

# UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND



## FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS TO ENGAGE ON RISKS OF ACADEMIC CHEATING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

By

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Needs Education at the University of Zululand KwaDlangezwa

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## DECLARATION

I, Sebenzile Mnguni acknowledge that I have read and understood the University policies and rules applicable to postgraduate research. I certify that I have, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complied with their requirements.

In particular, I confirm that I obtained an ethical clearance certificate for my research (Certificate Number UZREC171110-030 PGM 2016/328) and that I have complied with the conditions set out in that certificate.

I further certify that this mini-dissertation is original, and that the material has not been published elsewhere, or submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. I declare that this mini-dissertation is, save for the supervisory guidance received, the product of my own work and effort. I have, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complied with the University's Plagiarism Policy and acknowledged all source of information in line with normal academic conventions.

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## ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study aimed at exploring the factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating and plagiarism at the University of Zululand. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- To explore the extent of the awareness on the consequences of engaging in risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

The study was conducted at the University of Zululand, kwaDlangezwa campus with a sample of 25 students who were purposively sampled based on the grounds of their availability and willingness. Data was collected using an open-ended questionnaire. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data and to draw conclusions on the findings of what the respondents considered as the factors influencing students to commit the crimes of academic cheating and also the extent of their awareness on the consequences of engaging in the crimes of academic cheating.

The major themes that emerged under the first objective, which was to establish the factors influencing students to take risks on academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism, were: the lack of knowledge and understanding of cheating and plagiarism policies, lack of professional writing and studying skills, individual difficulties during examinations, lack of commitment (poor time management, inadequate preparation and aspiration for grades over knowledge) as well as Institutional challenges (inadequate of resources). The major themes that emerged under the extent of the awareness of the consequences of engaging on risks of plagiarism and academic cheating were: the lack of adequate awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating as well as the recommendations with which the respondents expressed as to what information and skills they needed to be aware of and what behaviour constitutes to academic dishonesty and also what is most likely to transpire as a result of engaging in such risky behaviour.

The recommendations derived from the findings of the study were for the university to have programs aimed at educating and familiarizing students, especially first year

students with the institution's policies of academic integrity and the importance of consistency in their application. Also, the importance of professional writing and study methods' workshops, awareness campaigns aimed at making students cognisant of the services offered at the student support for their academic or personal problems and the importance of consistency in the usage of the software programs that detect plagiarized work.

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- To my friends and colleagues, thank you so much for the love and support you have given me throughout the journey.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God the almighty, my best-beloved mother (Mrs FD Mnguni), my late father (Mr EB Mnguni) and the rest of my family. This work is the product of the unconditional love I have received from you.

*"Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!"* Luke 1:45

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### 1.1. Introduction

Risk taking behaviours have been a major issue associated with individuals having to drop their studies. Individuals find themselves having unplanned pregnancies, cheating during examination or being arrested. Adolescents as well as young adults these days are often found to be the most vulnerable groups on such risk taking behaviours. They tend to be inquisitive in nature and value relationships formed outside families. As such they get exposed to conditions that often put their lives in danger. A lot of phenomena can be identified as influencing such behaviours (Howe & Strauss, 2009; Dryfoos, 1991).

Being explorative is often viewed as a good thing towards growth and maturation. One needs to go through certain stages of life: to play different roles, be involved in different settings, take risks, seizing moments while they last and make mistakes. But most importantly, one has to learn from these variables so as not to repeat them in future. Most university students are individuals in their late adolescent stages. During the adolescent stage one starts showing signs of independency. But it is not the same as having to be independent at a place away from home where there are absolutely no adult figures to discipline or re-direct their ways. Students often encounter difficulties with having to make informed decisions about their lives without the supervision of their parents. But have we asked ourselves, which factors are actually influencing these risk-taking behaviours? Can it be biological, environmental or social? A report released by the uMkhanyakude district in 2014 indicated that 9.3% of babies delivered in KZN's health facilities were for teenagers. This indicated the figure higher than the national average of 7.8% and the national target of 6.8%, placing KZN as having the highest number of teenage pregnancies (Jolly, 2014). South Africa is not the only country faced with these problematic tendencies. A study conducted on adolescent multiple risk behaviour, also revealed England as having a similar crisis whereby people started abusing alcohol and drugs from the age of 15 years old. The figures were; 40% of teenagers on tobacco, 25% cannabis, 63% alcohol, 27% of boys and 32% of girls already engaged in sexual intercourse (Brooks, Magnusson, Spencer & Morgan, 2012).

This kind of information informs us of how impulsive and negligent university students can be. It is such behaviours that also lead to academic dishonesty. This study looks at the two aspects of academic dishonesty which are cheating during examinations and plagiarism at University. Cheating in an examination and plagiarism have dire consequences on the integrity of the institution (Sims, 2010), the society and the students. Cheating in the university examination tends to undermine the ultimate purpose of education and training since it makes difficult for the stakeholders to understand the real state of affairs. A study conducted in Ethiopia reported the serious consequences that could arise from cheating during examinations. This study was conducted on students at a university college of medicine. It focused towards the understanding of the consequences that are most likely to arise for human life, social values, and the economy, should students whose profession was of that standard engage on academic dishonesty acts. This study was conducted to determine the prevalence of cheating and identify factors that influence cheating among students (Desalegn & Berhan, 2014). Most students who engage themselves in cheating are not fully aware that their actions can put the reputation of their institution in jeopardy thus discouraging potential employers from employing graduates from the said institutions. The issue of academic dishonesty appears to be a worldwide pandemic that needs to be addressed as it greatly affects the dignity of university graduates. Academic dishonesty also has an impact on the economy. Most students are not conscious of the fact that cheating in examinations and plagiarising enhances the production of 'half-baked' graduates who lack adequate knowledge and skills essential for the building of the economy.

The University of Zululand is located at Kwa-Dlangezwa which is an area not very far from Esikhawini, Empangeni and Richards Bay. Kwa-Dlangezwa alone is not really a place where you can fully say that one is secured and hidden from all sorts of risky behaviour. Just outside the campus' main gate is a place where alcohol is accessible. Students are mostly young adults who are experimenting. They are most likely to be influenced by their current environment to do things they are not likely to engage on should the environment be more resourced with academically benefiting facilities. The research looks at issues influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating during examinations and those of plagiarising.

Academic dishonesty has a host of effects on university students, lecturers, the education system and the institutions at large. For example, students who give various excuses to justify plagiarism and cheating in examinations are more likely to cheat in future examination thus putting themselves, potentially, into a life of dishonesty. Most students are not aware of the fact that academic fraud undermines the core values and purpose of education. This practice interferes with free and honest transfer of knowledge. Besides, plagiarism and cheating in examination affects the integrity of both honest and dishonest graduates from an institution that has attracted negative publicity due to academic dishonesty. By researching this issue; the researcher aims to identify the factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism, as well as to establish the extent on their awareness of the consequences of engaging on these behaviours.

## **1.2. Background**

Certainly, students who engage in academic fraud are likely to get involved in theft or fraud at the work place in the near future. Academic dishonesty in the South African universities poses a major threat in the labour market. Normally, a diploma or a university degree is an important document that informs the potential employers on the knowledge and the abilities of the graduates. Nonetheless, due to academic fraud, not all students who have certificates might have the required skills for the job. Like all other universities, the University of Zululand does encounter academic dishonesty cases. At the time of this research, the institution was being accused of fabricating marks; it is alleged of having hundreds of nursing students who graduated without having met the minimum requirements of the South African Nursing Council (SANC) (Mathope, 2017). If the whole department is allegedly suspected of such an act, what can be said of its graduates? Are they to be treated with the same respect as those from other institutions of higher education or other institutions' graduates will get first preference on job applications because UNIZULU qualifications are questionable? In a study conducted at a certain university in South Africa; it was reported that "Cheating behaviours associated with plagiarism and assignments were identified as the main problem areas. An unacceptably high level of dishonesty with the completion of practical records was also an area of concern" (Theart, 2011, p.iii).

Academic cheating causes emotional distress to the members of the faculty thus leading to underproduction of knowledge on the side of the professors. Besides, Universities that are plagued with cheating scandals can make donors shy away from the institutions. Financial aid from donors is important in enhancing research and innovation. Potential donors are more likely to be attracted to institutions that uphold academic integrity and professionalism. Although this is not an issue only affecting the University of Zululand, academic integrity should be maintained by all institutions from the basic to higher levels of education. Even though qualitative studies related to academic cheating and plagiarism in academic institutions in South Africa have been conducted (Ocholla D & Ocholla L, 2016; Ramorola, 2014; Ramorola, 2013; Rettinger & Kramer, 2008; Wotring & Bol, 2011); this research area is far from being exhausted as these studies are not generalizable to the entire population in South Africa. In addition, this research aims to ascertain the current view of factors influencing students to engage in the academic cheating behaviour.

In view of the university students' risk taking tendencies, the researcher finds it very crucial to first establish a baseline for this study by pointing out to behaviours manifested within the institutions of higher education; some of which lead to academic dishonesty. Students are actively involved on risk-taking behaviours such as drugs, criminal activities, sexual activities and a lot more mischief that often results in having to either drop out from the university or being arrested before the attainment of their degrees. Sadly, these irresponsible and risky engagements do not only disrupt their studies, but their entire lives are completely shattered. They place themselves at very high odds of getting infected with STI's, HIV and AIDS, or having to spend their youthful years in prison. This constitutes to an increase in young adult's mortality rate. A study conducted on the factors perceived to influence risky sexual behaviours among university students in the United Kingdom indicated that lifestyle; individual and structural factors played a vital role in being influential with regards to risky sexual behaviours. High levels of alcohol consumptions increased sexual opportunities and liberation from moral surveillance. Individual and cultural differences were also perceived to account for some patterns of risky sex with older students. Overseas and religious students who had their priorities set for an academic goal were perceived less likely to be involved. A tendency of being more likely to adhere to moral values also had an impact on one's choice of behaviour.

Risk denial, inconvenient opening times, lack of confidentiality and stigma contributed to less use of testing and contraceptive services (Chanakira, O'cathain, Goyder, & Freeman, 2014). Risk taking behaviours have been discovered among students across the country. Studies which were reviewed, covered mostly pregnancy (Gama, 2008) and risky sexual behaviours (Chanakira et al., 2014) on the University students.

A lot of research has been done around students' risk taking behaviours (Chanakira et al., 2014; Gama, 2008); yet not much has been established around the issues of students' academic dishonesty. The researcher felt the need to conduct this study on the factors influencing students to engage on the risks of academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism. This can help increase the awareness and assist in curbing these unlawful tendencies. Institutions of higher education by all accounts, have broad policies, strategies and support mechanisms to warrant the students' acquisition and application of generally approved principles of academic integrity (Gallant, 2008). This entails that students are supposed to be aware of academic dishonesty as being unacceptable. Despite having broad policies, some students are still caught cheating during examinations or plagiarising. Could this be because the policies are not clear or are students ignorant when it comes to academic integrity?

A study conducted in Ethiopia had important implications for the development of institutional policies on academic integrity (Desalegn & Berhan, 2014). In a study of whether behavioural intentions to commit two forms of student academic dishonesty (cheating on exams and plagiarizing a paper) are related to perceived university authenticity; it revealed that students that recognized university's authorities as genuine were considered less likely to convey intentions to cheat during examinations. Authorising bodies can reportedly reduce students' academic dishonesty by guaranteeing that their methods and procedures used to deal with students are unbiased (Reisig & Bain, 2016). Most universities do not have effective guidelines that can help students on how to avoid plagiarism as well as the penalties that are imposed on students who plagiarize. Students are, reportedly, likely to take on in delinquency if endorsements are not obligatory or are not rigorous enough to prevail over the probable benefits of the falsification of one's work (Kisamore, Stone & Jawahar, 2007). It is very crucial for the university to explain to students the importance of academic honesty during orientation. Also, the university must show

consistency in implementing rules on cheating in an examination so as to discourage possible cheaters.

The findings of a study conducted in the University of the Western Cape indicated the frequency of student plagiarism as being within the Chemistry and Mathematical Technology departments. The 41% of students reportedly acknowledged it as a very serious act yet it is still practiced within the departments. This study also reported that 73% of the students admitted to using the internet to plagiarise their assignments (Sentleng, 2010). A study conducted at a university in Europe reported cheating among undergraduates as common and strongly associated with an issue of ethic character (Mikaela, Rklund, Claes-G, & Wenestam, 1999). A study conducted on Chinese college students indicated that organizational deterrence and individual performance of an individual had a negative influence on cheating while individual perceived pressure, peers cheating and engagement on extracurricular activities reportedly had a positive impact or increased the likelihood of academic cheating (Ma, McCabe & Liu, 2013).

The available literature addressing the issues of academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism appears to be focusing on the likelihood and identification of the methods of academic cheating used by most students. Little seems to be known around the factors influencing this behaviour and if students are aware of what is at stake when they engage on these behaviours. Literature has indicated that both individual and psychological factors such as gender, narcissism, competitive achievement and contextual factors such as the existence of honour codes, disciplinary rules and learning environment affect students' engagement in academic dishonesty (Bedford, Gregg & Clinton, 2011). In a study conducted in Kenya; it was reported that examination anxiety, lack of facilities, stiff competition, poor preparations and inadequate invigilation of the examinations were what mostly influenced high school learners to cheat during examinations (Nyamwane, Ondima & Onderi, 2013). The researcher wondered what if this is not the case with South African students or students in institutions located in rural areas such as the University of Zululand's students. The researcher did not shy away from the fact that such factors are likely to be generalised across institutions regardless of where they are located.

There appeared to be insufficient information, especially that which covers the diversified population of South Africa. Various studies addressing academic dishonesty are mainly from the neighbouring countries and there is very little done in South Africa. In this view there is a need for this study. The researcher addresses this at an angle that not only places the University of Zululand's students at an advantage, but, also other universities whose population shares similar characteristics with the current study population. This should also assist the institution in terms of identifying the factors influencing these risk taking behaviours so that it is easy to institute programmes to address these issues. According to Witherspoon, Maldonado, and Lacey (2012), a study on academic dishonesty is reasonably fitting as research confirms that numerous college students cheat from time to time. The researcher also believes that as much as there is existing information on academic dishonesty, it is highly impossible to treat students from different population groups the same way. Thus the factors identified in 2010 might not necessarily be applicable in 2017/18. What might have been the issue to a student in Europe might not necessarily be applicable to a student in South Africa. The predictors of academic cheating vary with different societies and backgrounds (Desalegn & Berhan, 2014).

### **1.3. Problem statement**

There is adequate consensus amongst researchers that students from higher level of education engage in academic dishonesty behaviours (Witherspoon, et al 2012; Bedford, et al, 2011; Sentleng, 2010). Current literature looks on different aspects that have the possibility of influencing this behaviour as well as the different methods used to cheat. This information has provided a baseline for this study to look at what has been done and to identify areas of improvement. What was of concern to the researcher regarding the current literature is that; there is inadequate information that caters for the South African population considering the factors influencing students to engage on the risks of academic dishonesty as well as the extent of their awareness on the consequences of cheating during examination and plagiarising.

Most University students start off their academic routes with much joy, happiness and eagerness until they start experiencing the ups and downs of emotional and practical challenges associated with university life. Research has revealed the existence of challenges with regards to the transition from high school to university

as well as students' unethical academic behaviours. When someone is sent into a higher institution of education, usually the family expects and hopes for the best out of that person. But the environment the students often find themselves in makes it difficult for them to cope. What is it that is making it so difficult? This study reveals the underlying factors that influence risk taking behaviours. The findings could be of assistance to institutions of higher learning in terms of combating these risk taking behaviours.

#### **1.4. Operational definition of terms:**

- **University students**

For this study, university student refers to every student above the age of 18, under graduate or post graduate, enrolled at the University of Zululand, kwa-Dlangezwa campus.

- **Risky behaviours**

Risky behaviours for the purpose of this study refer to plagiarism and academic cheating during exams.

- **Academic dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty was plainly put by Gaberson (1997) as the intentional usage of someone else's academic work in a misleading manner.

"Academic dishonesty-cheating-includes plagiarizing, receiving credit for work not one's own, copying assignments, copying from another's exam, taking another's exam, not doing individual work on individual assignments, failing to contribute to team projects, and other forms of deception about work and performance" (Happel & Jennings, 2008, p.187).

- **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the act of submitting or presenting work, study material, research work, assignments or inventions of someone else as one's own work without acknowledgement of the original source.

- **Academic cheating**

This is the act of a student being in possession of forbidden material, including notes or any other incriminating materials that are not allowed in the examination venue.

### **1.5. General aim of the study**

The aim of the study is: To find out the factors influencing University students to take risks on crime activities involving plagiarism and academic cheating during exams.

The study addressed the following research questions:

- What factors influence students to take risks on crime activities involving plagiarism and academic cheating during exams?
- Are the students aware of the consequences of engaging in plagiarism and cheating during examination?

