THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL

STUDY OF POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS IN GHANA

by

Shadrack Agyekum

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. The theories guiding this study were Hosking's critical disability theory and Tinto's student persistence theory. This study sought to understand postsecondary students with disabilities' social and academic experiences and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. Transcendental phenomenological research approach was employed to understand how students with disabilities experience the phenomenon under the study. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to select participants. Twelve participants took part in this research. Data were collected through personal interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter. I made sense of the text collected from interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter. I built detailed descriptions, applied codes, and developed themes. The five themes that emerged from this study include learning, relationship and interaction, social influence, institutional factors, and determination and perseverance. This research revealed both positive and negative interactions among participants, instructors, and peers.

Keywords: students with disabilities, academic experiences, social experiences, transcendental phenomenology, critical disability theory, student persistence theory

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Alison Boahemaa Agyekum and my son, Boateng Gyan Agyekum III, recruits who agreed to participate in the research, the registerer, assistant registrar, and administrators who assisted me during this research. I could not complete this program without my mother's guidance and assistance. Mama, rest in peace.

Acknowledgments

I thank Dr. Fowler Rollen and Dr. Lucinda Spaulding for their support and guidance throughout this dissertation journey. Your suggestions, contributions, recommendations, and encouragements enabled me to complete this dissertation without challenges.

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List of Abbreviations

Assistive Technology (AT)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The number of students with disabilities keeps increasing in postsecondary institutions (Hong, 2015). As the population of students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions increases, problems regarding discrimination and bullying increases (Grimes, Scevak, Southgate, & Buchanan, 2017; Miskovic & Gabel, 2012). Postsecondary institutions across the globe are required to protect and support students with disabilities (Gibson, 2015). Many postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana experience challenges and receive hostile treatment from their peers, instructors, and administrators (Naami & Hayashi, 2012).

Higher education institutions provide comfortable accommodations to students who declare their disability status by giving them the necessary logistics (Grimes et al., 2017). In Africa, many postsecondary students with disabilities experience discrimination, love, hate, and negative attitudes from their peers, instructors, and administrators (Nel, Moatoana, Indiran, Rankoana, & Mothibi, 2015). Students with disabilities who experience frequent or high amount of stigma and discrimination may develop lower self-esteem (Akin & Huang, 2019). Professional literature reveals that students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions in Ghana experience challenges in their daily lives (see Braun & Naami, 2019; Morley & Croft, 2011).

Postsecondary students with disabilities use assistive technology to study, improve school activities, and promote social inclusion (McNicholl, Casey, Desmond, & Gallagher, 2019). Assistive technology devices and resources such as writing tools, switches, wheelchairs, ringing balls, and adaptive controllers help postsecondary institutions to modify learning environment for students with disabilities (Grimes et al., 2017). Researchers report that assistive

technologies, effective accommodations, and policies supported by research evidence help

students with disabilities to complete their programs with little or no challenges (see for

example, Fullarton & Duquette, 2016; Malcolm & Roll, 2011). Devices such as recording

devices, voice recognition software, and concept mapping tools help students with disabilities to

get work done on time (Fullarton & Duquette, 2016). The devices help the students with

disabilities to encounter positive experiences.

However, many students with disabilities find it difficult to take advantage of important

programs that enhance positive learning outcomes (Boney, Potvin, & Chabot, 2019; Dunn,

Brown, & McGuigan, 1994). This reluctance may negatively affect the postsecondary students

with disabilities learning outcomes because the postsecondary students with disabilities may

either have low grades or drop out of school. Researchers examine the lived experiences of

students with disabilities in order to make meaning of their experiences (Hutcheon & Wolbring,

2012; Keinen, 2018). Many people in Ghana associate individuals with disabilities with evil,

sorcery, witchcraft, and magical powers (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The derogatory labels drive

students out of school (Avoke, 2012). This study explored the experiences of postsecondary

students with disabilities regarding social and academic experiences and institutional and

personal factors that impact persistence. This chapter entails the background information,

situation to self, description of the research problem, and the purpose statement. Moreover, the

chapter one also contains information concerning the significance of the study, research

questions, definitions, and summary. The study may add testimonial "voice" to the professional

literature regarding postsecondary students with disabilities' social and academic experiences

and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence.

Background

The number of students with disabilities has been increasing across the globe as population increases (Allen & Seaman 2014; Kent, Ellis, & Giles, 2018). There are inadequate data about the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana (Braun & Naami, 2019). Many students with disabilities across the globe are treated badly in many postsecondary institutions (Tuomi, Lehtomakib, & Matonyac, 2015) and evidence suggests that certain postsecondary institutions prevent students with cognitive or intellectual needs from continuing enrollment (Dryer, Henning, Tyson, & Shaw, 2016). Postsecondary students with disabilities find it difficult to access inclusive academic programs (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Newman et al., 2011). Most students with disabilities are at risk of academic challenges because they often have weak test-taking skills and study skills (Adelman, 2004; Conley, 2010).

Researchers examined the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities in order to understand the students with disabilities' needs (see for example, Agarwal, Moya, Yasui, & Seymour, 2015; Seale, 2017; Yssel, Pak, & Beilke, 2016). While researchers have examined the experiences and challenges of postsecondary students with disabilities in developed countries (see, for example, Dryer et al., 2016; Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016; Plotner & May, 2017), only a few researchers have actually examined the experiences of students with disabilities in postsecondary settings in Ghana (see Gavu, Tudzi, & Shani, 2015; Morley & Croft, 2011; Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The "limited amount of research regarding disability studies in Ghana is focused more on primary and secondary education instead of postsecondary education" (Braun & Naami, 2019, p. 3). Moreover, researchers who studied the general experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities used survey methods which did not allow the students with disabilities to fully describe their experiences (Lyman et al., 2016).

Historical Context

Informal and indigenous education in Ghana dates back to pre-colonial period, while western form of education in Ghana dates back to colonial period (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, & Addo, 2017; Yusif, Yussof, & Osman, 2013). Ghana's educational system is centered round basic education, second cycle education, and postsecondary education (Adu-Agyem & Osei-Poku, 2012). The basic education covers a period of nine years, second cycle education covers a period of three years, and the postsecondary education covers three to four years for diploma and degree programs (Adu-Agyem & Osei-Poku, 2012). Students with severe disabilities in Ghana attend special schools, whereas those without disabilities attend segregated residential schools (Opoku, 2016). The special schools in Ghana target students with hearing impairment, visual impairment, and intellectual and developmental disabilities (Opoku, 2016).

Postsecondary institutions in Ghana includes universities and polytechnics, teacher training colleges, and other specialized institutions (Yusif et al., 2013). There were three public universities in Ghana during the 1980s, but as of 2012, there were more than 126 public and private postsecondary institutions in Ghana (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). The breakdown of the postsecondary institutions as of 2012 includes six public universities, 49 private universities, 38 teacher training colleges, 18 nursing training colleges, and 10 polytechnics (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). Institutions such as University of Cape Coast and University of Education in Winneba provides inclusive education to all teacher training colleges in Ghana (Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah, & Nyarko, 2018).

Health practitioners in Ghana use the medical model of disability to diagnose persons with disabilities (Ocran, 2019). The diagnosis and treatment of persons with disabilities in Ghana often occur in hospitals (Inclusion Ghana, 2013). The medical model of disability involves

restriction or inability to perform task in a normal manner (Morley & Croft, 2011). However, communication barriers, inadequate healthcare professionals, lack of appropriate policies, and lack of coordinated care often disrupt disability diagnosis and treatment in Ghana (Inclusion Ghana, 2013). There were 2.5 million people with disabilities in Ghana as at 2012 (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017). The population of persons with disabilities in Ghana has increased over 60% since the country gained its independence in 1957 (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017). The 1992 Constitution of Ghana guarantees equal rights for persons with disabilities (Tudzi et al., 2017). After the 1992 constitution, the government of Ghana adopted the United Nation's community-based rehabilitation program in 1999 to help persons with disabilities (Kuyini, Alhassan, & Mahama, 2011). The community-based rehabilitation program failed due to mismanagement and corruption (Kuyini et al., 2011).

In 2006, Ghana's parliament enacted Persons with Disability Act to protect individuals with disabilities (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The United Nations General Assembly approved the Convention of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 to secure the fundamental human rights for individuals with disabilities (United Nations, 2006). The government of Ghana gave formal consent to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 to improve the civil rights for individuals with disabilities (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). However, many human rights activists and policy makers have criticized the poor implementation of the 2006 Persons with Disability Act (Sossou & Yogtigba, 2016). Research has demonstrated that many postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana are unaware of the 2006 Persons with Disability Act (Gavu et al., 2015). Most public and private postsecondary institutions in Ghana have no policies protecting students with disabilities (Gavu et al., 2015).

Many postsecondary institutions across the globe help students with disabilities (Lombardi et al., 2018) by teaching them and addressing their needs. About 88% of postsecondary institutions in many parts of the world have indicated that they service students with disabilities in order to meet their academic goals (Raue & Lewis, 2011). Research suggests that less than 50% of postsecondary students with disabilities register with disability services, whilst more than 50% of college students with disabilities fail to declare their disability status (Lombardi el al., 2018, Newman & Madaus, 2014). Most postsecondary institutions' campuses in Ghana do not favor students with disabilities (Tudzi et al., 2017). On the other hand, many postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana have expressed positive encounters with their instructors, peers, and administrators, but others have expressed negative experiences regarding poor facilities, prejudices, academic challenges, and lack of institutional support (Morley & Croft, 2011).

Social Context

Instructors and administrators are required to collaborate with students with disabilities without hurting them (Leader-Janssen, Swain, Delkamiller, & Ritzman, 2012; Millward & Jeffries, 2001). Many professional instructors provide students with disabilities the most engaging educational experiences (Leader-Janssen et al., 2012). Postsecondary faculty members provide effective strategies to address students with disabilities needs (Bettencourt, Kimball, & Wells, 2018); however, some instructors fail to motivate and support postsecondary students with disabilities (Algarni, Algethami, Alsomi, & Adhabi, 2019). Negative stereotypes, misconceptions, and instructors' lack of knowledge about disability affect students with disabilities academic success (Sniatecki, Perry, & Snell, 2015).

College disability services help students with disabilities by providing standardize texting facilities, note takers, and overview of accommodations (Bettencourt et al., 2018). Research demonstrates that postsecondary students with disabilities struggle with social adaptation skills (Belch, 2011; Hong, 2015). Postsecondary students with disabilities who struggle to adapt social skills face challenges in navigating social arenas, cannot keep friends on campus, and fail to utilize opportunities offered by departments (Plotner & May, 2017). Students with disabilities are less likely to complain when instructors, administrators, and peers treat them with respect (Cress, 2008). Postsecondary school climate becomes positive to students with disabilities when they experience positive relationships with their instructors and peers.

Some postsecondary institutions are unaware of social and cultural factors that affect students with disabilities (Fleming, Oertle, Plotner, & Hakun, 2017). The sociopolitical model of disability can be used to assess the inaccessible environment, stigmatization, and attitudinal challenges students with disabilities face (Hosking, 2008; Smart, 2009). Social experiences of students with disabilities include negative attitudes of instructors and peers, name calling, and negative stereotypes (Fleming et al., 2017). Research evidence suggests that the interaction between postsecondary students with disabilities and students without disabilities are not always effective or positive (Granello & Wheaton, 2001; Mutanga & Walker, 2017). Postsecondary students without disabilities develop personal relationships with students with disabilities depending on the severity of the disability (Miller, Chen, Glover-Graf & Kranz, 2009).

Theoretical Context

Researchers use disability theory to focus on disability challenges (Wieseler, 2018). Many philosophers and theorists often emphasize on the dominant narratives about students with disabilities rather than exploring their experiences (Wieseler, 2018). Due to the negative

stereotypes and beliefs associated with disabilities (Siebers, 2011), many people who think all disabilities need to be treated often maltreat and discriminate against individuals with disabilities (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). The disability theory enables researchers to explore sources of discrimination against individuals with disabilities (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011) by viewing disability as a cultural, historical, or social phenomenon rather than as a medical problem to be treated. Researchers use critical disability theory to explore the different perspectives of individuals living with disabilities (Glynne-Owen, 2010). Generally, students with disabilities experience love, bullying, physical assault, and harassment on college campuses (Findley, Plummer, & McMahon, 2015). College students with disabilities may experience discrimination and social exclusion from their peers (Aquino, 2016). Researchers try to learn first-hand accounts of students with disabilities in order to understand the stigma and challenges they experience in their lives (Aquino, 2016).

The critical disability theory enables researchers to understand individuals with disabilities' experiences, perspectives, limitations, and knowledge about the world (Hosking, 2008). Within the social construct, students with disabilities interact with their peers, teachers, and administrators. Postsecondary institutions support students with disabilities by addressing their needs, whilst encouraging instructors and administrators to show positive attitudes towards individual with disability (Dukes, Madaus, Faggella-Luby, Lombardi, & Gelbar, 2017). Instructors' knowledge about students with disabilities helps to improve the students with disabilities learning outcomes (Dukes et al., 2017). Critical disability theorists view disability as reality in which the experiences of individuals with disabilities are considered important within the social and political environment (Reaume, 2014). Robinson (2016) utilized critical disability

theory in his research by given students with disabilities the opportunity to voice out their experiences.

The model of student persistence theory in postsecondary education setting is used to examine and explain the interaction or involvement between students and the postsecondary institution (Fleming et al., 2017). Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory provides a useful framework for researchers to assess students' experiences and academic integration. Tinto's student persistence theory can be applied to determine the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities' social and academic integration and transitional learning experiences (Holden, 2018). Tinto's student persistence theory places important emphasis on "transitional adjustment, levels of containment and academic capability of arriving students, postsecondary learning environment, and factors of obligations" (Holden, 2018, p. 1004). The concept of social and academic integration can be used to examine interaction between faculty members and the students and the interaction between the students and learning environment (Severiens & Schmidt, 2008). Through the lens of critical disability theory and student persistent theory, this study examined the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana.

Situation to Self

I am an educator, environmentalist, and natural resource personnel. Since my secondary education, I have always wanted to assist students with disabilities to perform at their fullest potential. I am interested in giving a "voice" to students with disabilities. I have the desire to help students with disabilities to achieve their academic goals. In my own personal observation in higher education, I have witnessed many students with disabilities dropping out of school because of financial challenges, instructors' neglect, and peers' negative attitudes towards them.

During interviews, I took an active role in the research in order to understand the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities. The transcendental phenomenological research approach enabled me to understand the lived experiences of students with disabilities. This research helped me to explore and understand the many challenges associated with students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions. The research may benefit educators and institutions.

