

**A Quantitative Study Investigating the Correlation between Relationship Satisfaction and Causal Attributions in Adult Couples. A South African Study.**

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Declaration: I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Psychology degree to the Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not been previously submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Signature:

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### **Abstract**

There is a lack of research that has been done on the correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction within a South African context. A quantitative study was done to investigate the correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction in adult relationships within Kwa-Zulu Natal. Data was collected using closed-ended questionnaires. Results obtained from the multiple choice questions were efficient to analyse by using the Pearson's R correlation coefficient. Results indicated that a correlation does exist between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction. An overall high score on locus of causality was obtained, indicating that the fundamental attribution error was prominent in this study. Stability obtained the lowest scores, indicating that most of the respondents were optimistic about the future of their relationships. Men obtained higher scores than the women, and therefore had a higher degree of negative attributions towards their partners.

*Keywords:* Causal attributions, relationship satisfaction, correlation

## **A Quantitative Study Investigating the Correlation between Relationship Satisfaction and Causal Attributions in Adult Couples. A South African Study.**

### **Contextualisation**

Humans are constantly seeking to understand the causal determinants for others' behaviours and actions (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). Bias may occur when attributing the cause of others' behaviour, which may be brought on by specific qualities of the attributor or contextual circumstances in which the attributer finds himself/herself (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). Because attributions are socially created, and are dependent on the thinking patterns within the mind of the attributer, factors within the individual, such as mood, distress levels, and situational factors the individual exists within, significantly affect the way they think and process information, ultimately affecting the attributions they make (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). The relationship between attributions and relationship satisfaction has not been studied within a South African context. This is a crucial problem because contextual influences in which an attributer finds herself/himself may have an impact on his/her stress levels or thinking patterns, which may affect the attributions he/she makes about his/her partner and ultimately affect both partners' relationship satisfaction.

### **Rationale**

This study will be done to investigate the correlation between relationship satisfaction and causal attributions. There is a lack of research that has been done on the possible correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction within a South African context. There may be external factors that are indigenous to a South African context which may influence this correlation and therefore it is vital to address and uncover such factors.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a lack of research that has been done on the correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction within a South African context.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction in adult relationships, where the partners are aged 18-40, within Kwa-Zulu Natal.

### **Research Question**

Is there a correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction in adult relationships?

## Research objective

To determine whether a correlation exists between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction.

## Hypotheses

H1:  $p > 0$

It is hypothesised that there is a positive correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction.

H2:  $p = 0$

It is hypothesised that there is no correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction.

## Theoretical Framework

Jones and Davis's (1965) theory of attribution states that individuals are constantly seeking to understand the causal determinants for others' behaviours and actions (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). An attribution is an individual's construction of reality and a general form of sense-making in order to understand the reasoning behind others' and their own actions (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). Internal attributions occur when the attributer assigns the cause of behaviour to internal factors such as stable characteristics, whereas external attributions occur when the attributer assigns the cause of behaviour to external and uncontrollable factors such as chance (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). Internal attributions therefore place responsibility on the individual for their behaviour in a situation.

Bias may occur when attributing the cause of others' behaviour. The tendency for the attributer to overestimate internal factors as the cause of behaviour and underestimate external factors, even in the presence of clear situational causes, is known as the fundamental attribution bias, also known as correspondence bias (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). This error may be brought on by specific qualities of the attributer or contextual circumstances in which the attributer finds himself/herself. For example, if a couple has made plans to go out for dinner for their anniversary, the boyfriend arrives late with a valid excuse. He is soaking wet from the rain and claims that he had to walk to the restaurant in the rain, as his car broke down. There is evidence that the reason for his behaviour is due to situational factors, yet the girlfriend assumes that the real reason for him being late is that he forgot about their date. This is an example of attributing someone else's behaviour due to internal causes. There are many factors that could have caused the girlfriend to make this kind of attribution,

such as cognitive traits she may possess like neurotic tendencies or situational factors such as her previous experience in relationships.

The attribution theory is applicable to this research project because it provides a possible causal factor for different levels of satisfaction that exist within adult couples, as different types of causal attributions may have various effects on the dynamics within a relationship. An individual's attributions towards others is strongly influenced by their own thought processes and emotions (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). Tendency to be biased when attributing another person's behaviour and the dynamics which exist between partners within a romantic relationship, may have an effect on each other.

The theory of attribution explains the different kinds of causal attributions that may have an influence on relationship satisfaction. If a couple experiences more negative attributions than positive ones between each other, they are more likely to be less satisfied with their relationship compared to a couple who experiences more positive attributions than negative ones. The dimensions within causal attributions include stability of a relationship, controllability, blame, locus of causality and motivation (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). These areas of a couple's relationship are likely to have an effect on their relationship satisfaction.

### **Literature Review**

Relationship satisfaction refers to the overall quality of the relationship (Harvey, Wenzel, & Sprecher, 2008). A close relationship with a high level of quality is one involving strong, frequent and diverse interdependence between partners, that lasts over a substantial period of time (Harvey, Wenzel, & Sprecher, 2008). Many studies have made use of various measurement scales in order to assess relationship satisfaction. Among these includes the Causal Dimensional Scale, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and the Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM).

The Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM) would be the most appropriate choice of scale for the current study. This measure was introduced by Fincham and Bradbury (1992) as a reliable instrument, allowing assessment of different types of attributions relating to marital behaviour, yielding an association between attributions and marital satisfaction (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992). In an article examining 3 married couples regarding types of attributions for partner behaviour, reliability in this scale was established. High internal consistency and test-retest correlations were found. Causal and responsibility attribution scores correlated with marital satisfaction, attributions for marital difficulties and attributions for partner behaviours (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992).