**The specific objectives of the study are:**

- To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- To explore the extent of the awareness on the consequences of engaging on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

### **1.6. Intended contributions to the body of knowledge**

In South Africa, we have life orientations as one of the compulsory subjects taught at schools as a means of giving learners the fundamental basics of life. However, when these learners enter Universities, there are still issues of crime, drugs, alcohol, pregnancy, and a lot more reckless behaviours. Worst of all, along the process, these risk-taking individuals tend to neglect their future destinations.

This research studied some of the factors causing the University of Zululand's students to engage in risky behaviours by closely looking at academic cheating and plagiarism. Findings from this study informs learning institutions on the influencers of risky behaviours which can help in terms of structuring their programmes, future intervention strategies and policies in ways that addresses the causes rather than the effects/ results. Such programmes will assist all the students within the institution

to be focused, determined and to reach their full potentials both academically and socially.

### **1.7. Research methodology**

Research methodology is a systematic way of gathering data on a problem. It clarifies the logic behind the research methods and techniques (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). A qualitative methodology is used in this study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.4) as cited by Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005), "the word qualitative implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quality, amount, intensity or frequency").

### **1.8. Description and selection of participants**

#### **1.8.1. Sample and Selection of participants**

Twenty-five (25) participants were purposively selected for the study because of their willingness to participate. The researcher was allowed to go to those people who in her opinion were likely to have the required information and willing to share it with the researcher (Kumar, 2014). After attaining ethical clearance from the University's regulatory bodies, a sample of 11 males and 14 females was drawn from the students at the University of Zululand, from four different faculties. The participants signed a consent form to confirm their agreement where they were assured of their rights, safety and confidentiality which will be maintained throughout the process.

### **1.9. Description of procedures**

#### **1.9.1. Research design**

According to Kerlinger (1986, p. 279), "a research design is the road map that you decide to follow during your research journey to find answers to your research questions as validly, objectively, accurately and economically as possible" (as cited in Kumar, 2014). This study pursued a case study research design that was aimed at determining the factors influencing risky behaviours on university students.

This design is very useful when the researcher wants to explore an area where not much is known of, when the researcher wants to have a holistic understanding of the situation, phenomenon, episode, site, group or community. This design can be used

to study individuals, groups or institutions as it also allows the usage of multiple methods to collect data (Kumar, 2014).

#### **1.9.2. Research instrument**

The researcher used an open ended questionnaire to gather information from the participants. Further, there could be information that the respondent might feel reluctant to discuss with the researcher. However, the respondent was free to write down this information. This tool is best known for its great anonymity and is also good for collecting socio-demographic information.

#### **1.9.3. Trustworthiness**

The research was carried out with the awareness of the trustworthiness in terms of the instruments used. The methods used to conduct this study were well compiled in the manner that they produced quality results that are trustworthy and authentic (Kumar, 2014). According to Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Kumar, 2014), the trustworthiness in a qualitative study is shown by the four indicators closely related to validity and reliability which are: credibility, transferability, dependability and formability.

#### **1.9.4. Procedures for administration**

To have access to the students, the researcher acquired ethical clearance from the University's regulatory boards, sought permission to conduct research on students. Permission was also granted to use the University premises from the University's management teams. The researcher obtained consent from students who participated in the study. This had guaranteed their willingness to take part in the study. All this was done in writing; where participants entered into a form of a contract with the researcher aware of their rights, safety and protection.

Only those participants who volunteered to participate completed the open-ended questionnaires. The times for completing questionnaires were agreed upon by both the respondents and the researcher. The researcher was present during the self-administration of the questionnaire so as to make sure that the respondents were well informed on the purpose of the study, their rights in the process, confidentiality, as well as protection against harm. The researcher was also there to make sure that the environment was conducive and also to minimise any extraneous factors that might negatively impact the respondents' responses.

### **1.9.5. Data analysis**

Data was analysed using the qualitative methods of data analysis. This included the coding of data and sampling emerging themes. The researcher followed the six steps of analysing qualitative data. The first step was the process of preparing and organising the gathered data for analysis; the second was, engaging on an initial exploration of the data through coding the organised data; the third included using the codes to develop a more general picture of the information gathered, descriptions and themes; the fourth was representing the findings through narratives and visuals; the fifth, making an interpretation of the meaning of the results by reflecting personally on the impact of the findings and on literature that informed the findings; and lastly, conducting strategies to validate the accuracy of the findings. For this study, data was analysed by hand that is to say that it was read, marked and divided into parts manually (Creswell, 2012).

### **1.10. Ethical considerations**

Ethical clearance UZREC171110-030 PGM 2016/328 (see Appendix 6) was obtained from the University of Zululand's Ethics Committee (UZREC) allowing the researcher to proceed with the study. The study respectively abided by the ethical considerations that guided the professional relationship between the participants and the researcher. This was to make certain that the public was not ill-treated or manipulated during the process. An informed consent was utilised where the researcher obtained a compulsory agreement from the respondents after they were comprehensively and honestly made aware of the rationale of the study. Respondents were guaranteed of their rights to privacy and also informed of the anonymity of their identities and protection from harm, whether physical or emotional. Lastly, the researcher was involved in the process and did not manoeuvre or objectify respondents or act in any unethical manner (Fontana & Frey cited in Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005).

### **1.11. Preliminary Table of contents**

The study will be divided into five chapters as follows:

#### **Chapter 1**

This chapter will indicate the scope of the study. It will include an introduction, problem definition and objectives.

## **Chapter 2**

This chapter will explore the literature on the factors influencing risky behaviours on university students and also discuss the research procedures.

## **Chapter 3**

This chapter will focus on the research methods to be used. This includes a discussion of the sampling strategies, data collection and data analysis procedures.

## **Chapter 4**

This chapter will be based on the analysis and interpretation of research data.

## **Chapter 5**

This chapter will be based on the summary, recommendations; limitations and conclusion of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

Literature review enables the researcher to find out what has been done in the area and gives evidence of the gap that needs to be further explored. This chapter will be looking at some relevant literature of previous research results with regards to the factors influencing students who engage on risks of academic dishonesty at the University of Zululand. The review of previous research studies is based on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and supports the current study on predicting and directing the path to embark on. This study is focusing its endeavours on the risky behaviours among university students with regards to academic cheating during examinations as well as plagiarism. The researcher gathered relevant information concerning the study. Literature gathered explored issues concerning the different kinds of risky behaviours from various universities in order to have a more solid and better understanding of the issue of concern and be able to find a concrete and well-founded standing for the current study.

This chapter commences with the thorough amplification of what is meant by academic cheating.

#### 2.2. Theoretical framework

According to the theory of planned behaviour, the behaviour of human beings is informed by three forms of considerations (Ajzen, 1991). The first one is the belief of the likely consequence of cheating behaviour. Secondly, the credence on the normative expectations and thirdly, the belief about the presence of conditions that may enhance or impede cheating behaviour may make one to arrive at the conclusion about getting involved on the act of academic cheating (Ajzen, 1991). An attitude towards the behaviour and the perception of the behavioural control is critical in informing the behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). Thus favourable attitudes, subjective norms and the perception of control measures can influence or deter the acts of cheating in an examination (Ajzen, 1991).

The theory of reasoned action states that an individual's conclusion to engage in a particular behaviour is influenced by the kind of benefits that one gets from

performing that behaviour (Fishbein, 1979). According to this theory; students' behavioural intentions to engage on risks of academic cheating leads to the actual cheating behaviour. This behavioural intention, based on this theory, is a result of one's belief that committing crimes of academic cheating will lead to certain outcomes or benefits. Those outcomes in this case will be for example, to score good grades. The theory of reasoned action proposes that stronger intents lead to increased determination to executing the behaviour. This also upsurges the probability for the behaviour to be executed. Therefore, this entails that students' personal or circumstantial needs to succeed academically may consequently result in the intention to cheat during examinations or plagiarise work (Fishbein, 1979).

The social learning theory by Albert Bandura, on the other hand, posits that people learn new behaviours by observing or imitating others (Kalkstein, Kleiman, Wakslak, Liberman, & Trope, 2016). According to this theory, behaviour modification is strongly determined by environmental, personal, and behavioural elements. One's thoughts influence one's behaviour and an individual's characteristics provoke certain responses from the social environment. Similarly, a person's environment affects the development of personal characteristics as well as the person's behaviour. An individual's behaviour may also change their environment as well as the way the individual 'reasons' or 'feels'. Social learning theory focuses on the mutual interactions between these factors, which are claimed to regulate behaviour modification (Kalkstein et al., 2016). Advocates of this theory interpret dishonest or rule-breaking actions as learned behaviours attained and upheld by the similar procedure as compliant behaviour (Lersch, 1999). Students learn to engage or abstain from engaging on academically dishonest behaviours through their interactions with others. The social interactions provide them with the definition of what is an academically honest or dishonest act/behaviour. If the performed behaviour produces unfavourable rewards, an individual is most likely to refrain from it. Should the outcomes be beneficial to the individual, the person may continuously perform that action for the desired outcome (Lersch, 1999).

### **2.3. Academic cheating**

According to Trost (as cited in Ramorola, 2014) cheating, is by large considered as the attainment of something by dishonesty or deception. At university, it is considered to be synonymous with academic dishonesty. King, Gugeter, and

Piotrowski (2009,p.4) define academic dishonesty as “a transgression against academic integrity which entails taking an unfair advantage that results in a misrepresentation of a student’s ability and grasp of knowledge.” Academic cheating can therefore be used interchangeably with academic dishonesty. Cheating as defined by Holleque (1982), refers to the student’s practices in grading their own examinations in classes which includes the changing of one or more answers and not marking two or more incorrect responses. These practices all form part of academic dishonesty due to these deceptive acts.

Rehman and Waheed (2013) defined academic dishonesty as one unethical act whereby students attempt to produce other people’s work as their own. Such doings could include activities ranging from cheating (seeking help from peers) during examinations, copying other student’s assignments, plagiarism, working with others on individual tasks as well as the usage of unauthorized materials during an examination.

#### **2.4. Risk-taking behaviours of university students**

A vast number of risky behaviours have been reported to be highly escalating, especially with university students. A study conducted in Lebanon on risk perception, motives and behaviours on university students evaluated the role of risk perception, attractiveness and motives for risk behaviours. The findings revealed that risk perception was associated with lower risk intake, while attractiveness was a driver for it (Salameh, Salamè, Waked, Barbour, Zeidan & Baldi, 2014). University students are mostly adolescents and they behave recklessly because of their willingness to accept ambiguous conditions as stated by Tymula, Belmaker, Lior, Roy, Rudeman, et al. (cited in Michael, 2012). They are less concerned with the outcomes of any situation they place themselves on; as a result, they end up on high risk behaviours because of their high tolerance of the unknown. Their risk taking tolerance is also perceived as part of development as it also reflects positively on their eagerness to take better advantage of learning opportunities. According to Wassel and Gilligan (as cited in Department of child safety, 2008), physical growth and improved social interactions resembles a move towards independence and can also lead to their self-care skills, physical robustness, emotional development, resilience and need for independence. In turn, this can also lead to misguided or harmful behaviour.

The university students' risky behaviours are not only problematic or of great concern at the University of Zululand or in the KZN province, but are a worldwide issue. A quantitative study conducted in the University of the Western Cape revealed a lot more alarming concerns on the lifestyles of university students towards unhealthy sexual behaviours (Blignaut, Jacobs & Vergnani, 2015), the abuse of drugs and alcohol leading to unwanted pregnancies (Anyanwu, Goon & Tugli, 2013) as well as driving under the influence of alcohol or marijuana as stated by Hingson et al. (as cited in Poscia, Parente, Frisicale, Teleman, de Waure & Di Piet ro, 2015). These risky lifestyle choices are strongly influenced by their socio-demographic features, family structures, relationship with family as well as their living environment.

Among the different kinds of risky behaviours is an alarming indication of the number of students who threaten their academic journeys by cheating during examinations and professional writing. A non-profit Josephson institute of ethics reported that academic dishonesty does not only emerge in higher institutions of education as findings have revealed a number of teenagers who, reported having cheated on tests more than twice with others and personally agreed on having used the internet to plagiarize assignments (Novetney, 2011). It has been indicated that academic cheating is becoming a major problem with its escalating figures in schools and colleges. Students reported the pressure to attain good grades as being the major driving motive behind their cheating schemes (Klein, Levenburg, Mckendall & Mothersell, 2006). Lawson (as cited in Klein, Levenburg, Mckendall & Mothersell, 2006) stated that most students who cheated while studying are more likely to exhibit similar behaviours when at a work place. This includes employees who will tolerate or engage in unethical work behaviours because of their innate conditions of cheating. A study carried out on cheating during college years, revealed that business schools or colleges possess high rates of students who are cheating which could be a reason for the corrupted and fraudulent business community (Klein, Levenburg, Mckendall & Mothersell, 2006). The researcher finds it very alarming if one were to conclude that students who engage on risks of academic dishonesty were doing so because of their high tolerance of the unknown, that they are less concerned with the outcomes of the situation they find themselves in (as cited in Michael, 2012). This study will look at the factors influencing this behaviour and also to see if students are aware of its consequences beforehand.

## **2.5. Forms of academic dishonesty**

In the academic sphere, academic dishonesty can take many forms. Academic dishonesty at the researched university might occur just as it happens in other sectors of the broader society in South Africa. Mathipa and Semuli (2013) found out that globalization and migration of people with their academic credentials have made the act of academic fraud an elusive affair.

### **2.5.1. Cheating during examination**

The most common form of cheating in an examination is the smuggling of unauthorized materials into the examination room (Akaranga & Ongong, 2013).

Research conducted on student's academic cheating indicated that, "students manipulate variables such as the psychological and behavioural profiles of their professors, unwitting accomplices, technology, peers, spatial environments, and their own bodies, to negotiate the contingent intricacies and dialectics of academic dishonesty" (Shon, 2006 p. 30).

### **2.5.2. Plagiarism**

Chamon and Dantas (2016) positioned plagiarism simply as the process of presenting other people's work without acknowledging the original author. They reported that plagiarism can be in a form of plagiarism of content (the usage of material without acknowledging the owner), plagiarism of form (these include mostly verbatim plagiarism and paraphrasing) as well as self-plagiarism (this occurs when authors assume that using their previously published work does not require referencing).

## **2.6. Historical background of academic cheating**

Education has become the most important tool that each and every individual should possess in order to survive in this rather competitive era. World-wide, universities are striving towards imparting only the best, quality education to students in order to enable them the opportunities of serving the country diligently. Institutions of higher education by all accounts, have broad policies, strategies and support mechanisms to warrant the students' acquisition and application of generally approved principles of academic integrity (Gallant, 2008). Therefore, this entails that students are supposed to be aware of academic dishonesty as being the wrongful

doing. Relevant research and theory in psychology points to the importance of having a comprehensive understanding of an individual's perception of a particular subject or issue in order to successfully modify that person's attitude and behaviour (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010).

The issue of academic dishonesty is making it very difficult for the universities to ensure that the attainment of degrees is ethically approved because of the alarming increase of academic dishonesty which is viewed by most students as a normal part of life (Rehman & Waheed, 2013). Academic honesty in students has been documented as a basic goal of higher education. It has mostly been regarded as the most fundamental aspect in colleges and universities which signified the quintessence of learning. Honesty has long been expected from students even though they were unable to keep up with that norm. Student academic dishonesty is on the rise globally and it is highly possible that these dishonest students might continue with this unethical behaviour as future leaders and employees (Thomas & De Bruin, 2012).

The disturbing trend of academic dishonesty is not something new. Rehman and Waheed (2013) discovered that 85% of students perceived cheating as a normal part of life. Even today, academic integrity is still the main purpose for colleges and universities. But, is it slowly losing ground due to academic dishonesty? Looking at the study of cheating behaviours in college students, Holleque (1982) in his study, using a sample of 158 college students at a Midwestern public college, revealed that forty-three percent of students cheated. The results also indicated no significant difference in terms of gender (Holleque, 1982). Students who were on lower grade levels in terms of education were very much likely to cheat as compared to those who were at the upper grade scale (Holleque, 1982). The reasons that were mostly identified as leading to academic dishonesty included the students' perceived importance of grades to parents than the importance of grades to themselves. Anticipated college success was closely aligned to cheating at the 0.5 level using a Chi Square test of independence (Holleque, 1982).

South African universities are still facing a battle with the students' level of academic cheating, which is on the rise (Sunday Time, 2014). These include the sale of exam papers and plagiarism as students shamelessly take the 'easy way out' in obtaining a qualification. Institutions such as, UNISA have taken a stance towards the

management of this trending bad habit by expelling 519 students from continuing with their studies for 3 years due to cheating during examinations and 20 for selling or buying exam papers (Sunday Time, 2014). Even though universities have spent millions trying to combat the issue through the usage of the software that detects plagiarism, today's advancement in technology is making it impossible for the programme to be effective. According to the report by the Sunday Times (2014), the United States' educational portal indicated that in 1940, the percentage of students who had admitted to having cheated in college was only 20% which has now increased to a range of 75% to 98%. This is quite disturbing because it seems that, with a lot of changes happening, people are being transformed for the worst. This drastic change from 1940 to 2014 is in line with what Rehman and Waheed (2013) reported; that students perceived academic cheating as the normal part of life. If this is the case; are they aware of the consequences of engaging on such behaviours? This information raises questions on the type of leaders those students will become and if the institutions of higher education are still operating on the same principles as in the 1940s.

