared being seen by others when visiting the centre.



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Some students stated that they were not using counselling services because the time for counselling coincided with the time for lectures.

Shortage of staff and lack of marketing of the services was found to be contributing negatively to the utilisation of services. The author recommended that public awareness of the services needed to be improved by holding sensitisation workshops, for example. With regards to staff, the author recommended that more professional staff be hired and to introduce residence counsellors to cater for evening and night hours. A greater need to involve and engage students in counselling programmes was also highlighted.

Services Provision Strategies

The Counselling Centre aims to promote, support and ensure the provision of quality counselling and psychosocial services for the University community. Although there are many students who respond positively to counselling services, including scheduled appointments, there are some who would not utilise the counselling Centre irrespective of how much encouragement they receive. Boone and Eells (2008) argue that there are many students who are at greatest risk who do not utilise the services. These authors reported the findings of a study conducted in the United States of America by Schwartz (2006), in which it was found that 80% of the students who committed suicide never received counselling. The study reported that had the students received counselling, they would be six times less likely to kill themselves.

In addition to the reasons cited earlier in the article, for the non-utilisation of counselling services by the university students, there is need for the counselling service providers to be aware of the fact that the student population is not homogenous, as there are groups which may be classified as a non-traditional part of the population (Boone et al., 2011). These groups include older students who are over 24 years old, who most of the time have full time jobs (Bruce-Sanford, Heskeyahu, Longo and Rundles, 2015). They further indicate that these students are more likely to be commuters, first generation university students and married. From the authors' experiences, other groups which are not covered here include international students, students with disabilities, and students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background. The counselling service providers, therefore, need to diversify strategies employed to ensure that they reach out to both the reluctant students as well as to the diverse groups within the university.



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Most universities employ different counselling strategies with the view to achieving the interconnected goals of reducing stigma associated with counselling, reaching out to the non-traditional students and also increasing student utilisation of the counselling services. Some of these strategies include, i) promoting counselling services as being both clinical and non-clinical in nature, ii) expanding outreach efforts, iii) utilising the counsellor in residence programme, and iv) generally adopting alternative settings and strategies (Schartz et al. 2012).

The Counselling Unit at the University of Botswana also employs various strategies to promote utilisation and access of counselling services such as the availability of a residence counsellor, on-line counselling, newsletters, new student orientation presentations and the production and distribution of brochures and flyers. Thus it is imperative that the target population share their experiences with accessing counselling services, and whether the various ways of marketing counselling services over the years have been effective.

METHODS

Eight focus groups with a total of 148 participants were carried out, the focus groups were as follows; international students, students with disabilities, on-campus students, protection services staff, domestic services staff, off-campus students and students welfare staff. Participants were identified through notice board messages and request letters to supervisors. The intention was to recruit all categories of university population. When focus groups were arranged interviewers did not have prior knowledge of participants utilization of counselling services. All the authors undertook the interviews. At the beginning of the focus groups the authors met frequently to deliberate on issues which should be pursued and identifying emergent issues not originally envisaged. Discussions were all done in Setswana, and or English. They were recorded and immediately transcribed and translated into English by the interviewers. Thematic analysis was undertaken to find emerging themes from the focus group discussions.

RESULTS

Utilisation and access

Below is a summary of the themes and responses that emerged from the FGDs that were conducted.



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Awareness of counselling services

Majority of both students and staff reported that they were aware of the existence of the Careers and Counselling Centre. The location was seen to be good in that it is hidden on the second floor and in a building that is well located and accessed by students daily. However, some, mostly off-campus students, reported not knowing about services and where the Counselling Unit was located. Although staff was aware of the location, almost all, except domestic services staff, indicated that they assumed counselling services were only offered to students. They, therefore never tried to access and utilise the services. 10 out of 15 domestic services staff members confirmed having attended counselling sessions and were satisfied with the service. Whilst some students blamed procrastination, laziness and lack of appreciation, others confused services i.e., careers and counselling services as shared below:

“I have utilised services for CV writing and participated in the mentorship program”

“Because the Careers and Counselling Centre starts with Careers (wording), presumed that the Centre only offers Career Services”

Below are some comments made by staff on the availability of counselling services

“I know where you are located. For me I thought this was for students, I never thought this was for staff as well, I never thought an employee of the university can come and get help from here”

“I have seen your tables outside in the foyer, mostly with students talking about your services, but like mister here said, I just thought you want first year students or those who are looking for jobs”.

Description: What counselling means to respondents

With regards to description of counselling, responses were varied for both staff and students. Most students mentioned support, a help desk, help in times of trouble, and that counselling helps one accept and acknowledge self. One international student shared:

“Counselling offers safety and support; it’s like home away from home”

Staff on the other hand, and despite the fact that utilisation was minimal, did share that Counselling services were vital towards sorting out confusion on life issues and advice on retirement planning. One went further to say:

“We need counselling for emotional healing –go thuba pelo yame; go riitibatsa Maikutlo”

Whilst others shared:



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“That’s a difficult question because, the word counselling for some of us we think it is for people who cannot solve their problems, or cannot counsel themselves.”

“For some of us, we think counselling is for lazy people”

After some probing on the idea that counselling is for the lazy, the following statement was made:

“I mean people who struggle to solve their own problems, say a man cannot deal with his woman and she is planning to leave, some men know what to do, others, no, and if he is the type that cannot solve his problems and is thinking of suicide or killing her, then it is best they come for counselling, that’s what I mean they are lazy to think and solve their own problems.”

Benefits of counselling

A majority of students reported that counselling had indeed met their needs and that they were satisfied. For some it was an eye opening experience, useful and helpful.

“I got to off load my feelings”

“The Counsellor was available and friendly; the counsellor made it possible for me to open up”

Staff who used services described the benefits of counselling as follows:

“I was helped here and my situation has since changed a lot.”

“Yes I came here and I was helped, but I was looking for information.”

“Hearing about counselling brings happiness to me. I was hurt, counselling helped me to stand on my feet again, ke be ke ikamogela”

Existence of residence, peer counsellors and other services

The level of awareness of services and programmes other than counselling was low. Most students knew about the peer counselling program but did not know about the residence counsellor (RC), seminars, and support groups. Some reported a lack of awareness of the programmes and any residence counsellor, yet some male students resided at a block that housed the residence counsellor; which was interesting to observe. There was also confusion on the role of Warden and RC; this was observed for both students and staff as shared below.

“I have heard about counsellor who lives at 479, when we had that case of the young man who was brought to us and Mr (names supervisor) told us, he was counselled at the block, but I didn’t know the person who does counselling there. Like I said earlier, sometimes I think we are not told



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staff can get the services. Also we are not sure if that counsellor can go to other blocks to help there”.

“... for some of us we didn't know there is someone to do counselling after hours, because we have had many situations at night and we sent them to Marina or clinic, sometimes students are fighting at night and we just talk to them but if we knew about the counsellors here, I think we were going to send the students to them”.

“The wardens counsel students when there are problems at the hostels.”

Some participants did acknowledge the engagement of Peer Counsellors but indicated that they preferred to be seen by professional staff and not Peer Counsellors. This is why they end up not using the Centre. Some even shared fears and concerns on being counselled by PCs as noted below:

“Some of us don't trust the ability of Peer Counsellors to handle our personal problems”

“I am using a wheel chair and therefore feel my problems are too big to be solved by Peer Counsellors because they are young”

Those who had access to information on seminars and support groups complained that the activities were held at times that overlapped with lunch hour, yet no lunch was provided for them. Some shared that the number of seminars from the department were sometimes too much for them to attend all of them.

Expectations

With regards to expectations, though counselling was acknowledged as necessary, appreciated and important; feelings towards services were conflicted. Whilst some students shared challenges such as fear of being stigmatised, fear of talking to a stranger and lack of confidentiality, others stated that they seek guidance from friends because they feel counselling is for serious issues. One international student shared:

“We Zambians, if we have problems we interact only with our own”

Some students complained that UB staff members are generally not approachable so they did not utilise the services because they assumed Counsellors were the same. Most staff, on the other hand, stood firm on the issues of not using the services because they thought they were meant for students only. Some blamed Counsellors for not advertising the Unit enough. Some, like students, raised the issue of fear and this is what was shared:



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“Some people fear that their problems will be known, you people work for the university, so people fear that you will tell their colleagues that’s why. I am thinking just showing up here and be seen is not easy”.

Orientation was cited as another strategy to market the Centre, but the timing was said to be wrong as one student reported:

“I have seen the Counselling Unit marketing itself during orientation but, I was on the registration line. During that time no one wants to lose the line just for information because then you come back you have to join at the end, if may be the stalls can be kept after orientation, that will be helpful, those who didn’t get the information may get an opportunity afterwards”

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this study was to explore students and staff related barriers to the utilisation of counselling services’, how the services have been promoted, marketing strategies and collaboration within and outside the University. The findings suggest that students utilise services more than staff. The reason given by staff for non-utilisation was the assumption that the services were meant for students, not University employees. Differences were found between on and off campus Botswana students, students with disability and international students. International students were not utilising the services, despite the unique challenges they face. They expressed that they did not know of the facility, despite the fact that every year during orientation a staff member from the Counselling Unit briefs students on the services. Students with disabilities were satisfied with the service because the services were taken to them. Only a few problems were cited, regarding the access of services located on the second floor. With on and off campus Botswana students a discrepancy in access and utilisation existed between genders. It was evident that more female students utilised services than male students.

Despite students’ awareness of the existence of the Centre, some students still expressed a lack of knowledge about the services of the Counselling Unit. They confused them with those of the Career services. This was attributed to lack of marketing and publicity by the Counselling Unit.

Participants of the study i.e., both students and staff were aware of the existence of Counselling services. The only problem with staff was that they did not utilise services offered because they thought the counselling centre served students only. They also shared that there was



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a need for more pastoral counsellors to serve their needs. Participants had their varied definitions of counselling but all saw counselling as beneficial to addressing their problem. Some areas need strengthening such as marketing and collaboration, below were some of the recommendations:

- Strengthen and intensify marketing strategies:
 - o Use of social media to market services e.g., Facebook, Twitter etc.
 - o Run targeted workshops and training for staff and students with disabilities.
 - o Use of SRC, leaders of student clubs and societies to market services.
 - o Utilise block/residence meetings organized by wardens and RA's.
- Specific Counsellor Office labels to specify their titles or professional background so that clients may have an appreciation of the professionals at their disposal.
- Reinforce collaboration with Faculties and Department. Counsellors to visit faculties more often and educate staff on how to act when confronted by students in distress and in need of counselling help, as well as how to make proper referrals.
- Devote day to celebrate counselling services in order to engage students and student clubs.