Our close relationships provide the context for many important and mundane experiences. Understanding the nature and processes of personal relationships is crucial because they occupy a significant part of our lives. Attributions are a general form of sense making in order to identify the cause of a person's behaviour. Attributions are used to help individuals understand their own actions and the actions of others (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). Attributions are socially created, and are dependent on the thinking patterns within the mind of the attributer (Manusov & Harvey, 2001).

The mood and level of distress present in the mind of the attributer significantly affects the way they think and process information, ultimately affecting the attributions they make (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). Moods can be identified as low intensity and enduring affective states, without a noticeable cause. They have a long lasting and subtle influence on attributions (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). A person's mood influences the type of information processing strategy they use. This means that, within a relationship, a person's mood affects their attributions of their partner's behaviour (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). Fluctuating affective states may have an influence on relationship satisfaction, as happy partners often produce attributions that enhance relationship quality and unhappy partners produce attributions that maintain their current level of distress (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). Effective functioning in relationships requires accurate perceptions and interpretations of behaviour of partners (Harvey, Wenzel, & Sprecher, 2008). Moods also influence the likelihood of an individual committing an attributional error, as happy people may tend to find more lenient explanations for behaviour and sad people tend to make more pessimistic and negative interpretations (Manusov & Harvey, 2001).

Results from a study done by Debrot, Siegler, Klumb and Schoebi (2018) suggested that detachment from work affects individuals' and their close partners' perception of their interactions, thus detachment plays an important mediating role in the relationship (Debrot, Siegler, Klumb, & Schoebi, 2018). High work demands consume individual resources and being able to conserve and recover these resources is challenging (Debrot, Siegler, Klumb, & Schoebi, 2018). It is important to detach from work to maintain an adequate level of well-being and functioning (Debrot, Siegler, Klumb, & Schoebi, 2018). Exposure to stressors and the strain they bring has potential to harm romantic relationships because work stress diminishes constructive reactions in couples' interactions (Debrot, Siegler, Klumb, & Schoebi, 2018). This means that a prolonged exposure to stressors decreases overall relationship satisfaction by decreasing the ability for partners to constructively

react to each other and ultimately increase likelihood of the fundamental attribution error (Debrot, Siegler, Klumb, & Schoebi, 2018).

The context in which a relationship exists has a significant impact on the success of the relationship, as it may influence the moods of the partners involved and their levels of distress. An article examining the correlates of relationship satisfaction in Ugandan HIV-positive individuals seeking treatment at a community clinic found that marital satisfaction declined at the onset of illness (Pasipanodya & Heatherington, 2015). Once health problems exist, factors that relate to marital satisfaction, such as stress and depression, are highly correlated (Pasipanodya & Heatherington, 2015). The dynamics that exist within relationships in South Africa may differ significantly compared to those studied in other countries. Within a South African context, there may be external factors which may have an impact on relationship satisfaction. Sources of distress in intimate relationships could stem from a variety of factors such as cultural expectations from partners' family members.

Results from Ishii (2016) show that the association between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction varies between different countries (Ishii, 2016). Cultural and gender differences across different countries influence how coping behaviour affects relationship outcomes. Stress that spills over into one's intimate relationship can increase negative behaviour between partners (Ishii, 2016). The systematic-transactional model of stress and dyadic coping, suggest that the association between coping behaviour and relationship satisfaction is determined by cultural influences (Ishii, 2016). Culture is a contextual factor that influences how people help each other cope. Coping behaviour may be affected by specific constructs such as gender roles, family situation, individualism/collectivism, which are determined by an individual's cultural upbringing (Ishii, 2016). In South Africa, a collective culture is prominent amongst families as opposed to western culture. This article proposes that partners who identify with a collectivist culture may provide less support, when confronted with stress, as it may disturb the harmony with others (Ishii, 2016).

The Development of Early Adult Romantic Relationships model proposes that characteristics in the course of adult romantic relationships may be shaped by interactional characteristics from the individual's family of origin. This model also proposes a possible direct influence of experiences in the family on attributes of the relationship (Vangelisti, Reis, & Fitzpatrick, 2009). An article examining whether social support indirectly influences psychological well-being via older adults' qualitative perceptions of support, found that greater support network size predicted lower

perceived stress, fewer depressive symptoms, and better life satisfaction (Fuller-Iglesias, 2015). Different cultural upbringings within South African families may have a significant effect on the dynamics within individuals' romantic relationships. For example, 'African time' is a phenomenon that happens a lot within South Africa. This is a tendency for individuals to arrive much later than the expected time. This phenomenon originates from the values which African cultures have placed on time, which differ to western values of punctuality. This is an example of where a behaviour such as arriving late may be interpreted as inconsiderate between a couple where one partner comes from a Zulu heritage and the other comes from a British heritage. Because of the different family heritages of each partner, there may be a possibility that misinterpretations may arise and attribution bias.

Attributions are influenced by various factors that may affect an individual's attributions towards his or her partner's behaviour, and the tendency to be biased in attributing behaviour may be brought on by various factors that are not related to the person whose behaviour is being attributed. Based on the knowledge of this literature review, there is no previous literature that examines the relationship between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction within a South African context. There are factors which are present in a South African context may not be present within studies on this topic, which have taken place in other countries, meaning that dynamics within a South African relationship, regarding causal attributions, may differ. This ultimately would affect relationship satisfaction among South African couples.

