ABSTRACT

According to the International Labour Organisation (2019), in 2018, an estimated 172 million people were unemployed worldwide. Namibia recorded an unemployment rate of 33.4% with a total of 364,411 unemployed people between the period of 2016 and 2018 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). This research explores the gendered experience of unemployment among university graduates in Windhoek. Qualitative research method and an illustrative case study research design were used in this study. Purposive Sampling was used to select ten male and ten female unemployed graduates from the University of Namibia and the Namibia University of Science and Technology. Semi-structured interview schedules were used to collect the data. The findings of this research demonstrated that unemployment has a notable effect on both males and females. However, it was established that there are differences in male and female graduates’ experiences of unemployment. The findings revealed that societal expectation and pressure to secure employment is far greater for males than it is for females. In addition, the study found that some, but not all, degree programmes offer practical skills, indicating a skills deficit among research participants from certain degree programmes. Consequently, participants’ career choices constitute a higher probability for male participants to secure employment since more males were enrolled in natural sciences degree programmes which offers practical skills as part of the course curricula. This study therefore suggests that universities and labour market should facilitate internship opportunities to accommodate graduates from all disciplines. This would ensure that all university graduates gain formal work experience and practical skills in order to easily and successfully transition from university into the labour market.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- ECN- Electoral Commission of Namibia
- HPP- Harambee Prosperity Plan
- MTC- Mobile Telecommunication Company
- NEEEF- New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework
- NIEIS- Namibia Integrated Employment Information System
- NIP- Namibia Institute of Pathology
- NSFAF- Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund
- NSI- Namibian Standards Institution
- NUST- Namibia University of Science and Technology
- SADC- Southern African Development Countries
- TIPEEG- Targeted Intervention Program for Employment and Economic Growth
- UNAM- University of Namibia
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dad Frederick de Koker; my mom Johanna Elizabeth de Koker; my son Liam Frederich Roger de Koker; my partner Roger Zarckovitz Cloete and my siblings. Thank you for believing in me; I am wholeheartedly grateful for your support.
DECLARATION

I, Deidre Estelle de Koker, hereby declare that this thesis: “THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT: AN EXPLORATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY GRADUATES IN WINDHOEK”, is a true reflection of my own research and that this work or part hereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution of higher education.

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........................................  ........................................  ........................................
Name of Student                              Signature                              Date
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation of the study

The global economic slowdown over the past few years has caused a substantial increase in the unemployment rate in many countries worldwide. The increasing rate of unemployment is detrimental to the lives and livelihood of unemployed people, their families and society at large. Mwinga (2012) maintains that unemployment can lead to crime, economic warfare, death, misery, social exclusion and social instability. In isolation, unemployed individuals can experience a range of stress-related consequences that can bring about physical symptoms or lead to suicide (Wanberg, 2010). The ramification of unemployment is faced by all unemployed individuals, but the effects of unemployment are experienced differently by males and females.

Unemployment has two acceptable definitions that are used globally. The strict definition of unemployment refers to all people who are 15 years and older, that do not have a paid job, are available for work and are actively seeking employment within the period of reference; while the broad definition excludes the requirement of actively looking for work (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). The broad definition of unemployment is often acceptable in Namibia and other developing countries because of the scarcity of employment opportunities within developing countries.

In Namibia the unemployment rate has continuously fluctuated over the past ten years. In 2008 more than half of the county’s population was unemployed. Over the subsequent years, the unemployment rate decreased but continuously ascended and descended. For example, between the periods of 2014 to 2016, the unemployment
rate significantly increased by 6.1%, and between the year 2016 and 2018 the unemployment rate slightly declined by 0.6% (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). Despite the slight decline, one can however anticipate an increase in the rate of unemployment in Namibia due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The growing rate of unemployment is attributed to a number of factors which may vary from country-to-country. The increase in the overall unemployment rate in Namibia is attributed to factors such as; the first demographic dividend, minimal employment opportunities, skills deficit, discrimination and deficiency of the Namibian education system (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2015). These determinants of unemployment do not only apply to Namibia, but they are global drivers of unemployment.

The rise of unemployment among university graduates is a cause for concern, and it has become almost impossible to control. In Namibia, the unemployment rate among people with tertiary qualifications almost doubled over a period of two years, when comparing the unemployment figures for the year 2016 and 2018. According to Namibia Statistics Agency (2019), the overall unemployment rate among people with post-school qualifications in Namibia increased from 9.4% in 2014 to 24.5% in 2016. In 2018, the unemployment rate among people with post-school qualifications stood at 51.6%. Considering the persistent increase in graduate unemployment since 2014, it is important to establish methods to mitigate the further increase of graduate unemployment.

One of the major reasons for graduate unemployment in Namibia is attributed to a lack of skills among university graduates (National Planning Commission, 2018). A second major factor contributing to graduate unemployment in Namibia is the lack of
job creation in the country. The National Planning Commission (2018) asserts that Namibia’s economy is primarily driven by the extractive sector which does not ensure a build-up in the availability of jobs in the country. The high unemployment rate among university graduates and the short supply of jobs in the labour market result in much uncertainty about future employment prospects for university graduates.

The experiences of unemployment can be perceived differently by various groups of people. For instance, individuals with post-secondary qualification can experience unemployment differently to individuals without post-secondary education. Hwang (2017) argues that university students are more sensitive and susceptible to the effects of unemployment because of their high expectations for employment and wage returns, considering the time and money spent on their studies. Likewise, the experiences of unemployment may differ between males and females. Strandh, Hammarström, Nilsson, Nordenmark, and Russel (2013) maintain that male and female experiences of unemployment differ because of their structurally different positions in society. In many cultures, masculinity is associated with providing for the family. Therefore, the experience of unemployment is perceived differently among males and females because men are compelled to find employment in order to provide for their families (du Toit, de Witte, Rothmann, & van de Broeck, 2018). In general, the social context largely determines the difference in male and female experiences of unemployment.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Unemployment is a global microeconomic problem that raises concern among government ministries, economists, policy developers and the public. In Namibia,
literature on unemployment such as Shivoro, Shalyefu, and Kadhila (2017) and Sunde (2015) focuses mostly on the structural aspects of graduate unemployment and therefore little to no attention to the gender aspects associated with graduate unemployment. Hence, this study intended to explore the gendered experiences of unemployment among unemployed university graduates with the focus on contributing to the body of knowledge about unemployment from a gendered perspective within the Namibian context.

Unemployed people are confronted with different challenges including strong negative reactions from household and community members. In many cultures, it is believed that respectable and responsible people should be employed, causing stigma, shame and emotional pain among people who are unemployed (du Toit et al., 2018). Moreover, societal reaction towards unemployed people negatively influences those who are unemployed and vice versa; unemployed people can disrupt the ethical and social standards within a country (du Toit et al., 2018). Therefore, it was paramount to understand graduates experience in their search for employment and to have a clear understanding of the constraints that limit their ability to enter the labour market.

1.3 Research questions

1.3.1 What are graduates’ financial, social and psychological experiences of unemployment by gender?

1.3.2 What are graduates’ experiences in their search for jobs across genders?

1.3.3 How do graduates perceive the quality of their qualifications in relation to employers’ expectations?
1.3.4 Are there any differences in the experience of unemployment and in accessing the labour market between male and female unemployed graduates?

1.4 Significance of the study
This study contributed to the body of research on graduates’ experiences of unemployment in Namibia from a gender perspective. It allowed unemployed graduates to provide a personal narrative of their financial, social and psychological experiences of unemployment. The findings of this study brought about awareness of the unfavourable challenges endured by unemployed university graduates throughout their search for employment. It also provided awareness of the social pressure exerted on unemployed individuals which negatively affected them personally and throughout their search for employment. Furthermore, it provided insight into graduates' personal perception of their skills in relation to employers' expectation. University graduates accounted for their own skills and abilities acquired throughout university since skills mismatch is most often considered through the lens of employers.

1.5 Limitation of the study
The sample produced rich and sufficient data on the topic, but due to the small sample size and the nature of this study, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire population of unemployed graduates. Limited Namibian based literature on the topic restricts full exploration and analysis of literature on this phenomenon from a Namibian context thus limiting the basis of the literature review.

1.6 Delimitation of the study
The research was conducted in Windhoek among unemployed university graduates from the University of Namibia (UNAM) and Namibia University of Science and
Technology (NUST). Graduates from other tertiary institutions were not included in this study. This study was conducted among university graduates who were in Windhoek during the time of the research. Owing to a lack of funds, this study was not conducted outside Windhoek.

1.7 Thesis outline

This thesis is comprised of six chapters in total. The chapters are outlined as follows: Chapter One provides a short introduction to the research study in conjunction with the problem statement, research questions, and the significance of the study. It also sets out the limitations and delimitations of this research study. Chapter Two presents the literature review and the theoretical frameworks pertaining to the research study. Furthermore, the research methodology used to carry out the study is discussed under Chapter Three, followed by Chapter Four which describes the research findings. Chapter Five presents a detailed discussion on how the research findings relate to the literature and theoretical frameworks that were used in this study. Lastly, Chapter Six presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction
The following section discusses literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to this study. The literature focused on unemployment in Namibia with particular attention on graduate unemployment. Furthermore, it provides a description on the effects of unemployment and explores the underlying causes for increased unemployment among university graduates. Moreover, Chapter Two looks at interventions set in place to decrease the escalation of unemployment while briefly exploring whether or not these interventions have been successful. Premised on previous literature, possible ideas on how to decrease unemployment are also presented under this section.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks
Different reasons for graduate unemployment depend on the theoretical framework from which the problem was analysed. This study draws on three theoretical frameworks, i.e. the Skills Mismatch Theory, the Marxist Crisis Theory and the Feminist Standpoint Theory. The Skills Mismatch Theory and the Marxist Crisis Theory provide a substantive explanation for the growing rate of unemployment among university graduates from a micro and macro perspective. The Feminist Standpoint Theory accurately draws from personal experiences of unemployed graduates by creating awareness of their social, political and cultural identities as unemployed graduates. The theories reviewed under this study, accurately tied in with the research topic and addressed the aim of this research study.
2.2.1 Skills Mismatch Theory

Skills mismatch is a term used to refer to an imbalance between the skills offered by job seekers and the skills needed by employers. Mwinga (2012) defines skills mismatch as a form of structural unemployment, whereby the nature of the educational system does not correspond with the needs of the labour market. Similarly, Handel (2003) defines skills mismatch as a situation in which job seekers’ skills and education levels are above or below hiring firms’ expectations for certain employment positions. For instance, it refers to having a shortfall in skills needed to competently carry out work tasks or having more skills than what is required within a specific occupation.

The Skills Mismatch Theory is far more complex than an inconsistency in employee skills, relative to employer requirements. McGuinness, Pouliakas, and Redmond (2017) maintain that skills mismatch is different in terms of its determinants, how it manifests itself, how it is measured and how the consequences of skills mismatch are felt. For example, skills mismatch can be measured in terms of a vertical mismatch or horizontal mismatch. Vertical mismatch is categorised in terms of over-education, under-education, over-skilling and under-skilling; while a horizontal mismatch is categorised in terms of skill gaps, skill shortage, unfilled and hard-to-fill vacancies (McGuinness et al., 2017). Due to the complexity of ‘skills mismatch’ this analysis would be a general discussion of this theory and how it applies to the Namibian context. It is however important to understand that there are different types of skills mismatch.

In Namibia, there is a vertical mismatch of over-education and under-education. Namibia Statistics Agency (2015) asserts that methods such as mismatch by
occupation and relative wage returns determined incidence of over-education and under-education in Namibia, but the extent of under-skilling among university graduates in Namibia is still unknown. However, it can be argued that under-skilling among university graduates can be attributed to a lack of work experience given that most students directly shift from high school to university to obtain tertiary education. Thereafter, they have to search for employment without having any work experience.

Individuals in countries all over the world have become engrossed with obtaining education since tertiary education can increase the likelihood of finding employment. Handel (2003) maintains that workers in America were led to obtain more education than what was actually needed for the job, because of inflated hiring requirements. Tertiary education can also increase the possibility of obtaining higher wages and employment in high-ranking positions. Hence, the commodification of education which implies that the investment made in education will be recovered through well-paid jobs (Nanping, 2004). However, there are conflicting arguments about whether university graduates’ skills actually match employer’s requirements.

A lack of practical skills among university graduates is a global phenomenon. Handel (2003) claims that journalistic reports, policy debates and sociological writing on the economy all indicate an imbalance between the workers skills, education and demand for human capital in the current economy. In a similar way, van de Rheede (2012) asserts that university graduate skills and attributes do not always correspond with what employers require and this contributed to high levels of unemployment among university graduates. For this reason, tertiary education should be backed up with practical skills that are up to date with employers’ demands and the needs of the
economy. Nevertheless, the lack of practical skills is not the only determinant of graduate unemployment since graduate nurses in Namibia acquired practical training as part of their course curricula, yet also experience difficulty finding jobs (Nashuuta, 2018).

The attainment of tertiary education is automatically associated with skills acquisition. In certain degree programmes, universities often provide core skills but not always practical experience. Namibia Statistics Agency (2015) argues that qualification attainment is a formal recognition of someone possessing a given set of skills. However, practical skills are not often prioritised as part of the course curricula as university education mostly imparts skills that allow graduates to easily learn techniques needed for their job tasks (Pietro and Urwin, 2006). For this reason, educational qualification is merely signal for potential productivity, but it does not necessarily enhance productivity (Shvoro et al., 2017). This highlights the importance of practical or formal work experience in improving graduates competence and proficiency in successfully carrying out their jobs.

Employers often expect job seekers to possess multiple skills and attributes as an indication of their ability to successfully carry out their job functions. Besides having a good educational background, they should possess practical skills and key complex competencies such as critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, creativity, communication and soft skills (Salmi, 2017). At the same time, computer literacy and technology-related competencies are also considered extremely important basic skills that are required in the current technologically advanced economy (Handel, 2003). Furthermore, employees are expected to add value to companies by ensuring lifelong learning and self-development (Shvoro et al., 2017). Some of these skills
are acquired throughout university but not all of them. Instead, graduates have acquired basic skills that can be further developed while employed.

Tertiary institutions, the labour market and university graduates echo the same sentiment on the importance of skills attainment. Shivoro et al. (2017) found that higher education institutions, employers and graduates emphasised the importance of graduates acquiring other attributes, besides subject-specific knowledge. Internships and work-integrated learning programmes are methods that can be used to impart practical skills among university graduates. In addition, work-integrated learning programmes familiarises students with the labour market, acquaints them with what is expected in their chosen professions and prepares them to enter the labour market (Shivoro et al., 2017).

Despite recognising the importance of practical skills, employers often fail to offer internships or guide job seekers about what is required of them. Pollard et al. (2015) states that employers do not offer internships due to training costs, lack resources and because they would have to recruit interns for an extended period in order for them to gain true work experience. Furthermore, Altmann, Falk, Jäger, and Zimmermann (2015) maintain that throughout the search for employment, relatively little information and feedback about the guidelines of the search process are available which brings about bias in individuals beliefs.

In conclusion, employment relies heavily on company profitably. Profitability largely depends on skills set, and this is why employers prefer recruiting individuals with a fair amount of skills and attributes. McGuinness et al. (2017) assert that firm level profitability could be negatively impacted by skill shortages. Notwithstanding, labour markets and university graduates are mutually dependent on each other. Graduates
are significantly dependent on the labour market to enhance their core skills, and the labour market is dependent on skilful employees for company profitability. Therefore, employers should create opportunities for university graduates to acquire skills and practical experience through internships or in-service training within different fields of specialisation.

