

**COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS ON SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my dearest father, Livingstone machaba Seabi, who lost his life on the 29th May 1996.



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ABSTRACT

The study was done at the Orlando East campus of District Three community college in Soweto, south of Johannesburg. My participants were students at the above mentioned community college.

Social support services are important for students at a community college. Due to the fact that these students are adults, they have responsibilities to shoulder. I therefore believe that community colleges are in need of social support services such as guidance and counseling, a library, as well as a childcare centre, to enable the enrolled students to cope with their academic challenges.

Selected participants were interviewed as a group and also individually to get their perceptions on what they might need in order to meet their academic challenges.

The findings of the research in summary, highlighted the following concerns. Firstly, a need for a library was expressed because homes are not conducive enough for studying. Secondly, a need for guidance on career choice because many of the students do not have a vision of their future and counseling services because many of the students have personal problems. Finally, a need for a childcare centre wherein students' children can be protected from abuse, and which will enable students to attend classes regularly.

The implications of the study are as follows:

Students at a community college need a library for academic support. They need guidance on career choices to prepare them for the working world. They also need counseling services to help them deal with personal problems, which affect

them emotionally. Finally, they need a childcare centre wherein their children can be looked after.



LIST OF CONTENTS

SECTION ONE: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. OVERVIEW	1
1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1-2
1.3. MOTIVATION TO THE STUDY	2
1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	2
1.5. AIMS OF THE STUDY	3
1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN	3
1.7. RESEARCH METHODS	3
1.8. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS	4
1.9. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS	4-5
1.10. SUMMARY OF THE ESSAY	5

SECTION TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION	6
2.2. DEFINING COMMUNITY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES	6-7
2.3. A COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A CORE-PLUS INSTITUTION	8
2.4. WHAT ARE SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES?	8-9
2.5. ARE SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES A NECESSITY TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS?	9-10
2.6. HOW CAN STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES?	10-12
2.7. CONCLUSION	12

SECTION THREE: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

3.1. OVERVIEW	13
3.2. FLOWCHART	14

3.3.GAINING ENTRY	14
3.4.DESCRPTION OF THE SETTING	14
3.5.SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS	15
3.6.DATA COLLECTION PROCESS	16
3.7.Data organising	17
3.8.EXAMPLES OF RAW DATA	17-22
3.9.A DISCUSSION OF CATEGORIES	23-24
3.10.CONCLUSION	24

SECTION FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1.INTRODUCTION	25
4.2.DISCUSSION OF CATEGORIES	25-27
4.3.INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS	28
4.4.RECOMMENDATIONS	28-29
4.5.LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	29
4.6.CONCLUSION	29-30

BIBLIOGRAPHY	31-34
ADDENDUM	35-36

LIST OF TABLES

Table3.1.An illustration of participants' demographic data	15
Table3.2.Responses on how the lack of a library could affect them	19
Table3.3.Responses on how the lack of guidance and counselling could affect them	19
Table3.4.Responses on how the lack of a childcare centre could affect them	20
Table3.5.Responses on how the availability of a library could benefit them	21
Table3.6.Responses on how guidance and counselling services could benefit them	21
Table 3.7.Responses on how a childcare centre could benefit them	21
Table 3.8.Conceptual categorising of data	22

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure3.1.A flowchart of the data collection and analysis process.	13
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SECTION ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. OVERVIEW

This study addresses the problem of a lack of social support services at a community college. Given that students at a community college are mostly adults, one would expect them to have problems and responsibilities, I believe that they are in need of social support services, to help them cope with their learning activities.

This investigation will involve students at a community college. The college is situated at Orlando East in Soweto, south of Johannesburg. Perceptions of community college students on social support services available to them will be investigated.



1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Within the schools which most of the students at community colleges might have attended, services such as libraries and counselling were not available. According to Minzey and Townsend (as cited in Townsend, 1994:126), services were not available in most of the schools in the former education system. As a result institutions of learning regarded the three R's, that is reading, writing and arithmetic, as the only important aspects in education. Due to the impact of this former education system, students enter community colleges lacking cultural capital such as skills, knowledge, values and, attitudes which are needed for them to succeed in their courses in community and in society (Kanpol, 1994:24). Hence I believe that by finding out what students' perception are on the available social support services, as well as

what their needs are, could help identify the important services needed by them.

1.3. MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

Students at a community college need social support services such as library, counselling, and career guidance. Students were previously deprived of such services. The availability of a library for instance, could help students develop their knowledge through exploring the reading materials in the library. Career guidance offered in the college, could help students to have a good focus as far as careers are concerned. Whereas counselling services could help students cope with problems they might bring with them to the college, such as abuse.

In addition to the above, community colleges have been introduced to fill the gaps left by the former education system. As a result, they should be designed in a different and special way, so as not to repeat the imbalances of the former education system, by not taking students' needs into consideration. I think it is important that community colleges should consider other needs that could be of importance to students. They shouldn't simply decide on students' behalf. Therefore, this study will focus on the available, as well as on the required, social support services.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will guide the enquiry:

1. What are the social support services available to the enrolled students?
2. What are the social support services that participants in the study identify as required by them?
3. How do participants see these services as assisting them?