## **Methodology**

### **Paradigm**

The positivist paradigm will be adopted in this study. This will determine what kinds of questions are worthy of investigation. Positivism adopts the view that reality can be captured and treated as a system of causes and effects, one objective reality exists and that the laws governing it can be discovered. Focus lies on obtaining broad ideas and averages (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The ontological view of reality, according to the Positivist paradigm, is that a single, measurable reality exists and it is one that can be scientifically and objectively measured by empirically gathering data and analysing it through the use of statistical, quantitative measures (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The following study will be investigating whether a correlation exists between two variables; causal

attributions and relationship satisfaction. The Positivist paradigm will be best suited for this study because, through the use of statistical methods of data collection and analysis, a single reality will be discovered, which is whether or not a correlation exists.

According to the axiological view of the Positivist paradigm, research is value-free and personal values which the researcher holds do not influence data (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). No research can be truly and completely objective because research is done by human beings, which are not capable of being absolutely objective. Axiology focuses on what the research values and such values affect the way in which the researcher conducts the research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In this case, valid, reliable and generalizable findings are valued. The researcher aims to find results which contribute significantly to the body of knowledge in psychology. The researcher remains independent from the data and an objective stance towards findings is maintained throughout the research process is vital (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

One of the disadvantages of the positivist paradigm is that it offers a narrow view on reality, as it does not consider the range of opinions and experiences of individuals. It instead values facts and statistics of large numbers of people in order to attain an overall, collective understanding (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). While this may be a disadvantage in some research studies, it has the opposite effect on others such as this one. Because of the fact that positivism values facts, statistics and data in large quantities makes the data collection process an easier one. Data can be grouped and measured and because the sample size is large, a more accurate representation of the public can be discovered (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

## **Design**

This research project will be non-experimental. Due to time constraints of this Honours degree, this study will be cross-sectional, where data will be gathered from participants at one point in time. No manipulation of variables will take place.

A quantitative research approach focuses on external, observable reality and aims to gather data logically, so that data can be transformed into statistics (Maree & Pietersen, 2020). A quantitative approach will be adopted because it will assist this research project in answering the research question by seeking to find a correlation between attributions and relationship satisfaction through observing external and measurable reality.

Deductive theorising will be used because the hypothesis will be based on the theory of attribution, which is a theory that has already been developed. This theory will attempt to explain a correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction (Payne, 2014). Specific observations regarding this correlation will be made based on the general theory.

### **Population**

The nature of the population was people. The target population was adults between the ages of 18 and 40 who were involved in a romantic relationship and the accessible population was such adults within Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN). This age group was chosen because according to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1963), this stage of life predominantly involves the formation of intimate relationships (Hook, 2013).

### **Sampling**

A limitation of snowball sampling is the fact that not all of the elements of the population have an equal chance of being selected to be a part of the sample and therefore results from the data will not be generalizable (Maree & Pietersen, 2020). Two people, whom the researcher knew of and who fit the population parameters of this study, were emailed the questionnaire. They were asked to email the questionnaire to other people whom they knew of, that also fit the population parameters. Participants needed to be adults between the ages 18 and 40, they needed to be involved in a romantic relationship and live within KZN, in order to meet the population parameters.

### ***Sampling Method***

Snowball sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, was used.

### ***Unit of Analysis***

The unit of analysis was participant responses

### ***Sample Size***

Sample size was 20 participants.

### **Data Collection**

As soon as ethical clearance was received, questionnaires were emailed to the participants. One of the challenges that were faced was the fact that not all participants were studious and speedy on returning their answered questionnaires. This caused delay in the data collection and analysis phases. There are many advantages to quantitative questionnaires. Scoring data is a quick, cost-effective and an efficient process and participants were able to complete the questionnaires in the comfort and familiarity of their own home (Maree & Pietersen, 2020). A disadvantage of emailing

participants is the fact that not all of them responded immediately and some of them did not respond at all. More than 20 participants needed to be contacted in order to gather data from an adequate number of participants. Participants circled, highlighted or placed a mark next to the answer which they most agreed with. Two scales were included in the questionnaire. The first one was the Couple Satisfaction index, which measured the relationship satisfaction of each participant (Hendrick, 1988). The second scale was the Relationship Attribution Measure, proposed by Frank Fincham and Thomas Bradbury (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992). The Relationship Attribution Measure proposed four hypothetical scenarios which the participant had to choose the answer that would best suite how he/she would react in the given situation. This measure included six attributional categories; locus of causality, globality, stability, blame, controllability and motivation. (Manusov & Harvey, 2001).

### **Data Analysis**

Regarding the measures of central tendency, the mean, median and mode were established via Microsoft Excel. So too were the measures of dispersion, including the range, variance and standard deviation. Because this is a correlational study, Pearson's R correlation coefficient was calculated in order to determine whether a relationship exists between relationship satisfaction and causal attributions. The p-value was established via an equation that included the n value, r value, degree of freedom and the t statistic (Khan, 2014). Bar graphs were produced in order to visually depict the correlation and to determine a linear relationship between relationship satisfaction and the six different categories within causal attributions (Khan, 2014). Scores for each category of attribution and scores for relationship satisfaction were added up for each person and correlated.

