

PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON 2020 INTAKE OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND NURSING STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF  
NAMIBIA OSHAKATI CAMPUS, OSHANA REGION, NAMIBIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
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BY

SAKARIA NANTINDA

200401785

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MAIN SUPERVISOR: DR MOSES CHIRIMBANA (UNIVERSITY OF  
NAMIBIA)

## ABSTRACT

The research project motivation is to determine the psychological and social repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic on 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region, Namibia and identify their coping strategies against psychosocial effects. A project approach of qualitative in nature was implemented for conducting the study through a phenomenological study design. Seventeen (17) participants were selected purposefully from 156 targeted population of public health and nursing students. The data of the research were collected through a recorded comprehensively interviews of face-to-face and field notes, manually analysed, and interpreted. Study findings indicated that psychological and social effects are interrelated aspects which can influence one another in connection with COVID-19 pandemic. The study finding shows that stress, anxiety, loneliness, and depression are major psychological effects due to COVID-19 pandemic measures and online study. Poor social interaction and financial crisis are social effects which contributed to psychological effects as well.

Findings further shows that self-management (physical activities, hobbies, adhere to regulations, and staying positive), spiritual (religious) and social support (from family members, friends, and health professionals) was coping mechanisms to overcome psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic. The study recommended that the university should establish a policy that addresses the most effective strategies for managing and strengthen psychosocial support services to students, to maintain educational continuity and students' wellbeing during pandemic. It also recommended that effectively engage in physical activities and positive attitude facilitate students to maintain normal life over the journey of pandemic.

**Keywords:** *Psychosocial Effects, Coping Strategies, COVID-19 Pandemic*

## **CONFERENCE PRESENTATION**

**Health Africa International Conference (HAIC)**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AIDS	:	Acute Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BPSM	:	Biopsychosocial Model
COVID-19	:	Corona Virus Disease
CR	:	Class Representative
HIV	:	Human-Immune Virus
MOHSS	:	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MTC	:	Mobile Telecommunication Company
PPE	:	Personal Protective Equipment
RNA	:	Ribonucleic Acid
RSA	:	Republic of South Africa
SARS	:	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SRC	:	Student Representative Committee
UNAM	:	University of Namibia
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNREC	:	University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee
WHO	:	World Health Organisation

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## **DEDICATION**

I will dedicate this study to my parents:

Sakaria Nantinda, well known as “*Kapundja Okalumentu*” and Elisa Tobias Negongo,  
this belongs to you two.


## DECLARATIONS

I, Sakaria Nantinda, hereby declare that this research study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

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**Student Name:** Sakaria Nantinda

**Signature:** ...  ...

**Date:** April 2025

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

#### 1.1. Introduction

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-Cov-2) is a single-stranded ribonucleic acid (RNA) and a group of the Corona virus family that caused the respiratory infectious disease, which is named COVID-19 [1, 2, 3]. It is also described as a group of viruses that can cause the common cold or more severe illnesses such as severe acute respiratory diseases, Middle East respiratory syndrome, and COVID-19 disease [1]. It normally infects the respiratory system, which results from mild to severe symptoms such as normal cold to severe respiratory distress [2] with signs and symptoms of fever, cough, general body weakness, tiredness, and normal cold; however, symptoms may progress into severe conditions of difficult breathing (respiratory distress syndrome), organ failure (renal failures), as well as other conditions that may cause death [1].

The cases of the new sickness COVID-19 pandemic were identified in December 2019 in a city called Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. Afterwards, infections rapidly spread all over the world [3]. COVID-19 pandemic noticed as a global burden and the most common causes of morbidity and mortality diseases over the world after it was discovered. The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly impacted college students [4]. The pandemic has caused disruptions such as health problems and changed the lifestyles of all human beings, including psychosocial effects on college students [4]. Psychosocial effect is when a person is affected psychologically and socially because of certain conditions or environments [5]. It can also have positive or negative consequences for any exposed situation. Furthermore, COVID-19 pandemic has been

reported to have impacted university students, causing them to have difficulty coping with psychosocial challenges and experiencing anxiety, fear, and stress, which negatively affects the students' academic progress [4]. The idea for conducting this study is to determine the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic and identify coping strategies amongst the 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at the University of Namibia-Oshakati campus, Oshana region, Namibia.

## **1.2. Background of the study**

In March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed the virus and declared COVID-19 as a serious, life-threatening global pandemic disease, with a high fatality rate and the absence of effective therapies [3]. This proclamation created global perplexity. On May 3, 2020, there were 3,272,202 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 230,104 fatalities globally [4]. COVID-19 pandemic took several months to impact numerous lives. As of October 2021, around 5 million individuals globally had succumbed to the COVID-19 pandemic, rendering it one of the leading diseases worldwide [6]. In October 2021, around 700,000 fatalities were recorded in the United States of America [6]. As of April 2022, Namibia reported 172,121 confirmed cases and 4100 fatalities attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic [7].

Preventive strategies for the COVID-19 pandemic encompass isolation, lockdown, social distancing, and quarantine, cessation of social gatherings, hand hygiene, and mask usage to inhibit disease transmission [4]. The COVID-19 pandemic measures have altered the lifestyles of all individuals, including college students, resulting in the closure of schools. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) predicted significant school closures in early April 2020, impacting approximately 1.6 million students globally [8].

The alterations presented difficulties for the students, impacting them physically, psychologically, socially, and with other health issues [4]. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost 220 million students worldwide, leading to social isolates, and the emergence of psychological disorders amongst students [9]. Furthermore, a survey conducted in the Republic of China, the epicentre of the pandemic, indicated that COVID-19 pandemic induced anxiety in 24.9% of college students [10]. Research conducted in America indicated that 86% of students expressed heightened concern regarding social isolation [11].

A study from Egypt, a developing nation, indicated a significant prevalence of depression of 67.1% and insufficient sleep of 23.1% [12]. The study further indicated that 53.5% of the population experienced anxiety, whereas 48.8% reported feelings of stress. A qualitative study conducted in South Africa since the onset of the pandemic revealed that students had personal worry, anxiety, and academic challenges [13]. Ethiopia revealed that stress constitutes for 22.2% of students' health problems, mild anxiety 39.6%, and depression 40.2% [14]. In contrast South Africa indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic induced anxiety in 45.6% of students, sadness in 35%, and challenges in handling psychosocial concerns [15].

On March 13, 2020, the Ministry of Health and social Services (MOHSS) in Namibia reported its initial two COVID-19 pandemic cases involving a Romanian couple [16]. The government of the Republic of Namibia, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Social Services, addressed the pandemic by declaring a state of emergency, instituting lockdowns and further steps to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 pandemic [17]. The measures encompassed the closure of educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and universities [16, 17]. The authorities instructed students to return home for independent study and engaged in multiple e-learning programmes [17]. The

COVID-19 pandemic and its associated assessments may impact Namibian students mentally, emotionally, and socially. Therefore, the researcher is conducting this study to determine the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic and identify coping strategies to alleviate these effects on the 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at the University of Namibia-Oshakati campus, located in the Oshana region of Namibia.

### **1.3. Problem statement**

The psychosocial repercussion of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose challenges for tertiary students globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) has implemented various control measures in response to the pandemic, including prohibition of social gatherings, enforcement of social distancing, and instituting lockdowns to curb the transmission of the virus [18]. These interventions led to the widespread closure of universities and a rapid transition from conventional in-person instruction to online education [19]. This abrupt shift has resulted in significant psychosocial challenges for students, including increased anxiety, stress levels, and feelings of isolation, which could potentially hinder their academic performance, career prospects, and overall health [4, 9, 20].

A plethora of studies have documented the adverse psychosocial effects of the pandemic on university students worldwide. Research's outside Namibia indicates that students experienced heightened emotional distress, difficulties in maintaining motivation and engagement with studies, and challenges related to adapting to online learning environments [10, 11, 13, 14]. The isolation that stems from social distancing measures has also contributed to deteriorating mental health among students, as studying traditional support systems have been disrupted. This context raises concerns

regarding the long-term implications for students' academic trajectories and personal well-being.

Specifically focusing on Namibia, researcher have begun to examine whether local students, particularly the 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at the University of Namibia-Oshakati Campus, are experiencing similar psychosocial effects. This group is of particular concern as they were newly entering the university environment and lifestyle during the onset of the pandemic. The unfamiliarity with the academic terrain and the sudden onset of significant global challenges may have exacerbated the challenges they face [8]. Understanding the specific experiences of these students regarding psychosocial effects is essential. Additionally, Namibian setting, there is no known published literature concerning the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic over students. The scarcity of literature about psychosocial repercussion of the COVID-19 pandemic on students constitute a research gap that necessitate investigation.

Given all these complications, the present study aims to determine the emotional and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and discover coping methods among the 2020 cohort of public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of the University of Namibia, Oshana area, Namibia.

#### **1.4. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this project is to determine the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic amongst the 2020 cohort of public health and nursing students at UNAM Oshakati campus, of Oshana area, Namibia.

### **1.5. Research objectives**

To solve the research problem, researcher formulate the following objectives in accordance with the research title and problem statement.

1. To determine the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic experienced by students at UNAM Oshakati campus.
2. To identify how students are coping with the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic at the UNAM Oshakati campus.

### **1.6. Significance of the study**

The study results elucidate the psychosocial impacts encountered by students at Oshakati campus of the University of Namibia in Oshana region. This comprehension is essential in aiding students in navigating their courses during the difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study has significantly contributed to the national literature concerning the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students. The study's findings facilitate further research on the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also assists in offering advice to the Ministry of Health, and Social Services and universities on how to support students psychosocially during the epidemic and in the event of a comparable situation in the future.

### **1.7. Limitations**

Limitations in the study are conditions that may affect the research findings negatively, which are out of the researcher's control [21]. Overloaded with examinations, nursing practice, and other school activities such as compiling their research thesis for final submission, students struggled to find sufficient time for interviews during data collection, leading to some students declining to involve in the study. This limits

students' full participation in the study, which affects the generalization of study findings to other universities. As a result, the study's findings apply only to public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of the University of Namibia, in the Oshana region.

To overcome limits, the researcher extends the data collection periods for two to four weeks and advises the students to use their free time for the interview, which will last no longer than 30 minutes. In addition, since COVID-19 pandemic is the new disease with little or no study conducted in Namibia about the psychosocial repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic on students, there is a limit to citing in a literature review specifically from Namibia about student's psychosocial effects as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

### **1.8. Delimitations**

Researchers set delimitation boundaries to control the scope of their study [21]. The study was only available for the 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of the University of Namibia, in Oshana region, Namibia, and first registered with the University of Namibia in 2020 because this group of students were new to the university milieu and lifestyle at the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher did not allow any students outside the outlined requirements to participate in the study.

### **1.9. Definitions of the keywords**

**Psychosocial:** The term "psychosocial" denotes the impact of social circumstances on an individual's cognition and behaviour [22]. Psychosocially can also be referred to the interplay of psychological and social factors, emphasising human mental processes and behaviours in relation to social contexts. It encompasses both psychological and

social elements. Researchers can further delineate psychosocial as an individual's behaviour in relation to stimuli or social surroundings, and their response to specific situations. This study examines the psychological and social impacts suffered by the 2020 cohort of public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of the University of Namibia, in Oshana area, over the journey of COVID-19 epidemic.

**Effects:** The term "effects" denotes the observable influence or impact [23]. It can also be described as any positive or negative alteration that arises as a consequence of an event. This study defines consequences as any positive or negative changes experienced by the 2020 cohort of public health and nursing undergraduates at Oshakati campus of the University of Namibia, in Oshana area, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**COVID-19:** COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that induces severe acute respiratory syndrome [1, 2, 3]. This study examines COVID-19, a virus that infects the human upper respiratory system, leading to severe respiratory distress and mortality. The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the emotional and social well-being of students at the University of Namibia.

**Pandemic:** A pandemic is characterised as a disease that manifests in epidemic proportions throughout multiple countries concurrently [24]. This study defines a pandemic as a sickness that impacts global sectors, including health, education, and economics, within the context of Namibia. This study examines the adverse psychosocial repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students.

**Public health:** Public health is a discipline dedicated to illness prevention, life extension, and health promotion via coordinated initiatives and informed decisions made by society, organisations, the public and private sectors, communities, and individuals [25]. This study focusses on public health, a discipline addressing health

issues and educating students about health. The targeted population comprises public health students from the 2020 intake at the University of Namibia, specifically regarding the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Nursing student:** A nursing student is an individual registered with an accredited training institution and registration authority, undertaking a four-year program in comprehensive nursing and midwifery as stipulated in Section 21 of the Nursing Professions Act 2004 [26]. This study focusses on nursing students from the 2020 cohort at Oshakati campus of the University of Namibia, located in Oshana area, Namibia. A student, regardless of gender, who is now enrolled at the University of Namibia, recognised by the Nursing Council of Namibia, and permitted to practise in the country's hospitals, provided they are 18 years of age or older.

#### **1.10. Outline of the chapters**

The study is prepared and presented into the following sections/chapters:

**Chapter 1: Introduction:** This chapter includes of introduction, background of a research, and the research statement problem. Chapter 1 also encompasses the purpose and the study objectives. It additionally includes the study's relevance, limits, and delimitations. The final segment of the section delineates the definitions of essential terms and defines the research chapters of the study.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review:** This chapter comprises the literature review, which the researcher may utilise to substantiate the study's conclusions. This chapter additionally delineates the theoretical conceptual framework and contextualisation of the study's impacts related to COVID-19. The section examined the many psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, along with coping measures to mitigate these consequences.

**Chapter 3: Research methodology:** This chapter delineates the research paradigm approach for the study. It encompasses the research design and data collection methods employed to gather data from participants. Additionally, it provides a description of the study population, sampling methodology, research instruments, and data collection procedures alongside data analysis. The chapter also emphasises the trustworthiness of the qualitative research and the pilot study. The concluding section addresses the ethical considerations pertinent to the study.

**Chapter 4: Data analysis and presentation of findings:** Chapter 4 emphasises the examination and depiction of data. This chapter addresses the analysis and presentation of the study's findings. Results of similarity were categorised and presented in themes and sub-themes, with participant comments incorporated into the discussions, serving as proof of the study's results regarding the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic over students.

**Chapter 5: Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations:** This final chapter of the study examines the conclusions derived from the findings by addressing each target. The study encompasses details regarding its limits and recommendations, focussing on the emotional and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 cohort of public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, located in the Oshana region of Namibia. The chapter assessed the attainment of the study objectives and provided pertinent recommendations based on the research outcomes.

### **1.11. Chapter summary**

Chapter one has covered the introduction and background of problem identified. The problem statement was discussed in detail as follows: where and when the problem has been identified, subjects affected, and what has been done to solve the problem. Furthermore, it also looked at the purpose, objectives, and research question that may help the researcher get an answer to a problem being investigated. Finally, the relevance of the study, limitations, delimitation, including definition key words are also part of chapter one. The oncoming chapter contains the literature review (reported information about adverse psychosocial impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on university students) of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The preceding chapter provided an overview of the study, including the introduction, background of the recognised problem, problem statement, goal, and objectives, which assist the researcher in addressing the studied issue. The prior chapter also included the study's relevance, limitations, delimitations, and definitions of key terms.

