DETERMINANTS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE STUDENTS AT A UNIVERSITY IN MASVINGO PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

by

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to find out the determinants of academic performance of female students at a state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. This study was prompted by the fact that it was established through research that female students are lagging behind in academic performance especially in science subjects.

The population comprised all part two to part four female university students at the state university and all the lecturers who teach the female students. A sample of 25 female students and 5 lecturers in four faculties was selected using the convenience sampling strategy. The study employed a case study research design which enabled the researcher to identify the problems, gather facts on factors that determine the academic performance of the female university student in a natural setting. Self-designed interview and focus group discussions were used by the researcher to collect data. Data were analysed in narrative form and thematically.

The study revealed that the determinants of academic performance of female university students were gendered cultural codes, the female student's family background, resources and lecturer attitudes and competencies. The study recommends that policies that emancipate women be put in place. The study also recommends that resources and services such as guidance and counselling be readily available. In addition, institutions of education need to cultivate and nurture positive attitudes in parents, teachers and students towards females. Furthermore, the training of lecturers who are holders of non-teaching degrees is recommended. Finally, a model for the improvement of the academic performance of female university students is proposed.

Key terms

Academic performance; affirmative action; attitudes; culture; determinants; gender; gender stereotypes; female student, feminism; lecturer competence; resources, Zimbabwe.

DECLARATION

Student number: **049020226**

I declare that **'Determinants of academic performance of female students at a state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe'** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE   DATE

LILIAN MANWA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

My thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God who gave me parents that provided me with a good and sound educational background.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to establish the determinants of academic performance of female students at a state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, and significance of the study, theoretical framework, assumptions, limitations, delimitations and the definition of terms.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Across the globe, there is strong evidence of inequalities between males and females (OECD, 2011:5; Ford, 2002:184; Rao, 2004:140; UNESCO, 2003:143; Evans, 2003:47; Williams, Seed & Mwau, 2002:4; Hee Chee, Pino & Smith, 2005:2). This implies that there are discrepancies between men and women in the social, economic, educational and other spheres of life. Most studies reveal that women are lagging behind in education, politics, economic issues and the world of work (Watkins, 2000:196; Kasirye, 2009:1). Mapfumo, Chireshe and Peresuh (2002:157) state that there have been perpetuated disparities between males and females in both secondary and tertiary education in Zimbabwe.

The academic performance of primary and secondary school girls in various subjects, especially the so called "power" subjects such as Mathematics and Science, has been the major focus of many researchers in developed and developing countries. Such studies have been carried out in the United Kingdom (Eurydice, 2010:5), in France (Saito, 2011:3), in Sydney (Considine & Zappala, 2002:93), in Boston (Zembar & Blume, 2009:212), in West Africa (Nigeria) (Bassey, Joshua & Asim, 2010:56), in all SADC countries (Watkins, 2000:156), in Eastern and Southern African countries (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia, Lesotho and South Africa) (Saito, 2011:3), in Southern African countries (Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa) (Bonga, 2010:2; Nithi, 2010:1; United Nations Educational, 2003:143), in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, (Muthukrishna, 2010:6) and in Zimbabwe (Ngorima, 2001:4; Mutemeri & Mugweni, 2005;50; Mutekwe, Modiba & Maphosa, 2012:111). The above studies have

focused on gender gap on academic performance among primary and secondary school pupils. In these studies, the girls have been found to be performing below the boys in mathematics and science subjects.

Haralambos and Holborn (2008:858) define culture as a product of the society which touches almost every aspect of life. Culture influences what people do, and, like a mirror, what people do reflects their culture. Nature versus nurture studies have confirmed that people behave in response to their genetic and cultural factors (Seshamani & Shalumba, 2010:1). Most university students are pre-adults and adults who reflect their culture and the influence of the economic, social and political environments that they live in since the socialisation process would have taken place over a long period of time. Women are born to be carers; caring gendered roles are an extra burden on female students which may have an effect on their academic performance (Shirley, 1997:102). Hence, there is need to establish the determinants of the academic performance of adult female students who attend university.

Girl children have been the main focus of much research while little attention has been given to women who, like girl children, are also vulnerable, disadvantaged in many ways and are lagging behind in many areas, including education (OECD, 2011:5). Finsterbusch (2009:24) states that women seldom reach the highest levels of education because they face obstacles such as sex and gender discrimination at every stage of their careers that decreases the ratio of women to men at each step. Women continue to drop out, perform more poorly, and have less access to education than men (Mapfumo et al., 2002:157; Gaidzanwa, 2012:2). Chireshe (2006:1) states that, worldwide, students experience social, personal and academic problems at school or college. Good academic achievement is therefore pivotal in alleviating human suffering especially amongst women who are amongst the vulnerable. It is therefore possible to achieve gender parity in the world of work if women are able to attain good academic performance (OECD, 2011:5).

The difference between courses taken by males and females represents a wide gap in what courses males and females take, which leads to different educational and occupational paths (Dayioglu & Turut-asik, 2007:255). Similarly, Seshamani and Shalumba (2010:3) found that only 35 per cent of the enrolment from the lowest level of education through to the tertiary level is female. Often men are the pilots while women are the air hostesses who will be doing

the easy job of taking care for the passengers. Mostly, men become miners, engineers or doctors while females become nurses or teachers (Watkins, 2000:196; Ford, 2002:184; Rao, 2004:135; UNESCO, 2003:143).

Watkins (2000:155) indicates that inequalities in education between men and women extend across a wide range of dimensions including enrolment, completion and performance. Poor educational attainments or achievements may be a barrier to overcoming the vicious circle of poverty among humankind, especially among women (OECD, 2011:6). Williams, Seed and Mwau (2002:6) affirm that women are over a third of the world's workforce but earn a tenth of the world's earnings. The above findings raise questions on what will happen to females if the issue of the achievement gap is not addressed. Establishing the determinants of academic performance is pivotal in reducing the broader inequalities in society which reflect the fact that women are lagging behind men in educational attainment and outcomes (UNESCO, 2003:116).

Studies on gender disparities in academic performance in developed countries, for example, America, Canada and Britain, have mainly pointed to genetic differences (Witt, 2012:2; Ford, 2002:184; Lacour & Tissington, 2011:224). In Africa, research linked to genetic factors and the brain is scanty because of lack of resources or technology to research the genetic differences (Bassey et al., 2010:55). Other international studies reveal that poverty and family background account for the difference in academic performance between boys and girls (Cheesman, Simpson & Wint, 2006:5; Pedrosa, Dachs, Maia, Andrade & Carvalho, 2006:8; Johnson, 2006:2; OECD, 2011:40). The same situation of academic performance differences due to poverty also applies throughout sub-Saharan Africa (LaFraniere, 2005:2).

To the knowledge of the researcher, very few studies have looked at the determinants of academic performance of female students at a university in Zimbabwe. Dorsey (1989:349) looked at career prospects, aspirations and family role constraints of academic women in a university in Zimbabwe. It is against this background that the present study sought to establish the determinants of academic performance of female students at a state university in Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As revealed in the background to the study, women lag behind men in academic performance especially in mathematics and science subjects (Aleman & Renn, 2002: 213; Evans, 2003:232; Eurydice, 2010:5; Johnson, 2006:2; Mutekwe et al., 2012:112; Ngorima, 2001:3; Watkins, 2000:196). The background to the study also revealed that most of the studies for example, (Saito, 2011:3; Bonga, 2010:2; Eurydice, 2010:5; Nithi, 2010:1; Bassey et al., 2010:56) in this area focus on primary and secondary school students. Very few studies focus on tertiary female students. The difference in performance between males and females is internationally viewed as caused by genetics (Witt, 2012:2; Ford, 2002:184; Lacour & Tissington, 2011:224), poverty and family background (LaFraniere, 2005:2; Cheesman et al., 2006:5; Pedrosa, Dachs et al., 2006:8; Johnson, 2006:2; OECD, 2011:40). Furthermore, it has been reflected in the background to the study that, not much research on female and male differences in academic performance, known to the present researcher, has been carried out in Higher Education in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the current study sought to establish the determinants of the academic performance of female students at a state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Main research question

The present study was guided by the following main research question:

What are the determinants of the academic performance of female students at a state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe?

1.4.2 Sub-research questions

The present study was guided by the following sub-research questions in order to establish the determinants of academic performance of the female university students:

1.4.2.1 To what extent do gendered cultural codes determine the academic performance of female students?

1.4.2.2 How does the family background affect the academic performance of female students?

1.4.2.3 How do lecturers' attitudes and competencies influence academic performance of the female students?

1.4.2.4 To what extent do resources affect the academic performance of female university students?

1.4.2.5 What strategies can be employed in order to reduce or close the achievement gap between males and females?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were to:

1.5.1 establish the extent to which gendered cultural codes influence the academic performance of female university students

1.5.2 explore how family background affects the academic performance of female university students

1.5.3 find out how lecturers' attitudes and competencies influence the academic performance of female university students

1.5.4 investigate the extent to which resources affect the academic performance of female university students

1.5.5 establish strategies that can be employed in order to reduce or close the achievement gap between males and females at university.

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The researcher has very rich experience as a teacher and lecturer. Firstly, she taught at a primary school before her training and after training then taught at secondary school after being trained as a secondary school teacher. The researcher was also a college lecturer and then a university lecturer. This exposure gave her insight into the plight of Zimbabwean female children and adults who, no matter their age or stage in life, face more challenges in life, education and even in the social and political world, than their male counterparts. It seems that the obstacles and challenges take their toll on the female child as she progresses

from being a child to a teenager and then an adult.

These issues that concern women are familiar to the researcher since she was also once a student from primary to tertiary levels and also experienced good and bad academic performance that is relevant to this study. The obstacles may vary according to the many variables for each female student but experience has taught the researcher that women lag behind in many areas, including academic performance and face many more obstacles in their lives compared to their male counterparts. These issues pertaining to gendered cultural codes are therefore also part of the life of the researcher.

The researcher's main concerns were the general poor academic performance of many female students, the alarming dropout rate and the low completion rate by females. Female students, in most cases, have genuine reasons for missing lessons and not handing in homework/assignments in time, such as their children are not feeling well. They face many obstacles and challenges that cause them not to participate fully in the educational system. This situation is a cause for concern and calls for attention. Hence, the justifications for this present study.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was intended to benefit both female university students and lecturers since the information that it reveals may be useful to the lecturers when assessing students' work, hopefully to the advantage of female students at all levels. Lecturers may also adopt the use of affirmative action when distributing resources or when marking and teaching in order to correct the already existing imbalances. The study suggested strategies that can improve the academic plight of female university students. Educationists will be informed about the determinants of academic performance for women. Based on this research, policy makers may change policies that negatively affect women in universities and introduce policies which are women friendly. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders may be enlightened on the plight of women scholars and this may lead to interventions which may assist them. The current study can also be broadened with further research in order to get more insight into the difference in academic performance between males and females in Zimbabwe.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents the three major theories that informed the present study. The study of the determinants of academic performance of female university students requires an integrated approach in explaining the relationship between environmental factors, school factors, culture, gender and academic performance. The transactional theory and Eagly's social role theory illustrate how nature and nurture influence life. Seifert and Hoffnung (1994:59) state that contextual approaches view development as a process involving the pattern of reciprocal transactions between the child and the system of physical, cultural and historical developmental contexts in which those interactions occur. These contexts include gendered cultural codes, the student's family background, lecturers' attitudes and competencies and also the availability of resources.

In examining the gender myths that influence life, the difference between the biological category of sex and the cultural category of gender should be recognised (Evans, 2003:47). Sex is determined by chromosomes but gender goes beyond sex to the roles that society has determined are appropriate for an individual according to his/her sex. Sex, in other words, is a birthright but the roles played in society are largely determined by culture (Rank, 2010:7; Wood, 2008:13). In everyday life, however, this distinction between the natural category of sex and the cultural category of gender is blurred because socially determined gender roles are regarded as naturally dictated necessities (Pearson, 2007:6). This study is anchored on the transactional theory, Eagly's social role theory and feminist theory. The transactional theory which is the main theory that anchored this study is discussed below.

1.8.1 Transactional theory of child development

This study is anchored on the most widely accepted theory in the field of child development which is called the "transactional theory of child development" (Maasik & Solomon, 2003:16; Haralambos & Holborn; 2008:62). Seifert and Hoffnung (1994:62) posit that Sameroff's transaction theory views development as an on-going process of the reciprocal transactions between the child and the various social and physical environmental contexts in which she or he lives. The social contexts include parents, teachers and peers while the physical contexts include the geographical locations such as urban or rural environments. This theory underpins the present study since the university students will have gone through a long process of reciprocal transaction between the environment and themselves.

The transactional theory takes into account built-in characteristics of the child as well as environmental influences and then predicts lawful change and continuity during childhood and adolescence (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:62). Transactional theory emphasises the psychological resources of both the child and the environment and their dynamic interplay over time (Maasik & Solomon, 2003:16; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:62). The child brings certain biological and genetic characteristics to the interplay, for example, gender, temperament, physical health, genetic predispositions toward intellectual abilities, personality styles and psychopathology. The university student, like any other human being, also reflects the process of nature and nurture. It is in this regard that the transactional theory of child development formed the basis of this study.

The influences of the environment are characterised by the psychological resources and behaviours of salient people in the child's life: parents, siblings, extended family, peers, friends, school and neighbourhood communities. Culture is part of the fabric of every society, including our own (Ford, 2002:19). It shapes "the way things are done" and our understanding of why this should be so (Maasik & Solomon, 2003:475). Most of transactional theory, and indeed the bulk of child development research, has, in the past, focused on the mother as the key person in the child's life although this is changing somewhat as increasing numbers of investigations show that fathers, grandparents, peers, siblings, day care and schools also influence the child (Williams et al., 2002:4). Few studies, however, focused on these influences simultaneously, hence the need for this study.

The transactional interplay between the girl children's (in this case, female university students') inherent attributes and the environment can be caused by physical, social, and cognitive development (Maasik & Solomon, 2003:18). Children's characteristics influence parents' actions and behaviour (Scheiner & Willig, 2008:23), for example, parents respond differently to boys than to girls, and differently to children with outgoing personalities versus shy children. Parents also react differently to children whose temperaments cause them difficulty in self-regulating and interacting smoothly with environmental stimulations and challenges than to children whose temperaments are easy and who approach the world in a more even-keeled and appealing way (Scheiner & Willig, 2008:24). The family environment also contributes to intellectual competence (Maasik & Solomon, 2003:20; Seifert & Hoffnung, 1994:59).

The meaning of the transactional theory has been simplified in Figure 1 below which illustrates that the female student, from birth, brings in the nature (the DNA and genes) and then is planted and nurtured in a specific environment which influences the outcome of growth and performance (Seshamani & Shalumba, 2010:4; PDCE Admin, 2010:6). The transactional model describes development as the result of a complex interplay between the child and his/her natural environment, personality and traits, as well as family experiences and economic, social and community resources (PDCE Admin, 2010:4). The transaction that takes place determines the academic performance of the female student. This was the focus of this study.

Figure 1.1: An illustration of the transactions that happen between nature and nurture of the student

The plant in Figure 1.1 represents the female student who was born into a specific social environment that influences its beauty or end use and performance. The same applies to the female student whose performance in all areas of life is greatly influenced by both the genetic and social environment.

The transactional theory also views the child as existing within an intricate system of variables, all of which could have an effect on his/her development and achievements (Paquette & Ryan, 2001:3). The complexity of variables includes the micro system which refers to what the child brings to the world with him/her such as DNA and genes. The meso system is the immediate setting in which the child lives, such as the nuclear family while the exo system is the social environment in which the child lives. This includes the school that the child attends, the community and neighborhood in which the child lives, and the occupation

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of the child's parents. The exo system: macro system which represents the general society in which the child lives includes the broader culture as well as the government and any regulations or political ideologies and policies it has which may affect the developing child. The chrono system includes any transitions in the child's life that may impact his/her development such as the meso and exo systems (PDCE Admin, 2010:4). The current study was influenced by these systems since the female student is affected by both nature and nurture factors. The following section presents Eagly's Social Role Theory which is another theory that informed this study.

1.8.2 Eagly's Social Role Theory

Eagly, in 1987, offered an explanation of gender development which was based on the process of socialisation. Eagly's social role theory suggests that the sexual division of labour and societal expectations, based on stereotypes, produces gender roles (Eagly, Wood & Diekmen, 2000:124). Since this theory assumes that gendered roles influence academic performance, it is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study. Eagly et al. (2000:117) suggest that the social role theory distinguishes between the communal and agentic dimensions of gender-stereotyped characteristics. The agentic role is characterised by attributes such as assertiveness and independence which are commonly associated with public activities, and thus, with men (Anselmi & Law, 1998:195).

Generally, women provide more direct care for and spend more time with children than their male counterparts (Meggitt & Walker, 2007:194). Mothers with babies, who are, at the same time, students, have the duty of taking care of the health needs of their children. The unequal division of both household labour and childcare, with women doing the bulk of the work, is thought to contribute to the lower academic achievement of women (Meggitt & Walker, 2007:193). In view of this, Eagly's social role theory is pivotal in explaining how gendered roles influence the performance gap between males and females.

As Eagly suggests, gender roles are closely linked with gender stereotypes. Stereotypes are "over generalized beliefs about people based on their membership in one of many social categories" (Anselmi & Law: 1998:195). Gender stereotypes have four dimensions which are: traits, role behaviours, physical characteristics and occupations. Traditional gender stereotypes are most representative of the dominant culture. Female students, like any other

member of society, are socialised to conform to the norms and values of the dominant culture. Eagly and Dickmen (2000:1180) assert that, although race and social class may not be mentioned when inquiring about gender stereotypes, most people will make assumptions about these categories. Eagly and Dickmen's study suggests that when race and social classes are specified, different gender stereotypes emerge.

Gender roles and stereotypes affect couple and family interaction (Larson & Simonis, 2005:3). Often, for example, the division of household labour is based on gender. Traditionally, women in heterosexual couples remain at home and do most of the domestic labour while their male partners work outside the home to provide the family income (Meggitt & Walker, 2007:194). Although women have increasingly joined the workforce over the past thirty years, they continue to do the majority of the household labour which causes them to lag behind in academic achievements. Eagly et al. (2000:160) studied white, heterosexual, gay and lesbian couples without children. The study found that heterosexual and gay couples were more likely than lesbian couples to divide household labour so that one partner did the majority of the housework. Lesbian couples were most likely to share domestic tasks or take turns doing the tasks (Eagly et al., 1995:126). In instances where domestic tasks are shared between couples chances are high that females in this context perform better academically than those in situations where domestic chores are left to females only. This may also apply to female university students under study.

Gender roles often become more differentiated when men and women become parents. Overall, women provide more direct care for and spend more time with children (Meggitt & Walker, 2007:194). This includes taking responsibility for the mental work of gathering and processing information about infant care, delegating the tasks related to infant care and worrying about infant health and well-being. Mothers with small children who are, at the same time, students have the duty of taking care of the health needs of the children (Larson & Simonis, 2005:4; Ford, 2002:21). The unequal division of both household labour and childcare, with women doing the bulk of the work, is thought to contribute to lower marital satisfaction for women which may cause stress (Meggitt & Walker; 2007:193). There is a lot of evidence that the overall person is a product of inherent genetic qualities and environmental factors which include both the social and geographical environments (Meggitt & Walker; 2007:194). Academic performance is heavily influenced by both environments.

Eagly's social role theory involves the symbolic interaction through the process of socialisation where the individual interacts with all environments. Haralambos and Holborn (2008:688) state that the interaction between the person (student) and the environment is used to further explain the dynamics of culture, gender and academic performance. Skinner (2009:293) defines socialisation as the process of presenting alternative channels for individual behaviour together with positive and negative sanctions which will lead to acceptance of some and rejection of others. Socialisation emphasises the influence of social groups, formal and informal, upon the personality of the individual. Haralambos and Holborn (2008:688) suggest that symbolic interaction is also based on the social interaction between the baby and its carer. Meanings arise from the process of interaction rather than simply being present and passive.

The symbolic interaction that takes place during the process of socialisation leads to gender schemas. This entails the role of cognitive organisation in addition to socialisation (Meggitt & Walker; 2007:194). Eagly's social role theory postulates that, through socialisation, children learn how their cultures and/or societies define the roles of men and women and then internalise this knowledge as a gender schema, or unchallenged core belief which is usually fixed. The gender schema is then used to organise subsequent experiences (Bem, 1993). Haralambos and Holborn (2008:93) argue that some scientists believe that variations in the behaviour and social roles of men and women can be explained in terms of hormones and brain differences. However, environmental factors also have an influence on the behaviour and personality of the individual. Maximum capacities of intelligence are basically sharpened by the social environment (Meggitt & Walker; 2007:194). An individual's academic performance is therefore influenced to a large extent by his/her social environment. In the light of the current study it is assumed that gender role socialisation which leads to the development of a gender schema has a bearing on the academic performance of female university students. This suggests that internalised beliefs such as, that males are more intelligent than females may negatively influence the academic performance of female university students. The following section discusses Feminism which is also another theory that informed this study.

1.8.3 Feminism

Feminism is an ideology which provides a direct challenge to the gendered world as well as to patriarchy, capitalism and the sexist assumptions that women's differences from men render them inherently inferior (Ford, 2002:185). Arndt (2002:30) states that feminism is a world view which opposes the existing gender relationships. It advocates gender neutrality where all people are equal regardless of sex differences. Feminists advocate equal rights and opportunities and the weakening of gender stereotypes and the replacement of these with human rights and equality (Arndt, 2002:31). They fight for the convergence of the gender gap including the academic performance gap which was the scope of the current study.

Ford (2002:19) says that feminism is a complex phenomenon. Although many feminists exhibit a commitment to absolute legal and practical equality, some feminists support separate spheres of influence. As an ideology, feminism has spawned a number of different "brands"; among them are liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, global feminism, black feminism, eco feminism, psycho-analytic feminism, lesbian feminism and gender feminism (Arndt, 2002:30; Ford 2002:20). The scope of the current study was limited to the types of feminist theories which are linked to gender roles and culture.

Feminism is an ideology that wrestles with the question of how the demands for equality and fairness can be reconciled with sex differences (Ford, 2002:19). Freedom (2001:13) suggests that the equality/difference debate originates from the biological differences which are linked to mothering. Chireshe and Chireshe (2009:100) say that feminism is a theory which is important in understanding issues that affect women. Since the current study focused on women (female university students) feminism was found to be relevant. Gender feminists believe that the root of the oppression of women lies at the intersection of biology, psychology and culture (Freedom, 2001:15). The need to realise the importance of male and female traits by gender feminists has influenced this study in that both sexes, especially women who are lagging behind in academic performance, require support to realise their potential.

Critics of gender feminism argue that associating women with caring reinforces the traditional view of women as nurturing rather than women as autonomous and strong (Ford, 2002:20). The strength of this theory is that men should appreciate that they were born from women and

were taken care of by women; hence women are powerful in their own right. Men should therefore show their appreciation of the important role of women by assisting them to succeed in their academic endeavors. Women, if given the chance, can accomplish more in both public and private spheres but especially in education where they can demonstrate their academic prowess (Lewis, 2012:2).

Liberal feminism is rooted in promoting individual autonomy and the elevation of individual rights above the common good (Ford, 2002:21). Liberal theorists believe that social systems such as politics and education can be used to promote a liberal agenda for all people (Lewis, 2012:2; Lorber, 2010:9). Thus, liberal feminism's primary goals are gender equality in the public sphere, equal access to education, equal pay, the end of gender segregation and better working conditions primarily through legal changes. Liberal feminism, for example, supports affirmative action legislation requiring employers and educational institutions to make special attempts to include women in the pool of applicants for jobs (Lorber, 2010:9). This study investigated whether inequalities in access to service provisions have an influence on the performance of female students in universities.

The Marxist-socialist feminist theory which is founded on the desire for the empowerment of women also influences this study. Good academic achievements may lead to good jobs which results in empowerment of the individual (Lewis, 2012:2). From the Marxist-socialist point of view, women are empowered by means of education or political freedom. Their academic attainments will give them independence to enjoy their lives fully. Aleman and Renn (2002:214) affirm that higher education plays a fundamental role in promoting and enhancing the progress and well-being of women and the society in general. Thus, the current study's focused on academic achievement in higher education which enhances the chances of securing good jobs, renders the Marxist-socialist theory relevant.

In contrast to other theories, Marxist-socialist feminism stresses the collective aspect of human development. It posits that men and women, through production and reproduction, have collectively created society which, in turn, shapes them (Ford 2002:24). Marxist-socialists believe that capitalism, rather than sexism, is the root of the oppression of women. Women's economic dependence on men gives them little leverage in other aspects of society. It advocates public policy that aims to redistribute wealth and opportunity. To effect this change, women have used conventional forms of political participation and lobbying for

constitutional changes which will lead to gender equality. Since the realisation of academic potential by female university students may require women's political participation and lobbying, Marxist-socialist feminism was found to be appropriate in the current study.

1.9 ASSUMPTIONS

The study was based on the following assumptions:

1.9.1 Disparities that exist in the achievements between females and males in academic performance are a worldwide phenomenon.

1.9.2 There is need to assist women with their academic performance.

1.9.3 The respondents are willing to take part in this study.

1.9.4 Determinants of academic performance can be established.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Financial constraints were considered to be the major constraint. Time was also a challenge since the researcher is a full time employee. The dual task of being a worker and a scholar was stressful.

1.10.1 Overcoming the limitations

To overcome the problem of finance, the researcher applied for financial assistance in form of a doctoral scholarship from UNISA Directorate of Student Funding. The application for the scholarship was done as soon as was possible and the researcher got a positive response. The time constraint was overcome by taking leave so as to fully devote the time to the study.

1.11 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main thrust of this study was to establish determinants of academic performance of female students at a state university in Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe. The study focused on both part-time and full-time female students of the state university.

1.12 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1.12.1 Academic performance

Academic performance is the educational achievement attained over a specific time in school, college and university (Considine & Zappala, 2002:92; Seshamani & Shalumba, 2010:3). In the present study, academic performance mean the level of achievement the female university student displays in relation to her achievement in university, or the level of achievement she gets after an official or formal education for instance Part /Level 1 results which, in this case, leads to the next level such as Part /Level 2.

1.12.2 Affirmative action

Affirmative action is a wide range of voluntary and mandatory activities in the area of education and employment which seek to promote women or minorities (Aleman & Renn, 2002:211; Fullinwider, 2002:1). In the current study, affirmative action refers to an effort that gives priority to women for enrolment in education and in employment. Affirmative action gives women an advantage when entering universities even if they have low pass rates. Affirmative action in this study also includes the quarter system where a certain percentage margin is given to women to fill vacancies.

1.12.3 Attitudes

An attitude is a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards an object, person, or situation and the ability to favour or disfavour something (Hogg & Vaushan, 2005:150). In the present study, the term attitude is used to refer to showing favour or disfavour, for example, a teacher who favours women, gives them preference.

1.12.4 Culture

Culture refers to the beliefs and practices of a society, which includes intellectual and creative products such as literature, music, drama, and painting (Williams, Seed & Mwau, 2002:4). In the present study culture refers to norms, values, beliefs and codes of behaviour accepted by a specific group of people or a society such as gendered cultural codes that influence the behaviour of female students. In this study the culture of Zimbabwe was the main reference.

1.12.5 Determinants

Determinants are factors that affect the outcome of an entity (Kasirye, 2009:1; Cheesman et al, 2006:4). In the current study, determinants refer to those things that influence the academic performance of female students such as the availability of resources, gendered cultural codes and family backgrounds of students.

1.12.6 Gender

Gender refers to the concept of maleness or femaleness which is socially constructed and basic in all social interactions. Gender is constructed during the process of socialisation (Jhally, 2009:1). Gender, in the current study, refers to attributes and behaviours appropriate to women or men and about the relations between women and men. In this study, gender also entails the manhood and womanhood attributes which are based on a specific culture and also have positive and negative sanctions attached to them.

