

Living Conditions and Academic Success: A Qualitative Exploration of Students' Experiences with Accommodation at a South African University

P.M Makhoahle^{1,2}, M.A. Modise² & S Makola³

¹ Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, Center for Quality of Health & Living, Central University of Technology-Free State, South Africa

² Faculty of Humanities, Postgrad Studies, Central University of Technology-Free State, South Africa

³ Institutional Transformation office of the Vice Chancellor, Central University of Technology-Free State, South Africa

HOW TO CITE: | ABSTRACT:

P.M Makhoahle, M.A. Modise, S Makola (2026). Living Conditions and Academic Success: A Qualitative Exploration of Students' Experiences with Accommodation at a South African University
International Journal of Special Education, 41(23s), 226-248

Student accommodation significantly affects academic success, well-being, and overall student outcomes. However, there is a lack of qualitative research comparing students' experiences across various private housing types, especially in South African universities. This study aims to explore how different private accommodation options influence students' academic engagement and performance, focusing on their lived experiences and preferences.

An inductive qualitative approach was employed, utilising semi-structured interviews with 18 university students from a South African university. Data were analysed using thematic analysis supported by ATLAS.ti software, following a structured coding process that generated two main themes aligned with the study's research objectives. The sample comprised 10 females, 7 males, and 1 LGBTI+ participant, predominantly Black South African students receiving NSFAS funding.

Students view on-campus residences most favorably due to superior service, safety, and proximity to academics, despite higher costs being offset by included amenities. Accredited off-campus options yield mixed reviews, with inconsistent quality and safety. Non-accredited off-campus housing is deemed least reliable, plagued by poor service, safety issues, and unstable conditions. Key preferences hinge on service, security, affordability, and transport access. Off-campus housing offers pricing flexibility but often conceals extra costs and variable quality.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY)

The study concludes that accommodation is essential to students' academic success and well-being. To resolve the issues identified, universities, housing providers, and policymakers must work together to ensure student housing is safe, affordable, and supportive of learning

license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: Student accommodation, private housing, academic performance, thematic analysis, South African higher education, student experiences

Introduction

Background and Context

Student accommodation represents a critical yet often underexplored dimension of the higher education experience, playing a fundamental role in shaping students' academic trajectories, well-being, and overall success. The rapid expansion of higher education globally has intensified focus on student housing and its impact on academic outcomes, with research demonstrating that residential environments significantly influence students' ability to engage meaningfully with their studies. Despite the growing recognition of accommodation as a determinant of educational success, relatively limited scholarly attention has been paid to the quality of living conditions and their mediating role in academic engagement.

The South African higher education landscape presents unique challenges in this regard, characterised by significant disparities in access to quality accommodation. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which funds the majority of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, has faced persistent challenges in ensuring timely and adequate accommodation provision. These challenges have created a complex accommodation market where students must navigate between on-campus residences, accredited off-campus accommodation, and non-accredited private housing options.

Problem Statement

The adequacy and quality of student accommodation directly influence academic engagement, with poor living conditions creating barriers to effective study through inadequate hygiene, unreliable internet access, electricity interruptions, noise, and safety concerns. Research has established that accommodation characteristics including perceived location advantage, facilities, and safety show a significant positive association with academic performance.

Students residing off-campus often experience commuting fatigue, infrastructural instability, heightened financial pressure, and reduced academic engagement compared to their on-campus peers.

In the South African context, these challenges are compounded by systemic issues within the student housing sector. The Private Student Housing Association has raised concerns over ongoing uncertainty regarding accommodation rates and payment processes from NSFAS, warning that delays in disbursement threaten the sustainability of the housing sector. Landlords report being forced to carry rising costs for electricity, fuel, security, and maintenance without clarity on funding levels, leading to reduction in basic services and amenities that negatively impact students' living conditions. This situation creates a precarious environment where students face the dual burden of financial uncertainty and deteriorating housing quality.

Significance of the Study

This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of students' experiences across different types of accommodation within the South African context. While existing research has examined the relationship between housing and academic outcomes using quantitative methodologies, there is limited qualitative understanding of how students perceive and experience different accommodation types and how these experiences shape their academic engagement. The study contributes to both theoretical understanding of the accommodation-academic nexus and practical knowledge that can inform policy development in student housing.

Furthermore, the study responds to calls for research that considers accommodation not merely as an infrastructural concern but as a cultural, structural, social justice, and educational equity issue. By centering students' voices and

experiences, this research provides evidence that can inform the development of more responsive and equitable housing policies.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to determine the specific experiences students encounter at private accommodations and to ascertain students' accommodation preferences. The secondary objectives are:

1. To identify students' perspectives based on their experiences with different types of private accommodations.
2. To compare students' experiences with different types of accommodations regarding service delivery, safety and security, affordability, and transport facilities.
3. To explore students' perspectives regarding the impact of their living conditions on their academic engagement and performance.
4. To develop recommendations for improving student accommodation experiences based on students lived experiences.

Literature Review

Theoretical Frameworks

The relationship between student accommodation and academic outcomes is underpinned by several theoretical frameworks. Astin's (1993).¹ Student Involvement Theory posits that physical proximity to campus resources enhances students' academic integration and engagement. This theory suggests that students who live on campus have greater opportunities for involvement in academic and social activities, which in turn promotes persistence and achievement. Similarly, Tinto's (1993) Student Integration Theory emphasises the importance of academic and social integration in student retention, with accommodation playing a crucial role in facilitating this

integration.²

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory provides another valuable lens for understanding how accommodation environments influence student outcomes.³ This framework conceptualises student development as occurring within nested environmental systems, with the immediate living environment (microsystem) interacting with broader institutional and societal structures (mesosystem and macrosystem) to shape students' experiences and outcomes. This perspective highlights the importance of considering both the immediate quality of accommodation and the broader policy and regulatory context within which student housing is provided.

More recent theoretical developments have extended understanding of student housing through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, with research proposing a "wheel model" that categorises student needs into personal, social, and intellectual dimensions. This framework emphasises that effective student housing must address physical space, psychological comfort, social integration, academic engagement, and personal growth as interconnected dimensions of student well-being and academic success.

Student Accommodation Types and Characteristics

Literature distinguishes between several types of student accommodation, each with distinct characteristics that shape students' experiences and outcomes. On-Campus Accommodation has been consistently associated with positive academic outcomes. On-campus Accommodation has been consistently associated with positive academic outcomes. Research demonstrates that on-campus residents experience enhanced institutional integration, improved access to learning resources, increased peer collaboration, and greater academic

¹ Astin, A. W. (1993). What matters in college? Four critical years revisited. Jossey-Bass.

² Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes

and cures of student attrition (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

³ Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press

participation.

The proximity to academic facilities and the availability of integrated amenities including Wi-Fi, study areas, security services, and cleaning services create an environment conducive to academic engagement. Studies from the Ghanaian context indicate that students predominantly prefer on-campus residence due to easy access to institution's facilities, availability of water and electricity, and perceived low cost of accommodation.

Off-Campus Accommodation presents a more complex picture, with experiences varying significantly based on the quality and type of accommodation. Purpose-built student accommodations have emerged as a significant sector, with research indicating that these facilities can serve as catalysts for social integration, inclusion, and community building when designed to address students' personal, social, and intellectual needs. However, off-campus residence is also associated with commuting fatigue, infrastructural instability, heightened financial pressure, and reduced academic engagement. The adequacy and quality of off-campus housing is mediated by factors such as location, facilities provided, safety measures, and management practices.

Research has identified that student accommodation characteristics, including perceived location advantage, perceived facilities, and perceived safety and security, have a significant positive association with academic performance. Furthermore, perceived overall satisfaction mediates the relationship between accommodation characteristics and academic outcomes, suggesting that the quality of students' housing experiences influences their academic engagement through affective mechanisms.

Factors Influencing Accommodation Preferences

Several factors shape students' accommodation preferences and experiences. Security and safety consistently emerge as primary concerns, with research from the Nigerian context identifying security as a top influencer of

accommodation choice. Students residing off campus face heightened vulnerability to crime, theft, and safety risks, which negatively impacts their well-being and academic engagement.

Service delivery and facilities constitute another critical factor, with students prioritising availability of water and electricity, quality facilities, and effective maintenance practices. The inconsistency in service quality across accommodation providers reflects broader challenges within student housing markets, where regulatory frameworks may be inadequate to ensure minimum standards.