This chapter concentrates on the literature review of the subject. A literature review can be described as a critical assessment of existing published sources regarding the issue under investigation, aimed at acquiring information on the subject under study. The literature review provides leaders with a comprehensive overview of existing research and assists the researcher in formulating a strategy to address the examined topic. This chapter will examine the prior scholar who published on the psychosocial impacts of students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **2.2. Theoretical conceptual framework**

The research adheres to the Biopsychosocial Model (BPSM). The biopsychosocial model is an interdisciplinary framework that examines the interplay of biological, psychological, and social components [22]. The biopsychosocial paradigm, introduced by George Engel in 1977, aimed to rectify perceived deficiencies in medicine by asserting that psychological and social elements are as crucial as biological factors in determining individual health and well-being [28].

The model is deemed appropriate for this study as it enables the researcher to derive findings and conclusions from participants' responses regarding the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students, including psychological effects (stress, anxiety, and depression) and social effects (reduced social interaction and financial challenges) [5, 22]. It further examining their interrelations and mutual influences of the aspects, as the model accounts for individual health and well-being through the interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors [5, 22]. Furthermore, the model is deemed appropriate for this study as it assists the researcher in identifying students' coping strategies in response to the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, incorporating factors such as lifestyle, social support, and methods for managing anxiety and stress [5].

Nonetheless, the appropriateness of employing this approach to assess the emotional and social impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on university students has been corroborated by prior studies utilising the same framework, including the following: A qualitative study utilising the biopsychosocial model examines the biopsychosocial factors associated with students' wellbeing during their studies amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Arab Emirates and Jordan reveals that the physical health of certain participants, including physical discomfort, is affected by various psychological and social factors arising from COVID-19 pandemic measures [29]. The research undertaken in South Africa, utilising the same model, indicated that the capacity to manage daily stressors is affected by the interplay of three primary domains: physical, social, and psychological wellness [30]. No known research has been undertaken in Namibia utilising the biopsychosocial paradigm to examine the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students. Consequently, based on a forementioned facts and literatures, the biopsychosocial

model is deemed appropriate and suitable for this study as it establishes a foundation for elucidating the research findings about the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students.

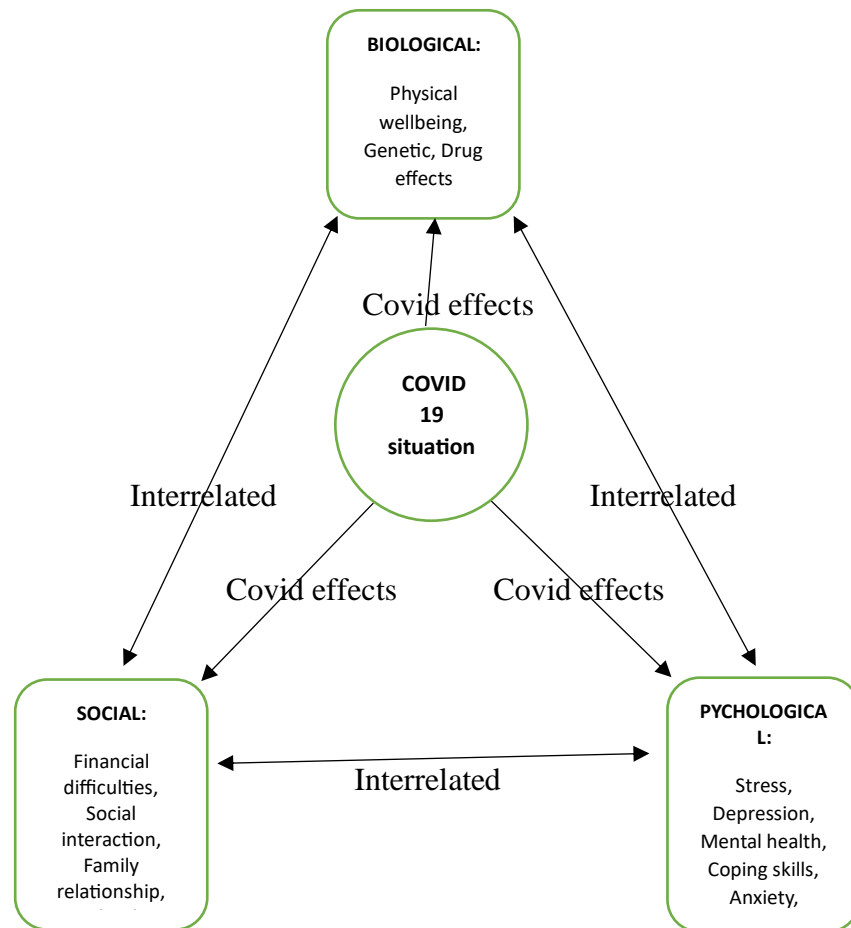


Figure 2.1: Biopsychosocial model frame

### 2.3. Contextualization of COVID-19 effects

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected mental health globally, notably in terms of psychosocial concerns, including psychological, emotional, physical, and socio-economic challenges among communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a challenging scenario, particularly for underdeveloped nations lacking sufficient resources, such as Namibia, which has been severely impacted by the crisis,

with several infections threatening the lives of its citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic impacts all sectors in Namibia, including health, education, agriculture, and economics.

The pandemic has affected the lives of Namibians in multiple ways. Following the World Health Organization's (WHO) confirmation of the pandemic and designation of COVID-19 as a severe, life-threatening global disease with a high mortality rate and no available treatments [3], control measures were implemented worldwide. Subsequent to the initial recorded incidence, Namibia shuttered its schools and dispatched its student's home. The educational framework transitioned from conventional in-person instruction to a contemporary e-learning model. The nationwide school closures led to students remaining at home idly, adversely affecting their academic achievement. This resulted from the implementation of online education, necessitating students to acquire proficiency in software and computer usage for virtual class attendance.

The transition to online learning poses a difficulty for students, as not all have access to the internet, computers, and smartphones. The impacts of COVID-19 have illuminated the disparities within the educational system, especially the necessity for students to pay a fee to attend lessons [11]. Students from low-income households and rural locations sometimes lack access to digital gadgets and internet connectivity, which jeopardises their academic performances [15]. The pandemic's impacts provide a threat to pupils nationwide, resulting in academic challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected student's health. The pandemic has adversely affected students' mental health. The stress and worry induced by the pandemic, together with the persistence of social isolation following COVID-19 measures—such as social distancing and the avoidance of social interactions

(including interactions with students and lectures)—have adversely impacted mental health [4]. This may lead to students experiencing diminished concentration and motivation, culminating in subpar performance, which adversely affects their academic and professional trajectories [11]. Numerous research globally has demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affects the emotional well-being of students [11, 12, 14, 15].

The COVID-19 epidemic has significantly affected Namibia, necessitating an emergency response. Enhancing emergency preparedness and response is essential to avert a crisis exceeding the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic [18]. Policies and suggestions must be established to support students at institutions in the event of a similar situation arising. The policies should outline how students can cope with the psychosocial effects of pandemics in general, enabling them to effectively respond to any potential future pandemic emergencies in general.

#### **2.4. Student's psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic**

The term "psychosocial" denotes the impact of social circumstances on an individual's cognition and behaviour [22]. It encompasses both psychological and social dimensions. The sudden transition to changing social dynamics due to the enforcement of COVID-19 pandemic measures may induce worry and tension in university students [4]. These results constrained their capacity to adapt to the changing circumstances, which impacted their studies [8]. Psychosocial influences can influence students' motivation, concentration, and social relationships, all of which are essential for achieving high educational success [11]. Students in Pakistan faced apprehension regarding potential victimisation by the COVID-19 pandemic, concerned about their

schooling, future employment, and possibilities, exhibiting stress and anxiety symptoms like burnout, hopelessness, and feelings of isolation, among others [31]. Global studies have shown that students experience stress and depressive thoughts, primarily due to factors such as loneliness, insecurity, uncertainty, powerlessness, hopelessness, increased irritability, feelings of isolation, anxiety regarding academic performance, and excessive rumination [11, 32, 33].

Numerous studies, including those in the United States, demonstrated that students' behaviour altered due to new circumstances instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as heightened social isolation, anxiety regarding academic performance, disruptions in dietary habits, modifications in living conditions, increased academic workload, and financial challenges [9, 11, 14, 20]. The other research further asserts that during the COVID-19 pandemic, physical components of the framework pertaining to stress reactivity, including insomnia, pain, or discomfort, as well as particular physical symptoms such as myalgia and dizziness, were strongly correlated with increased negative psychological outcomes [34]. The epidemic underscores multiple pressures, such as fears of infection, frustration, boredom, insufficient knowledge, financial loss, and stigma [33]. A South African study employing similar models to assess the mental health repercussions of the COVID-19 epidemic revealed that individuals encountered stress and anxiety manifestations, including burnout, hopelessness, and feelings of isolation, among others [30].

#### **2.4.1. Difficult with concentration**

The student's concentration was affected negatively by COVID-19 pandemic. Students had difficulty focus one's attention on academic related activities due to numerous sources of distraction [11]. Research indicates that their home serves as one

of the most distracting environments, impacting their concentration, as it provides a more comfortable setting for relaxation compared to school activities [10]. Similarly, study from America highlighted that student's concentration was more susceptible to being interrupted by their housemates and other home activities such as household chores [11].

A researcher further identified several factors that could potentially impact a student's concentration during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, including a lack of accountability, the use of social media, the internet, and video games [11]. The studies from Africa reported that studying from home (online) is associated with distraction to concentration due to lack of interactions with their lecturers [13, 14]. Further, researchers revealed that family members' distractions and loud noises disrupted student's concentration. Namibia hasn't conducted any research about the psychosocial consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on university students, leaving a research gap that the study filled. Literature creates a research gap that the study addressed.

#### **2.4.2. Students concerned with their health and the well-being of their families**

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected students' anxieties and concerns. Recent research reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affects students' fear and concern regarding their own health and that of their relatives [11, 17]. Report indicated that 11% of students reported fear and anxiety regarding virus transmission, while 43% expressed concern for high-risk family members, including the elderly, individuals with pre-existing wellbeing conditions, and those who are pregnant or nursing an infant [11].

Likewise, several investigations indicated that students communicated their apprehensions to family members, guardians, and significant others regarding their professions, which could heighten their vulnerability to the COVID-19 pandemic [17, 20]. These professions encompassed essential and healthcare workers [30]. The majority of participants expressed anxiety for their personal wellness as well as that of their family members, and they were apprehensive about the implications for their families in the event of early death [30].

### **2.4.3. Concerns about academic performance**

The COVID-19 pandemic is substantially impacting the academic achievement of university students. Research in the United States on the impact of COVID-19 on college students' mental health indicated that the most significant effect was the shift from in-person to online instruction [11]. The research indicated that students were chiefly apprehensive about abrupt syllabus modifications, the calibre of instruction, technological difficulties with online platforms, and the obstacles associated with online learning [11]. Students expressed apprehension regarding their academic advancement and the fulfilment of the academic year, attributed to social distancing measures, insufficient physical engagement with students, and difficulties in self-directed study [11, 32].

The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted examination preparation, with 88.8% of students expressing fear and a lack of confidence in their ability to undertake the final examination [33]. Furthermore, another study indicated that students experienced uncertainty regarding the grades they obtained while online learning, which served as a source of stress [11]. In the context of Namibia, there is a paucity of published information concerning the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic on

public health and nursing students. The lack of literature on the psychosocial effects experienced by public health and nursing students during the COVID-19 epidemic presents a research gap that this study aims to fill.

#### **2.4.4. Changes to sleeping patterns.**

Students sleeping patterns were negatively disrupted by COVID-19 pandemic. It has been reported that 61% of students have changed sleeping patterns; the majority of them have difficulty falling asleep and wake up many times during the night [32]. Similarly, another study found that students were concerned about their irregular sleeping patterns, such as different times of sleeping at night and wake up from morning to morning [11].

In contrast, some students were reported to have overslept during COVID-19 pandemic [9] rather than had poor sleeping quality and difficulty falling asleep [11, 32]. In the Namibian context, published literature regarding psychosocial effects among public health and nursing students of COVID-19 pandemic is still scant. The absence literature regarding psychosocial effects among public health and nursing students due to COVID-19 pandemic creates a research gap that the study intends to address.

#### **2.4.5. Changes to eating patterns.**

The pandemic situation has impacted the student's diet and eating patterns have been negatively disrupted. Studies on COVID-19 effects on eating patterns reported that some students' appetite increased with consuming sufficient snacks due to the diminished of health dietary choices, their eating patterns became inconsistent, such as different times of eating and avoiding meals, while other students express an

increase in poor appetite and experience emotional eating or a habits of poor eating appetite [11, 32]. It is reported that students were handing out food to cook at home but not eating as much as usual [32].

#### **4.4.6. Changes in class work**

The condition of COVID-19 pandemic impacted the student's coursework and resulted in an increased workload. The obstacles faced by students during the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affect their capacity to submit assignments punctually and hinder their research progress [17]. A separate survey indicated that inadequate connectivity and restricted data were the primary concerns for university students, hindering their ability to keep pace with coursework, as online learning necessitates data for connectivity [4]. They encountered an interruption to their customary university attendance and their everyday academic timetable [11]. Amid uncertainty regarding the duration of the lockdown and the resumption of their customary academic routines on campus, some individuals encountered sensations of helplessness [13]. A cross-sectional study conducted in Pakistan about the psychological effects of COVID-19 on medical education students indicated that the primary problem was the transition to online classrooms, resulting in students postponing classes and expressing dissatisfaction with the online teaching format [33].

Likewise, another study indicated that students were mostly apprehensive about abrupt alterations in the syllabus, the calibre of the classes, technological difficulties with online platforms, and the challenges associated with online learning [11]. Conversely, the academic workload has escalated because to the COVID-19 epidemic, prompting students to augment their efforts to compensate for the absence of in-person support from instructors or teaching assistants during online classes and projects [11].

### **2.4.7. Depression**

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected pupils' psychological well-being. An interview study in the United States regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college students' mental health indicated that students encountered depressive feelings during this period [11]. The primary factors contributing to depressive thoughts included emotions of loneliness, insecurity, uncertainty, powerlessness, and hopelessness stemming from the sudden transition to online education and pandemic-related measures [4]. Furthermore, it has been found that students preoccupied with academic success and excessive rumination contribute to depressive thoughts [17].

Researchers conducted a study [33] on the medical education of final-year students in Pakistan, revealing a substantial association between the prompt closure of institutions and the onset of delays in online instruction and depressive symptoms. Global studies have shown that students experience stress and depressive thoughts, primarily due to factors such as loneliness, insecurity, uncertainty, powerlessness, and hopelessness regarding their lives [8, 32, 33]. They also exhibit increased irritability and feelings of isolation in response to the pandemic situation [8, 32, 33]. A study conducted in Ethiopia indicated that students experienced increased agitation and distress due to heightened depression resulting from the COVID-19 lockdown [14]. No known research has been undertaken in Namibia about the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic on students; this absence of literature constitutes a research vacuum that the study aims to fill.

#### **2.4.8. Suicidal Ideation**

Depression continues to be an issue for students globally. The COVID-19 epidemic has adversely affected students, resulting in elevated levels of sadness and suicidal ideation [20]. A study on the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on students revealed that 8% experienced suicidal ideation attributed to despair, anxiety regarding academic achievement, familial issues upon returning home, insecurity, and uncertainty [11].

#### **2.4.9. Modifications in social interaction**

The student's social interactions are adversely affected by the COVID-19 condition. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in heightened isolation, diminishing students' relationships with family and friends, and limiting their independence by disrupting outside activities [11, 15]. Students expressed concern with the absence of in-person interactions with peers, including face-to-face meetings [10]. Students are apprehensive of detaching from the university system as a result of pandemic protocols. However, being removed from the institution equates to being severed from all academic resources, including the inability to access the library for research materials [13]. Conversely, the home setting presents excessive distractions for students completing their coursework, unlike the college atmosphere, which fosters attention and discipline [17]. The absence of connection to the school manual alienated students from their lectures and research supervisors, resulting in stressful situations characterised by feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness [11].