1.5. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of the study are to accomplish the following:

To find out the types of social support services that are available to students at a community college.

To investigate the types of social support services that students at a community college identify as required by them.

To investigate how participants in the study think these services could assist them.

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, qualitative research design was considered to be appropriate. Qualitative research design is aimed at both empirical as well as theoretical contribution (Le Compte, *et al.* 1992:511). In addition, Patton (1997:109) argues that it is this research design that enables the researcher to visit the programme for observations as well as gather data on feelings and perspectives. Since my study focuses on gathering data on perspectives of community college students, on social support services, I believe that this qualitative research design is appropriate.

1.7. RESEARCH METHODS

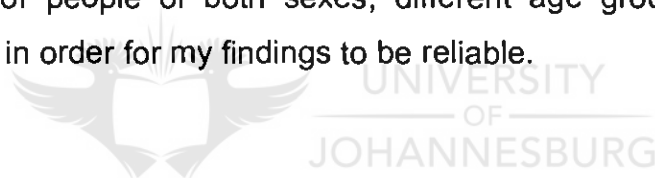
The study will be conducted by means of in-depth interviews. According to Patton (1997:110), in-depth interviews enable the researcher to get individual responses on how participants are personally affected by the situation. As a result, this method will be appropriate to my study because it will allow me to record unique individual responses, on how students at a community college perceive social support services.

In order to strengthen the reliability of my study, focus group interviews will be used as well. According to Street (1997:37), this is the type of interview

wherein participants meet as a group to discuss the questions posed by the interviewer. Interviewees' responses are then recorded on tape, or in a notebook. Focus group interviews will be appropriate to my study, as they will enable me to get detailed information. This method will enable participants in my study to provide additional information to the perspectives previously provided.

1.8. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Bramble and Mason (1978:171) define sampling as a way of selecting participants for the study from the population. According to them it is important that the sample should be selected in such a way that it is small enough to allow the study to be detailed, but adequate enough to be representative of the whole population. Given the above, my sample will be small but representative of people of both sexes, different age groups and varying classes. This is in order for my findings to be reliable.



1.9. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Community

The concept community has both geographic and symbolic meaning. Street (1997:32) defines the geographic meaning of community as a group of people with shared cultures or "a defined area where people live". On the other hand, Tonnies (as cited in Sergiovanni, 1994:4) provides a symbolic meaning of community as a group of people with shared goals and vision.

Community college

In the Encyclopaedia of Education (Deighton, 1971), a community college is described as an institution that has as its primary aim the provision of services to the people of the community in which it is situated. A community college has got a unique identity, because it is neither a school nor a university. It offers programmes and services to the community within which it is based. Therefore, a community college could be viewed as more of a facility than an institution. This is on the basis that it caters for the defined needs of the entire community.

Social support services

According to Gottlieb (as cited in Stewart, 1993:2-3), social support services can be defined as verbal or non-verbal information that has beneficial emotional or behavioural effects on the recipient. In addition, Veiel *et al* (1992:4-5), argue that these services have an effect because of their helping or comforting nature, which lead to states of being loved and esteemed.

1.10. SUMMARY OF THE SECTION

In this section, the focus was placed on the research interest and the background to the problem. In addition, I provided the motivation for the study, the research questions, the aims of the study, the research methodology, a clarification of concepts, as well as a conclusion.

The rest of the essay is organised as follows:

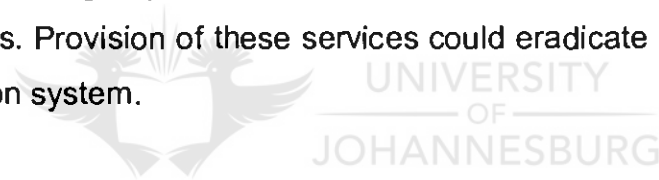
Section two is a construction of a conceptual and theoretical framework for the inquiry in hand. Section three is a presentation of the data generated in the study. In this section, I provided examples of raw data as well as final data categories. Section four is an analysis of findings. In this section, I discussed the implications of my findings, and presented recommendations as well.

SECTION TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Students at a community college need social support services. These services are important because it is through them that some of the imbalances resulting from the former education system can be redressed. The former education system provided students primarily with academic programmes, and disregarded other related needs that could have been equally important for students' achievement. Due to the impact that this education system had on students, community colleges have been introduced in order to fill the gaps left from the apartheid era. Therefore, it is essential that community colleges provide enrolled students with the necessary social support services. Provision of these services could eradicate the pitfalls of the former education system.



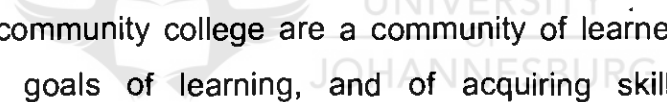
This section will provide evidence from various theorists such as Townsend and Sergiovanni, to support my claim that students at a community college are in need of social support services, to help them cope with their academic challenges.