Affordability represents a significant determinant of accommodation choice, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The South African context presents particular challenges, with NSFAS funded students facing uncertainty regarding accommodation rates and payment processes. Rising operational costs have forced some landlords to reduce basic services and amenities to remain financially viable, potentially compromising students' living conditions.

Transportation and proximity to campus facilities influence both accommodation choice and academic engagement. Students in off-campus accommodation often face commuting challenges that result in physical fatigue, reduced time available for study, and limited participation in academic activities.

Challenges in Student Accommodation

The literature documents multiple challenges affecting student accommodation provision. Funding and financial sustainability represent significant concerns, particularly in the South African context where NSFAS payment delays have created a crisis in the student housing sector. The Private Student Housing Association has reported that landlords face substantial arrears, with some operators facing potential closure. These financial pressures affect both the quality of accommodation provided and the stability of the housing market.

Quality and standards vary significantly across accommodation types and providers. Research

indicates that the quality of residential environments, rather than mere location, ultimately mediates academic outcomes. Students in stable, socially supportive environments demonstrate stronger engagement and achievement, while those in poor-quality housing experience negative academic consequences.

Regulatory frameworks and accreditation processes play a crucial role in ensuring minimum quality standards in student accommodation. However, challenges in accreditation and monitoring have been documented, with concerns that some properties are inaccurately accredited or fail to meet minimum norms and standards.

Hidden costs represent an additional challenge, with off-campus accommodation often involving expenses beyond rent, including transport, electricity, data, and other necessities. These hidden costs create financial strain that may reduce students' capacity to invest in academic resources and activities.

The South African Context

The South African higher education sector faces unique challenges in student accommodation provision. The majority of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds rely on NSFAS funding for both tuition and accommodation. However, systemic inefficiencies in funding disbursement, including unresolved validations, data mismatches, and delays in institutional uploads, have created significant challenges in the accommodation sector.

The Private Student Housing Association has highlighted that payment delays have been financially devastating for accommodation providers, particularly small and black-owned operators who lack access to working capital. These delays have hindered maintenance, security, and student support services, with some landlords defaulting on municipal bills, mortgages, or staff salaries. The situation has created a precarious environment where students' housing stability is threatened.

Furthermore, the Commission model, where

service providers receive a percentage commission from landlords for NSFAS transactions, has been identified as problematic, reducing the net income received by landlords and creating delays in payment processing. Calls for direct landlord payments and rigorous compliance monitoring reflect growing advocacy for more efficient and equitable funding mechanisms.

Research Gap

Despite growing recognition of the importance of student accommodation for academic success, several gaps remain in the literature. First, there is limited qualitative research exploring students' lived experiences of different accommodation types and how these experiences shape their academic engagement. Second, much of the existing research has been conducted in North American, European, or other African contexts, with limited attention to the unique challenges of the South African higher education landscape. Third, the perspectives of students themselves, their coping strategies, resilience, and recommendations remain underexplored in the literature.

This study addresses these gaps by providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of students' experiences across different accommodation types within a South African university, contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical knowledge that can inform policy and practice in student housing.

Methodology

This study used an inductive qualitative approach from which data were collected through interviews with 18 university students and then analysed using thematic analysis supported by ATLAS.ti software. Data were analysed using thematic analysis supported by ATLAS.ti software, following a structured coding process that generated two main themes aligned with the study's research objectives. The sample comprised 10 females, 7 males, and 1 LGBTI+ participant, predominantly Black South African students receiving NSFAS funding.

Data Analysis Process

Data analysis refers to the systematic process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data with the purpose of extracting meaningful information, generating conclusions, and guiding decision-making.⁴ The data analysis for this study was done using an inductive approach. According to Pearson, et al., (2025), an inductive orientation captures meaning directly from what participants have said, driven by the data itself rather than by pre-existing theories or frameworks. The data collected from participants in the form of interviews were analysed using thematic analysis approach.

Thematic analysis

Kiger and Varpio (2020) describe thematic analysis as a flexible method for analysing qualitative data.⁵ Thematic analysis is a method that involves identifying, analysing and reporting patterns with data. This assumes that the researcher gives a basic understanding of coded data based on the application of codes (Lochmiller, 2021).⁶ Once interviews were conducted and recorded, they were transcribed verbatim to words. The transcribed transcripts were subsequently imported into ATLAS.ti 26 for annotation and coding.

Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)

ATLAS.ti is a qualitative data analysis software that assists researchers in storing all relevant information in one place, allowing for greater data management security (Soratto, de Pires, and Friese, 2020).⁷ The use of ATLAS.ti for this qualitative study offers several benefits. It helps to deal with large amounts of unstructured data.

ATLAS.ti helped the researcher organise and structure the large amount of data in one place. It also made it easier to code and retrieve relevant sections of data, which helps in identifying patterns and developing themes during analysis. In addition, Computer-Assisted Qualitative Software such as ATLAS.ti improves the transparency and rigour of the research process by allowing the researcher to keep a clear record of the coding and analytical decisions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).⁸

Coding process

Coding is defined as the process of systematically tagging qualitative data with recurring themes, keywords, or phrases (Myers, 2013). In this study, the coding process was organised hierarchically, typically across three levels of data.

The process began with “codes”, which represent the core ideas derived directly from participants’ statements on a specific topic. Codes with similar meanings were grouped together into broader categories of ideas labelled as “sub-themes”. Related sub-themes were then clustered under bigger categories of ideas labelled as “theme”, reflecting more abstract concepts or patterns. In other words, the coding process for this study consists of a three-tier hierarchy (*Theme* → *Sub-theme* → *Code*)

Each code is supported by direct quotations from participants, ensuring that the analysis remains firmly grounded in the data. The coding process is illustrated in Figure 1, which provides a clear overview of how the analysis was conducted in this study. As shown in Figure 1, the findings are organised into two main themes: Theme 1 and

⁴ Pearson, H., Myall, M., Darlington, A., & Gibson, J. (2025). Inductive approaches in qualitative research: Methodological considerations. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 25(1), 45-62

⁵ Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846-854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>

⁶ Lo Lochmiller, C. R. (2021). Conducting thematic analysis with qualitative data. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6), 2029-

2044. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.5008>

⁷ Soratto, J., de Pires, D. E. P., & Friese, S. (2020). Thematic content analysis using ATLAS.ti software: Potentialities for research in health. *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, 73(3), e20190250. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7167-2019-0250>

⁸ Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013). *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Theme 2. Theme 1 consists of four sub-themes, while Theme 2 is made up of five sub-themes. Each sub-theme, across both themes, is further

supported by a set of codes that vary depending on the specific focus of the sub-theme.