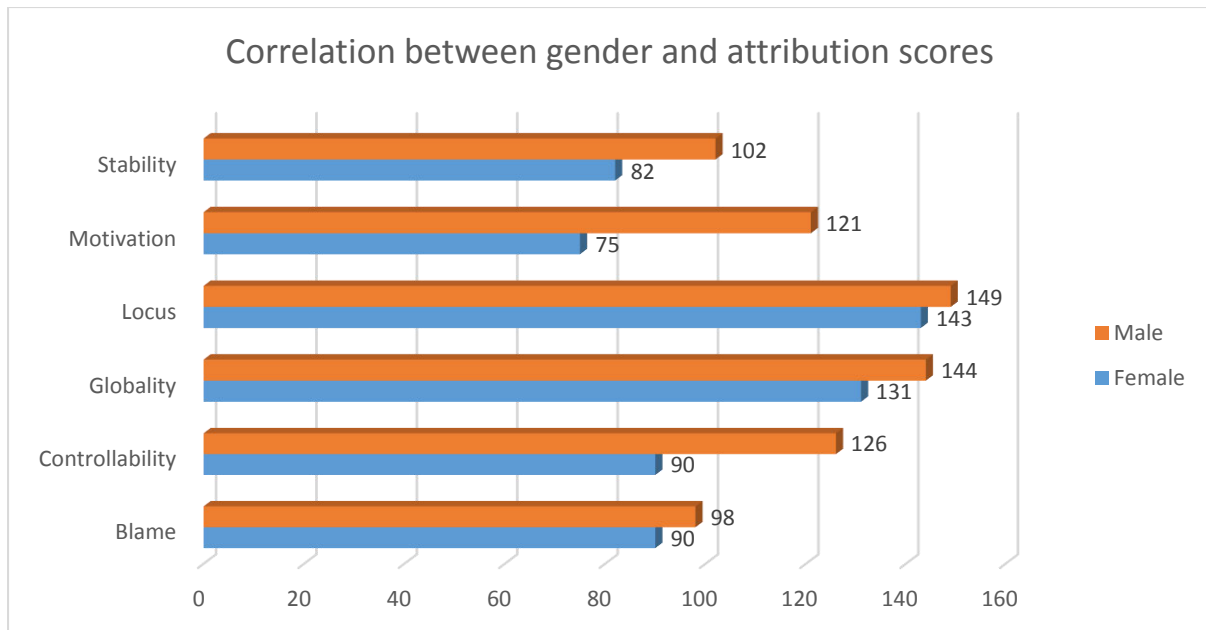
## **Findings and Interpretation**

### **Presentation of Findings**

#### ***Descriptive Statistics***

##### **Figure 1**

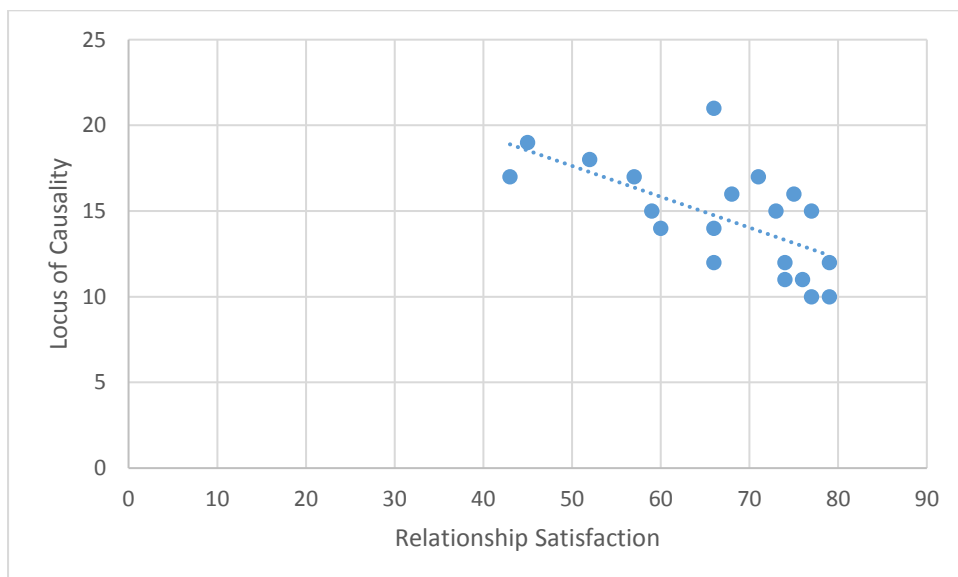
##### ***Correlation between Gender and Attribution Scores***



Males scored higher on attributions than females did, with the highest score being 149, from locus of causality. Men therefore experienced an overall lower level of relationship satisfaction compared to their female counterparts.