2.2.2 Marxist Crisis Theory
The Marxist Crisis Theory was developed to explain the accumulation of wealth by capitalist structures and how it has resulted in the crisis that economies are confronted with today. According to Kotz (2017), the Social Structure of Accumulation Theory that was developed by Marxist economists in the late 1970’s aligns with the Marxist Crisis Theory as it draws from its key principals. A description is brought about through this theory on how the rapid and consistent accumulated capital by institutional structures over a long period has resulted in the current economic crisis. Kotz (2017) mentioned that this theory evaluates the evolution within the capitalist era from one stage to another. In that, it evaluates how mass production and maximum wealth accumulation led to outsourcing as cost-cutting measures due to low rates of profit generated. In essence, this theory portrays how the capitalist acquisitive nature of wealth accumulation has led to what is predicted to be the end to capitalism.

In neo-liberal economies like Namibia, the state has little involvement and regulation in the labour market. This gives capitalists limitless restriction to production, extraction of surplus value and the limits of the market. According to Clarke (1990), capitalist tend to develop unlimited productive forces and restrict the world’s population from consuming what is produced. Similarly, Kilman (2015) states that
companies recruit in large numbers to significantly increase production and extracting surplus value by paying low wages.

Low wages consequently restrict people to merely purchase necessities and products that they are able to afford instead of what is desired or whatever is produced. Kilman (2015) argues that the consumption demand persistently falls short of the supply of output. The inability of the proletariat to afford or purchase products has thus culminated in the overproduction and under-consumption of products hence resulting in a decline in the rate of profit. Moreover, due to high rates of unemployment and a shortfall in job creation, there is arguably a further decline in the demand for products and services. Consequently, this presents an obstacle for the bourgeois to maintain profit figures and continue business as they normally would. Moreover, if a large number of businesses fail due to weak profitability it can ultimately bring about economic stagnation.

This theory affirms that the decline in the rate of profit and the inability of companies to maintain production has resulted in the lockdown of many companies, retrenchment of employees and lower employee recruitments. Kilman (2015) maintains that the long-term effect of falling profitability results in bankruptcies, idle plants and equipment among other downturns. For instance in Namibia, the Government of the Republic of Namibia has imposed a blanket freeze on public sector recruitments to cut costs, despite experiencing a shortage of staff (Nashuuta, 2018). In addition, retrenchments were issued at various mining companies, such as Elgin Brown and Hamer, Navachab Gold Mine, Langer Heindrich Uranium Mine and perhaps other parastatal entities that created jobs for Namibians.
The fall in the rate of profit accordingly results in companies competing with one another in order to survive. Lawhon, Millington and Stokes (2018) assert that entrepreneurship is a central discourse for international development and sustainability of livelihoods. However, smaller companies often struggle to make it through an economic crisis since large monopoly corporations often have more resources and the means to increase the capacity of production and labour power. According to Clarke (1990), the purpose of capitalist production lies in the expansion of production and the realisation of surplus value. Subsequently, this results in companies with greater production having more power (Clarke, 1990).

This theory implies that large corporations are able to produce in large quantities and sell products at reasonably affordable prices compared to smaller enterprises. Kilman (2015) argues that lower prices allow some capitalists to obtain more profit than the value of the product and surplus value they produce. However, since small enterprises lack the capacity and the financial means to produce in large quantities; they are unable to undercharge products as they would make a loss.

It has been speculated that capitalism has reached a climax due to the economic crisis. Kotz (2010) argues that severe economic crises can lead to the supersession of a capitalist economy to socialist economy. However, since the 2007/2008 economic recession is persistently still evident today, capitalism may not be overthrown. Moreover, the economic conditions can still be re-established. However, there are ways in which the economy can be restored. For example, Clarke (1990) suggests that higher employee wages can restore the unfavourable economic conditions. Moreover, the increase in employee wages would significantly contribute to an increase in consumer spending and boost the economy. It can also bring about an
increase in worker productivity, increase employment creation and contribute to the improvement of livelhoods.

2.2.3 Feminist Standpoint Theory

The Feminist Standpoint Theory is a critical theory that focuses on the relations between the production of knowledge and practice of power (Harding, 2004). This theory was used to accurately draw on the lives of unemployed graduates in order to produce knowledge about their identities associated with unemployment within a social and political context. In particular, it was used to interpret male and female graduates’ experiences of unemployment.

According to this theory, marginalised groups have a distinctive and authentic set of experiences. Collins (1986) claims that the political and economic status of the marginalised provides them with a distinctive set of experiences and consciousness than that available to other groups. Moreover, Haraway (1988) argues that the subjugated are least likely to deny any critical and fundamental experiences. For instance, unemployed individuals do not earn the right to voice their opinions on family or community affairs, because of their inability to contribute financially (du Toit et al., 2018). In addition, in many cultures, men are expected to provide for their families hence engendering differences in males and females experiences of unemployment (du Toit et al., 2018). Although the Feminist Standpoint Theory is determined to justify the accuracy in the subjective reality of the oppressed, one cannot say that one position is more credible than the other without interpreting what the other holds. Therefore, marginalised and the privileged people’s perspectives are both necessary in an effort to unravel the truth.
According to this theory, it is paramount for unemployed graduates to understand how the labour market functions as a means of finding solutions to the problem of unemployment. For instance, in order for job seekers to succeed in finding jobs, they have to exert a lot of effort in their job search, know what search channels to make use of and what types of jobs to target (Altmann, et al., 2015). However, emancipator groups that arise from marginalisation are often in a better position to strategise and come up with solutions for job creation. Stoetzel and Yuval-Davis (2002) assert that emancipator movement have to critically understand the hegemonic centre and the way people situated there think and act. In addition, Hartsock (1983) maintains that oppressed groups learn to identify their distinctive opportunities by turning oppressive feature of the groups’ condition into a source of critical insight about how the dominant society thinks and is structured. Therefore, job seekers are not passive victims of unemployment, but can actively influence their labour market outcomes (Baumann, 2016). University graduates are therefore tasked to understand how the labour market functions, what employers require and how they can make themselves more employable, but they also have to collectively challenge dominant structural factors that perpetuate unemployment.

The Feminist Standpoint Theory is an epistemology and a narration of the evolution of knowledge and strategies of action by collective groups who share social relations within given periods (Cockburn, 2015). On multiple accounts, unemployed graduates in Namibia have strongly communicated their unfavourable circumstances by pleading with the Government of the Republic of Namibia to ensure employment creation. Ikela (2017) maintains that unemployed graduates have collectively organised public demonstrations to demand employment creation for unemployed
graduates. Needless to say, it is clear that employment opportunities still remain limited and many graduates are still without employment.

According to Feminist Standpoint Theory, marginalised groups should openly reveal their material conditions, as this will raise awareness and sensitivity to those in power. Harding (2004) maintains that Feminist Standpoint Theory values experiences of subjugated groups, raising oppositional consciousness and empowering oppressed groups. The Government of the Republic of Namibia and employers are equally mindful of the pressing issue of graduate unemployment as a result of various public demonstrations that advocated for employment creation. Moreover, raising attention on discrepancies in recruitment processes can also be viewed as empowerment, because it is a fundamental stepping stone towards equality and non-discrimination in recruitment processes. According to Alonso and Mascoso (2018), job seekers’ perceptions of job interviews provide an account of their thoughts and feelings about assessment instruments, employee selection and organisational justice.

Unemployment in Namibia is in itself a political issue attached to social and culture elements. Hartsock (1983) maintains that politics and culture often function as a ‘prison house’ of knowledge, but they also function as a ‘toolbox’ that provide new perspectives and ways of seeing the world. As an illustration, culture and social norms determine how unemployment is perceived and how unemployed people are viewed and treated. According to Shanka (2016), people’s behaviour towards the unemployed are often determined by social norms which consequently result in unemployed people experiencing social pressure, stigma, social approval and social exclusion.
The Feminist Standpoint Theory is also concerned with the various intersecting forms of oppression. Hartsock (1983) maintains that the marginalised can unfold ideological strategies that justify sex-gender system and other intersecting systems of oppression. University graduates are thus confronted with various intersecting forms of oppression. For example, Mncayi (2016) asserts that job prospects are mostly restricted for young women than for young men. In addition, some employers prefer to hire graduates from certain universities over others, because of the quality education that certain universities provide (Mncayi, 2016). This theory will therefore help to clearly outline the deep-rooted impacts of unemployment on both male and female graduates and the intersecting forms of oppression that they encountered throughout their search for employment.

2.3 The nature of unemployment in lower-middle income countries

All countries are characterised by both working and non-working populations. However, depending on the levels of development, the characteristics and demography of unemployment may vary between countries. Nanping (2004) established that unemployment presents different characteristics associated with particular social and economic systems within a country. As a result of unstable social and economic conditions worldwide, unemployment is thus not confined to developing and underdeveloped countries, but it is apparent in developed countries too.

Low-income and lower-middle income countries are profoundly affected by unemployment. International Labour Organisation (2019) indicates that in 2018 low-income countries had the highest unemployment rate in the world, followed by lower-middle income countries. In particular, Southern African Development
Countries (SADC) and other sub-Saharan African countries have a huge challenge combating youth unemployment. Countries within these regions have tried to reduce the level of unemployment through the implementation of economic, institutional and social policies, but without success (Adjor & Kebalo, 2018).

Corruption, increased youth population and skills deficits are some of the major contributing factors to unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa. Adjor and Kebalo (2018) state that in developed and developing countries corruption is a major source of unemployment. Furthermore, many young people struggle to find jobs in sub-Saharan Africa because of the fast growing labour force (Fox & Gandhi, 2021). Moreover, weak education system in countries like Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania has resulted in job seekers lacking the requisite skills needed for employment (Motsatsi, 2019).

2.4 The nature of unemployment in Namibia

Employment modalities have changed in both poor and rich industrialised countries. According to Ferguson and Li (2018), labour relation trends have become radically heterogeneous. At this juncture, employment is classified in terms of informal work, own account work and paid work which can be categorised as temporary, part-time and permanent employment (Ferguson & Li, 2018). Furthermore, the current employment patterns indicate that the demand for labour is also radically more than the supply of available jobs (Lawhon et al., 2018).

The high rates of unemployment in Namibia can be traced back to 1990 when Namibia became independent. According to Sunde and Akanbi (2016), in 1990, the unemployment rate for the Republic of Namibia stood at approximately 19%.
Currently, twenty nine years after Namibia gained independence; the unemployment rate has further escalated (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). Considering the fluctuation and continuous escalation of unemployment throughout the years, it can be expected that the rate of unemployment will be even higher in the years to come.

Male and female unemployment in Namibia remains relatively high, but the country has made great strides to ensure female’s equal participation in the labour market. Namibia Statistics Agency (2019) indicates that 34.3% female and 32.5% males are currently unemployed, thus indicating a slight difference of 1.8%. In addition, it is evident that rural unemployment in Namibia decreased to a notable extent. The latest unemployment indicators show that rural unemployment reduced by 5.7% over a period of two years (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). The decrease in rural unemployment is a positive indicator of an expansion in the labour market. Moreover, increasing employment opportunities in rural areas could subsequently lead to a decline in urban unemployment. However, while rural unemployment decreased, urban unemployment further increased by 3.1% (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019).

Unemployment is largely determined, but not limited to the level of education that individuals acquire. The unemployment rate with consideration of the level of education is diverse in Namibia. People with junior secondary and primary education have the highest combined unemployment rate of 74.7%; while persons with university certificates, diplomas, degrees and post-graduate qualifications have a combined unemployment rate of 51.6% (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). Irrespective of qualification attainment, the statistics indicate that people with different levels of education find it challenging to secure employment in Namibia.
2.5 Youth unemployment

Unemployment among the youth presents an urgent call for intervention as nearly half of the Namibian youth are unemployed, with an unemployment rate of 46.1% (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). The youth play an integral part in the future development of countries, therefore it is very important to understand the reasons for youth unemployment and the extent thereof.

Youth unemployment in developing countries is more critical than in developed countries, because of the need for survival. Namibia Statistics Agency (2019) states that in order to survive, it is pivotal for each individual of employable age to get a job in developing countries because of the high levels of poverty. Similarly, International Labour Organisation (2019) mentions that living without employment is not an option for people in developing countries because of the high rates of poverty. Therefore, as a means to survive, many people opt for any kind of economic activity even when it means earning low wages, working long hours and working under harsh conditions.

High youth unemployment is largely attributed to levels of education and a lack of skills. Arguably, due to the high learner dropout rates, a large portion of the youth in Namibia has low levels of education. According to Lamprecht (2019), in 2015 alone, 16000 Namibian learners did not return to school for grades 11 and 12. Furthermore, the youth lack skills because primary and secondary education in Namibia is more theoretical than practical. Namibia Statistic Agency (2015) maintains that skills incorporation in school curricula is non-existent which is why such a large section of the Namibian youth does not have jobs. Lamprecht (2019) advises for a reform of education curricula in Namibia, from a predominantly theory-based to skills-based
curricula. A good education should therefore be supported with proper skills to ensure that the youth will be able to enter the labour market after completing high school.

On a final note, youth unemployment in Namibia is also attributed to the youth bulge. This is when the population of people between the ages 15-24 years increases at a significantly faster rate than other age groups (Ortiz & Cummins, 2012). The Namibian labour market is expanding at a very slow pace and can thus not accommodate the entire youth. As a consequence unemployment among the youth has intensified (Namibia statistics Agency, 2015). The increasing number of employable youth and the scarcity of available jobs in Namibia consequently results in the increasing rate of unemployment among the youth.

2.6 Graduate unemployment

Higher education attainment has become more easily accessible in many countries all over the world. Namibia’s tertiary education system is still relatively young given that the first university in Namibia was only established 28 years ago. After Namibia’s independence, the black youth had a greater likelihood of acquiring tertiary education than before independence (Eita & Ashipala, 2010). In addition, opportunities for tertiary education became equally accessible for both males and females.

Tertiary education is very important for reasons such as knowledge creation, alleviation of poverty, self-actualisation and overall development. According to Salmi (2017), knowledge and innovation are key factors for development as high standard human capital can be used to effectively manage countries’ economies. In a similar way, Marope (2005) maintains that tertiary education can be applied in
different settings to facilitate economic and social development. Moreover, building an educated nation ensures that the future generation can affectively take over from their predecessors to continue development. It is well-established that development is a continuation of growth and change, and so education offered at higher education institutions should develop accordingly with the expectations of the labour market.

The attainment of tertiary education enables people to stand a better chance of securing employment, earning well-paid job and it contributes to improved livelihoods. Hwang (2017) affirms that college students invest time and money in higher education, to acquire higher-valued jobs. However, due to increasing unemployment, graduates will have to settle for low wages and positions that are not in line with their fields of study.

Thousands of graduates are unemployed as private and state owned enterprises are hiring at a lower rate than before due to the current economic crisis. Shivoro et al. (2017) assert that both the employers and employees face higher risk and uncertainty regarding financial stability of companies. It is for this reason that employers seek skilled workers who can raise profit figures. Ikela (2017) states that employers often require that job seekers should have a certain number of years’ work experience. Consequently, university graduates have a small probability of finding employment after graduating because they often lack work experience.

2.7 Causes of graduate unemployment in Namibia

Firstly, the rate of unemployment is primarily dependent on the economic and social conditions of a country. Various macroeconomic shocks play a significant role in the sustained increase of unemployment. Sunde (2015) asserts that Namibia’s unemployment rate is attributed to macroeconomic shocks which caused a high
imbalance in the market equilibrium. In light of this, a significant disruption on the economy affects the economic performance and outcomes of the market industry which leads to economic recession and high unemployment.