1.12.7 Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are over-generalised beliefs about people based on their membership in one of many social categories (Kirchner, 2000:236). Gender stereotypes in the present study refer to the labels given to males or females, for instance, that women are known to be nurturing. In this study, gender stereotypes are contextualised in Zimbabwe and then referenced to other countries.

1.12.8 Feminism

Feminism is an ideology which promotes gender equality and aims to reduce the gender gap between males and females (Arndt, 2002:30). In the current study, feminism refers to the direct challenges made to existing gender disparities. In this study, feminism is both a theory and an ideology which advocates for gender equity in all areas of life including good academic performance. Those feminist theories that were relevant were considered and used in the present study.

1.12.9 Lecturer competence

Lecturer competence refers to the standards displayed by the lecturer when imparting skills and knowledge (Tope, 2012:6). In the present study, this term refers to the ability of any lecturer to impart knowledge and skills efficiently and effectively. The qualifications of the

lecturers and where they obtained them and also their work experiences were of interest to this study.

1.12.10 Resources

Resources are requirements which are needed to accomplish a task (Jantti & Cox, 2011:2). In the present study, resources are any form of supply which is useful in academic achievement such as text books and computers which are resources required by a student in order to attain good academic results. Building structures, equipment, human resources such as lecturers, administration staff and other ancillary staff were also placed under resources.

1.13 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The thesis has the following chapters:

Chapter One: The problem and its context

This chapter of the current study covers the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, significance of the study, theoretical framework, assumptions, limitations, delimitations and the definition of terms. The next chapter reviews related literature.

Chapter Two: Review of related literature

This chapter reviews related literature. The literature is presented under the following sub-headings: gender codes and the performance of females; student's family background and academic performance; academic performance and lecturers' attitudes and competencies, the influence of resources on academic performance and strategies that can be employed in order to reduce or close the achievement gap between males and females.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter addresses the research methodology. The discussion focuses on research approach and design, population, sample, instrumentation, pilot study, procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Data presentation, analysis and discussion

The chapter presents the empirical data collected from the participants. The data is presented according to the objectives of the study. The findings are discussed in relation to prevailing literature.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

This chapter discusses key findings on the determinants of academic performance of the female university students. Conclusions and recommendations are drawn of the study. The presentation of the conclusions and recommendations is done according to the research questions.

1.14 SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the background of the study, statement of the problem, sub-research questions, objectives, significance of the study, theoretical framework, assumptions, limitations, delimitations and the definition of terms. The next chapter focuses on review of related literature.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present study was to establish the determinants of academic performance of female students at a university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. This chapter reviews literature related to the determinants of academic performance of female university students. The literature is presented under sub-headings which are derived from the study's sub-research questions. The sub-headings are: gender codes and the performance of females; student's family background and academic performance; lecturers' attitudes and competencies and academic performance, and the influence of resources on academic performance. The gaps to be filled by the present study are highlighted.

2.2 GENDER CODES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Research such as (Rank, 2012:4; McKie, 2010:1; Wood, 2008:14; Hee Chee et al., 2005:1; Evans, 2003:57) has shown that gender codes have a negative influence on academic performance of female university students. Female university students are affected by the gender roles differently from men since the bulk of the roles apply to women. In many societies worldwide, the social roles of most married women are as mothers who take care of their children and husbands (Skinner, 2009:290; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:91; Jensen, 2006:4; Ford, 2002:19; Watkins, 2000:193). Such gendered roles are considered determinants of academic performance since they mostly preoccupy the female university students and severely disadvantage them. Hence, this section reviews literature on the influence of gendered cultural codes on the academic performance of female students.

Nziramasanga (1999:177) surveyed gender equity in education in view of the plight of the Zimbabwean female-child. Statistics obtained from the Nziramasanga survey indicated that the female-child lags behind the male-child in both enrolment figures and academic performance due to the gendered cultural codes which are part of the Zimbabwean culture. The survey looked at differences in performance between females and males without

including the determinants of these differences. Surveys usually do not provide detailed information on human experiences (Denscombe, 2007:37; Sidhu, 2003:111). The present study employed the qualitative design methodology to reveal detailed information on gender codes as a determinant of academic performance of female university students. Gender codes and gender bias, among other determinants of academic performance, have taken their toll on girl children's education (Nziramasanga, 1999:177). The gender roles are part of their lives such that they do not notice that the attention they give to their families and extended families reduces their academic performance to almost half of that of their male counterparts (Skinner, 2009:291; Pearson, 2007:6; Ford, 2002:19). Nziramasanga (1999:177) examined the plight of the girl child as regards to their participation in education. The present study sought to find out how the characteristics of womanhood, manhood and gender role expectations determine academic performance of female university students. The study by Nziramasanga focused mainly on primary and secondary pupils. The current study examined the plight of female university students who were mostly adults.

Omenge and Nasango (2010:327) in their study in Kenyan secondary schools on effects of socialisation as regards to gender roles on academic achievements of girls found out that there are a myriad of factors to be blamed for the low academic performance of female students. The gendered roles include domestic chores and biased upbringings that portray boys as superior to girls. This is contrary to the theory of feminism which is one of the three theories that underpin this study that advocates for equal rights and equal treatment of females and males. The results of the study by Omenge and Nasango (2010:327) also linked female students' participation in domestic roles to their low participation in class which results in low academic achievements. Similarly, a study by Rege (2003:288) on South Asian girls established that girls, during their puberty, undergo a socialisation process which trains them to be good mothers and this puts severe constraints on their schooling. The study revealed that the girls involved in the initiation mentioned above do not go to school for a period which affects their academic performance. The same applies in India. Rao (2004:140) established that when Indian girls or women try to combine schooling with home apprenticeship, the choice between work time and study time may lead to family tensions, poor performance, poor lesson attendance, and dropouts. This inevitably affects their academic performance. The girl child may have very little time to concentrate on that which pertains to her school work. The academic performance is affected in that there is not enough time for revising their school

work and also for personal study. The current study investigated whether the situation Kenyan, Asian and Indian above applies to female students at university in Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, the Shangani tribe carries out a similar socialisation process which also emphasises that the basic role of a woman is to be a mother. This has placed the girl children at a disadvantage as far as schooling and academic performance is concerned (Ngorima, 2001:4). The culture of Zimbabwe has a proverb which says "*Mushamukadzi*" meaning that women are the essence of the home. This means that the female student, as a woman, is preoccupied by the gendered roles which may negatively affect her academic performance. The present study sought to find out whether the above factors affect the performance of female university students.

Women, as presented above, have been socialised to be docile and humble and not to challenge the status quo. This is consistent with the Eagly's social role theory that stipulates that the socialisation process engraves in humans what is expected of them and the roles are then carried out without question and willingly. Most women have become contented mothers who are prepared to go an extra mile in their gendered chores regardless of the effects that it has on their academic performance (Ford, 2002:20). When married women go to work or school, their support function of servicing a personal relationship remains. Even with the support of a domestic helper, most women still have the primary role or responsibility of handling and organising most of the domestic chores and child rearing. There is a conflict between career, motherhood and marriage which affects the academic achievements of females (Shirley, 1997:102). The situation is a cause for concern since all these problems are not considered by most teachers and lecturers when they are marking assignments and tests (Walker, 2006:16).

Traditionally, fathers teach boys how to fix and build things; mothers teach girls how to cook, sew, and keep house (Rank, 2012:2; McKie, 2010:23). Children receive parental approval when they conform to gender expectations and adopt culturally accepted and conventional roles which may have severe impacts on their academic achievements (Skinner, 2009:294; Walker, 2006:16). Negative sanctions are used by parents to discourage unwanted behaviour. All of this is reinforced by additional socialising agents, such as the media and education (Chapman & Gorski, 2010:4; Fenstermaker & West, 2002:8). While the cited quantitative studies above looked at effects of societal roles and chores on the academic performance of

the girl, this qualitative study focused on determinants of academic performance of female university students at university level. The qualitative approach is advised when in search of feelings, emotions and behaviour of human beings (Gray, 2009:23). Female university students are affected by so many variables which affect their feelings and emotions that influence their academic performance hence, the suitability of the approach.

Nhundu (2007:640) established that in Zimbabwe, gender codes which affect the academic attainments of girl children are perpetuated and reinforced at school. Education means inculcating in the children a sense of humanism and developing social, moral, aesthetic and spiritual attributes acceptable by the specific culture (Girl Child Network, 2011:1; Sandhya; 2004:1). Ford (2002:19) acknowledges that gender codes exert a powerful grip on each individual and on the social, educational, political and economic systems in which we live, study and work. Similarly, Nithi (2010:6) established that most studies have found that schools, through teachers and their formal and informal organisational structures, reinforce gender stereotypes which demotivate girl children from taking certain subjects and for aiming higher in their achievements. Nithi's study was concerned about the academic performance of females which may also determine their place in all spheres of life hence, the study of gender roles. Gender codes may be a barrier that may affect the academic performance of female students and also inhibit the progress of female students and lead them to areas that do not suit their needs. The current study investigated whether the academic performance of female university students was influenced by the gender codes they acquired through the socialisation process.

There are different opinions whether observed differences in academic performance of males and of females including behaviour and personality traits between genders are entirely due to cultural or social factors, whether they are the product of socialisation, or whether they are due to biological and physiological differences (Chapman & Gorski, 2010:4; Pearson, 2007:11). Finsterbusch (2009:157) linked gender roles to poor academic performance by females and concluded that women continue to suffer career barriers due to gendered codes and/or poor educational achievements. The current study sought to establish how the gender codes influenced the academic performance of female students.

Ngorima (2001:67) studied cultural factors and the achievements of secondary school students in Zimbabwe with the focus on mathematical, social studies and science subjects. The study

revealed that cultural factors affect females more than males and this places females at a disadvantage as far as academic performance is concerned. Ngorima (2001:67) also established that Zimbabwean girls in high schools often perform badly because they have poor academic self-concepts which are the result of the African culture and the parents who give more importance to the male children and often believe that girls are not logical or quick to grasp concepts. The study attributed the problem of poor female academic attainment on the type of societal chores and sex-role expectations for females. Ngorima's study used a quantitative approach that involved questionnaires which may not be the best instruments when collecting data which include cultural aspects. The current study used in-depth interviews in order to solicit rich data from the participants. Such data is full of individual cultural experiences from the participants.

Mutekwe et al. (2012:118) studied perceptions of female high school students on gender and academic performance in Zimbabwe. The results of the study revealed that poor academic performance by female high school students is influenced by the fact that girl children are trained for domesticity. Cultural codes, social and economic factors combine to place young girls and women at a serious disadvantage that starts at home through school and extends into adulthood (OECD, 2011:6; Saito, 2011:20; Pearson, 2010:2; Eurydice, 2010:17; UNGEI, 2008:7; Watkins, 2000:155). The cited studies focused on teenage girls. The current study sought to find out if the same happens to the female students in university.

UNESCO (2003:119) suggests that differences in gender relations within and outside the household reflect societal norms and practices rather than determined choices. The facts of gender speak for themselves since it is clear that women and girls have less time to relax as compared to their male counterparts (IRIN, 2011:1; Ford, 2002:19; Watkins, 2000:196). This lack of relaxation time may lead to stress. In a similar vein, a study by Manwa (2010:4) on stress and working women in Zimbabwe revealed that women in Zimbabwe suffer silently due to gender roles to the extent that some of them are stressed to death because of the extra burdens and roles which encompass their extended families. Shirley (1997:102) argues that the attempt by females to live in both the public spheres of education and work and the private spheres of home and family is particularly complicated and potentially very stressful. Larson and Simonis (2005:4) state that women are overburdened by their traditional or gender roles, demands from the workplace or school and their own needs. Thus, the demands of gender

roles make the female student physically and emotionally exhausted which inevitably affects her participation during lectures and her academic performance. While the studies above focused on stress and women in general, this study sought to find out if the gender roles were seen as stressors particularly for female university students and how such stressors influenced their academic performance.

Rao (2004:154) studied gender equity in the education system in New Delhi and concluded that differences in educational attainments between boys and girls are due to unequal access to education. This is due to the fact that girls are overburdened by household chores that take up most of their study time. The amount of time spent at the library, in group discussions and for reading or study is reduced to almost half the time of their male counterparts (Mathias, 2009:7; UNESCO, 2003:117; Evans, 2003:101). When the female students do get time to read or study, they are tired and stressed which affects their concentration (Larson & Simonis, 2005:4). This is another example of gender inequality in education which is caused by gender roles albeit subtle and difficult to notice (Gaidzanwa, 2012:2; Ford, 2002:183; Mapfumo et al., 2002:157). It is subtle because when the female students fail to perform well, they are always to blame and very few notice that the female student is overburdened by the gendered codes. The current study sought to establish whether the same applies to female university students.

A study in African countries by Macionis and Plummer (2008:649) on the education of girl children revealed that most societies consider schooling more important for boys than for girls. The study also revealed that girls are lagging behind boys in achievement levels and that they study traditionally feminine subjects such as literature while males pursue mathematics and engineering. This implies that gender disparities are evident in primary enrolment, academic performance and school completion rates (UNGEI, 2009:4; Hellum, Stewart, Ali & Tsanga, 2007:60). This contradicts the tenets of feminism that advocate equal rights and equal access to all facets of life including education for all women. The study focused on how the society considered the education of the girl children leaving out university female adult students which was the focus of the present study.

The United Nations Educational Circular (2003:143) states that girls are disproportionately victims of intolerance, discrimination and violence in the education system which inhibits their performance in schools and colleges. Research findings of this nature raise questions

regarding the girl child as victim because of the fact that she is female. Is it about sex or gender or are the facts based on nature or nurture? Is there anyone to blame or it is natural that women have more chores or gender roles than men? The current study sought to establish if the debate applies to the university female students in Zimbabwe.

A study by Bonga (2010:2) on determinants of poor academic performance in Masvingo peri-urban secondary school children in Zimbabwe found that school subjects were gender-typed on the basis of perceived ability to master them. Most of the participants in the study agreed that "science is good for boys" because they believed that generally boys perform better than girls. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between family environment, culture and academic performance. While this study may not give the reasons for such a relationship and how it affects academic performance, most studies revealed similar results that boys generally perform well in mathematics and science compared to girls (Chirimuuta, 2006:6; Ngorima, 2001:3; Watkins, 2000:155). The current study sought to find out whether what is happening to the girl child as regards to the influence of gender codes also happens to female university students.

A study by Dorsey (1989:350) on academic women at the University of Zimbabwe revealed that gender disparities and their effect on the academic performance of female students are the main determinants of academic achievements of female university students. While Dorsey's study was based on working women, the current study involves a sample of female university students. Seshamani and Shalumba (2010:4), in their study on gender and the financing of higher education in Africa, revealed evidence that shows that there are differences in academic performances between male and female university students in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole. The reasons for such a disparity were due to gender roles. Zembar and Blume (2009:215) confirmed that while girls continue to exhibit higher verbal ability throughout high school, they begin to lose ground to boys after the fourth grade on tests of both mathematical and science ability due to domestic chores. In his study of gender and women in education, Saito (2011:15) submitted that females admitted to higher education in African countries were, in most cases, opting for subjects that were considered less intellectual such as the arts and that this emphasises that the difference in educational attainment due to gender differences. A general study of the participation of female students and their academic performance in universities in developed countries is of interest to this study since the level of

participation helps to explain why there is a bottle neck (fewer females in higher education) in universities and also forms the basis of the current study in explaining the academic gap and the plight of women in higher education and real life. In addition, research from the Caribbean on the determinants of academic performance of university students by Cheesman et al (2006:9) revealed that gendered roles for female students causes them stress and anxiety which, in turn, has a negative impact on their academic performance.

Studies conducted by Chapman and Gorsik (2010:4) on academic performance discrepancy between male and female students revealed that, since 1991, the proportion of young women enrolled in college in the United States doing arts subjects has exceeded the enrolment rate for young men. They also confirmed that the gap has since widened because these subjects are regarded as of lesser difficulty for those affected by gendered codes and genetic factors. Gaddis (2007:1) says that women now make up the majority, fifty four (54) per cent, of the ten point eight (10.8) million young adults who are doing arts subjects enrolled in colleges in the United States. Similarly, in most European countries, the academic performance gap between males and females continues to persist despite efforts to close it (OECD, 2011:40; Eurydice, 2010:3). The current study sought to establish whether gendered codes influence academic performance of female university students in Zimbabwe.

Table 2.1 (modified to present only the data relevant to this study) shows the Advanced ("A") Level results of students in Higher Education by subject and gender for 2006/07 and 2007/08 in the United Kingdom. The presented percentages are for full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students at home and overseas students who are in higher education institutions. Subject data is classified using the Joint Academic Coding System (Haggar, 2013). The following "A" level results of the comparison between male and female students are relevant to this study which sought to investigate the determinants of academic performance of female students at university level. The captured results were used to gauge the level of performance of university female students in general. The aim of capturing this data on performance was to compare the results and then establish the academic gap between male and female students.

Table 2.1 U.K. "A" level results per gender (2006-2008)

Subjects	Percentages per Year and Sex			
	Males 06/07	Males 07/08	Females 06/07	Females 07/08
Business and administrative studies	15.8	16.1	11.2	11.5
Subjects allied to medicine	5.5	5.4	18.2	17.7
Education	5.4	4.9	12.0	11.7
Social Studies	7.5	7.5	9.3	9.5
Biological Sciences	5.9	5.9	7.7	7.8
Creative art and design	6.2	6.3	7.2	7.3
Engineering and technology	11.7	11.8	1.7	1,7
Languages	4.5	4.5	7.0	6.9
Computer science	8.3	7.8	1.7	1.4.
Historical and philosophical studies	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.0
Law	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.0
Physical sciences	4.8	4.9	2.6	2.6
Medicine and dentistry	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.7
Architecture, building and planning	4.1	4.4	1.4	1.5
Mass communications and documentation	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1
Mathematical sciences	2.1	2.1	0.9	1.0
Agriculture and related subjects	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8
Veterinary science	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3
Combined	4.5	4.6	5.3	5.5

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency: From Social Trends 2009 and 2010: Crown Copyright Haggar (2013)

Table 2.1 reveals that female high school students excelled in education, subjects allied to medicine, biological sciences, creative art and design, social studies, languages, law, combined science, veterinary sciences, medicine and dentistry, mass communication and documentation and agriculture-related subjects. Male high school students were seen excelling in business and administrative studies, engineering and technology, computer science, historical and philosophical studies, physical science, architecture, building and planning and mathematical sciences. The reasons for these differences between females and males are genetic differences and students' personalities (Wood, 2008:13). The present study focused on gendered codes and not on genetic differences and personalities as determinants.

A study conducted by Haile (2012:1) in Ethiopia established that Ethiopia is of one the

developing countries which have females lagging behind in academic performance. Haile also found out that Ethiopia has a very low representation of females at all educational levels, especially at "A" level which affects progression to higher levels. The cause was mainly poor academic achievements as a result of gender codes. Although the growth rate in the enrolment of female university students has been satisfactory, higher education institutions in Ethiopia do not experience such a growth and this result in a bottle neck type of education system (Haile, 2012:1). The present study sought to establish whether the Ethiopian scenario also applies to Zimbabwe.

Hellum, Stewart, Ali and Tsanga (2007:147) state that women in Botswana generally fall short of high academic performance and qualifications compared to men since most women are employed at domestic level as housemaids or shop assistants. This may be shaped by cultural and societal factors which classify fields of study and careers as "male" or "female". In a similar vein, Ford (2002:205) raises a question why women willingly accept this "double burden" of carrying the majority of the housework and child care on top of full time jobs which may affect their academic performance. The current study sought to find out whether the same situation mentioned above applies in the Zimbabwean context.

Given that the family is the key player in shaping the expected behaviour and future of children, there is a need to study how the family background influences the academic performance of female university students. This is in line with the transactional theory which is the major theory that informed the current study which argues that nature (genetics) and nurture (the family environment) play a pivotal role in academic performance. The next section focuses students' family background and academic performance

2.3 STUDENTS' FAMILY BACKGROUND AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Research on the factors that determine or influence the academic performance of students has attracted the interest and concern of teachers, counsellors, psychologists, researchers and school administrators (Uwaifo, 2008:121). In these studies, the school-related factors were emphasised while paying little attention to the student's family background. The present study sought to find out how family background affects academic performance of the female university students. The family background is basically a general description of a family

situation, for example, the size of the family, religion, social class, economic status, location, generic attitudes, norms and values (Dimbisso, 2009:17; Colorado, 2007:4). Uwaifo (2008:122) posits that the family background lays the psychosocial, moral and spiritual foundation of the student and that the family environment influences academic performance of the student. The nature of the family background is of great concern to every educational practitioner as the question of where the students come from influences the academic life of the student (Uwaifo, 2008:122; Colorado, 2007:5; Fuligni, 2006:360).

Dimbisso (2009:17) studied students on variables explaining what caused poor academic performance for females. The study concluded that the family characteristics (family background) which included variables such as parents' level of education, home ownership, size of the family, income and occupation of the family members such as parents have an influence on academic performance of female students or girl children. The study used closed questionnaires which may not give room for any self expressions of the participants and this resulted in data which may lack a lot of valuable information. The current study used focus group discussions so as to understand the experiences of the participants. Patton (2002:104) argues that focus group discussions are best used when you want to understand participants' experiences. Ngorima (2001:2) also established that the academic performance of a female Zimbabwean adolescent is influenced by the parental level of education and attitudes towards education and their expectations of the girl child. The family structure and its make-up is the cornerstone of every person, any social structure and the society in general (Mathias, 2009:5; Colorado, 2007:4). Students obviously come from a family and the type of the family cannot be separated from the student's achievements. The nature of the family is influenced by so many factors such as norms and values of the family, the religion, the social status, economic status and geographical location (Seedam, 2008:2; Salbi, 2003:2; Watkins, 2000:195). The cited studies above looked at samples of young children and teenagers while the population of adult females was left out. The current study focused on the female university students.

Structurally, the family can be intact or disrupted or broken (Colulota, 2007:35; Lauer & Lauer, 2000:286). An intact family is the family that has both parents staying or living together with their children while a broken or disrupted family has one parent while the spouse is no longer part of the family for reasons such as divorce and death (Colorado, 2007:4; Fuligni, 2006:360). The structure of the family influences the support the female

university student gets from the family members (Seedam, 2008:1; Salbi, 2003:2). The type of the family background is influenced by both internal and external circumstances such as hereditary or inherited characteristics, economic and social factors which, in turn, influence the female student's personality and achievements (Watkins, 2000:39). Partnership studies show that when students have a rich family background and have assistance from educated parents, they do well in school. The importance of the family is echoed by the transactional theory that informed this study which equates the family background to the soil that determines the quality of the plant (female student). This study looked at the family background as a critical factor that determines academic performance. Many students who live in single-parent households and may have parents who do not speak English may have problems in their academic endeavours (UNESCO, 2003:144). Students from single-parent homes often find it difficult to find time to receive help from their parent.

The significant others such as parents are the first socialising agents who affect how the child reacts to life situations and perceives academic achievement (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:93). Broken families, single parent families and child-headed families can be traumatic for children and children from such backgrounds may have emotional problems which may hinder good academic performance (Kano, 2012:6; Uwaifo, 2008:124). Thus, the family background plays a pivotal role in building the character of the person which includes female university students. Hence, the current study sought to establish the influence of the Zimbabwean female university student's family background on her academic performance.

Stevenson and Baker (2012:1356) state that parents, through the day-to-day management of the child's school work or career, can influence the educational outcomes of the child. Adekola (2012:281) revealed that students whose parents are educated and are rich have a better chance of achieving their academic potential because of motivation, direct contact and encouragement from their parents than students whose parents are uneducated and poor. This implies that educated parents can adapt themselves to the educational needs or demands of their children. Topor, Keane, Shelton and Calkins (2010:190) say that educated parents, particularly mothers, who are aware of the importance of education usually have a positive attitude towards their children's education and are able to positively influence their children's academic performance. Almost all the influence of the mother's education is on the child's school performance (Mathias, 2009:5; Uwaifo, 2008:122). The present study sought to find

out whether family background affects the academic performance of female university students.

The family background largely determines the attitudes and behaviour of the significant others of the child such as parents, siblings, relatives and peers, which, in turn, affect the academic attitudes of the child (Kano, 2012:8; Watkins, 2000:39). The level of education of the mother and all other family members determine the family's attitudes towards education and this has an influence on the academic performance of the scholar (OECD, 2011:5; Finsterbusch, 2009:24; Shirley, 1997:102). The significance of parental attitudes towards education and school appears to be linked to the family background. The attitudes of the parents are therefore believed to influence the relationship between the parents and the school (Topor et al., 2010:190). Most of the studies cited above are quantitative in nature hence, they may have lacked the details that were likely to have given more insight on the family background as a determinant of academic performance. This study used the qualitative approach in order to solicit high quality information that gave insight on the influence of the family background on academic performance of female university students.

Educated parents from a fairly good background value the education of girl children and also value the academic performance (Rao, 2004:141). Educated parents consider the time girl children spend doing the household chores and are aware that heavy involvement in these activities disadvantages them and affects their performance (Kano, 2012:6). Such parents may also employ a domestic helper to make sure that their children to do their home work and have time to study. This greatly increases their time for access to the library, group discussions and reading or study time (Rao, 2004:141). The current study sought to find out if the same is applicable to female university students.

Robertson, Novelli, Dale, Tickly, Dachi and Alphonce (2007:1) established that parents who are well educated usually establish a parent-teacher relationship that can provide additional adult reinforcement to encourage student achievement. Parents who have high level of education usually have a higher involvement in a child's early education and this was consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance through to tertiary level (Topor et al., 2010:183). Parents' educational level also convey attitudes about education to their children and these attitudes are reflected in the children's classroom

behaviour and academic performance and in the teacher's relationship with the child and the parents (Stevenson & Baker, 2012:1356). The current research sought to find the influence of the family background on academic performance of female university students.

A study by Xu and Gulosino (2006:346) on the effect of teacher-parent relationships in China revealed that the relationship between the teacher and the parent is complementary since both have important roles in the academic achievement of female university students. The study also revealed that most students from poor family backgrounds lack teacher-parent relationships. In addition, some students from native families have difficulty in getting help with their homework because there is not an English speaker at home to offer assistance. The importance of the home environment or family on pupil or student's academic performance cannot be overestimated since the family is the source of basic inspiration. It is where the student gets the necessary encouragement and social support required to attain good academic performance.

Fuligni (2006:2) states that that parent-teacher relationship are based on the characteristics of the family which is good and sound and lead to positive student-teacher relationships which are related to positive social and academic outcomes in school. Fuligni's study is consistent with the transactional theory that underpins this study which stipulates that the relationships within a family and outside the family are intricate but are reflected in the pass rate of the children in that family. Fuligni's finding on parent-teacher relationships also demonstrated that increased cognitive competence of the student was related to higher achievement test scores and that the quality of the student-teacher relationship was significantly related to the child's academic performance, measured by both standardised achievement test scores and the child's classroom performance (Topor, et al., 2010:193; Considine & Zappala, 2002:91).

The norms and values of the family are formed from the culture and background of the family (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:130; Kirchner, 2000:236). The family prioritises values that it considers important. Such values may be assets, education, culture, behaviour, relationships, their history and their names they want to preserve or protect (Watkins, 2000:35). If a student comes from a family that has norms and values which instil self-centeredness whereby members do not consider the interests of the whole society, the student may portray deviant behaviour. Such deviant behaviour may be problematic as the student may fail to mix well

with other students and this may negatively affect the academic performance of the student concerned. When the family does not prioritise education, the student may have negative tendencies when it comes to do school work, which is the scope of this study, since this influences academic performance. The present study sought to establish how family norms and values affect the performance of female university students.

The norms and values of the family are influenced by the broader society and religion (Seedam, 2008:2). Adekola (2012:280) reveals that besides cultural factors, religious experiences provided by the parents, particularly those which are linked with books and reading, influence the academic performance of Nigerian female secondary school students. Adekola's study also established that belief systems help to achieve good academic performance of female secondary school students. Family belief systems may be used as a base which supports or help to achieve good academic performance through the interventions of the deity. Norms and values of any given family are influenced by the broader society and religion (Seedam, 2008:2). The present study sought to establish if the above applies to female university students in Zimbabwe.