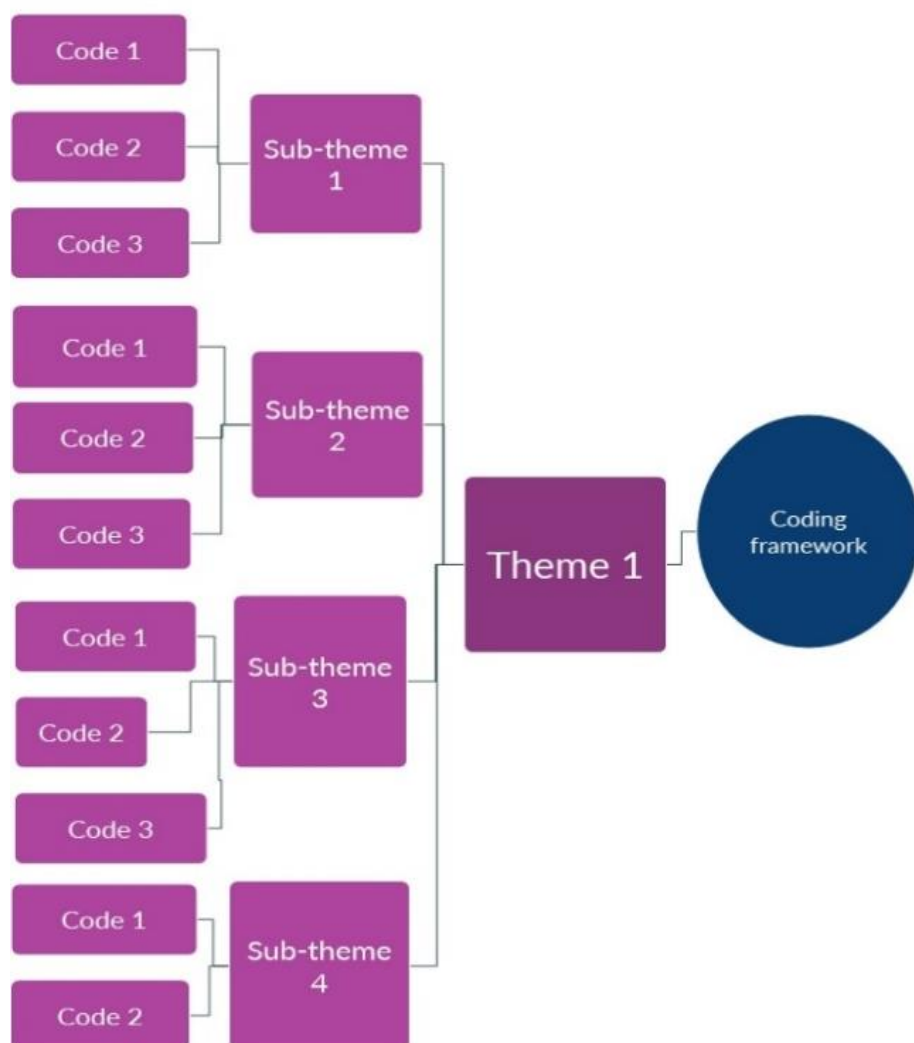


Figure 1: The study coding framework

Alignment of Generated Themes and Research Objectives

As previously indicated, two main themes emerged from the first level of codes, each of them is directly aligned with a secondary research objective. Theme 1 helps to achieve secondary research objective 1 as aims to identify students' perspectives based on their experiences on the different types of private accommodations. Theme 1 also helps to achieve secondary research objective 2 as it compares students' experiences with the different types of accommodations, and

based on that experience, a comparison is made to determine their preferences in terms of the service delivery, the safety and security, the prices of accommodations, and the transport facilities.

Figure 2 summarizes this alignment of the theme with a specific secondary research objective, and all of them collectively support the achievement of the primary objective of the study, which is: to determine the specific experiences students encounter at private accommodations, and to ascertain students' accommodation preferences.

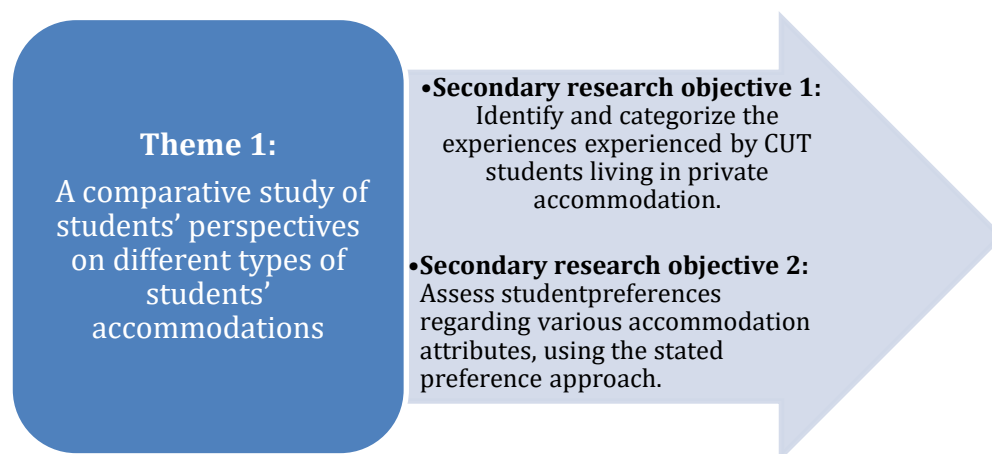


Figure 2: Alignment of emerging theme and objectives

Demographic Profile

Table 1 indicates that a total of 18 participants were involved in the study, comprising 10 females, 7 males, and 1 participant who identified as LGBTI+. All participants were from South Africa, with the majority originating from the Free State (8 participants). The remaining participants were from KwaZulu-Natal (3), Gauteng (3), North West (2), and the Eastern Cape (2).

The demographic profile further shows that most participants identified as Black, with only one participant identifying as Coloured. In terms of

home language, Sesotho was the most commonly reported (5 participants), followed by isiZulu (4), Setswana (3), and isiXhosa (3). English was reported by 2 participants, while Afrikaans was indicated by 1 participant.

All participants were either in their first or second year of university study. The majority reported receiving financial support through NSFAS, while one participant indicated being funded by the Funza Lushaka Bursary. One participant, however, reported not receiving any form of funding.

Table 1: Demographic profile

Participant s	Gender	Age rang e	Country of birth	Provinc e of birth	Race	Home languag e	Year of study	Funde d
Participant 1	Male	19	South Africa	KZN	Black	IsiZulu	First year	No
Participant 2	Male	20	South Africa	North West	Black	Setswana	First year	Yes
Participant 3	LGBTI +	20	South Africa	North West	Black	English	Second Year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 4	Female	18	South Africa	Free State	Black	English	X	X
Participant 5	Female	19	South Africa	KZN	Black	IsiZulu	Second Year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 6	Female	22	South Africa	Free State	Black	Sesotho	Second	Yes

							Year	NSFAS
Participant 7	Male	25	South Africa	Gauteng	Black	IsiXhosa	First year	Yes
Participant 8	Male	19	South Africa	Free State	Black	Sesotho	First year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 9	Female	19	South Africa	Free State	Black	Sesotho	First year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 10	Female	18	South Africa	Eastern Cape	Black	IsiXhosa	First year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 11	Female	20	South Africa	Free State	Coloured	Afrikaans	Second Year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 12	Female	18	South Africa	Free State	Black	Sesotho	First year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 13	Female	18	South Africa	Free State	Black	Setswana	First year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 14	Male	20	South Africa	Gauteng	Black	Setswana	First year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 15	Male	22	South Africa	KZN	Black	IsiZulu	First year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 16	Female	22	South Africa	Eastern Cape	Black	IsiXhosa	First year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 17	Male	21	South Africa	Free State	Black	Sesotho	Second Year	Yes NSFAS
Participant 18	Female	21	South Africa	Gauteng	Black	IsiZulu	First year	Funza Lushaka Bursary

Theme 1: A comparative study of students' perspectives on different types of students' accommodations

This theme presents participants' perceptions of three types of student accommodation: CUT on-campus residences, CUT-accredited off-campus accommodation, and non-accredited off-campus accommodation, offering a comparative understanding of students' experiences across

these living arrangements. The analysis is organised around four key sub-themes that are summarised in Figure 3. This figure shows that theme 1 is composed of the following sub-themes: Service delivery; Safety and security; Rent perspectives and affordability; And transportation facilitation, which collectively represent the main factors shaping students' accommodation experiences and preferences.

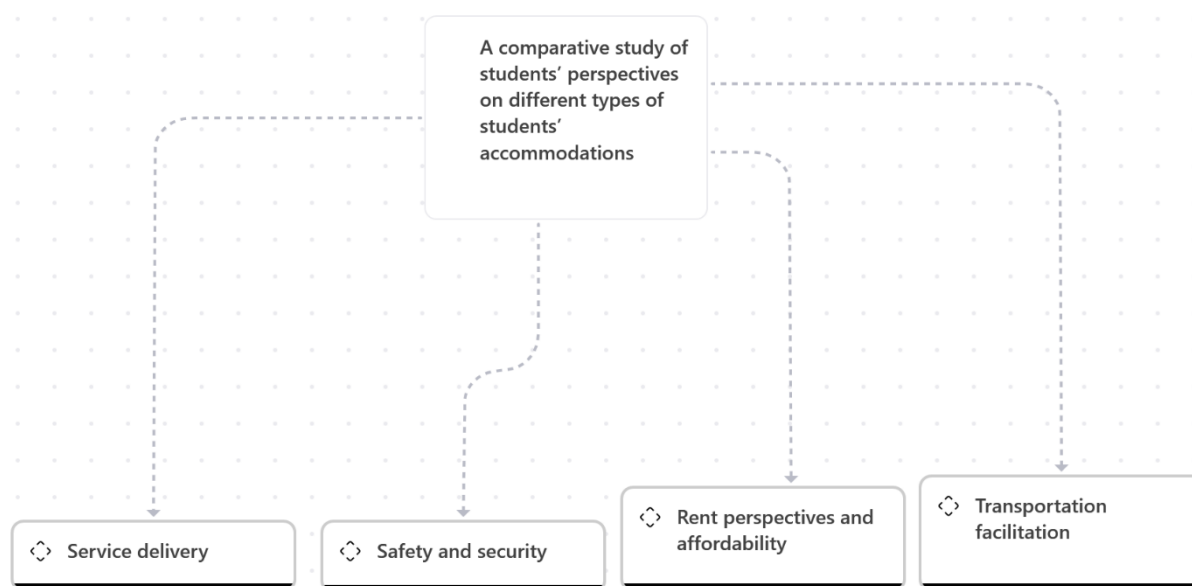


Figure 3: A comparative study of students' perspectives on different types of student accommodations

Service delivery

This sub-theme under theme 1 looks at the quality of service delivery across the three types of student's accommodations covered in this study. The findings show that the quality of service delivery differs according to the type of accommodation. Therefore, the emerging codes

under this sub-theme are summarised in Figure 4. This figure shows that the service delivery code consists of CUT campus residence accommodations service delivery; CUT Accredited off-campus accommodation service delivery; and Non-accredited off-campus accommodations service delivery.