Secondly, high graduate unemployment in Namibia is attributed to a delayed growth in the labour market and high student enrolment at universities. Based on Eita and Ashipala (2010) the Namibian economy is not creating enough job opportunities to absorb all graduates from Namibian tertiary institutions and graduates who study abroad. In addition, Nanping (2004) argues that graduate unemployment is attributed to massive student enrolments at universities. Student enrolment at the University of Namibia has grown from 1,400 students in 1992/93 to 24,280 in 2016 (Hangula, Matengu, Likando & Shanyanana, 2017). The supply from each university and each discipline is therefore far greater than what the labour market is able to absorb. Moreover, some courses offered at universities may be obsolete and no longer needed within the labour market.

Skills mismatch is regarded as another reason why many graduates struggle to acquire jobs. Skills mismatch is a key factor for graduate unemployment in Namibia (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2015). Since the emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) knowledge, skills and creativity have become of paramount interest to organisations. Xu, David and Kim (2018) affirm that knowledgeable and skilled workers are investments to company objectives as they provide focus, creativity and leverage.

2.8 The effects of unemployment on graduates

Unemployment can have an enormous effect on the social stability of a country. Ubbin and Ubbin (2013) report that unemployment has resulted in great tension,
hatred and communal clashes in Nigeria, where groups such as Boko Haram and Niger Delta Militants have committed armed robbery, prostitution and child trafficking due to unemployment. Moreover, Eita and Ashipala (2010) argue that high unemployment in Namibia poses a threat to the peace and stability of the country. Accordingly, severe crimes resulting from unemployment threaten social security and economic productivity, and this may lead to extreme poverty and anomie that would take decades to address.

Low self-esteem and low self-worth are some of the effects of unemployment which can negatively impact the probability of securing employment. Magagula (2017) argues that people who are unemployed can develop low self-esteem because they often compare their lives to that of people who are already employed. In addition, Shivoro et al. (2017) maintains that self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-confidence are factors that are essential for employability be achieved. Therefore, sound emotional and psychological well-being is essential in securing employment.

People who are unemployed are also prone to depression resulting from the inability to meet their families’ needs and their own. Strandh et al. (2013) argue that unemployment prevents people from establishing a structure in life, fully contributing to society and establishing social contact outside the family.

Graduates can also experience financial pressure and financial strain because they have to repay student loans. Hwang (2017) states that graduates are often left with a financial shortfall as a result of college debts and educational expenses. Graduates who are unemployed do not have the financial means to pay back student loans. For this reason the responsibility of repaying student loans fall back on parents and relatives.
Finally, looking for employment has become increasingly unsafe for job seekers. Vidros, Koliad, and Kambourakis (2016) maintain that job seekers have become more exposed to fake employment advertisements claiming to offer appealing wages and fringe benefits but who actually retrieve money and job seekers’ personal information for their personal use. Therefore, unemployment exposes job seekers to exploitation and other forms of endangerment such as human trafficking.

2.9 Differential experiences of unemployment between males and females

Employment plays an important role in identity construction. Ferguson and Li (2018) contend that having a proper job is not just about generating an income, but it equally has a lot to do with identity, gender, family and national membership. In addition, Lawhon et al. (2018) state that having a job contributes to an individuals’ sense of self, because employment is often perceived as a way of becoming a fully active citizen with dignity and moral worth. Therefore, when people are unable to contribute to their communities and families it shapes how they perceive themselves and how other people perceive them.

The effects of unemployment differ between males and females. Needless to say, both males and females who seek employment encounter financial strain during unemployment (Basbug & Sharone, 2017). However, men feel more pressured to be employed and women may feel less pressured to acquire jobs because masculine identity is intricately associated with having a job, while feminine identities are less connected with employment (Stradh et al., 2013). On the contrary, Basbug and Sharone (2017) argue that women have become more career-oriented and therefore also experience low self-worth and undesirable feelings of dependency. Gender roles
may differ across space and time; therefore, the effects of unemployment on men and women are not universal. For example, in female-headed households women assume the responsibility of providing for the family.

Stigmatisation and society’s lack of understanding for unemployment affects males and females experiences of unemployment, which in turn influence their reaction towards society. Du Toit et al. (2018) points out that unemployed men who experience disgust and contempt by their communities, retaliate by reinforcing what the community believes about them, engaging in non-conformist, perverse and criminal behaviour. Therefore, men and women react differently to stigmatisation and society’s lack of understanding on the issue of unemployment.

Gender and sexual orientation are often factors affecting employability. Females applying for male dominated jobs and males applying for female dominated jobs were often discriminated against (Wanberg, 2012). Moreover, Pepermans and Derous (2019) maintain that gender triggers different work-related expectations and it also induces biased decision making in hiring. Therefore, it can be argued that discrimination in employment may cause different experiences in employment search outcomes for males and females.

2.10 Interventions implemented to solve unemployment in Namibia

Namibia has initiated a number of policies and programs after independence in an effort to decrease unemployment through job creation. The interventions were set to create jobs for unemployed people in Namibia with special consideration for the youth.
2.10.1 National frameworks and policies for employment creation

Various national economic frameworks and policies for employment creation have been drafted since independence. The objectives established in each of these national development plans were built on sustainable development goals towards achieving Vision 2030. The Transitional Development Plan was the first national policy implemented after independence accompanied by five National Development Plans. The National Development Plan Five (NDP5) is currently under operation for the financial year 2017/18 until 2021/22. These policies were each in effect for the duration of five years with the goal of achieving sustained economic growth, creating employment, reducing poverty and reducing inequalities (Sunde, 2015). Considering the high unemployment rate, slow economic growth and backlog in jobs, it can be said that some of these frameworks have not been very effective.

The fifth National Development Plan (NDP5) overall has four primary goals which are to achieve economic progress, social transformation, environmental sustainability and good governance (National Planning Commission, 2017). The objective of this framework was to ensure sustainable and equitable economic growth, increasing productivity, development of people’s skills through investment in human capital and ensuring job creation (National Planning Commission, 2017). Similar to previous frameworks, the agenda of this framework is equally as enthusiastic, but since this National Development Plan is still in effect, one cannot predetermine its effectiveness. However, it accurately recognises the structural factors pertaining to unemployment that need intervention.

The New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework (NEEEF) and the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) are more policies that were intended for, but not
limited to job creation. The success of the NEEEF framework cannot be established yet, as it is currently still in effect. The HPP established a target of creating 8000 jobs; however this target was unattainable during the three year period. The HPP progress report indicates that only 4941 jobs were created, whereby at least 16000 people benefitted from short-term employment (National Planning Commission, 2019). Despite this, short-term employment lacks job security and it is merely a temporary employment solution.

2.10.2 Namibian employment programs and projects

The Targeted Intervention Program for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG) was established to create jobs and economic growth within the country. This program was in effect since the 2011/2012 and lasted for a short duration of three years. TIPEEG programmes provided 104000 direct and indirect jobs within the economic and public works sectors (National Planning Commission, 2011). Essentially, this programme was not very effective, considering that these jobs were a short-term solution to a lifelong need. In addition, Jauch (2012) states that the program was not established on the bases of the structural causes that resulted in the rise of unemployment. The root causes of unemployment have not been addressed through this program which is why this programme was not effective.

Public works programs were other projects that were established to directly provide jobs to people in Namibia. The Decentralised Build Together Programme was established under the public works program. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (2013) indicated that this project provided employment to at least 17,329 people. Its goal was to provide employment through the construction of 80,000 houses; however, only 9,609 houses were built when the project ceased due to lack
of finances (Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, 2013). Similarly to TIPEEG, despite sourcing income to Namibians, this program was not a lasting solution to the issue of unemployment.

The Namibian government has created a loan scheme to provide financial assistance to the youth who wish to establish small or medium enterprises. Erastus (2019) mentions that the Youth Credit Scheme provides affordable loans and fosters entrepreneurship across the economic sectors in the entire country. Through this scheme, a number of businesses have been established and the living standards of some beneficiaries have improved (Sisinyize & Shalyefu, 2015). The scheme currently still offers loans to Namibian youth who want to create businesses and need of start-up capital.

Notwithstanding, Namibia has attempted to mitigate unemployment by establishing short-term employment programmes. However, the structural factors leading to unemployment should not be overlooked. Thus, when the root causes of unemployment are not addressed, the unemployment problem will persist, and in the long run, short term approaches for employment will be costly. Moreover, business loans for small and medium enterprises are positive step towards self-employment and sustainability of livelihoods.

2.11 Solutions to graduate unemployment

2.11.1 Macro-economic solutions to the structural crisis

The consequences of a structural crisis can be circumvented by expanding the range of production and manufacturing most goods domestically. This would ensure more permanent and long term jobs and significantly increase the country’s gross domestic
products. Moreover, Osakwe (2010) asserts that vulnerabilities to external shocks that emanate from first world countries can be reduced when a diversified range of products are manufactured domestically. It goes without saying that to avoid another economic crisis, as per the principles of the Marxist Crisis Theory production should be considered in conjunction with good employee wages.

Entrepreneurship is another solution to graduate unemployment that is often brought under discussion. However, under the current economic conditions, entrepreneurship can have two contrasting consequences. It can either lead to a decline in unemployment or newly established companies would simply not survive the harsh economic conditions (Musa & Semasinghe, 2013). Either way, Lawhon et al. (2018) contend that entrepreneurialism marginalises unemployed people because the responsibility for job creation is shifted onto them instead of government ministries. In essence, entrepreneurship can increase economic activity among the unemployed but not without confronting challenges as businesses are at risk of losing everything, due to strenuous economic conditions.

2.11.2 Solutions to skills mismatch and skills deficits

The solutions provided under this sub-section intend to address the skills mismatch among unemployed university graduates and high school graduates.

Companies, government parastatals and higher education institutions must work together to establish expertise relative to the demand of the labour market. Pienaar (2018) suggests that a skills audit would outline the skills that are currently on the market and the skills that are in demand. The outcome of the skills audit would also balance the distribution of students throughout all educational programmes and
ensure a higher probability for employment. Moreover, a skills audit would provide universities with accurate overview of the skills to incorporate into course curricula.

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should ensure that practical skills are incorporated in schools. In addition, learners should receive career guidance throughout high school. This will enable them to explore career options that match their interests, skills and capabilities but most importantly they will be directed into selecting employable study programs (Mncayi, 2016).

2.12 Conclusion

We have learned that graduate unemployment is attributed to the global economic crisis and a skills deficit which are justified by the Skills Mismatch Theory and the Marxist Crisis Theory. Furthermore, it is evident that the Government of the Republic of Namibia recognises the underlying causes of unemployment and has tried to mitigate unemployment through implementation of a range of policies and employment programmes. The policies have however not addresses the leading causes of unemployment, and this allows the problem of unemployment to continue. Moreover, the Feminist Standpoint Theory provided concepts that are relevant to understanding the unique experiences of marginalised groups.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter provides a description of the manner in which data was collected. The outline of this chapter includes the research design, population, sample, research instruments, research procedures, data analysis, ethical clearance and conclusion.

3.2 Research Design
This study used a qualitative research design. Clark and Creswell (2015) define qualitative research design as a set of procedures for collecting, analysing, and reporting text and image data to answer research questions by exploring participants’ views. Qualitative research is used to understand people’s experiences and perspectives from a wide and deep-angled lens (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). Therefore, this design enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of unemployment among unemployed university graduates from the University of Namibia (UNAM) and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). A case study research methodology was used in this study as it focused on providing a detailed account of one or more cases (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). This methodology allowed the researcher to explore, describe and explain the research objectives by focusing on each case as a whole unit. Furthermore, Illustrative case studies were used to describe the phenomenon - what is happening around the issue of graduate unemployment and the reasons why it is happening.

3.3 Population
The targeted population in this study was unemployed university graduates residing in Windhoek and who graduated from UNAM and NUST and have been unemployed for no longer than three years.
3.4 Sample

Purposive sampling was used to draw the sample. Purposive sampling is a technique whereby the researcher identifies and selects individuals with certain characteristics of interest (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). This procedure best enabled the researcher to answer the research questions on the experiences of unemployment among university graduates by only selecting university graduates who are unemployed and who meet the criteria for participation. Unemployed graduates were traced through the UNAM Alumni Association. The researcher then proceeded with snowball sampling whereby one key informant identified other informants with similar characteristics until saturation was reached (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). The total sample size is 22 unemployed graduates of which 10 males and 10 females participated in the main study and two participants participated in the pilot study. In addition, only unemployed graduates from UNAM and NUST who had been actively searching for employment for a period of not more than three years were eligible for participation in the study.

3.5 Research Instruments

Semi-structured interview schedule was used to gather in-depth data from unemployed graduates. Through probing, the researcher was able to gain acute insight into graduates’ experiences, feelings and knowledge regarding being unemployed.

3.6 Pilot Study

3.6.1 Arrangements to execute the pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study prior to the main research study, as piloting is an integral part of a research process. Firstly, the researcher acquired permission
from the main supervisor to carry out the pilot study prior to the main study. Thus, she purposefully approached and made arrangements in advanced with one participant that matched the requirements of the sample to conduct the pilot study. Thereafter, the researcher used snowball sampling with the assistance of the pilot study participant to find an additional participant with the same characteristic in accordance with the sample of the pilot study. The pilot study was conducted on the availability and time slots agreed upon by the selected research participants for piloting.

3.6.2 Selection of research participants
Two research participants with similar characteristics as the sample of the research participants in the main study were selected purposefully as interview participants for piloting. The pilot study was done in advance to determine the accuracy and validity of the questions asked in the semi-structured interview schedule and to adjust the instrument used for conducting the main study. Therefore, the research participants who took part in the pilot study were excluded from the main research study. Consequently, the researcher learned that the data obtained from the pilot participants were reliable and in line with the research objectives of the main study.

3.6.3 Results of the pilot study
**Instrument:** Semi-structured interview schedule: The aim of the pilot study was to identify weaknesses within the semi-structured interview schedule and to adjust it accordingly in order to ensure that the researcher was able to elicit responses in line with the study's objectives. Furthermore, piloting was substantial to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument (interview schedule) and for research participants to understand and give in depth data to be analysed in the main
study. Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Lim, and Yusof (2017) contends that pilot testing is often conducted prior to the main study for the researcher to identify any flaws or limitations within the interview design and to allow necessary modifications to the main study. In addition Johnson and Christensen (2015) assert that piloting is a cardinal rule in research because it enables the researcher to determine whether the research instruments operate properly and whether the research instrument actually measures what it is supposed to measure.

The following paragraphs indicate how the items on the instrument were changed, swapped, combined, added and revised after the pilot study was conducted.

Question One in the semi-structured interview schedule read as follows: “What qualifications do you have?” The researcher completely removed this question, because it already existed in the demographic data that requires “field of study” as well as “qualifications obtained”.

In addition, Question Two on the original interview schedule read as follow: “For how long have you been unemployed after graduating?” Similarly, the question was removed from the main set of questions and moved to the demographic data section. It was modified and thereafter read as follows: “Years unemployed after graduating”. This change was made because this question draws statistical data on the characteristics of participants. This question is also not an open ended question and did not allow the respondents to answer it in open-text format.

The researcher found that Question Three that read as follows: “How has being unemployed affected you socially, economically and psychologically?” and Question Four that read as: “How do you feel at this point in time?” (socially, economically and psychologically), produced the same answers. Thus, Question Four was too
general and did not necessarily speak to the effects of unemployment. Therefore, Question Four of the semi-structured interview schedule was removed.