## **2.7. Student's academic dishonesty**

Cheating especially in summative assessments has often been an issue of concern in various institutions of higher learning. Examination dishonesty is an epidemic across various universities in South Africa where majority of students have engaged in some sort of cheating at some point (Ramorola, 2014). A study by Wotring and Bol (2011) on personal and situational causes of cheating among students revealed massive cases of examination malpractice in universities. Another research by Rettinger and Kramer (2008) revealed that 73% of the students confirmed engaging in at least one form of cheating behaviour whereas 37% reported serious involvement in cheating. In addition, 5% of students who participated in that study confirmed that they were using unauthorized materials on examination paper.

Related studies by Jones (2011) reported that cheating among undergraduate students is common in the United States, Spain and Pakistan. The phenomenon of cheating does not exclude South African Universities. Despite the fact that the reasons for the rampant increase in examination malpractice are not well known, Ramorola (2014) speculates that cheating is due to pressure for academic success.

Relatively, few studies have examined factors enhancing cheating in South African Universities.

This current study explored the causes of cheating behaviour among students and if they are conscious of the consequences of plagiarising and cheating in examinations. The study presents an overview of the reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty.

## **2.8. Academic dishonesty in South African universities**

University students in South Africa are audaciously cheating on test examinations (Ramorola, 2014). For instance, the University of Johannesburg, UNISA, Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch and North West found more than 1400 students guilty of academic dishonesty including plagiarism in 2013 (Ramorola, 2014). However, educational experts argue that these figures were just the tip of the iceberg because real cheaters were not identified during the survey. The brazen act prompted the then higher education Deputy Minister Mduduzi Manana to give a directive to the universities to tighten the rules on examination irregularities so as to stop the production of half backed graduates. The minister also encouraged the institutions of higher learning to expose individuals found engaging in academic fraud so as to guard the integrity of University education in South Africa. In response to the directive given by the Higher Education Deputy Minister; University of South Africa responded by suspending 519 students from studies for three years for using unauthorized materials during examination. Also, the University expelled about 20 students from various faculties for various offences including the buying and selling of examination papers. The University of KwaZulu-Natal embarked on a process of publishing the names of students who cheated in examination and those who plagiarize their work. The University of Cape Town disregards the act of plagiarism with the highest esteem by requiring every student to sign a declaration on every written assignment (Ramorola, 2014).

According to Alutu and Alutu (2003), academic integrity among students is an integral component of higher education. For a long time, academic honesty has been a highly regarded phenomenon which denotes the essence of learning in various academic institutions and essentially, the students' honest endeavours during university examinations. This is an attribute worth admiring. Despite the fact that

academic integrity is still an integral component of the educational theory and practice; this phenomenon has lost its ground to dishonesty among students, not excluding the University of Zululand. A study by Carroll (2002) indicated that various university administrators in South Africa have admitted that academic dishonesty, especially cheating during exams is a critical problem since most of the institutions of higher learning have not put in place effective strategies to combat the problem. Carroll's report shows that there is still a long way to go in terms of academic dishonesty tendencies with regards to South African university students. The factors influencing this kind of unethical behaviour could possibly be more institutional than personal, that is if there are still institutions of higher learning that have not put in place effective strategies to combat the problem (Carroll, 2002).

Studies that have been conducted in the South African universities mostly provided statistics and not the exploratory factors influencing that number of students who engage in the risks of academic cheating. The current researcher found it really important to not only identify the problem, but also to look at what influences that type of behaviour. Engaging on academic dishonesty is not something diminutive as one puts him or herself on risks of being expelled from the institution. It could happen that the situations that students in the 1940s found themselves in, are totally different from what current university students have to deal with. There appears to be a huge gap in literature that covers factors influencing academic dishonesty in the South African universities. This study tried to look at the factors influencing this act as well as the extent of the students' awareness of the consequences of academic dishonesty. The researcher finds it disquieting to say what influenced European or Kenyan students can be generalised for the South African population; it may be possible, but only to a certain extent.

### **2.9. The issue of examination procedures**

Academic dishonesty, commonly known as cheating, takes many forms including, stealing examinations, plagiarizing, dry-labbing, copying from other students, sabotaging experiments in the laboratory and using unauthorized materials and technology during the process of testing. Examinations are commonly used as an important tool that informs the entire system of education all over the world (Muchai, 2014).

Akaranga and Ongong (2013) indicated that there is hardly any system of education in the world that does not embrace assessment as an indicator of the said education system. Aullo (2004) contends that it is the instrument used in determining who is to be promoted to the next academic level. Indeed, examinations do not only serve the function of assessing the progress of the learners, but also, it acts as a motivation and helps them to assess their strengths and weakness besides providing educators with the feedback and opportunities to employ new teaching and learning strategies that will enhance good results. Examination in general, is also a tool used to enhance decision making on educational advancement, performance and job opportunities for an individual (Jordan, 2001). This might be the reason why University students are willing to do everything possible so as to pass examinations even when their abilities and preparedness for the examination is questionable.

As noted by Opiyo (2015), the examination process has two principal concepts. Firstly, it has to achieve the objective with which it is designed. Secondly, it has to be reliable and consistent with the designed tools of measurement. Ramorola (2012) further portends that examination malpractice is regarded as misconduct or an improper practice before, during and after the assessment by the examinee or the people charged with the responsibility of handling examination materials with the view of getting good grades by fraudulent means. With reference to this sentiment, examination malpractice is an unethical act since it encourages mediocrity in that learners, who obtain good grades through such unorthodox means, may be rated the same as those who earned honest grades. This is a fact that puts the reliability and the credibility of the examination into doubt. Therefore, it is important to discuss examination dishonesty so as to create awareness among the students and the University authorities on the dangers of irregularities on students, the university itself as well as the society at large.

Academic fraud is an issue of concern across institutions of higher learning across the world, in both the developed and developing countries. Academic dishonesty is not only a costly threat to societies, but also, a danger to the efficient operation of the university and the public trust on the credibility and the reliability of an institution. The biggest challenge to the problem of examination malpractice in the institutions of higher learning has been the increasing complexities of the modern developing social and economic order that puts more emphasis on the identification of highly

skilled and educated manpower through the use of the grades obtained during training (Ruto et al., 2011). Furthermore, increased competition in the labour market has forced many students to participate in formal education beyond the minimum required levels so as to gain credentials for social, educational and occupational advancements. This was also reported by Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre (2010) in their study of academic plagiarism in Spain. Students who cheated to get their qualifications are mostly unable to perform at their expected levels because they have not attained adequate knowledge to make them professionally competent in their proposed fields of study (Quaye, 2010). Students are forced to engage in the risk of examination cheating so as to become more competitive during interviews and promotions.

Since then, examinations have become high stake as a result of the various uses made of the students' results. Muchai (2014) noted the high rates of goal-motivated cheating among students in the United Kingdom. In a study initiated by McCabe and Trevino (1997), it was discovered that the majority of students surveyed in the United States confessed to have engaged in examination fraud. During the research, 25% of the University students admitted to have engaged in various forms of examination cheating in the recent examination. Additionally, about 50% of the students who participated in the study have participated in serious acts of examination fraud at least once on written assignments. In Pakistan for example, Muchai (2014) reported that inadequate preparation among students was a major cause of examination irregularities in universities.

In Nigeria for example, the West African Examination Council conducts the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in all the English speaking countries. The results obtained from the examination body are of great importance in admission into the tertiary institutions and employment. Besides, various schools and teachers are assessed by parents and the state on basis of the performance of their students in the WASSCE. Furthermore, the government's commitment to education and investment is measured by the performance of students in the WASSCE. Therefore, this examination has become a high stake in Nigeria (Asuru, 1996).

Asuru (1996) noted that it is common knowledge among various stakeholders that teachers and examinees tend to employ various means to secure success at a high stake examination like the WASSCE. Cheating has seen a decline in the quality of

education in Nigeria. This is a fact that has hindered the achievement of educational goals in Nigeria. Naghdipour and Emeagwali (2013) are of the same idea as they also stated that the crisis of academic cheating is demeaning the quality of education and that it also degrades the value of future professionals produced by institutions of education.

## **2.10. Factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating**

### **2.10.1. Insufficient understanding of the institutional policies against academic dishonesty**

Different views exist as to what might be influencing academic dishonesty practices of university students. The differences noted on a study based on the staff and student's perceptions of plagiarism and academic dishonesty indicated that the staff believed that students cheated because they had insufficient understanding of the institutional rules against academic dishonesty (Wilkinson, 2009). The institution's academic integrity policies and programmes have a substantial effect on students' comportments (McCabe et al., 2001). Further, Kokkinaki, Demoliou and Lakovidou (2015) also stated the importance of a thorough communication channels between institutional policies and students. This will ensure that they are well understood by all.

### **2.10.2. Effects of society on examination malpractice at the university**

Society plays a significant role in modelling the behaviour of the students since schools are an extension of the larger society. According to Anderman et al. (1998) academic dishonesty in most institutions of higher learning is informed by what most of the students' experience in the real world; where business scandals and the involvement of government officials in corruption cause students to develop perceptions that dishonesty is an acceptable strategy of achieving success in the contemporary society. Furthermore, they argue that students live in the world that is dominated by a consumerist culture whereby most people seek to get the best products in the market for the least money. Therefore, students tend to transfer the same culture to institutions of higher learning. Hence they developed strategies on how to obtain the highest grades for the least amount of work. Also, students' perceptions are reinforced by the societal systems which condone corruption.

### **2.10.3. Personal and situational attributes towards examination irregularities**

Personal attributes are characteristics that are exhibited by examination cheaters. A study by Chinamasa, Mavuru and Tarambawamwe (2011) indicates that cheating tendencies are similar among people from diverse races, nationality, religion and the social status. McCabe and Trevino (1997) are of a different view to this as they have based their argument on the individual differences method stating that individual students display different tendencies to cheat.

### **2.10.4. Gender and age prevalence in terms of academic dishonesty**

There is a strong correlation between examination malpractices and gender. Mathipa and Semuli (2013) found that the prevalence of the male students to engage in examination fraud is higher than that of the female students. However, another study by Ikpah, Akinrefon and Bamigbala (2016) asserts that the young students at the university tend to cheat more than older university students who are undertaking the same degree program. Despite the fact that cheating at universities seem to cut across tribes, gender and ages, Muchai (2014) found that there is a high prevalence of cheating among the first year and the second year university students.

### **2.10.5. Pressure for good grades**

Students who are weak in certain subjects tend to cheat more than those who are well conversant with subject (Whiteley, 2002). The pressure for good grades tends to tempt most of the students to engage in examination dishonesty. However, it is the student with academic difficulties that is more likely to engage in academic fraud so as to gain undue advantage against others (Whiteley, 2002). Whiteley (2002) in his study noted that low grades had a direct positive correlation with increased levels of examination malpractice. Additionally, a related study by Anderman, Griesinger and Westing (1998) noted that most of the university students tend to cheat since they are worried that they cannot reach the expected academic standards of their professors.

### **2.10.6. Intrinsic motivation**

Motivation of students by the lecturer has a greater impact in combating examination cheating among the undergraduate students (Muchai, 2014). Muchai (2014) notes that, students who are motivated to learn for the sake of learning tend to exhibit the

intrinsic value of education. These students are less likely to cheat in exams unlike university students who pride in getting high grades at any price for external benefits like impressing potential employers and getting a good job in this rather competitive job market (Naghdipour & Emeagwali (2013). According to Muchai (2014), learners who are intrinsically motivated are likely to be preoccupied with the mastery of goals hence reducing their chances of cheating as compared to those who are extrinsically motivated that seem to concentrate on performance goals. According to Asuru (1996) learners who doubt their intelligent abilities are more prone to cheating since they either expect failure or lack self-confidence.

#### **2.10.7. Getting off easily**

As noted by Opiyo (2015), students who cheat in the exams are often very smart in their game. This is supported by the fact that only 2% of the cheaters are caught during the examination. Schraw, Olafson, Kuch, Lehman and McCrudden (2007) reported that the students' low probability of being caught cheating encourages the bad habit and gives them confidence to even engage in examination irregularities again and again.

#### **2.10.8. Ineffective study habits**

Inadequate study habits and poor examination taking techniques among students are also blamed for the rising cases of exam academic dishonesty (Nyamwange et al., 2013). Akaranga and Ongong (2013) alludes that if students do not have recognizable legitimate strategies for dealing with the demands of the course, it is very likely that they will employ dishonest tactics during the exams so as to gain undue advantage over others. Most students expect their professors to teach them all the components in the course outline like the way it is done in high school by the teachers. Alutu and Alutu (2003) suggest that it is imperative for the universities to develop a comprehensive system which will ensure that all new students are introduced into the reading culture and how to adopt effective study techniques that are expected at the institution of higher learning.

#### **2.10.9. Poor time management**

According to Muchai (2014) poor time management is another cause to students' engagement in examination irregularities. Most students use a lot of time on social engagements instead of focusing on the course material. As a result, they resort to

cheating which is the only way that can guarantee them good grades during examinations.

In a study of academic dishonesty in assessment settings conducted in the University of South Africa (UNISA), the respondents reported such factors as: the lack of time for exam preparation, family bereavement, family responsibility and forgetfulness as some of the reasons behind their engagement on academic dishonesty behaviours (Ramorola, 2012). The issue of time management at the university can be remedied by ensuring that all the students are well informed of what is expected of them through the course outline so they can be prepared in time. According to Parkes and Harris (2002) the course outline, which is also known as a syllabus, serves three purposes. Firstly, it is to serve as a contract between the student and the instructor. This contract gives clear illustrations of each party's responsibilities. The second function is that of serving as a permanent record of what has been taught. Thirdly, a syllabus serves as a learning tool.

#### **2.10.10. Pressure from families and teachers**

A report by Chinamasa et al. (2011) indicates that most of the education systems in the world encourage the development of the culture of fear and intimidation among the teachers and the students due to the value that is attached to the examination at various levels of education. According to Lareu (1987) the difficulties faced by students included the pressure of having to meet certain parental expectations as well as stress during exams which could be due to the anticipation for good grades accompanied by the fear of the examination process and the possibility of failing. The fear that comes with consequences of failing exams tends to put pressure to students since both the professors and the parents expect them to meet a specific set of targets at the end of the semester. Undue pressure on students is a strong contributor to cheating. A notable example is the case of the 2009 standard test examination in Atlanta public schools whereby 44 schools engaged in examination irregularity out of the 56 schools that sat for the exam. Also, 178 principals and subject teachers were also found guilty of engaging in cheating during the standardized tests. Most teachers were accused of abating cheating by teaching the questions that were to be tested. Additionally, most of the teachers inflated the test results (Muchai, 2014).

University students are under immense pressure to perform, especially in the end of the semester examination so as to be promoted to the next level. Stress, according to Aherne (2001) is closely related to the type of students who strongly identify themselves with academic success and the desire to achieve. These students reportedly experience increased anxiety of being let-down in relation to their academic performances. Maramark and Maline (1993) have also identified stress as one of the major causes of students' engagements with academic dishonesty. This pressure to perform is reportedly worse among students undertaking technical courses who are supposed to get the average mark in the entire subject so as to move to the next academic year or else they repeat the entire course for another semester thus forcing some students to engage in cheating so as to pass. To curb the problem of examination irregularities in the universities, Opiyo (2015) suggests that Universities should advise students on how to choose courses so as to ensure that they pursue programs that appeal to them. Additionally, the heads of the Departments must ensure that professors give detailed course outlines to the students at the beginning of the semester and random checks on the progress of the teaching and learning activities at the university so as to ensure that the ultimate goal of education is reached. Provision of the course outline is also essential in ensuring that students are conversant with what is expected of them. The heads of the department have a responsibility of ensuring that the set exams are up to standard so as to ensure that most students pass.

#### **2.10.11. Institutional factors**

Institutions of higher education are often faced with the crisis of having a high population of students that does not match the availability of the facilities (Odu, 2014). Education does not only rest on one's emotional commitment to his or her studies, but the emotional interaction with the learning environment has to be conducive enough to elicit a culture of learning (Christie et al., 2008). A supportive campus environment is very important to nurture students' desires to learn diligently. An operative learning atmosphere is as much a matter of organisational guidelines and educational programming as architecture (Sommer, 1968). The importance of the environment of student learning is, mostly, not taken serious in some institutions of higher education whereas the environment interacts subtly and continuously, calling for the students' learning needs to be taken into account (Entwistle &

Ramsden, 2015). The condition of teaching and learning facilities has an impact on the ability of the student to understand the course content. Muchai (2014) contends that examination cheating is greatly influenced by poor teaching strategies by lecturers. Akaranga and Ogong (2013) indicated that most lecturers do not attend lectures as stipulated on the timetable. Some resort to make up classes which are not fully attended by all the students. Sometimes, those who attended classes wasted a lot of time politicking and giving information that is not related to the course content.