A study in Ethiopia regarding the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 lockdown and community coping mechanisms revealed that the pandemic has disrupted social and cultural practices, including visiting friends and relatives, and attending funerals,

weddings, and other social gatherings impacted during this period [20]. This circumstance engenders concern among students due to their restricted interactions. The online education system implemented as a pandemic measure were causing concern among students. The transition from conventional learning to a comprehensive virtual online approach encountered obstacles, including the lack of remote access to virtual content [13]. Likewise, several research indicated that adapting to new online standards, experiencing difficulties, and lacking familiarity with technology induces discomfort and anxiety [10]. They were accustomed to their conventional face-to-face teaching system, which has been disturbed by the pandemic [11]. The lack of interaction with their instructors and other students during online sessions resulted in a stressful, dismal, and sad predicament for them [13].

#### **2.4.10. Modifications in a habitat**

The COVID-19 pandemic is adversely impacting the living conditions of students. A study from the United States regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of college students indicated that students' express concerns about the living conditions with family members, which are perceived as more distracting and less conducive to independence [11]. Moreover, several students said that their home constitutes a detrimental environment, serving as a more appropriate space for relaxation than for studying [11]. Likewise, other researchers indicated that students were more susceptible to interruptions from family members and household activities at home during the Covid-19 pandemic [13]. Conversely, other researchers indicated that alterations in living conditions and solitude will diminish students' personal interactions with family, friends, classmates, and roommates for those who are renting [9].

A study conducted in Ethiopia on the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on graduating students at the University of Gondar, Northwest Ethiopia, revealed that 77.5% of students expressed concern about transmitting the virus to their family members [20]. Additionally, some exhibited symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, including nervous arousal, irritability, agitation, over reactivity, hopelessness, lack of interest, and feelings of devaluation as a result of environmental change [14]. A further study in Ethiopia indicated that students struggle to remain at home just with family members due to the absence of their educational environment [20]. In the Namibian setting, there remains a deficiency of published literature about the emotional impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on public health and nursing students. The lack of literature about the psychosocial consequences on public health and nursing students resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic constitutes a research vacuum that this study aims to fill.

#### **2.4.11. Economic Challenges**

The COVID-19 pandemic is adversely affecting students' financial circumstances in numerous ways. A study examining the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of American college students indicated that they are concerned about the financial hardships faced by their family members, primarily parents, who are experiencing layoffs or salary reductions due to the epidemic [11]. This complicates their ability to pursue education without remitting school fees, resulting in apprehensions among students regarding their eligibility to attend classes despite outstanding payments [30]. A study conducted in China indicated that concerns regarding scholastic delays and the economic impacts of the epidemic on daily life were somewhat connected with anxiety levels [10].

A study in South Africa regarding university students' mental health and emotional wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown indicated that some students faced financial hardships, potentially affecting their current and future employment prospects, including part-time jobs and internships [15].

#### **2.4.12. Stress and Anxiety**

Stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic continue to pose challenges for university students. A research study revealed that among 195 students at Texas University, 138 (71%) reported heightened stress and anxiety attributable to the COVID-19 epidemic [31]. Several factors were discovered that contributed to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depressed thoughts among students [4]. Concerns encompassed anxieties regarding personal and familial health (177/195, 91% reported adverse effects), challenges in maintaining concentration (173/195, 86%), reduced social engagement due to physical distancing (167/195, 86%), and heightened apprehensions regarding academic achievement (159/195, 82%) [31].

Reports indicate that students articulated feelings of dread, tension, and anxiety over their comprehension of the epidemic and its potential impact on their future [13]. A multitude of students experienced stress and anxiety as a result of the epidemic, leading to feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, despair, and mental weariness [10]. Likewise, the depictions of dread, anxiety, stress, and loneliness mirrored the mental health symptoms linked to the COVID-19 epidemic [9]. No studies have been undertaken in Namibia regarding the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic on pupils; this absence of literature constitutes a research vacuum that the study aims to fill.

## **2.5. Student's coping strategies with the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic**

Coping strategies are effective approaches employed by students to mitigate the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic. Diverse techniques assist students in persevering with their studies during the challenging period of the pandemic. Coping techniques are defined as a collection of ideas and behaviours employed to navigate both external and internal stressors [4]. Coping methods can be defined as a set of behaviours or thoughts employed to address stressful, worrisome, or unpleasant situations [5, 35]. The COVID-19 epidemic induced behavioural modifications among university students globally. Various research studies on the COVID-19 pandemic reveal that there are more effective coping mechanisms with psychosocial impacts on university students [15].

Research pertaining to previous outbreaks of infectious diseases has identified four coping responses: problem-focused coping mechanisms (e.g., behaviours that enable students to maintain health and exert control over the pandemic), avoidance/denial/distraction (e.g., engaging in reading and other activities), positive appraisal (e.g., sustaining a positive outlook), and seeking social support [35]. Alternative coping mechanisms, including spiritual, medical/internet coping styles, self-management, and both positive and negative coping techniques, have been beneficial for students during the COVID-19 epidemic [36].

### **2.5.1. Coping Strategies Centred on Problem Resolution**

Compliance with COVID-19 control measures is an essential method for managing the impacts of the pandemic. Compliance with pandemic management measures, including minimising social interaction, maintaining physical distance, remaining

indoors, and wearing masks, enables students to concentrate on the pertinent issues, which is the most effective strategy for managing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic [35]. A qualitative study in Ethiopia indicated that individuals coped with the COVID-19 pandemic by avoiding social engagement, engaging in prayer, dedicating time to reading, and watching films [20]. Another research study conducted in Ethiopia employed a qualitative approach to examine the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown and the community's coping strategies, Jimma University indicated that altering lifestyle in response to the pandemic is one of the strategies to mitigate the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic [37]. No research has been undertaken in Namibia about the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students; this absence of literature constitutes a research vacuum that the study aims to fill.

### **2.5.2. Evasion/Diversion**

Distraction is the most effective method for managing stress during the COVID-19 epidemic. Distraction can be succinctly defined as the act of diverting attention or refraining from confronting a problem by disregarding its presence [11]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students engaged in numerous activities to mitigate the psychosocial impacts, including gaming, watching television, and listening to music, among others [35]. Likewise, another study indicated that spending excessive time on reading (including academic and non-academic literature), viewing films, evading social interactions, and praying at home similarly diverted students from the emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic [37].

### **2.5.3. Affirmative Evaluation**

Positive appraisal serves as an effective coping tool for students managing the emotional impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic. Physical health, particularly exercise and general physical activities such as walking, jogging, performing push-ups, and engaging in play, are highly correlated with psychological well-being and mental health [36]. Other investigations emphasised the self-management coping strategies employed, including engaging with streaming services, utilising social media, interacting with pets, listening to music, reading journals, and exercising [36, 38]. Conversely, positive appraisals are deliberate coping mechanisms that facilitate the exercise of agency, such as completing household projects and appreciating the capacity to work from home [36]. No research has been undertaken in Namibia about the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic on university students; this absence of literature constitutes a research vacuum that the study aims to fill.

### **2.5.4. Social assistance**

Social assistance facilitated students in managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social support is characterised by the presence of friends, family, and others who acknowledge your circumstances or difficulties and motivate you to engage in constructive self-management [5]. Social support facilitates individuals' connection to a network that promotes wellbeing. Social relationships assist students in managing the stress, anxiety, and depression associated with the pandemic [36]. Report indicated that students are spending increased time with family and housemates, engaging in cooking, and cleaning, and allocating more time for personal activities such as resting, reflecting, re-energising, or slowing down, which serve as effective means of avoidance and diversion [35].

Furthermore, the research conducted in the United States indicates that social connections significantly assist numerous students in managing stress and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they seek support from others, including communication with family, friends, and fellow students via social media [11, 37]. Additionally, certain students pursue therapy services from health experts while seeking support from family and friends [11].

A study conducted in Nigeria regarding the psychological status and family dynamics of University of Ibadan students during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown indicated that some students sought assistance from professional therapists, family, and friends to manage stress and worry [39]. Universities and colleges provided counselling support to students during the COVID-19 pandemic [11]. Conversely, several obstacles hindered their pursuit of school counselling services during the pandemic: the condition was not regarded as sufficiently severe to warrant assistance; discomfort in engaging with unfamiliar individuals; reluctance to discuss mental health concerns via telephone; and a lack of trust in the counselling services, potentially reflecting stigma [39].

#### **2.5.5. Religious**

Religious practices serve as a coping tool that assists students in managing the emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through prayer. Religion pertains to spiritual convictions. Spirituality is the awareness or acknowledgement of a higher power that has influence over an individual. Enhancing student spirituality and engaging in prayer aids in managing the psychosocial repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic [37]. A study from South Africa similarly indicated that students believe that invoking God's mercy will help them surmount the emotional impacts of the

COVID-19 pandemic [36]. No research has been undertaken in Namibia about the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students; this absence of literature constitutes a research vacuum that the study aims to fill.

#### **2.5.6. Adverse Evaluation**

Conversely, many maladaptive self-management tactics employed to mitigate the psychosocial repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic include neglecting news coverage, extending sleep duration, and engaging in distractions such as alcohol consumption and smoking [11]. A qualitative study in Africa titled “We were afraid” examined the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in two South African districts [30]. It further reported that common coping mechanisms employed to navigate the pandemic's regulations included personal relationships and substance use to address the psychosocial effects of the crisis [30].

Substances such as alcohol and tobacco can improve relaxation. Students perceive that the consumption of drugs and alcohol aids in alleviating present difficulties and promotes restful sleep at night [30]. Employing those substance use tactics is perilous and detrimental to one's health. Consequently, the use of substances by students is not advocated as an optimal coping mechanism for the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic [11].

#### **2.5.7. Autonomy in Management**

Students employed many self-management coping strategies to mitigate stress and anxiety throughout the COVID-19 epidemic. Self-management encompasses a variety of techniques and novel behaviours integrated into one's lifestyle to adapt to new circumstances [11]. A qualitative study in the United States regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college students' mental health indicated that self-

management is an effective method for coping with stress, anxiety, and depression associated with the pandemic [11]. The study additionally indicated that diverse constructive methods were employed to alleviate stress and sadness, including meditation and breathing exercises, spiritual practices, physical exercise, music listening, and reading [11, 38].

Likewise, additional research on self-management coping strategies indicated that students employed leisure activities, such as engaging in physical activity and utilising streaming services, as effective means to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 [36]. Additional self-management tasks encompass engaging with pets at home and executing various domestic duties [11]. Engaging the mind is an aspect of a self-management coping strategy, including activities like reading and solving puzzles [36]. No research has been undertaken in Namibia about the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic over students; this absence of literature constitutes a research vacuum that the study aims to fill.

#### **2.5.8. Media and Internet**

Media and the Internet significantly mitigate the emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students. Media and the internet function as modalities of social communication. An augmented utilisation of the internet and other physical activities correlates with diminished feelings of loneliness and depression [11, 38]. The group with low psychological well-being substantially indicated a greater use of passive coping mechanisms, including engaging in video games, watching television, assuming fewer obligations, and remaining inactive [38]. Engaging in video games and watching television are coping strategies that are less advantageous, as regular digital media consumption correlates with diminished psychological well-being,

potentially leading to depression [36]. Moreover, the utilisation of technology, particularly mobile phones, emerged as a significant method for connecting and monitoring the welfare of social networks, proving helpful in mitigating the emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic [30]. No research has been undertaken in Namibia about the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic over students; this absence of literature constitutes a research vacuum that the study aims to fill.

## **2.6. Chapter summary**

Chapter two discusses the literature and what other researchers have published about students' psychosocial effects in connection to COVID-19 pandemic, both globally and locally. It discusses students' psychological effects of COVID-19 pandemic at the high institutions, with different effects such as change or difficulty with concentration, students concerned with their health and of loved ones, concern about academic performance, changes to sleeping and eating patterns, changes in class workload, depression, and suicidal thought, change in social interaction and living environment, financial difficulties, as well as stress and anxiety. It also examines students' coping strategies, which assist them in dealing with the psychosocial repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic. The various coping strategies discussed in detail include coping centred on problem resolution, avoidance or distraction, positive and negative appraisal, social support, religion, self-management, and media including internet. All of those discussed provide clues and help the researcher formulate a research interview guide. The upcoming chapter presents the research study methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter covered a discussion of literature reviews and what other researchers have published about students' psychosocial effects in connection with COVID-19 pandemic, both globally and locally. It discusses different students' psychological and social consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on university, as well as coping mechanisms and strategies against the psychosocial repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic.

This chapter emphasizes on a qualitative paradigm, design, and methods of research that utilised in the study to find a response to a research question about the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial consequences on university students. It is also discussed about the involved study population, sample, and the sampling approach that were utilised to select research participants from the population, the research instrument involved on data collection, and how research data was assembled from the participants. The process data analysis and interpretation are also discussed in this chapter. The last part examines the measurement of trustworthiness in qualitative studies, as well as ethical considerations for conducting this research project.

#### **3.2. Research paradigm**

This study is guided by an interpretative paradigm based on three research paradigm assumptions, such as ontology, methodology, and axiology. When a researcher seeks to understand the meaning of social actions, they employ the interpretative research

paradigm [40, 41, 42]. An interpretive approach is used based on the research paradigm assumptions. Research assumptions are the fundamental factors that drives people of being agreed on a faith or take it as truth without any proof or verification [21, 43, 44]. Therefore, this study is conducted through an interpretative paradigm based on the structure of three research paradigm assumptions, such as ontology, methodology, and axiology.

### **3.3. Research strategy**

The research approaches of qualitative was found convenient for the project because it helps gain a holistic understanding of the behaviour of the affected population, here of students influenced by COVID-19 pandemic, in the form of semi-structured and non-numeric data [21, 45]. However, using a qualitative approach through interviews allows the researcher to get more information from students about psychosocial consequences of COVID-19 pandemic because the researcher was allowed to probe students for deep information. A qualitative research method using a descriptive, and phenomenological design that lets the researcher gather, analyse, and make sense of the data to find out what the public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia in Oshana region, 2020 intake thoughts about the psychosocial repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic [41, 45, 46].

### **3.4. Research design**

Research design is a set of plans that guides researcher to obtain research participants and collect data in a proposed research study [44, 47, 48]. Research design can also be described as a suggestion that may indicate when, where, and how collected data are been analysed and interpreted [21, 41, 49]. It is research method that cornerstone on

the whole content of a research thesis, from formulating the problem statement of a research as a centre of beginning up to the end of the study in a logical manner [41, 50]. A descriptive and phenomenological research design are followed into this study of psychosocial of COVID-19 pandemic on 2020 cohort of public health and nursing undergraduates at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region, Namibia.

#### **3.4.1. Phenomenological design**

Phenomenology is defined as a study of the formation or shape of awareness as experienced from the first-person centre of opinion through interview [51, 52]. The design allows participants in the research to gain direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation and created an in-depth description of the problems students experienced in everyday life during COVID-19 pandemic [21, 40, 53]. The phenomenology design used in this study lets a lot of different data collection methods be used, like interviews and field notes. This gives the researcher a better understanding of situations and events that happen in a phenomenon, in this case of emotional and social implication of COVID-19 pandemic over students, which they have little control [21, 48, 53]. Phenomenology helps the researcher determine the psychosocial effects experienced by university undergraduates of public health and nursing as an outcome of COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **3.4.2. Descriptive design**

Descriptive design is used in research where it requires more contents in a certain field of study via the image's distribution of a subject, as exactly it appeared pure naturally [21, 42, 46]. Descriptive is more concentrated on the in-depth evaluation of the

phenomena to get a more clear and detailed description. As a result, the study used a descriptive design with non-numeric data about the psychosocial consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region, Namibia.