Question Six that read as: “What methods have you used in your job search? and Question Seven that read as: “What are your biggest challenges that you have experienced while searching for a job?” were swapped since the researcher noticed that respondents linked Question Six to Question Seven and in doing so, they automatically associated the challenges experienced while searching for a job with the methods used in their job search. The researcher decided to swap the two questions because Question Seven was posed with the intention of retrieving responses concerning the overall challenges experienced while searching for jobs and not only challenges associated with job search methods.

Question 14 that read as follows: “Do you have contractual or financial obligations?” and Question 15 that read as: “How do you meet these obligations?” were combined into one question to avoid closed-ended questions and to address the two questions as a whole. Question 15 on the current interview schedule reads as follows: “Do you have contractual or financial obligations and how do you meet these obligations?”

Furthermore, three questions were added to the interview schedule that allowed the researcher to gather richer information pertaining to the objectives of the research. The first question that was added as Question Seven on the final interview schedule reads as follows: “Why do you think you are unable to find a job?” This question was added, because it draws from participants personal perspectives of their abilities and competencies, without leading the responses provided by the participants. It also provides participants’ opinions on internal and external factors that hinder their ability to secure jobs.
The second question that was added as Question 17 on the final interview schedule reads as follows: “In your culture, can you describe how unemployed men are viewed and treated compared to unemployed women?” This question enabled the researcher to find answers that are directed at the heart of this research study. It provides cultural views of how unemployed men and women are treated and the differential gendered experiences of unemployment.

Lastly, the third question that was added as Question 20 on the final interview schedule reads as follows: “What do you suggest can be done to help address graduate unemployment?” This question was posed to provide a chance for graduates to recommend alternatives and solutions to unemployment because they are the people who are directly affected by this phenomenon. It also allows graduates to think of ways in which they can empower themselves and other unemployed graduates.

3.7 Research Procedure

The researcher made appointments with the participants well in advance. Participants were briefed on what the study was about and were informed about their rights as research participants. A pilot study was conducted to test the validity of the research instrument prior to the main study. Two participants of a total of 22 research participants participated in the pilot study. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, with the consent of the research participants a digital recorder was used to record the interviews.

Throughout the interview sessions, notes were taken to ensure a complete and accurate collection of information and verification of facts. Moreover, after each interview, participants were asked to identify other participants with similar
characteristics who were willing to participate in the study. Each interview was approximately one hour long and was conducted at an arranged setting at which participants felt most comfortable.

3.8 Data Analysis

Qualitative, thematic data analysis method was used to interpret the data by identifying themes in the research findings. Information gathered was first transcribed and then coded. Coding is a process whereby the researcher makes segments of data with themes, symbols, descriptive words or category names (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). The researcher then identified trends, made comparisons and looked for similarities and differences from the data generated. Thereafter, the researcher wrote up the final report of the research findings and interpretation of the data.

3.9 Research Ethics

The researcher acquired ethical clearance and research permission from the University of Namibia prior to conducting the research. In addition, the researcher acquired written informed consent from participants before conducting the study. Anonymity was retained by using pseudonyms so as to protect the identity of the research participants. Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any moment. Furthermore, the right to privacy of information gathered was assured to all research participants. With the consent of the research participant, the researcher used a digital recorder for the accurate collection of information. When participants did not wish to be recorded the researcher proposed note-taking. Furthermore, interview notes and audio recordings would be securely locked away for three years in a filing cabinet only accessible by the
researcher and would be destroyed thereafter. All data gathered were used only for research purposes.
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed analysis and description of the data collected. It accurately provides answers to the research questions on the differential gendered experience of graduate unemployment: an exploration into the experiences of university graduates in Windhoek.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

Table 1: Participants Demography

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Year Graduated</th>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>Years Unemployed</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
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<td>Diploma in Accounting and Auditing</td>
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4.2.1 Demographic characteristics of participants

Table One provides a clear outline of the demographic characteristics of the participants that took part in this study. The characteristics include participants’ gender, age, and alma mater. It further outlines the year in which participants graduated, the number of years that they have been unemployed since graduation, the qualifications that they had obtained, their marital status and the number of dependents that they have. This demographic data was used to establish a link between the characteristics of participants and the research findings.

Overall the study was comprised of ten males and ten female participants. The selection of an equal number of male and female participants ensured careful consideration of the differences and similarities between male and female experiences of unemployment.

Participants from the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) were engaged in this study to provide an in-depth inquiry into the experiences of university graduates. The analysed data showed no significant difference in experiences of unemployment between participants from the two tertiary institutions.

All the participants in this study were able to recall and provide an accurate description of their job search efforts since they have only been unemployed for approximately three years and less. Moreover, almost all the participants in this study had obtained a four year honours degree except for one participant who acquired a Diploma in Accounting from UNAM. The collected data indicates no significant differences among honours degree and diploma holders.
The participants had graduated with Bachelor of Psychology; Bachelor of Arts; Media Studies; Human Resource Management; Bachelor of Education and other science programmes. Bachelor of Psychology graduates and those from the fields of science, education, and commerce had all acquired practical experience throughout their study programmes. Meanwhile, participants who had obtained qualifications in Media Studies and Bachelor of Arts (double major) had not obtained any practical experience throughout their study programmes.

The findings show that age, marital status, and parental responsibility were factors that contributed to graduates unique experiences of unemployment. Participants’ ages ranged between 21 and 35 years. Only one participant in this study was married; while all other participants were either in intimate relationships or single. Moreover, three participants were parents with each having one child.

4.3 Graduates’ financial, social and psychological experiences of unemployment by gender

4.3.1 Financial experiences of unemployment
Graduates financial experiences of unemployment involve the availability, or the lack of money required for basic human necessities during the period of unemployment. Access to money is fundamental to the livelihood of human existence. Hence, formal employment can ensure good living conditions, quality education and proper healthcare. Moreover, people with formal employment are better positioned to maintain their daily costs of living. In contrast, unemployed people are incapable of ensuring proper living standards to their families or themselves. This analysis displays some of the financial experiences of university graduates throughout the period of unemployment.
4.3.2 Financial Challenges

The financial experiences of unemployment were primarily characterised by the financial challenges that participants encountered on a daily basis. Male and female participants experienced financial inability to pay for basic necessities such as water, electricity, rent and toiletries. Moreover, participants experienced difficulty applying for jobs or attending job interviews due to lack of money.

Sarah is a single 26 year old female who lives with her mom and cousin in Windhoek and who had been unemployed for a year and three months after graduating. Sarah mentioned that the cost of living in the capital city was extremely high and that it’s often beyond her financial capabilities.

Sarah had this to say: “It is very difficult living in a town like Windhoek because it’s very expensive. Where we live, we have to pay rent, electricity, water and all these things. The cost of living in terms of food and transport everything you do basically cost money. It is also very difficult to do my day-to-day things because I don’t have money.”

Dylan is 24 years old and has been unemployed for over two years. He lives with his parents, who provide for all his immediate needs. Dylan mentioned that he often needed money to carry out his job search.

Dylan Remarked: “My main sources of financial income at the moment are my parents and my siblings. They understand the fact that I am still searching for a job. In the meantime, I need financial help to sustain my personal needs and to travel to and from companies to submit my applications”.

Thabo is a 23-year-old male who obtained a Bachelor of Economics degree from UNAM in 2019. He encountered challenges in accessing vacancies on websites and
on social media since he did not have internet access and could not afford to buy data regularly.

Thabo: “There is not even Wi-Fi at home, but it’s up to me to apply for a job. I have to struggle money to buy credit in order to search and apply for jobs. So it’s a complicated situation. If there was Wi-Fi, I would at least come across vacancies in my field of study and be able to apply”.

Maintaining the day-to-day cost of living can be wearing and often more so when living in the capital city. At the same time, the financial burden on families who provide financial support can become overbearing. Despite this, the fact remains that having financial resources can increase the probability of finding jobs while the lack of funds yields the opposite. It is thus important to have funds, not only for the supply of basic necessities, but also to cover expenses pertaining to job searches.

4.3.3 Debt Repayment

Financial obligations analysed in this study include any debt owed to persons’ or organisations and which needs to be repaid within a particular period of time. Participants were asked whether they had any financial obligations and how they met these obligations. The question was posed to determine whether that participants were bound to any debt and how they were able to settle the agreements. Half of the participants did not have any contractual or financial obligations towards any person, organisation or institution. The remaining participants had to repay study loans which were offered to them by the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF). The loan holders stated that repayment of study loans is only expected once they secured permanent employment.
Dakari: “The only loan I have is a NSFAF study loan. It was supposed to be paid when I get a job… We are supposed to have a secured job to be able to pay back the loan”

Bob: “The only loan that I had was the NSFAF loan, but we have to settle the loan when we start working. Other than that, I don’t have any other contractual agreement”.

Emily: “Ja, I only have that loan from NSFAF. I can’t pay it, since I don’t have a job. So, that’s the only one”.

Mia: “NSFAF, they paid for me twice. So, that one until I get employed, it’s on hold. That’s the only one that I have.”

4.3.4 Financial Dependability

The participants in this study were either entirely or partially financially dependent on other people. Their parents, relatives and intimate partners helped them with food, shelter, clothing, money and other basic necessities. As a consequence, participants felt like they were a burden to others because they were unable to provide for themselves. More males than females felt this way.

Bob: “Economically, somehow my family manages to support me, but depending on someone still isn’t easy”.

Dakari: “Actually, it’s so stressful, you know. Maybe it’s because I’m a man you know. It’s not good to be a guy and dependent on your girlfriend; it’s not”.

Anna: “Economically, it hasn’t really affected me, because both of my parents are employed. So, they kind of fill that gap. So, I don’t really feel stressed. The only
stress is that, I wish I was making my own money and not living on my parents’ expense.”

4.3.5 Parental Responsibilities

In total, three out of the twenty research participants in this study were parents. The financial experiences mentioned by these research participants are far-reaching compared to those of non-parents. In essence, they have a legal responsibility to provide for their children’s needs and not just their own.

Ethyl is a 31 years old female with one child. She and her daughter currently reside with her parents who provide for both of them.

She narrated: “By this time I should have already moved on with my future. It’s just that I don’t have money, and I’m struggling in terms of having a daughter who goes to school. I’m in a very difficult situation. As I said before, my parents are unemployed and they are getting old. My parents have a house in Windhoek and so, they provide us with accommodation, shelter and food. However, we have to fight for our personal problems ourselves. I don’t feel good being supported by my parents at my age. I am the one who was supposed to support them by this time”.

Emma is also 31 years old. Similar to Ethyl, Emma endured financial difficulty providing for her baby’s needs. She is however also able to cope with the help of her family and with the money that she had saved while working temporarily for the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN).

Emma had this to say: “Economically it’s not easy! I have a baby, and I need to provide with food and nappies... I was temporarily employed at the ECN, so I saved money to keep myself going. I saved some money to survive with my kid. My
brother and my sister sometimes help me when I need money. They will help me with money, if I need to go and make copies or if I don’t have money at all.”

Benjamin is the only male participant with a child. He is 29 years old and had been unemployed for a year after graduating. In the interview, Benjamin mentioned that his mom helped him financially to provide for his son.

Benjamin: “I still depend on my parents for money, and I also get some money from small jobs, but my mom always helps me financially to support him”.

Evidently, these participants are unable to independently provide for all of their children’s needs. Their parents and other family members had assumed the responsibility of providing for them as well as their children. Money from savings and odd jobs is helpful, but it is not always adequate since these parents still require financial assistance from other people.

4.3.6 Family Obligations

The research participants felt obliged to take care of their parents. Some felt the need to help family members. These family members include siblings, nieces, nephews and other extended family members who were facing difficult financial circumstances.

Mia: “I can say my family expects me at least to contribute to the expenditure in the household. I can say I haven’t been able to fulfil that part of my responsibility yet. I have the obligation to assist them, but I’m in a stagnant situation”.

Dylan: “Yes, I do have. Not necessarily my parents, but my girlfriend yes. Now that I got my qualifications, I wish to get some money, somewhere so that I can assist her in some way, because she is still studying”.

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Noah: “In my family there are a lot of nephews and nieces. So far all of us are dependent on one person who is my brother. So, you know, the weight that is on his shoulder is very, very heavy. Therefore, he needs me to get a job in order to help.”

Furthermore, quite a number of participants felt obliged to assist their family and partners who had supported them while they were studying. Participants notice the financial burden faced by the people that they know but were unable to fully assist or support their family and friends.

4.3.7 Starting small informal businesses

Some participants have developed small informal businesses in an effort to make ends meet. It was observed that more females than males in this study engaged in self-employment mechanisms. This enabled them to acquire some of their basic needs but not all as very little profit was often generated from such ventures. Profits were barely enough for their personal needs which include making photocopies of documents for job applications, buying toiletries and paying for transportation to and from companies. Profits were also not sufficient to keep their businesses operating.

Emma: “I was trying to start a printing shop, but it didn’t work out because I don’t have funds to sustain the business. The printer just stopped working, and I didn’t know how to fix it”.

Amelia: “Well, thank God I’m very skilled with my hands. I started a jewellery business, selling earrings and bracelets which I love. Obviously, it’s not enough to pay rent. So, for now my husband pays the bills because he is employed. The financial support that I received from him is what I initially use to support my family”.
Sarah: “I try to braai on some week-ends. I buy meat or I buy wings or I buy whatever I need to make a potjie. Then, I sell it to make money”

Emily: “I was actually planning to go to school, but I was not admitted. I still have savings and sometimes I sell some perfumes and other products.”

Bob: “I have my own brand, it’s a clothing brand. It’s hard for me to help out because I don’t have a fixed income. This month you get less than 500, next month maybe 600.”

All the informal businesses were not in line with what participants had studied at university. This is perhaps because starting businesses in line with one’s qualifications is complicated and costly considering the resources and logistics in establishing formal businesses.

4.4 The effect of unemployment on graduates’ social lives

The social effects of unemployment speak to graduates’ patterns of socialisation during the period of unemployment. Socialisation in this case, includes the time spent with people in public and private spaces for enjoyment. In addition, it also includes the social dynamics in the household which can be viewed in terms of any changes in the behaviour of others towards an unemployed member of the household.

4.4.1 Social Isolation

Some unemployed graduates prefer to isolate themselves because of financial constraints and fear of being judged. Other participants merely tried to avoid the negative opinions and reactions of others.
Eva mentioned that she stopped socialising because she developed a fear that her employed counterparts would look at her differently because of the difference in their employment status.

Eva expressed: “They work in different companies and stuff, and so for us to meet up, I always fear that they would look at me differently. With friends, like I said, there is always that difference when someone is a stage above you. So, even the way you approach them or even the way they approach you, it is just different. So, I don’t know. It’s just different now with friends. I can say it’s not the same anymore.”

Amelia had been subjected to negative opinions of others, and therefore refrained from getting together with friends. Furthermore, she endured stigma, because people often expect that she should have a job at her age.

Amelia: “In a sense, if you kind of meet other people and then they are like “I did this and I’m already working” and then you are like oh! Okay I’m not working. It’s like you don’t even really want to share your financial experience with other people or put yourself out there by saying that you are unemployed because some people are just so negative about it. They start saying “oh! You are this old and you are not working”. Kind of like that stigma attached to not working.”

Similar to Eva and Amelia, Dylan felt as though he did not fit into society because of the way unemployed people are perceived. In addition, he also stated that he could not mingle with his peers because of the difference in their employment status.