I researched from an epistemological philosophical assumption by documenting participants' explanations/descriptions of their experiences and perceptions related to the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This enabled me to collaborate and spend time in the field in order to obtain subjective description and definition from participants. An epistemological assumption helps researchers to get closer to participants being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When researchers stay in the field they get to know more about participant. Axiologically, I reported my own personal values throughout the study. I "admitted the value-laden nature of the study and reported my own values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the students with disabilities" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). I openly discussed values that shaped the narrative.

The paradigm focus for the study was based on critical disability theory and Tinto's student persistent theory. The critical disability theory helps researchers to "examine fundamental values of individuals dignity and respect in society, social construct, and intersection of disability regarding ethnicity, race, class, and gender" (Hosking, 2018, p. 8), while the student persistence theory helps researchers to examine student involvement and interaction in order to explain retention (Fleming et al., 2017). Keeping with the critical disability theory and student persistence theory, the research may help instructors, administrators, and institutions to understand disability through an interpretive lens.

Problem Statement

Students with disabilities face challenges such as discrimination, inaccessible environment, negative attitudes from instructors and students without disabilities, and lack of institutional support (Costello-Harris, 2019; Ju, Zeng, & Landmark, 2017; Nel et al., 2015; Plotener & May, 2017). Despite the numerous postsecondary education programs for students with disabilities, many students with disabilities continue to struggle to complete course work and lack the academic and social skills needed to adjust in postsecondary settings (Prohn, Kelly, & Westling, 2019). Moreover, many postsecondary students with disabilities are "less likely to evaluate their own performance, less likely to consult instructors and administrators for their needs, struggles with depression and stress, and are less likely to identify their own interests and limitations" (Hong, 2015. p. 210, see also, Riddle, Tinkling & Wilson, 2005).

Research has shown that students with disabilities struggle to cope with the demand of postsecondary education curriculum (Hong, 2015; Tuomi, et al., 2015). Postsecondary students with disabilities have been reported to score lower marks in exam than their peers (Wasielewski, 2016). The graduation rate for postsecondary students with disabilities is lower than students without disabilities (Summer, White, Zhang, & Jeffrey, 2014). For example, Agarwal et al. (2015) conducted participatory action research with college students with disabilities and found out that social and physical barriers on college campuses prevent students with disabilities from achieving positive academic outcomes. Postsecondary students with disabilities can achieve positive social outcomes when their peers and instructors are aware of how to assist them (Agarwal et al., 2015). However, postsecondary students with disabilities who are not able to socialize with their peers and keep friends struggle to adapt to the school's climate (Plotner & May, 2017).

The problem is that many postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana experience many barriers in their educational endeavors (Braun & Naami, 2019; Naami & Hayashi, 2012). Postsecondary students with disabilities who encounter many challenges often fail to complete their programs (Walker, 2016). Instructors and students without disabilities discriminate against students with disabilities because they see the students with disabilities as difficult (Nel et al., 2015). Some people in Ghana believe individuals with disabilities are cursed (Avoke, 2002; Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017). Research demonstrates that built environment in many postsecondary settings in Ghana does not favor students with disabilities (Braun & Naami, 2019; Morley & Croft, 2011). The gap between students with disabilities degree attainments and enrollment is paramount for researchers, institutions, policy makers, and instructors to understand (Erickson, Lee, & Schrader, 2014). If postsecondary students with disabilities are not given the opportunity to describe their experiences, instructors, administrators, peers, and postsecondary institutions in Ghana may lack the knowledge and skill to support students with disabilities. Based on the above stated problem, there was the need to conduct research on the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. While some students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions in Ghana experience love and acceptance from their peers and instructors, many students experience discrimination and poor academic outcomes (Francis, Duke, Fujita, & Sutton, 2019; Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The theories guiding this study were Hosking's (2008) critical disability theory and Tinto's (1997,1998) student persistence theory. The disability theory posits

that ideas about limitations, capacities, and experiences of individuals with disabilities are socially constructed (Creswell & Poth, 2018), while the student persistence theory describes students' academic and social integration and institutional experiences (Severiens & Schmidt, 2008). Hosking (2008) emphasized that the critical disability theory provides an important descriptive base for inquiry which look at the social phenomena aspect of students with disabilities.

Significance of the Study

Researchers report that the number of postsecondary students with disabilities is increasing (Ju et al., 2017; Summers, White, & Gordon, 2014). Self-advocacy and determination help students with disabilities to succeed in postsecondary institutions (Ju et al., 2017). Postsecondary students with disabilities often feel unmotivated, isolated, disrespected, and less worthy (Francis et al., 2017). This research may give a needed "voice" to students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions in Ghana. Plotner and May (2017) compared college students with and without disabilities experiences and found that students with intellectual disabilities developed closer relationships with their peers than students with mild learning disabilities. The results from this study may help teachers, administrators, and school districts to develop effective strategies to address students with disabilities challenges.

The findings may help advance generalized knowledge about the experiences of students with disabilities in Ghana. The critical disability theory embraces the idea of changing perceptions about individuals with disabilities (Siebers, 2011). Students with disabilities may be among the most rejected students in postsecondary institutions (Schulte & Villwock, 2004). This study sought to understand the general experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities, the description of what instructors do to help postsecondary students with disabilities, how

postsecondary students with disabilities describe their experience regarding academic and social integration, and factors that impact persistence.

Moreover, the study may add practical knowledge of administrators', instructors', and directors' experiences while working with students with disabilities (Patton, 2002). The practical significance of the study may help researchers and policy makers to utilize the research's results to address the challenges of postsecondary school students with disabilities. The data that were collected and analyzed may help institutions and policy makers to draft strategies to solve the social and academic needs of postsecondary students with disabilities. In addition, data from this study may also provide students with disabilities strategies for persisting in higher education.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experience of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana. The research questions consist of one central question and four guiding questions. The central research question enabled me to explore the general experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities. The four guiding questions provided insightful information about the experiences of students with disabilities.

Central Research Question

How do postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana describe their lived experiences?

Critical disability theory invokes individual perceptions and thought processes about disability (Siebers, 2011). The seven elements of critical disability theory include "social model of disability, multidimensionality, valuing diversity, rights, voices of disability, language, and transformative politics" (Hosking, 2008, p. 5). Researchers have examined the experiences of

postsecondary students with disabilities by looking at instructors' and peers' attitudes towards students with disabilities and factors that hinder academic success (Agarwal et al., 2015; Yssel et al., 2016).

Postsecondary students with disabilities experience various phenomenon regardless of the specific type of disability, self-identity, socio-academic inclusion, and the institutional environment (Aquino, 2016). The understanding of how society perceives disability increases the accountability around students with disabilities (Aquino, 2016). Tinto's (1997) student persistence theory can be applied to look at practices that help postsecondary students with disabilities to persist. Positive learning experiences enable postsecondary students to learn and make friends, while negative learning experiences does not encourage students to make friends (Tinto, 1998). Hosking's critical disability theory and Tinto's student persistence theory were used to examine the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities.

Guiding Question One

What are the academic experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Instructors must value diversity and individuals with disabilities. Instructors teach students with disabilities to achieve positive academic goals (Friend & Cook, 2012), but instructors' knowledge about disabilities help the students with disabilities to study and cope with academics (Mamboleo et al., 2015). Positive interactions between students with disabilities and their instructors lead to greater students' realization of knowledge, intellectual commitment, and development of skills (Mamboleo et al., 2015). Postsecondary students with disabilities find it difficult to study when their instructors fail to support them. Postsecondary students who spend more time on their academic work stand to achieve positive academic outcomes (Tinto, 1998).

Postsecondary students who are able to academically integrate experience positive academic success and they can persist to complete their programs (Tinto, 1998). This question helped me to explore academic experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute students.

Guiding Question Two

What are the social experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

The critical disability theory deals with how language influences individuals with disabilities (Hosking, 2008). Words and images used to portray individuals with disabilities must be positive. Students with disabilities are offended when derogatory words are used to describe them. Positive relationships between postsecondary students with disabilities and their instructors make the students with disabilities feel emotionally supported, generate sense of closeness, and express their emotions without fears (Morina, 2019). Tino's student persistence theory assumes that social integration on postsecondary institutions involve students' collaborative work (Severiens & Schmidt, 2008). Social barriers such as negative attitudes of peers, faculty members, and staff pose challenge to many postsecondary students with disabilities (Fleming et al., 2017).

Guiding Question Three

What institutional factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

The critical disability theory ensures individual with disability rights to autonomy, rights to full participation, and rights to integration in society (Hosking, 2008). The critical disability theory responds to address the challenges of individuals with disabilities. Most postsecondary

students with disabilities do not have the desire to interact or participate in activities or assignments with students without disabilities due to previous negative experiences (Aquino, 2016). Postsecondary institutions support students with disabilities in many ways. Higher education institutions support students with disabilities by providing skills training, assistive technologies, and class note-takers (Raue & Lewis, 2011). Postsecondary institutions that fail to support students with disabilities subject the students with disabilities into difficult learning condition. However, some administrators are willing to support students with disabilities, but others have no knowledge about disabilities (Gilson & Dymond, 2012). Tinto's student persistence theory assumes that institutional factors affect postsecondary students via social and academic integration (Severienes & Schmidt, 2008). Tino's student persistent theory helps researchers to explore students' extra-curricular activities and teacher-student interactions (Severienes & Schmidt, 2008).

Guiding Question Four

What personal factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Personal factors that affect postsecondary students with disabilities include sense of belonging, determination, study skills, efficacy, aptitude, academic performance, and socioeconomic status (Chiu et al., 2019). Some postsecondary students with disabilities employ strategies such as making new friends with students without disabilities, increase independence, and effective communication in order to persist (Fleming et al., 2017). Postsecondary Students with disabilities are likely to persist if they engage in social and academic activities and interact positively with their instructors and students without disabilities (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011). Students put more effort into academic studies in order to persist and achieve positive academic

outcome (Tinto, 1998). Tinto (1997) indicated that postsecondary students who are committed to their goals, share ideas, and establish positive relationship with their family members and faculty members are likely to persist.

Definitions

1. *Critical disability theory* – Critical disability theory attempts to examine and explain social perceptions in order to address injustices by analyzing and treating disability as a cultural, historical, relative, social, and political phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

2. *Disability* – This can be described as label based on a diagnosis or individuals who meet the criteria of severe and chronic disability (Schalock, Luckasson, & Tasse, 2019).

3. *Emotional experience* – This refers to feelings about oneself, a person, or situation that involves changes in physiological arousal and cognitions (Gaines et al., 2019).

4. *Student persistence theory* – This consists of perceived campus environment, student persistence in higher education, student academic development, student characteristics, and institutional commitment (Baker, Arroyo, Braxton, & Gasman, 2020).

5. *Students with disabilities* – This can be defined as students who have different disabilities such as physical impairment, visual impairment, cognitive impairment, motor impairment, and hearing impairment (Dong & Lucas, 2013).

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. Students with disabilities face numerous challenges in postsecondary

institutions (Plotner & May, 2017). The problem is that many students with disabilities are rejected and maltreated in many postsecondary institutions in Ghana due to their conditions (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017; Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The study examined participants' academic and social experiences and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. Critical disability theory and student persistence theory were applied to investigate and analyze the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana. This study may add knowledge to existing literature which may help educators and institutions to examine the challenges and experiences of students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions.

The upcoming chapter two describes current research demonstrating the gap in literature. Critical disability theory and Tinto's student persistence theory were used to demonstrate the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities. The related literature includes individuals with disabilities, students' attitudes, experiences of students with disabilities, bullying students with disabilities, teachers' preparedness in educating students with disabilities, and accommodation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter describes important information regarding the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities. The two theories that guided the study were: Hosking's (2008) critical disability theory and Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory. The disability theory addresses oppression and marginalization issues which disrupt students with disabilities' academic outcomes (Hosking, 2008), while student persistence theory revolves round students' institutional experiences and social and academic integration (Severiens & Schmidt, 2008). The related literature describes important information regarding disability, postsecondary students with disabilities' academic and social experiences, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. The literature review serves a significant role in identifying areas needed for the study. My review of the literature provides detailed information on existing literature regarding students' attitudes towards disability, teacher-student relationships and interactions, stereotypic threats, and accommodation.

Theoretical Framework

Max Horkheimer proposed the critical theory of society in 1937 (Hosking, 2008). Horkheimer's critical theory has enabled theorists and researchers to look at practices that suppress human rights (Hosking, 2008; Ingham, 2018). Critical disability theory revolves round analysis of a disability that challenges the ablest assumptions that shape society (Hosking, 2008; Ingham, 2018). The critical disability theory provides an important descriptive base for enquiry which looks at social phenomena aspects of students with disabilities (Gillborn, 2015). The disability theory addresses oppression and marginalization issues that disrupt the students with disabilities academic and learning outcomes (Hosking, 2008). The descriptive and normative

bases for social inquiry seek to maximize human freedom by eliminating abuse and discrimination within disability groups in higher education (Ingham, 2018). Critical disability theorists consider disability as lived reality, social, and political definition based on school and societal power relations (Reaume, 2014).

The critical disability theory challenges approaches that deal with disabilities in society (Reaume, 2014). In many societies, individuals with disabilities have been reduced to metaphors in which disability discourse is centered on fear, insult, name calling, deficit, and malfunction (Titchkosky, 2015). Educators and researchers can examine employment, scholarships, learning challenges, and transportation challenges that affect students with disabilities in higher education. Researchers argue that critical disability theory helps educators and teachers to love individuals with disabilities in order to help them achieve their learning outcomes (Hosking, 2008; Ingham, 2018).

Theorists and researchers who adopt disability theory during research explore the challenges associated with disabilities. Disability theorists can settle on construction of the body and social relation of capitalism (Barnes, 2012). The disability theory remains significant as theorists and researchers examine social barriers and the various limitations students with disabilities face (Wieseler, 2018). Theorists and researchers focus on the challenge students with disabilities face in order to model effective framework to address the challenges.

Ingham (2018) suggested that researchers must use Hosking's (2008) critical disability theory formulation to conduct contextual analysis to ascertain reflexive analysis, reflection, and interpretation of themes. Ingham (2018) utilized Hosking's critical disability theory formulation to provide descriptive and normative description regarding disability challenges. Asch (2001) used critical disability theory to examine discrimination against individuals with disabilities and

found out that individuals with disabilities are not given the opportunities to take social roles due to their conditions. The variation model of disability recognizes the voices of individuals with physical, mental, and learning disabilities (Ash, 2001). Naami and Hayashi (2012) added that postsecondary institutions should use human model of disability theories to address the challenges students with disabilities face.