### **3.5. Research settings**

Research settings are defined as the physical location where the research study is going to take place or be conducted, such as a hospital, prison, institution, or certain community [41, 48]. The research study was initiated at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region, Namibia, which is situated in Oshakati west near the Oshakati independence stadium, Eliandel Mwatelele Street. The Unam Oshakati campus was inaugurated by His Excellence, Dr Sam Nujoma, founding Chancellor of UNAM, and first President of the Republic of Namibia on May 7, 1998. The research environment contains the office of the Campus Director and Centre for External Studies; the Office of the School of Nursing and Public Health; the Office of Deputy UNAM Librarian; and many offices of various divisions of UNAM.

The campus has a student population of more than 1200 full-time students in fields such as nursing, public health, and computer science; part-time students for postgraduates; and distance students for both undergraduates and postgraduates. Campus offers the various lecture halls, rooms, and laboratories for practical studies. It also has a library with a variety of study materials that many students use on campus and around town. The study was initiated on the 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of UNAM in Oshana area, to determine the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial implications on students within the campus environment.

### **3.6. Population**

A population is a complete congregation of identified subjects, those the researcher is interested in studying and who meet the criteria [21, 43, 44]. Other researchers stated that population is the targeted category of absorptions who meets the requirements of the study, for which the researcher intends to collect data and should be clearly explained in respect of person, place, time, and other factors that apply to the study [46, 54]. This study's target population is a 2020 public health and nursing undergraduates' students at Oshakati campus of the University of Namibia, in Oshana region, Namibia. Therefore, the population of the study was consisted of 156 students (58 public health and 98 nursing students) for the 2020 cohort of the UNAM Oshakati campus, Oshana region, Namibia, from the age of 18 years and above and currently registered within Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region, Namibia.

### **3.7. Sample and sampling approach**

The sample is described as an individual representative, who extracted from entire targeted research population [21, 48, 55]. The term "representative" refers to a sample that possesses similar characteristics, both in terms of inclusion and exclusion criteria, to the entire study population in as many ways as feasible [21, 44]. The study representatives were drawn from the target population of 156 students (seven public health and ten nursing students) from the UNAM Oshakati campus 2020 intake.

### **3.7.1 Inclusion criteria**

Inclusion criteria refers to a specific characteristic or criteria that participants must possess to be involved into the study [41, 47]. The characteristics of a public health and nursing student's 2020 intake at UNAM Oshakati campus are required, such as:

- Participant should be a 2020 cohort of public health and nursing undergraduate students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region.
- Registered with the University of Namibia during the study and with 18 years of age or elder.
- First time registered with the University of Namibia-Oshakati campus in year 2020.

### **3.7.2. Exclusion criteria**

Exclusion criteria refers to participants who possess unsuitable characteristics or do not meet the criteria for inclusion (participating) to the study [47]. The present research excludes following students: 2020 public health and nursing students at the UNAM Oshakati campus but interrupted their study such as break-in-studies, leave of absences as well as those deregistered and re-registered later for re-admission.

### **3.7.3. Sampling approach**

In this research, researcher utilised purposive sampling of non-probability technique to single out participants of the project. The total of seventeen participants were purposefully selected from the study's target population, which is 156 students (58 public health and 98 nursing trainee) on the 2020 cohort of public health and nursing trainee at the UNAM-Oshakati campus, in Oshana region, as representative samples.

Purposive sampling occurs when the researcher deliberately chooses the participants who have potential to provide rich context about a phenomenon [21, 56].

The sampling technique also helps the researcher identify the best participants who are willing to help and provide answers to the research question [21]. The researcher maintains its data saturation which control or decide the study's sample size, a centre at which no newly discovered information obtained from the interviews. Data saturation may be defined as the point when the data being received by the researcher during the interview from the participants becomes repetitive, whereby no longer new information emerges from the continued interviews [21, 41].

### **3.8. Data collection procedures**

The researcher obtained the University of Namibia-Oshakati campus clearance certificate letter for authorization to initiate the research study (note Appendix A). The researcher also writes a letter to the department of health research (MOHSS) requested a permission for conducting research study (note Appendix B). The retaliation from the Ministry of Health research department of a permission and registration letter for initiating research study (note Appendix C). The researcher further writes a letter to the director of the Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region, requesting permission to perform a research study on campus (note Appendix D). The permission letter to carry out the research study received within two days of the application for permission by the director of the University of Namibia-Oshakati campus (note Appendix E). The researcher further communicates with the UNAM Oshakati campus SRC for academic purposes about the research study, and all official letters to conduct the study were sent to the SRC, who further communicates with the Class Representative (CR) for both classes (public health and nursing classes). SRC

provided the researcher with the contact number for both CR, and the researcher communicated with CR about the study. The class representatives assisted the researcher by informing the targeted groups (public health and nursing students) on their class WhatsApp groups about the study and providing the contact number of interested participants to a researcher who can provide rich data when it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial consequences on university undergraduates.

Furthermore, more than seventeen (17) participant consent forms were printed out for those individuals interested to contribute to the study, for them to sign in expectation of the in-depth interview. Participants were called to arrange for the interview, and many participants requested to contact the interview once they were done with the examination. Those who interviews done in January; students were provided with transport money to reach the campus and back to their respective places. The researcher requested a quiet room to conduct an in-depth interview, which was provided within the UNAM Oshakati campus library. A researcher first disclosure about the purpose of a research study to the potential participants and sought their informed consent on whether they wanted to participate or not. The chance was assigned to those who admitted of being involved into the study to sign the consent earlier on the interview. With the participant's consent, all the in-depth conversation was documented with a voice recorder, and some notes were noted. One conversation was done outside UNAM Oshakati campus, which takes place within the participants place in Oshakati (in a quiet room without any disturbance from outside) due to participant personal matters that cannot be able to reach the campus.

### **3.9. Research instruments**

The researcher used an instrument device to assemble or gather data for a research study [21, 49]. In this study, an interview guide and voice recorder were utilised to assemble the research data.

#### **3.9.1. Interview guide.**

A conversation guide can be described as a document that is used during interviews when the researcher wants to ask and probing the respondent's information about their behaviours, attitudes, perspectives, and opinions over a phenomenon of concern in this case of the emotional and social repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic on university trainee [44, 45, 57,]. The researcher who wants to conduct an interview during research data collection can use an interview guide as a research instrument [21]. In this study, the researcher employs face-to-face conversation with selected samples applying a semi-structured conversation guide. The discussion guide helps the researcher control the interview by posing questions into the guide instruments. A semi-structured discussion guide is a pack of combinations (structured and non-structured interview guides) with all closed and open-ended questions about the phenomenon, in which a researcher will ask different numbers of specific questions as well as for clarification [21, 42].

#### **3.9.2. Voice recorder**

Researchers use a tape recorder to collect information from participants during interviews, allowing them to focus fully and observe non-verbal behaviors [41, 50]. Furthermore, a tape recorder prevents the researcher from being biased by the interviewer's poor notes or memory [51]. In this study, the researcher also used field

notes to record all non-verbal behaviours and facial expression. Therefore, the researcher was using both a voice recorder and field notes to record all the contact interviews about the psychosocial consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 cohort of public health and nursing undergraduates at the UNAM-Oshakati campus, in Oshana region, which helped the researcher not to lose any data from students.

### **3.10. Trustworthiness of the research**

Maintaining trustworthiness is essential in qualitative studies. Four criteria of trustworthiness, assess the degree of confidence a qualitative researcher's study has in the collected data. [21, 57]. Another way to describe it is as a stage or point of fully trust in the data collection, clarification, and methods used in the research to reach the study's quality [42, 57, 58]. These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity. This research study applied all the criteria associated with the trustworthiness of qualitative research, focusing primarily on qualitative research. There are many ways of evaluating and demonstrating to the audience if qualitative research is trustworthiness, such as triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, thick description, audit trail, data saturation, and reflexivity [41, 57]. The considered four research trustworthiness criteria to this study are: transferability, credibility, confirmability, and dependability, are discussed below.

#### **3.10.1. Credibility**

Many researchers use credibility as a critical criterion for research trustworthiness, ensuring that their research accurately measures its intended objectives. Credibility denotes to fully trust in the data's accuracy and irrelevant interpretations [46]. The research's focus determines its credibility, as does the level of fully trust in data

collection, analysis, and interpretation in relation to the intended focus. It is a positivist concept of internal validity that deals with questions like “How congruent are the findings with reality?” [59]. Credibility entails establishing that qualitative research method results are acceptable or convincing from the research participant experiences [45, 58]. It also demonstrates how techniques such as persistent observation, prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review or member checks, debriefing, negative analysis, referral adequacy, and external audit can establish confidence in the truth [21, 57]. Data saturation and audit trials are other techniques used to ensure credibility in qualitative research. Some techniques are discussed below.

Researcher can prolong and spend enough time with the participants during data collection with the intention of understanding them well and gaining insight into their lives, they achieve prolonged engagement and persistent observation [41, 57]. Observing a certain group for quite some time helps the researcher to maintain a clear shape of the group. Prolonged engagement helps the researcher build a positive relationship with participants, which allow to wait around in the field which facilitate data saturation of a research [44, 60]. Maintaining data collection saturation is crucial for achieving credibility. The researcher must continue to collect data until they reach a point where no new information emerges and in-depth insights become apparent, a sign of data saturation [21]. Furthermore, data saturation happens once the participants are no longer produced unknown information, and the information becomes repetitive. Data saturation allows the researcher to become familiar with a phenomenon, identify a research gap, and utilise phenomenality to address those gaps in research data, which helps to improve the research outcomes [42, 57].

In this study, the researcher had achieved data saturation by prolonging the data collection periods in a research field for full observations and better understanding participants. To ensure the research's credibility, the researcher employed a range of data collection methods through triangulation. Triangulation is a research trustworthiness technique that involves using different types of research data collection methods, such as interviewing and taking field notes [41].

Member check is the technique that validates the data accuracy and facilitates relationships within the researcher and participants [57, 58]. It allows participants to contribute to an accurate research outcome. Following the interview, the researcher discussed the recorded transcripts with the individuals, who will review the data and provide feedback on any missing or inaccurate data in order to maintain credibility [61]. It also allows the participant to check if they agree with the collected data before analysing and interpreting it. In this study, the researcher employed a member checking to enhance credibility of a proposed study by providing participants with the opportunity to review the interview audio, which allowed them to confirm the findings and clarify their descriptions. This offered a position to the researcher to confirm the overall data results and its perfection by scrutinise the study [57].

The peer review and debriefing session deals with the assistance, review, and feedback provided by other researcher experts in the field regarding the research process and findings [50, 57]. The process helps to evaluate and strengthen the research trustworthiness. Peer debriefing also consists of outcomes on methodology, sampling, and data collection techniques [41, 48, 50]. In this study, the researcher keeps on presenting the research proposal and outcomes in a research seminar for research

experts to intervene and give feedback. Peer review and debriefing also include the inputs from the research supervisor and other experts.

To ensure ethical and transparent research, an external audit involves investigating and evaluating the research process and findings from an external organisation [48]. An external audit allows the auditors to examine the research process and findings to see if they are valid and accurate. It helps to highlight potential biases or limitations in the research process and confirms that the research findings are valid and accurate [41, 57]. In this study, the researcher involved the research report and findings with an external moderator to verify the credibility of the research before publication.

### **3.10.2. Transferability**

As a measure of research trustworthiness, transferability is defined as the ability to apply qualitative findings to other contexts or participants [21, 46]. Transferability can also be defined as the generalisation of research findings [60]. The term "thick description" pertains to the researcher's ability to provide sufficient details when describing the research findings or formulating a theme [45, 57]. It is crucial for the researcher to ensure that they provide sufficient information about the research, enabling the reader to draw conclusions and extrapolate the data to a different context. Rich and thick descriptions can enable the reader to decide whether or not to apply the findings to their own situation [21, 57]. The description facilitates the reader's ability to apply the information to different contexts and determine if the findings are transferable due to shared information [41]. In this study, researcher achieved transferability by applying a detailed description of the research findings after gathering high-quality information from the participants. As a result, it assigns for

generalisation of a rich information produced from the participants to the targeted group because qualitative research cannot use a large sample size.

### **3.10.3. Dependability**

Dependability means evidence that would yield similar results if repeated with similar participants in the same context [21, 44]. The researcher used peer review and audit trials, which improved the study's reliability. Internal and external audits, which scrutinise the researcher's research process, data collection, and analysis procedures, are necessary for ensuring dependability [21, 50]. They do this to confirm the accuracy of the research findings and ensure that the data collection supports them. Prior to data collection, the supervisor and various research committees reviewed the research methodology and interview guide questions for their relevance, ensuring reliability of a research project.

### **3.10.4. Confirmability**

The degree to which others could confirm or corroborate the results is known as confirmability (41, 44, 47). The research respondent's data supports the findings, conclusion, and recommendation, and there is a consistency within the real life and researcher's interpretation [21, 48]. In this study, the researcher guarantee that the data accurately bounce back the participants' information, and that the researcher's imagination did not influence the data interpretations. In addition, the researcher used triangulation criteria such as interviews, field notes, and video recording to ensure research trustworthiness and transferability. Therefore, the researcher upheld this principle by clarifying all information with the participants.

### **3.10.5. Authenticity**

Authenticity in research give someone to understand that the research process conduct, and evaluation are credibility and dependability, as well as the research finding are worthy which contribute to the field of phenomenon [47, 50]. The authenticity criteria address the research gap from the pre-exist knowledge. Authenticity appears in the research report when it involves the participants lives as they experience it, those described experiences may enable the reader to develop a trust and worthy of the research findings [40, 46]. However, for the research report to be authentic, is only when the reader is able to understand the lived experiences of students' psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic on student's universities with sense of mood, feelings and context of those lives [41]. In this study, authenticity of the research report was applied a participant experience they had lived as they appear from the participants themselves during the interview.

### **3.11. Data analysis**

Data analysis is defined as ordering and organising raw data to extract useful information from the research findings [21, 57]. Other researchers describe data analysis as a hands-on process in which the researcher becomes deeply involved in data management, including categorising, manipulating, and summarising the collected data [21, 42]. This study, the data analysed in words instead of numbers as a study utilised qualitative techniques by reading, coding, displaying, reducing, and interpreting data.

Researcher employed various qualitative data analysis techniques, following a structured approach, to thoroughly examine, code, and interpret the data collected for

this study. These techniques provided a systematic way to extract meaningful insights from the data and identify key themes and sub-themes. The researcher outlines the points used in the analysis procedure below: The initial point in qualitative data analysis is reading, where the researcher gains a clear understanding of collected information and begins to look back on its full meaning [45, 57]. This study, the researcher scrutinizes and look through over and over the transcripts and field notes from the interviews to understand the content better. This step also involved writing notes in the margins to capture early thoughts and observations that could lead to the development of themes and sub-themes.