He expressed: “Socially, I would say, especially when it comes to the way that society has sort of like painted unemployed graduates, where they look at you with certain eyes where you even feel like you don’t fit in the society. I also feel that in a
way, when it comes to comparing yourself to your fellow graduates, where you see them at least doing something, yet you are unemployed. So, that has a great effect on me socially to such a state that I cannot even mingle with my fellow graduates because our statuses are now different.”

It is evident that socio-economic status plays a role in friendship ties as there is a change in the social connection between participants and their friends. It is also clear that the participants had developed insecurities about their socio-economic status and how they were perceived by society.

4.4.2 Social conditions in the household

Unemployment can have an influence on family relations and the social order within households. However, when unemployed people receive support, empathy and encouragement, it can be uplifting and it can bring about hope. Some participants pointed out that they received a lot of social support; while others mentioned not having received any. It is apparent that parents, relatives, congregation members, friends and mentors provided social support to the participants.

Eva: “My family keeps on praying for me; that I know for sure. They keep on advising me to just wait for my time, as they always say.”

Denzel: “I have received from my girlfriend, my uncle and my mother also, and it has helped me a lot since sometimes I feel like maybe I’m a burden to my uncle. So I must get a job and start looking after myself and my mother, but the encouragement and the motivation is there, and I keep striving forward.”

Dakari: “The only person that I spoke to that really kind of gave me that boost to say “no it’s okay; this is normal” is when I see my former lecturers and a few of my former colleagues when I visit them. Otherwise, other people that maybe also
give a word of encouragement are church people. Church people would say “no its okay, God has plans.”

On the contrary, other participants mentioned they are pressured to secure employment, because of poor economic conditions in households. Moreover, some felt segregated and were often excluded from any decision-making, because they lacked the means to support any family functions and other family developments. Apart from this, some experienced a lack of respect and understanding from their families.

Noah: “They feel bad especially my mom and siblings. They feel bad because they expect me to get a job after completing my studies. They always asking me: “Have you still not gotten a job? When are you getting a job?” These questions are also coming from relatives. They also start stressing me out because I need to push harder and just to get a job because all they need is help. They thought that after I was done with my studies, I probably just come in and help them out of poverty.”

Dakari, who is a Microbiology graduate stated: “Our family members and our parents don’t understand what we are going through. Thinking that maybe you are being picky, maybe you just want to do this particular job that you can’t get. So, there is pressure from inside yourself, you blame yourself and you feel so useless and there are those who are pushing you again… They are all like, “No why are you at home; at least go out there and search for something”. They even asked me to just get a job somewhere in Shoprite or something. You can see they don’t understand. It’s not like you want to be at home sitting and doing nothing.”

Dylan: “When it comes to the family, whenever there is a family gathering because you are unable to provide your voice is not even welcomed or wanted. If you want
to give your suggestions, your views or your opinions, they don’t even want to listen to you because they know you are just talking. So you are already put in a corner in the family were you are separated. There is also segregation amongst family members, whereby those that are working and providing for the family are given so much respect and recognition. So, it makes you feel bad as a person in the family. Although they might not necessarily say it out loud, but their actions will tell you because of the fact that at times you are not informed or called for those gatherings.”

Ethyl: “With family and friends, somehow you can encounter disrespect- you know. Sometimes people look at you like you are nothing. For you to be respected, you have to contribute something in the family.”

The social conditions in other households remained unchanged. According to Isabella, in their household nothing changed. She mentioned that her family was merely grateful that she completed her studies. However, she maintained that her family’s reaction would have been entirely different had she not completed her studies.

Isabella narrated: “The fact that I have a degree is a different story. I was going to get different words. In my family, from the one side most of them don’t have degrees. I was one of the first to obtain a degree in my family, so I don’t really receive any sort of backlash.”

Furthermore, the data showed that in some households, families expressed their disappointment and dissatisfaction in subtle ways.

Mia mentioned that her family did not directly express their disappointment, but she was able to sense their unhappiness because of the way they treated her.
Mia expressed that: “Family will not really show that they are not happy, but you, as a person, will be able to read from how they treat you or maybe how they say things indirectly to you. That’s what happened, and I mean it hurts, but you just wake up every day and you just give yourself hope that one day I will be out of this situation.”

Evidently, unemployment does have an effect on the social conditions in households. Moreover, people from different households react differently to the issue of unemployment and therefore graduates experiences are different.

4.4.3 Intimate Relationships

Only one of the participants in this study is married; while some participants were either in intimate relationships or single. Since unemployment can also have an influence on intimate relationships, an analysis was undertaken on how intimate relationships among unemployed graduates had been affected by unemployment. The findings indicate that none of the intimate relationships had been negatively affected by unemployment. Instead, all male and female participants in intimate relationships had simply received support and understanding from their partners. Despite this, both male and female unemployed participants deem it necessary to equally contribute financially towards their relationships.

Amelia was the only married participant. She felt obliged to equally contribute towards the household expenses instead of being entirely dependent on her husband.

Amelia: “In any relationship, you want to be in a position where you are also able to contribute, where you are able to give and not always just receive. I’m that kind of person, I use to feel really uncomfortable with the fact that there are bills that
need to be paid and he’s the one doing that. Expenses that need to be paid, he’s the one doing that.”

The participants who are in intimate relationships had this to say:

Dakari: “I know my girlfriend understands; she understands even though it’s stressful for everybody.”

Ethyl: “Partners are people that understand. I mean, it’s not just you who doesn’t have a job. There are quite a lot of people that are unemployed.”

Emma: “Sometimes I feel like I ask too much from my partner. I also have a responsibility, a 50-50 responsibility. It’s not him, but it’s me that feels that way. I feel like I also have a responsibility to take care of them, so sometimes when I need something I don’t ask.”

4.4.4 Societal perceptions of unemployed graduates

People in society often make assumptions about why graduates are not able to find jobs. Some of these assumptions are accurate, but often times they are not. However, the perception that society creates can have an influence on graduates’ emotional and psychological well-being. According to the perceptions of participants, community members believe that graduates are still unemployed because of their career choices, choice of university, laziness, a lack of effort and because they are merely picky.

Ethyl: “People look at you, thinking the course that you did at UNAM is not important or maybe that it’s useless studying at UNAM because people can see there is a lot of people that graduated at UNAM but are still sitting at home without a job.”
Isabella stated: “Most of them, not that they would say it, but I feel that most of them probably feel that you’re just lazy or you didn’t study the right thing.”

Bob: “I think most of them think that I’m not doing enough. They think I’m not applying.”

Dumi: “If you are a graduate and you are not employed, of cause it gives a bad picture. People believe that if you have entered university, you must get a job.”

It is also important that societal perceptions are analysed from a gender perspective because of cultural norms and customs associated with employment. In most cultures and households, men are regarded as the breadwinners, and when they were unable to provide for their families, they are treated with contempt.

The participants provided an account of how unemployed men are perceived and treated in comparison with unemployed women. It was found that unemployed men are often devalued and become less important because they are unable to offer financial contributions towards the needs of the family.

Bob stated: “It’s like you are losing value- just depreciated- that’s just how it is. You become less important because you are not getting a job and you are not helping with anything”.

Dakari: “Actually when you don’t have a job you don’t have the respect of people”.

The study also found that there is a greater expectation for men to find employment than it is for women.

Amelia who is a Congolese citizen stated: “Where I am from, a man that is not working is considered as the lowest thing out there which I feel is a bit unfair
because if it is a woman who is unemployed, then it's like ahh!, Just get married, or, you will find someone who will take care of you, but if it’s a man, it’s like he’s lazy and all pathetic or just not smart or hard working.”

Isabella mentioned this: “They are more lenient with women than they are with men because in my culture, it is believed that a man is supposed to take care of his family, and if he can’t take care of his family then it kind of emasculates him you know. So, they kind of put lot of pressure on males to have jobs than on females.”

Emma: “In our culture, they feel like a man has to provide for the wife and the children, but for us it’s not too much because if I have a kid, they feel like it’s the responsibility of a man to take care of the kid not me. For a woman, it’s better because you can stay without working, but for the man, they feel like he is a coward; he is not doing anything.”

These responses show that men receive very strong negative reactions from society when they are unemployed in comparison to women. Unemployed men are discriminated against and most often pressured to look for jobs. On the other hand, it is more accepting of women to be unemployed because it is considered the responsibility of men to provide for women.

4.5 Emotional and psychological impact of unemployment on graduates

The analysed data shows the different emotional and psychological effects endured by unemployed graduates in this study. Subsequently, it has indicated that most of the participants experienced a number of emotional and psychological effects resulting from unemployment. The most prevalent emotional and psychological effects experienced by unemployed university graduates were stress, low-self-esteem, worthlessness, suicidal thoughts, aggression and depression.
4.5.1 Stress, depression, helplessness

The majority of the research participants expressed that they encountered many inauspicious feelings as a result of demanding financial circumstances. Moreover, the state of being unemployed brought about feelings of hopelessness, depression, stress, self-pity and suicidal ideations among both male and female research participants. In addition, the lack of job opportunities in most business sectors in Namibia fuelled uncertainty about ever acquiring jobs which in turn caused continuous mental, emotional and physical pressure on unemployed graduates.

Dakari expressed: “You just feel so hopeless after having gone through so much challenges. I am a hard worker, but now I’m jobless because of the lack of job opportunities. It makes me feel so depressed sometimes. There are people that I want to send to school and I also want to provide things for our home, but I can’t do that because I’m unemployed.”

Olivia had this to say: “It’s just not easy. The first five months are the most depressing and hard times, but then as time goes, it becomes easier and you adapt to the situation of not having anything.”

Lucas stated: “Being unemployed comes with a lot of pressure because sometimes you feel that it was useless to study for four years just to sit at home and do nothing. Sometimes, I try to think of other things, or else I’ll commit suicide.”

Similarly, Isabella had this to say: “It makes you question your purpose in life. I often ask myself, what am I doing? It makes me feel like I don’t know what you doing here. Like what is my purpose? I just feel useless like I said.”

Evidently, the research participants were sceptical about having acquiring tertiary qualifications since they were unable to find jobs after completion of their studies.
4.5.2 Poor self-esteem and aggression

A number of participants mentioned that they developed a low self-esteem as a result of being unemployed. In essence, the inability to fulfil one’s own expectations as well as that of family led to the development of feelings of embarrassment and guilt among research participants. In fact, participants in this study felt ashamed because they had not only disappointed themselves, but also their immediate and extended family members.

Anna stated that the first months of unemployment were the most difficult time for her as she had started to develop a low self-esteem and blamed herself for being unemployed.

Anna states: “My self-esteem become very low, but I told myself that I am not to be blamed for this situation, so I learned to deal with it.”

Similarly, Dakari displayed signs of low self-esteem, and described himself as incompetent and burdensome.

Dakari: “I'm the type of person who tries to work very hard, but now I’m hopeless. I can’t even plan anything for my future. I also feel like I can’t be dependent on other people forever. They are already stressed because they feel I’m too much of a burden for them. In school, I was a burden; I’m out of school, and I’m still a burden- you know.”

Data analysis revealed that only one participant developed aggressive behaviour due to stress. The stress resulted from the inability to find employment.

Ethyl stated: “I’ve become an aggressive person because I have become stressed every time.”
4.6 Graduates’ experiences in their search for jobs across gender

The study evaluated whether participants used different job search and application methods available to job seekers throughout their search for jobs. This was done to determine whether participants made any real effort in their job search. Moreover, this study explored participants’ job interview experiences, experiences throughout their search for jobs and the job search outcomes that they had encountered.

4.6.1 Job search methods

It has been found that participants had used various job search methods and multiple platforms to apply for jobs. Furthermore, the majority of the participants used newspapers, company websites and recruitment agencies such as Namibia Integrated Employment System (NIEIS), Elite Employment and Jobs Unlimited to search for vacancies. Moreover, social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and LinkedIn, were platforms that they deemed useful for the purpose of identifying and sharing vacancies.

Olivia, a Bachelor of Education graduate had been unemployed for approximately ten months. She often engaged in formal and informal job search methods. She personally and telephonically consulted school principals to inquire about possible vacant positions at schools and submitted her name to the Ministry of Education Arts and Culture regional office in Windhoek for a job placement. In a desperate attempt to get a job, she even applied for jobs that were not related to her qualifications.

Olivia: “I wrote my name in the job seekers book, and I still do that monthly at the Ministry of Education Arts and Culture. I went to the extent of applying for administration work at different companies even if it’s not in my field of
specialisation. I have gone door to door at different schools. I feel like I have done everything because I even called people.”

Similarly, Dylan used multiple job search platforms, such as social media, print media while also engaging in social networking. He registered with Jobs Unlimited, Elite Employment Agency, as well as other recruitment agencies to improve his job search prospects. Moreover, he volunteered to work at various companies without expecting remuneration in order to gain practical experience.

Dylan: “I’ve lowered my expectations, and just decided to volunteer at any organisation to gain more experience and to put my theoretical knowledge into practice. I had to adapt to almost all the best possible platforms where I can possibly find vacancies. I have used social media and not to forget newspapers. Besides the newspapers I regularly visit employment websites like Jobs Unlimited and Elite Employment.”

Findings revealed that participants used various job search methods but still encountered various challenges such as a lack of access to internet, lack of funds to make duplicates and to pay for transportation to and from companies where they had submitted job applications. However, despite these challenges, they explored most of the job search and application methods that were accessible and available to them.

Furthermore, two research participants mentioned that they only used newspapers as means to acquire vacancy advertisements. This shows that there are university graduates that exert very little efforts in searching for employment.

Anna and Dumi were the only participants who only used the newspapers to scout for vacancies.
Anna had this to say when asked about the various job search methods that she used:

“\textit{I just send my CV whenever an application comes through the newspapers, but I never follow up. I also don’t know many people, so the newspaper is the only job search method that I use.}”

Similarly, Dumi informed that: “\textit{Normally I just read newspapers to check for vacancies that are advertised. Ja, that’s all.}”

Vacancies are sometimes advertised on platforms that are not easily accessible to every unemployed individual. Employers use certain advertising platforms to trace candidates with the necessary skills, experience and qualifications needed for a specific position. Therefore, a lot of effort, creativity, interest, perseverance and eagerness are required from the side of job seekers in order to access and apply to vacancies that match their skills and educational backgrounds.

4.6.2 Lack of job opportunities

According to the analysed data, participants found that there were hardly vacancies related to their fields of studies. Moreover, they believed that insufficient job opportunities were due to slow economic conditions in the country.

Dylan: “\textit{In the field that I have studied, there are quite a number of unemployed graduates looking for jobs because of the economic situation that we are going through in Namibia.}”

Benjamin: “\textit{It is Maybe just because of our economic situation. If you buy newspapers, you just read about the economic downturn and companies are freezing vacancies, but I still have hope that it will all change. The only challenge that I see now is the economic crisis.}”
Emily: “There are no jobs. I just think it’s the economic decline. I mean, we are not the only ones who are unemployed. There are a lot of people who are unemployed, for instance engineers, nurses, even people that did education. The government is unable to create jobs for us because there is no money.”

The shortage of jobs that emanate from the economic downturn has resulted in high levels of unemployment in Namibia. That being the case, it is somewhat beyond the control of unemployed individuals. However, graduates can establish income-generating activities for survival whilst persistently looking for jobs.