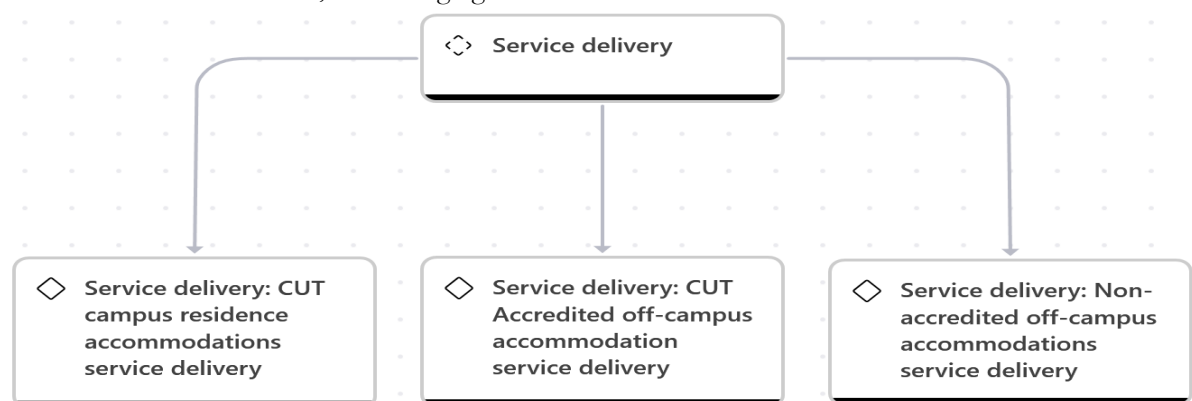


Figure 4: Service delivery

CUT campus residence accommodations service delivery

The findings show that this code is characterised by participants who believe that CUT campus residence usually gives better services than other types of university accommodation. Some participants even describe it as the best service. This view is illustrated in the direct quote below from one of the participants with regards to the

services that students received in CUT campus residence accommodations.

"They get the best services" (Participant 1)

One of the main arguments brought forward to justify this position is the proximity and the availability of facilities and amenities provided by the university, which is beneficial for students residing within its premises. This view is illustrated in the direct quote below from one of

the participants:

"Amenities are good, there is Wi-Fi, study areas, security, cleaning services and laundry facilities. Everything is close to campus" (Participant 18).

However, despite this advantage, one of the participants believes that such services could be improved as the participant stated the following:

"They do not meet minimum services they need to provide" (Participant 6).

CUT Accredited off-campus accommodation service delivery

The findings revealed this code is characterised by a divided perception among participants regarding service delivery at CUT accredited off-campus accommodation. Participants indicated that service quality varies across providers, with some offering satisfactory services while others fall short. In this regard, one participant stated:

"Most have decent amenities such as Wi-Fi, security transport to campus and furnished room, however quality may differ" (Participant 18).

This nuance in participants' perspectives on service delivery at CUT-accredited off-campus accommodation is reflected in the set of quotes below. On one hand, a participant indicated that some providers only meet the minimum required standards, as expressed in the direct quote below:

"The services depend on the payment they get, but some do not necessarily provide the standard services they should" (Participant 5).

Another participant, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the service delivery within the same type of accommodation. This concern is reflected in the direct quote below:

"The services we are being offered are very poor and are not good conditions for students to live there" (Participant 9).

The main arguments underpinning this negative perception of service delivery relate to several recurring issues, including unreliable or poor-quality Wi-Fi, a lack of adequate student amenities, landlords' unwillingness to address concerns, unsatisfactory treatment of tenants,

and the absence of clear rules and regulations.

Overall, compared to the service delivery in CUT campus residence accommodations, students tended to complain more about the service delivery in CUT accredited off-campus accommodation.

Non-accredited off-campus accommodations service delivery

The findings on the code related to service delivery in non-accredited off-campus accommodation also reveal a divided perception among participants. Some believe that these accommodations provide satisfactory services, particularly when payments are made on time, while others perceive the service delivery as poor. These differing views are reflected in the quotes below:

"They provide services on time and proper, as their rent get paid guaranteed on agreed dates" (Participant 5).

On the other hand, Participant 4 declared the following:

"Non accredited off campus accommodation are not good" (Participant 4).

This position is justified throughout the study by the fact that some of these accommodations have limitations in terms of maintenance, internet access, furniture, cold shower, transportation to school, electricity, and laundry facilities.

However, some participants noted that this variation depends on the type of non-accredited off-campus accommodation, as certain providers offer very good services while others do not. This perspective is reflected in the direct quote below:

"The quality differs with the cost, amenities can be poor or limited other can be decent" (participant 18).

Safety and security

This sub-theme under theme 1 looks at the level of safety and security across the three types of student's accommodations covered in this study. The findings show that some accommodations provide more safety and security than others. Therefore, the emerging codes under this sub-

theme are summarised in Figure 5. This figure shows that the safety and security sub-theme consists the following codes: of CUT campus residence accommodations safety and security;

CUT Accredited off-campus accommodation safety and security; and Non-accredited off-campus accommodations safety and security.

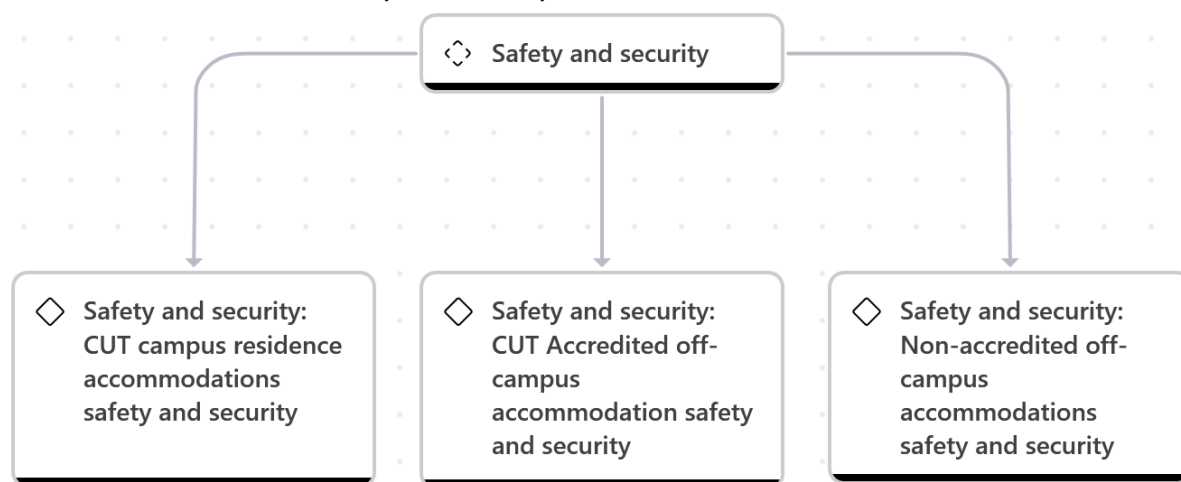


Figure 5: Safety and security

CUT campus residence accommodations safety and security

The findings under this code indicate that CUT on-campus residences are perceived as safer than the other types of student accommodation examined in this study. In this regard, one participant clearly stipulated the following:

"They're the safest" (Participant 3)

This perception of greater safety in CUT on-campus residences is mainly linked to the following advantages: Being situated within the university grounds means there is closer institutional control and oversight. In addition, access is tightly managed through identification and verification systems, while security is reinforced by 24-hour surveillance, on-site guards, and CCTV monitoring. Basic safety infrastructure such as fire alarms is also in place. Collectively, these measures help create a stronger sense of safety compared to other forms of student accommodation. This sentiment is expressed in the following quote from one of the participants:

"Campus residences are generally safe because they have proper safety security, access control and university supervision" (Participant 18).