Disability is universal because many people are disabled at sometimes in their lives (Hosking, 2018). Many educators have raised concern about critical disability theory whether the theory addresses individuals with disabilities needs (Bernal & Roca, 2016; Oliver, 2013). The critical disability theory fits qualitative research (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2017), that is why researchers use disability theory to explore the experiences and perspectives of individuals with disabilities (Oliver, 2013). Critical disability theorists seek to understand individuals with disabilities' perspectives through critical analysis and evaluation (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2017). The seven principles of disability theory include social model of disability, multidimensionality, diversity, rights, voices of disability, language, and transformative politics (Hosking, 2008). The disability theory guided me to ascertain and understand postsecondary students with disabilities' academic and social experiences and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence.

Tinto's student persistence theory plays significant role in postsecondary institutions. Tinto's student persistence theory has gained greater standing in many educational fields due to its role in modern study of college students' persistence and retention (French, 2017). In 1975, Vincent Tinto outlined a model which connected postsecondary institutions' environment with retention rates by suggesting postsecondary students are likely to persist and integrate when they immerse themselves into institutional context (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's (1975) student persistence

theory stipulates that students go to postsecondary institutions with different personal characteristics, family backgrounds, and pre-postsecondary experiences. The pre-postsecondary experiences, personal characteristics, and family backgrounds influence academic development and persistence (Dwyer, 2017). However, Tinto's (1997) student persistent theory describes academic, social, and institutional factors that affect students' persistence in higher education (Severiens & Schmidt, 2008).

Moreover, academic and social integration varies in many educational settings (Tinto, 1998). Student-faculty interactions form part of social integration which is one of the components in Tinto's student persistence theory (Dwyer, 2017). The "academic integration involves academic standards and academic structures, whereas the social integration refers to the compatibility between individual and institutional social system" (Dwyer, 2017, p. 326). In postsecondary institutions, an academic integration relates to intellectual development and grade performance (Murray et al., 2014). Tinto's (1975) added that positive interactions between students and the academic and social systems help the students to perform at or above academic levels.

Without social integration on college campus, many postsecondary students with disabilities would not be able to persist (Severiens & Schmidt, 2008). The more postsecondary students with disabilities are academically and socially integrated, the more likely they will persist and less likely they will drop out of school (Choi et al., 2019). Social integration enables postsecondary students to engage in extracurricular opportunities, interact positively with instructors and administrators, and leads to sense of belonging and affirmation (French, 2017; Tinto, 1975). Interactions in the classroom between students and faculty members may be positive or negative depending on the type of relationship that exist between the students and the

faculty members (Hoffman, 2014). However, Read et al. (2015) found out that many postsecondary students with disabilities fail to socially integrate with students without disabilities because they do not know how to navigate the relationship. Students who are unable to integrate academically stand the chance of achieving low grades; thereby, dropping out of school (Tinto, 1997).

The central research question examined the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana. The central research question and the four guiding questions enabled me to explore postsecondary students with disabilities' academic and social experiences and factors that impact persistence. The seven elements of critical disability theory were applied to examine the lived experiences of the students with disabilities (Hosking, 2018), while Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory was applied to examine academic and social integration and institutional factors that help students to persist. The central research question and the four guiding questions enabled participants to describe how they experienced the phenomenon. The current studies relate to the disability and student persistence theory because the research's purpose involves the challenges and experiences of students with disabilities.

Related Literature

Students with disabilities experience several challenges in postsecondary institutions (Dell'Olio et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2013). Postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana face challenges such as verbal abuse from their peers, discrimination, and name calling (Braun & Naami, 2019). Students with disabilities have been dealing with academic challenges because they cannot access social support, appropriate equipment, and responses from their instructors (Murray et al., 2013). The view of disability in Ghana and most parts of Africa focuses on

impairment (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017). Instructors' and peers' negative perceptions towards disability and administrative failure to support the students with disabilities affect the students with disabilities academic outcomes (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017).

The related literature explored views about disability and disability education in Ghana. The following subsections discussed important themes regarding students' attitudes towards disabilities, the experiences of students with disabilities, bullying students with disabilities, and the dropout rates among students with disabilities. The next involves review of teachers' preparedness in educating students with disabilities, teacher-student relationships and interactions, stereotype threats, performance of students with disabilities, and accommodation. The related literature highlights important information regarding social and academic integration and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence.

Individuals with Disabilities

The World Health Organization (2001) classified disability as biopsychosocial construct of identity which has many issues related to inclusion, equality of opportunity, and respect. Disability "can limit one's ability to engage in physical activities and learning process" (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017, p. 2). Individuals with disabilities have been examined from different perspectives. Postsecondary institutions have reported enrolling individuals with specific disabilities such as physical impairment, learning disability, and attention deficit disorder (Costello-Harris, 2019). Students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions encounter negative reactions from their peers (Akin & Huang, 2019) and feel they are treated unfairly by their instructors (Layman et al., 2016; Stein, 2014). For example, individuals with disabilities in postsecondary institutions who use wheelchairs experience awkward and difficult situation due to their condition (Akin & Huang, 2019).

Disability in Ghana

Some families in Ghana reject individuals with disabilities due to their condition (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). Due to superstition and discrimination, students with disabilities in Ghana are unlikely to secure gainful employment after they graduate from postsecondary institution (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). Despite the various constitutional provisions that protect individuals with disabilities, many individuals with disabilities in Ghana continue to experience social exclusion, discrimination, and social stigma (Ocran, 2019). Cudjoe and Alhassan (2017) disability assessment studies in the Western part of Ghana revealed that large number of people do not respect students with disabilities.

Moreover, some people in Ghana believe disability is caused by supernatural forces (Grischow et al., 2018), whereas others believe disability is a punishment from God (Gregorius, 2016; Naami & Hayashi, 2012). Christianity and traditional belief systems make many people in Ghana associate disability with magical powers and demons (Grischow et al., 2018). Only few individuals with disabilities that are fortunate to get good family support in Ghana can go to higher education, but many families in Ghana neglect individuals with disabilities because of superstition (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). Many Ghanaian families fail to sponsor individuals with disabilities to attend higher education because the families think supporting individuals with disabilities to attend higher education is a waste of scarce resources (Baffoe, 2013; Kassah, 2008).

Disability and Education in Ghana

Disability affects the day to day lives of students who manifest it (May & LaMont, 2014). Higher education institutions classify students with disabilities in order to improve their

academic outcomes. Different types of disabilities such as physical impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment, motor impairment, and cognitive impairment are on the rise in many postsecondary institutions (Dong & Lucas, 2013). Despite the challenges students with disabilities might face in their academic lives, they should be able to withstand and control the challenges (Fullarton & Duquette, 2016). Inadequate learning strategies and instructors' limited knowledge about disabilities affect the students with disabilities academic performance. Cognitive differences associated with learning disabilities limits individual's academic functions (Fullarton & Duquette, 2016). Students with learning disabilities need accommodations, and any denial from their instructors and administrators may affect their learning outcomes (Banks, 2014; Erten; 2011). Some postsecondary students with visual impairments find it difficult to integrate into the school's environment due to academic and social challenges (Reed & Curtis, 2012). Due to the many challenges students with disabilities face in their lives, many postsecondary institutions offer good academic accommodations such as assistive technologies and administrative support to help the students with disabilities to overcome challenges (Ostrowski, 2016).

Generally, children with disabilities in Ghana are trained in special schools just like children without disabilities. Historically, special education in Ghana started in the 1930s (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015), but the individuals with disabilities at that time were trained to weave baskets (Avoke, 2001). In 2013, the government of Ghana drafted inclusive education policy to favor or support children with disabilities, but little has been done to implement the policy (Ministry of Education, 2013). Currently, special education in Ghana targets children with mild to moderate disabilities such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, and intellectual disabilities (Akinkugbe, 2013). Educational programs in special education schools in Ghana

relate to general education programs which addresses pupil with disability needs (Opoku, 2016).

Private special education schools in Ghana such as Three Kings Special School at Bator, Shalom

Special School at Nkoranza, and New Horizon Special School at Cantonments in Accra provide

competitive special training for children with intellectual disabilities (Kassah et al., 2017).

Disability and Postsecondary Education in Ghana

Physical disabilities include congenital, acquired disabilities, and related health issues

(Jeannis, et al., 2018). Individuals with "physical disabilities such as orthopedic and neurological

impairment use of walker, wheelchair, prosthetic, cane, or scooter" (Jeannis et al., 2018, p. 186).

Some postsecondary students with physical disabilities express concern about interpersonal

relationships, academic stress, and time adjustment (Burwell, Wessel, & Mulvihill, 2015). Many

postsecondary students with disabilities who use wheelchairs have expressed positive academic

and residential experiences (Padgett et al., 2012). Majority of students without disabilities in the

western region of Ghana love to play with students with physical disabilities without hurting

them (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017). Moreover, students with intellectual disabilities have been

mistreated, insulted, isolated, and devalued than other disability groups (Phillips, Fortney, &

Swafford, 2018). Phillips et al. (2018) found out that postsecondary students with disabilities

experience positive relationship with their peers, while students without disabilities have greater

knowledge about individuals with disabilities.

The government of Ghana has made it possible for individuals with disabilities to attend

postsecondary institutions. In 2003, pressure groups such as Ghana Society for the Physical

Disabled and Ghana Society for the Blind made significant impact by collaborating with

Voluntary Services Overseas to ensure quality education for individuals with disabilities across

Ghana (Agbenyega, 2007). The pressure groups' effort led to visual impairments intake at

universities in Ghana (Mamah et al., 2011). For example, during 2008/2009 academic year, 12 students with visual impairments entered University of Ghana, whereas University of Cape Coast admitted 30 students with visual impairments (Mamah et al., 2011). Both public and private postsecondary institutions in Ghana receive few applications from individuals with disabilities each year (Morley & Croft, 2011). In addition, higher education institutions in Ghana support individuals with disabilities through many programs. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology has a draft policy which supports persons with disability in terms of accommodation (Gavu et al., 2015).

Persons with Disability Act

During the 1990s, the disability movement became a major talking point for individuals with disabilities in Ghana (Mfoafo-M'Carthy et al., 2020). The government of Ghana in 1992 drafted a constitution to safeguard the interest of persons with disabilities (Gavu et al., 2015). The 1992 constitution ensures non-discrimination and equality for individuals with disabilities (Tudzi & Danso, 2017). Shortly after the 1992 constitution, individuals with disabilities in Ghana carefully examined the constitution and identified irregularities which did not cover all human rights (Gavu et al., 2015). The irregularities led to the passage of the 2006 Persons with Disability Act (Mfoafo-M'Carthy et al., 2020).

The government of Ghana enacted Persons with Disability Act in 2006 to protect individuals with disabilities across all institutions (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). Prior to the 2006 Persons with Disability Act, students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions were not properly taken care of (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The passage of Persons with Disability Act has ensured the total protection of individuals with disabilities in universities and vocational training institutions. Teachers, administrators, and school leaders are supposed to educate and treat

individuals with disabilities without compromising on their rights (Republic of Ghana, 2006).

The Persons with Disability Act directs institutions, departments, and private citizens to make

buildings accessible to individuals with disabilities (Asante & Sasu, 2015). Sections of the

Persons with Disability Act stipulates that owner of a place or institution must provide

appropriate facilities or buildings that can be accessible and available for use by individuals with

disabilities (Tudzi & Danso, 2017).

Despite the successful implementation of the 2006 Persons with Disability Act, many

activists in Ghana have raised concerns about lapses in the Persons with Disability Act (Mfoafo-

M'Carthy et al., 2020). Many people have praised the 2006 Persons with Disability Act for the

coverage about basic human rights for all, but individuals with disabilities in Ghana have

expressed that people in society keeps oppressing them despite the passage of the 2006 Persons

with Disability Act (Sossou & Yogtiba, 2016). However, due to the 2006 Persons with Disability

Act, most Ghanaians have developed positive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities in

public places (Sossou & Yogtiba, 2016). Some postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana

have no knowledge about the existence of the 2006 Persons with Disability Act (Gavu et al.,

2015), this may affect their academic learning outcomes.

Students' Attitudes Towards Disability

Students in postsecondary institutions can either show negative or positive attitudes

towards students with disabilities depending on their level of knowledge and experience

regarding disabilities (Culp et al., 2017). Despite positive narratives from researchers, "greater

number of students without disabilities show more negative attitudes towards students with

disabilities" (Culp et al., 2017, p. 52). Postsecondary students without disabilities' attitudes and

perceptions towards students with physical and learning disabilities are often positive regardless

of the college major (Rice, 2009). Researchers have revealed that most postsecondary students at Mid-Western University without disabilities are comfortable with students with disabilities (Izzo & Shuman, 2013). Izzo and Shuman (2013) found out that most students without disabilities hold positive beliefs about students with physical and intellectual disabilities. Many postsecondary students with disabilities believe that positive attitudes from peers help them to succeed in education (Ekelman et al., 2013; Lightfoot, Janemi, & Rudman, 2018).

Negative attitudes towards postsecondary students with disabilities and misconceptions about individuals with disabilities affect the students with disabilities academic success. Most students without disabilities often perceive students with disabilities as incompetent and emotionally unstable (Carlson & Witschey, 2018). Many studies have revealed negative interactions between college students with disabilities and peers, but some postsecondary students without disabilities often show positive attitudes towards students with disabilities during course work and school activities (Carlson & Witschey, 2018). Students without disabilities in postsecondary institution show positive attitudes towards students with disabilities in order to help the students with disabilities to complete coursework and assignment on time (Polo Sanchez et al., 2017). Patel and Rose (2014) found out that students without disabilities feel that at younger age they were less empathic towards individuals with disabilities as compared to their present age in higher education.

The Experiences of Students with Disabilities

Postsecondary students with disabilities are less likely to be employed, accepted in communities, and earn less salaries than those without disabilities (Butler et al., 2016). Human rights activists and scholars have pushed for all-inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions across the globe (Butler et al., 2016). College

professors, administrators, university staff members, and students without disabilities have been reported to show positive relationships towards students with disabilities (Plotner & May, 2017). Positive relationships promote social developments. The academic, social, and intensive support improve the perception of students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions. Many postsecondary students with disabilities struggle with assignment, time management, and project work (Van Hees et al., 2014).

College students with disabilities have been complaining about negative attitudes from their instructors because the instructors believe students with disabilities are lazy, have no disabilities, do not pay attention in class, and do not study hard (Francis et al., 2019). Some students with disabilities avoid consulting their instructors because of the negative tag associated with students with disabilities that they are lazy and less capable of making it in class (Hong, 2015). In many instances, most postsecondary students with disabilities believe there are distrust and cynicism between instructors and students with disabilities because they feel instructors do not like students with disabilities (Hong, 2015).