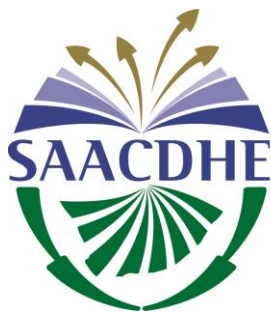
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Online Counselling: A Logotherapy-based Approach

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ABSTRACT

An international relocation from South Africa to Switzerland initiated my action to provide an online logotherapy-based counselling service. What I hope to share with readers in this paper is my observation of how logotherapy can be employed as a therapeutic approach to facilitate online counselling. For student development and support practitioners who work in the age of the internet and with clients who tend to be digital natives, the use of internet counselling has become a reality. I highlight possible avenues for further research.



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INTRODUCTION

One merely has to scroll through the internet and look at the vast number of websites that offer support and help for psychological distress to realise that the demand for therapeutic services in cyberspace has become commonplace in our 21st century world. The initial resistance and negativity to online counselling appears to be waning in light of increasing published papers discussing both the positive use of cyberspace as a vehicle for counselling and the subsequent given evidence of advantageous results of clients benefitting from internet counselling.

Resistance and negativity to online counselling appears to be largely fear based (Neethling, 2002). Amongst other things, fear of online counselling tends to reflect social anxiety around the pull towards internet addiction and the potential pathological consequences. However, presently a more positive and inquisitive tone asking how we can modify, adjust or develop new ideas in understanding this fast growing aspect of psychology is paving the way to exciting new developments not only in psychology but in education as well (Young, 2005).

The notion of online counselling stirred a curiosity within me when a relocation to Switzerland from South Africa coincided with me completing my studies in the field of logotherapy. Not only did I begin to consult with my study advisers online, but the potential benefits associated with offering counselling via the internet became apparent to me.

It is against the aforementioned background that I hope to share with you some key points that I have learnt as a result of my journey of logotherapeutic counselling over the internet. I have structured the article as follows. Firstly, I will highlight the limitations of online counselling. Then, the discussion will move to the benefits of offering online counselling. This will be followed by an in-depth discussion of a logotherapy-based approach to online counselling. I conclude the article by reflecting on key ideas that were highlighted in the text.

THE LIMITATIONS OF ONLINE COUNSELLING

To practice online counselling, one needs to first be aware of its limitations. Amongst others, these limitations include the following:

- No body or verbal language - initially when I first started counselling online I was very aware of not being able to observe my clients' faces, hear their voices or pick up on their non-verbal cues. However, over time I noticed this becoming less important as the essence of my client grew stronger through her/his words. There can be no replacement for being in the presence of another but alternatively I have noticed a strong ability of being able to



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‘virtually hold’ a client online once trust and mutual respect have been formed within the therapeutic relationship.

- Ambiguity in communication - I learnt quickly to continually build in stop gaps or pauses into my writing communication. By this I mean at regular intervals, even though I believe my language is simple and self-explanatory, I ask my client to comment on how they have perceived my communication from their perspective. In some cases, I may even break the session off, to get their feedback. Once I have their feedback and I have the sense that we are both ‘on the same page’ I then continue. This way the client grasps that I am truly engaging with him/her as in a conversation and this way we also attempt to avoid any miscommunication.
- Time lag - online therapy cannot replace the immediate response that face to face therapy offers. Clients needing immediacy will not be suitable candidates for counselling online. Subsequently, crisis counselling would not be an appropriate approach to pursue using online counselling.
- Internet connectivity - computer and internet access might not be available to all potential clients. Those working in internet cafes may experience a lack of privacy. Basic computer skills are necessary when counselling online. Additionally, not all clients may be able to access the internet in their homes.
- The challenge of psychopathology - serious psychiatric illnesses cannot be treated online. With crisis counselling and psychiatric illness, logotherapy online has formulated a triage system where the client takes responsibility for acknowledging their understanding of these limitations. However, as with face to face therapy, it is important to be alert for any indication that the client could benefit from a referral.
- Confidentiality - logotherapy online has taken every possible step to ensure a client’s privacy is safeguarded. The client is encouraged to make sure that they log off from the website, that they do not leave their computer unattended while they are using the website and are advised to not reveal their personal password that they use to log on to the website. Clients are fully informed of the risks of confidentiality over the internet on my website.
- Regulation online of counsellors - although there are some umbrella organisations offering regulatory oversight of counsellors working online, the client is advised to do background



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research on the counsellor to ensure qualifications are reputable and that he or she feels comfortable that the desired counsellor offers an ethical and genuine service.

- Not all people are able to express themselves adequately in writing - writing is a very powerful medium in which to connect with someone. However writing will not appeal to all. One has to feel comfortable expressing oneself with words. This applies to both counsellors and clients. The counsellor must be able to read beneath and beyond the written words of the client as well as grasping the nuances and challenges that come with communicating online in order to sufficiently guide the client so that this journey becomes one of self-growth and meaning.

Notwithstanding the limitations associated with online counselling, this medium also offers numerous benefits. I address the benefits of online counselling in the next section.

THE BENEFITS OF ONLINE COUNSELLING

The benefits of online counselling include:

- Connection through words need not be auditory - for some individuals, expressing themselves through the written word, allows for more creativity and fluidity. When writing about emotional issues, it is possible to write it down, 'save it', think about it and then send the message to a counsellor whenever the client feels psychologically safe enough to do so. The ability to maintain an e-trail of sessions enables the client to reflect and gain distance when perusing back through his/her entries or logs of sessions. This flexibility of time is not present during face to face encounters. This time lapse offers the client the ability to clarify his or her thought processes. Conversely, clients might write a log spontaneously at a time of great stress and anxiety and press the send button immediately. I have noticed that this situation offers some positive benefits opportunities. Firstly, it allows an immediate 'offload' or diffusion of the initial tension the client is experiencing. Secondly, because the written logs are all recorded on the website, there is this incredible learning moment where both client and counsellor can delve back into these previous sessions. From the vantage position of the present, the client can use the time lag to reread their session and sessions prior to that. They are able to reflect on the issue of concern to themselves, hence being able to self soothe and come up with a way forward which they then wish to discuss. This offsets tremendous pride and a sense of great achievement in



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their ability to actually solve their own issues, which then propels therapy forward with great enthusiasm.

- Anonymity - I have observed an accelerated openness to self-disclosure due to a sense of not being seen or known. Thus, the anonymity offered by an internet medium may assist in creating a safe environment for clients.

The convenience factor for persons whose daytime lives are busily scheduled or in circumstances where distance or disability are challenges, online counselling may serve as a valuable alternative to in-person counselling. Additionally, online counselling offers accessibility across time and geographical barriers

There are distinct advantages and disadvantages to counselling on the internet that should be meaningfully considered at all times and reassessed with each new encounter of a client. In the next section I offer a perspective on the use of a logotherapy approach to provide online counselling.

A LOGOTHERAPY APPROACH TO ONLINE COUNSELLING

What is logotherapy?

Logotherapy was founded by Dr Viktor E. Frankl (1905 – 1997) (Frankl, 1988). The central tenet of logotherapy is that life has meaning under all circumstances. Logotherapy calls humans to action by asking not what we may expect from life, but rather, to understand that life expects something from us. Humans have both the ability and the freedom to responsibly choose how we would respond to this challenge. Through logotherapy we are offered an opportunity to find our own unique meaning through what we give to the world (creativity), what we receive from the world (experiencing) or the attitude we take when facing a situation. Logotherapy seeks to awaken the human spirit and encourage the discovery of meaning in spite of the ubiquitous stressors of life (Frankl, 1988).

The experience of offering logotherapy-based online counselling

A genuine logotherapeutic encounter not only serves in real time i.e. as a face to face session but is able to authentically hold its' own virtually i.e. over the internet. Frankl (2006) indicated that meaning can be found in any authentic encounter where people reach out to each other, no matter what the circumstances are.



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After my first experience with a client online, I wrote the following message to my logotherapy supervisors:

I have always loved the fact that I could see my clients face to face, watch the expressions on their faces and read their verbal and non-verbal language. I now find myself in the situation where none of these resources are available to me. I am in a very one dimensional, flat space seeking 'through' the words on my computer for..... (And I had no other way to describe this sensation other than) human essence. I find myself peering behind and listening beyond the words written in front of me... I find myself seeing beyond what the person looks like or what he/she sounds like but connecting to something that is coming through much louder, deeper and far richer. Remarkably through the face of technology, I feel the warm, palpitation of a human encounter that goes beyond the description of words, beyond the physical. I am in awe of this experience and how in such a very short period of time, this has been revealed to me.'

I discovered how the very essence of that particular person's humanity unveiled itself not only through words but beyond them. Without the distraction of the soma (the presence of a physical person), I was able to stretch and explore beyond what I had thought possible. It became clear to me that I was able to recognize the Noös (the unique human potential to search and discover meaning even in life's most tragic moments) shining through words. Without the distractions of physicality and the ability to remain anonymous, clients feel a profound sense of liberation plus a sense of having significant input in steering therapy towards their goals. I find because of this, we are able to cut through superficialities remarkably quickly. Add into the mix the mere click of a button to terminate therapy when a client chooses, offers them also a very powerful exit strategy. Clearly over the internet this is far simpler to do than face to face therapy. However, for me as a counsellor, I found this more of a challenge and it took longer to adapt to. Initially I would have this feeling of dread around the disconnection of a client. The abruptness of the rupture left so much unresolved, so many potentialities unfulfilled. Of course, in true logotherapy style, I needed to examine what this meant to me and why I took on the responsibility of the client's choice to end our sessions without a hint of terminating. Why did this feel more violent to me as opposed to when the same happened in face to face sessions? On reflection and with gentle supervision, I began to soberly accept the simple fact, that clients will drop off (cyberspace offers them that exit) and as long as I continue with online counselling, I need to find a place within me that accepts this choice of theirs.

Easier said than done, without a doubt!



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However, through this experience, I am continually mindful of asking myself before the end of each session with a client online that should this client not return again, what would I want her or him to take away with them? This ensures that the end of each session is left on a nurturing, provocative yet caring note.

Two interesting observations I have made over these past years of online counselling is that: (1) if a client is going to disappear or *drop off*, on average, it will be before our third session, (2) if a client started off our sessions with a pseudonym or anonymously, generally by the our third session he or she shares his/her birth name with me.