Many families are influenced by their religious beliefs which form the basis of their relationships, attitudes towards life and towards education (Seedam, 2008:2; Salbi, 2003:2; Watkins, 2000:195). Hellum et al. (2007:348) state that the tension between religious beliefs and culture may influence the family's attitudes towards education. This can deny women and girls equal enjoyment of their human rights and this, in turn, can affect their academic performance. This is contrary to the theories of feminism that underpin this study. Feminist theory seeks to achieve gender neutrality where females and males are treated the same and given equal educational opportunities. The current study regarded it as a debacle when the religion is anti-education and does not consider it important and also when the religion is pro-education it is in this case considered important. Religious beliefs are pivotal in shaping the minds of the students and also serve as a basis of their attitudes towards education and academic performance (Colulota, 2007:35; Salbi, 2003:3).

The social status of the family either enhances or diminishes the self esteem of any child (Watkins, 2000:35). In Zimbabwe, the social status of a family is determined by the kingship status, wealth and level of education (IRIN, 2011:1; Chirimuuta, 2006:6). A family with a

good social status attained through good academic performance encourages female students to achieve good academic results in the community (Omenge & Nasango, 2010:333). Students who come from families with a sound social background tend to be treated with more respect, have self confidence, perform better in school and are often independent (Chapchieng & Kiboss, 2004:55). The study sought to establish whether the same applies to the female university students since they also come from different social backgrounds.

A study by Kasirye (2009:9) on the determinants of learning achievement in Uganda established that the socio-economic status of the family has an influence on the self esteem of the child. A poor family's structure leads to anxiety which may, in turn, affect the concentration span of the student which then affects his/her academic performance. Similarly, female university students who are poor are the most vulnerable among other students (LaFraniere, 2005:2). Persistent poverty may cause stress, anxiety and worry and these may lead the female student into prostitution which, in turn, affects the academic performance of the female student. Children from low-income families often do not receive the stimulation and do not learn the social skills required to prepare them for school (Ferguson, Bovaird & Mueller, 2007:3). Low stimulation of the student may be attributed to the family's socio-economic background and more significantly, correlate to their achievement and academic performance (Andrade & Carvalho, 2006:8; Chapchieng & Kiboss, 2004:51). The present study sought to establish whether the same affects female university students in Zimbabwe.

The social status of the family influences how people relate and treat the individual, for instance, female students who have a high social status stand a chance of being supported by lecturers to achieve good academic performances (Chapchieng & Kiboss, 2004:55; Lauer & Lauer, 2000:286). The family's socio-economic background also determines the emphasis that it puts on education that it shares with female university students and their parents. The effects of the social status of the family on the female university student cannot be overestimated since women, in most cases, are concerned about how they are valued (Seedam, 2008:2). Such worries negatively influence the concentration span of the female students during lectures resulting in low academic performance. The current study sought to establish the influence of the family's economic status on the academic performance of female university students.

The economic status of the family is closely linked to the social status of the family. The

family's economic status determines the provision of basic needs and wants and then concerns itself with academic performance (Fuligni, 2006:3). LaFraniere (2005:1) established that Ethiopian girl children's educational attainment was affected by family poverty. The study revealed that the home situation has a great influence on the student's psychological, emotional, social and economic states, all of which influence academic performance. The study of education and the girl child in Ethiopia by LaFraniere (2005:1) revealed that Fatima, an Ethiopian school girl, dropped out of school in the first grade when her father refused to buy her pencils and paper. For many girls in Africa, education is an uphill battle. They are enrolled as learners and students but there is no concern about how they struggle to cope with the dual task of being a woman and a scholar. The effects of the social status of the family status on the female university student cannot be overestimated since women in most cases worry much about how people see and value them (Seedam, 2008:2). Such worries influence the concentration span of the female students during lectures and the academic performance.

The family location such as farm settlement, in rural or urban areas is largely influenced by the family background by affects academic performance since the level of exposure is according to where one stays (Adekola, 2012:281; Uwaifo, 2008:123). In urban centres, the economic status and the level of privacy of the family is, in most cases, linked to the density of the location, whether high, medium or low. The terms linked to the density of the location reflect the level of wealth of the family and privacy. Children who grow up in high density areas have more opportunities to associate with people who influence their behaviour in negative ways such as truancy which affects academic performance (Colulota, 2007:33). This is consistent with Eagly's social theory which states that the behaviour of people reflects their responses to their social obligations within a given environment. Wealthy families stay in low density suburbs which influences the confidence and self esteem of the students to perform well. Locations that are associated with good ethics and moral behaviour affect the personality of the individual (Uwaifo, 2008:121). The current study sought to establish whether the family's geographical location can influence the academic performance of female university students.

Watkins (2000:38) revealed that almost 226 million children from poor family backgrounds in the developing world have diets which are poor in either proteins or vitamins. This implies that the economic status of the family determines the nutritional status of the student which is

among the most important determinants of academic performance and educational attainment (Watkins, 2000:39). Like malnutrition, micro-nutrient deficiency in children can negatively affect their learning abilities, academic performance and increase their susceptibility to infection (UNESCO, 2003:13). This means that the physiological needs of the scholar need to be given the attention they deserve since they affect the performance of the child in school (Considine & Zappala, 2002:91). The current study sought to establish whether the family background is seen as influencing the academic performance of female university students.

The family background also determines the provision of basic needs and wants of the student (IRIN, 2011:1; UNESCO, 2003:13; Watkins, 2000:39). Maslow's Hierarchy of needs presents the needs of all human beings, including female university students, the participants of this study. These needs obviously should be met by the family of the student. The poor family may fail to provide all the needs and wants on the hierarchy but the basic needs have to be met to sustain life and to enable the students to perform well (IRIN, 2011:1; Ebhohimen, 2006:212; UNESCO, 2003:12). If the student comes from a poor family background, the family may struggle to meet the basic needs and wants which in turn affects her academic performance. The level of participation during lectures is also determined by the satisfaction of basic needs (OECD, 2011:40; Alutola, 2007:31). It is impossible to pay full attention during lessons or lectures and achieve good academic results when suffering from hunger.

Figure 2.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of Needs illustrates the needs of the individuals according to the rank of importance for the individual, showing the basic needs for life at the bottom and the wants at the top. The family background is seen to determine how the needs of the university female student are met. The level of support the female university student gets from the parents is influenced by the family background (Lacour & Tissington, 2011:522; Watkins, 2000:39). The family is responsible for providing food, security, love, respect and moral standards (Considine & Zappala, 2002:90). Families may not be able to provide all of the above. If a family fails to provide basic physiological needs to a child in school, college or university the child (female university student in this case) is unlikely to aspire for higher academic

achievement which is a high level need. This will negatively affect academic performance of the student.

A study on the effects of the family structure and parenthood on the academic performance of Nigerian university students by Uwaifo (2008:122) revealed that the home environment and how the family meets the needs of female students influence their academic performance. The findings by Uwaifo (2008) relates to the transactional theory that underpins this study which considers the family as the ground which supplies the plant (the female student) with the food it requires to grow and flourish. The present study sought to establish if the Nigerian scenario is applicable to Zimbabwe.

Studies in Zimbabwe, for example, by Bonga (2010:2) suggest that the educational and social status of the parents determines the provision of basic needs which have an influence on the academic performance of the scholar. Female students are the most affected by poverty since the culture of Zimbabwe give preference to male education (IRIN, 2011:1). UNESCO (2003:12) states that when the girl child is poverty stricken, she may resort to promiscuous behaviour for survival. Children from poor families, in most cases, lack educational goals and are unable to participate in education due to anxiety (Ebhohimen, 2006:212; Alutola, 2007:31). In Botswana, girls from broken families are the most disadvantaged regarding their level of academic performance since they have the dual task of working at home and attending school. This situation is worsened by poverty (Hellum, Stewart, Ali & Tsanga, 2007:62). The present study sought to establish if the above scenario applies to Zimbabwean female university students.

Haegeland, Raaum and Salvanes (2005:14) explain that pupils from advantaged backgrounds tend to attend schools with better facilities that have a higher teacher-pupil ratio. Being raised in a low-income family often means having fewer educational resources in addition to limited access to health care and nutrition which could contribute to lower academic performance (Lacour & Tissington, 2011:522; OECD, 2011:40; Johnson, 2006:2). Many children who are poor, regardless of race, come from homes that often lack stability, continuity of care, adequate nutrition and medical care creating a level of environmental stress that can affect the child's development and academic performance (Cheesman et al., 2006:5; Pedrosa et al, 2006:8). As a result, these children enter school with a low word knowledge that can affect their language skills and they may lack experience with books and libraries. These

experiences have an influence on their performance through to tertiary education. The present study focused on how family background is perceived with regards to the academic performance of Zimbabwean female university students.

The literature above has indicated that family background is a key determinant of university female students' academic performance. The next section discusses lecturer attitudes and competences as other key determinants of university female students' academic performance.

2.4 LECTURERS' ATTITUDES AND COMPETENCIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Teachers' and lecturers' self-efficacy, interest, attitudes, qualifications, experience and competence have of late been under scrutiny in relation to pupils' academic performance (Berns, 2010:233; Cross, 2009:55; Tella, 2008:16). Teacher quality is an important educational issue that is connected to student achievement, and that teacher qualifications and competence are important components of teacher quality (Okpala & Ellis, 2005:380; Darling-Hammond, 2000:110). Similarly, Chireshe (2011:268) established that there are a number of important personality traits such as being well organised that results in a lecturer being effective thereby promoting high academic achievement among students. A good teacher is defined by his/her academic achievements, professional conduct and personality traits. Mohanty (2007:151) researched teachers and lecturers in India and established that teachers who produce good results love their jobs and love their students. Academic achievement and professional efficiency and also personality traits determine his or her image as a teacher. From the literature cited above, one can infer that whatever facilities are available, whatever content is taught, whichever environment the school is situated and whatever kind of pupils are in the school, the important and vital role of the teacher or lecturer cannot be overemphasised (Matoti et al., 2011:141; UNESCO, 2003:13).

Lecturing entails engaging pupils as active learners to introduce changes in their pre-existing knowledge and skills (Tope, 2012:5). Thus, good academic achievement is a combined effort of the teacher and the learner. This is consistent with the transactional theory that informed this study which stipulates that the transaction between the seed (genetics of the student) and the grounds (environment such as the physical and social ambience of the university) produce good results. Effective lecturers believe that they can make a difference in children's lives and

therefore they teach in ways that are reflected in good academic achievements (Tope, 2012:5; Tella, 2008:22).

Matoti et al. (2011:140) suggest that lecturers need to develop qualities that enable them to make intelligent decisions in order to handle ambiguous and challenging situations when lecturing. When the teacher is able to present data in a more effective and efficient manner, good academic performance can be achieved. Bhatt (2007:70) states that in the layman's language, self-efficacy can be regarded as self-confidence towards teaching or lecturing. Matoti et al. (2011:141) argue that it is crucial to understand teachers' beliefs about their own effectiveness, known as lecturer efficacy, as it helps to explain many instructional decisions that they make especially when assessing students' work which in turn also affects academic performance. The current study sought to find out the influence of lecturer competence on academic performance of female university students in Zimbabwe.

Self-efficacy is one of the major ingredients for producing good pass rates. It is the belief that lecturers or teachers can exercise personal control over their thinking and emotions in order to cater for the needs of both male and female university students. If students are to attain good academic performances there must be adequate teacher or lecturer skills and knowledge as well as support and resources (McMillan, 2000:6). It is pivotal not to under- or over-react when dealing with students, no matter their gender. This is consistent with feminism which advocates for equal treatment of male and female students. The present study sought to find out how teacher competence and attitudes influence academic performance of female university students.

Chireshe and Shumba (2011:114), in a study on teaching as a profession in Zimbabwe, revealed that the lecturer's self confidence and motivation is a basic requirement for effective teaching and for meaningful learning to take place. Effective teaching and meaningful learning are pivotal in achieving good grades. Good teaching motivates and engages students in ways that are consistent with theories of development, learning and motivation (McMillan, 2000:2). The study by Chireshe and Shumba focused on teachers' motivation while this study focused on lecturers' competencies in relation to female university students' performance.

The study on the effects of teachers' competence on academic performance of high school students of Lagos State by Tope (2012:7) revealed that successful lecturers and teachers have

a vast repertoire of instructional strategies and techniques that reflect their knowledge of their subject and that show a gap in knowledge between the lecturer and the learners. The study, unlike the current study, used closed questionnaires to collect data hence it may have lacked details on other factors that influence the competence of the lecturers. This study used in-depth interviews to collect detailed information on teacher competence as a possible determinant of academic performance of female university students.

Education policy makers and researchers have shown an interest in the relationship between student performance and teacher qualifications (Tella, 2008:17). The policy makers have what they identified as an "acceptable gap" in knowledge between scholars and their teachers. This acceptable knowledge gap allows the teachers to handle and manage the learner's educational needs such as attainment of good pass rates for their students. The current study sought to find out whether there is an acceptable knowledge gap between the lecturers and students and also whether this gap influences academic performance of female university students.

It is intuitively obvious that teachers and lecturers must possess professional knowledge of the subject matter they are teaching in order to effectively impart skills and knowledge (Tella, 2008:17; McMillan, 2000:2). Professional knowledge may cause teachers and lecturers to feel comfortable in teaching the areas of specialisation since they will be able to effectively impart skills and knowledge. If the teachers are allocated subjects other than their specialist subjects to teach, their morale and the level of performance may be reduced. Haegeland, Raaum and Salvanes (2005:17) state that unskilled teachers have a negative effect on academic achievement in all subjects but that this is more significant in mathematical and physical education. The present study sought to establish if lecturer competency is viewed as influencing female university students' academic performance.

Nziramasanga (1999:177) revealed that the main challenge of the government of Zimbabwe is to overcome the traditional, stereotyping and other practices that impede equal access to education and academic achievement of girls and women in education at all levels. The outcome from Nziramasanga's survey may imply that teachers' attitudes towards girl children are likely to affect their academic performance. Hee Chee et al. (2005:2) assert that women and men are known to differ in their college experiences and may therefore experience different outcomes. Educational outcomes are one of the key areas influenced by the attitudes of teachers (Ferguson et al, 2007:702; Robertson et al., 2007:7). Similarly, Uwaifo (2008:124)

states that the attitudes of the teachers towards girl children may inhibit good academic achievements. A teacher's competency enhances his/her ability to create an environment that is fair, understanding, and accepting of diverse students, ideas, experiences and backgrounds (Tope, 2012:5). The teacher's interest in a particular subject usually goes a long way to improve the performance of his/her learners (Tella, 2008:19). The present study sought to establish if teacher attitudes are perceived as having an effect on the performance of female university students in Zimbabwe.

Macionis and Plummer (2008:642) established that competent American teachers move from inner city schools to the more prosperous suburbs where they earn better salaries. Thus, highly qualified teachers seek for greener pastures and the poor schools face the problem of having demotivated teachers. Without motivated teachers or lecturers, the goals of education may never be achieved (Tella, 2008:19). The majority of teachers and lecturers in Zimbabwe have low morale and motivation since they face various challenges such as low salaries and a lack of resources (Chireshe & Shumba, 2011:116). Lack of motivation resulted in an outcry by teachers and lecturers over their low salaries which are almost below the poverty datum line. These low salaries may lead to negative attitudes towards their work. The current study sought to find out if lecturers' attitudes towards female university students affect their academic performance.

WHO (2012:4) established that African children tend to be concentrated in low achieving, highly segregated schools which lack high quality teachers. In general, students from developing countries are more likely to come from low-income households meaning that they are more likely to attend poorly funded schools based on the distracting patterns within the school system. These schools do not attract highly qualified teachers and are therefore unable to produce high pass rates (FAO, 2012:1; Watkins 2002:193). In Zimbabwe, private schools, in most cases, have low teacher-pupil ratios which are lower than the government stipulated ratio. This enables the teacher to manage the individual students in order to enhance good academic performance. On the other hand, schools in lower-income districts tend to employ teachers with lower qualifications, have fewer educational resources and have big classes which are difficult to manage. The study by WHO focused on children in schools. This study sought to find out if the same applies in tertiary institutions.

Good teachers cannot effectively operate without resources hence need to study the influence of resources on academic performance. The next section discusses the influence of resources on academic performance of the female university students.

2.5 INFLUENCE OF RESOURCES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Considine and Zappala (2002:91), in their study on factors influencing educational performance of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Sydney, discovered that the lack of resources due to the socio-economic status of the family and the country have a serious effect on the achievement of good results. The study also revealed that the provision of resources by both parents and the government has a strong relationship with the academic performance of the students and that this is well established in sociological research. Throughout the world, the education system receives the biggest share of the government expenditure, but the difference in the quality of service and provision of resources is determined by the economic status of the country (Watkins, 2000:40). The current study sought to find out the influence of resources on academic performance of the female university students in the Zimbabwean context.

In Zimbabwe, the unavailability of resources, among other determinants of academic performance, has taken its toll on the education of girl children (Nziramasanga, 1999:177). Research has shown that both an adequate supply of teachers and of material resources greatly influences students' academic performance (UNESCO, 2003:10). As such, the provision of resources cannot be overestimated because it is pivotal for the attainment of good academic achievement (WHO, 2012:5; Psacharopoulos, 2002:2). Ebhohimen (2006:6) argues that resources are the inputs in education while academic performance is the output and that this means that, without the resources (input), there is very little academic performance (output). The study by Cheesman et al. (2006:9) in the West Indies revealed that financial constraints are among the main determinants of academic performance since, without financial resources, there will be no procurement of material resources used for the process of teaching and learning. The cited studies are consistent with the transactional theory which underpins this study that considers that the nature of the ground (how rich it is) determines the quality of the product. The current study looked at the resources, such as finances since they represent how fertile the ground (the institution) is in order to produce the best yields (good academic achievements). The present study sought to see if the effects of unavailability of resources

apply in Zimbabwe.

Jantti and Cox (2011:2) state that the government of the United States of America is committing millions of dollars annually to the acquisition of and subscription to library and information resources to meet the research, teaching and learning needs of students. This allows students in America easy access to reading materials which influence their academic performance. Jantti and Cox (2011:2) further note that some resources such as reading materials and textbooks have a significant impact on academic performance of the students while others have lower effects. This means that without textbooks and other reading materials, students and teachers will experience a shortage of resources that affects teaching and learning in their classrooms. Similarly, Lacour and Tissington (2011:528) found out that the lack of resources due to poverty in the United State of America has a direct influence on teaching and learning and this affects academic performance. Governments for developing countries, including Zimbabwe, are, due to poverty, facing the challenge of providing enough resources to positively impact the teaching, learning and academic performance of the female students. The present study sought to establish whether the American scenario above is applicable to Zimbabwe.

Ferguson et al. (2007:3) posit that it is well documented that poverty decreases a child's readiness for school through aspects of poor health, poor home life, schooling and neighbourhoods. These are some of the six poverty-related factors which are known to impact child development in general and school readiness in particular. Provision of resources which affect academic performance such as libraries is pivotal for the achievement of good academic results. In a period of economic turmoil, resource scarcity and increased competitiveness in the attraction and retention of students, the ability to demonstrate the value gained by utilising library resources is becoming increasingly important in order to achieve good academic results (Jantti & Cox, 2011:1). The current study sought to find out the influence of library resources on academic performance of the female university students.

Macionis and Plummer (2008:642) in their study of the funding of education in Japan revealed that the Japanese government invests heavily in the education of students who perform well in examinations while students who perform poorly are pushed out of the education system. This implies that, although the education system in Japan is heavily sponsored, it caters for the intelligent only and leaves the less intelligent out of the system.

This has an impact on the female students who are usually lagging behind in academic performance. The general aim of education globally is to impart knowledge and skills to all scholars irrespective of their intelligence levels (FAO, 2012:1; WHO, 2012:5). For teaching and learning to be effective, it should be fully sponsored. Resources play a pivotal role in achieving teaching and learning goals such as good pass rates. Since the current study focused on the academic performance of female university students which were likely to be influenced by availability of resources the issue of resource provision was one of the issues that were considered.

Ferguson et al. (2007:2) conducted a study that found out that poverty remains a stubborn fact of life even in rich countries such as Canada. Their research confirms that poverty has a negative influence on student behaviour, academic achievement and retention in school. The study focused on the impact of poverty on educational outcomes of Canadian students and revealed that procurement of resources and the salaries for teachers is determined by the economic status of the country. The study also revealed that educational outcomes of students are one of the key areas influenced by the provision of resources which is consistent with the transactional theory that informed the current study that states that the provision of resources influence the educational outcomes. Without resources there will be very little meaningful teaching and learning which results in low academic achievements. Provision of resources is a difficult task in developing countries due to the high level of poverty and this affects enrolment figures and academic performance of female university students (Ferguson et al., 2007:2).

The World Bank Report (1988:2) commenting on the decline of spending on education by a number of governments, realised that a number of players, including Zimbabwe, contributed to the provision of resources in schools and colleges. Jantti and Cox (2011:2) also state that it is vital to have adequate human resources in terms of teacher quality for the teaching of all subjects in the school curriculum. Assuming that necessary facilities are adequately provided, the environment is conducive to learning, the curriculum satisfies the needs of the students and the students themselves are motivated to learn, learning cannot take place without the presence of the teacher (FAO, 2012:2). Thus, the current study sought to establish the influence of the education funding systems on academic performance of female university students.

Gaidzanwa (2012:1) criticises limited budgetary allocations for the education sector, suggesting that this not only affects the quality of education but also defeats the achievement of gender parity in education. This is because women and girls are more likely to drop out of school than men and boys. The present study did not look at the general effects of lack of resources on education but the influence of resources on the academic performance of female Zimbabwean university students.

Watkins (2000:154) says that, at the global level, the gender and academic performance gap in primary, secondary school and college enrolment is narrowing. However, the rate at which it is narrowing in developing countries is slow due to poverty and poor academic performance. Ford (2002:190) found out that, throughout the world, girls are likely to perform badly and leave school early due to many reasons. The economic factor tops the list. Financial constrains is a major factor that inhibits good academic performance since the payment of fees may bar the student from school until fees have been paid. The student may also lack the money to buy exercise books and text books.

FAO (2012:2) carried out a study to find out why developing countries are lagging behind in fulfilling the education for all millennium goals. The study by FAO established that the lagging behind was due to lack of resources and financial constraints. Developed countries blamed "political will" which may be either that governments are not willing to put more resources into education or they may face challenges such as a lack of resources. Resources, both human and material are pivotal in achieving educational goals for the government, the parents and the students. This is consistent with the transactional theory which underpins this study that says that it is the institution or the university environment which should supply the necessary ingredients for the students to achieve good results. The current study sought to find out how resources influence the academic performance of the female university students.

The availability of resources in schools is mainly determined by the education funding systems. In developing countries, this includes parents contributing the larger percentage through levies, fees and in kind (UNESCO-IBE: 2006/07). The Government of Zimbabwe contributes very little in terms of infrastructure, equipment and consumables (Zvobgo, 1999:30). Most of the rural primary schools in Zimbabwe do not have electricity and other resources required to address the educational needs of all students in order to achieve good results (UNESCO-IBE, 2006/07). Support facilitators, time, materials, instructional aids and

equipment are needed to address the diverse educational needs of students leading to good academic performance. Haegeland et al. (2005:18) established that, to improve on quality and quantity of resources, parents must assist in the provision of resources. Addressing these needs precedes the good academic performance of female university students. Since the provision of resources is critical in the achievement of good academic results, the extent to which resources influenced the academic performance of female university students was one of the focus areas of the present study.

The major concern of most governments in developing countries is the demand for more and better schools, the need to relate curriculum to the needs of the child and the environment, the need for instructional materials, training in vocational and technical skills and the problem of preparing African children in schools and colleges to be the productive future citizens (Saito, 2011:19; Wood, 2008:22). This cannot be fully accomplished without the aid of competent lecturers and teachers. The quantitative studies above compared the academic achievements of students in schools with adequate material resources to those in schools with inadequate material resources (FAO, 2012:1; Hungi, 2011:21). The present study used the qualitative method of collecting data. The advantage of the qualitative method is that it allowed the collection of detailed information from participants.

The promotion of good academic achievements in education requires integrated strategies of resource provision at all levels, from the family, community, local and national government and also the international community (Watkins, 2000:191). This implies that the allocation of funds towards the education system should involve all stakeholders. Ebhohimen (2006:4) states that problems of budgetary allocation at ministerial level regarding how resources should be allocated and shared between educational departments is a national concern. The distribution of available funds within the education sector becomes problematic when the resources are insufficient and when the exercise is done by a few individuals who may be biased. This is especially true distribution of resources is a challenge especially when there is a scramble of resources at the institution such as at college level because priorities differ from institution to institution and this inevitably affects the teaching, learning and academic performance of students. The current study sought to find out if the same applies to female university students.

Zimbabwean primary schools are finding it difficult to provide quality education which helps to improve academic performance of the female students as most schools, especially rural schools, survive on public assistance (Kapungu, 2007:2l; Nziramasanga, 1999:173). Practical subjects which are equated to life skills are the most affected since they require resources and equipment for pupils to gain skills (Mavhunga, 2009:33; Gwarinda, 2001:41). Effective teaching and learning is based on equipment and consumables and teachers also need realia to demonstrate concepts and skills (Watkins, 2000:156). It is not possible to impart skills and attain good academic results and knowledge without resources hence the need for proper funding strategies. Researches mentioned above focused on the effects of resources on school children. The present study sought to find out if the supply of resources also affects female university adult students.

Kapungu (2007:23) says that, it is critical to bear in mind the importance of material resources to teaching and learning, adequate instructional aids or media should be provided for the teaching of all subjects in order to increase students' performance in the subjects. Teachers can be frustrated without adequate supplies of materials needed to teach their subjects. It is therefore essential to provide adequate and relevant materials for teaching and learning not only for practical subjects but for all other subjects in the secondary school curriculum to attain a good pass rate (Gwarinda, 2001:41). Gwarinda's observation implies that lack of resources affect subjects in different ways with practical subjects the worst affected and this affects the academic performance of the female university students.

Both the supply of material resources and the quality of teachers are intimately related and affect the academic achievements of female students (Haegeland et al., 2005:15). Adequate supply of teachers and material resources greatly influenced students' academic performance as revealed by most studies that schools which have adequate material resources obtained a mean score which was significantly greater than that of schools without adequate material resources (Gwarinda, 2001:41; Watkins, 2000:191). There are significant statistical differences in the scores of students in schools with adequate material resources and the scores of students in schools with inadequate material resources. Statistical differences may not give an accurate representation of the facts on the ground compared to facts obtained through in-depth interviews (Denscombe, 2007:170; Neuman, 2006:22). Thus, this current study adopts of the qualitative design.

Haegeland et al. (2005:15) found out that in both the public discussion and in the research literature, it is argued that attending a school with limited resources is likely to be particularly harmful to low performing students. On the other hand, a positive school environment has a strong relationship to students' ratings of their overall school satisfaction, students' self-esteem and academic performance (Hee Chee et al., 2005:5). Due to a shortage of resources and a lack of adequate schools, pupils in rural Zimbabwe are often required to travel long distances between home and school. This creates fears for parents, especially concerning the girl child. This may increase the gender gap and academic performance gap in education which is the thrust of this study. Female students are the most affected since they may lack the resilience needed to overcome the issue of walking long distances (Kapungu, 2007:21; Watkins, 2000:193). The present study sought to find out how resources are seen as influencing academic performance of female university students.