CUT Accredited off-campus accommodation safety and security

The findings on the code related to safety and security in CUT accredited off-campus accommodation also revealed a divided set of opinions between those who think that such places are safe and those who feel like they are not necessarily safe. In the account of those who think that these accommodations are safe, on of the participants *disclosed the following:*

"They are safe and close enough to the campus" (participant 7).

However, some believe that safety and security are dependent on the accommodation and the location. This is illustrated by the quote below:

"Usually safe, as these accommodations are monitored and expected to meet university standards. However, safety can still vary depending on how each place is managed" (Participant 18).

Nevertheless, despite the perception of such places to be safe places, it remains that other participants perceive these places are relatively unsafe places. This is illustrated by the direct quote below reflecting a participant opinion regarding the level of safety of such accommodations:

"There is lack of safety and security putting students' lives at risk" (Participant 15)

The main reasons brought forward to justify this lack of safety and security are: Gates that are open 24/7 or broken, stuff being stolen, recurrent house breaks, and unsafe location. The direct quote below is an example to illustrate some of the reasons that make participants believe that these accommodations are not necessarily safe:

"There is no safety, no security, our stuff are being stolen the gate is always wide open there is no locker for the gate" (Participant 16).

Non-accredited off-campus accommodations safety and security

The findings on the code related to safety and security in non-accredited off-campus accommodation show that they are relatively perceived as places with limited safety and security, although some participants might link this lack of safety and security to the type of non-accredited off-campus accommodation as expressed in the direct quote below:

"It also depends on what the accommodation provides, if security is deployed it is safe" (Participants 5).

However, the findings also indicate that most participants perceive these accommodations as the least safe and secure when compared to other forms of student accommodations. This view is illustrated in the direct quote below:

"They are often less safe due to limited supervision and lack of proper security measures" (Participant 8).

Participants linked their concerns about safety and security in non-accredited off-campus accommodation to everyday lived experiences. Many pointed to practical issues such as inadequate or missing door locks, the presence of small animals like cats and cockroaches, and frequent break-ins. The ease with which outsiders can access these premises was also seen as a major risk, often contributing to repeated incidents. Coupled with the absence of supervision and minimal security measures, these conditions leave residents feeling exposed and vulnerable.

Rent perspectives and affordability

This sub-theme under theme 1 looks at the students perspectives regarding the rent and affordability of the three types of students accommodations covered under this study. Therefore, the emerging codes under this sub-theme are summarised in Figure 6. This figure shows that the rent perspectives and affordability sub-theme consist of codes that look at the students perspectives regarding the rent and affordability from the following dimensions: CUT campus residence accommodations; CUT Accredited off-campus accommodation; and Non-accredited off-campus accommodations

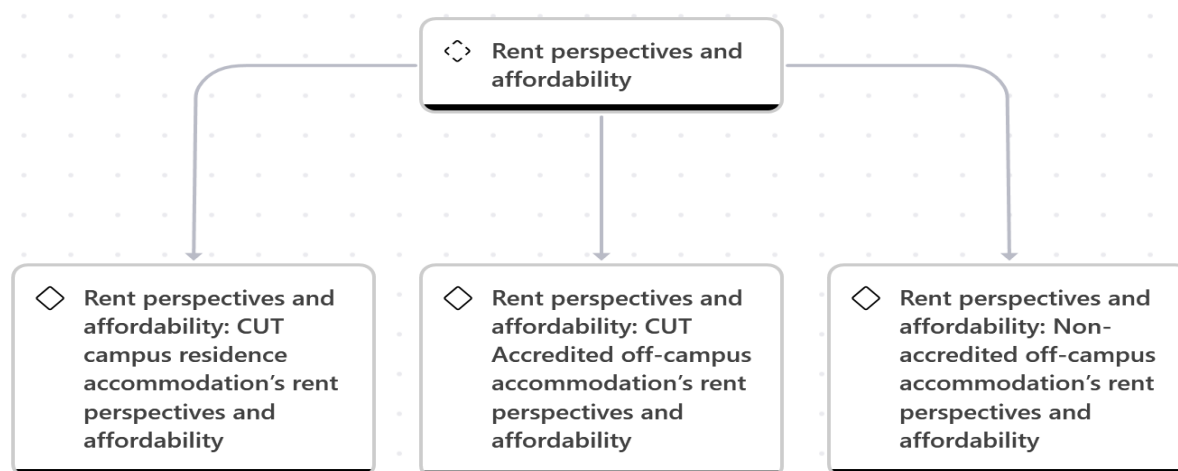


Figure 6: Rent perspectives and affordability

CUT campus residence accommodation's rent perspectives and affordability

The findings under this code suggest that CUT campus residences are generally perceived as relatively expensive. This perception is reflected in a participant's remark:

"The accommodation is expensive" (Participant 6).

However, despite the initial cost concern, participants also acknowledge that these residences may be considered affordable in the long term, as the rent typically includes essential amenities and facilities that support students' academic and daily living needs, as expressed in the direct quote below:

"The costs are usually affordable compared to other private options, and it include electricity, water and Wi-Fi. It is convenient for students because everything is covered in one payment" (Participant 18).

In this sense, participants believe that the costs for CUT campus residence are actually better when compared to the cost of other types of accommodations covered in this study, as it covers everything students need for their academic journey. This sentiment is illustrated in the direct quote below:

"Costs are way better, and students can access the school library easily" (Participant 5).

CUT Accredited off-campus accommodation's rent perspectives and affordability

The findings under this code suggest that students hold diverse perceptions of rent and affordability in CUT off-campus residences. These views range from students who perceive the accommodations as expensive to those who consider them relatively affordable, arguing that the pricing is fair in relation to the value offered.

Amongst those who perceive CUT accredited off-campus accommodations' rent expensive, one of the participants declared the following:

"To be honest I feel the accommodation is overpriced" (Participant 9)

One main reason brought forward to justify this

dissatisfaction with the rent is that it does not match the service received. This argument is expressed under the following direct quote:

"The cost is high with minimum services" (Participant 8).

However, among those who perceive the pricing as relatively fair, a key justification is that the rent includes amenities and facilities that support students' academic experience. This is illustrated in the direct quote below from one of the participants:

"The amount they paying is fair because they get whatever they need" (Participant 3).

Nevertheless, when compared to CUT campus residence, it remains that CUT Accredited off-campus accommodations are relatively perceived as more expensive. This is illustrated in the direct quote below from one of the participants:

"The costs are slightly higher than on-campus residence, but still reasonable" (Participant 18).

Non-accredited off-campus accommodation's rent perspectives and affordability

The findings under this code suggest that rent in non-accredited off-campus accommodation is perceived as relative rather than fixed. Some students view this accommodation as expensive, while others consider it affordable, depending on factors such as location, quality, available amenities, and the level of services provided. This is illustrated in the direct quote below:

"Most variable can be cheaper or more expensive depending on location, quality and amenities" (Participant 1).

Moreover, participants believe that these accommodations could be cheaper when compared to other forms of accommodation covered in this study, but it remains that the living conditions might also be poor as illustrated in the direct quote below:

"These accommodations can be risky they may be cheaper, but students might face issues like poor living conditions" (Participant 1)

Nevertheless, as previously indicated, other participants perceive non-accredited off-campus

accommodation as sometime expensive, especially due to the fact that they do not match the service quality offered, and they exclude other extra expenses such as transportation, electricity, data/Wi-fi, and other needs. This sentiment is illustrated in the direct quote below:

“The costs can be very high and sometimes not worth the quality offered. Students may also pay for extra for transport , electricity, and other needs” (Participant 8).

Transportation facilitation

This sub-theme, under Theme 1, explores students’ perspectives on transportation

provision in CUT accredited and non-accredited off-campus accommodations. It examines whether transport is provided and how this influences students’ experiences. In contrast, on-campus residences do not require transportation, as they are located within the university premises. Therefore, the emerging codes are summarised in Figure 7. This figure shows that the transportation facilitation sub-theme is composed of the following codes: CUT Accredited off-campus accommodation transportation facilitation; and non-accredited off-campus accommodation’s transportation facilitation.