As logotherapists, we have a solemn duty to awaken our clients to the unique experience of discovering the treasures that lie within their own medicine chests. I have found this very possible to communicate and implement over the internet using specific resources. These resources include, amongst others, humour, responsibility, self-distance, Socratic dialogue, logomoment and the logogift. I discuss these resources in the following section.

Resources available to the logotherapist

The resource of *humour* is challenging to portray online. Before one uses humour, the relationship with the person that is being encountered should be solid and there should be a deep understanding of one another. I would still however, err on the side of caution. If one feels that a funny comment or a more light hearted comment is appropriate, it is wise to consider clarifying with the client what part of your sentence is actually supposed to be funny or light hearted. I sometimes will use the colon and bracket to indicate I am smiling and clarify myself thereafter, so that the client sees the connection to the light heartedness and the comment is not construed in any personal manner.

Responsibility is the provocative stand of logotherapy. Shantall (2003) argues that we ought assist our clients in emerging from their victimised states and live life with dignity. In a sentence, humans should be challenged to take responsibility for their lives.

Logotherapy's stance on responsibility impacts our lives by creating the awareness that we are totally responsible for our own life choices. By becoming responsible we are held accountable to face up to life's challenges. This demands an active and involved participation in every moment that we are alive. Frankl (2006) is often quoted as saying that humans are responsible for what they do, whom they love and how they suffer.



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The words ‘responsible for what we do’ are never more apt than in my current role as an online logotherapist, particularly in ensuring that my communication is conveyed responsibly and that I receive any incoming information with responsibility. However, this applies to both online and face to face therapy. We fail our clients if we as logotherapists do not take a responsible stand as the reflective mirrors that ignite the responsible stance clients need to adopt in facing their own life’s challenges.

Encouraging a client to take a stand and make responsible decision and choices, in my experience, can be done through online text. Below is one example of an interaction with a client using online counselling:

‘So here is my gentle nudge. You can go further; it is just up to this point in your life that you have chosen not to go further. But all that has shifted now ... and this is about your responsibility to want to turn things around and search for meaningful possibilities in your life.’

Self-distancing is a resource that can be used during online counselling. The quiet presence of distance offers us time to be able to reflect, thereby clarifying our thoughts, feelings and perspectives. The distance inherent in online counselling cannot detract from meaningful counsellor-client relationships if they are meaningful, authentic and loving.

The Socratic Dialogue technique is a valuable tool for online counselling. As previously mentioned the very nature of online therapy tacitly stimulates self-reflection and self-distance. Thus we already have a fertile environment to work with for Socratic Dialogue. Below are two Socratic Dialogue questions that I used with one of my client’s.

- Despite the hardships of your past what have you learnt from having had endured and overcome these experiences?
- Describe meaningful moments from your past when you felt you had succeeded and how you could use them to assist you now in your current situation?

Improvisation and creativity have always been an important aspect of the Socratic Dialogue. By asking clients to recall moments that have been or could be, both meaningful and impactful in their lives, immediately puts them in touch with their noös.

In online therapy, the listening occurs through the words on the screen. Although one physically does not use one’s ears in this sense, a keen sense of searching for *logobints* (hints from the client that point to possible sources of meaning) occurs. When referring the client back to specific words or phrases that he/she wrote, it allows the client to gain a deeper insight into what is truly



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meaningful to her/him and to align again with their own values and inner desires which they have been failing to hear. One client shared the following with me in response to creating awareness of a logohint: 'I've never had any major adventures, travelled very far, had big strokes of good luck etc. like some people do, but thinking about things, I have had thousands of really good smaller moments which may not have lasted very long but at the same time made me feel happy'. I was able to use this thread of information to move forwards with our conversation to expand on these moments and encourage her to relook at what evoked her interest and passion. As with face to face therapy, when one hears a logohint it is heard loudly by the logotherapist. As you can duly see, the same impact happens online. The words of the logohint literally jump out amidst the story.

There can be no doubt when a *logomoment* (meaning moments) is shared between a logotherapist and her/his client. The recognition that a truth has been realised and released from being deeply hidden within the unconscious not only changes the energy in the room but is very clearly an emotive and unique experience shared intimately by two people. The unique human capacity to search for and discover meaning breaks through into the consciousness of the client with incredible splendour and clarity. I have been fortunate to experience logomoments both in face to face sessions and online. During a face to face session the logotherapist has the transparency and immediacy of the moment to diagnose the logomoment and to visually absorb the facial expressions and body language of the client thus enhancing the experience for both the logotherapist and the client. Online the logotherapist is not privy to witnessing the logomoment in its immediacy, however the logomoment felt by the client is sensed as being all powerful and causes the client to radically shift and propel forward with meaning and purpose. Here is an excerpt from a session written by an online client to me, revealing the logomoment.

You asked me why I think I needed to go through all this. I have asked myself this lots of times. Sometimes I feel privileged to have gone through this because it was such a spiritual journey for me. It has made me into a better person. I have learnt that I should go easy on myself more, judge others less harshly and I feel more spiritual now. I feel having gone through so much pain I might be in a position to help others more but don't know where to go with this. It's also just been a relief to share all of this with you. I think you are right in all you say. I do feel a lot better just sharing everything with you and you validating things for me. I really feel I can go from strength to strength now and put all this



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behind me. I am happy to stop these sessions. I can't tell you what a comfort this has been to me. Just to have someone to listen to me.'

With this client, although I as the logotherapist was not able to witness physically her logomoment I witnessed her shift as the result of her experience with therapy online. The result of her logomoment propelled her instantly forward into action and getting on with life. I sensed the shift in her energy through her written words. Suddenly there was no more need for a counsellor as she embraced her true strength and became totally self-sufficient in that very moment.

Above I have touched on the resources of the Noös and how they add such value to therapy online. During my period of practicing as a logotherapist I have devised a technique which I have found extremely valuable both within face to face therapy and online. This technique I have named the *logogift*.

The concept of a *logogift* refers to the significance of giving my clients a meaningful gift. This gift is not the token conventional gift that one would normally receive. This is a gift given to the client by the logotherapist echoing the client's own unique humanity. The technique involved is the recording of all the logohints of strength and courage picked up by the logotherapist during sessions with a particular client. With face to face therapy it is advantageous to either make reliable notes when you hear these particular logohints or tape record the sessions.

These logohints are then all written down and returned to the client at a meaningful time, for example at termination of therapy or as with one of my clients when she needed inner strength to face an impending divorce. The words of strength and courage are none other than their own words and phrases that they have said or written (in the case of online therapy) throughout their sessions. However they had not been aware of saying them at the time. The meaningful impact of this I have found to be not only rewarding but very emotive as the client realizes at a very deep level how very capable he/she is of wisdom, courage and ability. These words and phrases would simply have disappeared had not the logotherapist been present and aware to notice them. To the owner of the voice/hand who had uttered/written them in the first place. Through the Logogift the client immediately is able to witness her/himself through a different lens. There is a sense of amazement and wonder at this aspect of themselves that they had been totally blind to. They also have something tactile (the list written on paper, or highlighted in the sessions online) that they can return to in times of reflection or when needing to self soothe. This connects them directly



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to the power of their own noös and reminds them that they do indeed have the strength and courage to face adversity.

The ceremony of handing over the logogift can be done creatively depending on the logotherapist. For example, the list could be presented beautifully rolled up and tied with a ribbon. Whilst the Logogift during face to face therapy includes the ritual of a handing over of a 'meaningful gift', this obviously proves to be more challenging over the internet. On the logotherapy online website as previously mentioned, all sessions are kept in journal form for the client and therapist to return to time and time again. Hence there is already a wealth of information to glean from. What I do is highlight paragraphs from previous sessions of the client that offer logohints and glimpses of their unique humanity. I then ask the client to actively seek her/his noetic phrases and logohints. With online therapy it is extremely important to ensure that the client has a clear understanding of the noetical dimension and grasps the cornerstone concepts of logotherapy in order to be able to competently carry out the exercise. The Logogift technique provokes a sense of awe and wonder in the client, when they reflect on the wisdom and strength offered behind the words they have written or spoken.

Here is an example of an online client doing this exercise.

- I have attempted to do the 'homework' you assigned. I'm not sure I've done exactly what you asked, so here's the way I approached it – I read each section, looking for my noetic-self peeking through, but I also highlighted a few 'lessons' I took away from each section you chose.
- In this section, I see the closest thing to hope and faith that I experience in my life.
- This section feels like a reminder that not everyone is going to treat me badly, that I can have good relationships with new people, and that I can trust my instincts.
- For me, this whole passage does two things: it highlights the good qualities of me, qualities I still manage to maintain even through personally difficult times. The other thing it does is show me that I do matter to people.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to share my experiences of offering online counselling using a logotherapy-based perspective. It was indicated that online counselling poses both challenges and benefits. Within the ever expanding digital world that we live in, counsellors have to actively search



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for and find way to manage the challenges while embracing the benefits associated with online counselling.

Logotherapy proves to be a valuable approach to assist humans who are seeking therapeutic assistance in the digital age. In the article I highlighted and shared my approach to adopting a logotherapy approach to online counselling. It is my hope that this brief article created awareness in the readers' minds about how to develop and offer online counselling using their therapeutic paradigm of choice.

More research is needed on the value of online counselling. Amongst other things, student development and support practitioners can evaluate the efficacy of an online counselling programme. Additionally, researchers should consider the effect of possible client isolation in seeking online counselling. Lastly, it is imperative that clear guidelines on research ethics be devised to guide empirical studies investigating online counselling.

Online counselling is fast becoming part and parcel of the counsellor's *toolbox*. I hope that this article serves as the appropriate stimulus to motivate others to embrace online counselling as an avenue to empower ever greater numbers of clients who are daring to emerge from the anonymity of the internet in search of assistance.

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Three approaches to research design and methodology: A primer

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ABSTRACT

The traditional role of student development and support (SDS) practitioners has changed. No longer can SDS professionals choose to focus exclusively on their practice. Rather, they are expected to, in addition to offering much-needed support to students, also, evaluate the practice of SDS service delivery through an empirical lens. However, for many, the act of engaging in research seems overwhelming. This article aims to demystify the concepts of research design and methodology by providing a brief overview of three approaches that SDS practitioners can adopt in conducting research, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. It is argued that SDS practitioners ought to adopt the role of practitioner-researcher.