As identified by Ruto et al. (2011), the availability of facilities and infrastructure has an impact on cheating during examinations. For instance, cheating tendencies tend to be lower in examination rooms that have properly arranged desks. Muchai (2014) highlights that, universities should adequately prepare for the examination period by putting into place the entire infrastructure needed to accommodate all students.

### **2.11. Contextual factors contributing to academic dishonesty**

The relationship between the student and the lecturer has a greater impact on cheating in an examination. Aullo (2004) discovered that students tend to cheat less when their professor exhibits kindness, respect, understanding and real concern towards their studies and the mastery of the course content. Lecturers who appear to be enthusiastic about the course and encourage the students' internal or intrinsic worth of the course, tend to motivate students to work hard thus enhancing their self-confidence when dealing with examination issues related to the course. Lecturers who do not motivate their students may cultivate a feeling that the course is trivial or even boring. Such students are more likely to cheat since they feel that the lecturer is less concerned about their progress in academics.

#### **2.11.1. Advancement in technology**

Naghdipour and Emeagwali (2013) reported that plagiarism has become a common academic malpractice among students. The expansions of the Information Communication and Technology has provided students with an easy route towards academic dishonesty by allowing them to easily copy academic materials or even purchase course materials on the internet without being caught (Usoof, Hudson & Lindgren, 2014).

This practice is a tragedy in the development of the South African society since some of these students usually pass and are therefore initiated into the labour market as ready-made academic products. In Britain for example, a study by Muchai (2014) found that over half of the respondents, who were interviewed, confessed of cheating in examination by paraphrasing the works of other students or even using programmable calculators that have recorded formulas in the examination rooms. As a result of the study, the University responded by teaching students on how to acquire information from various sources and authorities so that they may use it with the acknowledgement of the authors. Also, the University established policies to curb plagiarism by imposing stiff penalties on the offenders. This vice has promoted laziness among the students since term papers can easily be bought online without an individual engaging in research. Furthermore, even experienced professionals have not been spared of these academic malpractices due to carelessness, neglect and deliberate actions.

#### **2.11.2. Inadequate professional writing and studying skills**

LoCastro and Masuko (2017) reported that one's desire to work perfunctorily, differences in cultural practices and the lack of skills or language proficiency are the most common reasons for plagiarism among students writing in English as a second language. With regards to the issue of professional writing skills; Madray (cited in Sentleng, 2010) reported that most students were guilty of paraphrasing without acknowledging the source of information because of inadequate paraphrasing and analysing skills. Davin and Gray (cited in Davila, Griffiths & Leigh, 2015) conducted a study to support first year students on their professional writing skills. Results indicated that first year students plagiarise because they lack appropriate paraphrasing and citation skills.

#### **2.11.3. Inadequate awareness of the consequences of academic cheating**

Lack of academic integrity among the students is also to blame for the rampant increase in the cases of cheating in examinations. Most institutions of higher learning have given up on enforcing strict standards of academic integrity (Asuru, 1996). This has left many students ignorant on what is meant by academic integrity and some lack clarity on which behaviour constitutes to academic dishonesty. Mathipa and Semuli (2013) portends that universities should give clear guidelines during the

orientation of new students on the expected student behaviour during and after the examination. A lot of emphasis should be placed on making students conscious of the seriousness of exams and the importance of adherence to the set rules that govern the conduct of students during the examination period at the university. On the other hand, lecturers have a responsibility of ensuring that the set rules are followed to the latter. Furthermore, it is important to observe consistency while implementing and respecting the students' rights so as to awaken the conscience of the students thus making cheating in the examination a less attractive affair (Whiteley, 2002).

Effective communication of university policies on academic dishonesty and the stipulated penalties for the students who contravene the university regulation is an effective deterrent of the cases of examination fraud (Muchai, 2014). Muchai (2014) reiterates that communicating the consequences of plagiarizing reduces the possibilities of cheating. A research by Anderman et al. (1998) revealed that cheating is more likely to thrive in an environment where students have a perception that cheating is widespread in the institution. Students' perceptions of peers that cheat during exams can either deter or allow cheating to flourish in the institutions of higher learning. Students tend to cheat when they realize that their friends condone cheating.

#### **2.12. Institutional policies and procedures underway to curb the prevalence of academic cheating**

Cleg and Flint (2006) stated that, it is the institutional policies that lay the foundation on the legitimacy of its regulations against plagiarism. The ranking of plagiarism as a form of academic misconduct to be dealt with by a range of penalties which may lead to expulsion from the institution give academics an idea about the seriousness of the matter (as cited in Wilkinson, 2009).

Academic dishonesty in the comprehensive evaluation of students is a worldwide predicament. Institutions of education have continuously tried to come up with the most effective methods to combat the issue of academic untruthfulness from taking place. Such methods may include the adoption of honesty policies, instituted academic uprightness tutorial completion prerequisites for registration and attainable

plagiarism software detection tools, but cheaters constantly come up with more enhanced methods to cheat (Ramorola, 2014).

Plans in South Africa are underway to oversee the establishment of a body of vice-chancellors from over 25 universities in South Africa. The aim is to oversee the formulation of a register that will help in keeping track of academics found guilty of engaging in academic fraud. The chief executive officer of Higher education in South Africa, Mr. Jeffrey Mabelebele lauded the formation of the body by noting that the establishment of the database of cheaters can help the universities in making informed opinions on various candidates during academic appointments. The move was meant to deter students from getting involved in academic dishonesty since they were well aware that engagement in academic fraud can jeopardize their future chances of getting employment in various institutions of higher learning.

The act of cheating during examination in South Africa is encouraged by the rising number of students who are caught stealing exams and walk scot-free. For instance, Patel (2015) uncovered a cheating syndicate whereby students who cheated in the Matric examinations in nine South African provinces got away with the crime. Several instances of group copying were revealed. Some students publicly confessed that it is not hard to cheat during the Matric examinations and get away with it. However, the government has responded to the wave of cases of cheating in examination by withholding results from centres that are perceived to have engaged in cheating and censure cheating students.

In South Africa, Universities are continuously implementing a raft of measures to deter students from engaging in examination malpractice like plagiarism. For example, the University of Johannesburg has set up strategies whereby new students are taught how to correctly receive copies of the University's academic integrity code and how to correctly cite sources used in their write-ups (Adele, 2015). Besides, the university plays an integral role of enhancing academic writing skills of the students, especially in the languages of instruction that is not the same as their first language.

According to Worting and Bol (2011), most of the universities of South Africa have incorporated lectures on the dangers of plagiarism and the resultant penalty in the course content. Additionally, the universities pay high fees to get the requisite license

for various software programs that are crucial in detecting similarity index in students' assignments against millions of electronically published articles. However, very little has been evidenced in terms of reducing the cases of cheating. Also, the condition could have been worst without the various software programs that help in detecting plagiarism. A study by Rettinger and Kramer (2011) also shows that incidences of plagiarism seem to be higher in classes where the lecturer shows lenience about the act of plagiarism. In addition, classes where no action is taken on those students who plagiarize their work seem to encourage this act of academic dishonesty. Furthermore, professionals who plagiarize their work seem to cultivate an environment that encourages the learners to engage in these acts of academic dishonesty since the professors are also guilty of the act.

### **2.13. Summary**

This chapter has examined relevant literature to gain background knowledge for the study and also to make a case for the importance of the problem as well as to avoid repetition of what is already known. Information for this chapter was gathered from theses, journal articles, seminar papers, government policy papers, conference proceedings, training manuals, legislature documents, research reports, business journals, textbooks, newspapers and periodicals. This information appeared relevant and of great value for this study. This study's main objectives are to find the factors that influence students to engage on risks of academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism, and also, to establish an awareness of the consequences of engaging on acts of academic dishonesty. This chapter began by first defining academic cheating, the risk taking behaviours on university students, the historical background of academic cheating, explored academic dishonesty in South African universities, the issue of examination procedures, forms of academic dishonesty, factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating, the education system, contextual factors contributing to academic dishonesty as well as institutional policies and procedures underway to curb the prevalence of academic cheating. From the information gathered, it appears that few studies have examined factors enhancing academic cheating in South Africa. The available literature from South African institutions merely points out the factors but mainly focuses on the identification of the problem and the methods used by students to cheat. Most studies addressing academic dishonesty are foreign and mostly outdated. The

researcher is not saying that nothing has been done regarding the issue of concern in South Africa, but there seems to be a gap of information regarding the factors influencing academic cheating as well as the students' awareness of the consequences. It also appears in this chapter that most studies addressing academic dishonesty mainly focus on cheating during examinations and little information is known with plagiarism as also forming part of academic dishonesty.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter gives the research process of a qualitative study. The aim of this study was to explore factors influencing risk behaviours involving academic cheating during examination and plagiarism among the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus' students. The issues explored in this chapter includes the research design, the research setting, the sample and sampling techniques used; the data collection tools and the data analysis method. The chapter also explores validity and rigor of the study by looking at its credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability. This chapter commences with the description of the research design used in this research.

#### 3.2. A qualitative research design

Guba and Lincoln (1994) define qualitative research as a method of inquiry that looks at information passed through language and behaviour in its natural setting. The current qualitative design used a phenomenological strategy to explore expressed information of the students about their understanding of factors influencing students' risk-taking behaviours that is, on crime activities involving plagiarism of academic work and academic cheating during exams. This design is also useful in exploring students' awareness of the consequences of engaging in plagiarism and cheating during an examination at the university setting. A qualitative study was employed in this study due to its ability to provide detailed narratives of students' understanding of plagiarism, their subjective beliefs about factors influencing them to take risks on crime activities involving plagiarism and academic cheating during exams and their awareness of the consequences of engaging in academic cheating. This kind of information is dependent on the students' experiences, thus qualitative studies provide more compelling and powerful data (Choy, 2014). The qualitative design is also useful in collecting data from few participants (Choy, 2014). This study is interested in a sample of 25 students. Therefore, this is a method appropriate for this study.

While qualitative research design has its advantages, it has received a fair share of criticism from other scholars. The quality of research in qualitative studies is heavily

dependent on the skills of the researcher. Therefore, it is open to personal biases of the researcher (Atieno, 2009; Ramona, 2011). In addition, qualitative research in scientific research is not accepted and understood. This is because most qualitative research relies heavily on scientific observation (Ramona, 2011). Scholars also argue that the presence of the researcher in the process of data collection (in qualitative studies) has the potential of influencing the responses of the respondents (Atieno, 2009; Ramona, 2011). It is also argued that the data collected in qualitative studies cannot be used to make general assumptions in other groups of respondents as the data collected is specific to that current group of respondents in terms of how they feel, think and behave (Atieno, 2009; Ramona, 2011). In managing the above mentioned criticisms, the researcher went through intensive readings and consultations with knowledgeable people in this field focusing on the skills for conducting qualitative research. The researcher also enhanced her research skills by going through studies which have employed similar methodological techniques as the current study in order to check how they were conducted and how, the biasness of the researchers was met. Furthermore, the researcher assured the participants not only of their confidentiality but also of the data collected. They were informed that the researcher will not judge or report any information regarding their academic or examination malpractices and the data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the supervisor's office, where only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to it. Although the outcomes of this study cannot be generalised to the larger population of students at the University of Zululand, Choy (2014) argues for the possibility of transferability of the findings (of a qualitative study) to another setting. In addition, future research should look at replicating the study considering other student characteristics not included in this study. While quantitative and qualitative research designs each have their strengths and limitations, they can be effective if they are both used to compensate for their methodological limitations. Thus future researchers interested in exploring academic cheating and plagiarism behaviours among students should take this suggestion into consideration.

### **3.3. Research setting**

The study was conducted at the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus located at KwaDlangezwa which is an area not far from Esikhawini, Empangeni and Richards Bay towns in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. The University is a

public institution hosting a population of more than 10,000 students with a larger population of woman than men. The campus hosts four faculties namely: Arts, Education; Science and Agriculture and Commerce, Administration and Law. The university brings together undergraduate and postgraduate students from various parts of the world with diverse nationalities, cultures, religions and races. It is this kind of a university setting which may provide an opportunity to explore students' perceptions of academic cheating and plagiarism, factors motivating these behaviours and ways to manage such behaviours in this context. The next section will explore the sampling technique used, its strengths and limitations.

#### **3.4. Sampling technique**

Landreneau and Creek (2008) define sampling as a technique of selecting a suitable sample or a representative part of a population with the purpose of determining the characteristics of the whole population. The study adopted a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling to access students across gender, race, level of study and nationality. The 25 students were included in the sample on the basis of their possession of the academic experiences on cheating during examinations and plagiarism at the University of Zululand. Purposive sampling is a technique where the researcher selected participants with an experience or knowledge of the issue of interest in the study (Oppong, 2013). The importance of this sampling method is that it is cost-effective in terms of financial costs, time and efforts to access respondents and can also give rich data (Oppong, 2013). The major limitation of purposive sampling is that it is susceptible to errors in judgment by the researcher and also the researcher has the potential of gathering poor quality and biased data thus leading to unreliable research findings (Oppong, 2013). In overcoming the challenges of purposive sampling, the researcher collected the data objectively which answers the research questions of the study. Furthermore, the data reported was drawn from the participants' responses and not the biasness of the researcher. In addition, the participants were urged to give honest responses to the questions asked.

The characteristics of the population are mostly useful with ascertaining who was assessed and also in breaking down the collected data into meaningful groups of respondents (DeFranzo, 2012).

In the South African law, one is considered a minor and cannot act independently without the consent of a parent or guardian if he or she is below the age of 18 years (Strode et al., 2010). For this study, all the respondents had to undergo a screening process to ensure that they were 18 years of age and above. These participants were considered legally independent to consent for this study which is also ranked as a low risk research. The ages of the respondents varied from 5 students who were between the ages of 18 and 20; 17 were between 21 and 25; 2 were between 26 and 30 and 1 between 31 years and older.

Out of 25 respondents, 11 were male students and 14 were female students.

The home languages of the respondents were 22 students who were IsiZulu speaking and 3 respondents included other languages including SiSwati (2) and Yoruba (1) language speakers.

Most respondents were from South Africa (22), 2 from Swaziland and 1 from Nigeria.

3 respondents were students from Commerce, Administration and Law, 9 were from Arts, the other 9 were from Education and lastly, 4 were students from the faculty of Science and Agriculture.

The respondents' levels of study varied from five students who were 1<sup>st</sup> years; five 2<sup>nd</sup> year students; six 3<sup>rd</sup> year students as well as eight final year students while one was a postgraduate student.

All the participants who took part in the study were single/unmarried students.

#### **3.4.1. Recruitment process**

A letter (see Appendix 1) seeking gatekeeper's approval was sent to the University of Zululand's registrar office to allow the researcher to approach students on campus about participating in the study. Letters were also sent to the deans of students (in connection as to the faculties of the students) in the four faculties, that is, the Faculty of Education (see Appendix 2), the Faculty of Arts (see Appendix 3), the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law (see Appendix 4) and the Faculty of Science and Agriculture (see Appendix 5) to seek permission to allow the researcher to conduct the study within the institution. Ethical clearance UZREC171110-030 PGM 2016/328 (see Appendix 6) was obtained from the University of Zululand's Ethics Committee (UZREC) allowing the researcher to proceed with the study. Only

students from 18 years old and above were recruited in this study as those below 18 years would require consent from their legal guardians or parents which might have taken some time to be obtained. Students were considered in this study in that, the global debates seem to suggest that the majority of university students are involved in risk-taking behaviours which may result in the involvement of criminal activities like plagiarism and other forms of academic cheating during exams.

The recruitment of the 25 students, with experience on academic cheating was done through an advert (see Appendix 7) which was placed on the university's notice boards calling for volunteers. The advert provided a brief explanation of the research topic, the intended group of students, contact details and guaranteed the respondents of their privacy. The advert required students to respond through sending emails, call back texts, a short message, or phone calls. Upon receipt of these messages, the respondents were asked some questions by the researcher to determine whether they fit the sampling frame indicated in prior sections of this chapter. The questions involved student's age, current registration status, the level of study, faculty, race, religion, gender, nationality and whether they had an understanding of/or experience in academic cheating during exams and plagiarism.

#### **3.4.2. Sample description**

The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 31 years. The respondents used in the sampling frame were 11 male and 14 female students. All respondents were from African countries; 22 South African nationals who were all IsiZulu speaking students and 3 international students of which 2 were from Swaziland and SiSwati speaking and 1 who was from Nigeria and Yoruba speaking. There were 16 undergraduate students and 9 postgraduate students. They were all unmarried students. In terms of their faculties; there were 9 students from Arts, 9 from Education, 4 from Science and Agriculture and 3 from Commerce, Administration and Law.