2.2. DEFINING COMMUNITY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

A community can be defined as a group of people with common interests, values and vision. According to Tonnies (as quoted in Sergiovanni, 1994:4), a community, which he refers to as '*gemeinschaft*', consists of people who share values, and are bound by mutual bindings. People in such a community see themselves as one. On the contrary, Tonnies defines a society, which he refers to as '*gesellschaft*', as people who are ruled by the 'I'. People in a

society do things for their own benefit. Community colleges should be more of a community than a society. Teachers and students should share the same vision, values, and interests.

A community college is an institution that has its foundation in the community within which it is situated (Deighton, 1971). It is aimed at serving the needs of the community within its area. The needs of a community are identified through needs analysis. According to Vella (1994:43), the first thing to be done before designing a learning programme, is needs analysis. Through needs analysis, one can find out from the people, what their needs are. In addition, a community college caters for identified needs. Different community colleges offer different courses in accordance to the identified needs of the community that they serve. Therefore, a community college should identify the kinds of social support services students need, in addition to the core curriculum.



Students at a community college are a community of learners, who have a shared vision, goals of learning, and of acquiring skills. Townsend's (1994:105) model of a core-plus school says that we must add the plus to the core of the curriculum. Core-plus schools accommodate the members of a community in the schools. Members of a community should feel as part of the community college. In addition, the community should be free to use the college's resources when they are not in use. Townsend's model further explains that knowledgeable members of the community can offer their services to the college in the skills that they have. The community college is an example of a core-plus school. We must move away from the old approach wherein communities were viewed in isolation from colleges. We must identify aspects and skills that can help students benefit from their co-existence in learning institutions.

2.3. A COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A CORE-PLUS INSTITUTION.

According to Townsend (1994:105), a core-plus institution is against the notion that institutions of learning should offer the academic programmes only. Through Townsend's model, we understand how the plus which is added to the core curriculum, can benefit students at a community college. For instance students at a community college can learn skills like sewing, bricklaying, or flower arranging, which they can later use to earn a living. Therefore through Townsend's model problems of unemployment due to lack of skills, could be curbed by the availability of skill training in community colleges.

2.4. WHAT ARE SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES?

Cochran (Berry & Cash, 1998:17), describes social support services as support that "focus primarily on the receiving individual". In addition, Berry and Cash (1998:21) argue that social support services are a remedy for social isolation. These theorists present social support services as support that is primarily focused on those people who cannot cope with their problems. These services are important for community college students because they decrease emotional dysfunction, and increase a positive self-perception.

Counselling services for instance, are social support services because, according to McLaughlin (1999:13), they are aimed at increasing a positive self-esteem of clients and decreasing social isolation. A library is also a social support to students because it can empower, and build the positive self-esteem of students who are emotionally needy. According to Talbot (1991:131), a library can give students access to information of a wider scope. Given the history of black education, with its lack of resources, it is assumed that most of the community colleges' student population will be in need of these services.

2.5. ARE SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES A NECESSITY TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS?

Social support services are a necessity to students at a community college. According to Berry and Cash (1998:21), stress occurs more frequently when there is no positive social support. As a result, community college students need these services. This will help in dealing with problems that are likely to result in stress.

According to John (1973:19), when students are unhappy or emotionally disturbed, they have difficulty studying, and concentrating in class. John says that such students are likely to underachieve in their performance in class. John does acknowledge that the intellectual capacity of a student could be the cause for underachievement, but he stresses unhappiness and emotional disturbance as leading causes for underachievement. Therefore, it is important that students at a community college be provided with counselling services to eradicate problems that could lead to underachievement.

Besides counselling services, students at a community college need guidance on the type of career they can follow. According to Watts (1977:169), career guidance is a necessity because it is aimed at providing students with the awareness of the working world they are going to enter. Watts says that students need to become aware of their personalities. He says that personality includes attributes such as "abilities, aptitudes, practical skills, personal qualities and physical strength" (Watts, 1977:170). The other factor that Watts highlighted as being important to career guidance, is the student's interests and values. He argues that interests and values can help students to take decisions concerning the type of career they want to follow. It is therefore important that students at a community college become aware of their

interests, as well as what they value in life. This awareness will enable them to make decisions on career choices, based on the knowledge they have of themselves.

A library as a social support service can equip students with skills to make decisions, based on the knowledge they shall have accumulated from the library. According to Belleh (1978:48), libraries can skill students through providing them with the relevant materials. These materials can revive the reading and writing skills that they already possess. A library at a community college is a necessity because it can encourage students not only to read, but to develop their personal perspectives based on the knowledge they shall have constructed.

A large sector of students at a community college are parents. For parents, a childcare centre is a necessity. According to Roditti (1995:1059), a childcare centre could help reduce the dropout rate in schools. According to him, the dropout rate could be reduced because a childcare centre will enable students to attend classes regularly as they will have someone to take care of their children. In addition, a childcare centre will provide their children with a secure and a loving environment.

2.6. HOW CAN STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES?

Students can be influenced by social support services. According to Cohran *et al* (as cited in Berry and Cash, 1998:482), these services could influence aspects such as student teacher interaction, behaviour, as well as attitude. Social support services could benefit students at community colleges, especially those students who are at risk of dropping out. This is because these services will have an influence on their attitude, behaviour and interaction.