Coding involves using symbols or abbreviations to categorise words or phrases within the data [21, 44, 48]. At this stage, the researcher assigned codes to specific chunks of text during the reading process. The codes represented themes and sub-themes, helping to organise the data systematically. In this point, researcher examined the themes and sub-themes identified during coding to understand their relationships and connections. This involved creating displays that visually represented the data, allowing for a more comprehensive examination of the patterns and themes emerging from the study. Data reduction involves breaking down and refining the data to focus on the most important points [46, 57]. The researcher examined themes and sub-themes, then reduced the data to its core elements, retaining only the most relevant information for further analysis. The final stage in the data analysis process is interpretation, here researcher makes sense of the collected data [57]. This stage involves drawing conclusions and synthesising the findings to form a coherent narrative. The researcher summarised the final interpretation of the research findings, highlighting the key insights gained from the data.

To analyse the collected data, the researcher used a voice recorder to record interviews and field notes to capture additional information. The researcher translated, transcribed, coded, categorised, and interpreted the recorded data to extract meaningful insights [48, 57]. Thematic approach where utilised by researcher to analyse data, identifying key themes and sub-themes that captured the study's core findings.

The thematic analysis adhered to the 8-step TESCH's approach to data analysis, as outlined in [57, 58].

1. Reading and rereading transcripts while noting emerging ideas.
2. Choosing a shorter or more interesting interview to interpret underlying meanings, recording notes in the field notes.
3. Continuing this procedure with additional participants, creating all emerged topics index raised, and clustering similar heading together.
4. Assigning codes to these topics and writing each code next to the appropriate text segment, checking for codes and new emerged categories.
5. Changing the most identified descriptive wording for headings into categories, reducing total lists emerged from categories by classifying related topics.
6. Deciding on abbreviations for categories and alphabetizing the codes, refining the last budge of codes and categories by repeatedly reviewing the materials.
7. All the belonging data are grouped together for each category and performing an introductory analysis. This reduction data sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organises data to draw and verify final conclusions.
8. Recording the data if necessary, ensuring accuracy and completeness.

This approach provided a comprehensive framework for analysing the collected qualitative data for this study, allowing the researcher systematically to examine the

information, identify key themes and sub-themes, and draw meaningful conclusions from the findings.

### **3.12. Pilot study**

A pilot study is a restricted investigation that uses primary research materials (tools) on a narrow numerous of participants from the entire study population, with the ideas of investigating the feasibility of the proposed study and pinpointing potential flaws in the methodology [21]. Pilot study helps researcher to pinpoint the gap in an instruments guide for data collection and tackle the identified problems before the real study resumes. This study, the pilot study was performed on the 2020 intake of nursing students at UNAM Oshakati campus, as the nursing intake comprises a larger student body than the public health cohort. In a pilot study, the researcher interviewed two (2) participants from nursing department but excluded them from the main study and data was not used for research findings.

Researcher contacted the pilot study shortly after receiving ethical clearance from UNAM research ethics committee of postgraduate and granted an authority to initiate the study from the Ministry of Health and Social Services, in collaboration with the management of the UNAM Oshakati campus in the Oshana region of Namibia. The University of Namibia-Oshakati campus provided a quiet room for conducting a pilot study. Researcher detailed research study's aim to the samples and obtained their consent before conducting the interview. After administering the interview questions, the researcher identified no issues or gaps in the instrument guide. Therefore, the researcher did not make any adjustments to the research interview guide after conducting the pilot study.

### **3.13. Ethical considerations**

It's by law the researcher to perform the research ethically, by competently acknowledge fairness, control resources honestly, report the findings accurately, and contemplate research outcome of a specific field of study and for the entire society [21, 60]. Is the researcher's responsibility extending to ethically presenting the research throughout all stages of planning, execution, and distribution. The study focused on COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial implications on students and accounted for all ethical principles that guide the researcher's actions and decisions throughout the study. Researcher discussed these ethical principles below, including permission, informant consent, voluntary participation, autonomy, beneficence, and confidentiality.

#### **3.13.1. Permission**

The researcher first sought authority and required permission to perform the study from appropriate authorities, including University of Namibia, department of health research at MOHSS and Oshakati UNAM campus director. After receiving authority and required permission to perform the study, the researcher headed to the field for data assembling.

#### **3.13.2. Informed consent**

Participants who have the right to participate in a specific research study provide their informed consent, ensuring they receive accurate information to make an informed decision [60, 61]. Before recruiting participants, the aim of the research is verbally highlighted in details and its benefits to the samples, and then obtained them a written consent. After providing explanations and clarifications, the researcher allows the

participant to contemplate and freely decide whether or not to participate. After the participants are satisfied with the explanations, the researcher presents a written consent, which the participant signed as proof of participating in the research study. The researcher did not force any participants to sign the consent form against their will.

### **3.13.3. Autonomy and voluntary participation**

It's the participants responsibility to self-determination through exercising autonomous, which means individuals are accountable to take any actions whether or not to participate in the study without any danger of prejudicial treatment or punishment [21, 62]. In this research study, the researcher has shared to the participants that during any period of study, it's their responsibility to disagree on disclosing any information, to enquire for any simplification about the study and to discontinue with the proposed research study. Researcher acknowledged the participants' withdrawal from the study at any time and did not impose any punishment or unfair treatment on them. A researcher also highlighted to participants that they only participate in the study voluntarily. As a result, everyone's participation in the study was voluntary; no one faced coercion or intimidation to do so. Therefore, researcher adhered to the principle of autonomy, which respects the dignity of others, throughout the study. The researcher always respected the rights and decisions of participants.

### **3.13.4. Beneficence and non-maleficence**

The fundamental principle in research is beneficence, where the onus is on the researcher to minimise or reduce harm and maximise or increase benefits for the participants themselves, other individuals, or society [55, 60, 62]. Throughout this

research study, the researcher avoided engaging in any activities that could potentially harm the participants, instead opting to protect their identities and promote the study's benefits. The researcher posits that the study's outcomes served as a developing fundamental or starting point of strategies aimed at promoting the psychosocial wellbeing of students.

### **3.13.5. Confidentiality and privacy**

Confidentiality means that no data provided by research participant should be revealed in any circumstance unless for a research purpose [62]. In this study, the researcher makes sure not to disclose any participants information from the research and all the recorded audio as well as field note from the interview are kept safe in a lockable cabinet until such a time they are destroyed, unless they were provided for a research assessment to the institution. All information (voice recorders and field notes from interview) about participant was handed confidential, it will only be made available to the University of Namibia research committee and external audit for research verification. All information was kept privacy.

### **3.14. Chapter summary**

Chapter three covered the study's methodology, discussing specific subtopics in detail to indicate to the leader the scope and methods followed during the research study. In this chapter, the researcher has emphasised the research paradigm, research design, research method, population, sampling method, and sample size. This chapter also highlighted the field setting and preparation for the field study. Finally, the researcher has emphasised qualitative research instruments employed for study, research data

collection methods, study piloting, and the exercised ethical consideration activities.

The next chapter discusses research data analysis and presents the study's findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed about the philosophical research methodology. This chapter will present the findings of the study. Thematic analysis was used in the study and subthemes were developed, discussed and the reviewed literature was used to validate the study findings.

#### 4.2 Biographical information of the participants

Table 4.2: Biographical Information of the Participants

<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Department</b>
Participant 01	25	Male	Public Health Student
Participant 02	22	Female	Public Health Student
Participant 03	24	Female	Nursing Student
Participant 04	23	Male	Nursing Student
Participant 05	22	Female	Nursing Student
Participant 06	26	Female	Public Health Student
Participant 07	24	Male	Nursing student
Participant 08	25	Female	Nursing Student
Participant 09	26	Male	Public Health Student
Participant 10	23	Female	Public Health Student
Participant 11	24	Female	Nursing student
Participant 12	25	Female	Public Health Student
Participant 13	24	Female	Nursing Student

Participant 14	25	Female	Nursing Student
Participant 15	26	Male	Nursing Student
Participant 16	24	Female	Public Health Student
Participant 17	24	Female	Nursing Student

The participants in this study consist of 17 students from the University of Namibia, Oshakati Campus, representing two key departments: public health and nursing. This narrative describes their demographic characteristics, highlighting age, gender, and departmental representation. The ages of the participants range from 22 to 26 years. The distribution suggests that the cohort is generally in their early to mid-20s, with the following breakdown: The majority of participants (6) are 24 years old, indicating a common age for students nearing the completion of their studies or just entering their professional fields.

The second-largest group comprises four 25-year-olds and three 26-year-olds, indicating that the latter part of the cohort is nearing graduation. Two participant is 22 years old, representing the youngest in the group, while another two is 23 years old, suggesting an entry-level or early-stage demographic among university students. The gender distribution reveals a significant skew towards female participants, with 12 out of 17 identifying as female. The male representation is considerably lower, with only five male participants. This imbalance may reflect broader gender trends within the fields of public health and nursing at this particular campus.

The group nearly evenly splits between public health and nursing in terms of departmental affiliation, with ten participants from the nursing department, indicating a slightly larger representation. Among them, seven are female, and three are male,

suggesting a notable gender disparity. The public health department comprises seven participants, with five female and two males, indicating a similar pattern of female dominance within this group.

The demographic overview provides valuable context for understanding the study's participants and the research environment. The age distribution suggests that the participants are generally in their early to mid-20s, which aligns with typical university student demographics. The significant female majority highlights a gender disparity that may be worth exploring in terms of its impact on study dynamics and the broader context of these academic fields. The relatively balanced representation between public health (seven out of fifty-eight) and nursing (ten over ninety-eight) suggests that the study captures insights from both departments, offering a more comprehensive view of the students experience at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana area.

This demographic profile plays a special role in interpreting the study's findings, as it provides a foundational understanding of the participants' backgrounds and their potential influence on the study's outcomes.

### **4.3. Presentation of themes**

The findings for this study interpreted by deciphering the themes and sub-themes that surfaced from the transcript responses of participants. Through qualitative research data analysis, there is a significant explore for themes, which are considered characteristics and identification features of a phenomenon under study [41]. One of the fundamental tasks a researcher must perform after data analysis is the identification of themes. A theme analysis is an objectively to highlight, analyse, and give feedback patten (themes and sub-themes) through qualitative analytic method within data [21,

43, 45]. A theme denotes as a authenticate of a centre or differentiate a common issue which are bunch of ideals that permeate written work of research data analysis [57].

Researcher draws sub-themes from themes that are considered offspring of parent themes. Sub-themes are defined as inheriting the parent theme’s resources of identification and characteristics [45, 47]. This study identified two (2) themes and their corresponding sub-themes. Researcher discussed each theme and verified the findings with direct quotations from the interview responses and a review of prospective literature. Table 4.2 (below) presents the contents of the discussion on the themes and sub-themes related to a students' reality experience of the psychosocial repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4.3: Table of emerged themes and sub-themes for a study finding.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
<b>1. Theme1:</b> Psychosocial implication due to COVID-19 pandemic challenges.	1.1. Depression During COVID-19 Pandemic 1.2. COVID-19 Stress Impact 1.3. COVID-19 Anxiety Levels 1.4. COVID-19-Induced Fear 1.5. Loneliness During COVID-19 Lockdowns 1.6: Financial Strain during COVID-19 pandemic 1.7 Poor social interaction during COVID-19 lockdown
<b>2. Theme 2:</b> Participants coping strategies to overcome COVID-19 psychosocial effects.	2.1. Adhering to COVID-19 Regulations 2.2. Staying Positive 2.3. Regular Exercise

	2.4. Engaging in Hobbies
	2.5. Spiritual intervention
	2.6. Social support

#### 4.4. Theme 1: Psychosocial implications due to COVID-19 pandemic challenges

- **Increased Anxiety and Stress:** The uncertainty and fear surrounding the pandemic likely heightened anxiety and stress levels among students, affecting their mental health and academic performance.
- **Poor social interaction:** Diminished social interactions and support networks in connection to physical distances and Lockdowns measures may have led to loneliness and feelings of isolation.

This theme delineates the students' reactions to the psychosocial impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, which they experienced during their university years. The COVID-19 pandemic challenges to participants emotional and social consequences presents with a variety of perspectives and reactions. COVID-19 pandemic measures and regulations, which were implemented to combat or prevent the pandemic's global spread, made participants more vulnerable to depression. The online study, social isolation and social distance identified as one of the main causes of sadness among university undergraduates due to COVID-19 pandemic regulations.

#### **4.4.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Depression During COVID-19 Pandemic**

This sub-theme emerged as a response to the consequences related to psychological challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic, as experienced by students in the public health and nursing programmes at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia in Oshana area. The following verbatim reactions from participants illustrate the ways in which these challenges manifested as feelings of depression.

Participants expressed frustration with the limitations of the virtual learning environment as illustrated in the following extract:

*"You are not familiar with the platform that they are using to teach you. Sometimes they will start the session with a limited number of participants, such as 50. If you arrive late, you won't be able to attend that day, which can lead to depression." [P 10]*

In this instance, the participant described the anxiety and disappointment caused by the inability to join a session due to a platform's limited capacity. This technical constraint not only interrupted the learning process but also contributed to feelings of exclusion and frustration, ultimately leading to depressive symptoms.

Participants highlighted a technical issue that led to severe academic consequences, as illustrated in the following extract:

*"When I was about to go write my exam, my class marks were not appearing on the portal, and after enquiring, they concluded that I did not register for it. I must retake a year, not due to failure but due to the unregistration of a pre-*

*requested module, or perhaps a technical glitch during the registration process. It was so sad. I was depressed." [P 08]*

This participant's experience underscores the emotional toll of administrative and technical errors, which resulted in a significant setback in their academic journey. The added burden of repeating a year due to an error rather than poor performance contributed to deep-seated feelings of sadness and depression. These verbatim responses reflect on new change, how the online learning transition and during pandemic administrative challenges led to significant stress and sadness symptoms among students. The unfamiliarity with online learning platforms and their limitations created barriers to education and social interaction, while technical errors with significant academic implications caused profound disappointment and emotional distress.

Literature supports these findings, indicating that the shift to remote learning over the journey of pandemic has been associated with increased levels of tensions and depression among students. Researchers found that the psychological outcomes of COVID-19 outbreak on university students was significant, with many experiencing heightened levels of sadness and anxiety symptoms following the disruptions in education and social life [11, 32, 33].

Further corroboration comes from conducted research, reported that college students in China experienced increased psychological distress during the pandemic, driven by uncertainty, academic pressures, and isolation [10]. These studies align with the participant responses, confirming that the COVID-19 pandemic's psychological effects have had a tangible consequence on students' well-being and mental health.

#### 4.4.2. Sub-theme 1.2: COVID-19 Stress Impact

COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems worldwide, causing significant stress among students due to abrupt changes in learning modalities and administrative challenges. Participants in this study shared their experiences with stress, reflecting the impact of poor communication and technical errors during the transition to remote learning.

Participants highlighted about the stress they experienced when they had to repeat a module due to miscommunication, as stated in the following extract:

*"I was very stressed to repeat the module due to poor communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Every time I think about it, I find myself feeling frustrated and stressed." [P 01]*

This statement indicates that the stress originated from administrative issues rather than academic failure. The breakdown in communication led to a frustrating situation where the participant had to repeat a module, causing stress, anger, and disappointment.

Similarly, Participants highlighted the stress caused by technical issues with online examination processes, as stated in the following extract:

*"It was very stressful for me to repeat the module that I know I wrote, and there was a high possibility for me to pass, but at the end of the day, because my examination, the paper that I wrote online, does not appear on it. It's very stressful." [P05]*

In this instance, the stress arose from a technical error that resulted in a failed module, despite the participant having completed the exam with the expectation of passing. The uncertainty surrounding online assessments and the lack of clear resolution processes added to the participants' stress levels. COVID-19 pandemic's impact on education caused profound stress, as illustrated by the participants' accounts. The abrupt shift to online learning introduced new challenges, such as communication issues and technical failures, leading to significant stress among students. These stressors were often beyond the students' control, causing frustration and anger as they navigated an already challenging academic environment.