The next section explores the data collection tool.

#### **3.5. Data collection tool**

An open-ended questionnaire was used as the major tool for gathering information to answer the research questions of the study.

### 3.5.1. The open-ended questionnaire

The open-ended questionnaire included a structure which does not provide answer categories (Foddy, 1993). Instead, the respondents formulated the answers and gave responses in their own words (Foddy, 1993). An open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix 8) which comprised of a set of open-ended questions, which gave participants room for flexibility and enabled them to freely write down their ideas and experiences was administered in this study. It has been argued that open-ended questions do not only give the respondents more freedom in formulating their answers, but also increases their cognitive efforts (Foddy, 1993). This means that, respondents have to perform extra cognitive tasks before responding to a statement (Foddy, 1993). Furthermore, open-ended questions help to curb response bias in the sense that the respondents are less likely to forget the answers they have to choose, that is, if they are responding in their own words (Foddy, 1993). The response bias can also be prevented as open-ended questions do not give respondents the opportunity to complete the survey with all the similar answers without reading the questions and responding to them thoroughly (Foddy, 1993). Furthermore, open-ended questions allow respondents to include more information; for example, feelings, attitudes and their understanding of the subject (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec & Vehovar, 2003). This is contrary to the close-ended questions which are limited to answers or options which may not offer respondents options or answers that reflect their actual feelings (Reja et al., 2003). In addition, Reja et al. (2003) have also argued that open-ended questions give respondents a chance to explain themselves if they do not understand the question or do not have a choice on an issue. Another advantage of open-ended questions is that they may yield more candid data and unique insight for researchers as respondents may find them less frightening than close-ended questions (Reja et al., 2003).

Although an open-ended questionnaire has its advantages in qualitative research, it has received a fair share of criticism. Krosnick and Presser (2010) argue that an open-ended questionnaire may not give the necessary or expected insight of the respondents who may find writing or typing as an uncomfortable way of expressing themselves. The responses for such individuals may be very minimal and they may perceive open-ended questions as cost-ineffective in terms of time and efforts thus leading them to provide brief or unsatisfactory answers (Krosnick & Presser, 2010).

Brief responses may be difficult to understand due to the lack of in-depth probing during the process of data collection, unlike the case of individual interviews. Reja et al. (2003) on the other hand argues that responses to open-ended questions may be difficult to interpret and analyse thus limiting their usefulness for researchers.

The questionnaire took respondents approximately 15 to 20 minutes to write down their responses. The time limit was heavily dependent on participants' knowledge of academic cheating and their experiences in risky behaviour. The questions in the open-ended questionnaire were developed based on previous studies on academic cheating and plagiarism. The questions entailed perceptions of plagiarism and academic cheating, the role of university environment in influencing academic cheating behaviour, understanding of the implications of academic cheating at the university, factors contributing to students' plagiarism and academic cheating behaviours and interventions that could minimise academic cheating in universities.

The next section explores the research process and ethical considerations.

### **3.6. The research process and ethical considerations**

The researcher began each session with a brief introduction of the study and acknowledged the respondents for volunteering to be part of the study. The participants were informed of the ethical approval (Ethical clearance-UZREC171110-030 PGM 2016/328) obtained from the University of Zululand's Ethics Committee (UZREC). This approval permitted the study to be conducted at the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus (see Appendix 6). This was followed by the presentation of the information sheet (see Appendix 9) to all respondent(s) indicating the study objectives; the nature of their participation; the expected risks and benefits of taking part in the research; measures put in place to keep privacy and anonymity of the respondents and the data, both in written and digital form; and the contacts of the ethics administrator, the research supervisor and co-supervisor and the researcher in case they have any queries regarding the research. The anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed by the use of numbers, whereby the researcher assigned numbers to all questionnaires. A summary of the material in the information sheet as well as the accessibility and storage of the collected data was given to the respondents. The participants were also informed that the researcher and supervisors only had access to the collected data and will be safeguarded for five

years or more at a locked cabinet at the supervisor's office and will thereafter be incinerated. The researcher also stipulated the roles of the research supervisors in each session and issued the respondent(s) with the contact details of the supervisors in case they wanted to make further inquiries about the research.

The respondents were then informed of their voluntary contribution to the study and their right to refuse to answer any question without any negative consequences. Although there were no unforeseen risks for participating in the study; the respondents were referred to the student counselling department for emotional support. This precaution was considered because academic cheating behaviour is a risk and a sensitive matter. Therefore, the subject matter may trigger some anxieties and worries within the students. For instance, some students might have had a history of academic cheating or plagiarism and discussions about these issues might bring forth feelings of guilt or worries about being caught and penalised for their behaviour. Some participants might have also been found cheating in an exam and discussing issues related to academic cheating might bring forth emotional concerns. Volunteering students were issued with the contacts (see Appendix 9) and directions to the student support and counselling department within the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus. The participants were given a soft copy of the University of Zululand's policy and procedures for managing and preventing acts of plagiarism in case they need more information about the policies in place to manage some forms of plagiarism within the university.

The researcher issued the consent forms (see Appendix 10) to the respondents and asked them to carefully read them and voluntarily sign to indicate their understanding of the nature of their participation, and as an indication of their agreement to take part in the study. The researcher also signed a declaration form (see Appendix 11) indicating that the respondent has understood the nature of participation in the study. The respondent(s) were then issued with the research questionnaire (see Appendix 8) and asked to read through it and respond to it as honest as possible. They were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire or any information that could possibly breach their confidentiality. The respondents who were accessed as a group, were asked not to discuss their responses or reveal their personal experiences of academic cheating as the subject matter could lead to negative exposure. The next section will explore the processes involved in data analysis.

### 3.7. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is an independent qualitative descriptive approach defined as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis was considered in this study due to its flexibility which gives a room for a wide range of analytical options in the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, thematic analysis has the potential of producing an insightful analysis that answers specific research questions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research questions of this study are: what factors influence students to take risks on crime activities like plagiarism and academic cheating during examinations? And what knowledge do students have about the consequences of engaging in plagiarism and academic cheating?

Braun and Clarke (2006) also argue that thematic analysis explores participants' responses and identify implicit and explicit ideas within the data. Furthermore, since this study is interested in seeking students' perceptions about academic cheating and plagiarism as well as their subjective contributions about factors influencing such risky behaviours, their subjective responses on the questionnaire cannot be quantified. Thus thematic analysis is appropriate as it analyses the data according to the themes that present themselves from participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although thematic analysis appears to be an appropriate data analysis method in qualitative research, it has its own methodological limitations. For instance, there is a possibility of mismatch between the theory used and methodical claims, or between the research questions and the method of thematic analysis used (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is poorly demarcated and does not give the researcher an opportunity to make claims about the language used in responding to the questions in the open-ended questionnaire.

The researcher followed the six steps of thematic analysis as described by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These steps involved: familiarising with data; generating initial codes; searching for themes from the codes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following the first step of thematic analysis, the researcher familiarised herself with the data and recognised themes by continual reading and re-reading of the participants' responses to the

questionnaire (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following the reading and familiarisation with the data, what was interesting about them is the second step which involved producing codes for the data. Coding is the creation of labels which will assist in identifying important information that can answer the research questions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The questionnaires were analysed by searching for common patterns in the data generated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data was then coded; similar responses addressing factors influencing academic cheating during examinations, plagiarism behaviours, consequences of plagiarism and academic cheating were organised into categories. Further coding in step three of thematic analysis was based on the consideration of similarities and relationships between categories which were refined into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These identified themes were reviewed in step four which involved refining currently existing themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). The researcher, at this stage, identified common themes which needed to be grouped together to form one theme and those other themes that needed to be separated from it.

Furthermore, the analysis of the data in this study considered the frequency with which an issue was stated by the respondents and the extent to which respondents elaborated on the issue. This process continued until all the collected data was coded and re-coded to accommodate new emerging themes. The researcher then compared the themes against the existing data from similar studies globally to check if any themes correspond and also if they answered the research questions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After grouping, separating and discarding of irrelevant themes, the researcher named and defined the themes that the research focused on (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes according to Braun and Clarke (2006) are called global themes which is the fifth step of the thematic analysis. Global themes are super-ordinate themes that encompass the principle metaphors in the data as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Attride-Stirling (2001) further clarifies global themes as sets of themes that present a position or an assertion about a given issue or reality.

The major themes of this study, under the research question addressing the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities such as plagiarism and academic cheating during examinations. These included:

- The lack of knowledge and understanding of cheating and plagiarism policies (lack of professional writing and studying skills).
- Individual difficulties during examinations.
- Lack of commitment (poor time management, inadequate preparation and grades over knowledge).
- Institutional challenges.

The major themes of this study, under the research question addressing the knowledge students have about the consequences of engaging in plagiarism and academic cheating. These included:

- The lack of adequate awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating.
- Recommendations.

The next section explores the validity and reliability of the study.

### **3.8. Trustworthiness of the study**

Scholars have proposed that researchers should conduct qualitative research in such a way that it promotes credibility, dependability and trustworthiness (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). According to these scholars, doing so is an appropriate way of managing the necessities of a scientific research (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Validating scientific rigor throughout the research will allow the conclusions of the research to be more reliable (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The following issues; credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of this research were addressed to enhance the validity and rigor of the study.

#### **3.8.1. Credibility**

This is a criterion of a qualitative study which involves establishing that the findings from the study are trustworthy from the perspective of the participant (Shenton, 2004). To enhance the credibility of this study, the researcher utilised a qualitative research design which has been shown to be a suitable and well-recognised research method. The researcher has given a thick description and examination of previous research in terms of the frames and findings of this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Shenton, 2004; Silverman, 2005). A detailed description of academic cheating and plagiarism behaviours at the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus has

been given in the results section. Such descriptions according to Shenton (2004) is a way of promoting credibility as it helps to convey the actual situations that have been investigated in terms of the extent and the contexts that surround them. Critical examination of previous research findings nationally and internationally to assess the degree to which the results of this study are congruent with those of past studies has also been done in the discussion chapter (Shenton, 2004). According to Silverman (2005), a key criterion for evaluating the findings of a qualitative inquiry is the ability of the researcher to relate the findings to an existing body of knowledge. The discussion of the findings drawn from this study was done in comparison with previous studies focusing on academic cheating and plagiarism in tertiary institutions both nationally and internationally.

A self-administered open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix 8) was helpful in facilitating the data collection process as the students might have found it easy and comfortable in reading the questions and answering them by themselves, than if they were to be interviewed. To ensure genuine responses, each participant was given an opportunity to refuse to participate in the study so as to ensure that the data collected only involved respondents who were genuinely willing and prepared to respond to the questionnaires (Shenton, 2004). Participants were encouraged to be frank in sharing their experiences as there were no right or wrong answers to the questions asked in the questionnaire (Shenton, 2004).

However, thematic analysis utilised in this study is capable of detecting and identifying all factors that influence any issue generated by the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis allowed the researcher to review the data set to identify instances missed in the process of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as well as deviant cases (Silverman, 2005). Thematic analysis is also appropriate when the study aims to understand the current practices of any individual (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study sought to explore the current knowledge about academic cheating and plagiarism among students at the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus.

### **3.8.2. Dependability**

Dependability refers to the degree at which the research findings are consistent and could be repeated (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Shenton, 2004). In order to enhance

dependability of the findings, a detailed description of the qualitative study design used and the processes involved in sampling, data collection, data analysis, and how the conclusions of the findings were reached are given (Shenton, 2004). This will enable future researchers to repeat such studies if not essentially to gain similar findings (Shenton, 2004). Such in-depth coverage will also allow the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed (Shenton, 2004). However, a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of all the methodological approaches has also been included in the report (Shenton, 2004). The acknowledgement of the limitations of the study and recommendations for areas for further research have been highlighted in the conclusion chapter in order to guide future researchers on the trustworthiness of the findings. Moreover, an open ended questionnaire allowed the respondents to raise issues that the researcher may not have considered. The researcher was faithful to the issues which are most important to the respondents even those that were not directly stated in the questionnaire (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, gave rich information in answering the research questions.

### **3.8.3. Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent in which the findings of the study can be applied to other research contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Shenton, 2004). Transferability was enhanced in this study through the provision of a sufficient thick description of academic cheating and plagiarism at the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus. Also, all the methodologies employed in this study were given in the final report. This would allow the readers to have a proper understanding of how the research was done and be able to compare it with other studies they might have seen or situations they might have experienced (Shenton, 2004). A description of the university's environmental context has been given in prior sections of this chapter to enable the readers to determine how far they can be confident in transferring the results and conclusions presented in this study to other contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Furthermore, the type of student participants and their faculties; restrictions in the students contributing to the data; the number of participants involved in the study and the data collection method is given in the procedures section to guide future researchers to identify the extent as to which the research findings could be

transferable. In order to further assess the extent to which findings may be applicable to students in other settings, similar projects employing same methodologies are recommended. Understanding of a phenomenon is gained gradually through several studies, rather than one major project conducted in isolation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

#### **3.8.4. Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the degree at which the findings of the study were the product of the aim of the study and not the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The findings reported in this study are from the experiences and ideas of the students, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The study was guided by the open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix 8) developed based on the past studies conducted on the topic. However, reasons for favouring the use of an open-ended questionnaire, qualitative research design and thematic analysis and acknowledging their methodological weaknesses have been stated in prior sections of this chapter (Silverman, 2005). A detailed methodological description will enable the reader to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted (Shenton, 2004). The research methodologies chosen have their limitations which will be explored in the next section.

#### **3.9. Methodological limitations**

The researcher faced a challenge in scheduling all the appointments at convenient times of the students who responded to the initial advert (see appendix 7). Another setback encountered in the process of data collection is that, some respondents failed to adhere to their appointments, thus the researcher had to reschedule missed appointments, and while in that process other students withdrew from the study. New students were recruited based on their willingness to participate in the study in order to make up for the ones who withdrew from the study. The methodological limitation that was faced was that of the sampling method employed. The study explores two phenomena, firstly cheating in exams and, secondly plagiarism. The first implies undergraduates mostly while the second implies postgraduates. However, the sampling of the participants for the study was not informed by these two phenomena.

The same research instrument was used for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The study was conducted at the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus and thus its findings might not necessarily be generalisable to the study context or to other South African universities. This study heavily relied on the participants to provide information about their academic cheating behaviours. Self-reports in research have been heavily questioned as their conclusions are not backed up by observation (Beck & Ajzen, 1991). In addition, verbal responses may also be influenced by the tendencies of participants to furnish socially desirable answers and to deny performing socially undesirable behaviours like cheating in an exam. Furthermore, the use of open-ended questionnaires only as a data collection tool has its methodological shortcomings as mentioned in other sections of this chapter. Thus the use of triangulation of more than one method of data collection could have been better to compensate for the limitations of the open-ended questionnaires.

Despite these limitations and challenges encountered during data collection process, the study gives a picture of the recent knowledge of academic cheating during examination and plagiarism, as well as of the factors that may contribute to these behaviours at the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa campus. The thematic analysis of the data collected will be presented in the next chapter, the results chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### 1.1. Introduction

The aim of the study was to investigate the factors influencing University students to take risks on crime activities involving plagiarism and academic cheating during exams. Its specific objectives were: to establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism; and to explore the extent of the awareness on the consequences of engaging on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

Data analysis and interpretation of the findings in this chapter was based on the findings from the open-ended questions distributed to students at the University of Zululand, kwa-Dlangezwa campus. The study employed mainly qualitative approach of data collection. The qualitative data was analysed thematically based on the recurring themes drawn from the respondents. The responses were grouped into themes. The researcher followed the six steps of thematic analysis as described by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These steps involved: familiarising with data; generating initial codes; searching for themes from the codes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data was grouped with a clear illustration of the main and sub-themes from the students' responses of what they considered the factors influencing academic cheating during exams and plagiarism and also the extent of their awareness of the consequences of such risky behaviours.

The themes that emerged from this study of the factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating during exams and plagiarism are presented under the two research objectives. These were: factors influencing students to cheat during examinations and plagiarise, and awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating.

**1.1.1. The following themes emerged under factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like, academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.**

- The lack of knowledge and understanding of cheating and plagiarism policies (lack of professional writing and studying skills).
- Individual difficulties during examinations.
- Lack of commitment (poor time management, inadequate preparation and grades over knowledge).
- Institutional challenges.

**1.1.2. The following themes came under the extent of awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating.**

- The lack of adequate awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating.
- Recommendations.

The chapter first identifies the response rate and then the analysis of the research results. Data from the open-ended questionnaires is analysed and discussed based on the recurring themes as per study's objectives.