It has been stated in Section one that a community college caters mostly for adults, who for obvious reasons have different life experiences. As these students enter the college with different life experiences, Berry and Cash (1998) argue that, provision of emotional support, guidance, and information, will be of benefit to students, as it might reduce stress. According to them stress is likely to result due to social isolation. Social support services could help address the social isolation experienced by students at a community college.

A library for instance, could reduce stress, as students could use it for diagnosing, as well as providing solutions to, their social problems. In addition, Bruce (1997:9) argues that a library can be used as an information resource, whereby students can construct their own meanings. It is through the library that students at a community college could be encouraged to interpret and understand ideas. Bruce refers to the ability to interpret and understand ideas as information literacy. According to him, information literacy goes against the notion that teachers should teach students everything they need to learn. Information literacy, as described by Bruce, could help students at community colleges to experience information in a way that will allow them to come up with their own phenomena.

Another social support service that could be of benefit is counselling services. As it has been stated, that community college students enter the college with different life experiences. Some of them are filled with insecurity, confusion, despair, or shame. According to Fireman (1983:7), social support services such as counselling could help provide a sympathetic ear to those students in need of help. Counselling services at a community college could be of benefit to enrolled students, as they could provide a positive feedback to stressed students.

In addition, Mantei and Matthews (1982:45) argue that counselling services are not enough if they are not offered by a trained counsellor. A trained counsellor could be of benefit to community college students, especially when treating major problems. For instance, Mantei claims that it is only a trained counsellor who possess the knowledge and skills to tell that a client's silence could express their anger, fear or embarrassment. Therefore, trained counsellors could be of benefit to community college students. These trained counsellors might be able to heal the deeper layers of depression, through employing the skills they have acquired as professionals.

A childcare centre can benefit students who are parents of small children. According to Roditti (1995:1059) lack of a childcare centre could deprive some of the students an opportunity to continue studying. In addition, it could add up to the stress that is already there. Therefore a childcare centre could be of benefit to students at a community college because they will be assured of their children safety.



2.7. CONCLUSION

Community colleges have been introduced with the aim of filling the gaps left by the former education system. It is important that these colleges do not repeat the mistakes of this former education system, by disregarding needs that might be of importance to enrolled students. I believe that community colleges should offer social support services to students, in order to make their educational experience worthwhile.

SECTION THREE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

3.1. OVERVIEW

In this section, data gathered from the sample selected from the population of students at the Orlando East campus, of District Three community college will be presented and discussed. The data gathered derives from participants' responses, on the types of social support services they identified as required by them and how they perceive the identified services as assisting them. The process of gathering as well as organising data will be illustrated on figure 3.1.

3.2. FLOWCHART

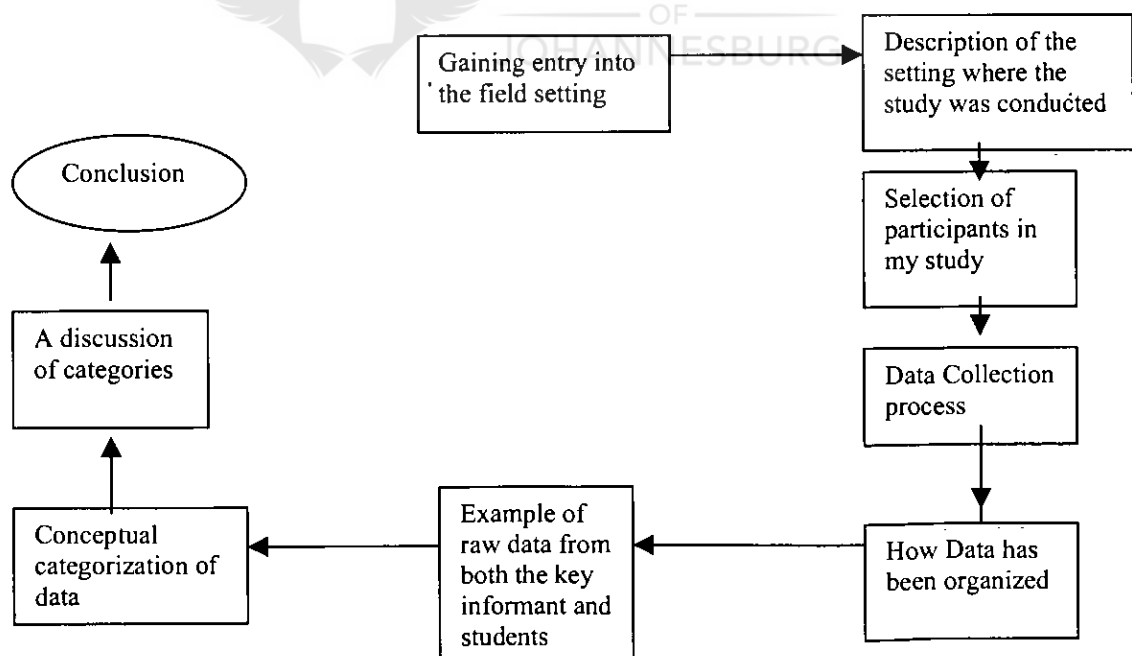


Figure 3.1. A flowchart of the data collection and analysis process.