Classroom Learning Experiences

Researchers explore students with disabilities classroom learning experiences in order to understand how the students with disabilities cope with studies. Research has demonstrated that most college student with disabilities are not happy with course format or method of instruction (Fleming et al., 2017). For successful and positive classroom experience, instructors discover students with disabilities interests to help them choose appropriate topics, name course, hold more extensive office hours, and create accessible resources such as slide projections and recordings (Quinlan et al., 2012). The failure of a lecturer to provide constructive feedback to students with disabilities often hurt the students with disabilities emotions and academic

outcomes (Burgin et al., 2017). Some of instructors have the opinion that they fail to provide constructive feedback to students with disabilities because they do not want to hurt the students with disabilities feelings (Burgin et al., 2017).

Students with disabilities continue to experience positive and negative treatments from instructors, administrators, and peers. Students with disabilities who use wheelchairs struggle to access classrooms, whereas students with learning disabilities do not receive proper accommodations (Black et al., 2015). Instructional methods such as class discussion, classroom arrangement, instructor's approach, and hands-on or interactive activities in most postsecondary institutions go against students with disabilities (Black et al., 2015). On the other hand, existing methodologies are found to be unfriendly to students with disabilities (Liasidou, 2014). Research has shown that certain postsecondary institutions lack emergency exists, fixed seats in classroom, ramps, elevators, and computers (Camacho et al., 2017). Postsecondary students with disabilities hold the view that essential improvements such as participatory teaching methodologies, new technology resources, positive lecturer's attitudes towards students with disabilities, and participatory active classes helps them to study without challenges (Camacho et al., 2017).

Stigmatization and Emotional Experience

Researchers have identified reoccurring presence of stigmatization towards students with disabilities in many postsecondary institutions across developing countries (Maranzan, 2016; Sachs & Schreuer, 2011). Negative attitudes towards students with disabilities prevent them from accessing educational support (Maranzan, 2016). Although higher education institutions try to educate students without disabilities about disability, many students with disabilities have experienced large amount of stigma because students without disabilities treat them bad on college campus (Trammell, 2009). Negative perceptions and misconceptions about disability

affect postsecondary students with disabilities learning outcomes. The perception of students without disabilities regarding disability may affect students with disabilities program choice, motivation, academic success, and career aspiration (Akin & Huang, 2019).

Lecturers', administrators', and peers' negative attitudes towards students with disabilities may negatively affect the students with disabilities academic outcomes and future success (Bamiteko et al., 2017). Students disclose their disability status to postsecondary school authorities in order to receive special treatments and benefits from the institutions. However, researchers have found that students who declare their disability status are often stigmatized by their peers and lecturers who lack knowledge about disability (Eccles et al., 2018). Due to stigmatization associated with disability disclosure on college campus, most students with disabilities refuse to disclose their status (Kravets, 2006). The stigma associated with college students with disabilities includes labelling, separation, and negative stereotypes (Gibbons & Birks, 2016).

Postsecondary students with disabilities experience frustrations which stem from lack of support, negative attitudes from peers, and physical barriers (Johnson, 2006). Student with mobility disability, auditory disability, and learning disability are often emotionally impacted from the negative treatments their peers subject them through (Johnson, 2006). Students with disabilities become emotional when their peers and teachers attach evil to their names (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). Negative perceptions about disability in postsecondary institutions affect students with disabilities emotions, influence sense of belonging, and may disrupt the students with disabilities community participation (Akin & Huang, 2019).

In Ghana, postsecondary students with disabilities express negative emotions because of bad treatment and inaccessible educational environment (Braun & Naami, 2019). Emotionally,

students with disabilities express emotive words such as bad, unfair, ashamed, devalued, lost, hurt, excluded, denied, challenging, isolated, and unfortunate to describe how their peers, teachers, and administrators treat them (Braun & Naami, 2019). Students with disabilities often experience stress, depression, and anxiety as the result of the numerous challenges they encounter in postsecondary setting (Squires & Countermine, 2018). The emotional challenges students with disabilities encounter in their daily lives on campus leads to fear, isolation, and insecurity (Francis et al., 2019, Squires & Countermine, 2018).

Bullying Students with Disabilities

Bullying towards students with disabilities is one of the documented incidents of violence on college campuses (Kowalski et al., 2016). Bullying creates a hostile environment for students with disabilities (Yell et al., 2016). Students with disabilities are likely to be abused by their peers (Findley, Plummer, & McMahon, 2015). The students with disabilities may experience more physical and emotional harm than the students without disabilities (Green, 2018). Some college students without disabilities play a significant role when it comes to conflict resolution. Green (2018) found out that some of the college students without disabilities respond to students with disabilities by providing them coping mechanisms in order to encourage the students with disabilities to feel safe on campus. Postsecondary students without disabilities have been found to cyberbully students with disabilities (Crosslin & Golman, 2014; Selkie et al., 2015). Constant cyberbullying subjects students with disabilities to anxiety and depression (Selkie et al., 2015).

Students without disabilities bullying students with disabilities is frequent in most postsecondary institutions (Findley et al., 2015). Educators and human rights activists have raised concerns about the frequency of bullying on some college campuses (Findley et al., 2015).

Students with disabilities are more vulnerable to physical harm, emotional harm, and psychological distress than students without disabilities (Green, 2018). Many students without disabilities copy and hack students with disabilities' social media profiles to damage and mock them publicly (Koata et al., 2012). In some postsecondary institutions, students with disabilities are bullied more often than students without disabilities (Kowalski et al., 2016). Cyberbullying may subject students with disabilities to ostracism and lower self-esteem more than their peers (Kowalski et al., 2016).

Dropout Rates Among Students with Disabilities

Postsecondary students with disabilities are at risk of dropping out of school due to a variety of academic and social related challenges. The dropout rate for students with disabilities varies from one postsecondary institution to the other (Knight, Wessel & Markle, 2016). The specific type of disability may influence the amount of time to graduation and persistence (Knight et al., 2016). The general college dropout rate range between 30% and 40% (Porter, 1990). Students with disabilities must overcome barriers in order to complete college programs. Research has revealed that postsecondary students with disabilities can complete course programs when they devote disproportionate amount of time, energy, and resource towards studies (Fichten et al., 2014). Graduation rate among postsecondary students with disabilities varies. Research has shown that about 51% of two-year college students with disabilities drop out of school due to challenges (Mamiseishvili & Kosh, 2012), whereas 74% of the students with disabilities in universities complete their programs on time (O'Neill et al., 2012). Fichten et al. (2014) revealed that 30% of college students with disabilities drop out of school during the first year of the program, whilst 17% drop out during the third year of the program.

Postsecondary institutions consider students with disabilities persistence to complete course programs. In a study examining the effect learning opportunities task force programs have on postsecondary students with learning disabilities, Harrison et al. (2012) discovered that college students with learning disabilities who are given learning support see their performance improve across course programs. However, in predictors of graduation among college students with disabilities studies, O'Neill et al. (2012) revealed that postsecondary students with physical disabilities graduation rate is higher than students with learning and developmental disabilities. Factors such as self-awareness, accommodations, positive relationships, and financial support help postsecondary students with disabilities to persist and graduate on time (Barber, 2012). The dropout rate decreases once postsecondary students with disabilities engage in the institution both academically and socially (Lee et al., 2014). Students with disabilities who believe they can do it and hold positive expectations often persist and graduate on time (Lee et al., 2014).

Teachers' Preparedness in Educating Students with Disability

Higher education institution instructors prepare to teach students irrespective of their status, creed, tribe, race, and culture. College instructors play significant role in educating individuals with disabilities. Dealing with challenging situations, postsecondary students with disabilities have indicated that the support from their teachers help them to withstand academic challenges (Banks, 2014; Mytkowicz & Goss, 2012). Instructors support postsecondary students with disabilities by paying attention to their concerns, building rapport, demonstrating significant knowledge about individuals with disabilities, and providing important accommodations to support classroom learning (Hadley & Satterfield, 2013; Mytkowicz, 2012). College instructors hinder students with disabilities academic success when the instructors rush through class

materials quickly without providing enough time for the students to adjust to the studies (Hadley & Satterfield, 2013).

Alternative lecture notes such as audio recordings and visual presentations often give students with disabilities adequate time to access and review lecture content on their own pace (Lightfoot et al., 2018). Some instructors use ineffective practices to teach students with disabilities without considering the impact on the students. Faculty members that accommodate postsecondary students with disabilities help the students with disabilities to learn and study hard in the educational environment (Mamboleo et al., 2015). Mamboleo et al. (2015) found out that students with disabilities' positive past experiences enable instructors to provide better accommodations, but negative past experiences hinder the students with disabilities from requesting accommodation.

Instructors must be prepared to teach all students without favoring specific group of students. Faculty members who are not prepared to teach students with disabilities increase the barrier to academic success (Hanson et al., 2017). Higher education institutions encourage instructors to use effective measures to meet students with disabilities needs. Instructors can prepare through seminars, workshops, individual consultation sessions, and online learning modules (Hanson et al, 2017). University faculty members support students with disabilities to achieve their learning outcomes through numerous programs (Shevlin et al., 2004). In postsecondary education, instructors use instructional support systems to support the students with disabilities academic development (Zhang et al., 2018). With the instructional support system, Abu-Hamour (2013) revealed that lower rank instructors are more willing to teach individuals with disabilities than the senior rank instructors.

Postsecondary institution instructors play significant role when it comes to helping students with disabilities. Some postsecondary students with disabilities complain about lack of instructors' preparedness to address their needs when they ask them to change their teaching styles (Tinklin & Wilson, 2005). College instructors who are prepared to teach individuals with disabilities often interact positively with students with disabilities (Molina et al., 2016), but instructors that are not well-prepared demonstrate negative attitudes towards students with disabilities (Beatriz et al., 2016). Positive instructors' attitudes and their willingness to teach students with disabilities improve students with disabilities' learning outcomes (Denhart, 2008).

Teacher-Student Relationships and Interactions

Postsecondary instructors play a significant role in educating individuals with disabilities by giving them the necessary knowledge to fit in society. Instructors who have adequate knowledge about disability help students with disabilities to study with little or no challenges (Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Nderaya, 2015). Students with disabilities experience positive relationships with their instructors because of the instructors' knowledge about disabilities (Mutanga & Walker, 2017). Some of the college instructors isolate or distance themselves from individuals with disabilities because they are not prepared to support the students with disabilities, or they do not know how to react with the students with disabilities (Mutanga & Walker, 2017). Instructors who distance themselves from students with disabilities display lack of respect and marginalize the students with disabilities (Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Nderaya, 2015).

Instructors who are not prepared to interact positively with students with disabilities often doubt whether students with disabilities have the capacity to compete with students without disabilities (Mayat & Amosun, 2011). Students with disabilities learn effectively when they are motivated by their instructors. Negative teacher-student relationships do not help students with

disabilities to achieve their academic outcomes. Research has shown that college students with disabilities who do not feel they have a good relationship with their instructors are more likely to drop out of school (Thomas, 2016). Students with physical and invisible disabilities may experience challenges in communicating with their instructors if they have bad relationships (Frymier & Wanzer, 2009). Most of the students with disabilities experience anxiety when they have bad relationships with their instructors (Frymier & Wanzer, 2009). The risk of shame is particularly great for students with invisible disabilities when they interact with their instructors and peers (Harrington & Mathew, 1997).

Positive interactions among students with disabilities, instructors, and peers help the students with disabilities to achieve their academic outcomes. The students with disabilities interact with their instructors in order to communicate, explain, describe, or suggest important information (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). Individual with disabilities who have experienced positive relationships often share information with their peers because they feel the students without disabilities understand them (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). The students with disabilities establish positive relationship with their instructors because they feel the instructors can help them to navigate the complexity of college life (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). Positive interaction between students with disabilities and their instructors help the students with disabilities to maintain positive relationship with the faculty and the students without disabilities (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). Some students with disabilities who use wheelchair have the belief that positive interaction with individuals without disabilities in college environment may help them to partake in school activities without looking at negative reactions from peers who think they cannot do it (Gelston, 2004).

Social participations and interactions between students with disabilities and students without disabilities demonstrate challenges (Schwab et al., 2018) and the challenges may be as the result of the negative attitudes students without disabilities develops towards the students with disabilities (Polo Sanchez, 2017). Students without disabilities interact with students with disabilities based on the type of disability and preconceived stereotypes regarding disability (Johnson, 2006). Some students without disabilities in postsecondary settings interact with students with disabilities by supporting the students with disabilities academic needs, but other students without disabilities may not interact with students with disabilities because they do not want to inherit curse from students with disabilities (Lee et al., 2014).

University faculty members are supposed to build positive relationships with students with disabilities. The positive relationships motivate students with disabilities to complete assignment and research work on time (Morina, 2019). Faculty members that have not been trained on how to interact with students with disabilities create problems for the students with disabilities when they approach the faculty member for assistance (Gilson & Dymond, 2012). Some students with disabilities have described their experiences regarding the way instructors handled their case. Gilson and Dymond (2012) found out that some instructors in postsecondary institutions fail to respond to questions or concerns raised by students with disabilities because they are tired of the students with disabilities. On the other hand, faculty members who are willing to interact with students with disabilities may unintentionally create barriers which may impede students with disabilities academic success (Gilson, 2010).

To balance stigmatization struggles, students with disabilities try to impress their peers when they engage in academic discourse (Hong, 2015). Hong (2015) revealed that students with disabilities prove themselves to students without disabilities by having the mindset of "I can do

it, I do not care about what they think, I am not stupid, and I can get the work done" (p. 218).
Due to stigmatization and discrimination associated with disability, students with disabilities
prefer to stay alone or mind their business without having anything to do with their peers (Nel et
al., 2015). Students with disabilities who have experienced discrimination often isolate
themselves because they do not want to face rejection when they interact with their peers (Nel et
al., 2015).

Stereotype Threats

Many postsecondary students with disabilities have experienced stigmatization,
discrimination, and stereotype threats in their academic lives (Lechtenberger et al., 2012).
Postsecondary students with disabilities experience negative attitudes and stereotypes from their
peers, instructors, and administrators, and may not be able to experience full inclusion in the
higher education setting (Aquino, 2016). Traditionally, many people in society view disability as
a limitation, impairment, and deficiency that must be fixed (Wax, 2014). This medical model
approach has a negative impact on individuals due to harmful perceptions about disability
(Watermeyer, 2013). Stereotype threat is the negative attitude or belief against one's social group
(Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat affects individuals with disabilities academic outcomes and
emotions (May & Stone, 2010). Stereotype threats against postsecondary students with
disabilities have been noted to be fueled by individuals without disabilities (Desombre et al.,
2018). Desombre et al. (2018) indicated that some students without disabilities tease or hold
negative stereotype against students with disabilities because of their conditions. Students
without disabilities in postsecondary institutions hold preconceived opinions about students with
disabilities regarding what the students with disabilities can do and what they cannot do
(Johnson, 2006).