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the literature related to the sub-research questions of the study. The literature revealed that genetic factors and the social environment, among other factors, determine academic performance. The literature was presented under the following sub-headings which were derived from the study's objectives: gender codes and the performance of females, student's family background and academic performance, academic performance and lecturers' attitudes, female competencies and the influence of resources on academic performance. How the literature is related to the study was discussed. The next chapter presents the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present study was to establish the determinants of academic performance of female students at a university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. This chapter presents the research methodology. Aspects discussed include: the research design, population and sample for both pilot and main study. Data collection instruments, namely, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, data collection procedures, data analysis, pilot study, main study, validity, reliability and ethical considerations are also discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Gray (2009:131) defines a research design as the overarching plan for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:125) also define a research design as the strategic, tactical and practicalities of the research. Van Wyk (2011:3) further defines the research design as the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problem to the pertinent (and achievable) empirical research. This implies that the research design is there to effectively address the research questions on academic performance of female university students. Cohen et al. (2011:21) argue that it is critical for researchers to give way to methodological pragmatism in addressing research questions. This implies that the chosen paradigms should be the best and employed in the most suitable way in order to answer the research questions in a practical and compatible manner. The research design is derived from the research problem and leads to the research methods such as sampling, data collection and analysis (Van Wyk, 2011:2). In this current study, a qualitative approach and a case study design were used to establish the determinants of academic performance of female university students. The qualitative approach which was used in the study is explained below.

3.2.1 Qualitative approach

A qualitative approach is an approach that attempts to understand social reality and must be grounded in people's experiences and understanding of their social reality (Gray, 2009:22). Denzin and Lincolin (2011:5) define a qualitative approach as an approach having an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured in terms

of amounts that are difficult to quantify. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996:35) also state that the qualitative approach is a method which attempts to understand and interpret what exists at present in the form of conditions, practices, processes, trends, effects, attitudes and beliefs as they are perceived by the actors. Similarly, Denscombe (2007:75) views a qualitative approach as an approach that emphasises subjectivity, description and interpretation and deals with people's perceptions and meanings, attitudes and beliefs, and feelings and emotions. The researcher found the qualitative approach to be more suitable for the study of academic performance of female university students since the data which were obtained from both the female university students and the lecturers was difficult to quantify because it dealt with feelings, beliefs, attitudes and emotions. Gray (2009:24) also defines a qualitative approach as the study of the "life world" human experiences.

The qualitative approach tries to paint a factual and accurate picture of the situation as it unfolds in the natural setting (Cohen et al., 2011:46; Denscombe, 2007:75; Neuman, 2000:122). This approach is normally employed when studying naturalistic phenomena (Merriam, 2009:15; Patton, 2002:104). The present study focused on the determinants of academic performance of university female students in real life situations which is a naturalistic phenomenon, based on the real life situations of the female students that occur naturally hence the choice of the qualitative approach.

Patton (2002:105) notes that the researcher's experiences and insights are an important part of the enquiry in order to understand the phenomenon under study. The researcher in qualitative research is interested in how the participants interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2009:5). The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to probe deeply the female university students and the lecturers' responses to gather more in-depth data about their experiences and insights regarding their academic performance. The qualitative approach revealed the determinants of academic performance of the female university students from the point of view of the lecturers and the female students themselves.

Denscombe (2007:84) posits that the qualitative approach considers the experiences of the individual as significant data in their own right. Similarly, the present study considered the experiences of the female university students and lecturers as significant data. The world of the female university students, like all other worlds, is socially constructed and subjective. The qualitative method was found suitable for this study mainly because it describes, clarifies,

analyses and interprets conditions, situations and aspects of education (academic performance) and students' behaviour as they exist and as interpreted by the participants. In its broadest meaning, the qualitative approach is a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experiences taken at face value, and one which sees behaviour as determined by the phenomenon of experience rather than by external objective and physically described reality (Sidhu, 2003:110; Neuman, 2006:122). This study sought to gather data on direct experiences of the female students under study, hence the qualitative approach was most appropriate.

The central question of the qualitative method is: "What is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?" (Best & Khan, 2003:255). This study was based on the experiences of the female university students and their lecturers in everyday life and it is through them that facts are established hence the suitability of the approach. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996:600) also assert that the qualitative approach is the study of the world as it appears to individuals, in this case, the experiences of the participants in this study.

Sidhu (2003:111) proposes that studies which deal with human behaviour are best studied qualitatively since it is difficult to quantify human behaviour. Since the current study explored the determinants of academic performance of the female university students, the qualitative approach was appropriate as it involved a close examination of feelings, emotions and attitudes of the female university students and lecturers. Data obtained using the qualitative approach from cultures and human experiences are soft data which is difficult to quantify (Sidhu, 2003:111; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:62). Soft data is difficult to handle statistically hence the need to study it qualitatively (Neuman, 2006:222). The qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because the inquiry was seeking to address issues that affect human beings, which were difficult to quantify. The use of the qualitative approach in this study was an in-depth way of unveiling human behaviour in relation to academic performance. Although many researches on academic performance are mostly quantitative in nature (for example, Cheesman, Simpson & Wint, 2006:5; Pedrosa, Dachs, Maia, Andrade & Carvalho, 2006:8; Johnson, 2006:2; OECD, 2011:40), the current study suited the qualitative approach since it explored female university students and lecturers' perspectives and experiences as advocated by Pedrosa et al. (2006:8) who view the qualitative approach as the best approach when

investigating human experiences from the point of view of participants.

A qualitative approach examines a small population and probes deeply to analyse interaction between factors in order to obtain a clear picture of the phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2011:219; Neuman, 2006:308; Best & Kahn, 2006:93; Sidhu, 2003:110). This research studied a relatively small sample in order to probe deeply into the determinants of academic performance of the female university students. Denscombe (2007:97) states that the qualitative approach prefers to concentrate its efforts on getting a clear picture of the things as they are directly experienced by people. The current study was determined to establish the clear picture of the phenomenon under study, namely, what influences the academic performance of female university students at a state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe hence the suitability of the qualitative approach.

The case study design which was used in the current study is discussed in the following section.

3.2.1.1 Case study design

A case study design examines a social unit as a whole and probes deeply to analyse the interaction between factors (Best & Kahn, 2006:93; Neuman, 2006:308). Haralambos and Holborn (2008:794) define a case study design as a detailed examination of a phenomenon. The main benefit of using a case study design is that the focus is on one or a few instances which allowed the researcher to deal with the subtleties and intricacies of complex situations. It was appropriate for the current study to adopt a case study design in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation and the participants taking part in the study. The determinants of academic performance of female university students is a complex phenomenon which requires the researcher to deeply probe and be immersed in the real social situation. Denscombe (2007:38) states that the case study design works best when the researcher wants to investigate real life situations in depth. The case study design helped to bring out an in-depth understanding of the determinants of academic performance of the female university students.

Studies focusing on society and culture in a group, a program or an organisation typically espouse some form of case study design as a strategy (Marshall & Rossman, 2008:55). Female university students are a specific group at a specific organisation hence the suitability

of a case study design. According to Denscombe (2007:36), the great strength of a case study design is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work. Female university students in the institution of higher learning were a group of individuals who were in a setting and had peculiar attributes which needed to be studied.

The study of the determinants of academic performance of female university students was done in a natural setting focusing on everyday situations. Nichmias and Nichmias (1995:146) also assert that a case study design involves an observation of a single group or event at a single point in time in a natural setting. Thus, the case is the situation, group, organisation or the specific problem. In the present study, the specific group studied was the students and their lecturers in a specific university situation which was unique and affected their social life, hence, the case study design.

In a case study design, the researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit. This could be a person, a clique, a school or a community (Cohen et al., 2011:20). Gibbs (2007:160) views a college or a school as a social organisation in its own right. The present study was conducted with an individual university community. The case study design is most suitable for studies that describe in detail what goes on in a particular activity or setting (Cohen et al., 2011:19; Gray 2009:14). In this case, the extent to which determinants of academic performance creates learning gaps that influence the female university students was investigated at a state university in Masvingo Provence, Zimbabwe. Similarly, the case study design enables the researchers to make a thick description of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2008:175). The case study design revealed the determinants of learning gaps that affected the female university students.

The study of human behaviour is complex in nature and requires a careful analysis of events and incidents which help the researcher to understand why people react and behave the way they do. Thus, the case study design was used because the researcher was directly involved in the research process and was able to take note of the determinants of academic performance of female university students in their natural setting. Qualitative researchers often place great emphasis on the importance of direct involvement by the researcher so as understand the perspective of the respondents (Upadhya & Singh, 2010:36; Sapsford & Jupp, 2006:112). Changes in academic performance were also noted in order to check their impact on the

determinants. Gray (2009:389) suggests that case study designs provide the opportunity to use data collection tools which collect detailed information such as in-depth interviews and focus groups. Since this study sought to collect detailed information about the determinants of the academic performance of female university students, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were employed.

3.3 POPULATION

Research population refers to the pool or group of people where the research sample is selected (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2009:272). The population for this study comprised all the Part/Level Two to Four female university students at the institution's four faculties and all the lecturers who taught the female students.

3.3.1 Sample and sampling procedure

The quality of the research study not only stands or falls by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted (Cohen et al., 2011:143; Marshall & Rossman, 2008:61). This implies that sampling decisions are central, contextual and should be done early in the overall planning.

The current study focused on the determinants of academic performance of the female university students because female students had unique problems which were different from those of their male counterparts. Research has shown that females are the second most vulnerable group after children (Saito, 2011:18; Watkins, 2000:193). This scenario prompted the study and also the reason for focusing on female students. The sample selected for the study consisted of 25 female students and 5 lecturers (3 females and 2 males) who taught the female students.

The present study used convenience sampling technique to select students and lecturers. Convenience sampling or the accidental or opportunity sampling, as it can be called, involves choosing the nearest individuals who were willing to participate in the study to serve as respondents (Gray, 2009:153; Cohen et al., 2011:155). Gray (2009:152) says that, in convenience sampling, the researcher deliberately selects the respondents against one or more traits to give what it is believed to be a representative sample. The convenience sampling was appropriate for both the students and lecturers so that lecturers and students of various

backgrounds were included in the research in order to solicit data which included as many variables as possible that determine academic performance.

Since convenience sampling is appropriate to select unique cases that are especially informative (Bogdan, 2007:143; Neuman, 2006:222), participants were selected because they were information rich and illuminative, that is, they offered useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest. The lecturers were included in the research because they were familiar with the academic performance and the general well-being of the female students. Lecturers who were concerned about the welfare of their students had some knowledge of their backgrounds. The nature of the sample required a careful selection that was convenient in order to cater for the details of the specialised sample.

3.3.2.1 Sampling of the participants for the pilot study

The sampling process of the female university students was done after a familiarisation tour which was done to get a general overview of the numbers, age range, family backgrounds of students and their time tables. A total of 25 female university students were selected. Four students were from the Faculty of Education, two from each of the two departments, Curriculum Studies and Educational Foundation, were chosen. Two students from each of the faculty of Commerce, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences were selected. The chosen students were from part two to part four. Part one students were omitted in all cases because they were in the process of settling down in the new environment. All the female students who were chosen for the sample were forthcoming. Two lecturers, who were teaching the chosen students and were readily available and willing to participate, formed part of the sample. The qualitative approach chosen required only a few participants for an in-depth study as advised by Gray (2009:24). The sample for the pilot study was not part of the sample of the main study. The following section presents instruments used to collect data for the present study.

3.4 INSTRUMENTATION

In this qualitative case study, in-depth-interviews were used with female students and lecturers. Focus group discussions were also used with the female students. Focus group discussions were the first to be conducted in order to obtain the general information and then followed by in-depth interviews so as to collect more in-depth information. McMillan and

Schumacher (2010:201) suggest that focus group discussions are important in obtaining general background information about a topic of interest. The main advantage of combining the two data collection tools was that in-depth interviews allowed for the collection of confidential information while group discussions catered for the general issues which required deliberations among the participants. These two instruments also gave room for checks and balances of the data collected. Johnson and Reynolds (2011:1) posit that along with in-depth interviews, group discussions comprise one of the main forms of data sources for interpretation and analysis in qualitative research. The following section presents focus group discussions.

3.4.1 Focus group discussions

Not all qualitative research focuses on individual biographies or, indeed upon the minutiae of deeply personal moments, but also on focus group discussions in order to explore specific sets of issues in educational settings (Pole & Morrison, 2003:39). Silverman (2006:177) views focus group discussions as useful tools for collecting data in a case study design. Similarly, Fraenkel and Wallen (1996:461) argue that focus group discussions are made up of a small group of people, usually between four and eight, who sit together and discuss a series of questions under the direction of a moderator. The moderator for the focus group discussions in this study was the researcher.

Pole and Morrison (2003:39) explain that focus group discussions are useful for examining how knowledge, and, more importantly, ideas, both develop and operate within a given cultural context. Denscombe (2007:177) suggests that grouping individuals with the aim of trying to solve a common problem or a case justifies the use of focus group discussions in case studies. In view of this, the current study employed focus group discussions in order to collect information from grouped female university students regarding determinants of academic performance of the female university students.

The issues that affected female university students demanded a joint effort by the female students. Focus group discussions in the current study were conducted in groups of five female university students and took about one and a half hours; the time depended on the issues that needed clarification. Focus group discussions are flexible and can be used at any time during a research program (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:20).

Silverman (2006:181) states that the advantages of focus groups over one-on-one interviews include: their provision of a "way of collecting data quickly from a number of participants in a relatively short time" hence, its suitability for this study as the collection of data was done at a short period of time. Similarly, Gay and Airasian (2008:218) also assert that the focus group discussions allow the researcher to collect as much information as is possible from a number of people at the same time. In the current study, much data was collected in a relatively short period of time during the focus group discussions since there were five groups of five university female students in each group which meant that, instead of interviewing twenty-five individuals, only five groups were involved. Silverman (2006:181) adds that focus group discussions are more "naturalistic" than interviews in so far as they are "closer to everyday conversation". The researcher adopted the focus group discussions which are closer to everyday conversations to enable the female students to freely discuss their experiences in relation to determinants of their academic performance.

Upadhya and Singh (2010:36) suggest that focus group discussions are very informative and are best for behaviour investigation. Individuals may forget some valuable information whereas, during discussions, participants may remind one another of facts. The female university students under study reminded each other on gendered issues affecting them. Focus group discussions are useful when examining how ideas are developed in a cultural context (Pole & Morrison, 2003:34). Information related to culture that determines academic performance was explored when participants were exchanging their ideas during focus group discussions. The female university students shared their experiences in a friendly manner and, at the same time, much valuable vast amounts of data were collected from them.

The focus group discussion data collection method has some disadvantages such as that some people may be wary of discussing personal issues in front of other people. Denscombe (2007:181) suggests that people may be reluctant to disclose thoughts on sensitive, personal, political or emotional matters in the presence of others. The researcher countered such a problem by adding a sense of humour during the discussions. Silverman (2006:180), on the other hand, maintains that focus groups "are well suited to exploring 'sensitive' topics and in the group context may actually facilitate personal disclosures". The researcher facilitated personal disclosures by encouraging participants to be open-minded and liberal in their views. Focus group discussions in this study were used as a platform for female university students

to socialise and as a forum to air their views on determinants of academic performance in a natural and friendly environment.

Denscombe (2007:183) adds another dimension to the use of focus group discussions by stating that recording the discussion during a focus group discussion may be challenging as speakers may talk at the same time and suggests that the researcher has to make sure that naturally dominant personalities do not control the proceedings. In order to overcome this, the researcher ensured that every participant had a chance to say something by reminding the participants that all the points of view were important. In-depth interviews are the focus of the next section.

3.4.2 In-depth interviews

Marshall and Rossman (2008:55) posit that a study focusing on individual lived experiences typically relies on in-depth interviews. As a formal discussion between the interviewer and the person chosen specifically for the discussion, the individual interview is one of the most widely employed methods in qualitative approaches and case studies (Wiersma & Jurs, 2008:207). Boyce and Neale (2006:3) describe in-depth interviews as qualitative approach techniques that probe deeply to discover information from the point of view of participants. The in-depth interview, or conversation with a purpose, was the tool used to solicit data from five lecturers and twenty five female university students since it allowed a person-to-person discussion in a natural manner. An in-depth interview is the best tool used to collect data from individuals in a natural way (Best & Khan 2003:268; Boyce & Neale 2006:2; Neuman, 2006:272). Data was collected from both female university students and lecturers in a relaxed atmosphere in order to make the interview as natural as possible. Stages for conducting in-depth interviews were adopted for this research.

Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2012:3) state that there are stages of conducting in-depth interviews such as thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing and verifying. The first two stages used by the researcher in the formation of the interview schedule were as follows:

Stage 1: Thematising. In this stage, it is important to clarify the purpose of the interviews. This was done by writing an overview statement or a preamble which covers the purpose of the study.

Stage 2: Designing. An interview guide that includes the key topics and questions is the formalised plan for collecting information. The interview guide should be designed to help the interviewer focus on topics that are important to explore, maintain consistency across interviews with different respondents, and stay on track during the interview process. The schedule was designed according to the research objectives to ensure that all the areas were addressed and covered.

Guion et al. (2012:2) state that in-depth interviews are excellent tools to use in case studies because they use an open-ended, discovery-oriented method which allows the interviewer to deeply explore the respondents' feelings and perspectives on a subject. Female university students in this study have emotions and feelings towards what is happening in the world around them hence the need to study the determinants of their academic performance. In the current study, in-depth interviews gathered detailed information about the thoughts and behaviours of the participants which were captured and used to explore new issues in depth (Pole & Morrison, 2003:34). Boyce and Neale (2006:3) state that the primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. The researcher in this present study solicited as much data as possible from the university female students.

Pole and Morrison (2003:35) argue that skillfully done interviews offer the flexibility not only to explore and recognise issues but, just as importantly, to develop new insights into themes emerging during interviews. The flexibility of in-depth led to an increased insight by the researcher into the female students' and lecturers' thoughts, feelings, and behaviour on the determinants of academic performance. Nichmias and Nichmias (1995:208) point out that nonverbal behaviour, "the body movements of the organism", consists of motor expressions such as facial expressions that convey a whole range of emotions and feelings including fear, sadness, surprise, anger, joy and disgust. During data collection the researcher gathered information linked to gestures such frowning when sensitive issues were discussed as an indication of emotions. These expressions were valid indicators of social and psychological processes which led the researcher to certain truths. Important expressions which gave insight were recorded on the schedule by the researcher.

Interviews are usually conducted in a relaxed atmosphere since people usually feel more comfortable having a conversation as opposed to filling out a survey (Wiersma & Jurs,

2008:207). The in-depth interviews for the present study were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere. The relaxed atmosphere was created by starting with the general issues which allowed the participants to ease into the conversation. The other advantages of in-depth interviews are that they are flexible and adaptable to all situations and interviewees (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:210). For this study, they were conducted in a flexible way to cater for the individual needs of the female university students and lecturers.

The disadvantage of the in-depth interview is that the interviewer may ask leading questions to support a particular point of view or that the interviewers' perceptions of what was said could be inaccurate (Barbour, 2008:73). Boyce and Neale (2006:3) agree that the major shortcoming of in-depth interviews is that they are prone to bias. Every effort was made by the researcher to phrase questions which did not lead to a specific answer and also attended to details when participants were expressing their views. Pole and Morrison (2003:35) state that interviews may be tiring or onerous for participants. Given that in-depth interviews are usually time consuming and can be tiring, the researcher involved a relatively small sample and allowed for short breaks with refreshments where necessary. Time was allocated for conducting in-depth interviews to ensure that they did not become too long and enough time was also allocated to transcribe and also for analysing of data.

Van Wyk (2011:11) suggests that the way to include all the aspects of the study is to ensure that interview questions cover the following types of questions: exploratory, descriptive, causal, evaluative and historical questions. All factors and variables should be considered when formulating questions for an in-depth interview (Bryman, 2006:97). As such, the interview schedule for the present study was a combination of exploratory, descriptive, causal, evaluative and historical questions. These types of questions were designed by the researcher to cover the what, how, why, the outcome and what led to the happening. The exploratory questions cover the what, for instance, what are the key gendered codes which influence the progress of female students? The descriptive questions sought to find out how these gendered codes influence academic performance. Causal questions addressed the why part such as why is it that these gendered codes mostly affect females and not males?

The evaluative questions seek an understanding of the outcome and the historical questions reveal the past and present situations to understand the trends (Van Wyk, 2011:11). The researcher considered the types of questions as the guide in formulating questions which were

seeking for the necessary details. Gray (2009:376) suggests that to ensure that the interview process is effective; the construction of the interview schedule should contain questions drawn from the literature and from the pilot work with respondents. This entails phrasing the interview questions based on the literature studied by the researcher. The questions for this study were also formulated in order to cover all the research objectives for the study. The wording of the interview questions was clear and was not demanding the use of the dictionaries in order to get the meaning of the words. The following table shows interview items which were based on review of related literature for the current study.

Table 3.1: Examples of items obtained from the literature study by authors

Author(s)	Items
FAO, 2012:1; Hungi, 2011:21; Saito, 2011:19; Wood, 2008:22	Cultural issues and female students' academic performance
Watkins, 2000:155; Chee et al., 2005:2	Types of gendered cultural codes and their influence on academic performance
IRIN, 2011:1; UNESCO, 2003:12; Lacour & Tissington, 2011:522; Watkins, 2000:39	Belief systems and attitudes of family members towards educating females and their influence on academic performance
Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:93; Watkins 2000:39; Gaidzanwa 2012:2	The level of education of family members and academic performance of the female students
Okpala & Ellis, 2005:380; Darling-Hammond, 2000:110; Mohanty, 2007:151	Lecturer attitudes towards female students and academic performance
Tope, 2012:5; Tella, 2008:22; Uwaifo, 2008:124; Nziramasanga, 1999:177; Hee Chee et al., 2005:2	Influence of lecturers' incompetence on academic performance of the female students
Williams et al., 2002:1; Snowman et al., 2009:361	Provision of basic needs on academic performance of the female students
Watkins 2000:39; Williams et al., 2002:1	Availability/non-availability of facilities at the institution and academic performance

The interview guides (see Appendices A to C) had section A on demographic data and sections B to F which consisted of open-ended questions which were used to solicit data to

answer the five research questions. The in-depth interview schedule covered six distinct sections as shown below:

Section A: demographic data

Section B: questions on the nature of gendered cultural codes and how they influence academic performance of the female university students.

Section C: questions on the effects of the students' family background on academic performance.

Section D: questions on the influence of lecturers' attitudes and competencies on academic performance of the female students.

Section E: questions on the effects of resources on academic performance of the female students.

Section F: questions on how the academic performance of the female students could be improved.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Of the two instruments used, focus group discussions were the first to be held. Focus group discussions provided general information on issues that affect female university students. In-depth interviews were then held. These were meant to cater for private and confidential issues such as those related to internal private family issues. In-depth interviews were also used to make a follow up on issues which lacked clarity during focus group discussions. Focus group discussions were conducted following a schedule. The researcher tried to be consistent with the tone and voice projection to every participant. This was done because the tone and voice projection may convey a message of approval or disapproval of what the participant has said. The researcher was composed and calm throughout the process of data collection.

The female university students were given the platform to voluntarily share their attitudes, interests, feelings, concerns and values about the phenomenon and the researcher added humour during the discussions. Denscombe (2007:178) states that group discussions use the social psychology aspects of group behaviour to foster the ability of participants to get

involved, speak their minds and respect the views of others. During the study, the researcher should be self analytical, composed and consider his/her tone of voice in order to convey authenticity and trustworthiness (Gay & Airasian, 2008:209). This idea was adopted to build trust between the interviewer and interviewees. Focus group discussions were recorded to capture the actual words of the participants as far as possible. The advantage of using the audio recording device was that the stored information could be repeatedly referred to and ideas from the participants could be used as they were presented.

In-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher. The researcher did not necessarily follow the exact order of questions in the interview schedule and prompting questions that were not included were followed up for a deeper understanding of the specific issues presented. The researcher collected data using the interview schedules. As in focus group discussion an audio recorder was used to collect interview data. The data were transcribed.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Gibbs (2007:73) defines data analysis as the careful scrutiny of data, line by line, to uncover new concepts and novel relationships and to systematically develop categories in terms of their properties and dimensions. Data were analysed in narrative form and thematically. A discourse analysis was used in order to reveal the reality from the participants' point of view. Denscombe (2007:308) posits that a discourse analysis reflects, generates and reinforces data from the participants. David and Sutton (2004:19) state that a discourse analysis covers semiotics to narrative analysis. Coding of data was done following the research objectives. Emerging themes were also coded to cater for all the views of the participants. The next section discusses the pilot study.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

It is always essential that any classification scheme or instrument that is developed is evaluated or tested prior to its application. This may mean the conducting of a pilot study (David & Sutton, 2004:40; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996:160). David and Sutton (2004:195) define a pilot study as a small scale trial of the proposed procedures that seeks to detect any problems so that they can be remedied before the proper study is carried out. Woken (2002:1) also defines a pilot study as a pre-study of the main study or a miniature version of a project which was done a few weeks before the main study. This implies that the pilot study was

conducted using a small segment of the population which was not involved in the main study. The researcher was obliged to test the instruments in order to refine them for the formal collection of data. The pilot study was conducted using the same instruments and procedures that were used during the main study.

Gray (2009:251) suggests that piloting is very essential in that it helps to ensure that all tools and procedures match the original research objectives. Woken (2002:2) suggests that a pilot study is done to provide the researcher with ideas, approaches, and clues that may not have been seen before conducting the pilot study. Such ideas and clues increase the chances of getting clearer findings in the main study. Woken (2002:2) further states that the pilot study reduces the number of anticipated problems, because of the opportunity to redesign parts of the study to overcome difficulties revealed by the pilot study. Pre-testing of the instruments through a pilot study was conducted and any necessary amendments were done which were linked to the questioning techniques, clarity of questions and the timing of the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions was adjusted to suit the situation.

The main purpose of the pilot study was to evaluate the validity and reliability of the instruments and the planned procedure. The pilot study was also conducted so as to 1) reduce or eliminate technical errors and address any technical matters; 2) to improve on clarity, timing and lengths of the interviews; 3) elimination of ambiguities in the open ended questions for the interviews; 4) to generate the categories and themes; and 5) to allow for a preliminary analysis of data to check whether the set questions answer the research questions. Questions which were similar were merged in order to avoid repetition. For example, there were similar questions covering cultural beliefs and societal beliefs which were merged since cultural beliefs are largely societal beliefs. Cohen et al. (2011:119) posit that the importance of the pilot study cannot be over-emphasised since it tests the feasibility of the study. Overall, the pilot study helped in reducing unnecessary problems associated with planning details and procedures of the main study. The results of the pilot study were similar to those of the main study.

3.8 MAIN STUDY

The main study was conducted after the pilot study was done. The main purpose was to gather data which answered the main research question.

3.8.1 Sample

Participant selection depends on the purpose of the study (Ary et al., 2009:273). Apart from a consideration of purpose of study with participant selection, the number of the participants selected depends on the objectives of the research (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011:197). Twenty-five female students in both the full-time and part-time programmes from the four faculties, namely, the Faculties of Commerce, Education, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences, were selected. The distribution followed the same method and ratio as that of the pilot study and was as follows: Commerce 5, Education 10, Natural Sciences 5, Social Sciences 5 and 5 lecturers, one from each faculty except for education which had two lecturers. Twenty-five female students and five lecturers who were willing to participate were the chosen sample. The sample for the full-time students consisted of resident and non-resident students. The sample comprised different female students representing important characteristics such as resident status and enrolment status.

3.8.2 Sampling procedure

The sampling exercise was carried out after the researcher had obtained written permission from the college authorities. The selection process for the study was the same as that of the pilot study. As already mentioned earlier on, the students and their lecturers were conveniently sampled; five of the lecturers who were forthcoming or were willing to participate automatically become part of the sample. The convenient sampling techniques were used on the lecturers since only those who were available and willing to participate were chosen. Since the Faculty of Education is the largest faculty at the university and has both part time and full time students, a majority of participants was selected from this Faculty to allow for a reasonable representation of the population. Ten students were selected from education while five were selected from each of the other three faculties. The reason for selecting participants across faculties was to cater for both the full-time (conventional) and the part-time (open systems) learning experiences.

3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Denscombe (2007:144) states that the credibility of data collected and the inferences drawn from data are based on the trustworthiness of the researcher. Thus, the validity and reliability of data refers to the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from data which is based on how trustworthy the researcher is. Researchers should avoid deception by operating in an honest and open manner with respect to investigations (Gay & Airasian, 2008:209; Denscombe, 2007:144). The researcher was aware that deception is a betrayal of good ethics and that there is no need to misrepresent the dealings with the research participants. Creswell (2009:175) states that participants' interpretation of phenomenon is critical in qualitative research. Hence, great cognisance of trustworthiness was taken into account throughout the research process. To enhance the validity and reliability of the research, the researcher emphasised earnestness and honesty during the research process.