3.3 GAINING ENTRY

Before I could start collecting data at the college, I initially obtained information from the Department of Education in the Gauteng province, about the community colleges in existence in Soweto. Two of the officers responsible for Further Education and Training introduced me to the college. It was on this day that I negotiated for permission to conduct my study at the college. According to Patton (1987:97), during negotiations for entry, it is important that the researcher should establish among other things, mutual trust; respect and co-operation. As a result, I explained to the co-ordinator the importance of my study, as well as how the findings could be used for growth in community colleges.

3.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE SETTING

The study was conducted on the Orlando East campus of District Three community college, which is situated in Soweto, south of Johannesburg. The college is built on a small campus of three buildings. The buildings comprise of a storeroom next to the main gate, an administration block, and a three level building block of classrooms. I met with the co-ordinator the first day (1st of September 1998) I was on the college campus. It was during our conversation that I learnt that, at the beginning of 1998, the college had a total of 1011 students enrolled with them. Due to a high dropout rate, the number has decreased to 435.

During our conversation I also learnt that the college offers varying subjects, but has a serious shortage of classrooms. Due to this shortage of classrooms, students who are enrolled for higher classes, that is, grade 8-12, come to the college only when they have classes. Whereas students who are enrolled for the ABET classes (Adult Basic Education and Training), are obliged to remain on campus and share one classroom.

3.5. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

My sample consisted of eight participants selected from the community college population. According to Bramble and Mason (1978:171), it is important that the sample is representative of the whole population. I selected eight participants to permit adequate depth as well as detailed information. Participants were selected purposefully to ensure that they represent the community college population. As such, I selected equal numbers of males and females, of various ages and courses.

Their demographic data will be illustrated in the table that follows.

Table 3.1. An illustration of participants' demographic data.

GENDER	SUBJECT	AGE	ED.LEVEL	CHILDREN
F	FAITH	27	GRADE 8	1
M	MICHAEL	39	GRADE 9	2
F	TEMBI	22	GRADE 10	2
F	TSHIDISO	27	GRADE 12	2
F	MPUMI	36	GRADE 12	2
M	SABBATH	31	GRADE 11	0
M	VUSI	27	ABET	0
M	PAPI	29	ABET	0

3.6. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

It took me three days (1st to the 3rd of September 1998) to complete my study at the college. On my second day, that is the day after I was granted permission to conduct my study, I started with the interviews. During the interviewing process, I offered the participants snacks. As we were eating, I explained the importance of my study in order to motivate them to be honest in their responses. I told them that the findings could help in initiating change or developments in community colleges. Again, to encourage them to be honest, I assured them of the confidentiality of all the information, and of the fact that I would not use their names if they did not want me to.

In order to ensure that participants understood the core of the interview, I explained what the concept social support means, as well as my area of focus. As many of my participants had a poor command of English they were encouraged to respond in the languages of their choice. According to LeCompte *et al* (1992:94), it is important that both the researcher and participants achieve the degree of understanding required.

I had a tape recorder as a tool to record their responses. A tape recorder is pivotal during in-depth interviews due to the importance of quotations. It is also important because it is not easy for the researcher to write the exact words of the people being interviewed. As a result, I initially conducted in-depth interviews, wherein I employed standardised open-ended questions. According to Patton (1987:11), standardised open-ended questions enable the researcher to get precise thoughts and perceptions from participants. I also used an interview guide to direct the interview. Although the questions were asked in a conversational way, the interview guide helped to enable important aspects to emerge.

It was after I completed in-depth interviews that I began with focus group interviews. For the focus group interviews, besides the tape recorder, I had a notebook as well. A notebook is a necessity because in this method of

interviewing, it is often difficult to distinguish what was said by whom. During the process of interviewing, participants seemed to enjoy being in a free environment wherein they were able to offer additional responses. This environment enabled me to get detailed information.

3.6.2. Data organising.

I transcribed raw data from the tape to a notebook every time I arrived from the field setting. The data was reduced by means of open coding. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990:62), this is the type of analysis, where data gathered is broken down, conceptualised and put together in new ways. To code my data, I used different pens to label the responses that were similar, and gave that phenomenon or concept a name. After labelling the concepts, I categorised them. Concepts were categorised through grouping the ones that were related, and giving them a name that represented them.



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3.7. EXAMPLES OF RAW DATA

I firstly interviewed the co-ordinator, who was the key informant in my study, about the available social support services at the community college. She responded by saying, “we don’t have any social support services at the college”. When asked as to how the lack of social support services affect them as a community college, she presented some of the cases they come across on a monthly basis. As she responded, she presented the following cases:

Case 1:

We have a learner who has been let out of jail last year, he needs counselling. His social behaviour is..., he is wild (raises voice), he smokes dagger. He came one day with a 'shake shake beer' and went to the classroom stoop and sat there and drink. He stays alone at home since he's been home from jail. He

doesn't have clothes (kept quiet for some time), so many things (breathed a sigh of relief). It seems as if he's not normal. He was arrested for murder and robbery. He spent 15 years in jail. This affects his learning. He once submitted a sheet of dirty and badly torn as an answering sheet.