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Keywords: Qualitative research; quantitative research, mixed methods; paradigms; research design.



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INTRODUCTION

Since 2011 I have regularly been offering research-related workshops at the annual SAACDHE conferences. Year after year colleagues from universities across South Africa share their research dreams and aspirations with me. Many of these dreams and aspirations are never realised, and in some instances, not even pursued, due to what I playfully term ‘generalised research methodology anxiety disorder.’ It is against this backdrop that I decided to author an article on the topic of research methodology. More specifically, this article offers a theoretical discussion of the three prominent paradigms that inform research designs, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.

The article comprises five board sections. First, the concepts of research design and methodology will be defined. Then, a broad level introduction to the three mentioned research designs would be provided. This introduction will also include a discussion on the concepts of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Next, the three prominent research designs are compared according to ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. The three research designs are then discussed in greater detail separate sections. Lastly, the article is concluded by calling for SDS practitioners to adopt the role of researcher in addition to practitioner. It is hoped that this article will provide professionals working in the SDS field with necessary methodology-related information to begin engaging in practitioner-research.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The concept, research design, can be defined as a strategic framework that guides research activities to reach sound conclusions (Durrheim, 1999a). In other words, researchers utilise certain designs as ‘maps’ to guide them in conducting empirical investigations (Hofstee, 2006). The research design ought to be informed by the specific research aims and questions (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2011).

The research aims and questions posed in a study are investigated by following a specific methodological approach (Dawson, 2002). The concept of ‘methodology’ refers to the philosophy or the general principles that guide research studies. The specific methods adopted to conduct the research study include, but are not limited to, selecting an appropriate sample, using valid and reliable data collection measures, and analysing data using suitable strategies (Dawson, 2002).



THREE RESEARCH DESIGNS: AN INTRODUCTION

Creswell (2014) refers to three broad research designs, namely (1) quantitative, (2) qualitative, and (3) mixed methods. Quantitative research designs serve as strategic frameworks to investigate objective theories through the examination of relationships among variables (Smith & Davis, 2010). In contrast, qualitative designs focus on exploring and understanding the meanings that participants attribute to social phenomena and experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Mixed methods designs emphasise the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative forms of data as a means of providing a more holistic perspective than would be possible when using single, or mono, method approaches (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009).

Instead of regarding the three designs above as dichotomous, Creswell (2012) advises that they be viewed as existing on a continuum ranging from quantitative, at the one extreme, to mixed methods (midpoint), and qualitative at the other extreme. The choice of research design ought to be a function of the research questions and objectives (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). Research designs can, furthermore, be characterised according to certain paradigm assumptions (Jonker & Pennink, 2010).

The concept of a ‘paradigm’ refers to an all-encompassing system of practice, standards, rules and thinking that defines the nature and scope of research enquiries (Kuhn, 1996). A paradigm defines the scope of a research study according to three dimensions, namely (1) ontology, (2) epistemology, and (3) methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Subsequently, diverse ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives and practices will influence how a research question is addressed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The mentioned three dimensions are discussed in the sections that follow.

Ontology

Human beings “...act in this world with limited knowledge...we can’t even be sure we know what we know” (Jonker & Pennink, 2010, p. 61) Hence, humans make assumptions about the nature of reality. In research nomenclature, the aforementioned is referred to as ‘ontology’ (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) define the concept of ‘ontology’ as the assumed nature of reality when researchers conduct their investigations. Research paradigms, i.e. quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, encompass diverse ontological assumptions that guide scholars to construct and uncover knowledge. Within the limits of such ontological assumptions, researchers pursue an epistemic interest, i.e. they endeavour to uncover approximations of the truth (Mouton,



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2001). This, however, requires that researchers justify how and what they regard knowledge, or truth, to be.

Epistemology

The stance that a researcher adopts in response to that which is investigated, i.e. knowledge, is referred to as 'epistemology' (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). That is, depending on the research paradigm adopted, a researcher will assume a particular epistemological stance towards knowledge. Subsequently, researchers ought to justify their epistemological assumptions when conducting an empirical study (Jonker & Pennink, 2010).

Methodology

The concept of 'methodology' refers to, amongst other things, the methods utilised to gather data (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Methods include the instruments and tools utilised to collect information about the social world as a means of answering a specific research question (Smith & Davis, 2010). The methodology utilised is determined by, and associated with, both ontological and epistemological assumptions (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). Therefore, methodological approaches ought to be aligned with researchers' assumptions about reality and the stance adopted towards knowledge.

Three essential components of the research methods adopted include (1) sampling, (2) data collection, and (3) data analysis. These three elements will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Sampling

Social science researchers aim to develop a better understanding and improve the lives, of specific populations being studied (Mouton, 2001). However, due to logistical and other restrictions, researchers cannot study entire populations (Creswell, 2012). Hence, a target population, or sampling frame, of a group of individuals with certain defining characteristics that are comparable to the population being studied, is identified. Within this target population a sample, appropriate for the purpose of a specific research study, is then selected (Creswell, 2012).

The concept of a 'sample' refers to a subgroup of the target population that the researcher aims to study (Smith & Davis, 2010). The selection of a sample is determined, in part, by the research design that guides an empirical investigation (Durrheim, 1999a). Subsequently, different



sampling strategies will be utilised depending on whether a qualitative or quantitative research design is utilised.

Data collection

Researchers require evidence to answer research questions. Data, which serve as proof, are collected by identifying, selecting and gaining permission to study specific samples (Creswell, 2012). Diverse forms of data are collected for quantitative and qualitative studies.

Data analysis

After data have been collected, it ought to be analysed. Creswell (2012, p. 10) describes data analysis as “...taking the data apart to determine individual responses and then ...putting it [back] together...” to present a summarised interpretation and synthesis. Quantitative research designs typically make use of statistical methods to analyse data (Field, 2013), while qualitative designs utilise interpretative approaches (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Mixed method designs, in addition to encompassing both quantitative and qualitative analysis procedures, also emphasise integrating, contrasting and comparing data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

QUANTITATIVE, QUALITATIVE AND MIXED METHOD RESEARCH DESIGNS: ONTOLOGICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In preceding sections, the concepts of ontology, epistemology and methodology were introduced and discussed. The three research designs identified by Creswell (2014) – quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods – can be described and differentiated according to diverse ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. This differentiation is summarised in Table 1.



Table 1. Research paradigms (Adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark (2011, p. 42), and Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999, p. 6)

Research paradigm	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Quantitative (Positivist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable external reality Reality functions according to specific laws that can be studied Singular reality: Hypotheses are accepted or rejected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers are objective and removed from the research context Researchers objectively collect data on instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experimental and quasi-experimental designs Hypothesis testing Deductive reasoning: a priority thesis is tested (top-down approach)
Qualitative (Interpretative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subjective experiences and reality Socially constructed, thus multiple realities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers are empathetic and subjectively involved Researchers visit participants at their sites/natural settings to collect data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social interaction as the basis of knowledge Interpretative Inductive reasoning: Researchers start with participants' views and build up to patterns and theories (bottom-up approach)
Mixed methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pragmatic: Both singular and multiple realities are embraced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers embrace both objective (quantitative) and subjective (qualitative) realities to address the research question Emphasis is on collecting data that address the research question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are adopted and integrated (mixed)

The three methodologies presented above, are discussed, respectively, in the section that follows.

THREE RESEARCH DESIGNS

Quantitative research designs

The quantitative researcher regards knowledge as existing objectively (ontology) and, therefore, adopts the role of an impartial and detached observer (epistemology) who utilises valid and reliable instruments, such as questionnaires (methodology), to collect data (Clark-Carter, 2010). Two prominent quantitative research designs are (1) experimental, and (2) quasi-experimental approaches.

The concept of an 'experimental research design' refers to the general plan for selecting participants (sampling), assigning them to experimental or control conditions, and controlling external variables in an attempt to determine causation (Clark-Carter, 2010). A defining



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characteristic of experimental designs is that participants are randomly assigned to either experimental or control conditions. This enables researchers to compare pre- and post-test results between the two groups. Given that the samples may be comparable regarding aspects such as age, sex and racial composition, post-intervention differences can be interpreted as, among other things, causal in nature (Clark-Carter, 2004).

In experimental studies, often conducted within controlled laboratory environments, researchers can utilise numerous measures to control extraneous variables. Hence, internal and external validity may be enhanced (Smith & Davis, 2010). In contrast, quasi-experimental studies mostly lack this strict methodological control.

Quasi-experimental research designs are often utilised outside of laboratory contexts, i.e. in real world settings (Tredoux, 1999). Subsequently, this design is often less rigorous when compared to experimental designs. Amongst others, participants are not randomly assigned to control or experimental conditions. Rather, quasi-experimental designs often consist of only an experimental group (Tredoux, 1999). Subsequently, determining causality is not necessarily a specific aim of quasi-experimental designs. The benefit of such a design is that it allows researchers to investigate problems using empirical methods without adhering to stringent control, which may be difficult to achieve outside of laboratory settings (Clark-Carter, 2010).

Regardless of whether social science researchers adopt experimental or quasi-experimental designs, the emphasis remains on quantification of social experiences and phenomena that can be analysed using statistical and mathematical measures (Kaplan, 2004). The concept of 'quantification' is discussed in the next section.

Quantification

Quantification refers to assigning numbers to objects in such a way as to represent quantities of attributes (Durrheim, 1999a). The quantification of social experiences offers numerous benefits. Amongst others, it enables researchers to study and experiment with, apparently, intangible properties/concepts (Kaplan, 2004). For example, the idea of meaning in life has been a prominent focus of philosophical discourse. However, the empirical study of meaning in life was limited due to its intangible nature. By making use of quantitative approaches, researchers have been able to operationalise the concept of using questionnaires (Steger, 2009). This has resulted in numerous empirical investigations and an expanding body of knowledge on



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the experience of meaning in life (Steger, 2009). Hence, a perceived vague philosophical concept was translated into an empirically testable variable.

Additionally, the use of quantitative measures enables researchers to collect and analyse significant quantities of data from large samples, e.g. 500+ participants, at one specific, or across various, points in time (Clark-Carter, 2004). Moreover, quantification enables researchers to generalise findings from a sample to the wider population (Kaplan, 2004). This could, among other things, inform social science researchers about the nature of human behaviour. Notwithstanding the benefits associated with quantification, it also poses certain theoretical challenges (Kapp, 2010).