Participants confirmed whether the researcher had accurately recorded and described their experiences, opinions, attitudes and beliefs in this present study as they were given the opportunity to validate the findings. To ensure validity and reliability, respondent validation was very important and considered in this study so that their voices and views could be heard. One participant from each faculty was involved in the validation process to check whether their views were correctly captured and to ensure that the concerns of the female students were captured in the findings. The exercise was done in a transparent manner with the emphasis on trustworthiness. The level of data representativeness was also checked and confirmed by the female students in order to ensure that the data was free from the influence of the researcher.

The use of excerpts and vignettes was employed in order to capture the real words of the participants in the study. The researcher used an audio recording device to ensure accuracy and the triangulation of collected data using various ways of capturing data. Cohen et al. (2011:180) state that validity in qualitative research entails conducting the research in a natural setting and that the data collected should be socially situated. The study was conducted in a natural setting where students lived or studied so that meanings were derived from the context they happened to be in. Cohen et al. (2011:180) explain that data is socially situated hence the need to understand and present data from the participants' point of view and not the researcher's point of view. Voice recorders were used in order to capture the

actual words of the respondents and important non-verbal communication was recorded on interview schedules.

Validation of the instruments was also done by experts in gender studies. The supervisor also assisted in ensuring that the items on the instruments addressed the topic under investigation.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers should be aware of the ethical responsibilities and legal constraints that accompany the gathering and reporting of information to protect the rights and welfare of the participants involved in the research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:136). Ethical considerations in this study focused on those issues that infringe on the participants' rights. Leedy and Ormond (2001:56) claim that most ethical issues fall into one of the four categories such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and protecting participants from harm. However, some scholars suggest that getting permission and being honest with all participants are the important ethical issues.

The following ethical issues were considered:

3.10.1 Informed consent

One of the most important ethical rules governing research on humans is that participants must give their informed consent before taking part in a study (Plous, 2013:1). Informed consent entails more than obtaining a signature on a form but also requires that investigators educate the participants to ensure that they can reach a truly informed decision about whether or not to participate in the research. Informed consent was sought from the participants to avoid deception (David & Sutton, 2004:18). The purpose and details of the research was explained to the participants before they participated. The participants signed consent forms (see Appendix D) after the researcher's explanation. Participants in this research were informed that participation was voluntary, thus, they were free to withdraw at any given time during the course of the study without fear of being victimised or harmed.

3.10.2 Confidentiality

Cohen et al (2011:65) define confidentiality as not disclosing information from participants or identifying respondents using information they have provided. Lahman, Mendoza, Podriguez and Schwartz (2011:314) and David and Sutton (2004:18) state that researchers usually know

the source of data but should strive to protect the privacy of the information. Participants for this study were given the assurance that their information would be treated with strict confidentiality. Focus group discussion members were informed that no one will publicise the information discussed during the proceedings. In addition, the setting for the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions allowed for privacy.

3.10.3 Anonymity

It is the researcher's ethical obligation to keep the respondents' identities private (Neuman 2006:99; Makore-Rukuni 2001:129). O'Leary (2010:42) and Cohen et al. (2011:64) say that anonymity goes beyond confidentiality and refers to protection against identification even from the researcher. Codes were used in this study and anonymity was ensured through asking respondents to state their codes and not their real names during the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions. Collected data for this study were captured on separate sheets of paper which were identified by special codes which made the outsiders and even the researcher unable to match data with participants.

3.10.4 Permission

The researcher requested permission from the university authorities by writing a letter with details of the research and its purpose. Permission was sought before collecting the data. This is supported by O'Leary (2010:42) who suggests that there is need for commitment to obtain official approval even in large bureaucratic institutions such as hospitals and some government departments (See Appendices E and F) for permission letters.

3.10.5 Harm to participants

Protecting participants from harm is one of the major tasks of the researcher (David & Sutton, 2004:19; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996:39). The participants were not harmed in any way since the researcher was aware that all ethical codes depend on what is morally upright than what is legally enforced. Harm to respondents may include: embarrassment, irritation, anger, emotional stress, lack of self-esteem, sleep deprivation, negative labeling, intrusion of privacy and damage to personal dignity (Urombo, 2000:42). All participants were treated with the fact in mind that they could get tired and make mistakes.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter covered the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure. Data collection instruments such as focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, data collection procedures, data analysis, pilot study, main study, validity and reliability and also ethical considerations were also covered. The next chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis and discussion of the study findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to establish the determinants of academic performance of female students at a university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. In the preceding chapter the research design, sample, instrumentation, data collection procedure and ethical issues were discussed. It also included the analysis of the data. This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the findings of the study. Data are presented, analysed and discussed in light of the sub-questions of the study. On each sub-research question, results from female students are presented first followed by those of the university lecturers.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Table 4.1 Demographic data of university female students and lecturers

VARIABLE	VARIABLE DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY
Sex	Female students	25 (83%)
	Female lecturers	2 (7%)
	Male lecturers	3 (10%)
Part/level of students	Two	12 (40%)
	Three	6 (12%)
	Four/final year	7 (48%)
Area of specialisation of lecturers	Education	2 (40%)
	Social Sciences	1 (20%)
	Natural Sciences	1 (20%)
	Commerce	1 (20%)

Table 4.1 above shows that the participants were twenty-five (25) female students and five (5) lecturers. Twelve (12) of the participants were female students in their second year, six

(6) were in third level and seven (7) were in their final year. There were five (5) lecturers, three (3) female and two (2) male, two (2) were from the Faculty of Education, and one (1) from Natural Sciences. Two (2) male lecturers were from the Faculties of Social Sciences and Commerce respectively.

Participants' codes and their meaning

In order to maintain anonymity, codes were used to represent the female students and the lecturers who were involved in this study. The following are the codes and their meanings: FGP.1—focus group participant number one (1), ISP.1—in-depth interviews student participant number one (1) and PL.1—lecturer participant number one (1).

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: To what extent do gendered cultural codes determine the academic performance of female university students?

4.3.1 Responses from female university students

All the female university students who participated in this study indicated that gendered cultural issues greatly influence their academic performance. Domestic chores and societal beliefs that discourage female university students from working hard and achieving good results were cited by all female university students. The next section presents results on domestic chores.

4.3.1.1 Domestic chores

The female university students who participated in the study revealed that household chores, such as meal planning, preparation, serving of food, cleaning, housekeeping duties and the motherly role that entails caring, were the major obstacles to achieving good academic results. Household chores were reported to be the cause of both half and total absenteeism as female university students were obliged to perform these roles and had no options. Domestic chores were also mentioned as a major cause of fatigue and stress that led to incomplete or sub-standard assignments and an inability to meet deadlines. The following verbal quotes from the focus group discussions illustrate the impact of domestic chores on the academic performance of female university students:

My academic performance is compromised by domestic chores such as meal preparation, serving as well as laundry work which consume most of my study time (FGP.12).

I have a motherly role that entails child bearing and nurturing which is very exhausting and causes me to hand in substandard work (FGP.6).

Caring for the sick and cleaning roles are a cause of fatigue. The roles usually cause me to doze during lectures resulting in my half absenteeism (FGP.2).

Results from in-depth interviews revealed similar sentiments on domestic chores and their impact on academic performance of the female university students. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes confirm the findings:

I lack good concentration and fail to complete assignments due to physical fatigue and mental stress caused by preparation of food, cleaning of utensils and housekeeping duties (ISP.2).

I go for routine check-ups with my baby during weekdays which is also lecture time since baby checkups are done only during weekdays. That causes me to be absent from some lectures (ISP.4).

The next section presents results on societal beliefs.

4.3.1.2 Societal beliefs that affect the academic performance of female university students

All female students noted that societal beliefs influenced their academic performance. This included beliefs that highly educated females would dominate their fiancés/husbands. Such societal beliefs caused anxiety and discouragement among female students especially those who were still to be married. The belief of highly educated females dominating their husbands reflected the societal belief that females have a subservient role, are low performers or less intelligent than men and that there are taboos regarding gynecological issues. The following findings from the focus group discussions express these beliefs:

I am discouraged to work hard because my in-laws have attached a label on me that I will dominate my husband after completing my degree since he is a holder of a Diploma (FGP.2).

The belief that women should submit to males hinders us to have confidence in ourselves as we expect males to take the lead (FGP.6).

The belief that we are low performers instils fear in us as female students and causes us to lose confidence in our academic potential (FGP.19).

As females we may have pain during the monthly cycle which usually causes us to be absent from lectures. The problem is that in our culture it is a taboo to tell the lecturers that one faces that challenge (FGP.3).

The in-depth interviews also revealed that the academic performance of female students was influenced by societal beliefs. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate this finding:

I am afraid of excelling better than my fiancé since he is not comfortable in me achieving better than him. It seems that my fiancé feels inferior (ISP.3).

Male students usually expect us to submit to them even during group or class discussions and this influences our level of participation (ISP.1).

4.3.2 Responses from university lecturers

The views of lecturers concerning gendered cultural issues that influence the academic performance of female students were the same as those of the female students. They indicated that cultural issues such as domestic chores and societal beliefs greatly influence the female students' level of involvement in their university work, their attitudes and their level of confidence. Most lecturers noted that female students are usually absent or late for lectures compared to their male counterparts because of the burden of domestic chores such as cooking, washing and house cleaning. Furthermore, lecturers also indicated that female students, in most cases, failed to meet deadlines and often submitted substandard work because their attention is divided between domestic chores and education. The following two subsections present domestic chores and societal beliefs as factors which influence the academic performance of female students respectively.

4.3.2.1 Domestic chores

Domestic chores such as home management duties were identified by all lecturers as major obstacles that inhibit female students from excelling in academic performance to the level of their male counterparts. Lecturers indicated that domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, washing and caring for children and the sick are time consuming to the extent that female

students are preoccupied by them. Lecturers also highlighted that female students were socialised to do domestic chores and also to be caring and that this compromises their academic performance. The following verbal quotes illustrate these findings:

I have learnt from female students that sometimes they come for lectures when they are already tired due to home management roles such as cooking, washing and house cleaning. That compromises their academic performance (PL.5).

I have noted that caring jobs are a major cause of female students' absenteeism and this sometimes causes the female university students to have bad results (PL.1).

Female students are expected to give priority to caring duties such that they cannot leave a sick child with the husband and go and attend the lectures (PL.3).

4.3.2.2 Societal beliefs that affect the academic performance of female students

Most lecturers indicated that societal beliefs shape the minds of both students and lecturers. Some lecturers pointed out that people act in response to the belief systems, norms and values in their society. As such, lecturers who were socialised in a way that looks down upon female students carry that mentality to lecture rooms and treat female students as inferior to male students. The beliefs that recurred were that highly educated females dominate their husbands, the subservient role of females, male dominance and that females are less intelligent. The following verbal quotes express this finding:

I have noted that female students who believe that males should be bread winners may develop a dependence syndrome and become less active during lectures (PL.4).

I have observed that culture socialises females to have a subservient role and this causes them to accept that they should be followers of men even in academic performance (PL.1).

There is a belief that females are not gifted and that they cannot outperform males. This seems to cause female students to lose confidence in themselves (PL.5).

The next section focuses on research question two.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How does the family background affect the academic performance of female students?

4.4.1 Responses from students

Responses from all the female students reflected that their family backgrounds affected their academic performance. The level of education of members of the student's family, the socio-economic status of the family, the family's social associations, the family's religious belief system and other family background-related factors were noted by the female university students as the variables that greatly influenced their academic performance. The factors are presented below.

4.4.1.1 Level of education of the student's family members and academic performance

The level of education of the family members was seen to have a great influence on female university students' academic performance. Most female students indicated that educated parents or family members are more understanding and supportive than uneducated ones. These family members are aware of the challenges female students face and encourage them to work hard. The following views from the focus group discussions illustrate the above findings:

> *Members of my family who are educated have a better understanding of my educational needs as their female offspring (FGP.1).*

> *My parents are educated and usually reward me when I get outstanding grades to encourage me to work harder (FGP.3).*

> *My relatives who are educated and have good jobs encourage me to work hard and they do not segregate their children (FGP.13).*

The study also revealed that uneducated parents or family members have problems in understanding the needs of the female students and also the importance of their support. The following views from the focus group discussions illustrate this finding:

> *Uneducated parents lack the understanding of the needs required for achieving good academic results (FGP.2).*

I took almost a year to convince my parents who are uneducated cross borders of the need to buy me a smart phone as they were failing to understand its use (FGP.14).

The study also revealed that some uneducated parents were seen to be supporting the education of their daughters. The following verbal quotes reflect this finding:

I am positive towards education because of my uneducated parents who greatly support me with the meagre resources they have (FGP.15).

My widowed uneducated mother is supportive and also encourages me to work hard as she believes this is the only way out of the vicious circle of poverty (FGP.3).

Findings from in-depth interviews also revealed that parents who are educated have the knowledge of the needs of the student and are supportive. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes point to this finding:

The level of support from my educated parents encourages me to work hard in order to please them (ISP.3)

My educated parents are very quick to understand and to respond to my educational needs (ISP.5).

My educated parents told me that my qualifications should be my first husband who should take care of me. That encourages me to work hard (ISP.4).

Findings from in-depth interviews also revealed that parents who are uneducated often lack the resources necessary for their children to realise their potential as well as an understanding of the needs of the student. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes point to this finding:

I am discouraged to work hard since I pursue a degree which is not of my choice as my poor parents could not send me to a high school that offered Sciences (ISP.1).

The level of support from my uneducated parents is compromised by their lack of knowledge of how important my needs are (ISP.3).

Like the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews also revealed that some uneducated parents were supportive although some of them were facing economic challenges. The following are the verbal quotes that express the above findings:

My uneducated parents are very supportive although their financial support is not enough (ISP.2).

My uneducated father who is self employed encourages me to work hard and he tries to give me all the necessary support (ISP.5).

4.4.1.2 Influence of family's socio-economic status and social associations on academic performance of the female students

The study revealed that the family's financial position, social associations and geographical location influenced the female students' academic performance. Most female students pointed out that the financial position of the family is the key to high academic performance since almost all the resources needed for upkeep and tuition fees require a good financial base. Insufficient money, in most cases, results in a lack of the basic needs and wants. Most female students pointed out that the family's social associations which are, in most cases, linked to the family's socio-economic status, are important as they may be a source of help in terms of scholarships or any other financial support. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions illustrate the findings:

I have noted that female students from well up families are usually connected to the right people, secure scholarships and are exposed to technology which enhances academic performance (FGP.4).

My rural background did not allow me to use a computer which has a great role in achieving high academic performance (FGP.5).

Education is an expensive commodity in Zimbabwe to the extent that those from a low socio-economic background like myself live a life full of stress due to lack of basic needs (FGP.13).

Findings from in-depth interviews concur with the findings from focus group discussions which revealed that the family's socio-economic status greatly influences the academic

performance of the female students. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate the findings:

> *I come from a poor background and I hardly get the basics. This negatively affects my academic performance (ISP.3).*

> *I noted that because of poverty in my family, the first dollar was allocated to my brother then I went to school older than my counterparts. This reduced my self-esteem which in turn negatively affected my academic performance (ISP.5).*

4.4.1.3 The relationship between the student's family belief system and academic performance of female students

All the female students who participated in this study revealed that family belief systems influence academic performance. Most female students said that the extent to which they value education is greatly influenced by the beliefs of their families. Some families have a belief that male education is more important to the family than that of the female and this lessens the level of support the female student gets from the family. Female students also indicated that they were encouraged by their families to pray for God's intervention when faced with academic challenges. It emerged that some family beliefs valued education and encouraged females to study so as to be empowered while others negated education. It also emerged that some families discouraged females from mixing with males because they believed that this is tempting to males. The following verbal quotes from focus group interviews point to the findings:

> *During financial crisis, my studies are disturbed since my family has the belief that my brother's education is more valuable to the family that mine as I would be married and leave the family (FGP.8).*

> *Some families have the belief that to achieve good passes one requires God's intervention. The belief is more appealing to females as these have limited study time due to gendered cultural codes. Students holding such a belief may relax thinking that God will intervene after fasting (FGP.14).*

> *My family believes that females should not mix with males so I find it difficult for me to work with male students and this affects my participation during lectures (FGP.17).*

The findings from in-depth interviews also revealed that family beliefs greatly influence the

female university students' academic performance. The following verbal quotes from in-depth interviews illustrate the findings:

> *Some female students have false confidence as they are given snuff (fodya yebute) by their parents who believe that their ancestors will intervene as they write their examinations. Such students often perform badly (ISP.4).*

> *My family has a belief that females should prioritise marriage and this has caused me to value marriage more than my education (ISP.1).*

4.4.1.4 Other family background-related factors that influence the academic performance of the female students

The study established that there were several other family background-related factors which influenced female students' academic performance. These factors included child abuse and domestic violence, structure of the family and terminal illness of a family member. The resultant traumatic experiences were cited by most female students as having a long-term negative effect on academic performance as they leave wounds and scars that usually take time to heal. Most female students said that domestic violence in the form of child abuse also greatly influences academic performance as it causes stress and anxiety. Quarrels and fights in the home were noted as the major causes of trauma. The study also revealed that female students who were traumatised have emotional problems and have problems mixing with other students. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions illustrate this finding:

> *Child abuse by family members causes stress and such childhood experiences may compromise academic performance as I have observed on my colleague (FGP.13).*

> *My self-esteem was reduced since the time I experienced domestic violence from my step mother. I am not confident to participate during lectures (FGP.9).*

> *We females are greatly affected by domestic violence and terminal illness in the family (FGD.19).*

The findings from in-depth interviews also revealed that child abuse and domestic violence have a negative bearing on academic performance of the female students. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate this finding:

I have a self-defensive behaviour because of my experience of domestic violence which made me to believe that anyone can be abusive. This results in my lack of confidence in my lecturers particularly males (ISP.2).

I was abused by my step mother during my early childhood and up to now I feel rejected, useless and my performance is greatly compromised (ISP.5).

The female students also indicated that the family structure influenced the female students' academic performance. Female students from broken and extended families revealed that they usually faced challenges that were linked to lack of good communication, financial and social support. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions illustrate the finding:

From experience, most in-laws in extended families think that all married women will betray their husbands so they want them to combine child bearing and education which is stressful (FGP.12).

I am failing to raise enough funds for my upkeep as my husband has abandoned me and is staying with another woman (FGP.15).

I have experienced that in most cases there are a lot of strife within the extended family may cause stress and compromises good academic performance (FGP.20).

The findings from in-depth interviews revealed similar sentiments as those from the focus group discussions that the family structure greatly influences the academic performance of female university students. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate the finding:

My fellow female students who are from broken families are struggling to raise tuition fees (ISP.1).

My husband is the eldest son, we are always involved in solving family disputes and this costs me my study time (ISP.4).

Death and terminal illnesses were mentioned by female students as other factors related to the family background that negatively influenced their academic performance. They indicated that they were negatively affected more than their male counterparts as they were more involved in caring duties. The findings revealed that sudden death of a family member mostly affects the academic performance of the female students especially when the deceased was

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the one responsible for paying tuition fees. A terminally person was also cited as a cause of absenteeism as the person requires extra care and attention which is normally provided by females. The following are narrations of the predicaments from focus group discussions:

> *My mother passed on when I was in Part One. She was my pillar of support. I am stressed and have difficulty in concentrating during lectures (FGP.17).*

> *My academic performance was greatly affected during my Part Two, as I was taking care of my terminally ill sister who later passed away (FGP.1).*

The same sentiments that death and terminal illness are a source of stress and also cause poor academic performance of the female students also came out of in-depth interviews. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes express this finding:

> *My parents died of a terminal illness and now I live a frustrated and stressed life as I lack enough financial and emotional support (ISP.1).*

> *My brother who was my guardian died in a car crash during Semester One of 2013. I am still in shock and this has severely affected my academic performance (ISP.2).*

4.4.2 Responses from university lecturers

The sentiments of the female students were expressed by the lecturers who confirmed that the family background of the female students greatly influences their academic performance.

4.4.2.1 Level of education of the student's family members and academic performance

The study revealed that all lecturers confirmed what the students experienced that the level of education of the family members is very critical in influencing the attitudes and level of confidence of the female students. Educated parents were noted to encourage and motivate their daughters and were more understanding and supportive. Some lecturers indicated that they had enjoyed good relationships with educated parents of some female students. The following verbal quotes illustrate these findings:

> *I observed that educated parents know the needs of the female students. Rewards are very motivating especially when one is given a laptop as incentive to work harder (PL.1).*

I noted that educated parents attach great value to education. They know that education is an investment and are cooperative and easy to deal with (PL.5).

The lecturers confirmed what the female students revealed that uneducated parents offer limited support academically. All lecturers submitted that uneducated parents have very little to offer in terms of skills and content such as downloading and providing reading materials. The following verbal quotes illustrate this finding:

There is not much to learn from uneducated role models. They have nothing to offer in terms of skills and subject knowledge (PL.4).

My experience is that the parents' social capital level of education determines the level of support the parent can give to the female student. This ultimately influences academic performance (PL.2).

The views of lecturers concurred with those of the female students that some uneducated parents support their female offspring's education. The following verbal quotes express this finding:

My experience is that some uneducated parents support the education of their female offspring as they regard it as a way out of poverty (PL.2).

I have noted that some uneducated parents encourage their female offspring to work hard by giving them their support. In a way this influences academic performance (PL.5).

4.4.2.2 Family's socio-economic status and academic performance of female students

The study revealed that lecturers believe that the socio-economic status of the student's family greatly determines academic performance. The lecturers concurred with the female students who indicated that without the support of the family, very little is achieved with regards to academic performance. Like the students, the lecturers indicated that female university students who come from poor families with poor social associations have problems in getting loans or bursaries. The following verbal quotes confirm this finding:

Some female students from low socio-economic background are shy to make presentations because they lack good attire (PL.2).

My experience is that female students who have rich family associates or relatives have an advantage of getting information on sponsorship and resources (PL.1).

4.4.2.3 The relationship between the family's belief system and academic performance of female students

The lecturers, like the students, indicated that belief systems influence the female student's confidence, self esteem and attitude towards university work. Most lecturers indicated that there is a strong relationship between the family's belief system and the student's academic prowess. Religious beliefs of a family may influence the value the female university student attaches to education and the role of supernatural powers in academic performance. This, in turn, influences academic performance.

Most lecturers indicated that they came across students, especially females, who were weak academically but who believed that supernatural forces would assist them to pass. Some lecturers highlighted that such beliefs, mostly cherished by females whose study time is limited due to domestic chores, can be misleading thereby leading to poor academic performance. The following verbal quotes illustrate this finding:

My experience is that most families support the education of females and encourage them to excel because of the belief that education is part of God's plan for all mankind regardless of sex. This support is likely to motivate females to perform well academically (PL.1).

From my experience, students who come from families that believe in divine interventions perform poorly if they don't apply themselves (PL.4).

4.4.2.4 Other family background-related factors that influence academic performance of the female students

Like the female students, the lecturers indicated other family background-related factors that influence the academic performance of the female students. These are: child abuse, domestic violence, family structure and death and dying.

All lecturers were concerned about the high rate of child abuse and domestic violence in Zimbabwe and the adverse effects that it has on the academic performance of female students. Most lecturers mentioned that students who are abused are, in most cases, less confident and have low self-esteem and usually fail to fully participate during lectures. The

following verbal quotes illustrate this finding:

I have noted that child abuse and domestic violence are some of the family issues that cause low self-esteem and negatively influence female students' academic performance (PL.1).

From my experience, students who were abused and neglected are usually bitter and often perform badly (PL.3).

I noted that students who were nurtured by step mothers are, in most cases, traumatised. They become so quiet that they fail to participate during discussions (PL. 2).

The lecturers revealed that most students from intact families have better ethics and are in most cases, able to manage group work better than those who are from broken families who are in some cases aggressive due to traumatic events they encountered. The following verbal quotes confirm this finding:

My observation is that students from polygamous families experience more quarrels and are usually stressed. This negatively impacts their performance (PL.2).

From my experience, female students from child headed families may lack norms and values that enable them to relate well with other students. This negatively influences their academic performance (PL.3).

Most lecturers were concerned with the number of helpless students who had lost their parents or significant family members due to HIV and AIDS. The findings indicated that most female students who struggled to pay tuition fees were those from a disadvantaged background. The following verbal quotes illustrate this finding:

I have observed that female students who have experienced loss of many family members, including real parents, have many challenges affecting their academic performance (PL.3).

My observation is that most students who are struggling to raise tuition fees are the needy ones. Their significant family members are deceased due to HIV and AIDS (PL.5).

The next section discusses the responses for research question three.

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How do lecturers' attitudes and competencies influence academic performance of the female students?

4.5.1 Response from female university students

Students indicated that lecturer attitudes and competence do influence academic performance of the female students.

4.5.1.1 Influence of lecturer attitudes on academic performance of female students

The findings from this study revealed that attitudes of lecturers towards females and their treatment of female students influence the academic performance of the female university students. It also emerged from this study that lecturers may pass negative comments such as female students are failures. Such comments discourage female students. Some female students also indicated that the attitudes of the female students also influence the attitudes and confidence of lecturers. The following vignettes from the focus group discussions reflect the views of the female students on the influence of attitudes of lecturers on the academic performance of female students:

> *We are discouraged by male lecturers who pass negative comments to us female students who are repeating, such as, we always failures (FGP.14).*

> *Our self-esteem is reduced if lecturers demand sexual favours from us. The lecturers usually have an attitude that stereotypes us as sex vessels (FGP.11).*

> *I have observed that there are some female students who have negative attitudes towards male lecturers and that causes the lecturers to also be negative towards us female students (FGP. 17).*

The findings from in-depth interviews were similar to those from the focus group discussions that the attitudes of lecturers influence the female students' level of confidence and self esteem. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes from the female students confirm the finding:

> *We are discouraged as some male lecturers hate female students naturally. They have an attitude that associates us female students with laziness and failure (ISP.4).*

> *There are some lecturers who label us female students as slow learners or low performers and this is a source of discouragement (ISP.1).*

I feel that labels and stereotypes from lecturers reduce my self-esteem and reduce my confidence to work hard and to achieve good results (ISP.2).

Most female students indicated that a number of female lecturers viewed the academic performance of the female university students in a positive way. It also emerged that some male lecturers, particularly in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, had a positive attitude towards female students. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions confirm the finding:

Most lecturers in Natural Sciences treat all students equally. Probably it is because we are a few female students who are doing subjects which are considered to be male subjects. This has a positive effect on our academic performance (FGP.15).

I have observed that female lecturers are positive towards us as they understand that we fail not because we are lazy but it is because we have too much on our hands especially the domestic chores. This attitude is encouraging (FGP.8).

Findings from in-depth interviews concur with those from the focus group discussions. It was noted that most lecturers, especially female lecturers, had a positive attitude towards female students except for a few female lecturers who had a negative attitude towards them. Lecturers with positive attitudes encourage the female students to work hard so as to do well academically. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes from the female students illustrate the finding:

I have noted that most female lecturers have positive attitudes towards us. They treat us female students fairly and encourage us to fight through all challenges (ISP.3).

I have observed that a few female lecturers have negative attitudes towards us (ISP.5).

Related to lecturer attitude was lecturer confidence in the ability of female students. Female students indicated that most male lecturers had no confidence in the academic competence of the female students while most female lecturers had confidence in female students' ability. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions are a reflection of these findings:

Most male lecturers do not believe in our ability. This discourages us as they usually pass comments such as 'cases like this require gentlemen and not ladies' (FGP.3).

Some female lecturers believe in the performance of us female students and give us the chance to make presentations and an equal platform to participate. This enhances our academic performance (FGP.2).

The findings from in-depth interviews also revealed that some male lecturers were viewed as lacking confidence in female students when compared to female lecturers. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate the finding:

Most male lecturers look down upon us and question our academic competence (ISP.3).