Case 2:

Another case is a girl who is left on the streets. She used to stay with her granny. When her granny died her sisters wanted to sell the house in order to share the money, as a result they kicked her out of the house. She had been sleeping on the streets for two weeks. She came here one morning crying. She has decided to discontinue studying.

Case 4:

Another case is of a girl who is staying with her uncle because her mother is working in the suburbs. One day her uncle attempted to rape her, she stabbed him and ran away. As a result the uncle was admitted to hospital. The girl was arrested but her mother bailed her out. When this girl came back to school she was traumatised. She dropped out because she says she cannot concentrate.

Case 4:

Early last year a learner used to come with a three months old baby. This learner collected only one course because when others stay behind after school for discussions she can't.

The tables that follow are examples of raw data gathered from learners, on how this lack of social support services affect them.

Table 3.2. Responses on how the lack of a library could affect them.

No.1	<p><i>Ba bang ba rona o thola re tlameha ho ema ko ntle ha thishere e le klaseng. Ha library e ne e le teng re ne re tla ko teng.</i></p> <p>(Some of us stand outside when the teacher is in class, if there was a library we would be in it).</p>
No.2	<p><i>Ke a hloleha ho balla ko lapeng. Ke na le ho balla ko community library a empho na le lerata.</i></p> <p>(I cannot study at home. I normally go to a community library although there is lots of noise).</p>



Table 3.3. Responses on how the lack of guidance and counselling services could affect them.

No 3	<p><i>Hona janong ha ke itse hore ke batla ho ba eng ha ke qheta skolo.</i></p> <p>(I don't even know what I want to become after completing my studies).</p>
No 4	<p><i>Ke na le mathata a ntshwenyang. Nakong tse ding ke na le ho ineela. Ke batla motho ya ka nthusang. Ho tshwana le hone yanong, lemoong sena ke feitse ditest tsaka kaofela.</i></p> <p>(I have problems that affect me. I desperately need someone who can help me because I sometimes think of giving up, for instance this year I failed all my tests).</p>

Table 3.4. Responses on how the lack of a childcare centre could affect them.

No 5	<p><i>Umgani wami Sophie o thole umtwana last year. Beka funa gu qhubeka ne skwele, manje u hlulegile ngoba a gekho u muntu o ga sala no mtwana wakhe</i></p> <p>(I have a friend called Sophie who had a baby the year before last and could not return to school because there is no one to look after her child).</p>
No 6	<p>“ You are forced to leave school earlier as a result I cannot stay behind and study with others after school. If a childcare centre was available it could have been better”</p>

The tables that follow present participants' views on how these social support services could benefit them.

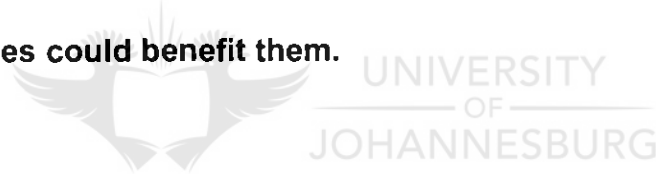


Table3.5. Responses on how the availability of a library could benefit them.

No 1	<p>“ Everyone gets an opportunity to use reserved material from the teacher”</p>
No 2	<p><i>Ke ne ke tla balla ko teng ha skolo se etswa ka hobane ko hae ho nna le ntho tse ngata tse motho a tlamhileng ho di etsa.</i></p> <p>(I would study immediately after school because at home there are lots of household duties).</p>

Table 3.6. Responses on how guidance and counselling services could be of benefit.

No 3	<p><i>E ne e ka thusa hhobane naakong tse ding ke nahana ho tlohela skolo, ke a sokola hobane ke patetse school fees.</i></p> <p>(It would help because I sometimes feel like withdrawing from school, I suffer because I paid school fees).</p>
No 4	<p><i>Ma u shera amaproblems akho no friends a ya.spreda. Ene futhi is not anyone who can solve amaproblems a kho but professionals gotwa ba treinilwe</i></p> <p>(It is not safe to share your problems with friends because they will spread. Besides that it is not anyone who can solve problems but professionals because they have been trained).</p>



Table 3.7. Responses on how a childcare centre could be of benefit

No 5	<p><i>E ka thusa hobane o tla be o tseba hore ngwana wa hao o safe, ha ho ba le ntho e etsahalang ba ka kgona ho ho bitsa</i></p> <p>(It will help because you will at least be assured of your child's safety, and if anything happens, they can always call you).</p>
No 6	<p><i>Hobane ho na le bontate ba abusang bana because bomme ba bona ba ba sia le bone. Ene haoe ho na le ba utswang bana ka dikoloi ba ba fa maswits.</i></p> <p>(There are fathers who abuse their children because their mothers cannot take care of them. And there are still those who abduct children by offering them sweets).</p>

3.8. CONCEPTUAL CATEGORISING OF DATA.

The table that follows is an illustration of the concepts that emerged from both in-depth and focus group interviews, after labelling the phenomena. This table also illustrates how those concepts were categorised in terms of their relationship. It will also illustrate the number of participants who responded on each concept.