4.7 Graduates’ experiences during job interviews

Job interviews are often conducted for the purpose of identifying the most suitable candidate for a particular position. Shortlisting, written and oral interviews are employment protocols used to establish the appropriate candidate for the job. This study sought to explore graduates’ job interview experiences. Data analysis indicated that some participants in this study had not attended any job interview after graduating. Furthermore, participants that had attended job interviews encountered natural emotional responses associated with job interviews such as nervousness. Moreover, some participants described their interview experiences as intimidating because they did not know what questions to expect. Others described it as stressful because they wanted to make a good impression on interview panellists.

4.7.1 Learning Experience

Participants’ experiences related to job interviews varied according to their personal judgments and observations on how the entire interview processes were conducted. Participants’ perceived job interviews as a learning experience and an opportunity to increase their levels of confidence in order to perform better in future job interviews.
Dylan: “At first, it was a nerve-wrecking experience, but the more interviews I attended, the more I became self-confident and skilled on how to answer the questions. At least the interviews boosted my confidence.”

Dumi: “Yes I have been interviewed once. I will just say that I was exposed to the environment of an interview since I have never been to a job interview before. I got to experience the interview environment and how the questions are asked.”

Emily: “I have been invited to many interviews. At first, I didn’t know how to answer the questions. Later, I discovered that was my problem because I didn’t understand what the people were really asking me about, but I got better at answering the questions.”

4.7.2 Negative job interview experiences

Both male and female research participants had regrets about attending certain job interviews. They had numerous unpleasant experiences at job interviews that they were invited to attend. Some described it as a waste of time and resources.

Eva attended at least three job interviews sessions after her graduation. Regrettably, she recalled one interview that she attended in Tsumeb and described it as an awful experience. This was mainly, because of the vast number of shortlisted candidates that were invited to attend a job interview for one position. Furthermore, she was disappointed that she had to travel a long distance in order to attend this interview and having received an unsuccessful outcome. She felt that attending this interview was merely a waste of money because she had to pay transport and accommodation costs.

Eva recalled: “I was invited to three interviews so far. One of them was a waste of time and money because it was in Tsumeb which is very far. I travelled, and when
I got there, there were like two hundred, three hundred people for only one position. It was awful. We first had to write a test and then do the oral interview, but from such a large group of people, they only wanted to get one person. It was just a waste.”

Similarly, Benjamin had this to say: “You find that you’re applying for a job; they call you for an interview, only to see that you are a lot of interview candidates. For example, in the government, they called me for a test. The written interview was set for one position, but they called three hundred people to write the test.”

Dakari attended three interview sessions after his graduation. He recounted an interview in Ongwediva, describing it as demoralising because of the unprofessional and chaotic manner in which the interview was conducted. He was of the opinion that some interviews are conducted merely for the sake of formality since it was evident that the interview was not fairly carried out.

Dakari had this to say: “I attended an interview at NSI (Namibian Standards Institution), at a school and at the Ministry of Fisheries. At one time, I had to travel to Ongwediva for an interview which was supposed to be a written interview. It was an unpleasant experience because I traveled so far just to see how unorganised the interview process was. I felt so demoralised. I feel that they just conducted the interviews for formality sake. They don’t really want somebody from the group of people that are interviewed because the position is already retained for a specific person.”

The responses provided by the participants indicate a loss of confidence in the validity and transparency of the recruitment process. Participants questioned the functionality and legitimacy of the recruitment process. Moreover, they were
displeased by employers’ disregard for the financial loss suffered by interview candidates when they have to attend interviews in distant towns.

Participants in this study also questioned the authenticity of the interview questions relative to candidates’ educational background. They assert that their educational background matched the job requirements as advertised, but the interview questions were not always in harmony with their educational backgrounds. For instance, graduates who had majored in Accounting, Human Resources Management and Industrial Psychology are invited to a job interview, but the interview questions are predominantly based on Accounting, and this is perceived as bias.

Emma is a Bachelor of Science Population Studies graduate who had this to say: “I have not attended an oral interview, just a written test. I did not expect that the interview panel would ask more economics questions, instead of questions related to what I have studied.”

Benjamin: “I went for a written interview which was very difficult. I studied something different from what they asked in the written tests. This happens especially when attending job interviews for government positions. They will ask you about government information that you have never seen and don’t understand. You can find some information on the internet, but there is a lot of information that is also not available on the internet.”

4.8 Job search outcomes

When participants were asked about their experiences throughout the job search, they narrated that it was time-consuming, financially challenging, and requires a great deal of effort. Moreover, the narrative around the experiences of both male and female participants was based on similar codes discussed under this heading.
4.8.1 No feedback from employers

Seven of all twenty research participants mentioned that throughout their search for jobs, they had not received any feedback on the outcome of their job applications. Participants often assumed that their applications were unsuccessful whenever they hadn’t received any feedback from employers. In light of this, they advise employers to provide reasons substantiating why their applications were turned down as this would clarify what the job applicants lacked, and it would also allow for greater transparency in the recruitment process.

Amelia: “Some companies don’t even respond to your emails or if they turn you down they don’t really give you a reason why you were not invited for an interview, especially if you know that you have met the advertised job requirements.”

Bob: “You don’t know whether they check your CV. That’s the thing that I hate about looking for a job because you don’t get a response. If I could at least get a response that says I am missing something or that I didn’t do something right, then I will be more satisfied.”

4.8.2 Declined to volunteer

The data analysis showed that both male and female research participants felt the need to gain work experience, and therefore availed themselves to volunteer at different companies without expecting any remuneration. However, their attempts to work as volunteers were often rudely shut down.

Emma stated: “People don’t want to listen or assist you, even though you just want to volunteer as a casual. They don’t even assist you in a professional way.”
Daniel: “When you search for internships or offer to volunteer, the way in which people treat you is inhumane.”

Mia: “I submitted my CV to volunteer, but I was informed that the company policies do not make provision to allow volunteers to work without receiving a payment. Companies refuse to help graduates to at least gain work experience because they feel that they should be able to pay us something. This happens even if you tell them that you only want to get work experience and not necessarily money.”

Ava: We actually approached different companies to submit our CV’s in case they have volunteering or internship opportunities. However, employers just ignored our requests. Some of the companies totally refuse to look at our CV’s unless there is an open vacancy or advertisement of a vacancy at that point in time.”

Volunteering would help them gain practical experience and more knowledge around their job functions. It can also benefit employers as companies may reap the benefits of having knowledgeable university graduates to achieve company goals, but evidently, some employers refuse to accept volunteers.

4.8.3 Subject to fake recruitments

It goes without saying that searching for employment is of paramount importance but it can be potentially harmful. Vulnerability and desperation for employment can increase the risk of unemployed graduates falling victim to recruitment scams.
Sarah mentioned that in a desperate attempt to find a job, she almost became a victim of fake and potentially dangerous employment scams. However, she was quick to realise the danger that she was exposed to and was able to walk away unaffected.

Sarah stated: “I applied for a vacancy that was advertised and they called me. They said I had an interview, but the company had a strange name that I never heard of before. So I did some research on them and found that it was a human trafficking syndicate. This was one of the challenges that I faced. We are in dire need of a job, but some people have other motives.”

4.8.4 Corruption, nepotism and tribalism in recruitments

Participants lacked concrete evidence of corruption and nepotism in employee recruitments. However, they suspect that corruption, nepotism and discrimination are reasons why they were unable to get jobs. Some participants stated that they met the job requirements, but weren’t invited to oral interviews. Hence, questioning the basis on which applicant shortlisting was conducted.

Olivia felt strongly about unfair and discriminatory practices during the recruitment process within the teaching fraternity. Based on her qualifications, practical experience and skills obtained, she was confident that she would be considered for employment.

Olivia stated: “So corruption and nepotism have been the hardest because it’s everywhere. I applied to different regions, but they haven’t returned back to me. They have not invited me for interviews. They just appoint whomever they want to appoint.”
Ethyl believes that certain companies appoint applicants based on racial and ethnic stereotypical beliefs.

Ethyl argued: “Some of the companies are owned by coloured people, and they always want to work with other coloured people. The thing is that coloureds are always fast and they are very good in administration. Maybe it’s because of the ethnicity and the years of experience, which we don’t have.”

4.9 Participants perception of the quality of education received in relation to employers’ expectations

4.9.1 Lack of work experience

Participants’ noted that they lacked formal work experience which is most often what employers require. Although they did not have formal work experience, some obtained academic knowledge and practical skills through their study programmes.

Amelia stated that employers often require at least three to five years’ formal work experience which new graduates often do not have. She believes that her job applications are often disqualified because she lacked formal work experience. Similarly, Dylan had been rejected several times, because he does not have formal work experience.

Amelia stated: “Employers require at least three years’ or five years’ experience. I just came out of school, and I have zero work experience. I think employers may as well take a chance on graduates that don’t have work experience because that will allow them to gain experience. If nobody hires you, where are you supposed to get experience?”
Dylan: “I have experienced challenges in terms of rejection, if I may put it that way. Where you send your applications and you feel you have met all the job requirements, yet at times, you are not even called for an interview. On several occasions employers told me, “no we don’t want to take new graduates” simply because I lack the experience that is needed for the job.”

4.9.2 Underrated Qualifications

According to the view participants, employers are of the perception that students from Namibian universities are not fully-equipped with the right set of knowledge and skills. They also stated that the qualifications obtained from Namibian universities are underrated, as these course curricula do not offer job-related training that are essential in performing the work successfully.

Dakari: “It appears that the market in Namibia does not really support what we did at UNAM. In other words, the universities offer programmes without doing market research on what the market requires from us.”

Thabo: “Let me say I think the Namibian curriculum for Bachelor of Science in Financial Mathematics is underrated. Most of the jobs in this field are mostly focused on financial analyses and investment analysis and employers do not want to take that risk of employing us in these positions. I believe that a master’s degree is requirement for these positions.”

Amelia: “I obtained an honours degree in biochemistry, and I also did internship at the Namibia Institute of Pathology (NIP) for about three months. However, at a later stage, we found out that our course wasn’t acknowledged by NIP. Therefore, the students that obtained degrees in biochemistry may not get jobs at NIP, but you can still work at other labs. Then again, labs in Namibia are very limited.”
There were other factors mentioned by participants that are said to have hindered their success in finding employment. These factors are however not related to their qualifications. It includes participants’ age, not having a driver’s license and the competitive struggle for employment among many qualified job seekers.

4.9.3 Skills acquired at university

All the participants acquired computer skills together with other soft skills such as presentation skills, communication skills and problem solving skills throughout their study period. However, participants gained programme-specific skills that varied according to the various disciplines. The study found that the difference in course curricula, constituted the difference in subject-specific skills and knowledge attained.

Participants who studied in the fields of science, commerce and education acquired practical experience and theoretical knowledge throughout their study programmes. For example, B.Sc. Microbiology participants gained practical experience in screening and testing of plant based projects, viruses and bacteria. Bachelor of Education participants acquired practical skills during their teaching practice. Moreover, graduates from the field of commerce had acquired practical knowledge regarding working with various computer programs.

Dakari graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Microbiology. He acquired practical skills together with theoretical knowledge throughout the duration of his study programme.

Dakari mentioned: “We did practicals in the laboratory making samples. I can work in a genetic environment, on a genetic project, plant-based projects or on microbiology- be it viruses, bacteria or parasites.”
Isabella graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Clinical Psychology) degree. She acquired good listening skills and developed patience. These skills were not only beneficial to the work environment but also to her personal life. Isabella however confessed that she did not quite remember the theory but rather had a general understanding of what she learned at university.

Isabella: “Since I studied psychology and sociology, it helped me to understand why people feel certain things and also understand that it is normal to feel certain emotions. So, if I have to go out and find a job, I will obviously have to work with people. What I’ve studied will help me to deal with people. How to interact with them and how I deal with rejection or backlash or criticism. Obviously, I don’t remember the theory work as we were taught at university, but I do have general knowledge about what we learned. However, I do feel like I will be able to transfer these skills into my work environment.”

Isabella’s field of specialisation requires application of the theory through interaction. She applies what she has learned during her study programme throughout her personal life which contributes to the mastery of what she had learned at university. However, it is apparent that prolonged unemployment ceases one’s ability to build on and retain theoretical knowledge obtained throughout university.

Unemployed graduates from the study fields of Humanities and Social Sciences had not acquired any practical experience. The only practical experience that graduates in this field acquired was research experience. Therefore, graduates from these disciplines had to take their own initiative to volunteer or look for internship opportunities in order to acquire practical experience.
4.9.4 Graduates’ perception of their education in relation to what employers expect

Participants stated that the skills requirements in their fields of specialisation differ from company to company. Therefore, they were able to meet some, but not all employers expectations. Furthermore, they asserted that universities merely lays a foundation of knowledge, but the complete set of skills sought by employers were often acquired on the job.

Denzel stated: “I think I have gained enough experience to work as a medical physicist because I did my internship. Most of the practical’s that we did are in line with what is expected at hospitals. I am equipped with most of the practical and theoretical skills except for metrology because we have not done most of the things that they do at Namibian Standards Institution (NSI). That is why I think that we are lacking knowledge in physics which NSI requires.”

Amelia: “Well, it depends on where you are working and the setup in which you are working. I believe that it depends on what practical skills employers want from you, but you can acquire that in the working environment. Universities equip you with the basics, but then it’s up to you to improve yourself.”

Furthermore, all participants were confident that they would be able to successfully transfer the practical skills and knowledge that they had gained at university to the labor market. They also have the desire to show employers that they possess a great set of skills but can only do so when given an opportunity to prove their capabilities.

Thabo confidently mentioned that he obtained all the skills desired by employers in his field of study. He acquired a degree in economics and pointed out that he is
effective and trained on various computer programs currently used by various companies.

Thabo stated: “Companies are using extension computers and programmes. So, the skills that I acquired on those programmes are very useful. I can even work at the bank because I learned how to work on these programmes at university.”

Bob completed a Bachelor of Science Degree in Financial Mathematics at the University of Namibia, and he had this to say:

“I’m not yet involved. I think if I get the chance, I will be able to prove myself by transforming the theory that we were taught at UNAM and putting it into practise.”

4.10 Participants’ suggestions on addressing graduate unemployment

Participants in this study were aware of the challenges associated with unemployment and securing jobs. Therefore, their inputs on how to deal with graduate unemployment hold much weight. Participants’ suggestions on addressing graduate unemployment include job creation, availability of business loans, job placements and early retirement.

Sarah: “I think it also starts with us. We need to be innovative and become self-employed, but this is only possible if the government is willing to help us. I can have a brilliant business idea, but I cannot do it without the financial means. Obviously because I am unemployed, it is not something that I can just do on my own.”

Bob: “I think if most companies should initiate graduate programs like those initiated by MTC, Bank of Namibia and First National Bank. It would be helpful
for graduates that are unemployed to obtain more skills and experience because the reason why we are not getting jobs is because we don’t have experience.”

Amelia: “I believe that exposure is necessary and experience is also necessary. Therefore, the universities should make provision for internship because we were not offered internship. We literally have to go out there and look for your own internships.”

Dumi: “I think this issue will not be resolved as long as the retirement age is at the age of sixty because there are no employment opportunities for the youth since most positions are still occupied by older people. Maybe people should retire at the age of fifty.”

4.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, all the suggestions provided by the participants’ were well-grounded to address and challenge the issue of unemployment among university graduates in Namibia. The next chapter will present a discussion of how the research findings relate to the literature review and the theoretical frameworks.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the research findings and how they relate to the literature review and theoretical frameworks. The following research question guided the findings of this study. What are graduates’ financial, social and psychological experiences of unemployment by gender? What are graduates’ experiences in their search for jobs across genders? How do graduates perceive the quality of their education in relation to employers’ expectations? Are there any differences in the experience of unemployment and in accessing the labour market between male and female graduates?