Quantification: Theoretical challenges

Durrheim (1999a) outlines three potential theoretical challenges associated with quantification, namely:

- Representation - an attribute can only be quantified if a valid theoretical foundation has been established;
- Objectivity - the rules of measurement assume the existence of objective laws that serve as criteria for quantification. Quantified numbers are abstract in nature, obey certain mathematical laws and are evenly spaced on a continuum. However, social science attributes, such as meaning in life, may not necessarily obey similar mathematical laws. Consequently, the differences between numerical values, such 'one' versus 'two', may not necessarily translate equivalently to the variances between scores of 'one' and 'two' on a measure for meaning of life; and
- Correspondence - researchers, ought to ensure that conceptual and operational definitions correspond. That is, there should be consistency between scores on a measurement instrument and quantity of attributes that different objects pose.

The three theoretical problems with measurement can be addressed by focussing on the following:

- Conceptualisation - quantitative measurement begins with conceptualisation, which refers to the theoretical definition and description of the attribute that is to be measured (Hofstee, 2006). This requirement is mostly addressed using literature study and



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review. Attributes that have been conceptualised, are referred to as ‘constructs’ (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006);

- Operationalisation - the theoretical and conceptual definition ought to be translated into visible indicators of the construct. Hence, operationalisation involves linking theoretical ideas to observable realities that can be measured;
- Validity - researchers ought to ensure that there is a good fit between the conceptual and operational definitions of a construct. In other words, operational measures ought to assess or evaluate its theoretical equivalent accurately. There are three primary forms of validity, namely:
 - Criterion-related validity - this type of validity refers to the degree that a measure is related to another criterion that also depicts the construct under investigation;
 - Content validity - the second type of validity, namely content validity, refers to the manner in which a measure accurately depicts a specific domain of knowledge; and
 - Construct validity - researchers ought to ensure that the measures utilised are related to measures with which it ought to be theoretically associated with (convergent construct validity). In contrast, measures should be inversely or not related to measures that are unrelated (divergent discriminant validity).
- Reliability - the dependability of the measuring instrument is referred to as reliability (Hofstee, 2006). The three primary forms of reliability are:
 - Parallel forms - by using two equivalent versions of a specific measurement, researchers can establish parallel forms reliability;
 - Split halves methods - if researchers choose not to devise two parallel forms of a similar measure, the items on a single measure can be randomly divided to create two equivalent halves. Reliability can then be assessed by calculating the correlation between the two specific halves;
 - Test-retest reliability - the temporal stability of a measure is referred to as test-retest reliability. That is, participants, completing the measure achieve a similar or equivalent score upon retesting; and
 - Internal consistency - reliability can be established by correlating each item in a scale with each other item. Internal consistency is typically depicted as Cronbach’s



alpha coefficient ('Cronbach's alpha', or ' α ') ranging from '0' (no internal consistency) to '1' (maximum internal consistency).

In addition to addressing the uncertainties related to objectivism and correspondence, quantitative researchers also have to consider threats to internal and external validity.

Internal and external validity

The concept of validity is central to quantitative research designs (Mouton, 2002). More specifically, quantitative research designs are aimed at maximising internal and external validity while balancing practical realities associated with conducting a study. In the sections that follow the concepts of, and possible threats to, internal and external validity will be discussed.

Internal validity. The concept of internal validity refers to the coherence of the research design (Dawson, 2002). A research design with high levels of internal validity will be substantiated by the logic of the design (Tredoux, 1999). In other words, the results of the research study can be validated due to the internal coherence of the specific design.

Extraneous variables could confound and influence the internal consistency of a study. This may discredit the results (Smith & Davis, 2010). Creswell (2012) identifies the following extraneous variables that threaten internal validity, namely:

- Factors related to participants -
 - History - participants' experiences between the time that lapsed from the beginning (pre-test) to the finalisation (post-test) of a research study could influence the results. For example, participants may obtain additional education or be exposed to a traumatic incident. These experiences could account for the differences between the pre- and post-test scores. Hence, the final results may not necessarily be related to the factors that were investigated, but due to variable influences outside of the scope of the study;
 - Maturation - participants, could change, for example, grow older, wiser or have new life experiences, in the periods between the pre-and post-tests. This could influence the results obtained in a study;
 - Regression - scores from participants will, over time, regress back toward the mean (Smith & Davis, 2010). If researchers utilise participants with extreme scores, this effect could be exacerbated. It is advised that extreme scores



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be managed by either removing it from the sample or controlling its effect (Tredoux, 1999);

- Selection - the characteristics of participants may influence the results of a study. For example, the selection of highly motivated participants could result in more favourable post-test outcomes, when compared to less motivated individuals;
- Mortality - participants who drop out of studies could influence the results. Researchers are urged to select large enough samples to absorb attrition, as well as compare the characteristics of participants who dropped out, with those who remained in the study (Smith & Davis, 2012);
- Interaction with the selection - numerous participant-specific factors could negatively affect the internal validity of a study. For example, diverse socio-economic backgrounds of participants could introduce uncontrolled historical factors. Subsequently, the logic of the results may not necessarily be a function of the research design or study, but be related to participant-specific factors;
- Factors related to the study -
 - Diffusion of treatments - in the case of experimental research designs, where specific control and experimental groups have been identified, researchers ought to ensure that participants are not exposed to the opposing group's treatment conditions. A particular threat is that participants from the different groups could learn from the other and this will influence the results;
 - Compensatory equalisation - if an experimental group (and not the control group) is exclusively exposed to an intervention condition, the validity of the study could be threatened. To address this threat, researchers could choose to also offer an intervention condition to the experimental group (Smith & Davis, 2010). For example, a hand-out depicting information on the topic of the study could be provided to the control group; compared to a workshop offered to the experimental group. In this way all participants receive some form of benefit;
 - Compensatory rivalry - the public announcement of treatment conditions and expected outcomes for both the experimental and control groups, could give rise to subtle forms of rivalry. For example, the control group may perceive themselves as the 'underdogs' (Creswell, 2012). Subsequently, participants in the control group



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could become resentful. Researchers can address this threat to internal validity by attempting to reduce awareness of the treatment conditions, limiting public awareness, and offering the experimental intervention to the control group following completion of the study.

External validity. The concept of external validity refers to the generalisability of the research results to wider contexts, i.e. generalisation from the sample to the population (Smith & Davis, 2010). Under ideal conditions, all quantitative findings would be generalisable, or applicable, to the general population. However, there are numerous threats to external validity. These include, but are not limited to:

- The particular conditions of the study, such as the setting, context, time of day or even the specific intervention could negatively impinge on external validity (Clark-Carter, 2004). For example, a logotherapist may have devised a way to reduce nursing students' feelings of agitation when dealing with difficult patients through listening to audio tapes of a soothing voice talking about relaxation. The effectiveness of the intervention may not necessarily mean that a specific nurse would be able to apply the technique within a stressful hospital context after having worked a 10-hour shift. Hence, the value of the intervention method may be limited to certain contexts and conditions;
- Characteristics of the participants, for example, age, sex and home language could restrict the generalisability of the results. In other words, if a sample was selected that mainly consisted of 30-year-old white males who were English speaking, the results may not necessarily apply to 50+-year-old, black females who are Xhosa speaking; and
- Because interventions or experimental conditions take place at a certain time and location, for example at the commencement of an academic year, the results may not necessarily be generalisable to a different time and place, e.g. at the conclusion of an academic year. A possible solution would be to replicate a study at various points in time and across diverse contexts (Creswell, 2012). As such, the results obtained from a stress-management programme conducted at the beginning of an academic year, may not predict similar results obtained at the conclusion of the same academic year.

Three additional aspects that are important to consider with regards to quantitative research designs are sampling, data collection, and data analysis. These aspects are discussed in the sections that follow.



Sampling methods in quantitative research designs

Creswell (2012) differentiates between two types of quantitative sampling strategies, namely (1) probability and (2) non-probability sampling. The defining characteristic of probability sampling is that participants are selected in such a way that every element in the population has an equal likelihood of selection (Tredoux, 2002). Hence, the selection of a particular participant is independent of the selection of any other participant. This form of random sampling is particularly rigorous, as it allows quantitative researchers to state the claim that the sample is representative of the population, which allows for generalisations from the sample to the population (Creswell, 2012).

In non-probability sampling, participants are selected because they (1) are conveniently available (sample of convenience), or (2) represent some characteristic of the population being studied (purposive sampling) (Creswell, 2014). However, convenience and purposive sampling may limit the external validity. Hence, it ought to be utilised when the aim of the study is 'description', versus 'generalisation' (Dawson, 2002).

Researchers who conduct quantitative studies, aim to select relatively large sample sizes¹ to ensure representativeness of the population being. However, because the exact population size is difficult to determine, numerous factors ought to be considered when selecting a sample. Creswell (2012) suggests that approximately 30 participants be chosen when conducting a correlational study, and 350 for a survey research design. Nonetheless, numerous factors, such as purpose of the research study, the variables being investigated, logistical constraints and financial limitations ought to be considered, when selecting a sample (Lachenicht, 1999).

Data collection in quantitative research designs

According to Creswell (2012) quantitative data ought to be collected by means of five interrelated steps, namely: (1) identifying the participants and/or units of analysis to study, (2) obtaining permissions required from research committees and/or organisations to gather the data, (3) bearing in mind what types of information to collect, (4) locating and selecting, or developing, data collection instruments, and (5) administering the data collection process. Hence, gathering

¹ Sample size is generally selected relative to the population being studied. Hence, an adequately large sample is one that is representative of the population from which it was selected (Creswell, 2014).



quantitative data ought to be about more than "...simply collecting data" (Creswell, 2012, p. 140). After data have been collected, it has to be analysed.

Data analysis in quantitative research designs

Researchers typically collect quantitative data using research questionnaires and surveys. The resultant data should then be prepared for analysis. This entails coding, entering and cleaning the data (Durrheim, 1999b).

The concept of coding refers to quantifying participants' responses to questionnaires, such as assessing the types of scores to use, selecting a statistical programme to use, for example, IBM SPSS version 21 (IBM SPSS Inc., 2012), and capturing the data. Next, the data ought to be 'cleaned', which refers to checking for and correcting errors. Researchers can clean data by selecting a random sample of 10-15% of the captured data. In the case of errors, it would be advisable to recheck the data for the entire sample; else, if there are no errors, the researcher can continue with the analysis process (Durrheim, 1999b).