Stereotype-related threats affect students with disabilities negatively (May & Stone, 2014). Common stereotype labels students and instructors often use against students with disabilities include laziness, incompetence, stupid, scary, risky, and bad (Braun & Naami, 2019). These labels affect students with disabilities academic performance and emotions. Some educators describe college students with disabilities as lazy students who do not pay attention to details (Francis et al., 2019). Due to negative stereotypes and perceptions about students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions (May & Stone, 2014), many instructors and administrators fail to provide accommodation such as PowerPoints, lecture notes, and extended time to students with disabilities because do not believe the students with disabilities require accommodation (Francis et al., 2019). However, Sniatecki et al. (2015) found out that college instructors avoid negative stereotypes, but rather show positive attitudes towards individuals with physical, mental, and learning disabilities.

Performance of Students with Disabilities

Postsecondary students with disabilities face barriers such as long degree completion times, higher dropout rates, and low retention rates (Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2012). Students with disabilities perform better when their peers support them (Lombardi et al., 2014). However, students with disabilities cannot achieve their learning outcomes if the institution and instructors do not support them. The academic performance between students with disabilities and students without disabilities in postsecondary institutions is a concern because some evidence suggests female students without disabilities perform better than females with disabilities (Wisielewski, 2016). However, no significant conclusion has been made between male students with disabilities and male students without disabilities (Wisielewski, 2016). Postsecondary institutions often tend to provide academic accommodations that include

examinations, term preparations, adaptive technologies, and different types of methodologies to balance academic learning outcomes for students with disabilities (United States Department of Education, 2015). For example, Becker and Palladino (2016) indicated that colleges provide alternative methods to help students with disabilities to complete assignment and research.

The experiences of students with disabilities seems to indicate that factors such as lack of institutional support, time management, lack of concentration, stress, depression, sickness, and negative attitudes from students without disabilities and instructors negatively affect students with disabilities' academic success (Salzer, 2012). Lack of institutional support leads to poor grades (James et al., 2004). The factors that affect students with disabilities academic outcomes are likely to affect the students' critical thinking and motivation to study (Dryer et al., 2016). Many students with disabilities find it difficult to learn in most postsecondary settings. Due to most students with disabilities' reluctance to disclose their disability status, they find it difficult to cope with students without disabilities and learn in the postsecondary environment (Dryer et al., 2016).

Moreover, it has been established that students with intellectual and physical disorders are vulnerable to social isolation (Riddell et al., 2005). Students with intellectual and physical disorders face alienation and non-acceptance culture from college students; thereby, affecting their learning abilities (Riddell et al., 2005). When students with disabilities are not supported in their academic endeavors, they find it difficult to learn subjects assigned to them. Many postsecondary students with disabilities find it difficult to complete assignments and homework. The program completion rates for students with disabilities have been reported to be lower than students without disabilities (Newman et al., 2011). Though most postsecondary students with disabilities encounter academic challenges, several of the postsecondary institutions have

develop strategic measures to help the students with disabilities achieve their academic goals (Ju et al., 2017).

Institutional Factors that Impact Persistence

Test accommodations have been noted as one of the factors that affect postsecondary students with disabilities course grade (Sprong et al., 2013). Some instructors use evidenced-based teaching techniques in inclusive environment to increase students with disabilities learning outcomes (Ferguson et al., 2000). Sprong et al. (2013) revealed that many postsecondary students with disabilities complain about negative experiences with accommodations such as taped lectures, assignment extensions, classroom accommodations, and tutorial support. Postsecondary instructors who fail to support students with disabilities may affect the students with disabilities academic performance. Other factors that improve postsecondary students with disabilities learning outcome includes physical access to buildings, rich curriculum, learning strategies, quality discussion, reading strategies, and assessments (Riddell et al., 2005). Postsecondary environment that is poorly built does not encourage student persistence (Gavu et al., 2015). For example, poorly built walks and ramps, entrances and exits, stairs, and restrooms frustrate college students with disabilities (Gavu et al., 2015).

Many higher education institutions have adopted strategies to improve students with disabilities academic and learning performance by assisting students with disabilities with assistive technologies, persistence seminar programs, and disability support programs (Mamiseishvili, & Kock, 2012). College administrative support services and financial assistance programs enable individuals with disabilities to study with little challenges (Lindstrom et al., 2009). Postsecondary students with disabilities who receive administrative support and financial assistance are likely to score high marks in exams (Lindstrom et al., 2009). Higher education

institutions can help postsecondary students with disabilities to achieve their learning outcomes through guided notes, frequent tests, remedial activities, and accessible syllabus (Tincani, 2004).

Postsecondary students with disabilities experience both positive and negative academic outcomes (Vaccaro et al., 2015). Some of the students with disabilities attribute their failures to lack of institutional support (Costello-Harris, 2019). In most postsecondary institutions, departmental tutoring and student organizations help students with disabilities to build social relations (Agarwal et al., 2014). The office of disability services in postsecondary institutions help students with disabilities to access wide range of courses (Shaw & Dukes, 2013). Higher education leaders work with the office of disability services to improve accommodations and structures that affect students with disabilities' wellbeing (Shaw & Dukes, 2013). Administrators and instructors work with the office of disabilities to sustain laws that protect students with disabilities (Cory, 2011). Administrative and leadership support enable students with disabilities to complete assignments and course work with little or no challenges (Moisey, 2014).

Levy's (2001) findings indicate that students with disabilities achieve their academic outcomes when administrators and instructors support them during class hours and project work. When postsecondary intuitions fail to support students with disabilities, the students do not achieve their academic goals (Levy, 2001). College administrators often intervene and help students with disabilities to overcome academic barriers (Littlepage & Clemson, 2018). Postsecondary students with disabilities who succeed in their academic endeavors utilize programs that advocate academic preparation, knowledge of support services, and financial resources (Perna & Finney, 2014).

In every postsecondary institution, students require pass marks to continue with the next program. Some college students with disabilities have indicated that their instructors help them

to obtain good grades (Banks, 2014; Quinlan et al., 2012). Some postsecondary students with disabilities have indicated that lack of cooperation from their instructors and administrators hinder learning outcomes (Hardley & Scatterfield, 2013). Lightfoot et al. (2018) found out that postsecondary institutional support "increases students with disabilities confidence, encourages the students with disabilities to explore campus support systems, and maintains personal growth" (p. 64). Postsecondary institutions aid students with disabilities by providing services such as interpreters and note takers (McCleary-Jones, 2007). College counselors advise students with disabilities about their rights and responsibilities (McCleary-Jones, 2007). For many college students with disabilities, their first interaction with administrators is during course registration (Cox, 2017). Postsecondary administrators often ensure that any student who disclose his or her disability status is well taken care of by revealing all the important information in the institution (Cox, 2017). Researchers have revealed that college administrators promote programs that inculcate diversity and inclusive learning (Shogren et al., 2015).

Personal Factors that Impact Persistence

Postsecondary students with disabilities that are determined to succeed in postsecondary environment apply self-determination strategies such as perseverance and resilience in academic learning, self-knowledge assistance from individuals without disabilities, and self-regulation in academic studies (Ju et al., 2017). Self-determined strategies involve goal setting and attainment skills, decision-making skills, choice-making skills, leadership skills, and self-advocacy skills (Wehmeyer, 2007). Self-advocacy involves one's ability to effectively communicate or negotiate his or her own rights (Hengsen & Weaver, 2018). Other factors that help higher education students with disabilities to graduate on time include personal factors related to setting goals and

objectives, feeling driven, strategic plans, building social networking, and external factors of proving to others (Russak & Hellwing, 2019).

Moreover, factors such as sense of belonging, study skills, and socioeconomic status enable students with disabilities to persist and achieve positive academic outcomes (Herbert et al., 2014; O'Neil et al., 2012). Students with disabilities use self-advocacy skills to ask for help from their peers, apply sense of belonging to relate with their peer and instructors, and apply mastery skills to communicate their accommodation needs (Vaccaro et al., 2015). Students with disabilities who often express uncertainty about the type of classroom accommodations, fear to disclose their disability status, and lack knowledge regarding documentation process needed for disability eligibility cannot persist and stand the risk of dropping out of school (Herbert et al., 2014). The type of disability may affect postsecondary students with disabilities' persistence. For instance, Chiu et al. (2019) found out that students with physical disabilities are likely to persist and achieve positive academic outcomes better than students with cognitive disabilities.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology provides postsecondary student with disabilities the opportunity to learn, interact with their peers and instructors, and encourage creation of social group on campuses (McNicholl et al., 2019). Research has indicated that assistive technologies empower college students with disabilities to interact more with their peers (Wessel et al., 2015). Academic performance is paramount within college environment. Assistive technologies help postsecondary students to score high marks during assignment and homework (Malcolm & Roll, 2016). Assistive technologies such as reading pens, iPads, reader device, and iPods help postsecondary students with disabilities to improve on their comprehension capacities (Floyd & Judge, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2012). However, Mosia and Phasha (2017) found out that some

postsecondary students with disabilities fail in exam because they are not trained or familiar with assistive technologies.

Postsecondary students with visual and mobility disabilities use assistive technologies at high level than students with hearing and developmental disabilities (Lersilp, 2016). Higher education institutions provide computers and smartphones to students with disabilities because the institutions want the students with disabilities to complete coursework and assignment without challenges (Lersilp, 2016). Administrators and caretakers ensure assistive technologies provided to the students with disabilities are appropriate, while factors such as cost, changing needs of the students, obsolescence, and accessibility are included (Asselin, 2014). Though assistive technologies help students with disabilities to achieve their academic goals, some of the postsecondary students with disabilities have reported disadvantages such as negative labeling and stereotyping (Ahmed, 2018).

Previous research revealed that many students with disabilities find it difficult to use and access assistive technologies as the result of inadequate training (Fichten et al., 2012). Some college students with disabilities have revealed positive experiences regarding the use of wheelchairs, crutches, canes, and walkers (Burwell et al., 2015; Padgett et al., 2012). Wheelchairs have been noted to be one of the best assistive technologies that help postsecondary students with disabilities to excel in academics (Padgett et al., 2012). Bradley and Hernandez (2011) added that crutches support individuals with physical disabilities' arms for weight bearing, balance, and propulsion. On the other hand, hearing assistive technology devices help college students with hearing impairment to listen and recognize sound (Bankatis, 2017).

Accommodation

    Higher education institutions support students with disabilities by providing suitable accommodations. Many postsecondary students with disabilities need accommodations in order to engage in academic activities (Bialka et al., 2017), but most postsecondary students with disabilities find it difficult to apply for academic accommodations (Murray et al., 2014). College accommodation is one of the viable academic determinants for students with disabilities (Lombardi et al., 2012; Mull & Siltington, 2003). Faculty members' stance regarding accommodation may enable students with disabilities to seek assistance. Colleges provide accommodations such as PowerPoints, lecture notes, waivers, and course substitutes to help the students with disabilities to persist (Tsagris & Muirhead, 2012). Research has demonstrated that college students with disabilities who utilize important accommodations score higher marks and graduate on time (Lyman et al., 2016). However, Yung-Chen (2019) found out that college students with disabilities who utilize note-taking services score lower marks as compared with students with disabilities. Other researchers have revealed that test accommodations help postsecondary institutions to predict students with disabilities cumulative grade point average (Kim & Lee, 2016).

    In every postsecondary institution, an individual with disability is supposed to declare his or her status to the disability support services. Research has revealed that most postsecondary students with disabilities fail to disclose their disabilities status because of lack of awareness on the part of students with disabilities (Hong, 2015). However, certain colleges deny students with disabilities accommodation (Lund et al., 2014) because "faculty members discourage the students with disabilities from using accommodation" (Lyman et al., 2016, p. 129). Some postsecondary institutions respond to students with disabilities' accommodational needs, but

Black et al. (2015) revealed that many of the postsecondary students with disabilities experience some degree of discomfort. Despite the training faculty members receive regarding accommodation, some faculty members fail to adhere to instructions (Marshak et al., 2010).

Postsecondary students with disabilities use accommodation, accessible elevators, accessible restrooms, accessible libraries, accessible parking lots, accessible path and entrances, accessible dormitories, accessible social and recreational services, accessible conference hall, accessible sports facilities, and computer rooms (Schreuer & Sachs, 2014). Postsecondary institutions ensure universal designs are related to services, instructions, spaces, and technologies (Burgstahler, 2012) in order to meet students with disabilities needs. Poorly built university environment affects students with disabilities learning outcomes. Examining campus physical environment accessibility for person with disabilities, Muzemil (2018) found out that physical environment such as classrooms, auditoriums, dining halls, libraries, clinics, banks, corridors, museums, dorms, shops, parks, and bookstores are inaccessible for most postsecondary students with disabilities. Researchers have noted that the characteristics and perceptions of campus physical environment affect students with disabilities' behaviors (De Cesarei, 2015; Newman & Madaus, 2015).

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The literature entails the experiences of students with disabilities, the challenges, emotions, interactions, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. The literature revealed that most students with disabilities are neglected by institutions, instructors, and students without disabilities (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities include bullying, discrimination, name callings, support, and love (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). Positive interactions among students with disabilities, instructors,

administrators, and students without disabilities help the students with disabilities to achieve their learning outcomes. The review indicated that negative interactions among students with disabilities, instructors, and students without with disabilities affect the students with disabilities' learning and academic outcomes. Large number of people in Ghana do not respect and value individuals with disabilities (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017). Little research has been conducted in the eastern belt of Ghana regarding the experiences of students with disabilities. The study examined the experiences of students with disabilities in postsecondary institution in Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. The focus of the study was to understand postsecondary students with disabilities' social and academic experiences and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. Chapter three contains several subsections: design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, researcher's role, data collections, and ethical considerations. The study was conducted at the Golden Technical Institute with a purposive sample of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews were conducted in the natural setting in order to obtain vital, rich, and substantive textural and structural descriptions of participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I looked at physical setting, participants' movement, interactions, activities, and conversations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All the necessary ethical principles were maintained during and after the data collection.

Design

I used qualitative research inquiry to guide the data collection for the study (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research "involves interpretive and naturalistic approach, essence, and meanings to the world" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 7). Qualitative research approach relies on interpretive frameworks which seek to address issues in society (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Critical disability theory and student persistence theory were applied to assess the phenomenon. Critical disability theory helps educators to focus on disability as dimensions of human difference and not as a defect (Creswell, 2012; Mertens, 2003), whereas the student persistence theory enables educators to examine perspectives, learning environment, levels of containment, and factors of

obligations (Holden, 2018). The critical disability theory involves social norms that define attributes as disabilities and social conditions such as discrimination, hate, and stigmatization (Schalk, 2017). Educators use the critical disability theory to assess socio-political construction in order to understand the impact of the constructions on individuals with disabilities (Schalk, 2017). Moreover, Tinto's (1997) student persistence theory describes postsecondary experiences, academic, and social integration (Severiens & Schmidt, 2008).