Most male lecturers always say that female students specialise in dressing themselves. 'Vakadzi vanongoda mucheno asi havagoni' meaning that females love to dress well but they are low academic performers (ISP.5).

Some lecturers, especially females, are confident that we may make it against all odds. This enhances our academic performance (ISP.2).

4.5.1.2 Influence of lecturer competence on the academic performance of female university students

The study revealed that most female students indicated that lecturer competence influences their academic performance. Most of the female students stated that poor lecture delivery comprising lack of proper media and illustrations which simplify the concepts to be mastered, had a negative effect on their academic performance. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions reflect the finding:

I have experienced that poorly presented lectures causes confusion as concepts are not clear and not simplified (FGP.18).

Some lecturers just give notes without explanations that cause us female students to suffer most as we have limited time to study due to domestic chores (FGP.17).

The findings from in-depth interviews echoed those of female students who participated in focus group discussions. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate the finding that lecturer competence influences the academic performance of female university students:

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Some lecturers read notes and give hand-outs as they say openly that they are not teachers by profession but are business administrators (ISP.1).

Some female lecturers may also face challenges in presenting good lectures since they may also be overwhelmed by gender roles (ISP.4).

4.5.2 Response from university lecturers

Findings from lecturers, like those from the female students, indicated that lecturer attitudes and competencies influence the academic performance of the female students.

4.5.2.1 Influence of lecturer attitudes on academic performance of female students

The study revealed that, like the female university students, lecturers also suggested that their attitudes towards the female students influenced the students' academic performance. It emerged from this study that most male lecturers had negative attitudes towards the female students and that they lacked confidence in them while most female lecturers had positive attitudes and were confident in the academic performance of the female university students. The finding concurs with that from the female university students that there is a difference between female and male lecturers' attitudes and level of confidence in the ability of female students. Female lecturers seemed to have an understanding that female students had a lot of other duties that caused them to lag behind in academic performance. The following views from lecturers express this finding:

As a female lecturer I have observed that most male lecturers have a negative attitude towards female university students as compared to us females (PL,1).

My experience is that male lecturers who were socialised to believe that females are not gifted are less confident and expect low performance from them which may lead to their failure (PL.3).

From my experience as a male lecturer, I noted that female students are usually passive. They are afraid of taking the lead and controlling discussions. This causes me to lack confidence in their ability (PL.4).

4.5.2.2 Influence of lecturer competence on the academic performance of female students

The study revealed that most lecturers, like the students, believed that poor lecture delivery or presentation greatly determines the academic prowess of the female university students. Poor lecture presentation was noted to be characterised by a lack of adequate content. Some

lecturers confirmed the students' concerns that some lecturers were not trained to be lecturers but were technocrats in their areas of specialisation such as lawyers who teach commercial law. The lecturers viewed poor lecture delivery as resulting from a lack of pedagogical skills. The following are the views of lecturers that illustrate these findings:

> *Lack of preparedness reflects incompetence and results in lecturers expecting too much from students. Non-resident female students are the worst affected as they, in most cases, have less time to study (PL.2).*

> *Poor lecture presentation by lecturers, combined with female students' social pressure, causes poor academic performance (PL.3).*

> *My observation is that lecturers' lack of pedagogical skills results in poor lecture presentation (PL.5).*

The next section presents results for research question four.

4.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: To what extent do resources affect the academic performance of female university students?

4.6.1 Responses from female university students

The study established that female students indicated that the availability or non-availability of resources influenced their academic performance. The students mentioned the resources that influence their academic performance as well as the level of availability of the resources.

4.6.1.1 Resources that influence academic performance

The study revealed that most female students indicated that financial resources, resources that fulfil physiological needs and service resources greatly influenced their academic performance. The students also highlighted that financial resources were the key to good academic performance since most of the resources that are used to achieve effective teaching and learning are procured using money. They also indicated that support, in terms of basic needs and upkeep is critical because hungry students have challenges in concentrating. Most female students indicated that service resources such as counselling facilities, buildings, equipment and consumables influence the academic performance of the female university students. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions illustrate this finding:

> *There is an acute shortage of resources at the university due to lack of finances (FGP. 19).*

Walking long distances due to lack of transport is not good for us females since we lack endurance unlike the males especially when experiencing monthly cycles (FGP.7).

Most female students from poor backgrounds do not realise their potential academically due to lack of basic needs and resources (FGP.4).

My experience is that when my physiological needs, such as hunger are not satisfied, I suffer from mental fatigue and fail to participate (FGP.16).

I failed to get immediate counselling services the time I lost my husband because of inadequate counselling services. It was very depressing (FGP.11).

The findings from in-depth interviews revealed similar sentiments as those from the focus group discussions that there are key resources such as finances that greatly influence the academic performance of female university students. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate the finding:

Library facilities are critical both in terms of buildings and books and the provision of e-journals. Since these are limited, our academic performance is compromised (ISP.4).

I am from a poor background and feel neglected and rejected if some students eat good meals when I cannot get one decent meal per day. This affects my concentration in class (ISP.2).

Financial resources are pivotal since education is an expensive commodity. Without a good financial base we are stressed and this leads to poor academic performance (ISP.5).

4.6.1.2 Level of availability of resources at the institution

The female students revealed that lack of resources at the university was a cause for concern. Most students pointed out that there were a number of resources which were unavailable, inadequate, out of order or out dated and that those which were available were very expensive. Most female students indicated that there was equipment which was out of order, torn or broken especially books, chairs and desks. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions reflect this finding:

As females, we are always stressed due to lack of financial support since we were not given bursaries and we are more vulnerable than males (FGP.18).

As female students, our academic performance is compromised as we waste time and quickly get tired looking for lecture venues since there are not enough buildings such as lecture blocks (FGP.16).

Sometimes we fail to get enough lecturers because of shortage of manpower. This has a bearing on us females as we lack enough time to study on our own. That compromises our performance (FGP.14).

In-depth interviews revealed similar sentiments to those of the students who participated in focus group discussions that there were resources that were not available at the institution. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate the finding:

The university lacks latest technological equipment such as computers and internet facilities in all subjects which should benefit us females who are not given by our parents as they look down upon us (ISP.2).

We face a challenge of books in the library. As females we suffer most since we do not have the time to wait in the queue for books (ISP.4).

Transport blues are our daily bread as we do not have enough transport to ferry us between campuses. This is a cause of fatigue as we have to walk long distances in addition to carrying out a number of domestic chores at home (ISP.5).

4.6.2 Responses from university lecturers

The study revealed that lecturers had the same sentiments as those of the female students as they confirmed that the availability and non-availability of resources affects the academic performance of female university students.

4.6.2.1 Resources and their influence on academic performance

The study revealed that all lecturers confirmed what the female students indicated that physiological needs were key in determining female students' academic performance. Lack of service resources such as buildings, equipment and consumables were noted by all lecturers as one of the major stressors of both students and lecturers resulting in female students performing poorly. Lecturers who taught practical subjects indicated that they were finding it difficult to impart skills with outdated equipment and tools. The following views of the lecturers confirm this finding:

I believe that physiological needs of the female students should be met first so that they can fully participate. Maslow's hierarchy of needs should be adhered to in order to achieve good results (PL.3).

I have observed that the main library is too small for all students to fit in since it is shared between the Teachers' College and the University (PL.4).

Financial resources such as grants or bursaries to assist the female students, who are usually prone to marginalisation when it comes to educational funding by the family, are critical for the achievement of good results (PL.2).

4.6.2.2 Level of availability of resources at the institution

The study indicated that the lecturers confirmed the students' opinions that equipment and tools were out of order at the university and this negatively influenced the academic performance of female students. The following verbal quotes illustrate this finding:

I observed that it is discouraging for most female students who are failing to procure equipment such as smart phones that are internet compatible (PL.5).

Female students are more vulnerable to stress as there are no grants or bursaries to assist their sponsors in paying the high tuition fees (PL.2).

Female students are mostly affected by lack of research facilities that are technologically advanced such as computers, internet, libraries, textbooks and e-journals that are not available at the university (PL. 3).

The next section presents findings of research question 5:

4.7 RESEARCH QUESTION 5: What strategies can be employed in order to improve the academic performance of female university students?

4.7.1 Responses from female university students

The following were the suggestions from the female students on strategies that can be employed in order to improve their academic performance: financial support to female students and the institution, campaigns and programmes that emancipate women, preliminary affirmative action, fund raising projects that involve female students, empowering women through legislation, subsidised procurement and removal of value added tax (VAT) on university goods and social and emotional support systems for the female university students.

4.7.1.1 Financial support to female students and the institution

Most female students indicated that fund raising projects that involve them, such as maintaining a viable farming project that supplies both the institution and the public with farming produce, were necessary to boost the finances of the female students and the institution. Most participants suggested that subsidised procurement is the answer to quick development of the institution which will benefit female students. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions indicate the suggestions:

> *There is need for loans or bursaries from the government which are specifically set aside to support university female students who are in need of assistance (FGP.6).*

> *The financial situation of both the students and the institution can be improved if fund raising projects such as farming are in place and viable (FGP. 11).*

> *Projects which are funded by the institution that involve female students such as fashion shows should be introduced in order to raise funds that cater for their unique needs (FGP.14).*

The findings from in-depth interviews revealed similar sentiments to those from the focus group discussions which are that there is need for the government to assist in funding the female students and the institution. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes illustrate the finding:

> *The institution can assist us female students by providing cheaper transport or accommodation which is close to the campus to reduce stress (ISP.4).*

> *Our stationery procurement should be done at the campus and subsidised so that we may get our consumables at a reasonable price (ISP.5).*

> *We need affordable and good catering services which can be achieved through farming projects that provide produce for the university canteen (ISP.2).*

4.7.1.2 Campaigns and programmes that emancipate and support women

The study revealed that most female students indicated that the female students need to be liberated from thinking that they are inferior to males and other beliefs that do not uphold the progression of females, through the inclusion of gender studies at all educational levels. Most female students mentioned that campaigns to educate society on laws which are linked to the

overall welfare of the women should be intensified through media, the school curriculum and text books. Female university students should be involved in revising affirmative action procedures so that they can be implemented from elementary levels through to the universities. Most of the participants suggested that guidance and counselling facilities should be in place so that female students get immediate counselling, if there is need. The findings revealed that most of the study time of the female university students is wasted when they try to find solutions to their social problems if they do not get immediate counselling services. The following verbal quotes from focus group discussions illustrate this finding:

> *Campaigns through workshops can be initiated from non-governmental organisation such as churches to conscientise society that female university students can achieve better (FGP.1).*

> *Free pamphlets in mother tongue can be used at grass roots (family and local community level) to educate families on the reduction of gender roles that affects us female students (FGP.4).*

> *Affirmative action procedures should be revised by all stakeholders in order to be done from grassroots and be implemented intensively to promote us female university students (FGP. 15).*

> *The institution should recruit more counsellors so that we may get advice as soon as possible to help us cope with our problems (FGP.3).*

The findings from in-depth interviews also revealed that there is need to improve and intensify the use of guidance and counselling programmes that improve the self-esteem of female students. The following in-depth interview verbal quotes point to the finding:

> *Guidance and counselling programmes aimed specifically for raising the self esteem of us female university students so that we can be self assertive may be done through regular workshops (ISP.3).*

> *I suggest that campaigns that are pro women should be backed up financially and have follow-up mechanisms that ensure that they are intensively done (ISP. 5).*

> *The idea that we are tied in the home should be done away with as far as possible through educating the males from grass roots that we need to be free in order for us not to operate from an inferior position (ISP.2).*

4.7.2 Responses from university lecturers

The study revealed that the lecturers' views were similar to those of the female students. They confirmed that, without financial support, it is practically impossible to achieve good results. The study also revealed that there is need to find solutions that improve the academic performance of the female students.

4.7.2.1 Financial support for female students and the institution

All lecturers echoed what the female students submitted that, without financial resources, it is almost impossible to achieve good results. Most lecturers suggested that fund raising projects such as nutritional gardens that involve disadvantaged female students are critical to provide tuition fees which are beyond the reach of most citizens. Most lecturers suggested that procurement for the university equipment, tools and consumables should be heavily subsidised so that the meager financial resources are used in a more meaningful way. The following verbal quotes illustrate this finding:

> *Specialised loans for female students should be put in place by the university so as to subsidise female students' education (PL.3).*

> *Income generating projects that involve the poor and disadvantaged female students at the institution should be done so as to help them (PL.2).*

> *Faculties should be encouraged by university authorities to run small scale projects such as tuck shops that involve and support female students (PL.4).*

4.7.2.2 Campaigns and programmes that emancipate and support women

All lecturers suggested that it is very important to launch more campaigns and programmes that improve the lives of women. The findings revealed that most females are preoccupied by gendered roles to the extent that this negatively affects their academic performance. Most lecturers advocated for affirmative action that is implemented from the classroom since the results at university level are influenced by daily activities. Most lecturers argued that all means of emancipating women are fruitless without legislation which can be used as a starting point to track the changes. Changes could be brought about through educating people through media such as pamphlets about the current practices on the performance of females. The social and emotional support system was mentioned by all lecturers as pivotal in improving the academic performance of female students. Stressed and depressed minds

which are full of anxiety inhibit good concentration hence, the need to address the issues that negatively affect the academic performance of female university students. The following verbal quotes confirm this finding:

> *Female university students should be liberated through gender education from the mentality that they are low performers and cannot take the lead. Campaigns to empower female students mentally are important (PL.3).*

> *I suggest that the society should be informed through media that both the girl and male children are equally important. The fight against stereotypes should be intensified (PL.4).*

> *Guidance and counselling services should be easily accessible to enable female university students to solve their problems. The problems negatively affect female students' academic performance (PL.1).*

> *The idea that musha mukadzi (meaning that the home is only the wife's business) should be changed to musha vaviri (meaning that the home is for two—both husband and wife). This may be achieved through awareness campaigns (PL. 5).*

The following section discusses the findings from this study.

4.8 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to establish the determinants of academic performance of female university students. This section discusses the findings in relation to the objectives of the study, namely to determine the extent to which the following factors influence the academic performance of university female students: gendered cultural codes, family background, lecturer attitudes and competence, and resources. Strategies which may be employed to improve the academic performance of the female students are also discussed. The discussion is in relation to available related literature.

4.8.1 Gendered cultural codes and academic performance

The study revealed that the academic performance of university female students is greatly influenced by gender codes. All participants involved in the present study indicated that gender codes such as domestic chores and societal beliefs have a firm grip on the female university students in relation to their academic performance.

The finding on domestic chores revealed that they are a major cultural code that preoccupy the female students and affect their academic performance. The female students' study time is reduced as they perform domestic duties. This relates to Dimbisso's (2009:58) finding that female students have heavy burdens of domestic work that cause unclear minds, increased fatigue, lack of time for assignments and lack of commitment to college activities. Similarly, Omenge and Nasango (2010:327) established that there is a close link between female students' participation during lessons and their low academic performance with their involvement in domestic chores. This implies that too much involvement in domestic chores by female university students reduces their participation during lectures and subsequently compromises their academic performance. This finding on domestic chores also confirms Meggitt and Walker's (2007:193) observation that, generally, women do most of the domestic chores compared to their male counterparts. Since feminism advocates equal rights between the sexes in all spheres of life including domestic chores (Ford, 2002:21), the findings of the study contradict this feminist ideal.

The finding on domestic chores also revealed that some female university students went to bed late and woke up early to do their domestic chores. This results in stress and fatigue thereby reducing concentration span as well as study or research time of the female university student. This finding, from the present study, concurs with Ford (2002:20) who suggests that females are burdened with domestic gender roles when compared to males and this disadvantages the female students. The study also revealed that it was common among non-resident female university students to show signs of mental fatigue during lectures leading to their failure to participate during lecturers. Eagly's social role theory, one of the theories that informed this study, asserts that societal expectations are based on stereotypes which define gender roles that assume that females are socialised to do domestic work (Eagly et al. 2000:124). Thus, the female university students may find themselves failing to achieve in their education due to the effects of gender roles even though they may be unaware of them.

The study also revealed that the domestic chores which put pressure on female students included meal planning, preparation, serving and washing of utensils, cleaning of the home, washing clothes and assuming the motherly role. These chores are not considered optional and are routine duties that affect the university female students because caring and eating are basic needs which cannot be ignored. This finding of the current study is consistent with

Rao's (2004:140) observation that female students are often kept at home to do domestic chores and this strains them physically and mentally. The most affected female students were those who were non-resident students in Part/Level Three or those in their final year who required more study time as the courses they did were more challenging.

The findings of this study also revealed that meeting assignment deadlines is a difficult task for most female university students compared to their male counterparts as the females are preoccupied with domestic chores. The female university students also take the motherly role which entails caring for the family and this may lead to their failure to hand in standard assignments on time.

Evans (2003:67) states that motherhood is a conditioned experience by women rather than men. Overall, women provide more direct care for and spend more time with children than their male counterparts (Meggitt & Walker, 2007:194). The motherly role was cited as the major cause of absenteeism, stress and anxiety among female university students. The study also found that taking children or siblings to hospital for check-ups or taking care of the sick may cause absenteeism that lowers the academic performance of female students. The present finding is consistent with Ford's (2002:190) observation that, throughout the world, female students are more likely to perform badly because of family obligations. The finding on the motherly role concurs with Watkins' (2000:191) assertion that cultural expectations of motherhood have placed female students at a disadvantage as this adversely affects their academic performance through absenteeism. Related to this, Dimbisso (2009:59) suggests that academic performance and absenteeism are inversely related. If absenteeism increases, academic performance decreases. This implies that the motherly role affects female students more than their male counterparts and it entrenches the stereotype of females as caregivers.

Most female students who participated in the current study played a motherly role and they indicated that it was preoccupying them. The motherly role, according to Haralambos and Holborn (2008:91), is the position of women in society that has a mythological justification (based on the Bible verse in Genesis 3:16) that says that women shall conceive in sorrow and bring forth children in pain. The motherly figure in the home can be any female in the family who is responsible for nurturing and caring for the family (Eurydice, 2010:110; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:91). This implies that the female university students do not freely decide to take the motherly role but are socialised into it and this may negatively influences their

academic performance without them noticing it. The present finding confirms Arndt's (2002:30) observation that gender codes are biased as females are trained for domesticity which includes the motherly role. Female students who try to combine schooling with caring for the home and family, that is, being a scholar and a carer, are often characterised by poor lesson attendance (Rao, 2004:151).

The study revealed that societal beliefs influenced academic performance of female university students. Examples of the societal beliefs were that females have a subservient role and that males should dominate them and that females are low performers or less intelligent than men. The finding on the subservient role of females and the dominant role of males revealed that most female students were stereotypically submissive and that society, through institutions such as religion, has reinforced male dominance and female submissiveness. This gendered socialisation concurs with Seedam's (2008:2) observation that usually the threat of negative reinforcement is sufficient to enforce normative behaviour while, conversely, an admiring glance, a word of praise or an encouraging smile provides rewards for conformity to social norms. It is likely that positive reinforcement may cause female students to submit willingly.

It emerged from the current study that male dominance is reinforced by the Zimbabwean cultural belief that males are known to set the pace and take the lead while females are to follow and be supportive. This may be the reason why male students dominate the lectures and expect female students to take their subservient role and be quiet. This suggests that males may use subtle or inconspicuous force to ensure that females continue to take their subservient role. This is supported by Chireshe (2012b:160) who found out that while the violence experienced by females had many forms, the overarching cause was that men used violence to ensure their control over their wives, to maintain their dominance and ensure their spouses' submissiveness. The inferiority complex which is instilled by culture in females may cause them to lose self-confidence and it may make them favour to wait for male students to help them even with what they can do. Low self esteem may discourage the female students from participating and this may have a negative influence on their academic performance.

The finding on male dominance revealed that there is a general belief that females should take their subservient role. Burn (2005:24) asserts that male dominance is part of tradition.

This implies that males may feel uncomfortable marrying females who are more educated than they are because they believe that educated women may fail to be submissive. Haralambos and Holborn (2008:91) argue that male domination over females is based on Ephesians 5, verses 22 and 24, that say females (wives) should submit to their husbands. The study also revealed that only a few single female students conveyed a message that their education came first and if they failed to get married, it did not matter because they were already empowered. However, the culture of Zimbabwe values marriage because it is considered to be a union instituted by God and therefore it is obligatory. Related to the issue of the centrality of marriage is the belief that an empowered female may dominate her husband which may make it difficult for highly educated females to secure marriage partners. Female students who uphold this belief may therefore negate their education and so perform poorly.

The study revealed that belief systems often cause female university students to feel inferior, have low self esteem and be less confident. An earlier Zimbabwean study by Ngorima (2001:67) found out that female students often perform badly because they have negative self images instilled in them by African culture that believes that females are not logical and they are not quick to grasp concepts. In a similar vein, Aleman and Renn (2002:363) assert that girls express less confidence in their academic work because of the way they were socialised. It is likely that female university students may feel threatened by the male students who are known to excel better than them. These traits are a product of the process of socialisation that the female students experienced.

4.8.2 Family background and academic performance

It emerged from this study that the family background is pivotal in achieving high academic performance and that there were many variables that were related to the female students' family background that determined their academic performance. The variables included the level of education of family members, the socio-economic status of the family, family belief systems and family-related background factors such as the structure of the family.

This finding that the family background influences the academic performance of the female students' concurs with Sameroff's transactional theory which is the major theory that informed this study. It states that the various social and physical environmental contexts in

which people are born in, influence their mental capabilities and performance (Seifert & Hoffnung, 1994:62). Similarly, Jansen (2006:1) found that social contexts and family environment contributes to the intellectual competence of students while, in the same vein, Adekola (2012:280) observed that cultural experiences provided by the parents, particularly experiences with books and reading, intellectual and language activities, greatly influence academic achievements from childhood through to tertiary level.

The study revealed that educated family members were supportive of the education of the female students compared to uneducated family members. The present finding confirms Dimbisso's (2009:59) observation that educated parents or family members are likely to support education and, in most cases, quickly adjust to the needs of the student. It may be expected that female students coming from educated family backgrounds normally perform well at school. Educated parents, in most cases, are able to work together with lecturers to improve the academic performance of their daughters. In the same vein, Shaw (2010:21) says that most educated parents know that they are responsible for the well-being of their children at school, regardless of sex and age. This implies that a high level of support encourages the female university student to work harder and also to choose courses that are more rewarding.

The present study also showed that students of educated parents stand a better chance of achieving their academic potential because of encouragement, motivation and direct contact with their parents. A solid parent-teacher relationship can provide additional reinforcement that enhances students' academic achievement (Adekola, 2012:28; Benoit, 2008:71). It is likely that students who get support from both family members and lecturers may excel in academic performance. Kyoshaba (2009:31) states that, according to Cultural Capital Theory, it is expected that students from families who are closest to the academic culture have the greatest success. Similarly, Maasik and Solomon (2003:16) assert that Simeroff's transactional theory established that there is a correlation between the influences of the family background of an individual and his/her life achievements. This implies that there may be a close link between the transactions within the family and the academic performance of the female students.

The finding on the level of education also revealed that there is a knowledge gap with regards to uneducated family members and academic work. This may indicate that the level of education of family members determines academic performance as the level of support the

family offers is used as the spring board for the female university student to excel (Considine & Zappala, 2002:92). This implies that parents who are uneducated have difficulty in understanding the needs of the female university students. This may also mean that most students of uneducated parents may struggle to convince their parents that they need resources for their education. Kyoshaba (2009:31) posits that it is believed that low education negatively affects academic achievement because it prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at university and at home for the female university student. Uneducated family members do not know when to encourage the female student to work harder or when to reward her for good performance. The finding on the influence of the level of education of family members is in line with World Bank Ed Stats' (2008:7) observation that female students from low-income families may start school already behind their peers who come from more affluent families that expose them to a wide variety of technology.

It was interesting to note that some uneducated parents in the present study were viewed as very supportive of female students by encouraging them to work hard to solve the problems related to poverty. The finding on uneducated parents supporting female students relates to Considine and Zappala's (2002:92) finding that uneducated parents may have a low income and low social status, but nevertheless transmit high educational aspirations to their children. This implies that some uneducated parents encourage their children regardless of sex or gender. Some parents may believe that education will remove them from the cycle of poverty.

The current study revealed that the socio-economic status of the family greatly influences the academic performance of the female university students in several ways since education is a commodity that requires financial resources. Cheesman, Simpson and Wint (2006:9) state that financial constraints cause emotional stress and anxiety that negatively influence academic performance. This study revealed that the level of support from family members influences the female students' efforts in achieving good results. This implies that the socio-economic status of the family may influence the attitude to work since some parents may not be a source of inspiration to acquire high qualifications. Adekola (2012:28) points out that parental educational background and attitude, remarks, instructions and corrections given to a child can enhance the child's educational aspirations. Correspondingly, World Bank Ed Stats (2008:2) argue that educational outcomes such as high academic performance are influenced by family income which enables the parents to support the student in a variety of ways.

Students from poor families have been, in most cases seen, by most lecturers to lack the required resources.

The study revealed that female students from poverty stricken families were sometimes hungry when they attended lectures which caused mental fatigue and made it difficult to grasp new concepts. A study by Lacour and Tissington (2011:522) also revealed that students who lived in persistently poor families failed to perform well due to the impact of poverty on their emotional and physical being. Such female students may have to leave college in search of employment to raise tuition fees thus, losing out. They normally take a longer period to complete their studies because of the study breaks that they take as they search for employment to raise tuition fees. This awful situation to raise fees and other resources may force the female students to engage in prostitution. The practice may put the female students at risk of being infected by HIV and AIDS. Their academic endeavours may be negatively affected if they get infected.

It also emerged from this study that the social status of the family is related to geographical location. Students from wealthy families usually stay in areas where they are exposed to technology compared to those from poor backgrounds. Students from poor families are used to a rural life. This type of family locale highly influences academic performance as they lack exposure to technology. Female students are the worst affected as they may fail to perfect their skills due to lack time for them to practice. This finding confirms Uwaifo's (2008:122) statement that the geographical location and the home environment influence the academic performance of students.

The study revealed that the family's religious belief system influences the academic performance of the female students. The beliefs which were cited as most influential were the belief in God's intervention to attain good passes, the belief that the education of the male child is more valuable than that of the female child and beliefs that pertain to the value of education. This implies that there is a relationship between the student's academic performance and the family's belief systems. The finding also revealed that there are some religious beliefs that influence family beliefs such as the belief that females are inferior to males, based on the story that woman was created for man. Such beliefs negate the female student's education and academic performance as they centre on craft work and marriage. The finding that some families believe in God's intervention in attaining good passes is in

line with the belief in miracles that characterises Christianity, particularly Pentecostal Christianity that teaches that when supernatural powers are on your side, you can do well in any endeavour. The same applies in academic performance whereby preparation for the examination is believed to be guided by supernatural forces. To the female student, God's intervention is highly regarded because of the many obstacles they face in order to attain good passes. This finding on God's intervention is consistent with Okulicz's (2011:875) observation that there is a relationship between the belief in God and everyday life. On the other hand, it is believed that faith based on idleness and false confidence will lead to failure.

The finding that some families believe that the female child is inferior to the boy child to the extent that they value the education of the male child more than that of the female child has greatly affected the academic performance of female university students. Sex and gender discrimination in the family was mentioned as a challenge by most female students. This discrimination of regarding education for females as less important to that of males is also prevailing in most African countries including Zimbabwe (IRIN, 2011:1; Macionis & Plummer, 2008:649). Most families in Zimbabwe prefer a boy child which is consistent with the belief that educating the girl child is like watering a neighbour's garden (Burn, 2005:263). The reason behind such a belief is that the girl child will eventually get married and then leave the family to stay with her husband. Resources are first given to a boy child since he is considered a family asset. The finding revealed that some female students were given their tuition fees after their parents had paid for that of the male child. Late payment of the fees may be very stressful and can result in poor academic performance. The finding echoes Uwaifo's (2008:122) argument that the home environment and how the family meets the needs of the female students affects academic performance especially when lack of resources causes them to seek other methods, such as prostitution to meet their needs.