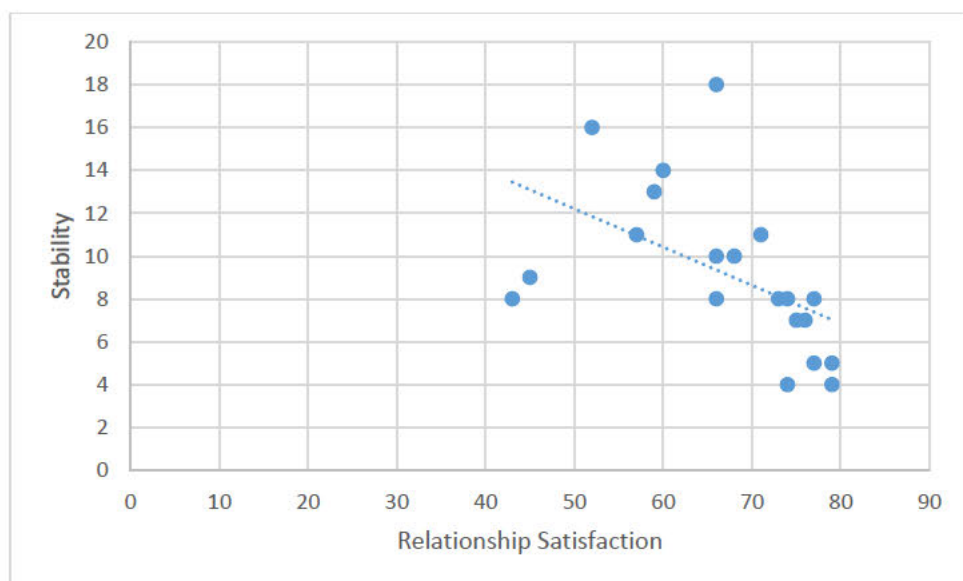
**Figure 2**

***Correlation between Relationship Satisfaction and Locus of Causality***



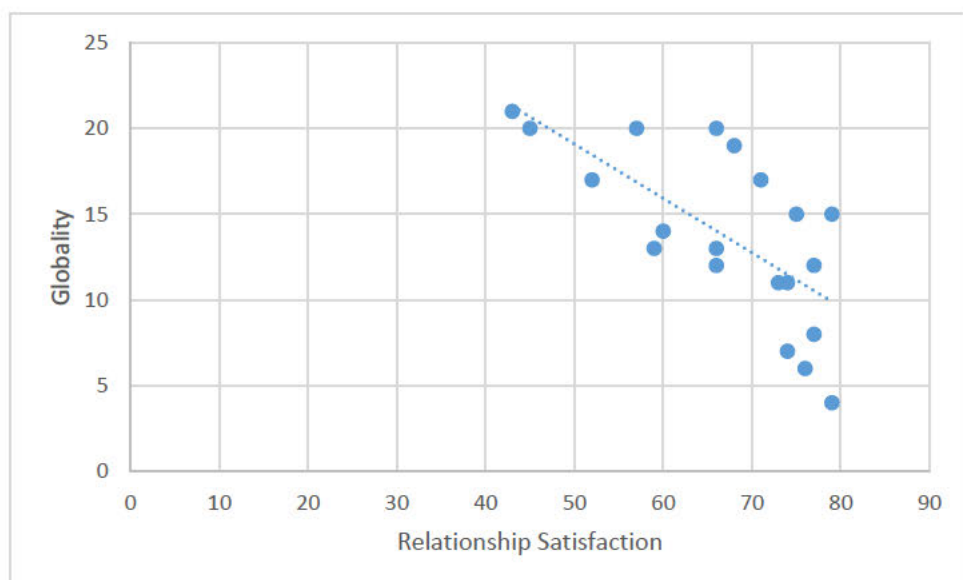
**Figure 3**

***Correlation between Relationship Satisfaction and Stability***



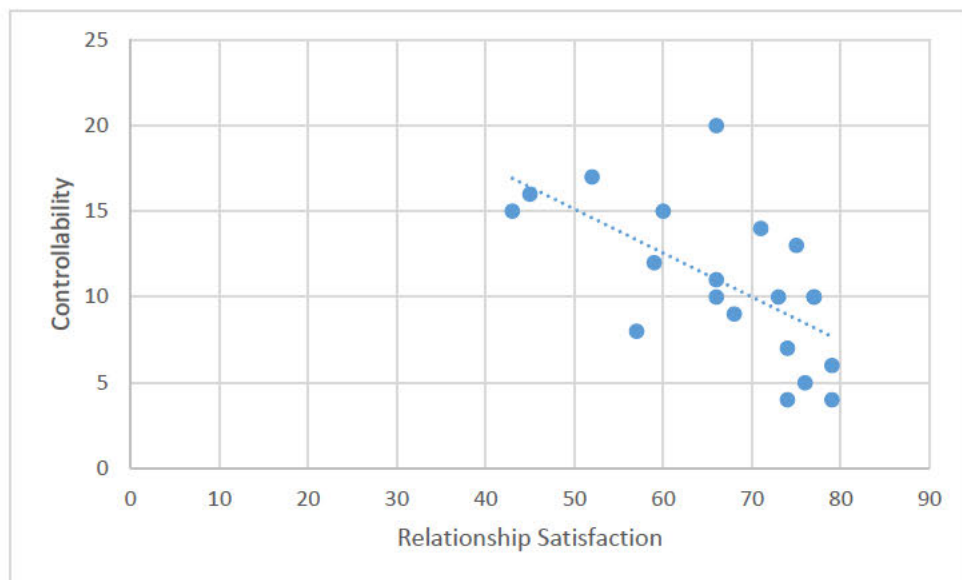
**Figure 4**

***Correlation between Relationship Satisfaction and Globality***



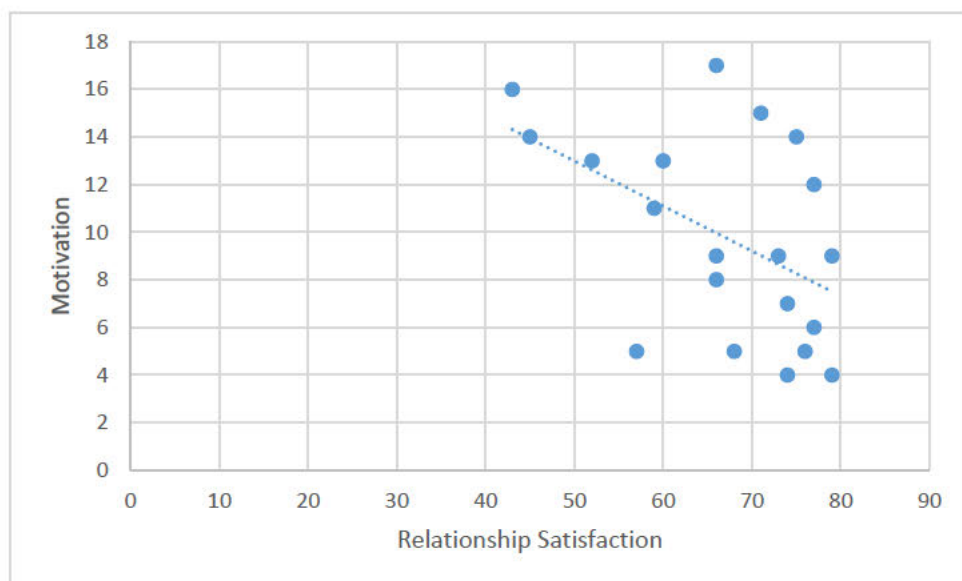
**Figure 5**

***Correlation between Relationship Satisfaction and Controllability***



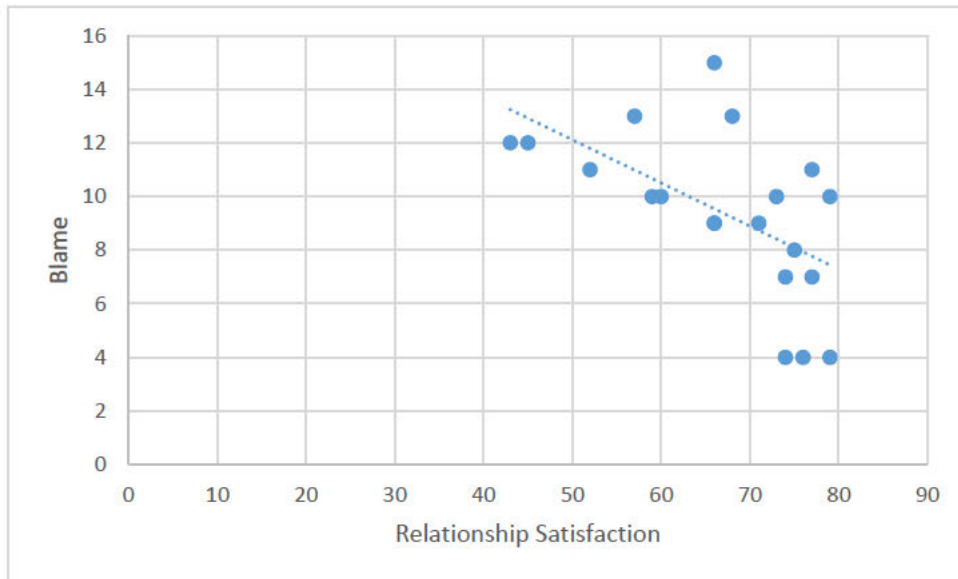
**Figure 6**

*Correlation between Relationship Satisfaction and Motivation*



**Figure 7**

*Correlation between Relationship Satisfaction and Blame*



**Table 1**

*Tabulation of Pearson's R Coefficient and P Values for the 6 Dimensions of Causal Attributions*

|                    | Pearson's R coefficient | P value  |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Locus of Causality | -0.6363                 | 0.00128  |
| Stability          | -0.5138                 | 0.010242 |
| Globality          | -0.69277                | 0.000355 |
| Controllability    | -0.62917                | 0.001479 |
| Motivation         | -0.48742                | 0.014632 |
| Blame              | -0.57548                | 0.003966 |

The P value is less than 0.05 for all of the figures presented, which means that the Pearson's R correlation coefficients are statistically significant on a 5% level. A strong, negative trend line appears on all of the above figures, meaning that a negative correlation exists between the 6 dimensions of causal attributions and relationship satisfaction.