Creswell (2012) suggests that one first conduct a descriptive analysis of the data. This includes, amongst others, reporting on measures of central tendency (e.g. mean scores) and variation (e.g. standard deviation). Next, more sophisticated inferential analysis, for example, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and the paired sample's *t*-test, can be conducted (Creswell, 2012).

Following the aforementioned quantitative data analysis, the results are reported using statistics, tables and figures (Kapp, 2010). The results are accompanied by a discussion and synthesised using an interpretation, which compares the current results with data reported on in the existing body of scientific knowledge. Lastly, the implications of the results and avenues for further research are presented to the academic and scientific community (Kapp, 2010).

The use of quantitative research designs offers the benefit of adhering to the accepted scientific and academic traditions (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). The quantitative approach is also limited. Amongst others, quantitative research does not adequately acknowledge the context or setting of human experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Subsequently, the voices of participants are not heard – "...figures do not speak for themselves" (Jonker & Pennink, 2010, p. 74). Additionally, the biases and personal perspectives of quantitative researchers, who remain in



the background, are seldom addressed. Qualitative research designs address some of these limitations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Qualitative research designs

An important distinction between quantitative and qualitative research designs resides in the 'depth' of the inquiry (Christensen, 2001). Quantitative research focusses on data collection using predetermined instruments, such as questionnaires. Subsequently, research participants can only provide information addressed by the use of the instruments used (Kaplan, 2010). In contrast, qualitative research reflects an in-depth study of, amongst others, participants' thoughts, feelings and perceptions related to the topic of study. Accordingly, research participants in qualitative studies are encouraged to express and provide information that moves beyond the initially defined scope of inquiry (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research focusses on how people construct meaning and make sense of their lives (Merriam, 2009). However, there are numerous divergent views regarding what qualitative research signifies. Hence, providing one standard definition appears to be challenging. Given this caveat, Nkwi, Nyamongo and Ryan (2001) define qualitative research as any research that makes use of data that do not indicate ordinal values.

The purpose of this section is to present a discussion on qualitative research designs. The following aspects will subsequently be addressed in the sections that follow, namely the characteristics of qualitative research, sampling, data collection and data analysis, as well as validity and reliability.

The characteristics of qualitative research

Creswell (2014) describes the following as characteristics of qualitative research, namely:

- Qualitative research is conducted within natural, and not laboratory, settings. The defining characteristic is that qualitative researchers subjectively interact with participants in their natural environment;
- The qualitative researcher assumes that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore adopts an empathetic and subjective epistemological stance. As such, qualitative research assumes a reflexive quality and the researcher becomes the research instrument (Creswell,



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2007). Subsequently, the qualitative researcher's unique cultural background, experiences and perspectives play important roles in shaping the interpretation of the data;

- Multiple sources of data may be collected when conducting a qualitative study. These include, but are not limited to, interviews, naïve and narrative sketches, observations, documents and audio-visual data (Wright, 2008). The collected data are then reviewed and organised into pertinent categories and themes;
- While qualitative research is considered to be an inductive process (Henning et al., 2011), deductive reasoning also plays an important role (Creswell, 2012). After categories and themes have been identifying from the bottom-up (inductive reasoning), researchers are required to deductively evaluate the data collected to determine if more and additional sources of evidence may be necessary. Hence, as the qualitative analysis process moves forward, a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning is required;
- Notwithstanding the discussion above regarding the importance of both inductive and deductive reasoning, the qualitative approach is primarily focussed on understanding the meanings that participants attribute to the specific phenomenon under investigation. Hence, the qualitative researcher does not enter into the qualitative process with predetermined hypotheses to test, and instead engages in inductive reasoning; and
- The qualitative researcher attempts to develop a complex understanding of the problem being investigated. Consequently, he/she aims to provide a rich description of multiple perspectives and factors involved.

Sampling in qualitative research

While quantitative research designs emphasise the importance of generalisation of findings, qualitative approaches focus on developing an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2012). Subsequently, the criteria for selecting qualitative and quantitative samples differ. More specifically, qualitative research designs focus on, amongst others, purposive sampling.

The concept of purposive sampling refers to intentionally selecting participants to learn or understand the phenomenon being investigated because they can offer rich and valuable data (Creswell, 2012). Purposive sampling can occur before conducting a qualitative study or may



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emerge from the dynamic nature of the research being conducted. Researchers could also opt to select homogeneous qualitative sample, thereby enabling them to study a specific group of participants or particular concept (Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative sample sizes, which are smaller than what would be utilised for quantitative approaches, could differ due to the nature and aim of the specific study (Kapp, 2010). As a general guideline, Kelly (1999) suggests that six to eight participants (data sources) might, all things being equal, be sufficient for a homogeneous qualitative sample. However, adequate data ought to be gathered to allow for an in-depth study and rich description of the problem under investigation (Henning et al., 2011). Qualitative data collection should stop – with no new participants added to the study – when saturation occurs. The concept of ‘saturation’ suggests that no new insights emerge as further data are collected (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

Qualitative data collection

The qualitative researcher makes use of interactional and interpretative methodologies to collect data (Henning et al., 2011). Hence, the qualitative researcher interacts with participants and plays an active role in shaping the final interpretation of the data. Given the subjective nature of this process, Troskie de-Bruin (2011) suggests that qualitative data be collected via three interrelated steps, namely: (1) recording information through research protocols, (2) administering data collection in order to anticipate potential problems in data collection, and (3) bringing sensitivity to ethical issues that may affect the quality of the data. These three steps are now briefly discussed.

Research protocols. Qualitative data ought to be collected in such a way as to enable researchers to explore the research questions being posed. However, there is a fine distinction between questions being too detailed or too general (Smith & Davis, 2010). If a significant amount of research has been conducted on a given topic, researchers may want to examine a specific aspect in detail – hence numerous detailed questions may be posed. Alternatively, if very limited information is available about a specific topic, researchers may want to pose numerous general and open-ended questions to enhance qualitative exploration (Troskie-de Bruin, 2011). To sufficiently manage this process, Henning et al. (2011) suggest the use of qualitative research protocols. This, essentially, requires that the researcher explicitly record the data collection process through, amongst others, indicating the types of questions that will be



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posed, date of when data were collected and a description of the context or setting (Henning et al., 2011).

The anticipation of problems in qualitative data collection. Numerous problems could arise during the qualitative data collection process. These include, but are not limited to, access to data sources and managing raw data. Creswell (2007) indicates that researchers ought to ensure that they have gained sufficient permission to access data sources, for example, ethical consent to interview participants. Because data are often collected within participants' natural settings, researchers should take the time to ensure that practical arrangements are addressed, for example having access to the necessary equipment, such as a tape recorder, when conducting interviews.

Ethical concerns. The in-depth study of phenomena in qualitative research necessitates that sound ethical principles be adhered to (Hoffmann, 2013). These include, *among other things*, assuring confidentiality and anonymity, gaining informed consent and collaborating with participants. These aspects will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4.3 (Ethical Considerations).

Qualitative data analysis

The purpose of qualitative data analysis is to make sense out of text and image information (Creswell, 2014). Henning et al., (2011) indicate that the qualitative "...analysis process is the "heartbeat" of the research..." (p. 103). In other words, the aim is not to provide a 'thin' description that merely reports on cold facts that are independent of circumstances and context. Rather, the purpose of qualitative analysis is to provide an integrated and 'rich' description of the research problem – to create a verbal landscape (Saldana, 2009).

However, because of the in-depth study of the data, some of the information may have to be excluded (Creswell, 2014). This implies that researchers may have to focus on certain aspects of the data, while disregarding other parts of it. Subsequently, researchers may aggregate data into a limited number of themes; for example, five to seven themes (Willig, 2008).

Qualitative data analysis typically proceeds on two levels, namely (1) a general procedure in analysing data, namely 'content analysis', and (b) the analysis embedded within specific qualitative designs, such as grounded theory, phenomenology or case studies. For the purpose of this article, the discussion will focus primarily on qualitative content analysis.



Qualitative content analysis. According to Henning et al., (2011) qualitative content analysis focusses on one level of meaning, namely the content of the data text. Researchers aim to arrive at a valid set of findings based on the stringent application of strict coding and categorisation. Creswell (2007) describes this coding process regarding six interrelated steps, namely:

- (1) Organise and prepare the data for analysis. This includes, amongst other things, transcribing interviews, optically scanning documents and sorting data according to different types;
- (2) The researcher reads through all the primary raw data to develop a general sense of participants' thoughts, feelings and perceptions. Initial thoughts and ideas that emerge ought to be documented. This can be done by noting down ideas in the margins of the transcribed material or field notes;
- (3) The 'coding' process begins. The concept of coding refers to assigning descriptive labels to blocks of text, or units of meaning, for example, sentences (Willig, 2008). The researcher ought to allow the data to "...speak for themselves..." thereby ensuring that codes emerge inductively (Henning et al., 2011, p. 105). However, personal characteristics, influences and literature may serve as critical lenses through which researchers view and make sense of the data - such influences ought to be noted down in 'memos.' The concept, memo, refers to recording reflective notes about aspects such as the data, thoughts, feelings and the analysis process (Henning et al., 2011);
- (4) The codes are then categorised into a small number of themes, which serve as the prominent findings in a study (Saldana, 2009). The analysis process ought to work towards a multi-layered analysis by, for example, interconnecting, and to compare emerging themes;
- (5) Next, the researcher advances regarding how the qualitative themes and discussion will be presented in the final report. Amongst others, it may take the form of a narrative passage, in-depth discussions of several themes, or present some interconnected themes; and
- (6) Lastly, an interpretation of the qualitative themes is presented. This could be submitted as a researcher's personal interpretation, be synthesised via a theoretical lens, or serve to identify additional avenues for research (Saldana, 2009).

While the content analysis was presented as a linear procedure in the section above, numerous authors describe it as a 'messy' process (Saldana, 2009; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999; Willig, 2008). Hence, qualitative data collection, analysis and even report writing are interconnected



and cyclical processes of ever-deepening empathetic insight into the data. This process can be managed using specific qualitative software packages (Smith, 2008).

Software packages for qualitative data analysis. Numerous software programmes are available to assist researchers with qualitative data analysis (Creswell & Maietta, 2002). These software programmes allow researchers to organise and manage large quantities of qualitative data, for example, interview transcripts, in an electronic format. Additionally, it enables researchers to code data and facilitates searching for specific text or keywords. However, the qualitative analysis programmes do not analyse the data *per se*. Rather, researchers still ought to follow accepted guidelines to analyse qualitative data (Creswell & Maietta, 2002).