5.2 Graduates’ financial, social and psychological experiences of unemployment by gender

5.2.1 Financial Challenges

Results presented in Chapter Four showed that both male and female unemployed graduates experience financial difficulties. Participants found it challenging to keep up with the daily cost of living and acquiring basic necessities. Furthermore, they often lacked the financial means to buy internet data bundles or pay for transport when having to submit job applications. As a consequence, they were often unable to access essential channels for employment due to a lack of money. These findings validate and support the view of Basbug and Sharone (2017) who asserts that male and female job seekers experience financial strain during unemployment. In addition, the findings also support Mncayi (2016) who claims that financial constraints are a restraint for the unemployed during their search for jobs. Evidently, the experience of
unemployment constitutes the deprivation of basic necessities and the necessary means needed to apply for jobs.

5.2.2 Debt Repayment

Hwang (2017) states that university graduates can experience financial deficits because of college debts and educational expenses. The findings of this study confirmed that both male and female unemployed university graduates had the financial obligation to repay student loans. Apart from that, some participants in this study did not have obligations towards repayment of any other loans. The data, contributes to a clearer understanding of the repayment of the Namibian state funded student loans. In light of this, participants were not required to repay the loan yet since they were still unemployed. Instead, they are only required to repay the loans once they had secured permanent jobs.

5.2.3 Financial Dependency

Du Toit et al. (2018) state that unemployed people become ashamed and disappointed when they are unable to subscribe to the belief of becoming financially independent. In addition, Stradh et al. (2013) maintain that masculine identity is intricately associated with having a job which evoked more pressure and responsibility for men to find employment than it does for women. The findings correspond with both of these statements because the majority of male and female research participants are dependent on other people for essential necessities such as food, shelter and financial support. As a consequence, participants’ financial reliance on others brought about feelings of embarrassment and shame among both male and female participants, but it was more prominent among male participants. It was evident that socio-cultural stereotypes pertaining to masculinity profusely evoked more pressure among men to become independent and self-reliant.
5.2.4 Parental Responsibilities

The data contributes to the understanding of Ferguson and Li (2018) who state that having a job is not just about generating an income, but it has a lot to do with identity, gender and family. Evidently, the findings of this study indicated that unemployment had an influence on university graduates’ ability to fulfill their responsibilities as parents because all parents experienced financial difficulty providing for their children’s needs. In this study, participants were merely able to provide for their children’s needs with the help of parents and relatives. Consequently, participants’ inability to fulfил their parental responsibilities had a negative impact on their identities as parents, because they were unable to fulfil their parental obligations. Instead of being independent and self-sustainable, participants were financially confined and dependent on their parents and other people for financial support in raising their children. This impacted the manner in which they perceived themselves and how they imagine other people perceived them. The findings also showed that family is an incredible source of financial support when it comes to raising children. The financial support is not only rendered by family members, but participants also had a longing desire to reciprocate support towards their family upon finding employment.

In respect of parental responsibilities, the findings concur with Feminist Standpoint Theory that argues that the marginalised have a distinctive set of experiences and consciousness than that available to other groups (Collins, 1986). The data clearly indicated that female unemployed graduates were more sensitive about their maternal role than males since they displayed a discerning desperation to take care of their children’s needs. It was evident that female unemployed graduates recounted their responsibility and standpoint as primary caretakers. In this respect, mothers
displayed a unique set of experience and thoughts that are only understood by them. In a similar way, fathers also have a unique set of experiences. However, since the study was comprised of only one male parent, the findings could not be adequately compared to that of female unemployed parents. Therefore, more studies need to be conducted so as to completely understand unemployed male and females experiences in fulfilling their parental responsibilities.

5.2.5 Family Obligations

International Labour Organisation (2019) contends that because of the high rates of poverty in developing countries, it is important for each individual of employable age to find employment. Subsequently, research findings of this study confirm that unemployed university graduates are unable to fulfil their desire of improving the lives and the living conditions of their families because they do not have any form of financial income. Moreover, participants were also unable to financially contributing towards the educational attainment of their loved ones.

5.2.6 Starting Small Businesses

According to Lawhon, Millington and Stokes (2018) entrepreneurship is a central discourse for international development and sustainability of livelihoods. Analysis of this research findings shows that although unemployed graduates had started small businesses, they were struggling financially to keep businesses operating, and they did not generate enough profit to meet all their essential needs. Moreover, it was evident that small business owners could not cope with or recover from financial inadequacy. Therefore, the findings of the study do not support the claim that entrepreneurship enables livelihood sustainability in this respect. Arguably, livelihood sustainability through entrepreneurship largely depends on the nature and scope of the businesses established. This therefore supports the Marxist Crisis
Theory, which suggest that greater production and supply among large companies gives them more power and control over the market sector and consequently downplays smaller companies (Clarke, 1990). Therefore, entrepreneurship does not always ensure international development, unless small business owners receive financial support.

It has been established that more female than male unemployed graduates in this study had created informal businesses. The businesses created by female participants were mostly associated with their feminine identities. Female participants sold ready-made food, self-made jewellery and cosmetics as a means to earn money. Moreover, these participants had used their subjective knowledge conditioned by patriarchy in societies. Cooking has been a long-standing gender role subscribed to women in many cultures; while jewellery and cosmetics were mostly associated with women, as they symbolise femininity and beauty. However, domestic stereotypes such as cooking and maintaining socially-influenced physical appearances are socio-cultural stereotypes that are often deemed as sexist and denying women of their independence and self-character.

5.3 The effects of unemployment on graduates’ social lives

5.3.1 Social Isolation

Strandh, Hammerström, Nilsson, Nordenmark and Russel (2013) argue that unemployment can have an impact on the establishment of social contact outside the family. This statement corroborates the findings of this research, as both male and female unemployed graduates socialised less often now, during the unemployment stage. Unemployed graduates in this study chose to be less sociable for various reasons. Firstly, they preferred to socialise less frequently because they did not have
any money as socialising often involves spending money. Secondly, graduates felt ashamed of their socio-economic status. Thirdly, they had developed insecurities about themselves since they compared themselves to their peers who were already employed. Lastly, they had developed a fear of being judged or discriminated against because of the stigma attached to unemployment. The findings, therefore also affirm the claim that unemployed graduates develop a low self-esteem as a result of comparing themselves to other graduates who were already employed (Magagula, 2017).

5.3.2 Social conditions in the household

According to Shanka (2016), people often experience social pressure, social approval and social exclusion when unemployed. In addition, du Toit et al. (2018) state that unemployed individuals do not earn the right to voice their opinions on family or community affairs because of their inability to contribute financially. The findings of this research agree with these statements because the social conditions in certain households reflect characteristics of social pressure, social approval and social exclusion. It is apparent that in certain households graduates are pressurised to finding employment; while some families strongly disapprove of graduates’ inability to contribute to household expenses. Moreover, the findings showed that in certain households, unemployed graduates were excluded from decision-making processes during family deliberations.

On the other hand, social conditions in other households revealed the contrary. The findings of this study showed that the social conditions in some households remained unchanged as graduates’ status of employment had no influence on the social conditions in some households. Moreover, some graduates had not experienced any
pressure to finding employment; instead certain families were found to be encouraging, motivating and uplifting.

5.3.3 Intimate Relationships
According to Basbug and Sharone (2017), females have become increasingly career-based; therefore, when they are unemployed, they experience low self-worth and unwanted feelings of dependency on their husbands which can bring about marital tension. The findings slightly vary from the literature because both males and female acquired tertiary education with the intention of finding proper paid jobs after graduating. As a result, both male and female participants in all intimate relationships experienced low self-worth and undesirable feelings of dependability. Moreover, there was no indication of tension in any of the intimate relationships. On the contrary, participants maintained that their intimate partners were emotionally and financially supportive throughout the time that they had been unemployed. Furthermore, since there were no married men in this study, the effect of unemployment on married men could not be established. Hence, a detailed interpretation of how spousal relationships were affected as a result of unemployment could not be provided.

5.3.4 Societal perceptions of unemployed graduates
Du Toit et al. (2018) claim that when graduates do not find employment after graduating, they are perceived as too selective, too lazy and overall receive a lack of understanding from society. The analysis confirms that unemployed graduates are often perceived as lazy, and that they were not exerting much effort in searching for employment. In addition, there is often a lack of tolerance for unemployment in families, as some participants experienced that parents and relatives showed a lack of understanding, empathy, support or encouragement. Furthermore, it was found that
family members perceive graduates as being too picky in their employment preferences.

The study’s findings also concur with du Toit et al. (2018) who claim that people who are financially independent are much more respected and appreciated in society as opposed to people who are unemployed. The findings revealed that there is widespread disapproval of male unemployment in most cultures since unemployed men are often not appreciated or respected. On the other hand, the findings of this study indicated that society displayed more tolerance and understanding of unemployment among women.

5.4 Psychological and emotional impact of unemployment on graduates

Diraditsile (2017) maintains that feelings of hopelessness, low self-esteem, low confidence, depression, sleeping problems and suicidal ideations are some of the emotional and psychological effects of unemployment. In confirmation to this claim, the findings revealed that unemployment had taken a toll on the self-esteem and confidence of both male and female participants. Furthermore, hopelessness, stress, depression, suicidal ideations, aggression are psychological experiences that participants had encountered while unemployed. In addition, societal pressure and prolonged unemployment further perpetuated the adverse psychological and emotional effects of unemployment among participants.

5.5 Graduates’ experiences in their search for jobs across gender

5.5.1 Job Search Methods

Altmann, Falk, Jäger, and Zimmermann (2015) claim that in order for job seekers to succeed in finding jobs, they have to exert a lot of effort in their job search, know what search channels to make use of and what types of jobs to target. The findings of
the study are not entirely consistent with this statement as the majority of both male and female research participants had exerted a great deal of effort in their search for employment. In addition, most participants had used various employment search channels and various job application methods. However, in a period between ten months and three years of searching for employment, research participants were still unsuccessful in their search for jobs. Therefore, the amount of effort applied throughout the search for employment, the amount of applications and job search channels used plays a role in securing employment, but they do not necessarily guarantee employment. Instead, other underlying factors such as structural weaknesses and skills deficits also hinder graduates success in entering the labour market.

According to Feminist Standpoint Theory, oppressed groups develop critical insight of how the dominant society is structured and how they think (Hartsock, 1983). Baumann (2016) mentioned that job seekers are not passive victims of unemployment but can actively influence their labour market outcomes. The findings corroborate both of these statements because they showed that unemployed graduates had developed critical insight of what the labour market required and how they were able to conform their skill set to the labour market’ requirements. For example, it is evident that graduates were cognisant that work experience is an essential requirement for employment. They have therefore offered to volunteer since volunteering could potentially increase their chances of finding employment in the future. However, Feminist Standpoint Theory does not only apply to individuals, but groups who organise and challenge the macro structures responsible for certain oppressive conditions. In view of this, the findings of this study did not indicate any
collective group action taken by the research participants to challenge the macro structures that had led to high rates of unemployment.

5.5.2 Lack of job opportunities

The research findings substantiate the claim of Eita and Ashipala (2010) who argue that graduates are unable to find employment because the Namibian economy is not creating enough job opportunities to absorb all university graduates. In concurrence with this claim, graduates pointed out that there were hardly vacancies related to their fields of specialisation. They believed that the lack of jobs emanated from current economic conditions in the country which caused the temporary freezing of new appointments in the public service. Results of this study therefore also concur with the Marxist Crisis Theory, which postulates that low cost-effectiveness gave rise to cost-cutting measures (Kotz, 2017). Moreover, the halt in appointment of new employees further results in a backlog of jobs in the country.

5.5.3 Graduates’ experiences during job interviews

Alonso and Moscoso (2018) maintain that applicants’ perceptions of job interviews are based on their opinions of organisational justice, their thoughts, and feelings about assessment instruments and about personnel selection in general. The findings correspond with the literature, because the participants in this study provided their opinions on the conduct of job interviews that they had attended. According to the findings, graduates observed discrepancies within interview protocols. They expressed that in some cases, hundreds of candidates were invited to attend job interviews for one position. It was also found that the interview questions were, in some cases biased and that during some interviews, the recruitment process was unprofessional. Moreover, unemployed graduates shared their thoughts on the legitimacy of the interview process, suspecting unfair and discriminatory practices by
employers. In the same vain, they highlighted the need for cost-effective methods of conducting job interviews to accommodate people who lack the financial means to attend interviews in remote areas. In contrast, the findings also revealed that participants showed some optimism with the fact that every job interview attended was a learning experience and a form of preparation for future job interview opportunities.

The results of graduates’ interview experiences fit with the Feminist Standpoint Theory which argues that the standpoint of the subjugated is more credible, because the marginalised are able to provide an objective account of their lived experiences (Haraway, 1988). Due to the research methodology employed in this study, credible and critical insight on how unemployed university graduates made sense of their job interview experiences was brought forth.

5.6 Job search outcomes

5.6.1 No feedback from employers

Altmann, Falk, Jäger, and Zimmermann (2015) assert that throughout the search for employment, there is relatively little information and feedback about the guidelines of the search process bringing about bias in individuals beliefs. The findings affirm that graduates had not received any feedback on the job applications despite meeting the job requirements as advertised by companies. As a consequence, participants questioned why they hadn’t received any feedback; whether the positions have been filled or not; why their applications had been unsuccessful, and whether employers actually reviewed their job applications. Notwithstanding, feedback on the success or failure of job applications could be considerably time-consuming and labour intensive for employers, but it can provide unemployed graduates with guidelines on
what skills, attributes and qualifications to improve on. It would also provide applicants with a better understanding of what skills and attributes employers seek. On the other hand, the lack of feedback on why job applications were declined consequently makes it difficult to understand what skills and attributes employers are looking for. Therefore, employers should consider providing justifications for declining job applications, to eliminate bias in individual beliefs and to help graduates become more employable.

5.6.2 Declined to volunteer

Van de Rheede (2012) argues that graduates should work as interns without necessarily expecting compensation but merely to gain work experience. On the other hand, Pollard et al. (2015) mentioned that some employers do not offer internships because of the costs involved in training interns, the lack of available resources to offer suitable experience and because internships would need to be excessively long for graduates to gain actual work experience. Against this background, the findings confirm that unemployed university graduates offered to volunteer without expecting compensation or incentives but rather to gain work experience. The findings showed that their propositions were declined by some employers. Unemployed university graduates are thus placed in a quandary since employers expect them to have work experience but are not willing to accept volunteers or create internship opportunities for graduates. As a result, university graduates were in a perplexed state of not knowing what to do and how to move forward. The reasons why employers deny graduates to volunteer without compensation were unclear and could not be determined since it is beyond the scope of this study and requires insight from employers themselves.
5.6.3 Subject to fake recruitments

Vidros, Kolas, and Kambourakis (2016) mention that job seekers are increasingly coming across fake job advertisements that offer appealing wages and other benefits aimed at retrieving money or personal information. The findings confirm that at least one unemployed university graduate came across a fake online recruitment advertisement. However, because the participant realised that the advertisement was a fraudulent scheme, no money or personal information were given to scammers. Moreover, because only a single research participant came across fake recruitment schemes, the effects of fake recruitment advertisements on unemployed university graduates could not be determined. Therefore, further studies should be carried out to determine the scope and the effect of fake job advertisements on unemployed university graduates.