Stress among students during the pandemic is a well-documented phenomenon. A study by reported that students at high institution and colleges experienced increased stress as well as anxiety because of uncertainties and disruptions caused by the pandemic [32]. Similarly, researchers noted that university students faced heightened stress due to remote learning challenges, social isolation, and administrative errors [4, 13, 33].

#### **4.4.3. Sub-theme 1.3: COVID-19 anxiety levels**

COVID-19 pandemic has significantly contributed to increased anxiety among students, stemming from fears of contracting the virus, uncertainties surrounding remote learning, and technical issues. The following are verbatim responses from participants that illustrate the sources of anxiety during this challenging period.

Participants highlighted about the alarm of contracting COVID-19 as well as its potential consequence of their health plus academic progress, as illustrated by the following extract:

*“We were anxious. We were scared of what would happen. What if we encounter people with COVID who have not yet received a diagnosis and unintentionally contract the virus ourselves, thereby compromising our health and potentially hindering our academic progress?” [P03]*

This statement underscores the heightened anxiety stemming from the potential risk of infection. The uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the potential for transmission among students and faculty, created a pervasive sense of fear and concern for personal health and academic continuity. The possibility of contracting the virus could have severe repercussions, not only medically but also academically, leading to further stress and anxiety.

Participants conveyed concerns about technical difficulties in the remote learning setting, as stated in the following extract:

*“If you need to complete a test or assignment, it requires a password. At times, the password is either unavailable or only accessible to certain students. Therefore, the likelihood that you won't be able to access it is high. Everything has a deadline, and the unfinished work is incomplete.” [P10]*

In this case, anxiety arose from the inconsistency and unreliability of the online platforms used for assessments. The uncertainty surrounding access to tests and assignments, combined with the fear of missing deadlines due to technical glitches, added to the students' anxiety. This lack of clarity and communication during a critical academic task contributed to their apprehension and concern about the potential impact on their academic performance.

These examples demonstrate that the primary contributors of worried over the journey of COVID-19 pandemic were multi-faceted, ranging from health concerns to technical issues with online learning. The fear of contracting the virus and its consequences on health and studies created significant anxiety, while technical issues with online assessments added another layer of uncertainty. Research has shown that university students experienced heightened anxiety during the pandemic. Conducted research reported that anxiety was a prevalent issue among college students' wellbeing, health and studies due to the consequences of pandemic [11]. Similarly, other research's highlighted that those technical issues in remote learning and social isolation contributed to anxiety among university students [4, 13, 19].

#### **4.4.4. Sub-theme 1.4: COVID-19-Induced Fear**

The COVID-19 pandemic has induced a pervasive sense of fear among undergraduates, especially those in fields requiring direct interaction with patients, like public health and nursing. Fear of acquiring the virus during clinical practice or training sessions emerged as a significant concern, affecting students' willingness to participate in hands-on learning experiences. The following are verbatim responses from participants that illustrate the intensity of this fear:

Participants expressed their fear of contracting the virus during practical sessions, as illustrated by the following extract:

*"I fear of going to practice and contracting an infection or virus." [P12]*

This statement indicates that students were apprehensive about their safety during practical training, where close contact with potentially infected individuals was likely.

The prospect of contracting COVID-19 during practice sessions created a significant barrier to hands-on learning.

Participants described the anxiety of interacting with potentially infected patients, as stated in the following extract:

*"When you're going for practice, you have to invade with people who are COVID victims. As a student, you must constantly be concerned about the possibility of contracting COVID-19." [P05]*

Participants emphasized the life-threatening nature of the pandemic and its impact on their willingness to participate in practice sessions, as illustrated by the following extract:

*"I used to go for practice, but now I fear going because I'm scared of COVID-19 pandemic, which is wiping out lives." [P08]*

This comment reflects the profound fear of a deadly virus and the emotional toll of witnessing its effects. The fear of contracting COVID-19 pandemic and its potential to cause severe illness or death created a significant psychological barrier for students in health-related fields.

These responses illustrate the intense fear experienced by public health and nursing trainees over the period of COVID-19 pandemic. The prospect of contracting the virus during practical sessions had a significant impact on their willingness to engage in hands-on learning, creating additional challenges for both students and educational institutions. This fear not only affected the students' academic progress but also had broader implications for their future careers and the healthcare sector.

Literature supports these findings, showing that healthcare workers and students experienced heightened fear during the pandemic due to the risk of exposure to COVID-19 [11, 30]. Other researcher reported that medical students in Japan experienced significant anxiety and fear related to their clinical practice, echoing the sentiments of the participants in this study [17]. Similarly, the conducted study noted that fear of contracting the virus was a common concern within high institution students in health-related fields [30].

The fear of contracting COVID-19 during practical training sessions emerged as a significant sub-theme, highlighting the psychological related consequences of the pandemic on public health and nursing students. This fear, driven by the risk of exposure to the virus and the potentially severe consequences, underscores the importance of addressing students' safety concerns in educational settings.

#### **4.4.5. Sub-theme 1.5: Loneliness During COVID-19 Lockdowns**

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted to strict social distancing measures and lockdowns, profoundly impacting students' ability to interact with their loved ones, families, and friends. Students experienced a sense of loneliness and isolation due to the deprivation of crucial social support systems during challenging times. The following are verbatim responses from participants that illustrate the loneliness experienced during this period.

Participants described the impact of social distancing and the inability to socialise in public spaces, as illustrated in the following extract:

*“There was social distancing going on, and we were not allowed to go out or go to public areas and places with people, and we had to prepare for social distancing most of the time.” [P06]*

This response reflects the restrictions that limited social interactions, as well as the sense of isolation that came with them. The inability to go out and meet with friends or family contributed to a feeling of loneliness and disconnection from support networks.

Participants expressed the deprivation of attention from friends including their family due to social distancing restrictions, as stated in the following extract:

*“There were some restrictions on social interaction, possibly to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Therefore, I experienced a significant lack of attention from my friends and family members.” [P15]*

This statement underscores the emotional toll that isolation from loved ones can have led to loneliness to students. The restrictions intended to curb the spread of COVID-19 led to a significant reduction in social support, resulting in feelings of loneliness and detachment from close relationships.

These responses demonstrate the emotional toll of social distancing and lockdown measures on students. The lack of social interaction and limited contact with friends and family contributed to a sense of loneliness, which can have a negative impact on mental health and well-being. This loneliness can exacerbate stress and anxiety, leading to a decreased sense of community and belonging. This study, research corroborates these findings, showing that social isolation during the pandemic has been associated with increased levels of loneliness among university students. Other

researcher found that the disruption to social networks due to the pandemic led to heightened feelings of loneliness, which impacted students' psychological well-being [13]. Similarly, researchers noted that social distancing measures, while necessary, contributed to a sense of isolation among students [11, 19].

Loneliness emerged as a significant subtheme during COVID-19 pandemic, with strict social distancing measures and lockdowns limiting social interactions for students. The absence of regular contact with friends and family contributed to a profound sense of isolation, which could adversely affect students' mental health and academic performance. Addressing this loneliness requires a focus on creating virtual support networks and promoting social connections in a safe manner, ensuring that students do not feel isolated during these challenging times. Therefore, institutions should provide resources and initiatives that foster a sense of community, even in a socially distanced environment.

#### **4.4.6. Sub-theme 1.6: Financial Strain during COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic's economic repercussion has deposited significant financial strain on students. Many students have seen challenges such as the loss of part-time jobs, reduced family income, and increased expenses for online learning.

Participants expressed that financial instability after they lose part-time incomes and their parents losing jobs during pandemic outbreak, has contributed to heightened stress and anxiety, affecting their overall well-being and academic performance, as illustrated in the following extract:

*"I lost my part-time job at the cafe, and now I'm struggling to pay for my textbooks online and other school supplies related to virtual study." [P04]*

*"My parents' income dropped significantly due to the pandemic, and now we can't afford the same level of support for my education. It's been really stressful trying to make ends meet." [P11]*

Financial strain over the journey of pandemic has led to significant stress and anxiety for many students. The loss of part-time employment and the reduction in family income have created a precarious financial situation, making it difficult for students to afford necessary educational materials and living expenses. This financial instability often exacerbates existing mental health issues and can lead to new psychological challenges, as students navigate the uncertainty of their economic future and academic responsibilities.

Research reported that there is an increased levels of sadness and worried among students over the period of COVID-19 pandemic which were strongly connected with financial difficulties [11]. Additionally, a conducted study highlighted that economic stressor, such as the loss of part-time jobs and financial insecurity, significantly added to mental wellness problems among university trainees during the pandemic [15]. Other researchers also noted that economic stressors related to the pandemic, including financial strain and unemployment, have a considerable consequence on students' emotional and psychological wellbeing, leading to increased rates of anxiety and depression among young people [10, 32].

#### **4.4.7. Sub-theme 1.7: Poor social interaction during COVID-19 lockdown**

The measures implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19, such as lockdowns, social distancing, and quarantine/isolation, have led to poor social interaction. This poor social interaction has had a profound impact on individuals' mental health and well-being.

Participants expressed that social distance affecting their ability to connect with others and maintain social support networks, as stated in the following extract:

*"Being cut off from friends and family has been one of the hardest parts. I feel so alone and disconnected." [P07]*

*"I miss the regular interactions with my colleagues at campus. Virtual meetings just aren't the same." [P14]*

Poor social interaction during the pandemic has deprived individuals of essential social interactions and support systems. The inability to engage in face-to-face communication, participate in social activities, and physically connect with loved ones has led to feelings of loneliness and isolation. These feelings, individual struggle to make use of themselves with diminished status of supports and social engagement which can contribute to a high percentages of mental health disorders including sadness and anxiety.

Conducted studies reported that quarantine and social isolation have significant psychological impacts, including feelings of loneliness, anger, and confusion [11, 13]. Additionally, the conducted research demonstrated that social isolation and loneliness over the pandemic journey are associated with higher levels of social and psychological wellbeing problems among children and adolescents [32]. A conducted review also highlighted that the social distancing measures necessitated by the pandemic have led to widespread feelings of social isolation and loneliness, contributing to increased psychological distress [15].

#### **4.5. Theme 2: Participants coping strategies to overcome COVID-19 psychosocial effects**

COVID-19 pandemic posed significant psychosocial challenges, leading individuals to adopt various self-coping and social support strategies to manage the effects. One such strategy is adherence to regulations. This sub-theme explores how students coped with the psychosocial consequences of the pandemic by following public health guidelines and government-imposed restrictions.

##### **4.5.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Adhere to Regulations**

Adhering to regulations involves obeying the policies and guidelines designed purposefully to further weaken the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, compliance with health measures represents a problem-focused coping strategy aimed at reducing the psychosocial effects of the pandemic. Students could reduce fear and anxiety by following these regulations, knowing they were taking the necessary steps to protect themselves and others.

Participants demonstrated that adhere to pandemic measure protocols allows them to adopt the life, as illustrated in the following extract:

*“I used to adhere to all the instructions that we were getting from our front-liners, or the Ministry of Health and Social Services, that we should wear masks, keep distancing, maintain hand hygiene, and also the curfew that was put up.” [P03]*

This response demonstrates the participant's commitment to following standard guidelines and protocol of public health, including the using of face masks, practicing

excellent hand hygiene, and exercising or maintaining social distance. By adhering to these measures, they could mitigate the risk of contracting COVID-19, thus reducing the associated fear and anxiety.

Participants highlighted the importance of adhering to government regulations, as stated in the following extract:

*"I began adhering to the regulations established by the government." [P07]*

This participant's statement indicates that adhering to regulations became a crucial coping strategy, not only to protect against the virus but also to maintain a sense of order and control during uncertain times. Compliance with government guidelines helped to create a safer environment and contributed to a collective effort to overcome the pandemic. The strategy of adhering to regulations reflects a proactive approach to coping with the psychosocial outcomes of COVID-19. By following public health measures, students reduced their exposure to the virus, thereby decreasing the anxiety and fear associated with the pandemic. This problem-focused coping mechanism offered a sense of security and predictability, allowing students to navigate the uncertainties of the pandemic with greater confidence.

Research supports the importance of adherence to regulations as a coping strategy during the pandemic. A research study noted that compliance with public health measures as a problem-focusing coping was crucial in diminishing the spread of COVID-19 and alleviating psychosocial stress [35]. Similarly, conducted research found that individuals who adhered to health guidelines experienced lower levels of anxiety and fear, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach [37]. Adhering to regulations emerged as a key coping strategy for students dealing with the

psychosocial end-results of COVID-19 pandemic. By following public health guidelines and government restrictions, students could reduce fear and anxiety, contributing to a safer and more controlled environment. This approach highlights the importance of clear communication and consistent enforcement of regulations to support individuals in overcoming the constituted challenges of the pandemic. Therefore, as institutions and governments continue to respond to the evolving situation, encouraging adherence to regulations remains a vital component of effective coping strategies.

#### **4.5.2. Sub-theme 2.2: Staying positive**

Over the pandemic journey amongst university undergraduates, staying positive was a suitable coping strategy against COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting their efforts to maintain a calm and focused mindset despite the challenges. This sub-theme explores how students approached the situation with a positive outlook, preparing themselves to handle uncertainty situations and the pandemic's likely caused of stresses. Their ability to stay positive helped them navigate the difficulties with resilience and a problem-solving attitude.

Participants expressed that they coped by accepting the pandemic and focusing on government regulations, as stated in the following extract:

*“There is nothing you can do, but you just have to align your mind, and then you accept the situation. I began adhering to the guidelines set by the government. These included staying at home, steaming yourself, and drinking lemon water.” [07]*

This response shows a pragmatic approach to the pandemic, where acceptance and a positive attitude were key to coping with the challenges. The participant found it easier to comply with regulations by aligning their mindset, demonstrating that positivity helped maintain discipline and calmness during a time of uncertainty.

Participants emphasised on the importance of meditation and other activities to maintain a positive outlook, as illustrated in the following extract:

*“I try also to meditate when I am home. I attempted to engage in various coping strategies, including exerting effort as instructed.” [08]*

This participant's strategy to meditate and engage in calming activities reflects the value of mindfulness and relaxation techniques in reducing stress and promoting a positive mindset. These approaches not only helped the participant cope with the immediate end-results of the pandemic but also contributed to overall emotional well-being. Staying positive emerged as a key strategy for coping with the psychosocial repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic. By maintaining a positive outlook, students could better manage stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. The attitudes expressed by the participants indicate that a positive mindset helped them adapt to the situation, comply with necessary regulations, and find ways to navigate the challenges.

Research supports the idea that a positive mindset can play a crucial role in coping with stress and anxiety [35, 36]. According to a study conducted in America, students who maintained a positive attitude experienced lower levels of anxiety during the pandemic [11]. Similarly, conducted studies noted that positivity and mindfulness techniques helped university students manage the psychological effects of the pandemic [35, 37]. Staying positive was a significant sub-theme in the study, reflecting

the students' efforts to maintain a calm and focused approach to overcoming the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic. By aligning their minds to the reality of the situation and engaging in mindfulness activities, students could reduce stress and anxiety while complying with government regulations.

This strategy underscores the importance of fostering a positive mindset during times of crisis, as it can lead to better emotional well-being and a more resilient approach to navigating challenges. Therefore, educational institutions should encourage and support students in adopting positive coping strategies, providing resources and guidance to help them maintain a balanced outlook during difficult times.