Qualitative validity, reliability and generalisation

Validity, reliability and generalisability in qualitative studies ought to be addressed throughout the research process (Creswell, 2012). The concept of ‘validity’, in the context of qualitative research, refers to the accuracy and credibility of the findings – in the seminal work on the topic, Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to qualitative validity as ‘authenticity’ and ‘trustworthiness.’ This can be pursued through the implementation of certain procedures. ‘Qualitative reliability’ relates to whether the researcher’s approach is consistent across different studies by various researchers utilising a similar design (Creswell, 2012).

The concept of qualitative generalisability is contentious. Researchers tend to focus more on providing a rich description of themes that emerged from a specific context, instead of concentrating on the generalisation of findings to the population as a whole. Nonetheless, it remains an important concept to consider. In the sections that follow the concepts of qualitative validity, reliability and generalisation will be further elaborated upon.

Qualitative validity. Because qualitative research is characteristically subjective, researchers are expected to ensure that findings are accurate and credible (Willig, 2008). This can be addressed through incorporating certain validation strategies, which include, amongst others, the following:

- Triangulation - researchers, can incorporate different sources of data to build and justify a coherent argument (Troskie-de Bruin, 2011). This includes, but is not limited, to including interviews, narrative sketches, observation, field notes and memos in a single



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study. Adding different sources of data can be claimed as adding validity to the qualitative study (Creswell, 2012);

- Member checks - by taking the final report and descriptions of specific themes back to participants, validity can be enhanced. This process enables participants to indicate whether they agree, or disagree, with the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the data. Hence, participants are afforded the opportunity to comment on the findings (Smith, 2008);
- The use of rich and thick descriptions - descriptions that 'transport' readers to the setting and offer discussions of shared experiences, adds a dimension of accuracy and credibility to the findings (Creswell, 2014). Smith (2008) states that adequate raw data, for example in the form of participant quotes, ought to be included in the final report to substantiate the interpretation. Additionally, this would enable readers to interrogate the interpretation being presented (Smith, 2008);
- Clarification of bias - through a process of reflexivity (when the researcher reflects on the role that personal bias, values and background could play in the unfolding qualitative interpretation) an open and honest narrative, which may point to greater credibility, would be presented (Creswell, 2014);
- Presentation of negative and discrepant information - whereas some participants may, for example, express a specific view, researchers can enhance the validity of a study by actively seeking out and discussing counterpoints of evidence. Subsequently, the qualitative account becomes more realistic and credible (Troskie-de Bruin, 2011);
- Prolonged exposure - the greater a researcher's experience with participants within their natural settings, the more likely the interpretation and findings will be credible and accurate (Creswell, 2014); and
- External auditor - the qualitative researcher could obtain the services of an external auditor to provide an objective evaluation of the study (Lincon & Guba, 1985). Henning et al., (2011) indicate that the use of an external auditor may point to inter-rater reliability. However, the authors add that this implies crossing epistemological boundaries between quantitative and qualitative approaches. Subsequently, they suggest that requesting participants to indicate whether the findings 'makes sense' to them (participants), may be a more viable approach (see 'member checks' above). However, Henning et al., (2011)



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caution that participants may not necessarily fully agree with the findings, as they may, amongst others, be theorising from diverse perspectives. Hence, this ought to inspire qualitative researchers to continue (1) questioning the interpretation, and (2) remain reflexive in the process.

Notwithstanding the validation strategies adopted, the final test comes from getting one's "...ideas accepted in the discourse community – to open them to falsification..." (Henning et al., 2011, p. 149).

Qualitative reliability. Researchers assure qualitative reliability by determining whether their approaches are consistent and stable (Creswell, 2014). The following strategies can be utilised to address qualitative reliability:

- Checking transcripts for accuracy;
- Ensuring that codes are defined and consistently applied; and
- If a team of qualitative researchers are working on a project, that there is agreement about the codes that are being employed.

Qualitative generalisability. According to Creswell (2014) 'particularity', and not 'generalisability', is the hallmark of good qualitative research. However, the possibility exists that qualitative themes could be generalised to a broader theory, especially in case study designs. This could be accomplished when researchers study additional cases and discover that previous findings could be generalised to the new contexts. To explore the possibility of qualitative generalisation, however, requires detailed documentation and the development of a thorough case study database (Creswell, 2014).

In the concluding sections of the discussion on quantitative research design, it was stated that a qualitative approach addresses some of the limitations posed by the mentioned methodology. Amongst others, quantitative research has been regarded as weak in developing an understanding of participants' subjective experiences – an area that can be addressed via qualitative enquiry (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

However, qualitative research has also been criticised for its strong subjective orientation – an aspect that can be addressed via a quantitative research design. Hence, the weakness of each approach can, correspondingly, be offset by the strengths of the other approach.



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A mixed methods research design, which focusses on the collection, analysis and subsequent integration of both quantitative and qualitative data can “...answer questions that cannot be answered...” by the respective approaches alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 11).

Mixed methods research designs

Mixed methods research designs integrate both quantitative and qualitative data (Todd, Nerlich, McKeown, & Clarke, 2005). Subsequently, mixed methods researchers assume that research problems can be studied from both objective (quantitative) and subjective (qualitative) perspectives. More specifically, it is assumed that objective knowledge is socially constructed by human beings in a subjective manner. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies can be utilised to investigate research problems (Todd et al., 2005).

Numerous definitions have been proposed for the concept of ‘mixed methods research.’ According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzi and Turner (2007), there are approximately 19 varying definitions that have been proposed by highly published mixed methods researchers.

Mixed methods research: Defined

As a basic definition, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) describe the concept of mixed methods as the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. Johnson et al. (2007) add that mixed methods research refers to the use of both quantitative and qualitative data for the aims of widening breadth and depth of understanding the issue being investigated. They also emphasise that the use of mixed methods necessarily incorporate different philosophical viewpoints, use of data collection and analyses methods, and inference techniques (Johnson et al., 2007). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) agree and propose a definition of the core characteristics of mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This definition states that mixed methods research refers to:

- The collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data;
- Persuasive and rigorous research approaches;
- Mixing, integrating, merging and comparing the two forms of data collected;
- The appropriate framing of procedures utilised regarding pertinent philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses; and



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- The use of specific mixed methods research designs, for example, parallel, exploratory sequential, or explanatory sequential approaches.

Hence, mixed methods research is about more than just the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. It refers to the use of multiple empirical worldviews (i.e. epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies) while collecting, analysing and integrating of two diverse forms of data in an attempt to answer specific research questions. Subsequently, mixed methods-orientated researchers adopt a pluralistic stance, i.e. they argue that research problems can be investigated from both objective and subjective perspectives (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Todd et al. (2005, p. 4) explain: "...ideally psychologists should all live happily in the paradise of 'methodological pluralism'..." However, numerous methodological arguments regarding the validity of mixing quantitative and qualitative methods have emerged (Creswell, 2012).

Mixed methods research: Methodological arguments

Purists supporting the quantitative and qualitative paradigms, respectively, have indicated that these approaches are incompatible (Howe, 1988). Amongst others, proponents of a quantitative approach argue that objective measurement advances the field of psychology as a science (Clark-Carter, 2004). In contrast, qualitative researchers contend that a disciplined subjective approach is more compatible with the aims of psychology, which include, amongst others, developing an understanding of human nature (Todd et al., 2005). This paradigm argument is referred to as the 'incompatibility thesis' (Barnes, 2012).

The primary argument espoused in the incompatibility thesis is that the two methods – quantitative and qualitative – differ fundamentally regarding ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions and should, therefore, be regarded as antagonistic (Barnes, 2012; Howe, 1988). More recently, however, researchers have advanced the notion that there is significant overlap between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Burke, Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). More specifically, methodologists have suggested that an integration of the two paradigms could afford researchers with a more holistic understanding of the problems being investigated (Burke et al., 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

'Pragmatism' has been proposed as one philosophical avenue to deconstruct the apparent incompatibility between quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Barnes, 2012).



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Pragmatism

The concept of pragmatism stands central to the ‘compatibility thesis’, which claims that, amongst others, quantitative and qualitative data can be mixed (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Pragmatism adopts a dialectical approach by rejecting ‘either-or’ arguments and proposing a ‘both-and’ perspective (Howe, 1988). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) outline the following characteristics of pragmatism:

- It focusses on finding a middle ground between philosophical dogmatism and scepticism to find workable solutions to long-standing philosophical debates;
- It rejects binary options, e.g. ‘yes’ versus ‘no’, as encapsulated in traditional dualistic paradigms, i.e. quantitative and qualitative;
- Knowledge is regarded as being socially constructed and based on the reality of experience;
- Theories are considered ‘true’ to certain degrees;
- Pluralism is endorsed, i.e. multiple perspectives are valued;
- Capital ‘Truth’ may be acquired as a final option. However, in the interim humans live according to lowercase ‘truths’. Subsequently, both quantitative and qualitative methods can contribute ‘truths’ as researchers endeavour to discover/uncover the ‘Truth’;
- Action is preferred to philosophising;
- Practical solutions are offered to address traditional philosophical dualistic challenges;
- Pragmatism fluctuates between inductive (qualitative and verification) and deductive (quantitative and explication) reasoning and encourages ‘abduction.’ The concept of ‘abduction’ or ‘abductive reasoning’ refers to exploration, pattern finding (qualitative investigation) and subsequently suggesting a plausible hypothesis that could be tested (quantitative investigation) (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009); and
- Transferability, versus generalisation, of research results. It is argued that not all quantitative results would be generalisable to all external contexts. Similarly, not all qualitative findings are applicable solely to the context being studied (Barnes, 2012). Hence, there is a fluid movement between quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 8) argue that a mixed methods research approach are warranted under certain conditions: “Research problems suited for mixed methods are those in



which one data source may be insufficient, results need to be explained, exploratory findings need to be generalised...and an overall research objective can best be addressed...” using multiple methods. Therefore, a mixed methods research design could be beneficial, when:

- One source of data may be insufficient to understand the research problem;
- Initial quantitative results have to be explained and explored in greater detail;
- Exploratory findings have to be generalised to the greater population, beyond the scope of a small and homogeneous sample; and
- A research problem is complex, and its intricacies cannot be understood using a mono method inquiry.

Nonetheless, even when the use of a mixed methods approach is warranted, it could pose certain challenges to researchers.