Table 3.8. Conceptual categorising of data.

Category	Concepts	codes	dimension
Inconducive learning environment	noisy classroom home unsuitable access on documents studying purposes disturbance at home full public library disturbance in class noisy public library	nc hu ad sp dh fpl dc npl	8 7 1 8 7 5 8 3
Guidance on social problems	Discouraged Depression Confide need advises personal problems	ds dp c na pp	3 2 6 8 7
Vision on career choice	Hopeless Vissionless Confusion	h v c	6 7 7
Concern on children	child as obstacle safety security disturb learning	co sf sc dl	5 4 5 6

3.8. A DISCUSSION OF CATEGORIES.

After coding and clustering, the following categories emerged:

Inconducive studying conditions.

Students raised the problem of not having a suitable place to study either at home or at the college. They said that they couldn't study at home due to a lack of space and adequate studying facilities. The subjects in my study said that their homes are suitable because many of them reside in small houses or shacks. As a result they find themselves surrounded by relatives most of the time. It is impossible for one to study under such conditions.

Moreover, they raised the problem of not being able to utilise their classrooms either. These participants said they cannot use the classrooms because, during school hours classes are in use, whereas after school hours other students use them for group discussions. Since the college and home are both unsuitable, some of the participants said they could utilise a public library. However they complained of overcrowding and noise, as being obstacles for effective learning.

Guidance on social problems

Students at community colleges are mostly adults. As adults, they said that they have personal problems that lead to states of depression. As a result, during the interview some of the participants sounded discouraged, This highlighted a need for a specialist in whom they could confide. Even the key informant in my study indicated that because of the major problems they often come across, a trained counsellor is indeed a necessity.

Vision on career choice

Many of the participants raised the fact that they lack vision on what type of career to follow after completing their courses at the college. From their responses it is clear that this problem results from a lack of guidance on which subject stream to follow, whilst still attending lower classes high school courses. This consequently leads to a lack of vision on the type of career to choose.

Concern on children

Some of the subjects in my study raised a concern for the safety and security of their children. They raised this concern because of the high rate of child abduction, and child abuse by relatives in their community. Due to a concern for the safety of their children, some of them bring their small children to the college.

3.9. CONCLUSION.



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This section was a description of the field under investigation. It is in this section that I described how I gathered and organised data. From the interviews, subjects in my study highlighted the social support services that could be of benefit to them. A support service that many of them raised was a need for a library, which they can use for studying purposes. Another support service they highlighted as important, is counselling for personal problems, as well as guidance on career choice. To conclude, the last concern raised by most mothers, was the need for a childcare centre, to keep their children safe.

SECTION FOUR

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION.

In section one, my research questions were formulated as follows:

- . What are the social support services available to community college students?
- . What are the social support services that the participants in the study identify as required?
- . How do participants see these social support services as assisting them?

After having investigated these questions, the following themes emerged in section three: Inconducive learning environment, guidance on social problems, vision on career guidance, as well as concern on childcare. This section will as a result look at the following: implications of those themes that emerged in section three, what is recommended after having constructed the study, what limited the study, and finally a conclusion.

4.2.DISCUSSION OF CATEGORIES.

The following categories emerged in section three. Their relationship will be presented in terms of which social support service is needed most as identified by the participants in my study.

Theme one: Inconducive learning environment.

In this category many of the participants in my study identified a lack of a conducive studying environment as a problem. During the interviews they said that they could not use their classrooms nor public libraries, due to noise and overcrowding. These participants said they couldn't study at home. This is because many of those interviewed reside in a shack or one-bedroom house,

with inadequate facilities. On average six people occupy one room. In normal circumstances, no person can be expected to study under such conditions.

The students at this community college do not have access to a library and are not aware of how it can benefit them as students. Since they are not aware of how it can benefit them, they view teachers as their only source of information. According to Bruce (1997:9), teachers should not teach students everything they need to learn. Hence he says that a library as an information resource could equip students with the knowledge as well as skills they might require. A library at a community college will not only be a suitable place to study, but students can also use it to construct their own knowledge. They can do this by becoming actively involved in their learning activities.

Some of the participants indicated a lack of access on reading materials. A library at a community college could cater for all the students without prejudice. For instance, students who are enrolled for ABET classes could be provided with easy to read materials for adults. These reading materials could help them to develop their reading and writing skills.

Theme two: Guidance on social problems.

During the interviews, many of the participants sounded discouraged. Some of them highlighted a serious need for a professional counsellor, whom they could confide in. Many of the participants in my study indicated that they have serious personal problems that disturb them emotionally, and consequently disturb their performance in class. According to John (1973: 19), as stated in section two, students who are disturbed emotionally are likely to underachieve in class. Hence, Manthei and Matthews (1982:45) argue that, a trained counsellor could be of importance, as they are equipped with the skills to heal deeper layers of depression.