The family belief, which entails that females are low performers and that their education is of less value because they will be married and leave the family, has resulted in reluctance by family members to buy female students expensive technology. On the contrary, some families have the belief that empowering women is empowering the nation. The finding on family beliefs concurs with Meggitt and Walker's (2007:194) observation that, through socialisation, children acquire beliefs regarding the roles of men and women and then internalise this knowledge as a gender schema, or unchallenged core belief that influences their

achievements. Beliefs of the family play a pivotal role in the socialisation process and the construction of norms and values that influence development, behaviour and achievements (Adekola, 2012:280; UNGEI, 2009:4; Skinner, 2009:291; Wood, 2008:25; Hellum, et.al., 2007:62). Thus, female university students' academic performance is influenced by such beliefs.

Other family background-related factors were revealed as influencing the academic performance of female students include child abuse and domestic violence, structure of the family and terminal illness of a family member. The findings on domestic violence revealed that domestic violence in the home was cited by most participants as a major cause of trauma and stress that negatively influences academic performance. In a similar vein, Chireshe (2012b:160) revealed that most women indicated that they witnessed physical violence perpetrated by their parents or guardians which included the beating of their mothers by their fathers or the beating of their aunts by their uncles. The trauma of witnessing domestic violence can therefore inhibit good academic performance as this causes anxiety. Female students who are orphans related that they suffered from domestic violence daily since they had nowhere else to go.

The finding on other factors related to the family background revealed that female students from broken families, in most cases, had behavioural problems which affected the way they related to other students. As Haralambos and Holborn (2008:93) assert, families are instrumental to the development of relationships outside the family, especially with other children and what is experienced within the family can readily be incorporated into social relationships beyond the family boundaries. Some female students from broken families indicated that sometimes they felt lonely and rejected even when they were with their colleagues. Lecturers may not be aware of the situation of these female students and, as a result, they may judgment them incorrectly.

Extended families were also mentioned as another family background-related factor that influenced the academic performance of the female university students. Resources are shared among the extended family members and that reduces the level of support the female university student gets from her parents. Even though the parents may be working, the female university student may lack many basics because of the number of people dependent on the same source of finance. In addition, female university students who grow up as orphans

normally have limited educational attainments and so cannot secure employment which causes the vicious cycle of poverty to continue (Chireshe, 2012b:147). The next section discusses lecturers' attitudes and competencies as other variables that determine the academic performance of the female university students.

4.8.3 Influence of lecturers' attitudes and competencies on academic performance

The study revealed that most male lecturers had negative attitudes towards female students while most female lecturers had positive attitudes towards them.

The study revealed that male lecturers who were socialised to see females as inferior to males could be identified by their comments that females are low performers, carry that same attitude to lecture rooms and treat female students as inferior. This finding on lecturer attitudes is consistent with Haralambos and Holborn's (2008: 688) assertion that the socialisation process instils traits that influence one's social interactions. The same finding resonates with Eagly's social role theory (Meggitt & Walker, 2007:194) which postulates that, through socialisation, children learn how their cultures and or societies define their expected behaviour. It is likely that lecturers may make incorrect judgements about female students because of the way they were socialised.

The findings on lecturer attitudes also indicated that lecturers may attach labels which are negative due to the way the female students dress. The lecturers may see a relationship between dressing and level of seriousness of a student. This finding of the current study is consistent with Manwa, Ndamba and Manwa's (2010:1) observation that dress is a non-verbal communicator which communicates one's personality and gender issues. Some lecturers indicated that female students who concentrate on how they look are usually low performers.

The study also revealed that some male lecturers, especially those from the Faculty of Commerce and Sciences, had very positive attitudes towards the female university students who were doing the so called difficult subjects such as maths and science. These lecturers from the Faculty of Commerce were a young liberal cohort who therefore may have accepted the changes brought about by feminism which accounts for their positive attitudes towards female students. Some of the young generation male lecturers blamed gendered codes as the factors that negatively influenced female students' academic performance. Their conviction

was that, given an enabling environment, female students can compete equally with their male counterparts. Lecturers with such a positive attitude encouraged female students to work hard and excel.

The current study also revealed that student-lecturer relationships may create a barrier to effective lecturing and learning and this compromised the attainment of good results. This may mean that female students who have negative attitudes towards lecturers may not pay attention during lectures and this, in turn, can cause lecturers to have a negative attitude towards them. The lack of attention may negatively affect their performance. Myers (2008:119) posits that both teachers' and students' attitudes combined influence academic performance. The social climate or ambience of the school and a good learning atmosphere that is characterised by good relations between scholars and teachers/lecturers is known to be a conducive environment for teaching, learning and assessment of students' work (Manwa, 2013:352; Adekola, 2012:280). In the same vein, Macionis and Plummer (2008:233) posit that teachers who try to work closely with students have an understanding that leads to a successful and rewarding learning environment. Students who had a positive attitude towards lecturers benefited from their lecturers and also found it to be a pleasure to be a student and not enduring being a student. Lecturers' input and positive attitudes contribute a lot towards good academic performance (Uwaifo, 2008:124).

It also emerged from the study that most male lecturers and a few female lecturers lacked confidence in the ability of female students. It is likely that they may consciously or subconsciously feel that male students usually perform better than female students. The lack of confidence by the lecturers towards female university students may be seen in how they allocate topics for presentations, mark assignments and comment during lectures. This present finding is inconsistent with Loukas and Murphy's (2007:295) suggestion that lecturers should use fair ways of marking and rewarding students' work regardless of sex. In the same vein, Omenge and Nasango (2010:228) suggest that teaching methods should not disregard the female students thereby stigmatising them.

The study revealed that lecturer attitudes were negative because of the passive behaviour of some female students. This may mean that the students who were passive had accepted that they lag behind in academic performance. As they grow older, female university students, especially the single ones, speak less and less in classroom settings, hence lagging behind in

educational outcomes (FAO, 2012:3; Hung, 2011:21; Saito, 2011:15; Nhundu, 2007:642). Some lecturers may have experienced that some of the female students who, even when encouraged to excel, may not be able to due to low self-esteem. Teachers are, in most cases, biased towards good students and are negative to problematic and weak students (Loukas & Murphy, 2007:295). Lecturers, in most cases, may have confidence in female students who are respectful and stable and consistent workers.

It also emerged from the study that lecturer competences influenced the academic performance of female university students. The study revealed that poor lecture delivery comprising high volumes of notes that lack explanations and illustrations had a negative effect on female students' academic performance. Lecturers who were not trained to be in the teaching/lecturing profession were noted to be data banks that lacked pedagogical skills of delivering the data. A related study by Tella (2008:17) revealed that a teacher who does not have both the academic and professional teaching qualification may in some cases have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of his/her subject. The study indicated that some lecturers left a lot of work to the students and, because of domestic chores, most females failed to add more information on the lecture notes given. Such lecturers were said to be dictating high volumes of notes without explaining the notes. For the female students, volumes of notes become a challenge since most of them will not have enough time to digest the notes due to domestic chores. Illustrations and examples which are given during lectures help in grasping difficult concepts. Effective lecturers believe that they can make a difference in students' lives and they teach in ways that include demonstrations that create an environment conducive for learning and this is reflected in high academic achievements (Tope, 2012:5; Tella, 2008:22). An effective lecturer creates a conducive learning environment and gives all the students an equal platform so that both male and female students participate and are awarded marks they deserve.

The study established that resources have a bearing on competence of lecturers. Cross (2009:55) established that teacher competence is not only determined by training but also by level of support in terms of salaries and resources. Lack of support causes teachers to be exhausted by anxiety and stress. Lack of appropriate media and equipment greatly influences the quality of lecture presentation. Mass lectures are usually a challenge for lecturers especially when there is no appropriate teaching equipment. The distance between the

lecturer and the student may be reduced by the use of a projector and a microphone. Some lecturers may be incompetent in the use of the electronic gadgets. The use of the chalk board in such cases is not feasible because of distance. Such a scenario is the reason for the following section which deals with the issue of resources and academic performance.

4.8.4 Influence of resources on academic performance

The present study established that availability or non-availability of resources influenced the academic performance of the female university students. The finding on availability and non-availability of resources indicated that there was a lack of resources at the institution because some were broken, out of order or outdated. This may be because the institution is still in its infancy and the country is facing economic challenges that affected individuals, institutions and the country at large. Cross (2009:55) argues that education systems are responsible for providing required teaching and learning resources in order for them to achieve good results. Lack of resources was found in this study to be negatively affecting teacher competence and subsequently academic performance of female students.

The current study revealed that the provision of resources is pivotal for effective teaching and learning to achieve good results. Ebhohimen (2006:6) argues that, in education, resources are the inputs while academic performance is the output. This means that, without the resources (input), there is no academic performance (output). The finding on resources is related to Jantti and Cox's (2011:6) observation that resources are crucial for achieving good academic performance although some resources have a significant impact on academic performance while others have less impact. The finding on resources is related to the transactional theory which views the child as existing within an intricate system of variables such as culture and resources, all of which could have an effect on his/her development and achievements (Paquette & Ryan 2001:3). It therefore may be argued that female students' academic performance is influenced by the availability of resources.

The study revealed that financial resources were the major hindrance to the procurement of resources. An adequate supply of teachers and material resources greatly influenced students' academic performance. The female student is the worst affected by shortage of resources as the culture of Zimbabwe gives preference to the boy child. Such a scenario causes female students to get minimum support from most family members. The present finding relates to

Considine and Zappala's (2002:91) observation that the provision of financial resources by both parents and the government has a strong relationship with the academic performance of the students and that this is well established in sociological research. It also emerged from the present study that lecturers were causing a serious human resource shortage. Lecturers were not happy and lacked the motivation to deliver the lectures. This present finding confirms Chireshe and Shumba's (2011:114) observation that teachers' motivation influences teacher/lecturers' competences and delivery of lessons/lectures.

It also emerged that parents or families were struggling to pay tuition fees since the government was not assisting the parents by providing loans. Most of the female students were facing difficulties in acquiring both basic needs and requirements for effective learning since they were often overlooked by their families who favoured the male children. This is worsened by the fact that females in general have more needs than males (Gwarinda, 2001:41; Watkins, 2000:191). The lack of accommodation at university emerged as a cause for many students to be non-resident which has a bearing on academic performance since walking long distances from home locations to the campuses causes fatigue especially for the female student who has to do a lot of domestic work before leaving the home. It also emerged from this study that travelling from campus to campus is another issue which causes stress for female students since the institution has very few buses which are used to ferry students from one campus to another (shuttle service) during peak hours of lectures. Fatigue may influence the concentration of female students.

The findings on resources also indicated that practical subjects that required specialised laboratories for learning and practice purposes suffered as effective teaching and learning in these subjects is based on practical lectures. Because of the lack of resources, students were obliged to queue to take turns to access the laboratories. Female students are the most affected as they may lack the physical strengths to queue for the scarce resources. The study also revealed that modern equipment and tools to furnish the laboratories were required in order to be used for both lecturing and learning purposes. Computer lessons were the most affected as there was a lack of new computers. Most schools in most developing countries, including Zimbabwe, lack resources to keep abreast of technological developments that are necessary for effective teaching and learning which, in turn, lead to good academic achievements (Oxfam, 2005:1; Zvobgo, 1999:30). The reason why computer lectures are the

most affected is that if there are no computers in the laboratory, lectures cannot take place. This disadvantages female students most since they may fail to get extra tuition to compensate for lost time since they are in most cases second to the male child who in most cases is given preference in allocation of resources.

The study also revealed that if students were hungry, they were not able to fully participate during lectures. This finding concurs with Maslow's hierarchy of needs which defines physiological needs as basic needs for life. The study also revealed that physiological needs should be met in full so as to improve on academic performance. Considine and Zappala's (2002:90) found that the family is responsible for providing food, security, love and respect to instil acceptable moral standards which positively influence good academic performance. Male students in most cases are more resilient to harsh conditions such as walking long distances than female students (Rao, 2004:141). The level of support the female student gets from the parents is influenced by the family's economic background (Lacour & Tissington, 2011:522; Watkins, 2000:39). The family background of the female university student which was characterised by a lack of finance to offer material support to the student had a negative effect on the academic performance of the student. The study revealed that some female students were reluctant to make presentations as they felt inferior because of their poor quality of clothing and this destroyed their self-esteem and confidence which obviously influenced academic performance negatively.

The study also revealed that female students' academic performance was affected by the lack of counselling services in the university. Counselling services are critical as in some cases they save lives and reduce suicide cases. The female students experienced a lot of psycho-social challenges that needed counselling. The need for counselling relates to Chireshe's (2006:5) observation that students need counselling in order to overcome the traumatic experiences they have undergone in life. The lack of proper counselling may influence academic performance in many negative ways as some of the female students may waste a lot of study time trying to solve issues which they cannot be solved. This finding is related to Chireshe's (2006:5) observation that effective counselling results in an increase in behaviour related to achievement such as improved study habits, efficient use of time and greater academic effort.

4.8.5 Possible strategies for improving the academic performance of female university students

The study revealed the following suggestions that may improve the academic performance of the female university students: financial support to female students and the institution, campaigns and programmes that emancipate women, preliminary affirmative action, fund raising projects that involve female students, empowering women through legislations, subsidised procurement and removal of value added tax (VAT) and social and emotional support systems for female university students.

The study revealed that there is need to find solutions in order to improve the academic performance of the female students. The finding of the current study concurs with Benoit's (2008:2) observation that there should be an attempt to bridge the academic performance gap between female and male students. Similarly, Fergusen (2011:1) proposes that narrowing the academic performance gap between female and male students can be achieved by increasing teacher, student, parent and community engagement in order to reduce the challenges that negatively influence the academic performance of the female students. This implies that all the avenues that can be used to improve the academic performance of the female students should be fully exploited. Liberal feminists believe that educational and all other social systems can be used to promote a liberal agenda that emancipates women (Lewis, 2012:2; Lorber, 2010:9). Watkins (2000:195) argues that some of the difficulties faced by female students in education lend themselves to relatively simple solutions that include the building of more structures, provision of scholarships and grants, reductions in tuition fees and the provision of necessary equipment and consumables.

It emerged from the study that closing the achievement gap requires an integrated approach which entails financing and working closely with a variety of partners, including governments, civil society, academia and the private sector (Ferguson, 2011:2; Benoit, 2008:7; Watkins, 2000:191). Funds channelled to girl children should cover all females across the board, since the United Nations stipulates that educating a woman is educating the nation. This goal should be given priority as female university students will benefit and be given the chance to learn without stress and anxiety over their welfare and tuition fees. Women academics in the United States of America have traversed difficult terrain in arriving at a central role in higher education, gender equity in education but still much more remains,

such as reducing the academic performance gap which has to be done on the precipitous road ahead (Aleman & Renn, 2002: 213). This implies that the struggle continues as there are areas affecting the education of female students in universities which still need to be addressed.

Cross (2009:55) posits that it is not enough for institutions to provide well qualified teachers without necessary support in terms of resources that are critical for effective teaching and learning. Subsidised procurement of all critical resources of the institution should be done so that it becomes possible to erect more buildings to accommodate all university programmes. Construction materials imported from other countries should be exempted from value added tax (VAT) to reduce the costs of construction. To achieve good academic results, female students need to have all the facilities such as lecture rooms and fully furnished library that help to achieve effective lecturing and learning.

The finding that there should be programmes that emancipate and empower women suggests that emancipating women entails not only giving them funds but also giving them enough time to do their assignments and to do personal studies. Watkins (2000:196) suggests that some of the greatest obstacles to high academic performance are not financial or material constraints, but lie in the culture and minds of parents, teachers and political leaders. This means that the disadvantages begin at home and are reinforced at school and by the society in general. Children who arrive at school from a home culture supportive of education, and/or have had a quality preschool programme, are more likely to succeed in school as giving children the tools and a love of learning early in life are both essential (Hawes, 2008:330; Fantuzzo et al., 2004:470; Scott, 2007:49).

The study also revealed that some male lecturers believed that the term *musha-mukadzi* should be revisited and changed to *musha-vaviri*. *Musha-mukadzi* means that the woman is the owner of the home and that the essence of the home is felt when the women is there. *Musha-vaviri* means that the home is for both the husband and wife as both males and females should be involved in all household chores. The male lecturers who suggested the replacement of the term were those who taught gender studies and were supporting feminism as an ideology that can achieve gender equity.

Larson and Simonis (2005:4) found out that, women have a belief that it is their duty to do

their traditional roles. The study revealed that females should be emancipated from the belief that they belong in the home since the domestic chores were engraved in them to the extent that if they are punished for not taking care of their husbands they accepted that they were wrong. Shirley (1997:102) argues that living in both the public spheres of education and work and the private spheres of home and family is particularly complicated and potentially very stressful for most women. Similarly, Larson and Simonis (2005:4) state that women are overburdened by their traditional roles, demands from the workplace or school and their own needs. Campaigns should be vigorously done using both paper and voice media in all languages in order to inform females that these are cultural roles which were socialised in them. These campaigns can be managed under the auspices of the Zimbabwean Ministry of Gender and Women's Affairs to ensure their full sponsorship and implementation. The study also revealed that some participants were against the idea of emancipating women from the household chores as they regarded that as destabilising the social order. Some female students mentioned that these roles were created by God from the beginning of time and that women were created to support men and should be helpers. This may be alluding to verses in the bible such as Genesis 2 verse 18 which indicate that females should serve men.

The study revealed that some male lecturers held the view that females need to be upgraded to the level of males so that the female students may not operate from an inferior position. It is supported by research that gender stereotypes, in turn, decrease self-esteem among many females and that this leads to anxiety due to the fear of failing of subjects (Saito, 2011:3; Bassey et al., 2010:56). This implies that most female university students perform poorly simply because they may believe that they cannot perform better than their male counterparts. This mentality may cause a dependence syndrome. Some females are likely not to aspire to excel and get higher grades because they may believe that they will be taken care of by their husbands. Males, on the other hand, need to acknowledge that women are also capable of high academic achievements and that males have too many powers and they need to shade the powers to their female counterparts. The Zimbabwean culture socialises males to believe that to be a man you should be better than a woman.

The use of affirmative action was commended by most female students to close the academic performance gap. However, some female lecturers were sceptical of accepting it as they said that it is grouping and stigmatising them. Seshamani and Shalumba (2010:6) say that

affirmative action gives preferential treatment to females through a wide range of measures which include remedial training, lower scores required on tests for university admissions, jobs and recruitment procedures designed for women. Affirmative action in universities was criticised for reinforcing the inferiority complex of women since they were enrolled in universities using lower level grades (FAO, 2012:3).

It emerged from the current study that most students suggested that affirmative action should start at grassroots such as in lectures and the marking of assignments and examinations. The present study agrees with Chireshe's (2012a:30) observation that the education sector, like all other private sectors, should be gender sensitive and assist women to achieve. Lecturers should be well informed on the bulk of gender roles and how they influence the academic performance of the female university students. Affirmative action should therefore be revised to suit the needs of the female students and implemented intensively. Tracking of the implementation process and changes should be female dominated to ensure successful implementation. This suggests that university female students were advocating for being stakeholders of affirmative action. Female university students need not be just beneficiaries but the planners as well as members of the steering committees. Follow up mechanisms on the implementation should be intensified to persuade all stakeholders to adhere to the policy. This finding on follow up mechanisms is consistent with Seshamani and Shalumba's (2010:4) observation that the involvement of female university students in formulating policies which emancipate them and also their engagement in tracking changes ensures a complete representation of their concerns. Affirmative action should also cater for the provision of resources. Instead of the first dollar for the male child it should be the first dollar for the female child. Affirmative action should be practised in the family whenever and wherever possible.

The study revealed that gender studies should be part of the school curriculum from the lowest level through to tertiary education. All gender stereotyping in education such as pictures in text books that elevate males over females should be eliminated. Education programmes for women and girls should be designed to eradicate the social and cultural barriers that have excluded them from the benefits of regular education programmes as well as to promote equal academic performance between female and male students (C.A.R.E., 2011:174). Aleman and Renn (2002:214) propose that the key to closing the academic

performance gap is to empower female students through involving them in formulating policies that emancipate them. The study also indicated that females who experience challenges as they advance academically, should be given the chance to participate in formulating policies that affect them as academics such as the introduction of affirmative action from the classroom onwards.

The finding on the need for proper guidance and counselling facilities indicated that female university students require professional and immediate counselling as they are faced with more challenges than their male counterparts. Chireshe (2006:44) states that the role of school counsellors is to address the development of students in three essential areas: educational development, career development and personal social development. The study revealed that guidance and counselling services which are tailor made for the university female students should be put in place so that female university students get the help they need swiftly since some career aspirations are inhibited due to social or personal challenges that must be addressed by counsellors.

The study further revealed that guidance and counselling services should be readily available and easily accessible by the female students. The current sentiment concurs with Kasirye's (2009:2) finding that the college environment should provide emotional responsiveness, support, understanding, compassion, unconditionality and fairness through counselling the students especially the female students who are more vulnerable. The study indicated that the institution requires experienced counsellors who are trained to help the female university students in a professional manner. It may be true that anyone can do some sort of counselling but it is not true that all are specialists in counselling, hence the need for a team of specialists to do the very important task. Chireshe (2006:5) states that the most important function of guidance and counselling services is to study the individual students in order to discover their abilities, interests and needs, thereby helping them to make effective adjustments to university life. This implies that guidance and counselling services should be given the priority they deserve.

The study established that there is need for legislations which directly affect female university students since they are crucial in improving academic performance. Special legislation is the remedy for the social, economic and political disadvantages women endure as a result of motherhood and traditional gender roles (Ford, 2002:28). Policy changes can

alleviate the challenges women have as far as traditional gender roles are concerned (Ford 2002:28). Macionis and Plummer (2008:649) affirm that changing policies that negatively affect women helps to improve the academic performance of female students. A survey carried out by Watkins (2000:196) analysed the gender images in forty-two (42) primary school text books in Zimbabwe. In these books, men are never seen in domestic roles but in engineering trades thus biased text books reinforce the stereotype that presents young boys as more powerful than young girls. Policies may be put in place which creates female-friendly resources such as textbooks and advertisements which do not reinforce gender bias. Clearly, the socialisation of gender roles and the use of a gender-biased curriculum leads to an inequitable education for boys and girls (UNESCO 2003:117; Johansen 2011:4).

It emerged from the current study that legislations that promote females may be incorporated in schools, colleges and universities in order to improve the academic performance of female students. A firm understanding is required of how the school and community through legislations can strategically and effectively work together with a shared goal to improve female student outcomes. This is pivotal to improving the academic performance of female students (Scott, 2007:48; Andrews, 2008;56; Bobetsky, 2003:38; WHO, 2012:3). In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Open University is said to be offering bursaries especially for females who do doctoral studies. Such a move can be done through legislation in all Zimbabwean universities to encourage them to give priority to female university students. This encourages women to work harder at undergraduate levels so that can achieve better and then reach the top. Female professors are scarce in Zimbabwe therefore policies to encourage women should start at lower levels so that female university students may excel in their academic performance (Dorsey, 1989:351). However, policies may be put in place but when not accompanied by the right attitudes, they become ineffective (Chireshe, 2013:225).

The study also revealed that gender education in universities may be used as a means to liberate female students from gender roles. An Economist survey in 2005 found that while universities are still one of the most important engines of the "knowledge economy", competition is obliging them to rethink their mission statements to find new ways to mobilise resources and forge new partnerships (FAO, 2012:3; Hung, 2011:21). There is a need for action to create gender responsive policies that bridge the academic performance gap between male and female students (OECD, 2011:6). Universities have a major role in making this

happen by involving the female students in formulating policies that emancipate them (Johansen, 2011:4; WHO, 2012:3). This study has confirmed that female university students face numerous challenges that hinder good academic performance. Gender issues need to be addressed at universities as the highest institutions of learning in Zimbabwe.

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented, analysed and discussed data from the thirty participants around the five research questions. The study revealed that the gendered cultural codes that influence the academic performance of female university students were domestic chores, the role of nurturer and the subservient role attitude. The family background factors that determined the academic performance of female students were: the family members' level of education, the family's socio-economic status, the belief system of the family, the structure and stability of the family, domestic violence and child abuse. Lecturers' attitudes and competencies were noted as major influences of academic performance of female students. Resources were also cited to be adversely affecting the academic performance of female university students. Strategies that can be employed in order to improve the academic performance of female university students were identified as: empowering them financially, emancipating them from the gendered roles and discrimination, providing good infrastructure, equipment and quality guidance and counselling services. The next chapter summarises and concludes the findings of the study. Recommendations are also presented.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study was to establish the determinants of academic performance of female university students at a state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. The previous chapter presented, analysed and discussed the findings from the thirty participants. This chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations for this study.

5.2 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The study was conducted on the basis that research has confirmed that female university students are lagging behind in academic performance, especially in mathematics and science subjects (OECD, 2011:5; Kasirye, 2009:1; Ford, 2002:184; Watkins, 2000:196). The academic performance gap between male and female students is a cause for concern for most educationists; most male students are outperforming female students in many disciplines except for arts subjects (IRIN, 2011:1; OECD, 2011:5; Finsterbusch, 2009:24; Watkins, 2000:196). The above scenario prompted this research as it was intended to find out the determinants of such a situation which is a cause for concern.

5.2.1 AIM OF STUDY

The main aim of this study was to establish the determinants of academic performance of female students at a state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe.

5.2.2 SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study was guided by the following sub-research questions:

5.2.2.1 To what extent do gendered cultural codes determine the academic performance of female students?

5.2.2.2 How does the family background affect the academic performance of female students?

5.2.2.3 How do lecturers' attitudes and competencies influence academic performance of the female students?

5.2.2.4 To what extent do resources affect the academic performance of female university students?

5.2.2.5 What strategies can be employed in order to reduce or close the achievement gap between males and females?

5.2.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were to:

5.2.3.1 establish the extent to which gendered cultural codes influence the academic performance of female university students

5.2.3.2 explore how family background affects the academic performance of female university students

5.2.3.3 find out how lecturers' attitudes and competencies influence the academic performance of female university students

5.2.3.4 investigate the extent to which resources affect the academic performance of female university students

5.2.3.5 establish strategies that can be employed in order to reduce or close the achievement gap between males and females at university.

The findings are intended to enlighten both the female university students and lecturers on the factors that influence the academic performance of the female university students in an effort to find out strategies that can be employed in order to improve their academic performance. The findings on how academic performance can be improved may also be an eye opener to most students, lecturers and other stakeholders as far as the plight of female university students is concerned. Government and non-governmental organisations may use these findings when formulating policies that empower women and may also improve their strategies as they see the need to emancipate women in order to fulfill the millennium United Nations goals of gender equity in all areas of life (Eurydice, 2010:17; UNESCO 2003:143; UNESCO 2004:116).

5.3. SUMMARY OF RELATED LITERATURE

The summary of related literature is presented according to sub-research questions of the present study.

5.3.1 Gender codes and the academic performance

Research has established that gender codes and gender bias, among other determinants of academic performance, have taken their toll on female students as compared to their male counterparts (OECD, 2011:40; Cheeseman et al., 2006:5; Johnson, 2006:2; Pedrosa et al., 2006:8; Watkins, 2000:196). Literature from developed and developing countries has confirmed that females do the bulk of domestic chores and that gendered chores have a powerful grip on females (Larson & Simonis, 2005:4; Rao, 2004:140; Evans, 2003:47; United Nations Educational Circular, 2003:143; Ford, 2002:20; Williams, et al., 2002:4). In Zimbabwe, it was established that throughout the education system the female-child lags behind the male-child in both enrolment figures and academic performance due to the gendered cultural codes which are part of the Zimbabwean culture (Kasirye, 2009:1; Watkins, 2000:196). It is common knowledge in Zimbabwe that females are the primary caregivers and also do most of the domestic chores at the expense of their education.