## **1.2. The number of respondents to the questionnaire**

The respondents for this study involved the whole student population of about 10 000 with a sample of 25. This study had a total of 25 respondents to the questionnaire. Scheduling appointments and giving respondents the freedom to arrange appointments with the researcher has a link with the increased number of response to the study (Holbrook et al., 2007). The response to the questionnaire was high for this study due to the notification made to the respondents through posters. Persistent appointments also yielded a high response.

### 1.3. Key themes identified from responses to open-ended questions

#### 1.3.1. Factors influencing students to cheat during examinations and plagiarise

##### 1.3.1.1. The lack of knowledge and understanding of cheating and plagiarism policies

Although the majority of the responses indicated the lack of adequate knowledge as the major influence; some also indicated having knowledge of these existing policies, but lacked a clear understanding of when and how they are applied. It appears that these policies are there but not clearly stated to students as the most important policies that govern the whole institution during orientation in the beginning of the year. The excerpts below, are evidence that the academic integrity policies are communicated to students but the methods used to communicate these are not effective enough.

Respondent 13: *"Only the policy of Plagiarism communicated with students at the University library."*

Respondent 3: *"It is only during exams that you have the rules and regulations of the exams and I think by then it's a little too late."*

Respondent 11: *"The University does have policies on plagiarism and examination cheating but not clearly defined. In my opinion in the sense of what percentage of similarity constitute plagiarism there is no specific baseline of what content of work constitute plagiarism."*

This awareness of the policies was put differently by respondent 24 who stated that:

Respondent 24: *"I am doing my third year and no one I can remember of has taught or told me about policies regarding plagiarism."*

And respondent 19 who was also of the same opinion stated that:

*"The policies are not binding to all lecturers, each lecturer deals with it their own way."*

These findings are in line with what was reported by Wilkinson (2009) in his study of staff and student's perceptions of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. His findings

indicated that students were believed to cheat due to insufficient understanding of the institutional policies against academic dishonesty. These policies, according to McCabe (2001) are considered to be fundamental in the governance of the students' conduct. Furthermore, Kokkinaki et al., (2015) in their study of students' perceptions of plagiarism and relevant policies in Cyprus also conveyed having identified the need for the importance of thorough communication of the implications of academic dishonesty to students and faculties. The policies are present but not fully emphasised and are also not consistently implemented.

From the excerpts above, plagiarism seems to be an issue that is not clearly put for everyone but only applied by certain departments and lecturers. Uniformity and consistency are very important in the setting up of the policies, procedures and penalties of plagiarism and academic dishonesty (Kokkinaki et al., 2015). The majority of the respondents appeared to be aware of the institutional policies against academic dishonesty but are also of the same opinion that these are only made known to students just before they start writing their examinations which is a bit too late for someone not prepared.

#### **1.3.1.1.1. Lack of professional writing and studying skills**

Lack of knowledge is expressed differently by some respondents. It appears that some students end up engaging on the risks of academic dishonesty due to inadequate professional writing skills. This is further expressed in the excerpts below.

Respondent 3: *"Most students usually do not know how to properly reference and write sources in a correct way."*

Respondent 11: *"I for one have never been taught how to write an assignment, so obviously when I write one I will plagiarise, and also when submitting assignments, we don't use programmes like turnitin to check the degree of plagiarism, if used we would then be able to go back and properly rewrite assignments."*

Respondent 5: *"Sometimes you research and do not get what you are looking for or you just don't know how to put it in your own words."*

Respondent 4: *“Students should be taught simpler ways of transforming and summarising other people’s work so they can show their understanding.”*

Respondent 9: *“Students do not put in the extra effort that will give them the advantage when writing exams. E.g. study groups, attend tutorials and consulting with lecturers.”*

Research indicates that there is the possibility of students unintentionally plagiarising due to writing in their second language. Respondent 5 alleges that the inability to put information in your own words is one of the factors influencing academic dishonesty. The majority of students at the University of Zululand speak English as their second language. These findings concur with what LoCastro and Masuko (2017) reported about the influence of culture and language proficiency as the most common reasons for academic dishonesty tendencies. The findings of this study also corresponds to what was reported by Madray (cited in Sentleng, 2010) and Davin and Gray (cited in Davila et al., 2015) who reported on the issues of committing academic cheating due to the lack of professional writing skills.

Respondent 11 alluded on the issue of not being trained or not having access to programmes that help in the detection of plagiarised work as one of the factors influencing students to plagiarise. Sunday Times’ (2014) report is in line with this as they also reported that South African universities have spent Millions of Rands trying to introduce software programmes that detect plagiarism; but it has been impossible to keep up due to the students’ advancement in technology.

Lack of knowledge around good studying methods was not left out as some respondents also indicated the likelihood of cheating during exams as caused by not having good study skills. This is evident from respondent 9’s response above. These findings are also in line with what was reported by Nyamwange et al., (2013); Akaranga and Ongong (2013); Alutu and Alutu (2003) when they indicated that the lack of adequate study skills and examination taking techniques were capable of influencing academic cheating during examinations. Entwistle and Ramsden (2015); Quaye and Harper (2014) stated that students have different interests, expectations, motivations and personalities which consequently influence their methods of studying. The respondents expressed the difficulties faced by a majority of students

whereby they try to study but still do not understand the information being studied. This was communicated as a problem caused by not being in a possession of good studying skills. Didarloo and Khalkhali (2014) are of the same idea as they spoke of the enhancement and strengthening of the students' study skills as very important in the institutions of higher education. Putting in place the right study skills and strategies consequently make a significant difference in one's academic performance. This improvement is only assured when the study strategies developed are relevant to one's ways of thinking, working and drawing up their personal interests and preferences (Cottrell, 2013). It is possible that some of the respondents who reported having difficulties in this area are not in possession of this knowledge.

In summary of the above illustrated information, it appears that the majority of students lack the adequate knowledge of professional writing skills, study methods and also the knowledge of the institutional policies that will inform their awareness of the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating during examinations.

#### **1.3.1.2. Individual difficulties during exams**

The majority of the participants' responses voiced having difficulties during examinations as greatly influencing students to take risks of academic cheating. When responding to the question of the factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating during examinations, some of the responses were:

Respondent 2: *"Fear of failing and of parents."*

Respondent 6: *"Feeling too much pressure from the modules after failing certain tests."*

Respondent 8: *"Blackout during examinations also influences this type of behaviour."*

Respondent 10: *"Stress concerning personal life."*

Respondent 12: *"Being a slow learner as well leads to copying."*

From the above excerpts, it appears that; although students go through different personal, circumstantial or situational difficulties during examinations, they still have one common outcome which is academic dishonesty

From the analysis of the responses, it appears that the experienced difficulties differ from person to person based on one's background and personal experiences. This is

in line with the individual differences method stated by McCabe and Trevino (1997). Eriksson and McGee (2015) posits that some students justify their unethical behaviours by stating that certain situations like parental expectations, academic competitions with other students, workload and assessment standards have the possibility of directing one towards overlooking institutional policies on academic integrity.

Lareau (1987) stated that family background has a direct impact on one's educational experiences. This is in agreement with the findings of this study as some respondents indicated having the fear of parents, should it happen that they do not perform well academically. This issue of the importance of grades to parents that was stated in this study concurs with the findings reported by Holleque (1982) in his study of cheating behaviours in college students. Some respondents outlined the impact of stress as being closely related to the desire to cheat as it was also reported by Arhene (2001) and Maramark and Maline (1993).

#### **1.3.1.3. Lack of commitment**

The issues of poor time management, inadequate preparation as well as the aspiration of grades over knowledge as expressed by the respondents were grouped as the students' lack of commitment to their studies.

##### **1.3.1.3.1. Poor time management**

One of the aspects evidenced from the responses was not having enough time to prepare for exams. The following excerpts evidenced the issue of not having enough time to prepare for exams and assignments. This was illustrated by the respondents who stated:

Respondent 14: *"There is too much work and limited time to study everything in a short period of time so most students fail to manage their time and study enough, they end up studying under pressure and do not finish the scope of their work."*

Respondent 25: *"Students should be given enough time to prepare their assignments."*

Respondent 17: *"The limitation of time in the examination. The exam time is for writing only but some questions require a person to think/recall information."*

Respondent 15: *"Students don't get enough time to study because they are busy doing other entertaining things during, before and after exams."*

This was further identified as the student's excuses for their failure to commit to their studies. This is because; most, if not all institutions of higher education distribute course outlines at the beginning of each semester to assist students in tracking assignment deadlines and examination dates. Parkes and Harris (2002) are also of the same idea as they have alluded on the importance of the course outline to university students in terms of informing them of what is expected of them and when it is expected. According to the responses in this study, students are reportedly given a week before examinations which is called the "study-week". This therefore entails that students are given time to prepare for their examinations, but are unable to use it effectively. Muchai (2014) and Ramorola (2012) have also reported on the issue of the students' inability to effectively manage their time as one of the factors that lead to the violation of academic integrity. Most students reportedly lack the time management skills to be able to effectively manage their social, academic and personal lives without having to compromise the other.

#### **1.3.1.3.2. Inadequate preparation**

The participants also indicated the issue of not being fully prepared for the exam due to laziness as well as ignorance of one's studies. This was reported as one of the aspects influencing academic dishonesty. This is supported by the following excerpt as articulated by the respondents.

Respondent 16: *"Students do not take academics seriously."*

Respondent 23: *"Partying and end up not being prepared for exam leads to cheating."*

Respondent 17: *"If you don't want to write an assignment you just go to the internet and just copy and paste what you want."*

Respondent 12: *"Being too lazy to study and just know that I am going to cheat."*

Muchai (2014) and Nyamwange et al., (2013) are also in line with these findings as they also reported the inadequate preparation as the major cause of academic dishonesty in university students. Respondents of this study also pointed to the students' eagerness for non-academic activities as having a negative contribution towards academic dishonesty.

#### 1.3.1.3.3. Grades over knowledge

Some responses indicated the possibility that University students perceive school as short-cuts to getting good grades and believe that they can get away with not studying at all. This may be evidenced from the following responses:

Respondent 18: *"Students write assignments to score marks not to gain anything."*

Respondent 20: *"It is easier just to cheat and score marks rather than having knowledge. At the end of the day it is just about getting degrees."*

Respondent 21: *"Graduating is the ultimate goal not being educated."*

Respondent 22: *"Students engage on risky behaviours because they are scared of failure, they want to achieve their degrees in an easy way."*

Holleque's (1982) report which indicated the importance of grades to students as a factor contributing to academic dishonesty is in agreement with the findings of this study. Engaging in academic dishonesty, for someone who does not have a clear motive for studying and a purpose that they want to acquire knowledge for is highly possible. Students are most likely to cheat when the most driving motive is to get good grades; which according to Asuru (1996), Naghdipour and Emeagwali (2013) causes a decline in the quality of education. Once one manages to get away with it the first time, it is very much likely that they continue with that behaviour because it yields good reward (Schraw et al., 2007). This aspect of cheating for grades increases the number of graduates obtaining high positions while they have inadequate proficiency (Hosny & Fatima, 2014; Janashia, 2015). Thomas and DeBruin (2012) also reported that those students, who disobey the ethical codes of the institution, are likely to go with the same mentality in their workplaces.

The findings of the study are in line with what was reported by Klein et al. (2006); Whiteley (2002); Asuru (1996); Ramorola (2014) and Anderman et al. (1998) that the pressure to obtain good grades was the major driving motive for academic cheating.

Minarcik and Bridges (2015) also reported that external pressure was one of the highly reported reasons for the violation of academic integrity.

In summary, the above mentioned sub-themes speak to the student's lack of commitment to their studies. It appears that some fail to invest enough time and effort needed to ensure that they are fully equipped with knowledge necessary for writing their exams and assignments properly.

#### **1.3.1.4. Institutional challenges**

Some of the responses received outlined some of the institutional challenges that influence students' engagements in academic dishonesty. The excerpts below are in support of this aspect.

Respondent 23: *"Unizulu have many students. The space at the library is not enough to accommodate all of us. From someone who enjoys studying at a quiet place, I don't study at the library because it is too crowded and too noisy."*

Respondent 12: *"It is not safe enough for students to be able to go to the venues reserved for those who study during the night so many students rather fail than lose their lives and that also includes me."*

Respondent 3: *"Shortage of laboratories for students to study."*

Respondent 7: *"Not enough resources at the institution (computer labs)."*

Respondent 9: *"Most of us, Science students usually write our test in classes so the space is small it is very difficult to hide things from people sitting beside you."*

These findings are in line with what was reported by Callom (2002) who stated that this kind of unethical behaviour should not be viewed solely as influenced by personal factors as it could also be related to institutional factors. Further, the learning environment has to be conducive enough to facilitate the learning process (Odu, 2014; Christie et al., 2008).

The issue of having inadequate resources within the institution to assist students with their studies appeared to be one of the factors reported as influencing students' academic dishonesty. This is in line with what was reported by Ruto et al. (2011) and Muchai (2014) when they reported on the influence of the unavailability of the

facilities and infrastructure within the institution as leading to academic cheating, especially during examinations. The respondents who were of this opinion stated that; the university library is not big enough to accommodate everyone during the examination period. It is reportedly crowded and some find it impossible to focus in that environment. Sommer (1968); Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) were also of the same notion that the learning environment is mostly not taken into serious considerations in most institutions of higher education although it needs to be well established and inviting for learning to take place. Furthermore, it was stated that even if there were additional venues allocated for studying at night, the University management does not make any arrangements for students staying off-campus. Housing options reportedly have an effect on students' academic performances (Zhang & Albarran, 2016). Should it happen that a student staying off-campus has a bad roommate who is disruptive and wishes to go study at the library; what if that student will be unable to do so because they are not safe to travel at night? These students reportedly fear for their safety and end up not getting equal opportunities or access to the University facilities as their fellow classmates staying on campus do, when they need to study. These were the institutional challenges that the respondents stated as having an impact on academic cheating during examinations as well as plagiarism.

The minority of the respondents were of the opinion that; one of the reasons for students' engagement on the risks of academic dishonesty was due to their deep involvement in the non-academic activities within the institution.

Respondent 1: *"Students are interested in entertainment than their studies."*

Respondent 4: *"Those that are politically active end up not concentrating on their school work."*

On a study intended to investigate the relationship between non curricular activities and academic performance, it was reported that more time spent on non-academic activities negatively impacted one's academic performance. This report also noted that intense involvement on non-academic activities for male students mostly yielded poor grades (Zacherman & Foubert, 2014). This idea of students' engagement on non-academic activities was put differently by Lumley, Ward, Roberts and Mann (2015) who in their study of self-reported extracurricular activity, academic success,

and quality of life in UK medical students; reported that the amount of time spent on studies had no relationship with the attainment of better grades. Having good study skills was reportedly more accurate for yielding better grades. This takes us back to the need for the attainment of better and effective study methods.

### **1.3.2. Awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating**

#### **1.3.2.1. The lack of adequate awareness of the consequences of academic cheating**

The majority of the respondents indicated lack of adequate knowledge as what mostly causes students to engage in behaviours that often put their academic future at risk. This lack of knowledge therefore leads to them being unaware of what might transpire as a result of engaging in academic dishonesty or how serious the institution provides punishments. This was confirmed by what the following respondents said:

*Respondent 7: "Lecturers do not emphasize the issue of plagiarism as a criminal offense in lecture halls."*

*Respondent 1: "I think students are not fully aware of the risks because even in high school we are not really taught to not plagiarise so when we get here, we continue with that mentality."*

*Respondent 22: "The University should teach all students about the consequences of plagiarism because it seems like there are specific departments that concern the issue of plagiarism."*

*Respondent 23: "Students should be trained and educated on the effects and consequences of plagiarism from their first years."*

*Respondent 18: "There are consequences for cheating and plagiarising but I recently had a chat with students and we all didn't exactly know what they are exactly."*

The lack of adequate knowledge, as well as the adequate understanding of the consequences of cheating during examinations and plagiarism appears to happen due to institutional policies that are not fully made known to students. Students are most likely to have not read the existing institutional policies on academic integrity

and depend on their lecturers for this knowledge to eradicate the existing confusion they have on what is expected of them with regards to academic integrity. This misunderstanding also contributes to inconsistencies they are exposed to as they try to make sense of academic integrity on their own (Gullifer & Tyson, 2014). Students reportedly look up to their faculty members for the thorough explanation of what behaviour constitutes academic dishonesty as well as how such behaviour can be prevented (Quaye, 2010). In other words, from the excerpts above; it appears that students are not aware of what they are not informed of. If their lecturers do not inform them of the repercussions on breaking the ethical codes of academic integrity, they likely appear not to query or search for the adequate information for the sake of awareness. Asuru (1996) also reported that most universities are no longer strict on the application of academic integrity policies to students. Communication of the consequences of academic cheating to students is very important (Muchai, 2014; Mathipa & Semuli, 2013).