**Table 2**

*Comparison of Measures of Central Tendency between the 6 Dimensions of Causal Attributions*

| M.C.T | Mean | Median | Mode | SD | Variance | Range |
|-------|------|--------|------|----|----------|-------|
|-------|------|--------|------|----|----------|-------|

|                           |      |      |    |     |      |    |
|---------------------------|------|------|----|-----|------|----|
| <b>Locus of causality</b> | 14.6 | 15   | 12 | 3.1 | 9.6  | 11 |
| <b>Stability</b>          | 9.2  | 8    | 8  | 3.8 | 14.5 | 14 |
| <b>Globality</b>          | 13.8 | 13.5 | 20 | 5   | 25   | 17 |
| <b>Controllability</b>    | 10.8 | 10   | 10 | 4.5 | 20   | 16 |
| <b>Motivation</b>         | 9.8  | 9    | 5  | 4.3 | 18.1 | 13 |
| <b>Blame</b>              | 9.4  | 10   | 10 | 3   | 9.4  | 11 |

*Note:* M.C.T = Measures of Central Tendency, SD = Standard Deviation.

The highest mean score was attained from locus of causality and the lowest came from stability. The highest score for standard deviation was attained by globality and the lowest score came from blame, meaning that data was most widely spread out among globality scores and less widely dispersed among blame scores.

### ***Inferential Statistics***

#### **Interpretation**

The research question has been answered because the research objective is to determine whether a correlation exists between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction. Findings prove that a strong, negative correlation exists between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction, and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected.