#### **4.5.3. Sub-theme 2.3: Regular Exercise**

Exercise emerged as a key coping strategy among students to combat the psychosocial outcomes of COVID-19 pandemic. Physical activity served as an outlet for stress, allowing students to relax and calm their minds while reducing feelings of anxiety and depression. The following are verbatim responses from participants illustrating how they used exercise to manage the psychological impact of the pandemic.

Participants shared on how regular exercise helped them to alleviate stress, as stated in the following extract:

*“When it's come to physical activities, most of the time, we do our normal exercise. We do exercise just to ease those stresses that we have.” [P04]*

This response demonstrates that engaging in regular physical activity was a way for students to manage stress. The physical exertion allowed them to release tension and provided a break from the pressures of remote learning and pandemic-related stressors.

Participants described their use of simple exercise equipment's at home, as illustrated in the following extract:

*"I find some simple exercising equipment in the house. " After my lessons, before I take a shower. Then I do some jumping. I do some push-ups. I lift some items that resemble gym equipment." [P09]*

This participant's use of basic exercise equipment at home reflects the adaptability of students during lockdowns and restrictions on public spaces. The routine of exercising at home provided a structured way to relieve stress and maintain physical health, contributing to an improved sense of well-being.

Participants explained on how joining a sports team helped them to relieve stress, as illustrated in the following extract:

*"I joined a netball team that is to practice in the stadium. It really helps me a lot because after lessons, I go outside to do some simple exercises to relieve my stress." [P17]*

This response highlights the importance of social interaction through team sports, which not only offers physical benefits but also provides a sense of community and support. The ability to engage in group activities helped reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, contributing to better mental health.

Participants also emphasised the role of sports activities in relieving their stress, as illustrated by the following extract:

*"I sometimes would do sports activities at home just to help relieve the stress."*  
[P02]

This statement underscores that even simple sports activities may positively influence the consequences on mental health and wellbeing. The participant's approach to incorporating physical activity into their routine shows that exercise is a versatile and accessible way to manage stress. The responses from the participants indicate that exercise was a crucial coping mechanism for managing of COVID-19 pandemic's psychological and social consequences. Engaging in physical activity provided an effective way to reduce stress and maintain a positive outlook. It also served as a way to stay active and healthy during a time when traditional exercise facilities were unavailable due to lockdowns and restrictions.

Exercise is a well-documented method for reducing stress and improving mental health. According to a conducted study, physical activity can significantly lower anxiety and depression, contributing to better overall well-being [36]. Similarly, conducted researchers found that exercise played a role in maintaining mental health during the pandemic, providing an outlet for stress relief, and promoting a sense of routine [11, 38]. Exercise emerged as a significant sub-theme, demonstrating its value as a coping strategy for overcoming the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Whether through structured sports teams, simple home exercises, or other physical activities, students found that engaging in exercise helped them relieve stress, reduce anxiety, and maintain a positive outlook. These findings suggest that encouraging physical activity and providing resources for exercise can be beneficial for students coping with the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. Therefore, educational institutions should promote physical activity as part of a comprehensive approach to supporting students' mental health and well-being.

#### **4.5.4. Sub-theme 2.4: Focus on hobbies**

Focusing on hobbies and personal interests emerged as an effective coping strategy to further weaken the college trainee's consequences of psychosocial over the journey of COVID-19 pandemic. Engaging in affordable relaxation techniques and the joyful activities helps to alleviate stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions. The following are verbatim responses from participants illustrating how they used hobbies to maintain a sense of normalcy and calmness during the pandemic.

Participants shared how watching travel videos became a relaxing and comforting activity, as stated in the following extract:

*"I try to relax myself by focusing on my hobbies. I really enjoy watching travel videos. Aside from that, it may seem like a leisure activity, but I watch travel videos because they help me relax and prepare my mind for travel." [P16]*

This statement demonstrates that focusing on hobbies, even those involving virtual experiences like watching travel videos, can be a valuable way to reduce stress and maintain a positive mindset. The participant used this hobby to soothe the desire to travel, finding comfort in experiencing different places through videos.

Participants explained how motivational content helped them stay focused on their studies, as stated in the following extract:

*"I used to read and listen to some quotes from the motivational speakers that if a situation is present and inevitable, you just need to use whatever you have to get through it. So, I started using my phone and laptop to catch up with my studies." [P07]*

This response reflects the participant's use of motivational content to maintain a positive outlook and stay focused on their academic goals. By engaging with quotes and speeches from motivational speakers, the participant could find inspiration and encouragement to navigate the pandemic's challenges. This approach not only provided comfort but also helped the participant stay on track with their studies.

The focus on hobbies and personal interests during COVID-19 pandemic reveals the importance of finding individual ways to cope with stress and anxiety. By relaxation techniques and being involved into happiness activities can be an effective method for maintaining mental health and promoting a positive attitude. By focusing on hobbies, participants could create a sense of normalcy amidst the uncertainty and disruptions happened due to the pandemic.

Research supports the role of hobbies in reducing stress and promoting mental wellbeing. According to research, it found that university students who engaged in hobbies or recreational activities experienced lower levels of stress and anxiety during the pandemic [38]. Similarly, a conducted study noted that focusing on personal interests and finding enjoyable activities helped students maintain a sense of balance during challenging times [36].

Focusing on hobbies emerged as a significant sub-theme, illustrating its value as a coping strategy for overcoming the noticed psychosocial consequences over the journey of COVID-19 pandemic. Students found ways to reduce stress and maintain a positive outlook through involving into relaxation and engaged over the activities that bring excitement. This approach underscores the importance of encouraging students to pursue hobbies and personal interests as a means by familiarise selves to ongoing end-results over challenges of the pandemic. Educational institutions should support

and promote recreational activities and hobbies as part of a comprehensive strategy to foster student well-being and resilience.

#### **4.5.5. Sub-theme 2.5: Spiritual intervention**

Spirituality, particularly through prayer and religious beliefs, assisting students by played a significant responsibility in accepting life with the psychosocial end-results of COVID-19 pandemic. Engaging in spiritual practices provided students with a sense of hope, strength, and confidence to face the uncertain and stressful circumstances brought on by the pandemic. The following are verbatim responses from participants that illustrate how spirituality and prayer helped them manage the psychological impact of the crisis.

Participants described how prayer helped reduce anxiety and provided a sense of hope, as illustrated in the following extract:

*“I also had to pray, to just reduce the anxiety, and to also strengthen ourselves and to give myself the hope that everything will be okay, and it will eventually just come to an end, and we have just to make it through this pandemic, which was really threatening.” [P03]*

This statement reflects the calming and reassuring effect that prayer and spirituality can help during challenging times. The participant used prayer to cope with anxiety and fear, finding comfort in the belief that the situation would improve. This spiritual approach provided a sense of strength and ability to face the reality of uncertainty.

Participants emphasized the importance of prayer within their family, stating that it played a central role in overcoming the effects of the pandemic, as illustrated in the following extract:

*"We believe in prayer as a family; whatever challenge comes, we should pray.*

*It really helps me a lot to overcome the effects that were there at that time."*

*[P01]*

This response underscores the communal aspect of spirituality, where prayer was a collective activity within the family. This shared spiritual practice not only offered individual comfort but also strengthened family bonds, providing a support system during a difficult period. The participant's belief that prayer could help overcome challenges gave her confidence to face the pandemic's effects. Spirituality and prayer emerged as powerful student's coping activities over the journey of COVID-19 pandemic. These practices offered a sense of hope, strength, and confidence, helping students navigate the uncertainty and stress caused by the crisis. The participants' experiences demonstrate that spirituality as crucial responsibility which take parts in maintaining mental health and providing emotional support during challenging times.

Research supports the connection between spirituality and psychological well-being during the pandemic. Researchers found that spiritual practices, such as prayer and meditation, were associated with lower percentages of worries and tension among students [35, 36]. Similarly, other researchers noted that religious practices and spiritual believes are primary origin that provided comfort and strength for university students coping with the effects of the pandemic [11, 38].

Spirituality, through prayer and religious beliefs, emerged as a key sub-theme in the study, highlighting its role in helping students cope with the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial consequences [36]. By engaging in spiritual practices, students found comfort, strength, and a sense of hope to face the uncertain and stressful circumstances of the pandemic. The finding emphasises the importance of recognising and supporting spiritual and religious practices as valuable coping mechanisms during times of crisis. Therefore, educational institutions and support systems should acknowledge the positive impact that spirituality can have on student well-being and incorporate spiritual support into broader strategies for fostering resilience and emotional health.

#### **4.5.6. Sub-theme 2.6: Social support**

Social support emerged as key coping strategy among students against experienced psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Social support maintained through social network, specifically having contacts with friends, family members, and health professionals provided students with positive attitude, strength, confidence to face and overcome the depression and stressful circumstances brought on by the pandemic situation such as social distance, online technical issues, and academic administration. The following are verbatim responses from participants illustrating how social support assist them to manage the COVID-19 psychosocial effects during the pandemic.

Participants described how seeking social support helps to resolve psychosocial effects provided psychological wellbeing, as illustrated in the following extract:

*“I speak to my friends a lot. It's my mom, sister and my two best friends and my partner, my significant other. So those are one of the reasons I cope with those effects.” [P13]*

*“I decided to go to a psychologist, and it really helped because they let you speak and asks you questions that actually help you reflect on your life, how you can improve as a person. So, psychologist together with provided online devices, data and musk from school helps me to cope with the situation.” [06]*

Emotional support from family, friends, psychologists, and social support intervention is associated with positivity toward COVID-19 pandemic. Seeking psychological assistance from health professionals and emotional conversation with family members including loved one over the journey of COVID-19 pandemic strengthening and provide university trainees with positive attitudes against infectious pandemic, helps them to alleviate from experienced stress and anxiety. Additionally, provided social support of technical issues and Personal Protective Equipment’s (PPE) from the institution minimized the students burden of online study and reduce the level of fear of infection which allows students to accept and cope with COVID-19 pandemic’s noted psychosocial repercussions.

With the supported literatures, seeking for effectiveness communication with family members, friends, psychologist, and social supports are primary interventions that facilitate student’s acceptance with tensions and anxiety over the journey of COVID-19 pandemic [11, 35]. Similarly, social connection helps students to familiarised with COVID-19 pandemic’s related worries and tensions [36]. According to a conducted study, it reported that students from diminished family interactions are at risk of suffering with elevated sadness than students with well-maintained interactions family [39].

#### **4.6. Chapter summary**

Research outcomes was discussed in this section of chapter four that emerged from the data collection and analysis by the public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia in Oshana region, Namibia. Following the data research collection and analysis process, researcher formulated two different themes and their sub-themes based on the participant's responses, grouping all relevant information, and discussing each one individually. The most similar emotional effects students experienced are stress, fear, worries, and sadness over the journey of COVID-19 pandemic, and social factors like poor interactions, financial difficulties, and online study further exacerbate these effects. Finally, students employed different coping mechanisms, including self-management as well as spiritual aspects coping mechanisms, to overcome the psychosocial consequences of COVID-19 pandemic. Conclusions of the research project, limitations, and recommendations are presented to the upcoming chapter, about the psychosocial end-results of COVID-19 pandemic over public health and nursing students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region, Namibia.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECCOMEDATIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction

The ended chapter detailed data analysis and discussed the study findings regarding the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial repercussions on university trainees. Researcher conducted a manual content analysis of the data. Based on the participants' responses, researcher identified two themes from the psychosocial end-results of COVID-19 pandemic on students and discussed these themes and their sub-themes.

The research study's findings inform the conclusions in this chapter from participant responses, including limitations, and recommendations of the study. The study's results led the researcher to draw conclusions that were in line with the research objectives. The research study aims to evaluate the psychosocial end-results of COVID-19 pandemic on students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in the Oshana region, Namibia. It also aims to pinpoint the strategies students are employing to rule out and manage the COVID-19 pandemic's psychological as well as social outcomes at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, in Oshana region. Furthermore, the research question consistently yielded conclusions that aligned with the study objectives. Researcher implemented the limitations based on any constraints identified during the study. Finally, based to outcomes of the study, researcher managed to note study's recommendations, which pertain to the use of self- and social support coping strategies against the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial consequences among university trainees.

## **5.2. Summary of the findings**

### **5.2.1. Objective 1: To determine the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic experienced by students at UNAM Oshakati campus**

End-results of the research project revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial outcomes among students at Oshakati campus of University of Namibia, Oshakati, in the Oshana region, Namibia, were profound and multifaceted. Researcher used the Biopsychosocial Model (BPSM) as a comprehensive framework to understand the complex interplay of factors related to health wellbeing and illness including biological, psychological, and social. By applying this model, the following discussion explores how these factors contributed to the various psychosocial effects experienced over the journey of COVID-19 pandemic by the students.

The BPSM's biological dimension refers to the physical health aspects of COVID-19 pandemic. The end-results of the study showed that students experienced a significant phobia of acquiring the virus, driven by the risk of severe health consequences and the potential impact on loved ones. This heightened fear contributed to a general sense of anxiety and stress among students. Additionally, the disruption to normal routines, such as limited physical activity could have negative biological impacts, affecting students' overall health and well-being.

The psychological dimension examines the emotional and mental responses to the pandemic. The end-results revealed that trainees were prone to depression, stress, and anxiety due to the pandemic's sudden changes that occurred. Participants reported feelings of discomfort, hopelessness, unhappiness, and nervousness related to the abrupt shift of current study to online learning and the uncertainty surrounding

educational outcomes. The unexpected changes caused instability and contributed to heightened psychological distress. Academic challenges further fuelled emotional turmoil, with students experiencing issues such as missing academic content, poor performance, and the prospect of repeating modules. The unfamiliarity with online learning systems led to confusion, lack of interest, and increased stress as students struggled with new teaching method adaptations.

The social dimension focuses on the pandemic's social interactions and relationships impacts. The findings showed that social distancing measures and lockdowns caused significant disruptions to social life, resulting in loneliness and boredom among students. Many participants described a sense of isolation due to limited social interactions with friends and family. This loss of social connection adversely affected their emotional well-being, emphasising the social support advantage and its importance for mental health.

Moreover, financial difficulties emerged as a social concern, with participants indicating that their families faced economic challenges due to job losses. These financial strains added stress and uncertainty, further impacting students' academic focus and performance. The findings from the study viewed through the lens of the BPSM suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial outcomes are deeply rooted on a biological, psychological, and social dimensions. The complex interaction of these factors creates an environment where students face significant challenges in maintaining their health and well-being.

To address these psychosocial effects, educational institutions must adopt a holistic approach, considering all aspects of the BPSM. This approach should include providing mental health support, encouraging physical activity, fostering social

connections, and offering financial assistance to students in need. By addressing the biological, psychological, and social dimensions, universities can create a supportive environment that helps students navigate about ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

The BPSM underscores the considering of the wide context, as well as its importance in which students lived and study. Recognizing these factor's interconnections, educators and policymakers can formulate the preventive comprehension strategies against the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial end-results and offer support to students in their academic and personal journeys.

### **5.2.2. Objective 2: To identify how students are coping with the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic at the UNAM Oshakati campus during their study**

Researcher derived the identified coping strategies against the psychosocial repercussions experienced during COVID-19 pandemic from the manual analysis of the data, following Tesch's eight-step approach. Researcher categorised the data on coping mechanism into a theme and sub-themes, shedding light on the various methods students employed to manage the pandemic's impact on their lives. The study revealed that students utilised a range of coping strategies to overcome the psychosocial end-results of COVID-19 pandemic, including both self-coping and social support-based approaches.