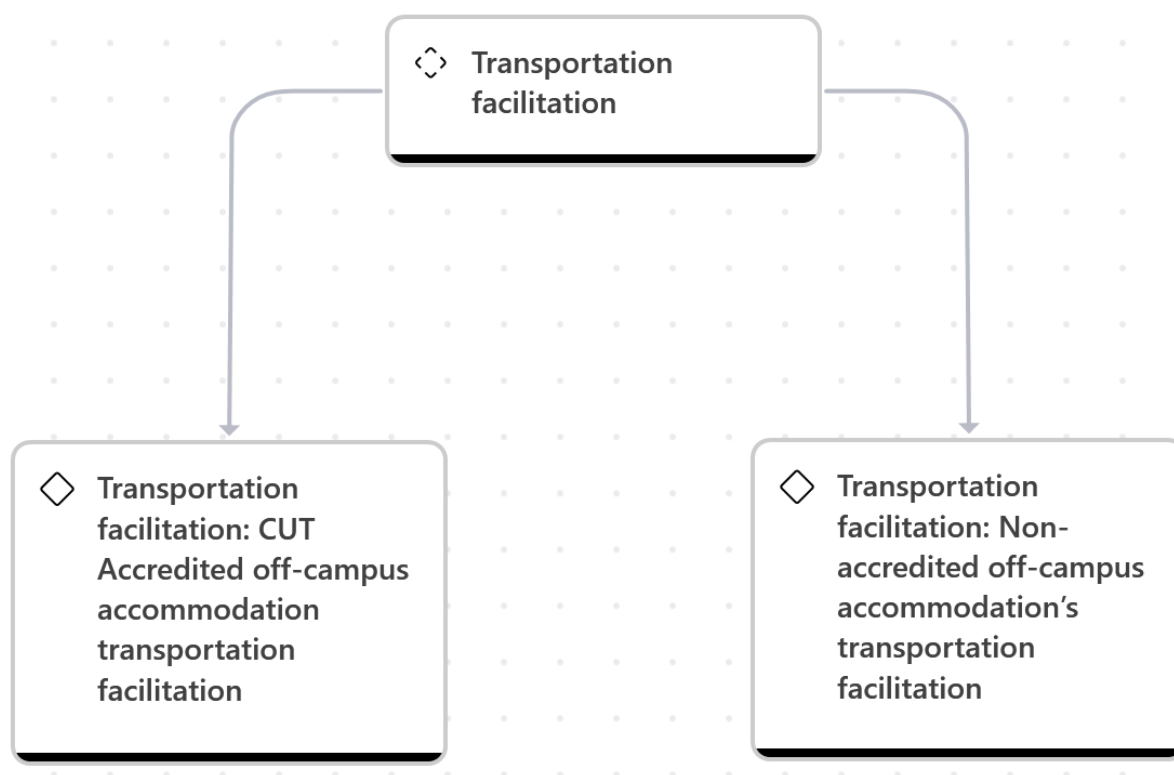


Figure 7: Transportation facilitation

CUT Accredited off-campus accommodation transportation facilitation

The findings under this code indicate that transportation provision in CUT accredited off-campus accommodation is not uniform. Some accommodation offers transport services to students, often depending on their location and specific arrangements, while others do not. Among participants who noted the availability of transport in certain cases, the following was stated:

“Transport accesses, some accredited accommodation may offer shuttles or close to safe public transport routes” (Participant 1).

However, one of the participants complained about the quality of these transport as per the following direct quote:

“My accommodation is about 3 km away from campus they fail to give students a proper shuttle” (Participant 12).

Nevertheless, as previously indicated, some other

participants stated that these accommodations do not offer transportation. This is illustrated in the direct quote below:

"There is no transport" (Participant 15)

Non-accredited off-campus accommodation's transportation facilitation

This code is primarily characterized by a participant's indication that their accommodation does not provide transport, coupled with the absence of any participant reporting the availability of such services. This position is illustrated in the following direct quote below:

"I would come from campus late due to there being no shuttle" (Participant 13).

This code marks the conclusion of the coding framework for Theme 1. The subsequent theme shifts focus on participants' broader perspectives on student accommodation and its perceived impact on their academic activities and overall performance.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into students' comparative experiences across different types of accommodation, highlighting the multifaceted nature of students' living arrangements and their subsequent impact on educational outcomes. This discussion synthesises the key findings from Theme 1, integrating them with existing literature and theoretical frameworks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It is important to note that Theme 2, which focuses on students' broader perspectives regarding how accommodation affects their academic engagement and performance, will be addressed separately in a subsequent publication to provide a more focused and detailed analysis of this critical dimension.

Comparative Analysis of Accommodation Types

The study reveals a clear hierarchy in students' perceptions of accommodation quality, with CUT on-campus residences consistently rated as providing the best overall experience. This finding aligns with international research demonstrating that on-campus living arrangements are associated with higher levels of student satisfaction and improved academic outcomes.⁹ The proximity to academic facilities, integrated amenities, and institutional oversight create an environment conducive to academic engagement a finding that resonates with Astin's (1993) theory of student involvement, which posits that physical proximity to campus resources enhances students' academic integration.¹

The perceived superiority of on-campus residences extends across all four sub-themes examined in this study. Regarding service delivery, participants consistently praised the comprehensive amenities available, including Wi-Fi, study areas, security, cleaning services, and laundry facilities. This contrasts sharply with the variable service quality reported in both accredited and non-accredited off-campus accommodations. The inconsistency in service delivery among off-campus providers reflects broader challenges within the South African private student housing market, where quality standards remain inadequately regulated.¹⁰

Safety and security emerged as particularly salient concerns, with on-campus residences benefiting from institutional governance structures that ensure controlled access, surveillance, and emergency response protocols. The apprehension expressed by participants regarding safety in non-accredited accommodations characterised by open gates, theft, and inadequate security measures highlights systemic vulnerabilities that extend beyond individual housing arrangements to intersect with broader social issues, including crime and inadequate urban planning. This finding corroborates

⁹ Winstanley, M. (2020). Student housing and academic success: A comprehensive review. *Journal of College Student Development*, 61(4), 489-504

¹⁰ Masha, Anthony Kambi, and Nana Yaw Brenya Agyeman. "An Analysis of Must-be Attributes of Off-

campus Student Housing Facilities and their Influence on Effective Learning: The Case of One University in South Africa." *E-JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES* Ученумен: Noyam Publishers (2024): 3391-3406.

research by Gregory (2022), who documented similar safety concerns among university students in South African urban settings.¹¹

The Paradox of Affordability

An intriguing finding concerns the paradoxical perception of affordability. Although on-campus residences were initially described as "expensive," participants ultimately framed them as cost-effective due to their inclusive nature. This perception reflects an appreciation for bundled services that eliminate hidden costs, a feature that is particularly valuable for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who constituted the majority of this study's sample. The finding that NSFAS-funded students predominated in the sample underscores the importance of accommodation affordability as a structural determinant of access and retention in higher education.¹²

The rent perceptions for accredited and non-accredited accommodations revealed a more complex picture. While some participants viewed these options as affordable, others highlighted hidden costs transport, electricity, data, and other necessities that rendered the total financial burden comparable to or exceeding that of on-campus residence. This "hidden costs" phenomenon represents a significant but often overlooked dimension of student poverty and may contribute to the phenomenon of "academic sacrifice," where students reduce spending on academic resources to cover housing expenses (Govender & Mthethwa, 2021).¹³

Transportation Challenges

Transportation facilitation emerged as a critical factor influencing students' accommodation preferences and experiences. The findings

revealed significant disparities in transport provision between accredited and non-accredited accommodations, with many students reporting either inadequate shuttle services or no transport provision at all. This lack of reliable transportation creates multiple challenges, including physical fatigue from commuting, increased financial burden, and reduced time available for academic activities. These findings align with research by Adarkwah (2021), who documented how transportation barriers disproportionately affect students from disadvantaged backgrounds, limiting their ability to fully participate in academic life.¹⁴

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The recommendations emerging from participants' experiences align with policy advocacy for improved student housing standards. The call for stricter monitoring of landlords, mandatory inspections, and accountability mechanisms echoes broader calls for regulation of the private student accommodation sector (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2022).¹⁵ The requirement that accommodation pricing aligns with service quality speaks to principles of consumer protection and educational equity, ensuring that students receive value commensurate with their financial investment.

The study's findings also highlight the need for universities to recognise their role beyond the classroom, encompassing the broader student experience. This perspective aligns with the concept of "campus ecology," which emphasises the interdependence between students' physical environments and their psychological and academic development (Strange & Banning, 2015).¹⁶ By addressing accommodation

¹¹ Gregory, J. (2022). An easy target: studentification, crime and safety of students in Johannesburg. *South African Geographical Journal*, 104(3), 366-381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03736245.2021.2004918>

¹² Council on Higher Education. (2023). *VitalStats: Public Higher Education 2021*. Council on Higher Education

¹³ Daily Maverick. (2025, August 5). Landlords threaten legal action as NSFAS fails to pay R62m in student accommodation fees. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za>

¹⁴ Hlatshwayo, M. (2022). The public transport crisis in South Africa: Through the eyes of the four revolutions. *The Thinker*, 92(3), 49-60. <https://doi.org/10.36615/thethinker.v92i3.1458>

¹⁵ Department of Higher Education and Training. (2022). *Student Housing Policy Framework*. Government Gazette.