#### **1.3.2.2. Recommendations**

Getting a baseline of what perpetuates the academic dishonesty pandemic in institutions of higher education is very important to consider before an effective programme is implemented. Ashworth, Bannister, Thorne and Students on the Qualitative Research Methods Course Unit (1997) also reported that; it is very important for academics to try and understand the students' points of view on cheating and plagiarism so that they will considerably use them in their exertions to communicate the correct norms. In answering the question of what should be done to combat the issue of academic dishonesty amongst university students; the majority of the respondents had indicated not having adequate information and understanding of the policies against such risky behaviours. The majority of the respondents were of the opinion that there should be awareness campaigns, training programmes as well as advanced security especially inside examination halls. Lampert (2014) argued that the current culture of identifying and posing punishments that are considered appropriate for the breaking of ethical codes seem to be highly honoured in most institutions. This has reportedly taken away the focus from the importance of creating a curriculum that educates students on the appropriate techniques needed to integrate information from external materials within their own writing or projects.

The respondents in this study expressed different feelings with regards to the current issue of academic dishonesty. As mentioned earlier on, some participants indicated that they are aware of the policies. But it appears that it is only when you reach a certain level of study that these are intensely applied on your academic endeavours. Most respondents also seemed to be of the opinion that the policy of cheating during examination is only made known to them in the examination hall just before they start writing. This entails that some students end up breaking the ethical codes unintentionally because of this lack of adequate knowledge of the institutional policies (Wilkinson, 2009).

The majority suggested the importance of hosting awareness campaigns and workshops in order to assist students to develop their writing skills to an expected level.

Respondent 8: *"Teach first years how to write assignments without plagiarising and to use programmes like turnitin."*

Respondent 11: *"There should be a tool in place which can detect how much a student have plagiarised."*

In a survey conducted on academic integrity in Australia; the findings reported the existence of the differences in terms of students' awareness and understanding of academic integrity policies. The students' responses stressed the importance of institutions to provide a holistic approach towards academic integrity that will involve them rather than just providing simple information of what makes up academic dishonesty (Bretag et al., 2014). These findings are also in line with what was discovered in this study. The respondents appeared to have different views with regards to academic dishonesty and academic integrity policies. These differences in the knowledge of academic integrity were mostly evidenced from students who were in their first and second levels of study and were not yet exposed to research related modules. Students need to be more exposed on the culture of honouring the guidelines protecting copyright and intellectual property (Lampert, 2014). Carrollm (2002) is also of the same idea with the findings of this study thereby denoting that the university's failure to put in place effective strategies to curb academic dishonesty is also prolonging the problem.

#### 1.4. Summary

The respondents' responses greatly articulated their need for a methodical and educative approach towards academic integrity. Maxwell (2014) stated that the only way that people can be able to make advancement towards a better world is by learning how that is done. Similarly, from the responses gathered, it appeared that most respondents are in need of information regarding the ethically acceptable ways of professional writing; ways of studying that will consequently enhance an individual's understanding of the module to prevent being lured into the temptations of cheating during exams. Most respondents in this study were undergraduate students who also appeared to have inadequate knowledge of the institutional policies regarding academic integrity. These findings are in line with what was discovered by Sentleng (2010) in his study of plagiarism amongst undergraduate students.

There were no gender differences identified in this study as reported by Mathipa and Semuli (2013) that there is a higher prevalence of male students to engage on academic dishonesty behaviour than females. What was discovered in this study is in line with what Muchai (2014) stated, that there is greater likelihood of cheating for first and second year students.

The next chapter focuses on the summary, recommendations, limitations and conclusion of study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS & CONCLUSION OF STUDY

#### 5.1. Introduction

The previous chapters have laid out the background as well as the comprehensive discussion of what was evidenced from this research study. A summary of the findings, recommendations, limitations as well as concluding remarks are coherently addressed in this chapter in order to assist the institutional regulating bodies as well as future researchers to get a clear understanding of what was discovered as well as the shortcomings of this study which may be avoided in future.

##### 5.1.1. Problem statement

The journey towards getting a degree is reportedly an emotional one with its trials and accomplishments. Nevertheless, the educational trail headed for a college degree can be demanding for some students (Stebleton et al., 2014). Researchers have identified the difficulties that most students, especially first year university or college students face when entering institutions of higher education. These difficulties range from having to adjust to the demands of the new environment, the emotional reality of being a first-year or university student and having to familiarize yourself with the new standards of working/ work ethics. The issue of academic dishonesty forms part of a risk-taking behaviour and has long been a matter of concern across the world (Ma et al., 2013).

Risk taking behaviours have the tempting tendency of enticing one into doing what they are mostly not expected to. Students of higher institutions of education often have needs to obtain the required course standards, competition for higher grades and so forth, which subsequently, elicit one's yearnings to succeed at all costs of which constitutes a risk-taking behaviour considering the consequences of getting caught. This deed has the possibility of influencing the persistent desire to break the ethical codes of academic integrity in order to obtain the anticipated rewards (Kolanko et al., 2006).

This study's main focus was on the factors influencing students to engage on the risks of academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism. The available literature which is mainly outdated and does not arduously cover South African

issues of academic dishonesty; typically illustrated the actuality of the problem as well as the means most students used for the comportsment of this act. Little is known with regards to the factors influencing students to engage on the risks of academic cheating.

### **5.1.2. The study objectives**

The study objectives were:

- 5.1.2.1. To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities such as academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- 5.1.2.2. To establish the extent of the awareness on the consequences of engaging on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

### **5.1.3. Structure of the study**

The first chapter provided the background and scope of the study. Chapter two provided the background literature review of this study, making way for this study's direction and chapter three focused on the research methods used; these were the discussions about sampling strategies, data collection as well as data analysing procedures. The previous chapter, chapter four, was based on the thematic analysis and interpretation of research data. This chapter is about the summary, recommendations; limitations and conclusion of the study.

## **5.2. Findings of the present study**

The findings are thematically presented based on the study's objectives.

### **5.2.1. Factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism**

#### **5.2.1.1. The lack of knowledge and understanding of cheating and plagiarism policies**

This objective's purpose was to locate the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism. The findings with regards to this objective mainly illustrated the issue of inadequate knowledge and understanding of cheating and plagiarism policies as what mostly influenced students to engage on academic dishonesty behaviours. There appeared

to be no or very limited communication of these institutional policies with students; the policies of which are considered by McCabe (2001) as essential to police students' behaviours. Students, especially first year students, reportedly enter the institutions of higher education with little or no understanding of what is meant by academic integrity. They reportedly try to make sense of it on their own which has the possibility of performing what is considered unacceptable without knowing. It also appeared in the findings of the study that, although the majority of the respondents did appear to have knowledge of the regulating policies, they also lacked a clear understanding of when and how they are applied. There appeared to be a lack of uniformity and consistency in the application of these academic integrity policies.

This lack of adequate knowledge as what influences students to break the ethical guidelines of academic integrity, was also put differently by some respondents as the students' lack of knowledge about professional writing and studying skills. Respondents expressed the issue of language as well as not being in possession of plagiarism detecting programs as contributing to the problem of professional writing skills. These findings correspond to what LoCastro and Masuko (2017) reported about the influence of culture and language proficiency as the most common reasons for academic dishonesty tendencies. The findings also pointed to the lack of studying skills as what contributes to cheating during examinations. Cortell (2013) stated that putting in place the right study skills and strategies consequently reveal a significant difference in one's academic performance.

#### **5.2.1.2. Individual difficulties during examinations**

The findings also indicated the different difficulties that students often face as having an impact on their academic performance as well as how they perceive the importance of abiding by the institution's ethical codes. These individual difficulties included one's fear of failing, too much pressure from parents and stress concerning personal life.

#### **5.2.1.3. Lack of commitment**

The issues of poor time management, inadequate preparation as well as the desire for grades over knowledge were all grouped as the students' lack of commitment to their studies. The findings indicated that this influenced them to engage on risks of academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism. This was positioned as their

lack of commitment to studies because institutions of higher education give out course outlines (Parkes & Harriss, 2002) that informed them of what is to be expected of them, as well as their lecturers' roles. With that knowledge, they get caught up with a lot of other unnecessary things and do not take their academic commitments seriously. It appears that most students do this because they view higher institutions as a place for the attainment of degrees and not to a place to acquire knowledge (Hosny & Fatima, 2014; Janashia, 2015). Therefore, this causes a decline in the value and quality of education (Asuru, 1996; Naghdipour & Emeagwali, 2013).

#### **5.2.1.4. Institutional challenges**

Findings also alluded to the issue of challenges within the institution as what contributes to academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism. Carrollm (2002) also addressed the issue of academic integrity as not only a result of personal factors but institutional factors should also be taken into consideration. Findings around this issue were of the opinion that the institution's lack of resources to cater for all students (shortage of computer labs and library space and limited on campus housing accommodation) is what made some of them to be unable to fully prepare their assignments and study for exams as they wished. Therefore, they are tempted to cheat.

#### **5.2.2. The following themes came under the extent of awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating**

##### **5.2.2.1. The lack of adequate awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating**

The findings with regards to establishing the students' awareness of the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and cheating indicated that the students' lack of adequate knowledge regarding what is ethically inappropriate behaviour resulted in them being unaware of the consequences that transpire as a result of engaging in what is considered inappropriate. Some respondents indicated having an idea of the consequences of academic dishonesty, but were also not clear if what they knew was correct or not.

#### **5.2.2.2. Recommendations**

The respondents alluded to what they recommended as what the institution has to do in order to address the issue of academic dishonesty in students. Amongst the identified recommendations were the needs for awareness campaigns, training programmes as well as advanced security, especially inside the examination halls. Lampert (2014) is also of the same opinion, as he argued that institutions appear to be placing much emphasis on the punishment of breaking ethical codes than creating a curriculum that teaches techniques of analysing and interpreting information without breaking any rules of academic integrity.

#### **5.3. Strengths of the study**

Findings from this study have the possibility of being generalizable to other university students that share similar characteristics as those of the researched population. Choy (2014) also contend that it is possible to transfer the findings of a qualitative study to another setting. This places other universities at greater chances of advancing from these findings. Desalegn and Berhan (2014) stated that the conjecturers of academic cheating are highly impacted by societies and backgrounds. There seemed to be insufficient literature on academic dishonesty studies that accommodates the diversified population of the South African universities. Existing literature is mostly archaic. Witherspoon et al., (2012), portend that a study on academic dishonesty is at all times needed as students unremittingly cheat from time to time. This study offers contemporary information with regards to the factors influencing students to engage on academic dishonesty behaviours as well as the extent of their awareness of the consequences. This information will also assist not only the University of Zululand, but other institutions of higher education that wish to get a clear understanding of what influences students to engage on risks of academic cheating from the students' point of view and also to see if they are aware of the institutional policies of academic integrity and the consequences of breaking them. This will be very useful for the institutions to identify what knowledge and skills are lacking that perpetuates this kind of risky behaviour.

#### **5.4. Implications of theoretical framework to the research findings**

The findings of the study indicated the lack of knowledge and understanding of cheating and plagiarism policies as one of the factors influencing students to engage

on risks of academic cheating. Due to that lack of adequate knowledge, students therefore, try to make sense of what is considered part of academic integrity on their own. Through their social interactions, they get misconceptions of what constitutes academic dishonesty. Some respondents reported having done things, thinking that they were acceptable, not knowing that those actions were actually considered as breaking the ethical codes of academic integrity. Albert Bandura's theory of social learning portends that individuals learn through their social interactions with others. In their social interactions they are given a definition of what constitutes good or bad behaviour (Kalkstein et al., 2016). In light of these findings, it appears that the students' lack of this knowledge is linked to the characteristics of their social agents.

The findings also indicated the presence of individual difficulties such as: one's fear of failing, too much pressure from parents and stress concerning personal life as contributing towards one's intentions to cheat academically. These findings are in agreement to the theory of reasoned action. The students, as indicated in the findings of the study are motivated to cheat because of the desired outcomes of cheating. The theory of reasoned action states that, the benefits or outcomes of performing the behaviour increases one's intentions to perform the behaviour which consequently makes it more possible for the behaviour to be performed (Fishbein, 1979). Findings indicated the lack of adequate awareness on the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and academic cheating. This entails that should they have been aware of the consequences; they would have been less likely to engage on crimes of academic cheating. The theory of planned behaviour, positive attitudes, individual norms and the mindfulness of control measures can either influence or deter the acts of academic cheating (Ajzen, 1991). In light of this theory, the respondents in this study proposed recommendations they considered appropriate to make them knowledgeable of the consequences of academic dishonesty behaviours.

#### **5.5. Limitations of the study**

The study was conducted at the University of Zululand and its findings might not be generalizable to institutions of higher education that do not share the same characteristics as the study area. The respondents only provided information on academic dishonesty tendencies. Self-reports in research have been examined because they lack observations to support them (Beck & Ajzen, 1991). Respondents' responses also have the possibility of being influenced by their attempts to provide

socially desirable responses and to deny performing socially undesirable behaviours like cheating in an exam. Furthermore, the use of open-ended questionnaires only as a data collection tool has its methodological shortcomings.

## **5.6. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

- 5.1.1. This study revealed that inadequate knowledge and understanding of the institutional policies of academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism is what influences students to engage on such behaviours. The University should therefore have programs aimed at educating and familiarizing students, especially first year students with the institutions' policies addressing academic integrity matters. Petty (2014) is also of the same opinion as he also acclaimed that there has to be programs in place in the institutions of higher education aimed at assisting students from high school to deal with their weaknesses.
- 5.1.2. According to the findings of this study; students end up committing the crimes of cheating during examinations and plagiarism because they have inadequate professional writing and study skills. Didarloo and Khalkhali (2014) spoke of the importance of developing and nurturing students study skills for better academic performance. Professional writing as well as study methods' workshops are highly recommended for improved academic performance and less academic dishonesty behaviours.
- 5.1.3. Findings also indicated the individual difficulties that students often face with their families and also the fears that come with the examination process as what contributes to academic cheating. It would be very helpful for the University to run awareness campaigns, especially in the beginning of each semester to make known the student support services available on campus where students can go for general academic counselling, interpersonal skills counselling, stress, grief/bereavement, time management, study skills, exam preparation strategies, depression and a lot more emotional, social, academic or mental health issues they often encounter as they embark their academic journeys.

5.1.4. The findings also indicated the existence of students who are not fully committed to their studies as they do not prepare adequately for examinations and also strive for grades over learning. These students are therefore prepared to do anything, even breaking the law in order to perform academically. To curb this bad behaviour; the University has to have awareness programs and workshops in place to motivate the students' desires for learning. The university has to make use of software programs that detect plagiarized work for every assignment given as a form of motivating students to do their work earnestly. This software has to be consistently applied in all faculties and by every lecturer.

5.1.5. Most importantly, it is also very crucial that the importance of the institutional policies of academic integrity is stressed equally to all students regardless of their study levels. Consistency in their application should be maintained so that students understand their importance. These will make every student aware of what behaviour constitutes academic dishonesty as well as the consequences of going against the ethical codes of academic integrity.

#### **5.7. Prospects for future researchers**

Future research should look at replicating the study whilst considering other student characteristics not included in this study. While quantitative and qualitative research designs each have their strengths and limitations, they can be effective if they are both used to compensate for their methodological limitations. Consequently, the use of triangulation of more than one method of data collection could have been better to compensate for the limitations of the open-ended questionnaires.

#### **5.8. Conclusion**

This study addressed the factors influencing students to engage on crime activities of cheating during examinations and plagiarism. The study was conducted in order to establish these factors as well as the extent of the students' awareness of the consequences of cheating during examinations and plagiarism. The current study was conducted on students at the University of Zululand (kwa-Dlangezwa campus) which is located in South Africa, KwaZulu- Natal province. As indicated previously,

there is insufficient information about academic dishonesty that caters for the current generation and mostly for the South African population which addresses the factors influencing university students to engage on risks of academic cheating. The current study was aimed at providing the University of Zululand, as well as other institutions of higher education that are likely to identify with the current study's population group or the proposed recommendations with the most recent and profound information about students' dishonest academic tendencies.

The findings of this study indicated: the lack of knowledge of the institutional policies of academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism, lack of studying and professional writing skills, individual difficulties during examinations, poor time management, inadequate preparation, the desire for grades over learning as well as the challenges within the institution (inadequate resources) as what influences academic dishonesty tendencies. Findings also indicated that the inadequate information of the policies is also related to the students' lack of awareness of the consequences of conducting the crimes of plagiarism and cheating during examinations. Recommendations were made as to what the respondents considered appropriate to combat the issue of academic dishonesty, especially the lack of awareness.

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**Appendix 1: Letter to the Registrar**

University of Zululand

P O Box X1001

KwaDlangezwa

3886

Mr DE Janse van Rensburg

The Registrar

University of Zululand

P O Box X1001

KwaDlangezwa

3886

20/09/2016

Dear Ms/Mr

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand. My supervisor is Dr DC Kent and Ms LO Makhonza.