Qualitative research is emergent in nature, with data collected in natural settings, and the goal of data analysis is to establish themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research designs help researchers to understand the complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative research approach was selected for the study because it enabled me to locate, observe, and interview participants in the field. Researchers use qualitative research inquiry to explore, analyze, and construct meanings from individuals lived experiences (Patton, 2015). Due to the research purpose which seeks to understand the lived experiences of students with disabilities, the qualitative research approach was appropriate for the study.

Phenomenology can be defined as philosophy or research method that helps researchers to understand phenomenon (Creswell, 2003; Morse, 1991). Phenomenology seeks meaning from experiences and appearances through participant's reflection in order to make sense of their own lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Zolnierek (2011) credited Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) as the founder of the phenomenological research concept. Husserl's contribution has helped many researchers to grasp the meaning and essence of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Van Manen (2014) elaborated the significance of Husserl's contribution regarding phenomenology in qualitative research study. Researchers use Husserl's epoché concept to eliminate suppositions and biases in phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl's

work on meaning and essence has enabled researchers to establish facts from lies (Moustakas, 1994). Through the phenomenological research approach, I was able to grasp the essence of the phenomenon. The phenomenological approach was appropriate for the study because it enabled me to understand the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym).

The transcendental phenomenological design was selected for the study because it enabled me to understand how students with disabilities describe their lived experiences regarding academic, social, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). I chose the transcendental phenomenological approach because it allowed me to declare and state my values, biases, and beliefs toward the objectives while separating and eliminating the biases and personal opinions in order to understand the meanings and views of the students with disabilities (Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental phenomenological approach enabled me to "describe the textural and structural descriptions of participants' experiences" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 78). Transcendental phenomenological research approach enables "researchers to determine what an experience means for individuals who have had an experience about the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). I chose the transcendental phenomenological research approach because it enabled me to collect data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon in order to develop complete description of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I chose the transcendental phenomenological design because it enabled me to describe my own experience regarding the phenomenon by bracketing my views before proceeding to the experiences of students with disabilities (Moustakas, 1994). This is called epoché (Moustakas, 1994). The epoché process enabled me to set aside biases and preconceived ideas (Moustakas,

1994). I kept research journal to document my biases and preconceived ideas. Appendix A demonstrates my biases and preconceived ideas towards postsecondary students with disabilities. Moustakas (1994) stated that "transcendental reduction enables researchers to derive textural description of the meaning and the essence of the phenomenon" (p. 34). The focus of the research was placed in brackets, while information that are not related to the research questions and topic were eliminated (Moustakas, 1994). This procedure enabled me to construct significant textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon without being bias.

Moreover, after the transcendental phenomenological reduction, I used imaginative variation strategy to grasp the structural essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Every phrase within the research was given equal attention. The transcendental phenomenological approach will inform readers about what participants experienced regarding the phenomenon and how they experienced it. The "structural essence of the imaginative variation was combined with the textural essence of the reduction to produce textural-structural synthesis of the meanings and essences of students with disabilities" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 36). This final step enabled me to grasp and understand the meaning and essence of the phenomenon under study.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding the study include:

Central Research Question

How do postsecondary school students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana describe their lived experiences?

Guiding Question One

What are the academic experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Guiding Question Two

What are the social experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden

Technical Institute in Ghana?

Guiding Question Three

What institutional factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with

disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana*?*

Guiding Question Four

What personal factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities

at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Setting

Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) is in the eastern belt of Ghana. The school is

located within the transitional zone and savanna woodland of the northern belt and the forest belt

of the south. The map of the study area is shown in Appendix B. The school offers four-year

degree programs, three-year diploma programs, and non-tertiary programs. Currently, the school

runs two schools and five faculties. The two schools at Golden Technical Institute are school of

graduate studies and business school. Golden Technical Institute's leadership includes the board

of directors, the president and vice president, and administrators. The school's president, vice

president, and head of departments ensure instructors perform their duties without hurting

anyone in the school. The school's departments are managed separately and headed by directors

who report to the president. The departments share systems for resources. The institution's

administrators ensure that shared research is conducted by departments.

The site was selected for the study because the school is the only postsecondary

institution in the area with students with disabilities. Instructors constitute majority of the

workers in the institution. The student to instructor ratio is 60 to 1. The school has a student population of 3,600.

Participants

I used purposive and snowball sampling methods to select participants. Purposive sampling enables researchers to intentionally sample participants who meet the study criteria and have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purposive sampling method was used as the initial method for selecting the participants. This enabled me to have maximum variation in terms of gender, ethnicity, and different group. Snowball sampling method helps researchers ask participants to recommend other potential participants for the study (Patton, 2002). Researchers use snowball sampling method to select groups or individuals who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The snowball sampling method enabled me to increase the sample size beyond the initial purposeful sample.

The number of participants in phenomenological research studies varies. Dukes (1984) suggested that researchers can study three to 10 participants in a phenomenological research. Padilla (2003) studied one participant, whilst Edwards (2006) studied 33 participants in a phenomenological research. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with 12 participants with disabilities. I continued to add to my sample until my analysis of the data revealed I have reached thematic saturation, the point at which no new themes emerged as new participants were added (Creswell, 2013; Dukes 1984; Moustakas, 1994). Participants who were 18 years and above and have a documented disability were considered for the study. I worked with Golden Technical Institute authorities to recruit 12 students with disabilities. Researchers encourage participants to be true seekers of knowledge in order to obtain in-depth description of the

phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I encouraged participants to join me as truthful seeker of

knowledge. Participant demographics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability	Major	Level
Adamu	20	Male	Konkomba	Arm impairment	Building Technology	100
Aku	22	Male	Ewe	Vision impairment	Building Technology	100
Ama	30	Female	Ewe	Mobility impairment	Accountancy	300
Enyonam	27	Female	Ewe	Mobility impairment	Accountancy	200
Kofi	26	Male	Konkomba	Vision impairment	Building Technology	200
Kojo	23	Male	Ga	Vision impairment	Building Technology	200
Korley	25	Female	Akan	Arm impairment	Accountancy	300
Kwame	26	Male	Akan	Mobility impairment	Accountancy	200
Mawunyo	24	Female	Ga	Vision impairment	Secretaryship and Management	100
Napari	21	Male	Konkomba	Speech impairment	Building Technology	200
Nii	28	Male	Ewe	Mobility impairment	Information and Communication Technology	300
Yaw	23	Male	Gonja	Mobility impairment	Accountancy	200

Note. "Level" means year of full-time study, 100 represent first year student, 200 represent second year student, and 300 represent third year student.

Procedures

Before data collection, I applied to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee at Liberty university for approval. Once permission was granted by the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F), I sought permission from Golden Technical Institute authorities. I met face to face with the school's registrar and administrators to discuss the purpose of the study. On approval, I contacted the school's administrators for possible participants. I included a link in the recruitment letter for participants to respond and indicate their interest in participating. Students with disabilities from Golden Technical Institute participated in the research during 2020-2021 academic year. I forwarded informed consent forms to participants to read and sign. Researchers are supposed to protect participants during and after research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I protected the privacy of participants, the school, and instructors. I emphasized the confidentiality of the data and the results. I coded students and the selected school with an alias.

Each participant who volunteered to participate was given an informed consent form (see Appendix C). I included participants' rights and assent form in the documentation. McCracken (1988) suggested that researchers must gather data through interviews with as many as 10 participants. I gathered the data through interviews, focus group, and prompt letter development. The information was recorded through field notes, sound recording, and interview write-ups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used informal process such as jottings, daily logs, and descriptive summary to record information. The interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner and encompassed 24 semi-structured questions. Participant interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. During the interview, participants were asked to describe what they have experienced

regarding the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed.

Two focus groups involving the same participants were conducted after the interviews. Each discussion session consisting of six participants each participated in 60 minutes discussion. During focus group discussion, participants were given the opportunity to discuss, share, suggest, and reflect on the questions. The document analysis was in a form of personal artifacts. Participants were asked to write a two-page letter by describing relevant information related to the topic/phenomenon that may not have been captured in the face-to-face interview and/or focus group discussion.

The Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). I am an environmentalist, Natural resource expert, and educationist. I have worked with many foresters and researchers in Ghana before I moved to United States. I helped a community to establish plantation woodlot. As a researcher, I was a team member among many natural resource personnel in Ghana who ensured riparian trees were well protected. I also served in the United States Armed Forces and retired in the year 2016. I have Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Technology and Master of Science in Environmental Planning and Management.

Higher education administration is a new field to me. However, it has been my continual desire to earn a doctoral degree. I chose to study this program because I wanted to experience a new learning field, gain prestige, and gain competencies and becoming a leader in an educational field. The knowledge I have acquired throughout the study has equipped me to conduct research in educational field. I was determined to conduct the research without any excuse. I have no tie to Golden Technical Institute, and I am not affiliated to any of the departments. I considered my

experience as a researcher to be a strength during the research. Based on my previous research experience, I strived to use my own prior knowledge and expertise to demonstrate awareness of current thinking that relates to the topic, objectives, research methods, analysis, and discussion. I established cordial relationships with participants. I got close to the participants in order to understand their experiences.

I was responsible for gathering the data through interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development. I accounted for all procedures during the research, and I cooperated with administrators, instructors, and staff members at Golden Technical Institute. I sought permission from Liberty University Institutional Review Board and Golden Technical Institute. I implemented strict confidentiality guidelines during and after data collection, data analysis, and publication. I obtained consent from participants. I validated and triangulated the results, tabulated the results, and made necessary and important recommendations. Patton (2015) added that qualitative researchers "reflect on their own voices and perspectives" (p. 603). Based on Patton's (2015) suggestion, I acknowledged my personal views, experiences, and biases during the study (see Appendix A). I strived to be neutral during data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Data Collection

The data were collected in many ways. I used interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development to collect the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). I reviewed all memoranda and personal files. I ensured interviews and focus groups were recorded via field notes and sound recordings. This helped me to focus on the research intent and capture behaviors, challenges, academic and social interactions, and factors that impact persistence.

I used responsive interview model to develop the interview protocols. Responsive interview helps researchers to understand the phenomenon under study. The responsive interview enabled me to obtain adequate information from participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview protocol form and a header were used to record the interview answers during data collection. I ensured free and fair interviews without any bias.

Interviews

I developed semi-structured interviews to collect the data. Interview can be described "as the process whereby knowledge is constructed between the researcher and the participant" (Brinkmann & Kyale, 2015, p. 4). The interview process includes "informal, interactive, and open-ended questions" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, and Namey (2005) added that semi-structured interviews help researchers to obtain adequate information about participants. I took the needed steps to ensure the interviews were reliable and accurate. The semi-structured interview protocol was developed to allow me the freedom to pursue any emergent lines of discourse. The interview protocol consisted of 24 questions. The interview protocol was drafted to guide the general experiences of students with disabilities. The questions reflect the experiences of students with disabilities regarding challenges, academic and social interactions, and factors that impact persistence.

Face-to-face interviews are highly effective, and it helps researchers to obtain enough information (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Face-to-face interviews enabled me to identify and interpret the response of the interview questions (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The interview protocol questions were developed to reduce bias by given participants large scope to answer the questions. The language of the interview questions was neutral and nonthreatening. The questions were read to the participants accordingly.

The phenomenological "interview must begin with social conversation or short meditative activity that will lead to trusting atmosphere" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Participants were asked to take few moments to reflect or focus on the experience. I created favorable environment for participants to express themselves without fear (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers watch, listen, interpret, and respond to verbal and nonverbal cues during interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to obtain deep, thick, rich, well thought, and descriptive responses, several questions were asked when participants responded to the questions with limited words like, "it's ok" or "He treats me fine" or "they treat me ok." The semi-structured interview enabled me to elicit the needed information from participants. The interviews lasted for about 60 minutes.

The necessary tools that were used to record the interviews were android phone and a voice recorder. The interviews were conducted one on one. I stayed within the study boundaries. The interview protocol was used to guide the questions within the 60 minutes. The interview questions enabled participants to answer the central research question and the four guiding questions. The 24 interview questions enabled me to understand each participant's level of experience with the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). I transcribed the audios manually. Table 2 shows the interview questions.

Table 2

Face to Face Interview Questions

Interview Questions
1.   What were your educational background experiences prior to college?
2.   What are you studying?
3.   Why did you choose to study this program?
4.   Why did you choose to attend this university?

5.   Describe your general experience in classroom. Are you happy to be in the school? Why or why not?

6.   What is the relationship between you and teachers during and after class hours? Do you think the school support you to learn? Why or why not?

7.   Tell me about tools and facilities that help you to learn in the school? Do you like the facilities? Why or why not?

8.   How do you feel being with students without disabilities?

9.   How do you feel being with the teachers and administrators?

10.   What is your experience with bullying?

11.   What is your experience with name calling?

12.   What is your experience with discrimination?

13.   How do you interact with teachers? What type of interaction do you have with teachers?

14.   How do you interact with students without disabilities? What types of interactions do you encounter with students without disabilities?

15.   How do you interact with your peers during activities?

16.   What assistive technology has been supportive to you?

17.   What opportunities has the school given you to learn on your own?

18.   How does structures and tools in the school help you to learn?

19.   How has the school's support helps you to assess learning? Does the support help you to complete assignment on time?

20.   What is your experience of walking to school?

21.   What is your experience with administrative support?

22.   In your opinion, what institutional factors impact persistence?

23.   In your opinion, what personal factors impact persistence? What do you do to personally stay organized, meet your goals, and self-advocate?

24.   What else would you like to add about your experiences that has not been covered/addressed by the questions I have asked you?

Questions one through four focuses on the experiences of the participant's educational background and participant's reasons for chosen the program and attending the postsecondary institution (Patton, 2015). Questions five through seven are the school climate questions (Lubienski, Lubienski, & Craine, 2008; Wieringo, 2015), and are designed as follow up questions to the general experiences of students with disabilities in the classroom. The school climate questions were centered on students with disabilities classroom experiences (Wieringo, 2015). The questions include general experiences of students with disabilities and the tools that help the students to learn.

Social interactions play important role in students' learning (Morina, 2019). Teachers and administrators must be able to connect with students with disabilities (Woodhouse, 2012). Students with disabilities' emotions are important in school settings. Emotions serve to enrich the social and relational experiences which help the students with disabilities to develop (Morina, 2012). Students with disabilities interactions with their instructors and students without disabilities are often emotionally charged (Hagenauer, Glaser-Zikuda, & Volet, 2016). Questions eight through 12 enabled me to obtain adequate information about students with disabilities' social interactions.