¹⁶ Strange, C. C., & Banning, J. H.

challenges, universities can contribute more effectively to student retention, success, and overall well-being.

Conclusion

This qualitative study set out to explore students' experiences and preferences regarding different types of private accommodation. The research successfully addressed this aim through systematic data collection and rigorous thematic analysis, generating findings that contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical knowledge in the field of student housing.

The comparative analysis of accommodation types reveals a clear preference for on-campus residences, attributed to superior service delivery, enhanced safety and security, perceived cost-effectiveness, and convenient access to academic facilities. Accredited off-campus accommodations present a mixed experience, with service quality varying significantly across providers, while non-accredited accommodations are consistently associated with the poorest outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of robust accreditation processes, regular inspections, and enforcement mechanisms to ensure minimum quality standards across all student housing types.

The demographic profile of participants, dominated by Black, South African students from various provinces, predominantly receiving NSFAS funding, highlights the intersection of accommodation challenges with broader issues of educational equity and access. The study reinforces the understanding that student housing is not merely a logistical concern but a fundamental determinant of educational opportunity and success.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence that student accommodation quality is inextricably linked to academic outcomes. The findings carry significant implications for universities,

accommodation providers, and policymakers, emphasising the need for coordinated, sustained efforts to ensure that student housing environments are safe, affordable, and conducive to academic success. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that recognises the interconnection between physical living environments, student well-being, and educational achievement.

Limitations

While this study makes significant contributions to understanding student accommodation experiences, several methodological limitations warrant consideration.

Sample Limitations

The study's sample was drawn from a single university (CUT) in South Africa, which limits the generalisability of findings to other institutional contexts. While the sample size of 18 participants is appropriate for qualitative research aimed at generating rich, in-depth data (Patton, 2002),¹⁷ it may not capture the full diversity of experiences within even this single institution. The predominance of NSFAS-funded students, while reflecting a significant demographic, limits understanding of how accommodation challenges affect students with different funding sources or from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Geographic and Cultural Considerations

All participants were from South Africa, with the majority from the Free State province, reflecting the university's location. This geographic concentration means that findings may not transfer fully to institutions in other provinces or countries, where housing markets, regulatory frameworks, and cultural contexts differ. Additionally, while the sample included representation from multiple language groups, the cultural homogeneity of Black South African participants limits understanding of how students from different cultural backgrounds experience

(2015). *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments That Work*. Jossey-Bass.

¹⁷ Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications

and interpret their accommodation circumstances.

Data Collection and Analysis Limitations

The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential limitations associated with recall bias, social desirability effects, and participants' subjective interpretations of their experiences (Myers, 2013).¹⁸ While qualitative research inherently explores subjective experiences, the absence of observational or documentary data means that findings cannot be independently verified. The cross-sectional nature of data collection captures experiences at a single point in time, or findings' emphasis, despite efforts to maintain analytical rigour and reflexivity.

Focus and Scope

The study's exclusive focus on accommodation experiences within a specific institutional context means that findings cannot be generalised to other accommodation types or settings. Additionally, the study did not explore the perspectives of accommodation providers, landlords, or university administrators, which would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping students' accommodation experiences.

Implementation of Findings

While the study provides valuable recommendations for improving student housing, it does not address the practical, financial, or political barriers to implementing these recommendations. The gap between identifying solutions and implementing them remains a significant challenge, particularly in resource-constrained educational contexts (Council on Higher Education, 2023).¹²

Recommendations For Future Studies

Based on the findings, limitations, and emerging questions from this research, the following

in time, missing the dynamic nature of students' evolving accommodation experiences across their academic journeys.

Researcher Positionality

Although the study utilised rigorous analytical procedures, including the use of ATLAS.ti software to enhance transparency (Soratto et al., 2020),¹⁹ researcher positionality may have influenced the research process. The researchers' pre-existing assumptions about accommodation conditions may have shaped the analytical focus, data interpretation

recommendations are made for future studies:

Expanding research scope

1. **Multi-Institutional Comparative Studies:** Future research should extend this investigation to multiple South African universities across different provinces to identify variations in accommodation experiences and establish whether the patterns observed in this study are institution-specific or reflect broader systemic issues. Such comparative research would enhance the generalisability of findings and inform context-sensitive policy development.

2. **Mixed-Methods Research Designs:** While the current study provides rich qualitative insights, future research should incorporate quantitative components to measure the statistical relationship between accommodation conditions and specific academic outcomes, such as grades, retention rates, and time to graduation. Longitudinal designs would capture changes in students' experiences over time and identify causal mechanisms linking accommodation to academic success.

3. **Inclusion of Diverse Perspectives:** Future studies should include the perspectives of accommodation providers, landlords, university accommodation officers, and policymakers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of

¹⁸ Myers, M. D. (2013). *Qualitative research in business and management* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications

¹⁹ Soratto, J., de Pires, D. E. P., & Friese, S. (2020). **Thematic content analysis using**

ATLAS.ti software: Potentialities for research in health. *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, 73(3), e20190250. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7167-2019-0250>

the factors shaping student housing quality and addressing challenges from multiple stakeholder perspectives. This multi-stakeholder approach would facilitate the development of more effective and sustainable solutions.

4. **Exploration of Intersectional Factors:** Research should investigate how accommodation experiences intersect with other aspects of student identity, including gender, race, disability status, and socioeconomic background, to identify how multiple forms of disadvantage compound to affect students' academic experiences.²⁰ Such intersectional analysis would enable more targeted and equitable interventions.

Research Design Considerations

5. **Comparative International Studies:** Comparative research across national contexts would identify how different regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and economic conditions shape student accommodation experiences, providing insights for policy transfer and adaptation. Such studies would be particularly valuable for understanding how different countries address similar challenges in student housing.

6. **Longitudinal Tracking:** Studies that track students' accommodation experiences across their academic careers would illuminate how housing conditions evolve over time and how transitions between accommodation types affect academic engagement and outcomes. This longitudinal perspective would provide insights into the cumulative effects of accommodation quality on educational trajectories.

7. **Intervention Studies:** Research that evaluates the impact of specific interventions such as accommodation subsidies, landlord training programmes, or enhanced support

services would provide evidence for effective policy and practice. Randomised controlled trials or quasi-experimental designs would strengthen causal inferences.

8. **Technological-Mediated Research:** Future studies could utilise mobile ethnography or photo-elicitation methods to capture students lived experiences in real-time, addressing the limitations of retrospective self-report data.²¹ Such innovative methods would provide more immediate and authentic insights into students' daily accommodation experiences.

Addressing Gaps in Knowledge

9. **Examination of Successful Accommodation Models:** In-depth investigation of accommodations that students perceive as successful would identify best practices and key success factors that could inform improvements across the sector. Such positive deviance research would identify strategies that work in practice.

10. **Exploration of Digital Access Challenges:** Given the centrality of internet access to academic participation, future research should investigate the specific ways in which accommodation-related connectivity issues affect academic engagement, particularly in the context of blended and online learning.²²

11. **Comprehensive Analysis of Academic Impacts:** As this study has addressed Theme 2 separately, future research should build upon this work to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the specific mechanisms through which accommodation conditions shape academic performance and engagement. Detailed qualitative investigation of these mechanisms would inform targeted interventions.

12. **Well-being and Mental Health Outcomes:** While this study focused on

²⁰ Hoolachan, J., Preece, J., & Moore, T. (2026). Student accommodation in Scotland: Home, emotions and diverse experiences. *Housing, Theory and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2026.2622948>

²¹ Pink, S., Sinanan, J., Hjorth, L., & Horst, H. (2015). Tactile digital ethnography: Researching mobile media through the hand. *Mobile Media &*

Communication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157915619958>

²² Czerniewicz, L., Mogliacci, R., Walji, S., Swartz, R., Ivancheva, M., Swinnerton, B., & Morrison, N. (2020). Negotiating the "new normal": University leaders and marketisation. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 34(3), 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.20853/34-3-3466>

accommodation experiences, future research should comprehensively examine the relationship between accommodation conditions and student mental health, exploring how stress, anxiety, and depression associated with poor housing affect academic engagement.²³

Policy and Practice-Focused Research

13. **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Research that calculates the economic costs of poor accommodation (including academic failure, drop-out, and health consequences) versus the investment required to ensure quality student housing would provide evidence for policy advocacy and resource allocation.