5.3.2 Students' family background and academic performance

The nature of the family background of the student has of late been of great concern to every educational practitioner as the question of where the students come from influences the academic life of the student. International and Zimbabwean literature has established that the family background which includes variables such as parents' level of education, home ownership, size of the family, family beliefs, income and occupation of the family members such as parents have an influence on academic performance of female students (Mutekwe et al., 2012:112; OECD, 2011:40; LaFraniere, 2005:2; Ngorima, 2001:3; Watkins, 2000:196). Partnership studies show that when students have a rich family background and have assistance from educated parents, they do well in school as they get both material and educational support (Kano, 2012:8; Rank, 2012:4; McKie, 2010:1; Wood, 2008:14; Watkins, 2000:39). Female students from poor backgrounds were noted in most cases to be stressed as they struggle to make ends meet because they have more needs than their male counterparts

(Andrade & Carvalho, 2006:8; Chapchieng & Kiboss, 2004:51)**.**

5.3.3 Lecturers' attitudes and competencies and academic performance

As alluded to before in Chapter 2, research, has established that teacher quality is an important educational issue that is connected to student achievement, and that teacher qualifications and competence are important components of teacher quality (Tope, 2012:5; Tella, 2008:22). From the literature cited in Chapter 2 (for example, FAO, 2012:2; Matoti, et al., 2011:140; Tella, 2008:16; Uwaifo, 2008:124; Bhatt, 2007:70) one can infer that whatever facilities are available, whatever content is taught, whichever environment the school is situated and whatever kind of pupils are in the school, the important and vital role of the teacher or lecturer cannot be overemphasised. This means that for students to attain good academic performances there must be adequate teacher or lecturer skills and knowledge, as well as support and resources

5.3.4 Influence of resources on academic performance

In most developing countries including Zimbabwe, the unavailability of resources, among other determinants of academic performance, has taken its toll on the education of female students as most African families prefer educating the male child as compared to the female child (IRIN, 2011:1; Macionis & Plummer, 2008:649; Kapungu, 2007:2l). Resources are the inputs in education while academic performance is the output and this may mean that, without the resources (input), there is very little academic performance (output) (WHO, 2012:5; Ebhohimen, 2006:6; Psacharopoulos, 2002:2). The provision of resources by both parents and the government was found to have a strong relationship with the academic performance of the students and that this is well established in sociological research (FAO, 2012:1; Hung, 2011:21; Saito, 2011:19; Wood, 2008:22).

5.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study used a qualitative approach. A case study design was adopted in order to establish the determinants of academic performance of female university students. The qualitative approach was the best since it emphasises subjectivity, description and interpretation and deals with people's perceptions and meanings, attitudes and beliefs, and feelings and emotions (Gray, 2009:24; Denscombe, 2007:75; Best & Khan, 2006:255;

Marshall & Rossman, 2006:4; Sidhu, 2003:111; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:62). The population for this study comprised all the Part/Level Two to Four female university students at the institution's four faculties and all the lecturers who taught the female students. The sample consisted of thirty participants; twenty-five students and five lecturers. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were the tools used to collect data. The researcher was aware and considered the ethical responsibilities and legal constraints that accompany the gathering and reporting of information to protect the rights and welfare of the participants involved in the research study. Data were presented in narrative forms and analysed thematically.

5.5 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The summary of findings is presented according to sub-research questions of the study.

5.5.1 Sub-research question 1: To what extent do gendered cultural codes determine the academic performance of female university students?

The current study revealed that gender codes which influence academic performance of female university students include cultural issues such as domestic chores and the societal beliefs. This study established that domestic chores were taxing and consumed much of the female students' study time. The chores were so overwhelming that they caused physical and mental fatigue as well as stress. The study further revealed that domestic chores also caused late submission of assignments. The maternal role which entailed caring for the family was portrayed as a domestic chore that influenced the academic performance of the female university students causing low academic performance.

It emerged from this study that cultural beliefs such as the subservient role of females, male dominance and females being less intelligent than males were influencing the academic performance of the female university students. This study established that highly educated females were believed to dominate their husbands because they may not need material support from them. Since marriage is highly valued, most female university students were very concerned about failing to get a life partner or facing divorce due to the fact that they would be highly educated. This was said to compromise their academic performance and their effort to attain higher academic achievements. The findings also indicated that the subservient role was affecting the female university students' self esteem and self confidence.

All these factors were viewed as greatly influencing the female university students' academic performance. The female students' internalisation of the belief that females are generally low performers was viewed as inhibiting high academic performance as the belief affects their level of confidence.

5.5.2 Sub-research question 2: How does family background affect the academic performance of female university students?

The study revealed that the level of education of family members influenced the academic performance of female students. Educated parents were seen to be supportive of their daughters. They provided emotional support and material resources. A few uneducated parents were viewed as supportive of their daughters' education so as to break the cycle of poverty. The study established that the socio-economic status of the family influenced the academic performance of the female university students. It emerged from this study that factors such as the family's financial position were viewed as highly influencing the academic performance of the female students since finances are required to meet all the needs of the female student. The female student was viewed as more affected since most families in Zimbabwe place a higher value on the boy child than the girl child.

The study also established that some female students were performing poorly as they believed that spiritual interventions would help them to pass. Some families believed that female students would be married and looked after by their husbands thus they would not need to make academic efforts. The study revealed that other factors that are related to the family background of the female university students that influenced academic performance were domestic violence, broken families and loss of a family member. These factors caused stress and trauma to some female students.

5.5.3 Sub-research question 3: How do lecturers' attitudes and competencies influence academic performance of female university students?

The study revealed that attitudes of most male lecturers were negative and different from those of most female lecturers. The study indicated that lecturers who were socialised to see females as inferior to males brought that attitude to lecture rooms. The attitudes of lecturers and stereotyping were viewed as affecting the level of confidence of female students and then their academic performance.

The study established that poor lecture presentation and lecture delivery were factors that influenced the academic performance of the female university students. Some lecturers dictated notes without explanations which made the course material difficult to understand. Poor teaching methods mostly affected female students since they, in many cases, failed to have enough time to study due to gender codes.

5.5.4 Sub-research question 4: To what extent do resources affect the academic performance of female university students?

It emerged from this study that a lack of resources had a major influence on academic performance of the female university students. The study revealed that resources were the key in achieving effective teaching and learning which greatly influenced the academic performance of the female university students. Lack of transport and reading materials were among the resource factors affecting the academic performance of female university students. Hunger also caused female students to suffer mental fatigue since the brain was not able to function properly and grasp concepts quickly.

Due to lack of transport, female students were walking long distances between locations and campuses and this compromised their academic performance as they started lectures when they were already tired due to domestic chores and walking long distances. The female students did not have enough time to queue for scarce books in the library to add information to their notes. The female university students were thus most affected by the lack of resources since they lacked high endurance like their male counterparts who can endure and manage through difficult situations.

5.5.5 Sub-research question 5: What strategies can be employed in order to reduce or close the achievement gap between males and females?

The study revealed that female students need to be emancipated from the mindset that they were raised for domesticity which makes them feel obliged to do domestic chores. Society needs to be educated on the plight of female students through campaigns, programmes, workshops, books and monographs which seek to emancipate female students. The study established that there is a need for feminists and organisations such as the United Nations, through its organs, to intensify campaigns against inequalities between males and females. It was suggested that females should be involved in the formulation of policies that emancipate them. The United Nations, through its organs, may enforce these policies and monitor their

implementation. The study revealed that, even if resources were provided, women still need to be emancipated from the gendered roles such as domesticity, the gendered maternal role and subservient roles which take up the study time of female students.

The study also revealed that female students need guidance and counselling services which must be readily available and provided by experienced counsellors. The study also revealed that fund raising projects at institution level must be done in order to provide equipment and consumables necessary for good teaching and learning. It was also suggested that subsidised procurement should be in place to cater for experts from within or outside the country. Value added tax and other taxes applying to the procurement of university items should be removed to accelerate the process of building structures and buying equipment.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The main thrust of this study was to establish the determinants of academic performance of female university students at state university in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. Basing on the findings of this study it can be concluded that there are several factors that determine the academic performance of female university students. Gendered cultural codes were rated the most dominant factor that negatively influences the academic performance of the female university students, followed by the family background. Lecturers' attitudes and competence and the availability/non-availability of resources were also variables that significantly determine the academic performance of the female university students. The next section discusses the recommendations.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, recommendations related to policy and practice that may improve the academic performance of female university students have been made.

5.7.1 Policy

This study recommends the enactment of policies which may help to improve the academic performance of female university students. There is need for a gender main streaming policy where gender studies could become part of the curriculum throughout the education system. That is, all schools, colleges and universities would have gender studies as part of their curriculum. The inclusion of gender studies in education may instil gender sensitivity in

children at tender age that will help them to appreciate the importance of sharing domestic duties. Furthermore a policy that makes it mandatory for all reading materials in educational institutions to be gender sensitive could go a long way in fostering gender sensitivity among students and teachers. There is also a need for legislation that mandates all university lecturers to acquire professional teaching and learning skills.

5.7.2 Practice

5.7.2.1 Provision of guidance and counselling services

The study recommends that the institution provide guidance and counselling specialists who are well trained and readily available so as to attend to female students who in most cases face many challenges as compared to their male counterparts. Guidance and counselling services are crucial so as to alleviate the students from stress and also for them to regain their self esteem and confidence. It is also very important to have special counselling rooms which allow for privacy and confidentiality since some of the issues are typical to females. There is need for the institution to have ways of monitoring and supervising the provision of the guidance and counselling services so as to ensure that female students get the counselling that is tailor made and helps them to find ways of improving their academic performance.

5.7.2.2 Provision of resources

Institutions of higher learning, with the support of the government and other stakeholders, need to give preference to female students when distributing resources since this study has revealed that female students have more needs as compared to their male counterparts. Families are also encouraged to distribute resources to their children equally considering that female and male children are equally important and considering the fact that females require more resources than male children. The institutions should involve female students in projects which empower them financially.

5.7.2.3 Attitudes of lecturers and parents

Institutions of higher education can cultivate and nurture positive attitudes in parents, lecturers and students towards females through workshops and paper media in order to achieve gender equity. The Division of Students' Affairs should be in charge of programmes that nurture the attitudes of both lecturers and students. The government and non-

governmental organisations may also intensify their efforts to the change of attitudes of parents, students, teachers and lecturers through training in order to achieve gender equity. Programmes that focus on a change in attitudes may also target all other stake holders such as the Christian community and the society in general in order to reach all people and achieve gender equality.

5.7.2.4 Training of Lecturers

The study recommends that lecturers who are holders of non-teaching degrees be give in house training by the university so that they acquire teaching skills. Lecturers may also be encouraged to acquire a post graduate diploma in education as a pre-requisite for a lecturing post.

5.7.2.5 A model for improving the academic performance of the female university students

The model being proposed by L. Manwa is a reflection of the suggestions from all the participants, literature and the theoretical framework on how to improve the academic performance of the female university students. The model was designed based on the main theory that informed this study, Sameroff's transactional theory. A contextualised study of problems faced by a group of people is a sound approach that considers the details of the nurture process which represents the transaction between the female student and the environment. Eagly's social role theory states that females are socialised to conform to the norms and values of the dominant culture which initiates them in their gender specific roles. Ford (2002:19) acknowledges that gender roles affect female students and compromise their academic performance. The special feature of this model is the emphasis on the introduction of a policy on tracking mechanisms that ensure effectiveness of the implementation of suggested solutions.
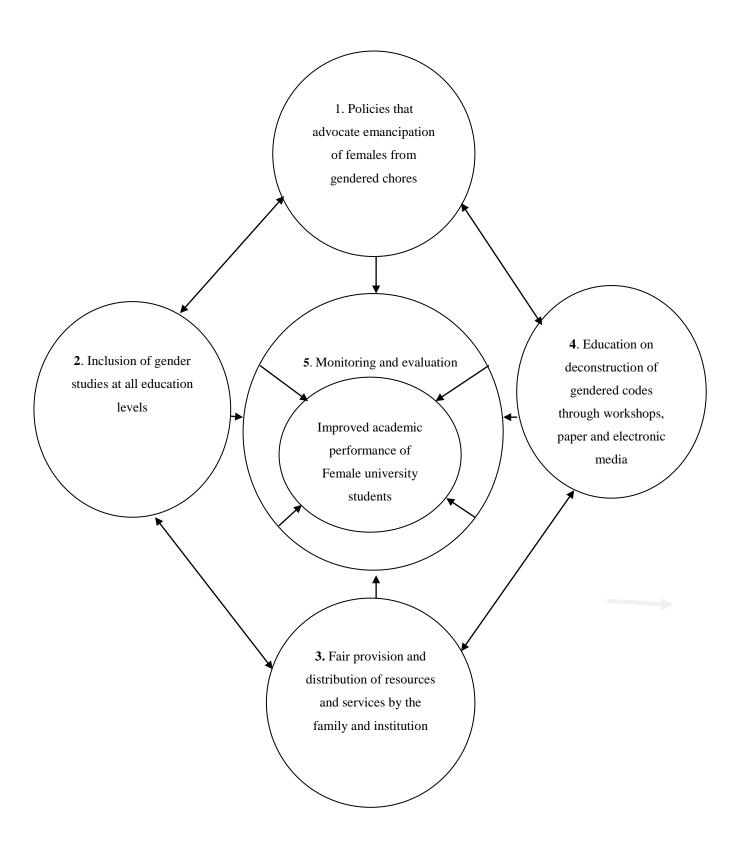
Figure 5.1: A proposed L. Manwa (2014) model for improving the academic performance of female university students

The model shows that all the variables are linked in such a way that they cannot be treated in isolation. This implies that the suggested solutions if implemented individually cannot totally solve the problem. The problems revealed in this model are a societal problem that affects all females regardless of colour, creed or social status. The suggested solutions can also be used as a buffer that reduces the impact of the problem on the female university student.

Component 1: Policies that advocate emancipation of females from gendered chores and follow up mechanisms

The study recommends policies that advocate for neutral gendered roles which are considered as a major change which can improve the performance of the female university students. As Watkins (2000:196) says, feminism brings hope of freedom from domestic chores to females as they advocate for gender neutrality. The policy should adopt feminist views and include sections that gradually influence family and the community beliefs that regard the female child as inferior to the male child to value the female child as equally important as the male child. Policies to check the effectiveness of each suggested solution should be developed. Feminists and other women's organisations, including female university student forums, should be involved in policy making and in charge of follow up mechanisms backed by the government and non-governmental organisations.

Component 2: Inclusion of gender studies at all education levels

The inclusion of gender studies from primary level through tertiary may be used as a means to influence a change in attitudes of parents, males, lecturers and the society in general on gendered cultural issues which affect female children. Many societies in the world treat the female child as secondary to the male child and believe that the female child is born to be a carer (Rank, 2012:4; McKie, 2010:1; Skinner, 2009:290; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:91; Jensen, 2006:4; Ford, 2002:19; Watkins, 2000:193). Eagly's social role theory, which is one of the theories that underpins this study, asserts that the socialisation process is a tool used to instil cultural beliefs, gendered expectations, values and norms in humans. Hence, education as part of the secondary socialisation process can be used as a tool to reverse the damage already done. Attitudes of lecturers and the challenges faced by female university students from the lecture room perspective can be improved when they are educated on gender issues. Competence of lecturers can be improved if they are trained to accommodate the female

university students in their methodologies.

Component 3: Education on deconstruction of gender codes through workshops, paper and electronic media

The influence of family beliefs that regard the female child as inferior to the male child can be changed through workshops, paper and electronic media such monographs, newspaper columns, magazines and electronic journals, the internet and television programmes that conscientise the families and the community in general that the female child is equally important as the male child. Respected men such as chiefs and church leaders may be involved in campaigns that encourage gender equity and maintaining the cultural fabric of the nation. Fair distribution of domestic chores among children, regardless of sex, can also be covered through workshops by the Zimbabwean Ministry of Gender. Campaigns done through the media and workshops are encouraged in order to conscientise the female students on the influence of beliefs that are disadvantaging them. Gendered codes are internalised by females to the extent that unconsciously gendered chores affect their academic performance (Ford, 2002:20). Available media may help in reinforcing the need for the deconstruction of gender beliefs.

Component 4: Fair provision and distribution of resources and services

The proposed model advocates for a fair distribution of resources from the family to institutional level. The institution may give preference to the female student as a gesture of fair distribution of resources. The family, government and all other stakeholders should consider that females are equally vulnerable in terms of resources. The fact that females are the poorest and most marginalised in the world should initiate calls for special funds for empowering women. Guidance and counselling services tailor made for the female students should be put in place and be readily available.

Component 5: Monitoring and evaluation

Implementation of policies requires tracking changes through monitoring and evaluation programmes which ensure that the policies are implemented in the correct manner. Monitoring will also assist in checking for weaknesses so as to improve the policies and the implementation process. Inclusion of gender studies at all educational levels needs to be

monitored to ensure that the inclusion is properly implemented. Monitoring and evaluation of education on deconstruction of gender codes through workshops, paper and electronic media need assessment to ensure that all key players. Evaluation is necessary to determine whether the education provided is achieving its intended goal of conscientising families and the community in general that the female child is as important as the male child. Provision and distribution of resources and services needs monitoring to ensure that intended beneficiaries receive them and that the distribution is done fairly. Evaluation of the provision and distribution of resources and services will go a long way in identifying areas for improvement, It is only when the components mentioned above (1 to 4) are monitored and evaluated, that improvement in the academic performance of the female university students can be realised.

5.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study used a sound approach that captures and examines situational factors such as the family background, socialisation process, classroom cultures and pedagogy, teacher attitudes and competence that may be influencing different performance levels of female and male students. The study is intended to be a reference or manual to deal with matters affecting female university students. The results of this study can be used as a springboard for further research in universities.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This current study focused on one university so it is very important to study all the other state universities in Zimbabwe in order to establish whether the findings can be generalised. An in-depth study on the African and Zimbabwean cultural beliefs that disadvantage the girl child from birth through tertiary education is critical in finding a lasting solution that can improve the academic performance of the female university students. Comparative studies which include other universities in Africa and in developed countries are necessary to find out whether the same situation prevails in other countries.

5.10 FINAL COMMENTS

The study successfully established the determinants of academic performance of the female university at a state university in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The experiences of both female

university students and the lecturers revealed the determinants of academic performance of the female students.

The academic performance of female university students was found to be influenced by a range of variables such as gendered cultural codes that were preoccupying the female university students and took most of their study time. The family background, the availability of resources and lecturer attitudes and competencies were also critical factors which were influencing the academic performance of the female university students.

This study also suggested possible solutions to the problem of underachievement by female university students. The suggested solutions pertain to all interested parties and the university female students. An emphasis was placed on tracking changes which was to be done by the female university students and other women's groups because, although effort may be put in trying to solve the problem, without follow up measures, very little will be achieved in terms of improving the academic performance of the female university students.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE STUDENTS

DETERMINANTS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE STUDENTS AT A UNIVERSITY IN MASVINGO PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

INTERVIEW ITEMS FOR THE STUDENTS

I, Lilian Manwa, am a UNISA student conducting a research on Determinants of Academic Performance of Female Students at a University in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. The respondents are kindly asked to respond honestly. This information is confidential and will be used for the purposes of research only.

Place of the interview.. Date...............................Time.....................

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Part or level..

Subject/s of Specialisation..

SECTION B

Gendered cultural codes and academic performance of university female students

a) What are the cultural issues that affect the academic performance of female students? Explain your answer.

b) How do societal beliefs affect female students' academic performance?

c) Do gender codes influence the rate of absenteeism among female students? Explain your answer in relation to their academic performance.

d) How do gendered codes affect the attitudes of female students towards their university work?

e) Do you have confidence in your ability? Explain your answer.

SECTION C

Family background and academic performance of female students

a) Does the level of education of members of student's family influence student's academic performance? Explain your answer.

b) What is your opinion on the influence of family's socio-economic status on the academic performance of female students?

c) Is there any relationship between family's belief system and academic performance of female students? Explain your answer.

d) Explain any other family background related factors that may influence the academic performance of female students.

SECTION D

Lecturers' attitudes and competencies and academic performance of female students

a) Do you think lecturer attitudes affect female students' academic performance?

b) How does lecture delivery affect academic performance of female students?

c) How does lecturer competence affect academic performance of female students?

d) Do lecturers have confidence in the ability of female students? Explain your answer in relation to their academic performance?

SECTION E

Resources and academic performance of female university students

a) Mention key resources that influence the academic performance of female students.

b) Are the above resources available at your institution? Explain your answer in relation to the academic performance of female students.

SECTION F

Strategies that can be employed in order to improve the academic performance of female students

Suggest ways that can be employed in order to improve the academic performance of female students?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LECTURERS

DETERMINANTS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE STUDENTS AT A UNIVERSITY IN MASVINGO PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

INTERVIEW ITEMS FOR LECTURERS

I, Lilian Manwa am a UNISA student conducting a research on Determinants of Academic Performance of Female Students at a University in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. The respondents are kindly asked to respond honestly. This information is confidential and will be used for the purposes of research only.

Place of the interview... Date..................................Time............

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Area of Specialisation...

Sex: male   ☐   female   ☐

SECTION B:

Gendered cultural codes and academic performance of university female students

a) What are the cultural issues that affect the academic performance of female students? Explain your answer.

b) How do societal beliefs affect female students' academic performance?

c) Do gender codes influence the rate of absenteeism among female students? Explain your answer in relation to their academic performance.

d) How do gendered codes affect the attitudes of female students towards their university work?

SECTION C:

Family background and academic performance of female students

a) Does the level of education of members of student's family influence student's academic performance? Explain your answer.

b) What is your opinion on the influence of family's socio-economic status on the academic performance of female students?

c) Is there any relationship between the family's belief system and academic performance of female students? Explain your answer.

d) Explain any other family background related factors that may influence the academic performance of female students.

SECTION D:

Lecturers' attitudes and competencies and academic performance of female students

a) Do you think lecturer attitudes affect female students' academic performance?

b) How does lecture delivery affect academic performance of female students?

c) How does lecturer competence affect academic performance of female students?

d) Do you have confidence in the ability of female students? Explain your answer in relation to their academic performance?

SECTION E:

Resources and academic performance of female university students

a) Mention key resources that influence academic performance of female students.

b) Are the resources available at the institution? Explain your answer in relation to academic performance of female students.

SECTION F:

Strategies that can be employed in order to improve the academic performance of female students

Suggest ways that can be employed in order to improve the academic performance of female students?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

DETERMINANTS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE STUDENTS AT A UNIVERSITY IN MASVINGO PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ITEMS

I, Lilian Manwa am a UNISA student conducting a research on Determinants of Academic Performance of Female Students at a University in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. The respondents are kindly asked to respond honestly. This information is confidential and will be used for the purposes of research only.

Place of the interview... Date..................................Time......................

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Part or levels..

SECTION B:

Gendered cultural codes and academic performance of university female students

a) What are the cultural issues that affect the academic performance of female students? Explain your answer.

b) How do societal beliefs affect female students' academic performance?

c) Do gender codes influence the rate of absenteeism among female students? Explain your answer in relation to their academic performance.

d) How do gendered codes affect the attitudes of female students towards their university work?

e) Do you have confidence in your ability? Explain your answer.

SECTION C:

Family background and academic performance of female students

a) Does the level of education of members of student's family influence student's academic performance? Explain your answer.

b) What is your opinion on the influence of the family's socio-economic status on the academic performance of female students?

c) Is there any relationship between the family's belief system and academic performance of female students? Explain your answer.

d) Explain any other family background related factors that may influence the academic performance of female students.

SECTION D:

Lecturers' attitudes and competencies and academic performance of female students

a) Do you think lecturer attitudes affect female students' academic performance?

b) How does lecture delivery affect academic performance of female students?

c) How does lecturer competence affect academic performance of female students?

d) Do lecturers have confidence in the ability of female students? Explain your answer in relation to their academic performance?

SECTION E:

Resources and academic performance of female university students

a) Mention key resources that influence academic performance of female students.

b) Are the above resources available at your institution? Explain your answer in relation to the academic performance of female students.

SECTION F:

Strategies that can be employed in order to improve the academic performance of female students

Suggest ways that can be employed in order to improve the academic performance of female students?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR BOTH FEMALE STUDENTS AND THE LECTURERS

Dear Student/lecturer

My name is Lilian Manwa. I am a student with the University of South Africa for the Doctor of Education Degree in DED (Psychology of Education). I am conducting research on Determinants of Academic Performance of Female Students at a University in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe.

Procedures

The researcher requests for your participation. If you accept to participate, I will converse with you for an hour and with your consent our conversation or discussion will be recorded in writing and an audio recorder will also be used. Twenty-four other students and four other lecturers will participate. You will be interviewed individually or be involved in group discussions of five in each group and their responses and yours will be reported as findings. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary so that you can terminate your involvement at any time, notwithstanding the fact that you would have consented to participate. Please feel free to express your experiences honestly. You will remain anonymous and all the information you provide will be held in strict confidence and with utmost privacy. You may decline to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable and you do not have to provide me with a reason for refusing to answer any question. If you decide not to be part of the study, there will be no consequences for you. There is no right or wrong answer to any question. I just want to know your opinions and ideas. The study does not anticipate any risks to you.

Privacy and confidentiality

I shall use an audio tape recorder in this focus group discussion or interview. To help me remember what you say here, I will just take notes and audio record. Your real name will not be recorded but codes will be used instead. The only place your name will be recorded is on the information sheet and the informed consent form. These forms will only be in my possession and will never be used in any research output.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits from this study but your participation will help us find out the determinants of academic performance of female university students at Great Zimbabwe University in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The information obtained from the interviews or group discussions will help in finding ways of improving the academic performance of female university students.

If you have questions about the study, you may ask now. If you do not have questions and agree to participate in this study, then we will go ahead and begin the interview or discussion. Firstly, I will ask you to sign this form, stating that I, the interviewer, have informed you of your rights and that you have agreed to participate in this interview. This is the only place your name will be entered. If you do not wish to sign your name you may simply mark with an "X".

Volunteer Statement

The interview has been explained to me. I have been given a chance to ask questions which I may have and I am content with the answers to all my questions. I also know that; my records will be kept private and confidential, I can choose not to be interviewed, not to answer certain questions or stop the interview at any time. I give consent that my interview can be audio tape recorded. I understand that twenty-nine other volunteer interviews and group discussions will be analysed together with mine and reported on as findings of the study.

Date: _____

Name of Volunteer: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

The interviewer's statement

I Lilian Manwa, the undersigned, have defined and explained to the volunteer in a language that he/she understands, the procedure to be followed and the risks and benefits involved and the obligations of the interview

Date: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____

Signature of Interviewer: _____

APPENDIX E: LETTER SEEKING CLEARANCE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY

Appendix E

LETTER SEEKING CLEARANCE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY

08 September, 2013

The Registrar

Great Zimbabwe University

Box 1235

Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

Dear Madam

R.E: **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY.**

I am undertaking a study on the Determinants of Academic Performance of Female Students at a University in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe for a doctoral degree at University of South Africa (UNISA). I am requesting for permission to conduct research in the institution. This request is in compliance with the UNISA College of Education Research Ethics policy. The research will use in-depth interviews with individuals and focus group discussions, and only female students and lecturers will be involved. The purpose of the research is to find out what determine the academic performance of female university students with the aim of finding ways of reducing the achievement gap and make recommendations on how to improve the academic performance.

The University Ethics Committee requires written permission of this request from your office and your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours

L. Manwa.

APPENDIX F: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Appendix F

Letter of permission to conduct research

	Registrar *Ms S. Tirivanhu* *P O Box 1235* *MASVINGO* *Tel: 039-252100* *Fax: 039-252100*	*Off Old Great Zimbabwe Road* *MASVINGO* *E mail: stirivanhu@gzu.ac.zw*

GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY

09 September, 2013

Mrs L. Manwa
Great Zimbabwe University
Box 1235
MASVINGO

Dear Mrs Manwa

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY.

The above subject matter refers.

This is to confirm that your request has been approved, but please note that we would request a copy of your findings too.

Wishing you good luck in your studies.

Sincerely

S. Tirivanhu (Ms)
REGISTRAR

GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY
P.O. BOX 1235, MASVINGO
TEL/FAX: 039-252100

0 9 SEP 2013

REGISTRAR