Many participants expressed that adhering to COVID-19 protocols and regulations, such as social distancing and wearing masks, was a keyway to cope with the pandemic's psychosocial effects. Following these guidelines made them feel safer and more in control of their environment, reducing anxiety and stress.

Additionally, a significant number of participants indicated that through adhered to COVID-19 regulation and measures, staying positive was a significant way of cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, which reflecting the students' efforts to maintain a calm and focused approach to overcoming the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic. By aligning their minds to the reality of the situation and engaging in mindfulness activities, students could reduce stress and anxiety while complying with government regulations.

Physical activities importance was also pinpointed by participants, such as sports and home exercises, in maintaining a sense of normality and combating the psychosocial effects of the pandemic. Engaging in physical activities provided an outlet for stress and helped students to stay physically and mentally healthy. Other participants found solace in focusing on their hobbies, using these activities to stay busy and distracted from the negative effects of the pandemic. Some participants mentioned hobbies like watching travel videos, reading, or meditating as effective ways to maintain a positive outlook during challenging times.

Social support played a crucial role in helping students cope with the psychosocial effects of the pandemic. Participants mentioned receiving support from surroundings, family members, friends, colleagues, and partners, which allow them to manage the tension and worries caused by the pandemic. Participants also noted the importance of psychological support from social workers and psychologists through counselling sessions. These sessions provided students with professional guidance about emotional impact's acceptance due to the pandemic and helped them maintain a positive mindset. Moreover, participants received support from the University of Namibia in the form of internet devices, Mobile Telecommunications (MTC) data, and Personal Protective

Equipment (PPE). This institutional support enabled students to continue their studies and maintain a sense of normality despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Lastly, spirituality and prayer were additional coping strategies mentioned by the participants. Students viewed prayer as a source of strength and confidence, enabling them to maintain optimism amidst uncertainty against COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial effects.

### **5.3. Conclusions**

The study examined the psychosocial end-results of COVID-19 pandemic on the Oshakati campus of University of Namibia's students, in Namibia, Oshana region and the coping strategies they employed to navigate the challenges during this unprecedented time. By analysing the data in accordance with Tesch's eight-step approach, the study revealed a complex array of psychological and social impacts resulting from the pandemic, as well as various methods students used to overcome them. The findings showed that students experienced a wide range of psychosocial effects, including stress, anxiety, depression, fear, loneliness, poor social interaction, and financial difficulties. The disruption to academic routines, the immediate implementation of online learning system, the need for some meters distancing apart, and overall uncertainty surrounding the pandemic largely drove these negative impacts.

Despite these challenges, the study found that students utilised a variety of coping strategies to manage the psychosocial effects. These strategies encompassed both self-coping techniques, such as focusing on hobbies, engaging in physical activities, staying positive, spiritual aspects and adhering to COVID-19 protocols, as well as

social support-based approaches, including receiving support from family and friends, and seeking psychological guidance through counselling sessions. The incorporation of the Biopsychosocial Model (BPSM) into the study's framework highlighted the interconnectedness of biological, psychological, and social factors in understanding the COVID-19 pandemic's emotional and social impacts. The findings reinforced the importance of a holistic approach to addressing the psychosocial effects, emphasising that effective coping strategies must consider the broader context of students' lives.

The study also underscored the critical role of educational institutions in supporting students during times of crisis. The provision of resources allocated such as internet access, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and professional counselling services played a significant role in helping students maintain a sense of normality and academic continuity.

In conclusion, study demonstrated that while the University of Namibia's students in Oshakati campus psychosocial effects were profound by COVID-19 pandemic, the diverse range of coping strategies employed by the students enabled them to navigate the challenges with resilience and adaptability. Moving forward, educational institutions should continue to foster a supportive environment, providing comprehensive resources and support systems that address the various dimensions of students' well-being. This approach will be crucial for promoting student success and mental health, both over the journey of the ongoing pandemic and in future crises.

#### **5.4. Limitations**

Several limitations were highlighted. To determine the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial effects that experienced by students at the UNAM Oshakati campus, in

the Oshana region and to identify the coping mechanisms employed by these students was this project's aim and purposes. Due to the sample size's limitation, the study concentrates on the psychosocial effects experienced by a small number of participants. Only the UNAM Oshakati campus conducted the research study, and its findings might not apply to other Namibian students. Moreover, qualitative studies solely consider the subjective perspectives of the interviewees, potentially limiting the generalizability of the study's findings. Therefore, due to the different characters of the cultural and geographical orientation of the study participants from that of students at other universities in the country, the project outcomes may not be referred and generalised to the whole Namibian universities population. However, the availability of the project's findings is effective for future research and literature materials.

## **5.5. Recommendations**

The study's findings and conclusions, derived from objectives 1 and 2, form the basis of the following recommendations. The researcher made recommendations for proposed future research, the University of Namibia, and students.

### **5.5.1. University Management**

- The researcher recommended that the university should establish an internal policy and plan that addresses the most effective strategies for managing students during a potential pandemic or similar situations. The policy should prioritize issues such as students' psychological and social well-being and provide ambitious support services to maintain educational continuity during the pandemic.

- The researcher recommended that universities must strengthen and offer psychological support to students during pandemics. The university should provide psychological support, such as counselling, as it plays a crucial role in promoting students' mental wellbeing during emergencies and positively impacts their academic performance. Psychological support assists students to focus on their academics.
- The researcher further recommended that universities must render social support to students during the difficult times of global change. The university must ensure that during pandemic era, all students must have access to online studies and all the accessories are available for continuing education programs. The university's social support includes providing students with devices, internet connectivity, and relevant training on the new online teaching platform.
- The researcher also recommended that universities help students prevent pandemics. The university must provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to students, such as masks, face shields, aprons, gowns, and hand sanitizers during pandemics. This improves students' protection against pandemic infection during practice and reduces fear.
- The universities must offer a bonus to self-funding students during the pandemic. Offering bonuses to self-funding students will reduce the likelihood of academic dropouts because their financial support lost the job during the pandemic.

### **5.5.2. Students**

- The researcher recommended that students engage in self-management strategies; it strengthens their coping mechanisms against the psychosocial effects of the pandemic. Participating in physical activities such as exercise, walking a distance, jumping, performing push-ups, and lifting objects helps students maintain a normal life. Participating in sports activities also contributes to pandemic coping mechanisms.
- The researcher recommended that students must engage in their hobbies; it facilitates their coping skills against pandemic effects. Students who focus on media play a major role in coping with pandemic effects, such as watching television or video, listening to music, and reading novels. This approach is healthy for students and allows them to maintain their normal lives despite the pandemic effects.
- The researcher further recommended that students adhere to pandemic measures, as this helps them maintain a positive approach against the situation. Researcher further recommended that student's adhering to COVID-19 protocols and regulations, such as social distancing, hand sanitiser and wearing masks, are one of keyway to cope with the pandemic's psychosocial effects.

### **5.5.3. Future research**

Given that this is Namibia's first study on the psychological and social consequences of COVID-19 pandemic against students, the country's knowledge of these effects is limited. Here are some recommendations for future research on this topic:

Researcher recommend conducting quantitative research to gauge the severity of these effects on university students.

- Researcher recommend investigating the physical impacts and managing them for students experiencing the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic.
- Determine the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding university managing students experiencing psychosocial end-results from COVID-19 pandemic.
- Investigate the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic on students' academic outcomes.
- Determine the best management for students facing the psychosocial end-results of COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **5.5.4. Project contribution to body of knowledge**

The project contributes to the literature of knowledge, especially for the university's management, students, the department of health, and Namibian society as a whole. The study findings enrich the effectiveness of experiences on the management and care of students undergoing psychosocial effects of pandemics or emergencies. The study also enhances the quality of life by providing social support through the roles of family, friends, partners, and health professionals.

#### **5.6. Summary**

This chapter outlined the study's conclusions in relation to the project findings. The chapter has also discussed the project's limitations and recommendations. These students' unique experiences vary depending on their life and academic background. The recommendations derived from this study aim to comprehend and provide

students with psychosocial management skills, while also equipping them with knowledge about the psychosocial effects of pandemics.

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**Appendix A: The ethical certificate was obtained from Unam decentralised ethics committee**



**UNAM**  
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**Ethical Clearance Reference Number:** DEC OSH 0076      **Date:** 06/10 2023

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Ethics Committee (REC) 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 ethics committee.

**Title of Project:**      PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON 2020 INTAKE OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND NURSING STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA - OSHAKATI CAMPUS, OSHANA REGION, NAMIBIA

**Principal researcher:**      SAKARIA NANTINDA

**Staff Number/ Student number:**      200401785


**Remarks:**      Low Risk      Approved after corrections done.

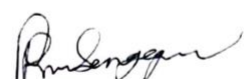
**Centre for Research Services**

Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee.
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by the ethics committee.
4. The ethics committee 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.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof Hans J Amukugo (Oshakati Campus Chairperson Decentralized Ethics Committee)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi (Head, Multidisciplinary Research)

## Appendix B: Requested permission for conducting research study to the ministry of health research department

S Nantinda  
Onayena Health Centre  
P.O. Box 12061  
Onyaanya  
17 November 2023

The Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Health and Social Services  
Private Bag 13198  
Windhoek  
Namibia

Dear Sir

**Re: Request for Permission**

I am writing this letter to your good office requesting for a permission to conduct my study (Research) within the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) which scheduled to take place at University of Namibia-Oshakati campus, Oshana region.

The looking of a permission is necessitated by the fact that, I am currently perusing my study at the University of Namibia toward a master's degree in public health. The title of the study is: **"Psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic on 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at University of Namibia-Oshakati campus, Oshana region, Namibia"**. The population of the study will entail 2020 intake of public health and nursing students with the age of 18 years and above from Unam-Oshakati campus, Oshana region. The study design will be of qualitative in nature.

It is therefore against this background that, I am humbly requesting your good office for a permission to conduct this study within the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Kindly, find the attached letter of permission from the University of Namibia ethics committee.

Thank you for your assistance into this matter.

Sincerely Yours



Mr Sakaria Nantinda

Registered Nurse  
Onayena Health Centre

## Appendix C: Permission and registration response from ministry of health research department to conducting the research project



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

### MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Ministerial Building  
Harvey Street  
Private Bag 13198, Windhoek

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tel: No: 061 -203 2507  
Fax No: 061-222 558  
Andreas.Shipanga@mhss.gov.na

Ref: 22/4/2/3

Enquiries: Mr. A. Haufiku

Date: 29 November 2023

Mr. Sakaria Nantinda  
PO Box 12061  
Onyaanya  
Namibia

Dear Mr. Nantinda

**Re: Psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic on 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at University of Namibia-Oshakati Campus, Oshana region, Namibia.**

1. Reference is made to your application to conduct the above-mentioned study.
2. The proposal has been evaluated and found to have merit.
3. **Kindly be informed that permission to conduct the study has been granted under the following conditions:**
  - 3.1 The data to be collected must only be used for academic purpose;
  - 3.2 No other data should be collected other than the data stated in the proposal;
  - 3.3 Stipulated ethical considerations in the protocol related to the protection of Human Subjects should be observed and adhered to, any violation thereof will lead to termination of the study at any stage;
  - 3.4 A quarterly report to be submitted to the Ministry's Research Unit;
  - 3.5 Preliminary findings to be submitted upon completion of the study;
  - 3.6 Final report to be submitted upon completion of the study;
  - 3.7 Separate permission should be sought from the Ministry for the publication of the findings.
4. All the cost implications that will result from this study will be the responsibility of the applicant and **not** of the MoHSS.

Yours sincerely,

  
BEN NANGOMBE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



All official correspondence must be addressed to the Executive Director.



**Appendix D: Requested permission letter for conducting a research study to  
Unam Oshakati campus director**

S Nantinda  
P.O. Box 12061  
Onyaanya  
25 October 2023

The University of Namibia-Oshakati Campus Director  
Private Bag 5507  
Oshakati  
Oshana Region

Dear Sir

**Re: Request for Permission**

I am writing this letter to your good office requesting for a permission to conduct a study (Research) in your respective campus (Unam-Oshakati campus).

The looking of a permission is necessitated by the fact that, I am currently perusing my study at the University of Namibia toward a master's degree in public health. The title of the study is: **"Psychosocial effects of COVID-19 pandemic on 2020 intake of public health and nursing students at University of Namibia-Oshakati campus, Oshana region, Namibia"**. The population of the study will entail 2020 intake of public health and nursing students with the age of 18 years and above from Unam-Oshakati campus, Oshana region. The study design will be of qualitative in nature.

It is therefore against this background that, I am humbly requesting your good office for a permission to conduct this study in your campus. Kindly, find the attached letter of permission from the University of Namibia ethics committee.

Thank you for assistance into this matter.

Sincerely Yours



.....

Mr Sakaria Nantinda  
Registered Nurse  
Onayena Health Centre

## Appendix E: Permission letter from Unam Oshakati campus director to conduct the study

**HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBÄ & OSHAKATI CAMPUSES**

*Dr Jacob Sheehama: Director*

University of Namibia,

Private Bag 5507, Oshakati

☎ +264 65 232 3000; Fax: +264 65 230 006 E-mail: [jsheehama@unam.na](mailto:jsheehama@unam.na); URL.: <http://www.unam.edu.na>



**To:** Mr Sakaria Nantinda  
Onayena Health Centre

**From:** Dr Sheehama J  
Director HP and Oshakati Campuses  
University of Namibia

**Subject: Permission to conduct the study at UNAM Oshakati Campus**

I am pleased to write this letter of permission for you Mr S Nantinda, to conduct the research study at Oshakati campus, as per your ethical approval. Your study should be conducted as per the protocol approved by the Research Office at the University of Namibia.

For any enquiries feel free to contact Dr J Sheehama at the contacts: email: [jsheehama@unam.na](mailto:jsheehama@unam.na) or cell: +264814348018.

Sincerely,



**Dr. J. Sheehama**  
Director: HP & Oshakati Campuses  
University of Namibia

(Reference Sharon Tuyapeni)

## **Appendix F: Participant informed consent**

My name is Sakaria Nantinda, a third-year master's post graduate student in public health registered with the University of Namibia. I am conducting a research study to determine the COVID-19 pandemic's psychosocial effects within students at University of Namibia-Oshakati campus, Oshana region, Namibia. The study findings will be helping the students to cope with their studies during a difficult time of COVID-19 pandemic. It is useful also to formulate a recommendation to the Ministry of Health department and Universities regarding supporting students psychosocially once the similar situation of pandemic happen in future.

The population of the study will be a 2020 intake of Public Health and Nursing students from the age of 18 years and above registered with University of Namibia-Oshakati campus, Oshana region, Namibia. Therefore, is humbly requesting individual to be part of the study and required to give consent by signing on the space provided below this page. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, individuals at any time are allowed to withdraw and discontinue from the study. No one will be punished from refusing to answer any question.

The data for the study will be gathered using the interviews and field notes. A semi-structured interview guide will be used to conduct an interview session in adherence with COVID-19 rules and regulation. All the interview sessions will be recorded on with a voice recorder. During the interviews, researcher will also record some field notes of non-verbal behaviours and expressions of the participants. All information will be confidential, no names of participants will be recorded and collected data from interview will be kept safe until the completion of the study which may disposed after.

Ethical clearance of the study was offered by Research Ethical Committee (REC), University of Namibia-Oshakati campus, Oshana region, Namibia and permission granted by Ministry of Health research department to go ahead with the study. The study requires participant's time as the interview will last no longer than 30 minutes. Your participation to the study will be highly welcomed.

Agreed to participate on the study, sign on the space below.

Participant signature: ..... date: .....

Thank you very much.