14. **Regulatory Impact Assessment:** Studies examining the effectiveness of existing accreditation and regulatory frameworks would identify gaps in current approaches and inform policy reform. Such assessments would provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening regulatory mechanisms.

15. **Student Decision-Making Processes:** Research exploring how students select accommodation and the information sources they rely upon would inform interventions to support informed decision-making and reduce information asymmetries in the housing market.

16. **Collaborative Research Partnerships:** Future studies should involve partnerships between universities, student representative bodies, and accommodation providers to ensure that research is co-produced and findings are directly translated into practice.²⁴

Methodological Innovations

17. **Participatory Action Research:** Studies that involve students as co-researchers would empower participants and ensure that research processes and findings are grounded in student

priorities and perspectives. This approach would enhance the relevance and impact of research findings.

18. **Comparative Case Study Research:** In-depth case studies comparing specific accommodations of different types would provide detailed insights into the factors that differentiate successful from unsuccessful housing arrangements. Such case studies would offer rich contextual understanding.

19. **Theoretical Development:** Research that develops and tests theoretical frameworks explaining the relationship between housing conditions and academic outcomes would advance conceptual understanding beyond description. Grounded theory approaches would be particularly valuable for this purpose.

20. **Scaling Studies:** Research examining the scalability of successful accommodation models and interventions would address the challenge of moving from small-scale success to institutional-wide change.²⁵

By addressing these recommendations, future research can build on the foundation established by this study to advance knowledge, inform policy, and improve the educational experiences and outcomes of university students. The findings of this research underscore the urgency of addressing student accommodation challenges, not as a peripheral concern but as a central element of educational equity and success.

About Author(S)

Prof. Parks M. Makhoahle is an academic, researcher, and medical scientist affiliated with the Central University of Technology (CUT), South Africa, and currently pursuing a Doctor of Education (EdD). His research interests span higher education, student success, student

²³ Eisenberg, Daniel, Ezra Golberstein, Janis L. Whitlock, and Marilyn F. Downs. 2013. "Social Contagion of Mental Health: Evidence from College Roommates." *Health Economics* 22 (8): 965–986. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.2873>

²⁴ Barbara A. Israel et al., "Critical Issues in Developing and Following Community-Based Participatory Research Principles," in *Community-*

Based Participatory Research for Health: From Process to Outcomes, ed. Meredith Minkler and Nina Wallerstein, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 47–62

²⁵ World Bank. 2015. "The Poverty Focus of Country Programs: Lessons from World Bank Experience." Independent Evaluation Group. Washington, DC: World Bank

accommodation, well-being, quality assurance, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). He also specialises in Medical Microbiology, antimicrobial resistance, molecular biology, ethnobotany, phytomedicine, medicinal plant research, and antimicrobial drug discovery. Prof. Makhoahle is affiliated with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and has published extensively on higher education, antimicrobial resistance, medicinal plants, public health, and educational quality enhancement.

Prof MA Modise

Prof. Motalenyane Alfred Modise is a full Professor at Central University of Technology (CUT) in Free State Province, former Departmental Manager, former Acting Assistant Dean: Teaching and Learning, former Acting Senior Director of research Development Support and PG Studies and currently Assistant Dean: Research, Innovation and Engagement at CUT, Free State Province. His research interests include accounting, transformation and change, pre-service teachers' development, educational psychology, and pedagogical content knowledge. He is the member of the following committees: Member of Senate, Title Registration Committee, Faculty research committee Faculty board member, University Research & Innovation committee Research Forum, Ethical Committee, Promotion committee, Community engagement committee, international committee, Deputy President of Southern African Society in Education (SASE). He has proven himself as a scholar by presenting papers in national, international conferences. He has published papers in different Journals and supervised

masters and PhD students. He received funding for different projects from different stakeholders

Prof. Solomon (Oupa) Makola is a Professor of Psychology and Research Fellow at the Central University of Technology (CUT), Free State, South Africa. He previously served as Campus Director of the CUT Welkom Campus and currently holds the position of Director: Institutional Renewal and Transformation. He is a registered Counselling Psychologist, Child Psychologist, and Psychometrist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), and a member of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) and the Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy (USA). His research interests include logotherapy, positive psychology, forgiveness research, integral spirituality, student success, student attrition, psychological well-being, youth development, and academic performance. An NRF-rated researcher (C3), Prof. Makola has authored numerous scholarly publications, book chapters, and three books, including *Find Meaning, Stop Wondering*, *Pimp the Pain*, and *Seventy Women and One Man*. He has presented extensively at national and international conferences and is widely recognised for his contributions to community-engaged psychology and student development research.

PM Makhoahle ORCID id:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6131-9419>

MA Modise ORCID id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2950-9129>

S Makola ORCID id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9415-5681>

Reference

- Astin, A. W. (1993). What matters in college? Four critical years revisited. Jossey-Bass. Accessed 05/07/2026
- Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013). Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design. Harvard University Press
- Council on Higher Education. (2023). VitalStats: Public Higher Education 2021. Council on Higher Education
- Czerniewicz, L., Mogliacci, R., Walji, S., Swartz, R., Ivancheva, M., Swinnerton, B., & Morrison, N. (2020). Negotiating the "new normal": University leaders and marketisation. South African Journal of Higher Education, 34(3), 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.20853/34-3-3466>

Daily Maverick. (2025, August 5). Landlords threaten legal action as NSFAS fails to pay R62m in student accommodation fees. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za>

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2022). Student Housing Policy Framework. Government Gazette.

Eisenberg, Daniel, Ezra Golberstein, Janis L. Whitlock, and Marilyn F. Downs. 2013. "Social Contagion of Mental Health: Evidence from College Roommates." *Health Economics* 22 (8): 965–986. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.2873>

Gregory, J. (2022). An easy target: studentification, crime and safety of students in Johannesburg. *South African Geographical Journal*, 104(3), 366-381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03736245.2021.2004918>

Hlatshwayo, M. (2022). The public transport crisis in South Africa: Through the eyes of the four revolutions. *The Thinker*, 92(3), 49-60. <https://doi.org/10.36615/thethinker.v92i3.1458>

Hoolachan, J., Preece, J., & Moore, T. (2026). Student accommodation in Scotland: Home, emotions and diverse experiences. *Housing, Theory and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2026.2622948>

Israel, Barbara A., Amy J. Schulz, Edith A. Parker, Adam B. Becker, Alex J. Allen III, and J. Ricardo Guzman. "Critical Issues in Developing and Following Community-Based Participatory Research Principles." In *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: From Process to Outcomes*, 2nd ed., edited by Meredith Minkler and Nina Wallerstein, 47–62. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008

Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846-854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>

Lo Lochmiller, C. R. (2021). Conducting thematic analysis with qualitative data. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6), 2029-2044. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.5008>

Masha, Anthony Kambi, and Nana Yaw Brenya Agyeman. "An Analysis of Must-be Attributes of Off-campus Student Housing Facilities and their Influence on Effective Learning: The Case of One University in South Africa." *E-JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES* Учредители: Noyam Publishers (2024): 3391-3406.

Myers, M. D. (2013). *Qualitative research in business and management* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications

Pearson, H., Myall, M., Darlington, A., & Gibson, J. (2025). Inductive approaches in qualitative research: Methodological considerations. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 25(1), 45-62

Pink, S., Sinanan, J., Hjorth, L., & Horst, H. (2015). Tactile digital ethnography: Researching mobile media through the hand. *Mobile Media & Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157915619958>

Soratto, J., de Pires, D. E. P., & Friese, S. (2020). Thematic content analysis using ATLAS.ti software: Potentialities for research in health. *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, 73(3), e20190250. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7167-2019-0250>

Soratto, J., de Pires, D. E. P., & Friese, S. (2020). Thematic content analysis using ATLAS.ti software: Potentialities for research in health. *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, 73(3), e20190250. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7167-2019-0250>

Strange, C. C., & Banning, J. H. (2015). *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments That Work*. Jossey-Bass

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Winstanley, M. (2020). Student housing and academic success: A comprehensive review. *Journal of College Student Development*, 61(4), 489-504

World Bank. 2015. "The Poverty Focus of Country Programs: Lessons from World Bank Experience." Independent Evaluation Group. Washington, DC: World Bank