Questions 13 through 16 involves the interaction of the students with disabilities with their instructors and students without disabilities. Postsecondary students with disabilities

interact with their instructors for assistance and academic adjustment (Hong, 2015). When students with disabilities interact with their instructors positively, it helps them to achieve their academic outcomes. Positive interactions boost the confidence of students with disabilities to learn (Swan, 2001). The questions 13 to 16 enabled students with disabilities to reflect on their interactions with instructors and students without disabilities. This enabled the students with disabilities to describe their experiences.

Technological advances help students with disabilities to succeed in education. Lack of assistive technology and structure may lead to delays in students with disabilities progress in education. Assistive technologies such as computer software, mobile device, stander, and wheelchairs support students with disabilities to overcome academic challenges (Peterson-Karlan, 2015). Questions 17 through 19 helped participants to describe their experiences regarding structures.

Many postsecondary institutions fail to support students with disabilities. Higher education institutions support students with disabilities by assessing each student's needs through numerous programs (Taylor et al., 2016). Some postsecondary institutions have developed models that include identification and needs assessment, processes for disclosure, and system support and processes (Hargreaves & Walker, 2014). Students with disabilities cannot achieve their learning goals if schools fail to support them. Questions 20 through 24 enabled participants to describe the support they receive from the school, instructors, administrators, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence.

Focus Group

Focus group discussion is one of the established mechanisms for data collection in qualitative research (Luke & Goodrich, 2019). Focus group discussion enables participant to

reflect and add response to other participants' opinions, perceptions, beliefs, and ideas (Patton, 2015). I conducted focus group discussion after individual interviews in order to allow students with disabilities to discuss their shared experiences. In qualitative research, focus group discussion can be divided into two or three sessions (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017) and the groups may consist of five to eight participants (Patton, 2002). Based on Guest et al., (2017) and Patton (2002) suggestions regarding the number of participants and sessions in a focus group discussion, I conducted two focus group discussions consisting of 6 participants each.

Moreover, during discussion, I recorded the conversation by using android phone and voice recorder. Each discussion session lasted for about 60 minutes. This enabled the participants to fully share their views and experiences. I manually transcribed the audios by listening to the recorded audios multiple times. After the transcription, I forwarded the transcribed audios to participants for clarification and validation. The data recorded were coded with strict password and stored on my computer. The focus group discussion enabled participants to answer guiding questions one through four. Participants in each group were allowed to share, discuss, add, suggest, and reflect on the initial questions and the suggestions of other participants. The focus group questions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Focus Group Questions

Questions
1. What attracted you to this institution?
2. What factors impact your academic studies?
3. What are your social experiences in the school?
4. What institutional factors impact persistence?

5. What do you wish your instructors and peers understood about living with a disability?

6. What do you think instructors should do to support your studies?

7. What are things you wish your peers understood about you and your social and academic needs at this institution?

Students with disabilities have a right to participate in academic and extracurricular activities, sports, and equal access to accommodation and auxiliary aids (Singh, 2019). Many students with disabilities consider factors such as auxiliary aids, academic support services, nature of programs, and location before applying for admission (Singh, 2019; Walker, 2016). Question 1 enabled students with disabilities to describe why they chose to study in the school. Personal, institutional, and social factors contribute to learning and positive academic outcomes (Yung-Chen et al., 2019). Social integration is important for postsecondary students with disabilities (Tinto, 1975) because it helps them to compete, foster competence, and complete course work on time (Bialka et al., 2017). Academically, postsecondary students with disabilities integrate to find congruence between themselves and the institutional environment (Bialka et al., 2017). Positive academic integration helps students with disabilities to perform or complete assignment with little or no challenges. Questions 2 through 4 enabled participants to describe factors that affect their studies, persistence, and social experience.

Questions 5 through 7 involves peers' and instructors' knowledge regarding disability. Instructors' knowledge about disability helps students with disabilities to build positive relationships with faculty members and their peers (Padden & Ellis, 2015). Instructors develop effective teaching methodologies to help students with disabilities' academic needs (Padden & Ellis, 2015). Faculty members that lack disability knowledge are ill-prepared to teach and

implement students with disabilities' accommodation needs (Sniatecki et al., 2015). Moreover, students without disabilities' knowledge regarding disability leads to positive interactions among students with disabilities, faculty members, and the students without disabilities (Sniatecki et al., 2015). Questions 5 through 7 enabled participants to describe what they wish their instructors and peers understood about disability.

Document Analysis

Document analysis enables researchers to examine and interpret data in order to understand and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The document analysis in this research consisted of personal artifacts. The personal artifacts were in a form of prompt letter. In qualitative research, personal artifacts enable participants to share information that may not be included in the interview process (Creswell, 2013). I asked participants to write two-page letter to describe their academic experiences, social experiences, and institutional and personal factors that hinder academic success. I asked the participants to include any relevant information in the letter. The letter was used as a personal artifact to provide relevant information to support the research questions. Personal artifacts enable researchers to access information that was not included during interviews and focus group discussion (Patton, 2002). Document analysis was used as personal insight into the central research question and the four guiding questions. I identified pertinent information and separate it from non-pertinent information. I determined the relevance of the study (Bowen, 2009). I evaluated the document in order to ascertain whether the information fits the research's purpose. I gained information about participants' complaints, participants' challenges relating to school fees and other finances, and participants' challenges regarding accommodation, social and academic experiences, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence.

Data Analysis

Moustakas (1994) outlined the steps needed to analyze phenomenological data. The seven phenomenological reduction steps include epoché, open coding, horizonalization, clustering into themes, textural description, imaginative variation, and synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). With the epoché process, I bracketed my own personal biases (Moustakas, 1994). I set aside my own personal opinions about students with disabilities. According to Moustakas (1994), researchers must describe their personal experiences with the phenomenon under study. I described my own personal experiences with the phenomenon under study (see Appendix A). I kept journal during data collection. The journal consisted of field notes which allowed me to write my reactions, behaviors, events, and other important information that were not captured by the audio recordings (Patton, 2002).

In the second stage of the analysis, interviews and focus group discussion were digitally recorded and transcribed by myself (Patton, 2002). I read the transcripts from the interviews, focus group discussions, and personal artifacts multiple times in order to better understand the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I identified codes and classified the codes into themes by relating the material to the aspect of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The coding process included tentative codes that matched the text from the transcripts. I used lean coding approach and later expanded the code as I reviewed the database. I developed the theme by naming the initial code, expanded the code, and reduced the code into its final code category (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I developed code book that contain the name of the codes, descriptions of the codes, and examples of the codes.

After the coding process, I applied the horizonalization process to treat all data equal (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). I listed every "relevant expression and applied reduction and

elimination techniques to assess whether the expressions contain significant moment of experiences" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120-121). "Statements that were irrelevant to the topic and the research questions were deleted leaving only the textural meanings and invariant constituents" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). Following horizonalization, I organized the data into themes (Patton, 2015). Moustakas (1994) reiterated that researchers need to group significant statement into broader units of information. Repeated words or phrases were the basis for the themes. The themes were interpreted and organized into textural and structural descriptions. In the "textural description nothing is omitted, but every phase is given equal attention, while structural description involves conscious thinking, recollecting, imagining, and judging" (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 78-79). The textural description enabled participants to describe how the phenomenon was experienced.

I created description of what participants experienced with the phenomenon. I constructed participant's textural description of the experience by using relevant validated constituents and themes. Moustakas (1994) stated that "an extensive description of the textures of what appears and given enables participants to describe how the phenomenon was experienced" (p. 78). Participants can experience phenomena through (a) feelings such as anger, grief, or love, (b) thoughts, (c) the sense of experiences, and (d) textural qualities (Creswell & Poth; Moustakas, 1994). With the textural description, I included verbatim. I drafted how the experience happened regarding academic, social, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. Each participant's comments and description were valued equally. I constructed participant's structural description of the experience based on the individual textural description and imaginative variation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

After the textural and structural description, I employed the imaginative variation strategy to step back and look at the information presented. The imaginative variation enabled me to describe important structures of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The last aspect of the analysis procedure is synthesizing the textural and structural descriptions into composite description regarding the essence of the phenomenon. I constructed individual composite textural-structural description of the meaning and the essence of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I wrote in paragraphs about what the participants experienced regarding the phenomenon and how they experienced it. I synthesized the data by relating the evidence back to the research questions.

Trustworthiness

I ensured trustworthiness to validate the data during the research. Researchers have indicated that qualitative researchers must inspire confidence in the outcome of the study (Creswell, 2013). Researchers and scientists need to trust participants at every point of the research (Phillips et al., 2019). Trustworthiness in research includes credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability techniques enabled me to increase reader confidence in the authenticity of the findings.

Credibility

Researchers must demonstrate truth in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Truth in qualitative research can be said to be equivalent to internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (2013) noted that triangulation process ensures the researcher uses multiple methods to ascertain the phenomenon corroboration. Multiple methods such as interviews, focus group discussion, and document analysis were applied in triangulating the data. The interview

questions were formulated in a focused manner which engaged the participants in the research. The interviews were conducted in a professional manner to ensure transparency and honest responses.

To ensure credible research, Carlson (2010) credibility strategies were employed. Member checking strategy was adopted to strengthen the research's credibility. With the member checking strategy, participants were allowed to review the data, interviews, focus group discussion, prompt letter, and the final representation of findings. Participants were asked to examine the textural-structural descriptions of their experiences. I spent enough time with the participants in order to allow them to examine the data, interviews, focus group discussion, and the interpretation. Participants' suggestions (additions and corrections) regarding the textural and structural description were considered. The credibility strategy enabled me to test the plausibility or accuracy of response.

Dependability and Confirmability

To ensure dependability, the research methods were reproducible through proper documentation. I included descriptions of methods of data collection, audio recordings, context, and population sample (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A recording device was used to record interviews and later transcribed. Field notes were taken during interviews and focus group discussion. The research procedures will enable other researchers to access, review, and duplicate the research. Researchers can determine dependability through the description of the research procedures (Ary et al., 2006). The extent to which a study is free from bias is considered as confirmability (Ary et al., 2006). Participants were allowed to review the interviews, focus group discussion, and the interpretation. All forms of bias were eliminated, and participants' views, suggestions, and corrections relevant to the topic and the objectives were considered.

Moreover, I established audit trail for "external researcher to examine the process and the product of the account in order to access their accuracy" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 262). The audit trail will enable the external auditor to examine the accuracy of the results, interpretations, and conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I created tracking document at the beginning of study.

Transferability

The methodology and data analysis were explained thoroughly to reflect the transcendental phenomenological research (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). Descriptive adequacy was sought through detailed description of the study area and the participants. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) illustrated the importance of in-depth research description which is the prerequisite process of transferability. Based on the detailed description, researchers will be able to determine the transferability of this research in the future. Maximum variation sampling strategy was used to differentiate the site and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The maximum variation strategy enabled me to acquire a broader and varied understanding about how the phenomenon was experienced by participants. The information in the research may be used for further studies.

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Ethical Considerations

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Ethical issues are important to researchers. Due to the nature of the participants, ethical considerations are inherent. With this study, I used reflective and mindful strategies during data collection, analysis, discussion, and publication. Ethical guidelines were followed to safeguard the rights of students with disabilities. To conduct the research, I gathered university approval from the institutional review board (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and sought permission from Golden Technical Institute. I obtained informed consent from participants. I explained the research

purpose to participants, and they were assured that their participation was voluntary. I respected the rights of participants, and the participants were informed about their rights to withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the research, I developed special relationships with the participants. I ensured participants safety by not harming them. Researchers must be cautious during data collection (Dongre & Sankara, 2016). I treated participants fairly and equitably (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I ensured proper recruitment as well as justifying sampling strategies.

To obtain adequate data, the research intent was fully explained to participants and interaction with participants included clarification of process and assurance of confidentiality. Documents obtained have been stored in a secured location for five years. During data analysis, I reported multiple perspectives and contrary findings. I used pseudonyms to describe participants and the school. I reported honestly and used appropriate language for the audiences of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I refrained from using the same material for more than one publication. The research's report was made available to participants.

Summary

Chapter Three describes the overview and the purpose of the phenomenological research approach. This chapter details the research design, research questions, settings, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. The design entails the purpose of qualitative and transcendental research approach and the history of phenomenology. The setting describes the location of Golden Technical Institute, the rationale for the selected site, and organizational leadership. The procedure consists of the steps necessary to conduct the research. Permission was sought from the Institutional Review Board at Liberty University and Golden Technical Institute. Data

collection strategies employed include interviews, focus group discussion, and document

analysis. The interview was the primary source of the data collection. The credibility,

dependability, confirmability, and transferability have been discussed in detail.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. The transcendental phenomenological design was selected for the study because it allowed me to understand how students with disabilities described their academic and social experiences and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. This chapter presents findings of the research.

This study was grounded in central research question and four guiding questions. The central research question was: How do postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana describe their lived experiences? The four guiding questions include: (a) What are the academic experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana? (b) What are the social experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana? (c) What institutional factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana? (d) What personal factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana? This chapter provides a detailed narrative about students with disabilities.

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from one postsecondary school in the eastern belt of Ghana. Criteria for participation required that the participants be 18 years of age or older, be college student, and have a documented disability. Through purposeful and snowball sampling methods, 15 students were found that met the study criteria. Out of the 15 students, 12 agreed to

participate in the research. Seven participants were recruited via purposeful sampling, while five

participants were found through snowball sampling. Eight of the participants were males and four

were females. Participants' age ranges from 20 to 30 years. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms

were used. Participant demographics are shown in Table 1.

Adamu

Adamu is in his 20s and a level 100 Building Technology student. Adamu comes from

Northern region of Ghana. He believes Building Technology program will uplift him to achieve

his dream. He had an accident when he was 10 years, and it affected his left arm and hips.

Adamu has been living with left arm impairment for more than 10 years and he struggles to lift

and push things with his left arm. He described his secondary education prior to college as the

worst experience because majority of his senior high school mates did not understand his

condition. He loves this postsecondary school because instructors and administrators are

friendly, instructors respond to his questions anytime, and he believes the instructors understand

his condition. Adamu cannot sit for lectures for more than two hours. Due to this condition, the

instructors allow him to stand for about five minutes during active lectures. He enjoys doing

assignments with his peers, and he often goes to the library to learn with his best friend who does

not have a disability. The instructors do not allow Adamu to lift anything in class because of his

condition.

Adamu admits to playing cards and games with his peers during weekends. He interacts

with his peers during group work and school activities. His peers help explain and do

assignments for him when he finds it difficult to do it by himself. He personally interacts with his

instructors and asks for help and guidelines. Instructors and administrators are conscientious to

help him whenever they can. Because of his injuries, Adamu reports getting tired when walking

from his hostel to lecture halls. He often feels pain when accessing lecture halls because the stairs put strain in his injuries. He draws inspiration and advice from his parents. Due to his parents' advice, he studies hard to pass exams, moves away from bad influence, and does assignments on time to persist academic challenges.