There is a strong, negative correlation between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction. High scores of the 6 dimensions of attributions on the questionnaires means that the participant thinks negatively about their relationship because the reasons that they attribute for their partner's behaviour are negative because as the score increases, negative attributions increase. For example, one of the statements included in the questionnaire is "my partner deserves to be blamed". If the participant highly agrees with the statement, they obtain a high score. The fact that a strong correlation exists between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction, indicates that these two variables are significantly influenced by each other. Attributions are a general form of sense making in order to identify the cause of a person's behaviour. They can also be used to help individuals understand their own actions and the actions of others (Manusov & Harvey, 2001). Attributions therefore influence the way partners in a relationship view each other and each other's actions, which may have an impact on the satisfaction they receive from their relationship.

Locus of causality refers to whether a behaviour is a result of internal or external factors such as ability (internal) or luck (external) (Weiner, 1972). A high score on locus of causality in the

questionnaire indicates that a partner attributes the cause of a behaviour as a result of internal factors, as opposed to a low score, which would mean that they attribute the cause of a behaviour to external factors. An overall high score on locus of causality means that most of the participants attributed the cause of their partners' behaviour as a result of internal factors. This is known as the fundamental attribution error. The fundamental attribution error is the tendency of an individual to attribute the cause of behaviour as a result of internal factors rather than external ones (Weiner, 1972). Findings from this research project prove this error to be a common one.

Stability refers to whether or not a behaviour is likely to change over time (Weiner, 1972). If a score on stability is high on the questionnaire, the partner has little hope that the behaviour would be likely to change over time. The fact that stability scores are low overall, means that most of the participants are optimistic about the future of their relationships and assume that negative behaviours from their partners are likely to change over time.

Men obtained higher scores than women, which means that overall, men from this study have a greater number of negative attributions towards their partners, think more negatively about their relationships than their female partners and experience less relationship satisfaction compared to their female partners. The difference in attribution scores between men and women was not a large one. It is likely that information obtained from a different, larger sample may have obtained results where women scored higher on causal attributions.

### **Conclusion**

A strong, negative correlation exists between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction. As the scores for causal attribution increase, relationship satisfaction scores decrease. Men obtained higher causal attribution scores than women did and the highest scores were obtained from locus of causality. Because high causal attribution scores indicate negative attributions within a relationship, it can be concluded that negative causal attribution within a relationship have a negative effect on relationship satisfaction.

### **Implications**

This research study holds value because it delves into a significant influence of relationship satisfaction; causal attributions. Relationships are a fundamental part of humans' lives, as they are a significant determinant of human's mental health. A faulty relationship holds potential to cause distress, discomfort and confusion in a person's life. On the other hand, a healthy and strong relationship, where each partner experiences a sense of satisfaction and contentment, has potential

to improve mood, comfort and overall mental health in a person (Berscheid & Regan, 2016). For this purpose, it is vital to be knowledgeable of the factors that influence relationship satisfaction, in an attempt to improve the level of mental health.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This refers to the moral and professional code which sets the standard for the attitudes and behaviour from the researcher and participants towards the study (Louw, 2014).

Once the application to conduct research was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Independent Institute of Education, research commenced. The questionnaire that was sent to the participants included information which participants had the right to know, in order to be transparent with participants (Louw, 2014). They were informed of the purpose of the study and that the information which they provided was not used for inappropriate use. Participants were assured that their identity and their feedback remained anonymous and unavailable to anyone unauthorised to view their feedback. Participants were made aware of the fact that they, at any stage, had the right to withdraw from the study. The questionnaire did not ask for sensitive information to be provided. Information from the questionnaires was objectively gathered, meaning that there was no fabricating or omitting any data (Louw, 2014).

Since the following study was quantitative, a consent form was unnecessary. Consent was implied from the completion of the questionnaire.

### **Limitations**

There are a number of limitations that exist within this study, however they were addressed and the possible negative effects they bring were minimised. Due to the COVID 19 outbreak in 2020, South Africans were encouraged to stay at home. It was therefore more difficult to contact research participants. This study however, adopted methods that were independent of this complication, meaning that physical contact with participants was not necessary.

Quantitative research possesses a number of disadvantages to its methods, in that it does not allow for research participants to elaborate in the experiences and knowledge they bring to the study. A deeper understanding of individuals' lives and searching for answers to the question 'why' is not the focus of the quantitative approach (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, & Bezuidenhout, Research Matters, 2014). Instead, focus lies on gathering general, less personal and more factual feedback on a greater number of people (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, & Bezuidenhout, Research Matters, 2014). In the quest to obtain broad ideas and averages, the individuals' perspective is often lost. The researcher is also

distanced from the participant, which may cause the participant to not feel as engaged with the study as one would like and he/she may not be as passionate to give his/her honest feedback compared to a qualitative study, where questions would be answered during an interview or focus group (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, & Bezuidenhout, Research Matters, 2014).

Even though there is more of a distance between the researcher and participant in quantitative studies, and averages and factual information are valued over understanding individual experiences, there are many strengths to this approach. Data can be statistically analysed in order to discover possible trends, correlations or differences between data and easily group data accordingly (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, & Bezuidenhout, Research Matters, 2014). The purpose of this study is to investigate whether a correlation exists between causal attributions and relationship satisfaction and therefore this approach is ideal in order to answer this research question.