5.6.4 Corruption, nepotism and tribalism in recruitments

Discrimination, nepotism and corrupt practices in the recruitment process are often subtle and not easily recognisable; therefore, they are not often exposed. However, the findings showed that research participants suspected discrimination in the recruitment process whereby candidates from certain racial backgrounds were appointed over others. They also believed that certain employment positions were reserved for people familiar to some employers. Therefore, the findings agree with Feminist Standpoint Theory that argues the oppressed are fundamental to unfolding the ideological strategies used to design and justify intersections of different forms of oppression (Hartsock, 1983). It is evident that because of the graduates’ unemployment status they were able to recognise, question and provide an objective account of the different forms of injustice that they were subjected to as job seekers.
5.7 Participants’ perception of the quality of education received in relation to employers’ expectations

5.7.1 Lack of work experience
Ikela (2017) maintains that one of the prominent job requirements is for applicants to have a number of years work experience in similar positions. The findings affirm that participants lacked formal work experience which is an essential employment requirement set by employers. As a consequence, participants perceived their lack of formal work experience as a drawback in finding employment. It is for this reason that some participants proposed to volunteer without expecting any compensation or incentives.

5.7.2 Underrated Qualifications
Mncayi (2016) argues that graduate unemployment is associated with employers’ preference to hire graduates from certain universities because they trust the quality of the education provided at these higher education institutions. In support of this view, the findings indicate that employers do prefer to hire graduates from certain universities as opposed to others. According to participants’ views, graduates from Namibian universities are perceived to be under-skilled and risky as they could possibly be a liability for companies. In essence, graduates with qualifications from Namibian universities are placed in a conundrum whereby their qualifications are not deemed satisfactory for some employers.

5.7.3 Skills acquired at university
Salmi (2017) asserts that employees are expected to have a good educational background and should possess practical skills and key complex competencies. To a certain degree the findings conform to this statement as all participants had acquired
theoretical knowledge, key complex competencies, soft skills and computer literacy skills. However, only graduates from certain study programmes had acquired practical skills throughout their studies. The findings showed that most graduates in Humanities and Social Science had not acquired any practical skills. This is perhaps so because these programmes are more analytical and philosophical which enhance skills that are easily transferrable. However, the lack of practical skills affirm that there is a skills gap between what employers expect and what Humanities and Social Sciences graduates had to offer. Therefore, the findings support the Skills Mismatch Theory that claims that there is an imbalance between workers skills, education and demand for human capital (Handel, 2003). However, contrarily, participants from the fields of Education and Science had acquired all the characteristics that employers seek- including practical experience. As a result, graduates in these fields of study did not display a mismatch of skills. Therefore, the skills mismatch theory does not accurately justify why graduates in the field of Education and Science were unable to secure employment.

5.7.4 Graduates’ perception of their education in relation to what employers expect

In this study, participants were self-assured about being able to successfully transfer what they had learned at university into the labour market. However, they were doubtful about possessing all the skills that employers required. They argued that universities merely impart core skills, but all the skills and knowledge that employers seek are normally acquired in the workplace. Moreover, they maintained that companies’ skills requirements differ, but the core skills are universal. Therefore, one cannot always meet all job requirement needed by employers. The findings therefore support Pietro and Urwin (2006) who state that practical skills are not often
prioritised in course curricula, but university education mostly imparts skills that allow graduates to easily learn techniques that are needed for the job task.

5.8 Participants’ suggestions on addressing graduate unemployment

According to Feminist Standpoint Theory, it is important for marginalised groups to understand the hegemonic centre and the ways people there think and act in order to emancipate themselves (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002). The participants suggested that the Government of the Republic of Namibia and non-governmental organisations should create employment, offer internships and assist unemployed graduates in becoming self-employed. Furthermore, mandatory early retirement was proposed as this would ensure employment opportunities to the vast number of unemployed youth. These suggestions support the Feminist Standpoint Theory because it is evident that unemployed university graduates understand the social, political, and economic structures that impede on their ability to find jobs and acquire basic necessities. However, graduates must collectively challenge the issue of unemployment in order to emancipate themselves as collective group action is paramount to achieving emancipation.

5.9 The differences in male and female graduates’ experience of unemployment and in accessing the labour market

The findings show differences, but also similarities in male and female graduates’ experiences of unemployment and in accessing the labour market. The findings concur with Stradh et al. (2013) who argue that gender roles in the labour market and in the family have a strong influence on how the consequences of unemployment are interpreted. The findings revealed that gender roles played a significant role the different interpretations of unemployment among male and female participants. In summary the similarities and differences observed are as follows:
5.9.1 Similarities

- Male and female unemployed university graduates struggled to maintain their daily cost of living and carry out job searches because of a lack of income.
- They were primarily reliant on family members for financial support.
- Male and female unemployed university graduates had financial responsibility to take care of their children.
- Males and females had student loan agreements that needed to be settled.
- Both genders had a profound responsibility to take care of their families.
- They were both emotionally and psychologically affected by unemployment.
- The methods employed in participants’ job search, job search outcomes and the job interview experiences were comparable as both male and female unemployed university graduates shared similar experiences in this regard.

5.9.2 Differences

- More female than male participants had created small businesses as income generating activities. The females in this study had drawn from their identities and gender roles and generated a small income by selling food, cosmetics and making jewellery.
- A significant difference was observed in the social experience of unemployment between male and female unemployed university graduates which is primarily aroused by values and norms in families and in society. Evidently, more pressure is placed on males to find employment than on females. As a consequence, male participants placed more pressure on themselves to find employment because they wanted to maintain their socio-cultural standards. Thus, making them more vulnerable to the emotional and psychological effects of unemployment as observed in the findings.
Graduates career choices determined males and females different experiences in accessing the labour market. In relation to the field of specialisation, more males had qualifications in disciplines that offer theory and practical sessions as part of the course curricula. In contrast, more females in this study graduated from Humanities and Social Sciences study programmes which are almost entirely based on theory. In consideration of employers’ preference of employing graduates with formal work experience and practical experience, it may be argued that graduates with practical skills have a better chance of finding employment as opposed to graduates who do not have practical skills.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of graduates’ financial, social and psychological experiences of unemployment, as well as males and females experiences in their search for employment. Moreover, it provided a description of how graduates perceived their education in relation to employers’ expectations. Furthermore, it outlined the differences in males and females experiences of unemployment and in accessing the labour market. The next and final chapter will provide the conclusion and recommendations on how to address the issue of graduate unemployment in Namibia.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations on the research topic: “The gendered experience of graduate unemployment: an exploration into the experiences of university graduates in Windhoek”.

6.2 Conclusion

The Skills Mismatch Theory, Marxist Crisis Theory and Feminist Standpoint Theory were theoretical frameworks used in this study. All theories were applicable and helpful in understanding the nature of graduate unemployment. The Skills Mismatch Theory and the Marxist Crisis Theory provided justification for the high rate of unemployment among university graduates in Namibia.

In terms of skills mismatch, the study found that despite graduates’ confidence in their ability to competently carry out work in their fields of specialisation, there was an inconsistency in the skills acquired by Humanities and Social Science graduates and the skills needed by employers. For example, Bachelor of Science in Bio-Chemistry course curricula was not in line with the requirements of the Namibia Standards Institution. Furthermore, formal work experience was an important element required by employers and only a few graduates had acquired work experience through internships; while the majority of the participants did not have formal work experience.

In reference to the Marxist Crisis Theory, it was established that male and female graduates’ experiences in the search for employment were indistinguishable. It was clear that both male and female participants wielded much effort in their search for employment. However, irrespective of the effort exerted in searching for
employment, graduates were unable to enter the labour market because of a lack of jobs resulting from the current economic crisis.

The Feminist Standpoint Theory made it possible to understand the experiences of unemployment among graduates. This study brought about knowledge on distinctive standpoints and the actual lived reality of unemployed university graduates from UNAM and NUST. It revealed and described the distinctive experiences of males and females, but it also recognised the experiences of unemployed graduates who are parents, informal business owners, participants in intimate relationships, student-loan holders and graduates from different study programmes.

The financial, social and psychological experiences of unemployment among university graduate were presented in this study. This study demonstrated that both male and female university graduates shared similar, but also different financial, social and psychological experiences of unemployment as outlined in the findings. In addition, they also share similar and different experiences of unemployment and in accessing the labour market. The differences in male and female experience of unemployment observed in this study were mainly attributed to socio-cultural stereotypes associated with gender roles. Moreover, the differences in graduates’ experiences in accessing the labour market are mostly attributed to graduates’ field of specialisation and the skills attained within different study programmes.

In accordance with the research findings, it could be argued that the Namibian government’ policies used to address unemployment have not been very affective. The policies were geared towards, economic growth, skills development and increasing job opportunities, but the findings indicated that there is a lack of employment opportunities and a skills deficit among university graduates.
Relative to the research findings of this study, international best practices that could be used to ensure employment creation and skills attainment in Namibia includes the diversification of manufactured products in Namibia on the condition that the labour force are well-compensated and not exploited. This would allow revival of the labour market, while ensuring employment creation for a large number of Namibians. Furthermore, universities should incorporate practical skills throughout all degree programmes and employers should provide internships to university students or offer in-service training. This will give graduates the practical skills and work experience that are required by employers.

6.3 Recommendations

This study showed that employers seldom provided feedback on the outcome of participants’ job applications, which consequently led to bias in participants’ belief in the recruitment process and uncertainty about the skills required by employers. This study therefore, recommends that employers should provide feedback regarding why graduates were unsuccessful in job interviews in order for unemployed graduates to improve on their shortfalls and to avoid any trace of bias in individual beliefs pertaining to employee recruitments.

The study demonstrated that there was a lack of employment opportunities in line with participants’ educational backgrounds. The Government of the Republic of Namibia and private sector should therefore diversify and expand the manufacturing sector to ensure employment creation. They should also establish employment opportunities in other sectors to accommodate graduates from different educational backgrounds.

Universities should look for ways to include practical experience in all study programmes since this study found that there is a skills deficit and lack of work
experience among university graduates. In addition, employers should provide in-service training, mentoring and internships, as this would allow graduates to gain formal work experience.

According to the study findings graduates were displeased about the financial costs associated with attending job interviews in remote areas and attending job interviews that were comprised of hundreds of candidates. Furthermore, it was found employers’ broadly select candidates from different educational backgrounds which gave rise to bias in interview questions. This study therefore, suggests that employers narrow down the number of candidates for job interviews and consider online interviews. This would enable job seekers and employers to save financial costs and time. It would also grant interview candidates a fair opportunity to part-take in the interview process. Moreover, when employers’ shortlist candidates with qualifications closely related to the specific line of work, it would also eliminate bias in interview questions.

It was evident in the research findings that the informal businesses created by participants did not make enough profit to sustain participants’ needs nor to maintain the businesses. Moreover, participants suggested that business loans should made available to unemployed graduates. This indicated that university graduates were unaware of the Youth Credit Scheme which offers business loans to the Namibian youth. Therefore, this study suggests that university graduates should be made aware of the availability of business loans and procurement procedures. This would enable more university graduates to apply for business loans.

This study found that some graduates merely used a single job search method which consequently plays a role in the probability of them securing employment. Therefore,
this study proposes that graduates use multiple job search methods in order to increase their chances of securing employment.

This research shows that university graduates suspect nepotism, favouritism and discrimination in recruitment processes. Thus, employers should ensure equal opportunities for employment by strongly refraining from any form of discrimination in the recruitment process. Nonetheless, it is the legal responsibility of all employers to ensure equality, transparency and non-discrimination throughout the recruitment process.

Participants’ experiences as unemployed parents could not be adequately analysed and compared across genders because there was only one male and two female parents in this study. Therefore, more studies need to be conducted, so as to understand unemployed parents’ experiences in fulfilling their parental responsibilities while unemployment.

Similarly, this study was comprised of one married female participant; while there were no married males in this study. Therefore, the effects of unemployment on married males could not be established and a detailed interpretation could not be made on how spousal relationships are affected as a result of unemployment. This study therefore, recommends that further studies be conducted to understand the effects of unemployment on relationships and marriages.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical clearance certificate

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FHSS /528/2019  Date: 20 November, 2019

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia’s Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: The Gendered Experience Of Graduate Unemployment: An Explanation Into The Experiences Of University Graduates In Windhoek

Student: DEIDRE ESTELLE DE KOKER

Student Number: 200935267

Supervisor(s): Dr Lucy Edwards-Jauch

Faculty: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Take note of the following:

(a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the HREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.

(b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the HREC.

(c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the HREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by HREC.

(d) The HREC retains the right to:

(i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,

(ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

HREC wishes you the best in your research.

Dr. E de Villiers: HREC Chairperson

Ms. P. Claassen: HREC Secretary
Appendix 2: Consent letter to participants

P. O. Box 24825
Windhoek
Mobile: +264 814213656
E-mail: dekokerdeidre@gmail.com
22 November 2019

Consent letter

Dear participant,

You are hereby invited to participate in the research project: “The gendered experience of unemployment: an exploration into the experiences of university graduates in Windhoek”. This study is about university graduates’ experiences of unemployment and how unemployment is experienced by men and women. The study will be conducted among unemployed university graduates from the University of Namibia and the Namibia University of Science and Technology who reside in Windhoek. Your input and participation in this study is extremely important and will significantly contribute to the nature of this study.

If you opt to, you will participate in this study through a face-to-face interview. All the information gathered will be treated with confidentiality and privacy, and you will remain anonymous throughout this study. Please be assured that the data gathered will be used for research purposes only and all the information will be locked in a filing cabinet only accessible by me. Therefore, if you are willing to participate in this study kindly complete this form as a declaration of your consent.

Yours truly,
D.E de Koker- UNAM Masters of Arts (Gender and Development Studies) student.

I ……………………………………………… (Name) agree to participate in the research study entitled “The gendered experience of unemployment: an exploration into the experiences of university graduates in Windhoek” as outlined in the consent letter.

Signature: ……………………………….. Date:……………./………………/2020
Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT: AN EXPLORATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY GRADUATES IN WINDHOEK

Administration Block

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Greetings:

My name is **Deidre Estelle de Koker**. I am a Masters student from the University of Namibia. I am conducting research on the differential gendered experience of unemployment: an exploration into the experiences of university graduates in Windhoek. I have identified you as a possible participant who can enlighten me on the subject and would like to ask you if you would be willing to share your knowledge and experiences with me. Some information that I may ask may be sensitive, and therefore you have the right to decide what information you wish to share or to stop at any moment, but I can assure you that all information will be treated with confidentiality and privacy and that your identity will not be disclosed. I will not reveal your name or anything you have shared with me.
Personal questions

1. What qualifications do you have?  
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2. For how long have you been unemployed since graduating?  
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3. How has being unemployed affected you?(socially, economically and psychologically)  
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4. How do you feel at this point in time- socially, emotionally and psychologically?  
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Graduates experience in the job search

5. Please describe what you have experienced while searching for employment?  
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6. What methods have you used in your job search?  
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7. What are your biggest challenges you have experienced while searching for a job?  
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8. Have you been invited to an interview after graduation and what was your experience during the interview?  
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Graduates perception of their education and skills

9. What kind of skills and knowledge did you gain at university?
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15. How do you meet these obligations?
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16. What family obligations do you have; how do you attend to them (parents, spouse, and kids)?
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17. What do people, family, partner, friends say about you being unemployed? How do they feel?
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18. What are the views in your culture about people who are unemployed? (cultural beliefs, norms, expectations)
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19. Have you received any form of encouragement while unemployed, and how has it helped you?
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20. How does unemployment affect your relationship with your family, partner and friends?
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21. Thank you for your time, do you have any questions or anything that you would like to add?