The proposed topic of my research is: Factors Influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating at the University of Zululand. The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- (b) To establish the extent of the awareness of the consequences of engaging on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

I am hereby seeking your consent to grant me the permission to conduct my research study in your institution. To assist you in reaching a decision, I have

attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy the research instruments which I intend using in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

**Candidate:** Ms S. Mnguni

**Phone:** 071 776 0366/ 060 936 3493.

**Email:** nkule.a.k.a.coorey@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Dr D.C Kent

**Phone:** 035 902 6385

**Email:** KentC@unizulu.ac.za

**Co-Supervisor:** Ms L.O Makhonza

**Phone:** 035 902 6236

**Email:** MakhonzaL@unizulu.ac.za

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a bound copy of the dissertation.

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



---

Sebenzile Mnguni

## Appendix 2: Letter to the Dean Faculty of Education

University of Zululand  
P O Box X1001  
KwaDlangezwa  
3886

Prof DC Sibaya  
Dean: Faculty of Education  
University of Zululand  
P O Box X1001  
KwaDlangezwa  
3886  
20/09/2016

Dear Ms/Mr

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand. My supervisor is Dr DC Kent and Ms LO Makhonza.

The proposed topic of my research is: Factors Influencing Risky Behaviours among Students at the University of Zululand. The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- (b) To establish the extent of the awareness of the consequences of engaging on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

I am hereby seeking your consent to grant me the permission to conduct my research study in your institution. To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy the research instruments which I intend using in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

**Candidate:** Ms S. Mnguni

**Phone:** 071 776 0366/ 060 936 3493.

**Email:** nkule.a.k.a.coorey@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Dr D.C Kent

**Phone:** 035 902 6385

**Email:** KentC@unizulu.ac.za

**Co-Supervisor:** Ms L.O Makhonza

**Phone:** 035 902 6236

**Email:** MakhonzaL@unizulu.ac.za

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a bound copy of the dissertation.

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



---

Sebenzile Mnguni

### Appendix 3: Letter to the Dean Faculty of Arts

University of Zululand  
P O Box X1001  
KwaDlangezwa  
3886

Prof GH Kamwendo  
Dean: Faculty of Arts  
University of Zululand  
P O Box X1001  
KwaDlangezwa  
3886  
20/09/2016

Dear Ms/Mr

#### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand. My supervisor is Dr DC Kent and Ms LO Makhonza.

The proposed topic of my research is: Factors influencing risky behaviours among students at the University of Zululand. The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- (b) To establish the extent of the awareness of the consequences of engaging on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

I am hereby seeking your consent to grant me the permission to conduct my research study in your institution. To assist you in reaching a decision, I have

attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy the research instruments which I intend using in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

**Candidate:** Ms S. Mnguni

**Phone:** 071 776 0366/ 060 936 3493.

**Email:** nkule.a.k.a.coorey@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Dr D.C Kent

**Phone:** 035 902 6385

**Email:** KentC@unizulu.ac.za

**Co-Supervisor:** Ms L.O Makhonza

**Phone:** 035 902 6236

**Email:** MakhonzaL@unizulu.ac.za

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a bound copy of the dissertation.

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely'



---

Sebenzile Mnguni

#### **Appendix 4: Letter to the Dean Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law**

University of Zululand  
P O Box X1001  
KwaDlangezwa  
3886

Prof D. D Tewari  
Dean: Faculty of Commerce, Administration & Law  
University of Zululand  
P O Box X1001  
KwaDlangezwa  
3886  
20/09/2016

Dear Ms/Mr

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand. My supervisor is Dr DC Kent and Ms LO Makhonza.

The proposed topic of my research is: Factors influencing risky behaviours among students at the University of Zululand. The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- (b) To establish the extent of the awareness of the consequences of engaging on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

I am hereby seeking your consent to grant me the permission to conduct my research study in your institution. To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy the research instruments which I intend using in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

**Candidate:** Ms S. Mnguni

**Phone:** 071 776 0366/ 060 936 3493.

**Email:** nkule.a.k.a.coorey@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Dr D.C Kent

**Phone:** 035 902 6385

**Email:** KentC@unizulu.ac.za

**Co-Supervisor:** Ms L.O Makhonza

**Phone:** 035 902 6236

**Email:** MakhonzaL@unizulu.ac.za

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a bound copy of the dissertation.

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



---

Sebenzile Mnguni

## Appendix 5: Letter to the Dean Faculty of Science and Agriculture

University of Zululand  
P O Box X1001  
KwaDlangezwa  
3886

Prof OM Ndwandwe  
Dean: Faculty of Science and Agriculture  
University of Zululand  
P O Box X1001  
KwaDlangezwa  
3886  
20/09/2016

Dear Ms/Mr

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand. My supervisor is Dr DC Kent and Ms LO Makhonza.

The proposed topic of my research is: Factors influencing risky behaviours among students at the University of Zululand. The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- (b) To establish the extent of the awareness of the consequences of engaging on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism and academic cheating.

I am hereby seeking your consent to grant me the permission to conduct my research study in your institution. To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy the research instruments which I intend using in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

**Candidate:** Ms S. Mnguni

**Phone:** 071 776 0366/ 060 936 3493.

**Email:** nkule.a.k.a.coorey@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Dr D.C Kent

**Phone:** 035 902 6385

**Email:** KentC@unizulu.ac.za

**Co-Supervisor:** Ms L.O Makhonza

**Phone:** 035 902 6236

**Email:** MakhonzaL@unizulu.ac.za

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a bound copy of the dissertation.

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



---

Sebenzile Mnguni

## Appendix 6: Ethical Clearance

<p><b>UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE</b> (Reg No: UZREC 171110-030)</p>		<p><b>RESEARCH &amp; INNOVATION</b> Website: <a href="http://www.umzulu.ac.za">http://www.umzulu.ac.za</a> Private Bag X1001 Kwadlangezwa 3886 Tel: 035 902 6807 Fax: 035 902 6222 Email: <a href="mailto:Research@uzuland.ac.za">Research@uzuland.ac.za</a></p>
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### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

<b>Certificate Number</b>	UZREC 171110-030 PGM 2016/328		
<b>Project Title</b>	Factors influencing risky behavior's among students at the University of Zululand		
<b>Principal Researcher/ Investigator</b>	S Mguni		
<b>Supervisor and Co-supervisor</b>	Dr D Kent	Ms LO Makhonza	
<b>Department</b>	Educational Psychology and Special Education		
<b>Nature of Project</b>	Honours/4 <sup>th</sup> Year	Master's <sup>1</sup> s	Doctoral
			Departmental

The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above mentioned project proposal and the documents listed on page 2 of this Certificate.

**Special conditions**

- (1) This certificate is valid for 2 years from the date of issue
- (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format [due date: 31 October 2017]
- (3) Principal researcher must submit a report at the end of project in respect of ethical compliance

The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this Certificate, using the reference number indicated above, but may not conduct any data collection using research instruments that are yet to be approved.

Please note that the UZREC must be notified immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the UZREC
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

**Classification:**

Data collection X	Animals	Human Health	Children	Vulnerable pp.	Other
Low Risk	Medium Risk X		High Risk		

The table below indicates which documents the UZREC considered in granting this Certificate and which documents, if any, still require ethical clearance. (Please note that this is not a closed list and should new instruments be developed, these would require approval.)

Documents	Considered	To be submitted	Not required
Faculty Research Ethics Committee recommendation	X		
Animal Research Ethics Committee recommendation			X
Health Research Ethics Committee recommendation			X
Ethical clearance application form	X		
Project registration proposal	X		
Informed consent from participants	X		
Informed consent from parent/guardian			X
Permission for access to sites/information/participants	X		
Permission to use documents/copyright clearance			X
Data collection/survey instrument/questionnaire	X		
Data collection instrument in appropriate language		Only if necessary	
Other data collection instruments		Only if used	

The UZREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Certificate if
  - a) Any unethical principles or practices are revealed or suspected
  - b) Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
  - c) Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature to require
  - d) The conditions contained in this Certificate have not been adhered to
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting the research

*Gideon De Wet*  
 Professor Gideon De Wet  
 Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee  
 Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation  
 07 November 2016

**CHAIRPERSON**  
**UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND RESEARCH**  
**ETHICS COMMITTEE (UZREC)**  
**REG NO: UZREC 17111030**  
  
**07-11-2016**  
  
**RESEARCH & INNOVATION OFFICE**

## Appendix 7: Advert

**WE WANT TO TALK ABOUT ACADEMIC CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM!!!**



**Would you be interested in participating in responding to an open ended questionnaire about academic cheating?**

**Do you have an experience in academic cheating including plagiarism, an undergraduate or postgraduate student from the University of Zululand and of the age of 18 and above?**

I am looking for male and female students from the University of Zululand to be part of my Masters research exploring factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating at the University of Zululand.

This will be done through responding to an open ended questionnaire which might take you **10-15 minutes!!**

If you will be interested in participating in this study please contact me by:

- Email- [academiccheatingstudy2016@gmail.com](mailto:academiccheatingstudy2016@gmail.com)
- SMS- 0609363493
- "please call me"- 0609363493

**PLEASE NOTE: CONFIDENTIALITY IS GUARANTEED!!!**

## Appendix 8: Research questionnaire

I am a Master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand. I am carrying out a research in partial fulfilment of my studies.

I kindly request you to provide your response to what you think might be the factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating at the University of Zululand by responding to this brief questionnaire, this should take no more than 15 minutes.

Your name and specific identifying information is not required and confidentiality is guaranteed.

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Home language:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Ethnic group:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Country of Origin:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Faculty:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Level of study (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup>):** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Marital status:** \_\_\_\_\_

This study's aim is to find out about some factors influencing risky behaviours among students at the University of Zululand with regards to academic cheating during examinations as well as plagiarism during professional writing.

**The specific objectives of the study are:**

- To establish the factors influencing students to take risks on crime activities like academic cheating during examinations and plagiarism.
- To establish the extent on the awareness of the consequences of engaging on plagiarism and cheating during examinations.

Please provide your responses to the following research questions. Be as open and honest as you can. If at all you feel like the question is too personal or somehow demeaning, you are free to refrain from answering it. All the information gathered will be kept secured, nothing will be used against you.

1. Do you regard conducting plagiarism as a risky behaviour?

Tick appropriate box 

YES	NO
-----	----

What do you think influences this type of risky behaviour?

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---

On a scale of 1 to 10 how spread is plagiarism at UZ?

2. Do you regard 

--

 academic cheating during exams as a risky behaviour?

Tick appropriate box

YES	NO
-----	----

What do you think influences this type of risky behaviour?

---

---

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---

3. Would you say that the university's environment has an influence on the students' risky behaving concerning academic cheating and plagiarism?

Tick appropriate 

YES	NO
-----	----

 box

Explain how so.

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4. What in your understanding are the consequences of engaging in plagiarism?

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5. What in your understanding are the consequences of engaging in academic cheating during examinations?

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---

6. According to your own perspective, what do you see as the major factors contributing to students' risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism?

---

---

---

---

What do you think should be done to combat the issue of plagiarism?

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7. According to your own perspective, what do you see as the major factors contributing to students' risky behaviours with regards to academic cheating during exams?

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What do you think should be done to combat the issue of academic cheating during exams?

---

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8. What information and skills will students need on risky behaviours with regards to plagiarism?

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And if the institution was to implement an intervention programme what would you like to see the programme addressing?

---

---

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9. What information and skills will students need on risky behaviours with regards to academic cheating during exams?

---

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---

And if the institution was to implement an intervention programme what would you like to see the programme addressing?

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10. What are the common risky behaviours that the students at the University of Zululand are likely to engage on?

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11. Do you have anything else to add concerning the factors influencing the students' risky behaviours?

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12. In your opinion, does the university have policies on the consequences of:

a) Plagiarism? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Examination cheating? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Were these policies communicated to students? When? \_\_\_\_\_

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End of questionnaire. Thank you for your valuable time. Your thoughts, opinions and ideas are highly valued and will be considered for the purpose of this research study.

## **Appendix 9: Open ended Questionnaire Information sheet**



### **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This document is intended to provide you with information about this study and your role within it. In order to participate in this study, you **MUST** be a male or female registered student at the University of Zululand and be 18 years old and above.

My name is Sebenzile Mnguni, a post graduate student at the University of Zululand. As part of my master's degree, am conducting a study on "Factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating at the University of Zululand" I would like to know your perception of plagiarism and academic cheating, your input on factors influencing students to engage in academic cheating and plagiarism, your take on the consequences of engaging in academic cheating and plagiarism at this university and your suggestions on ways to prevent academic cheating and plagiarism among students. By conducting this research, I hope to get understanding of your perceptions on issues related to academic cheating and plagiarism.

### **Your response to the open ended questionnaire**

Responding to the questions in the open ended questionnaire might take you between 10 to 15 minutes. Do not share you responses with your friend a person sitting next to you in case there is any. Please respond to the questions to your level best. This research is looking at your opinions and experiences on this social issue therefore, there is no right or wrong answers. You are encouraged to respond to these questions freely and informally. You have no obligation to answer any of the questions that you do not want to. Your participation in this research is completely

voluntary and you are also free to leave the study any time you wish to with no negative consequences.

### **Confidentiality**

Your identity will be kept confidential in this process by using a number. However, please be advised that I cannot guarantee confidentiality if you are in a group set up and so do not discuss any personal details concerning your academic cheating or plagiarism behaviour. It is also recommended that you do not disclose any sensitive information about yourself or mention the name of the student you are referring to when taking part in this study.

### **What happens after responding to the questionnaire?**

I will take your questionnaire, assign you a number, analyse the data and produce a report. This report will be used for my masters degree in Educational Psychology and it will be examined by at least two staff members and one external examiner in the Discipline of Psychology.

This data will be available to me as the researcher and my supervisor. The data may also be analysed further in future studies. The findings of the study might also be reported at conferences and they may be used to write journal articles. In all these, your identity will be kept confidential by using your pseudonym which is a number. A brief synopsis of the findings will be made available to you upon request.

### **Storage of the research data**

The questionnaires will be kept for future research purposes such as additional analysis. They will be stored for five years in a locked cabinet in my supervisor's office, as will any other materials relating to this research. To keep your identity confidential, all the data will be stored separately from information which links it to your actual name.

### **Possible benefits of participating in the study**

By participating in this research you could benefit indirectly from this research as the findings may assist in designing interventions for students surrounding awareness of academic cheating and plagiarism within the university. At this time I do not foresee any risk that the study may cause you by participating in the research.

If the research raises other social or psychological distress you can visit the Student Services Department or contact them through TN Mnisi Tel: 0359026346 Email: [MnisiT@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:MnisiT@unizulu.ac.za).

**Additional**

If you have any questions you would like to ask, you are welcome to contact me using the details at the bottom of the page

Ms S. Mnguni

Cell: 0609363493

Email: [academiccheatingstudy2016@gmail.com](mailto:academiccheatingstudy2016@gmail.com)

If you have any questions, you may also contact my supervisors:

Supervisor: Dr D.C Kent

Phone: 035 902 6385

Email: [KentC@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:KentC@unizulu.ac.za)

Co-Supervisor: Ms L.O Makhonza

Phone: 035 902 6236

Email: [MakhonzaL@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:MakhonzaL@unizulu.ac.za)

If you have any ethical concerns about this study you can also contact Ms. S Manqele of the University of Zululand's Ethics Committee (Tel: 035 902 6887) Email: [mangeleS@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:mangeleS@unizulu.ac.za)

Thank you for your time and participation. I hope this is an interesting and rewarding experience for you.

Sincerely,

Sebenzile Mnguni

RESEARCHER

0609363493

[academiccheatingstudy2016@gmail.com](mailto:academiccheatingstudy2016@gmail.com)

Dr D.C Kent

SUPERVISOR

035 902 6385

[KentC@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:KentC@unizulu.ac.za)

**Appendix 10: Informed consent**

**Project Title: Factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating at the University of Zululand**

Sebenzile Mnguni from the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to find out about some factors influencing students to engage on risks of academic cheating at the University of Zululand. The findings will be used to inform the university programmes towards the betterment of the conditions that most students often find themselves in and as a result end up being involved on such risks.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the betterment of the lives of students in the institution towards making them aware of the factors influencing students to be engaged on risks of academic cheating during examinations so they can be able to prevent or avoid them.
4. I will participate in the project by completing a questionnaire.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative

consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research.
7. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of a research paper. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
8. I will not receive feedback regarding the results obtained during the study.
9. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Ms Sebenzile Mnguni at 071 776 0366/ 060 936 3493. Email: nkule.a.k.a.coorey@gmail.com
10. By signing this informed consent declaration I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
11. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, ..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....  
**Participant's signature**

.....  
**Date**

## Appendix 11: Researcher's Declaration

I, Sebenzile Mnguni declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to

.....

- requested him/her to ask questions if anything was unclear and I have answered them as best I can
- I am satisfied that s/he sufficiently understands all aspects of the research so as to make an informed decision on whether or not to participate.
- The conversation took place in English
- I did not use an interpreter



.....  
**Researcher's signature**

.....  
**Date**