Mixed methods research: Challenges and strengths

Creswell (2012) describes the following potential challenges with regards to the application of mixed methods research designs:

- Researchers ought to be well-schooled in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Subsequently, the use of mixed methods approaches may be a challenging endeavour for novice researchers;
- The dual processes of collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data are time-consuming and potentially expensive; and
- It requires broad conceptualisation. That is, mixed methods research is not simply collecting two types of data. Rather, mixed methods research implies the integration, merging and comparison of the two categories of data.

Notwithstanding the afore-noted challenges, mixed methods approaches could also offer the following benefits to researchers:

- A richer, more nuanced and enhanced understanding of the research question;
- It provides unique perspectives about a research problem being investigated;
- The weaknesses of one research approach is offset by the strengths of the other; and
- Practicality is emphasised. In other words, researchers are encouraged to solve problems using the tools offered by both quantitative and qualitative methods.



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In the next section, a brief overview of mixed method research designs will be provided. This discussion will also focus on sampling, data collection and analysis, interpretation, and validation. Given the breadth and continued development within the area of mixed methods research, a comprehensive discussion of the methodological approach falls outside the scope of this article.

Mixed methods research: Designs

Several typologies for classifying mixed method research designs have been proposed (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Table 2 (see next page) serves as an adapted summary of the three basic mixed method research designs as outlined by Creswell (2014).

From Table 2 it can be deduced that mixed method research designs address two critical components, namely (1) whether data are collected in a parallel (convergent) or sequential manner, and (2) how the quantitative results and qualitative findings are utilised. By collecting data in a parallel manner, researchers assume that two strands of information, i.e. quantitative and qualitative, could enable them to develop a better understanding of the research problem; or, alternatively, researchers may suspect that one strand of data, in isolation, may be insufficient to address the research question. Through sequential data collection, one strand of data sets the stage for the collection of the other strand of data.

Both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research process ought to be rigorous, thereby adhering to paradigm-specific guidelines for, amongst others, sampling procedures, data collection and subsequent analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Notwithstanding the necessity to conduct research with empirical rigour in mind, researchers should also adhere to ethical guidelines and principles.



Table 2. Three basic mixed method research designs (Creswell, 2014, pp. 219 - 227)

Research design	Description	Data collection	Data analysis	Validation
Convergent parallel mixed methods design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological traits can be best understood by collecting and analysing different forms of data Quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed separately Quantitative results and qualitative findings are compared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative and qualitative data collected separately and via appropriate measures Data collection focuses on same or parallel variables Equal or unequal sample size; same database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data from each database analysed separately and then merged Merged results² are presented through comparing and evaluating quantitative and qualitative data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each strand of data validated using relevant strategies Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unequal sample sizes Use of different variables in either strand of data
Exploratory sequential mixed methods design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative data collected first Qualitative findings serve as impetus for quantitative phase Aim: Determine if data from small qualitative sample are generalisable to larger sample (quantitative) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected in two phases: Qualitative phase first, followed by quantitative phase Data could be collected from diverse databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data from each database analysed separately Qualitative findings used to initiate quantitative phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each strand of data validated using relevant strategies Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different samples to be used to avoid duplication of responses Qualitative exploration to move beyond thematic analysis
Explanatory sequential mixed methods design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative data collected first Quantitative results serve as impetus for qualitative phase Aim: Qualitative data collected to aid in explaining quantitative results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected in two phases: Quantitative phase followed by qualitative phase The data gathered from one database Qualitative sample may be smaller than quantitative sample 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data from each phase analysed separately Quantitative results are used to plan qualitative enquiry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each strand of data validated using relevant strategies Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accuracy of findings may be compromised if researcher does not follow-up on all aspects identified in quantitative phase

CONCLUSION

This article provided a discussion on three paradigms that inform research design, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. For SDS professionals working in higher education context, a new dawn has broken. The time has come to move from focussing exclusively on practice to embracing the role of practitioner-researcher. As practitioner-researchers SDS professionals would be expected to evaluate empirically the focus and impact of their practice. Selecting the appropriate research approach to conducting empirical work is, therefore, imperative.



It is hoped that this article could serve as a guide to assist SDS practitioner-researchers in conceptualising and conducting their empirical work.

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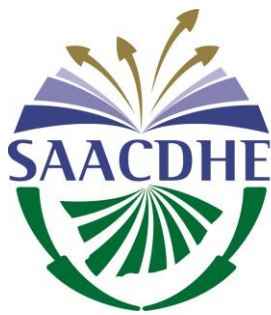
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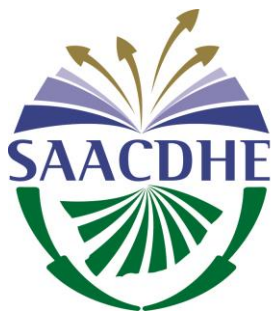
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Research Ethics: An Overview of Four Principles

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Keywords: Autonomy; beneficence; informed consent; non-maleficence; research ethics.

ABSTRACT

Adhering to ethics guidelines has become key criteria for those engaged in, amongst other things, research that includes human participants. However, addressing ethics may appear to some as another layer of complexity added to the research process. This article offers a summary of four important research ethics principles, namely autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and informed consent. It is hoped that the article contributes positively to researchers' ethical-orientated engagement when conducting empirical studies.

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Keywords: Autonomy, beneficence, informed consent, nonmaleficence, research ethics



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INTRODUCTION

For student development and support (SDS) practitioners, the importance of engaging in research to substantiate the value of their services, have become a prominent focus of discourse (Mason, 2015). However, in addition to adhering to proper methodological rigour, SDS practitioner-researchers should also pay attention to ethics guidelines. This article offers an overview of four key research ethics principles.

RESEARCH ETHICS

According to Resnik (in Hoffman, 2013), the concept of ‘ethics’ refers to the norms and standards that can be utilised to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. It furthermore indicates that all people have, by being human, certain rights – namely, ‘human rights.’

When viewed through an ethical lens, the concept of ‘human rights’ indicates that all human beings, regardless of, amongst others, age, sex, language, indigenous heritage, social status, or sexual orientation, have the right to choose the course of their lives. Hence, all humans ought to be treated with dignity and respect with regards to their right to live self-determined lives (Hoffman, 2013).

Research serves as, amongst other things, an epistemic pursuit (Mouton, 1996). That is, one of the primary aims of research is to search for and uncover the ‘truth.’ Within the social sciences, an epistemic pursuit includes, but is not limited to, uncovering the truth about human behaviour. Consequently, humans are often included in research studies as participants (Mouton, 1996).

Researchers, who wish to include human participants in research studies, ought to respect their rights to live and act in self-determining ways. Therefore, research ethics refers to, among other things, the pursuit of epistemic interests in a manner that do not negatively impinge on the basic human rights of participants; research participants should not become a means to an end, but their human dignity ought to be respected (Hoffman, 2013).

Wassenaar (2006) highlights three guiding ethical principles of social science researchers, namely (1) autonomy, (2) nonmaleficence, and (3) beneficence. These three principles form the bedrock of the fourth principle, namely informed consent.



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Autonomy

Humans are autonomous and self-determining beings (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). With regards to research ethics, this implies that humans ought to be allowed to: (1) hold diverse points of view, (2) make authentic decisions, even when these are regarded by others, such as researchers, as ‘wrong’, (3) take actions based on personally held beliefs, and (4) assume responsibility for choices and actions taken (Hoffmann, 2013). Researchers can show respect for participants’ autonomy by obtaining informed consent and respecting their choices to participate, or not, in a given study. Additionally, participants should be allowed, all things being equal, to withdraw from a research study at any time without negative repercussions.

Nonmaleficence

The principle of nonmaleficence indicates that participants ought not to be harmed as a result of taking part in a research study (Wassenaar, 2006). Therefore, researchers are expected to follow a cost-benefit analysis when conducting a research study. In other words, researchers ought to be clear that the costs and harm involved in participation, outweighs the potential benefits on offer to participants (Clark-Carter, 2010).

However, if researchers do foresee possible harm that may not necessarily be offset by the intended advantages of the study, practical arrangements ought to be put in place (Hoffmann, 2013). An example of such an instance may be when a researcher requests participants to complete a questionnaire that focusses on stressful life experiences. It may be anticipated that participants could potentially be emotionally affected or upset by the contents of the questionnaire. In such an instance the researcher may choose to make counselling services available to participants – ideally, free of charge. Subsequently, the potential harm may be contained and effectively addressed.

Beneficence

In addition to not causing harm, i.e. nonmaleficence, researchers are also expected to conduct studies that offer some advantages to participants (Wassenaar, 2006). One potential benefit of a research study is that it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on a specific field or discipline (Kapp, 2010). However, the principle of beneficence indicates that the benefits offered by participation ought to extend beyond just a contribution to the existing body of scientific knowledge.



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An example of those above may be that a specific study, in addition to offering the benefit of enhancing scientific understanding, also focusses on developing an intervention programme for participants. In this way, the potential costs and harm involved in participation may be outweighed by the promise of a specific tangible benefit.

Informed consent

The concept of 'informed consent' refers to a process where researchers inform participants about the risks, possible benefits and the right to participate, not to participate, or to withdraw participation from a study or not (Smith & Davis, 2010). Additionally, researchers ought to inform participants, in a non-technical manner, about the purpose of a research study, whether their confidentiality and/or anonymity will be protected, who will have access to the quantitative results and/or qualitative findings, whether their data will be safely stored, and if the results will be published as dissertation/thesis, in a scientific journal, or presented at an academic conference. Moreover, researchers ought to ensure that participants have the capacity to understand the information and procedures that they are consenting to, and that they are not coerced into participating (Hoffman, 2013).

Informed consent can be obtained by providing participants with an information sheet that outlines the information above in an understandable and non-technical manner (Clark-Carter, 2010). Alternatively, researchers, or field workers, could verbally explain the mentioned ethical principles to participants. Contact details, such as telephone numbers and e-mail addresses, ought to be included in the informed consent information sheet if participants have questions about the procedures or would like to contact the researchers. Participants may be requested to provide written informed consent should they agree to participate in a study. However, if a study is to be conducted anonymously, researchers could indicate that participants' decision to complete, for example, a research questionnaire, would be regarded as proof of implied informed consent (Hoffman, 2013).



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CONCLUSION

This article outlined and discussed four research ethics principles, namely autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and informed consent. For SDS practitioner-researchers who work daily with students, the importance of adhering to research ethics principles is of paramount importance. By respecting the rights of our participants, we engage in ethical research. The latter goes a long way to ensuring that our services are based on ethical and empirical data.

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