In addition, Townsend's (1994:105) plus component could intervene in addressing the needs of the community college students. According to Townsend, it is through the plus that students' needs and concerns can be

catered for. This can be done through needs analysis. According to Vella (1994:43), as in section two, it is necessary that students define their needs.

Theme three: Guidance on career.

Many of the participants indicated that they have a problem in choosing a career. These participants pointed out the problem of not knowing what career to follow after completing their courses at the college. From their responses, I got the impression that many of them come to the college because it is a new institution that is open for adults during the day. According to Watts (1977), career guidance could help to eradicate the confusion they experience as students. Guidance on career choices could help students decide on the career they want to follow. Their decision will be based on the knowledge they have of themselves.

Theme four: Concern on childcare

Many of the students at community colleges are parents. They come to the college with poor financial backgrounds, and many cannot afford to put their children in local crèches. As a result they are often left with only two options, either to bring children to class, or leave them with relatives. There were fellow students who raised the option of coming to class with a child as a serious problem for both parties. It is a problem because the parents cannot concentrate because of their concern for the safety of their child. In addition, with a child present in class, fellow students are distracted and affected by the noise made by the child. Some of students, who leave their children at home with relatives, raised the fear that their children might become victims of abuse or abduction. There is obviously consensus that students at a community college need a childcare centre. As Roditti (1995) says, a childcare centre will not only enable students to attend classes regularly, but it could provide a safe and a loving place for their children.

4.3. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

From the investigation conducted at the Orlando East campus of District Three community college, it seems that the college does not provide any social support services to the enrolled students. Students who were interviewed, identified the four most needed social support services as, a library; guidance and counselling services, and a childcare centre. They highlighted the importance of these services as follows. A library would support them academically. Counselling and guidance services would help them cope with their personal problems, and provide them with a vision for a better future. A childcare centre would enable them to attend classes regularly without the disturbance of their children, it would also keep their children safe and well cared for.

4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the investigations undertaken, the following recommendations are suggested:

I suggest that community college students be provided with a library. Services at this library should be rendered by a trained librarian, to help students find the reading material that can help them develop their reading as well as writing skills. This library should be well equipped with all the necessary equipment. In addition, it should be big enough to accommodate all community college students.

I suggest that counselling services provided by trained personnel be accessible to all enrolled students at the community college.

I also suggest that trained personnel offer career guidance as most of the subjects interviewed do not have a vision of which career to follow, and why. This trained personnel should consider students' personality, their interests, as well as what they value in life.

Finally, I suggest that a childcare centre should be erected next to the college. This centre should charge a reasonable fee that is affordable to students.

4.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Factors that limited the study were that participants in my study do not present a large enough group for broad generalizations. Only eight students were interviewed from the community college population. The research was also limited to the Orlando East campus of District Three community college in Soweto. As a result, generalisations regarding other colleges are thus not possible.

4.6. CONCLUSION

The study aimed at researching the social support services that are made available to community college students. It also aimed to discover types of social support services that participants in my study identify as required by them, as well as how they think these services could assist them. Subjects at District Three community college were interviewed. They were interviewed because it was necessary to find out from them, whether the college caters for needs other than the academic programme. The reason for this is that, community colleges have been introduced with the aim of serving the needs of the community they serve.

The findings highlighted that District Three community college does not offer any social support services to enrolled students. In contrast, subjects in my study highlighted a serious need for a library for studying purposes. They indicated a serious need for guidance and counselling services for the type of careers to choose and for the problems that affect them emotionally. They even highlighted a need for a childcare centre for their children's safety.

The findings imply that when Orlando East campus, of District Three community college was introduced, the Department of Education in the Gauteng province did not conduct a needs analysis from the students themselves. It seems as if this Department of Education just assumed that the academic programmes could meet the needs of the enrolled students. The prevailing situation at the college is in contrast with what should be occurring in a community college. This community college still resembles the pitfalls of institutions of learning in the former education system, by disregarding the needs of the community it serves. Therefore the findings for my study validate my claim that, students at a community college need social support services, to meet their academic challenges.



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Addendum 1.

Transcribed interview with one learner, during in-depth interview.

Q How does the lack of a library affect you as a learner?

A I can't study at home or in class, at would be better if there was a library since at home we are staying in a shack which is very small. I cannot study at these affects my performance.

Q How does lack of counselling services affect you?

A Sometimes when I start reading I become confused and I don not know why I cannot concentrate.

Q Does lack of advises on career choice affect you?

A Yes because at the moment I don not even knows what career to follow after completing matric.

Q How does lack of a childcare centre affect you?

A I don't have children.

Q How can a library benefit you?

A I really need a library because the libraries available in this area are always full. I never got a seat. If a library was available over here, I would atleast get an opportunity.

Q In what way can a counselling centre benefit you?

A I have problems that affect me. I normally go to the clinic for advice. I have personal problems and I sometimes feel like life does not have anything good for me. I don't have enough time to go there for support. Things are not all right for me. I give up and sometimes need someone who can help.

Q Of all these services do you think there are those which are needed most than others?

A No because I really need them all, especially a library, a counselling centre as well as advises.