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### Annexure

1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

|                                                                                                   | Extremely<br>Unhappy<br>0 | Fairly Unhappy<br>1 | A Little<br>Unhappy<br>2 | Happy<br>3                 | Very<br>Happy<br>4       | Extremely<br>Happy<br>5     | Perfect<br>6          |                                     |                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
|                                                                                                   |                           |                     |                          | All<br>the<br>time<br>5    | Most of<br>the time<br>4 | More often<br>than not<br>3 | Occasion<br>ally<br>2 | Rarely<br>1                         | Never<br>0              |
| 2. In general, how often do you think that things<br>between you and your partner are going well? |                           |                     |                          |                            |                          |                             |                       |                                     |                         |
|                                                                                                   |                           |                     |                          | Not<br>at all<br>TRUE<br>0 | A little<br>TRUE<br>1    | Some-<br>what<br>TRUE<br>2  | Mostly<br>TRUE<br>3   | Almost<br>Comple-<br>tely TRUE<br>4 | Completely<br>TRUE<br>5 |
| 3. Our relationship is strong                                                                     |                           |                     |                          | 0                          | 1                        | 2                           | 3                     | 4                                   | 5                       |
| 4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy                                                 |                           |                     |                          | 0                          | 1                        | 2                           | 3                     | 4                                   | 5                       |
| 5. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with<br>my partner                                  |                           |                     |                          | 0                          | 1                        | 2                           | 3                     | 4                                   | 5                       |
| 6. I really feel like part of a team with my partner                                              |                           |                     |                          | 0                          | 1                        | 2                           | 3                     | 4                                   | 5                       |
|                                                                                                   |                           |                     |                          | Not<br>at all<br>0         | A<br>little<br>1         | Some-<br>what<br>2          | Mostly<br>3           | Almost<br>Comple-<br>tely<br>4      | Completely<br>5         |
| 7 .How rewarding is your relationship with your<br>partner?                                       |                           |                     |                          | 0                          | 1                        | 2                           | 3                     | 4                                   | 5                       |
| 8 .How well does your partner meet your needs?                                                    |                           |                     |                          | 0                          | 1                        | 2                           | 3                     | 4                                   | 5                       |
| 9. To what extent has your relationship met your<br>original expectations?                        |                           |                     |                          | 0                          | 1                        | 2                           | 3                     | 4                                   | 5                       |
| 10. In general, how satisfied are you with your<br>relationship?                                  |                           |                     |                          | 0                          | 1                        | 2                           | 3                     | 4                                   | 5                       |

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes ***how you feel about your relationship***. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

|                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 11. INTERESTING  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | BORING    |
| 12. BAD          | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | GOOD      |
| 13. FULL         | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | EMPTY     |
| 14. STURDY       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | FRAGILE   |
| 15. DISCOURAGING | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | HOPEFUL   |
| 16. ENJOYABLE    | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | MISERABLE |

The following are hypothetical scenarios. Place a cross in the box which you would most agree with.

**Key:**

| 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Disagree strongly | Disagree | Disagree somewhat | Agree somewhat | Agree | Agree strongly |

| <b><u>Your partner criticises something you say</u></b>                                                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My partner's behaviour was due to something about them (eg: the type of person they are, the mood they were in) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. The reason my partner criticised me is not likely to change                                                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. The reason my partner criticised me is something that affects other areas of our relationship                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4. My partner criticised me on purpose rather than unintentionally                                                 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5. My partner's behaviour was motivated by selfish rather than unselfish concerns                                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 6. My partner deserves to be blamed for criticising me. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

|                                                                                                                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b><u>Your partner begins to spend less time with you</u></b>                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1. My partner's behaviour was due to something about them (eg: the type of person they are, the mood they were in)    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. The reason my partner started to spend less time with me is not likely to change                                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. The reason my partner started to spend less time with me is something that affects other areas of our relationship |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4. My partner started to spend less time with me on purpose rather than unintentionally                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5. My partner's behaviour was motivated by selfish rather than unselfish concerns                                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6. My partner deserves to be blamed for spending less time with me.                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|                                                                                                                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b><u>Your partner does not pay attention to what you are saying</u></b>                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1. My partner's behaviour was due to something about them (eg: the type of person they are, the mood they were in) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. The reason my partner did not pay attention to what I was saying is not likely to change                        |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|                                                                                                                               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 3. The reason my partner did not pay attention to what I was saying is something that affects other areas of our relationship |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. My partner did not pay attention to what I was saying on purpose rather than unintentionally                               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. My partner's behaviour was motivated by selfish rather than unselfish concerns                                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. My partner deserves to be blamed for not paying attention to what I was saying.                                            |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|                                                                                                                    |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b><u>Your partner is cool and distant</u></b>                                                                     | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> |
| 1. My partner's behaviour was due to something about them (eg: the type of person they are, the mood they were in) |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| 2. The reason my partner has become cool and distant is not likely to change                                       |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| 3. The reason my partner has become cool and distant is something that affects other areas of our relationship     |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| 4. My partner has become cool and distant on purpose rather than unintentionally                                   |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| 5. My partner's behaviour was motivated by selfish rather than unselfish concerns                                  |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| 6. My partner deserves to be blamed for becoming cool and distant.                                                 |          |          |          |          |          |          |

Student no  
Student  
Campus

Re: Approval of Psychology Honours Proposal and Ethics Clearance

### HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

#### GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

*Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.*

**Please note:** The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.

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The researcher(s) may only  
no other way.

3. Photographs of  
informed  
photo
4. The

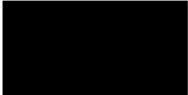


should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited  
for supplying such resources.

5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the  
research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way  
and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.



  
Supervisor  
Leigh De Wet

  
Campus Postgraduate Coordinator  
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