Aku

Aku is 22 years old and a level 100 Building Technology student. Aku comes from Volta region of Ghana. He is the only son of his family. Aku has vision impairment and has been living with the condition since infancy. He chose to study Building Technology because he wants to gain employment in the future. Aku described his lived experiences prior to postsecondary education as a "tough one". Aku remembered his classmates calling him "blind and four-eye person after class hours" (personal communication, February 26, 2021). Aku asks instructors questions when he cannot see instructors' handwriting on the whiteboard. Despite name callings, he does homework with his peers, and asks his peers and instructors to explain or read sentence for him when he cannot see the statement clearly. Aku feels bad when he does not get correct answer during quiz. He once accused an instructor of giving him a bad grade on purpose. He thought the instructor did not like him because of his condition.

Aku likes sport activities and he always play with his peers. He interacts with his peers during and after lecture hours. He admits having positive interactions with his instructors and peers. Aku stated that "instructors are always ready to assist me whenever I ask them for something" (personal communication, February 26, 2021). He does not seek financial support from the school because he thinks the administrators may think he is using his condition to obtain aid from the school. Institutional factors such as the use of a glossy whiteboard negatively affects his vision during lecture hours. The whiteboard reflects light in the lecture hall thereby

making it difficult for him to see statements and sentences on the board. Some of the students without disabilities do not like the way he asks many questions during lecture hours because the students without disabilities think he ask questions to waste their time. Aku reads widely by searching on internet for different materials he is interested in, stays out of trouble by following the school's rules and regulations, and works hard to turn in assignment on time. He motivates himself to persist in the school by making sure he follows the school's rules and regulations, does not fight with anyone, participates in school activities, and attends lectures on time.

Ama

Ama suffers from mobility impairment and has been living with the condition since infancy. She is in her 30s and has been teaching in a vocational training school for the past seven years and is currently in the postsecondary institution to upgrade herself. Ama is level 300 Accountancy student, and she chose to study the program because she wants to become a banker. Ama described her classroom experience as positive because instructors and some of her peers treat her good. She admits instructors help her in many ways during and after class hours, instructors direct and guide her when she finds it difficult solving a problem, and some of her peers play with her during school activities. Ama studies very hard in order to accomplish her aims and she makes sure she does all assignment and homework on time. Socially, she attends parties and church with peers, and she enjoys participating in school activities with her peers.

Ama seeks training opportunities and advice from her instructors and peers. Ama admits most of the school offices are not disability friendly. She always finds it difficult when accessing the student representative building and lecture halls (personal communication, March 1, 2021). She draws motivation from her peers and individuals with disabilities that have achieved great

success in life. The motivation encourages her to persist in the school because she knows she can also do it.

Enyonam

Enyonam is 27 years old and is a level 200 Accountancy student. Enyonam comes from Volta region of Ghana. She has a 3-year-old daughter. She suffers from mobility impairment because of car accident. Enyonam shared her educational background experiences prior to postsecondary education as both positive and negative. In her secondary school, her instructors made sure she achieved her academic goals. She remembered two students without disabilities called her names like "cripple" and "four-legged person". In her postsecondary education, Enyonam described experiencing positive interactions with her instructors and administrators. She stated, "my instructors provide me with academic guidelines and these guidelines help me to study without challenges" (personal communication, March 6, 2021). She shares her thoughts and ideas with two friends.

To overcome academic challenges, Enyonam studies lecture notes, handouts, textbooks, and reads academic journals. She interacts with her peers when she needs help from assignment, homework, and project work. Enyonam plays with her peers during leisure time. She stated, "I sometimes watch comic programs to reset my mind from academic loads" (personal communication, March 6, 2021). Enyonam indicated that the school's lecture halls and some of the offices are inaccessible. She finds it difficult accessing buildings because the stairs negatively affect her legs. Enyonam has developed personal strategies such as sleeping eight hours a day and going to lectures on time in order to persist in the school.

Kofi

Kofi is 26 years old and hails from Northern region of Ghana. Kofi has visual impairment and has been living with the condition since infancy. After high school, he stayed in the house for three years before applying to study Building Technology. He is level 200 student. He chose to study Building Technology because he wants to gain employment in the future. Kofi studies hard to complete and pass homework and group assignments. In the classroom, he stays out of trouble, minds his own business, and does assignments on time. Instructors often respond to his needs during class hours, and they always explain course content to him. Instructors give Kofi ample time to do assignments and his peers encourage him to participate in school activities. The love from his peers enables him to do group work without challenges. Kofi admits one student tried to bully him in class when he asked an instructor to do something about a fluorescent bulb in the class.

Kofi seeks answers from the school administrators when he needs an explanation to something he does not understand. He personally interacts with his peers during school activities and group assignment. He utilizes the school library and the laboratory for research work. Kofi stated, "the school's internet services enable me to complete assignment on time" (personal communication, February 28, 2021). Kofi finds it difficult to read from the school's whiteboard. Due to the reflection from the whiteboard, he struggles to write lecture notes during class hours. He remembered how the class once shouted at him when he told an instructor he cannot see because of the bright glare coming from the whiteboard. Students without disabilities sometimes call him "Mr. four-eye" (personal communication, February 28, 2021). In order to persist in his studies, he pays attention to details, does his homework on time, does not take certain jokes from his peers personal, and he studies hard to avoid failure.

Kojo

Kojo is 23 years old and a Building Technology student who has vision impairment. He has been living with the condition since infancy. Kojo hails from Greater Accra region of Ghana. Kojo chose to study Building Technology because he wants to be contractor. His vision impairment did not deter him from applying to postsecondary institution. Kojo indicated that his instructors and peers in senior high school loved him. Kojo once experienced bullying in senior high school. When asked about his experiences in postsecondary institution, Kojo indicated that he is happy to be in the school because of good instructors and peers in the school. His classmates understand his condition. Kojo has positive relationships with his peers. Kojo participates in coursework by answering and asking questions. His positive classroom experiences include sharing of ideas, sharing textbooks to course mates, and solving problems together.

Kojo revealed that he does not engage in student representative council week celebrations. Despite having positive relationships with his instructors and peers, Kojo prefers staying indoors during sport activities. He does assignment and homework in the library and utilizes the computer laboratory for research work. When asked about tools that helps him to learn, Kojo indicated that the school has given him drawing board and he uses the board to do most assignments (personal communication, March 4, 2021). Kojo utilizes benches under trees to learn on his own. Personal factors that help Kojo to persist in the school spans from submitting homework on time, participating in group work, researching on topics taught by instructors, going to class early, moving away from troubles, and motivating himself.

Korley

Korley is 20 years old and comes from Eastern region of Ghana. She suffers from arm impairment and has been living with the condition since childhood. She tries to learn hard to impress her family. She chose the Accountancy program because she would like to work in a bank. When asked about her educational background experiences prior to college, she indicated she came straight from high school to pursue diploma in accountancy. In her high school, most of her classmates liked her except for a few students who called her names such as "witch", "one hand", and "Sickler." Korley's postsecondary educational experiences have been positive since she joined the school. She indicated that all her classroom experiences are positive because the instructors and peers never looked down on her (personal communication, March 6, 2021). Instructors give her the opportunity to express herself during class hours. Her peers assist her when she needs help from them and does homework and group work with her peers during and after class hours without challenges.

Korley's social experiences include playing with her peers after school hours and attending parties with peers on occasions. Her condition does not stop her from participating in school activities. She engages in sport activities, watches football with peers, and participates in student representative council week celebrations. Institutional factors that help Korley to learn includes the school library, computer laboratory, and vast spaces that allow her to learn. The school's administrators have assisted her to get financial assistance from the school. This enables her to focus on her education without thinking about quitting. Korley is happy to be with his instructors and peers. Her instructors and peers understand her condition. Korley stated "hmm, one student tried calling me one hand, but when I told her to stop calling me such name, she apologized and she is now my friend" (personal communication, March 6, 2021). Personally,

Korley makes sure she goes to class on time, submits assignments on time, stays away from an unhealthy lifestyle, and consults her peers when she needs help.

Kwame

Kwame is 26 years old and a level 200 student. He is a first-generation student and hails from Oti region of Ghana. Kwame fell from a mango tree at age 13 and suffered an injury that led to a mobility impairment. He is an Accountancy student. He chose to study the program because he wants to become a banker. As Kwame reflected on his educational experiences, he remembered painful experiences during his secondary and tertiary education.

Kwame takes advantage of opportunities in the school by using the computer laboratory to do assignments and homework. He approaches instructors for clarification, advice, and direction. Kwame stated, "I always stay indoors and don't like playing with my peers" (personal communication, March 1, 2021). He only interacts with his peers during school activities. Kwame described having positive interactions with the school administrators. He stated, "the administrators helped me to get student aid" (personal interviews, March 1, 2021). Kwame indicated inaccessible lecture halls and offices negatively affect his movement. He stated, "I find it difficult accessing lecture halls because the stairs affect my wheelchair movement" (personal communication, March 1, 2021). Kwame persists in the school by submitting assignments on time and motivating himself.

Mawunyo

Mawunyo is 24 years level 100 Secretaryship and Management student. She comes from the Greater Accra region of Ghana. She has a vision impairment and has been living with the condition since infancy. She chose to study Secretaryship and Management program because she wants to work at ministries and departments. Mawunyo experienced both positive and negative

encounters during her senior high school years. She had good relationships with most of her peers during her secondary education. Instructors were good to her during her senior high school; however, some of her peers often called her names such as "four-eye, blind, and eyes close" (personal communication, March 3, 2021). Mawunyo describes her experiences in the postsecondary institution as an overall positive one. She enjoys lectures and instructors assist her during lecture hours. She is often happy because of positive feedbacks from instructors. In the classroom, Mawunyo participates in group work and attends lectures on time. When asked about social experiences, Mawunyo indicated she attends parties and partakes in school activities such as volleyball and peer tutoring. She does not have many friends due to her experiences in senior high school. She interacts with her instructors when she needs clarification from assignment and course work. She sometimes feels sad when interacting with her peers because of the derogatory things they say to her.

Mawunyo admits the school's whiteboard negatively affects her during class hours. She stated that "the whiteboard reflects light and I find it difficult copying notes" (personal communication, March 3, 2021). She also finds it difficult reading textbooks or handouts because of small print. Mawunyo's indicated that the school's library and the computer laboratory help her to learn on her own. She feels comfortable when using the school's library. Mawunyo takes advantage of the school's WiFi by doing assignment, homework, and Facebooking. She sometimes asks administrators for help regarding tools that can help her to learn. When asked about personal factors that help her to persist in school, she stated "I'm determined to complete this program and I study hard to pass all the courses" (personal communication, March 3, 2021). She does not look down upon herself, this allows her to

compete equally with her peers. During hard times, Mawunyo stays calm and ponders over the problem. This enables her to persist in the school without thinking about quitting.

Napari

Napari is 21 years old and is a level 200 Building Technology student. Napari comes from Northern region of Ghana. He suffers from speech impairment. He is a first-generation student in his family and came straight from high school to the postsecondary institution. Napari admits to both positive and negative experiences during his senior high school education. He encountered bullying and discrimination during his high school education. In higher education, Napari's classroom experiences include negative interactions with his peers. Napari stated, "peers often tease at me when I talk in class" (personal communication, March 4, 2021). When instructors ask Napari to explain or define something, the class laughs at him. These experiences have made him keep quiet during class hours. Napari shares his knowledge with his peers during assignment and group work.

Due to Napari's condition, he does not like socializing with his peers. When asked how he feels being with his peers, he stated, "hmm, I feel bad when I am with my peers because they always laugh when I talk" (personal communication, March 4, 2021). He has two friends he shares ideas with. He hangs out with two friends in many places because they understand him. Napari watches premier football league on the television with his two friends during weekends. Napari interacts with his instructors during and after class hours. He goes to his instructors' offices when he does not understand homework or assignment. Napari shared that he had a negative encounter with an instructor. When asked about his experiences about the school structures, Napari indicated that he enjoys using the school's library, computer laboratory, and student representative building. Napari stays out of trouble, does assignments and submits them

on time, participates in group work, and he calls instructors whenever he needs help. This helps him to persist in the school.

Nii

Nii is 28 years old and a level 300 Information and Communication Technology student. Nii hails from Volta Region of Ghana and he is first-generation student. He came straight from high school to study in the postsecondary institution. He chose to study Information and Communication Technology because he wants to become a database administrator. Nii suffers from mobility impairment and has been living with the condition since infancy. During class hours, Nii pays attention to detail and he listens to instructions. When he does not understand a question, he asks instructors for clarification. However, when Nii sits in class for long hours, he experiences severe leg pains.

Nii does not want to interact with his peers because of negative encounter he experienced in high school. He admits students without disabilities often call him "cripple", "four-legged", and "disadvantaged person" (personal communication, February 26, 2021). Nii interacts with his instructors when asking question during and after class hours. He also asks instructors for guidance and advice. He does not like engaging in social activities because of derogatory names people call him. He does homework with peers, but he prefers doing the homework with students with disabilities because they understand each other. The school's structures and lecture halls negatively affect his condition because most of the school buildings are not disability friendly. Nii takes advantage of the school library and the computer laboratory. He studies very hard to stay motivated, does assignment on time, avoids troubles, and reads journals and research papers during his leisure time.

Yaw

Yaw is 23 years level 200 Accountancy student. He comes from Northern region of Ghana. He has mobility impairment as a result of car accident. Yaw has been living with mobility impairment for the past nine years. He stayed in the house for two years after high school because of financial constraints. His mother borrowed money from next-door neighbor before applying to study in the Accountancy program. He remembered his peers in senior high school used to call him "cripple, four-legged, and bad luck" (personal communication, March 3, 2021). Yaw is happy to be in the postsecondary institution because his peers and instructors understand his condition. In the classroom, Yaw shares ideas with his instructors and peers. During class hours, he expresses himself when answering questions and his peers become happy when he gets the answer right. When Yaw cannot solve an academic question or problem, he asks instructors and peers for help. His positive classroom experiences stem from the good relationship he has with instructors and some peers.

Yaw socializes with his peers after school events, he dances with his peers during church services, and watches premier football league on the television with his peers. Yaw celebrates with his peers during student representative council week celebration. Yaw stated, "the school's library and the computer elaborately enable me to complete assignment on time" (personal communication, March 3, 2021). Lecturers' handouts enable him to read and understand course work, research, and group work. The institution has given Yaw an opportunity to study on his own, he utilizes the school's bench to study, and takes advantage of the numerous programs in the school. The school's structures present challenges to Yaw. Yaw struggles to access lecture halls because the stairs negatively affect his legs. In order to persist in his schooling, Yaw commits to the school's rules and regulations, submit assignment on time, do homework,

participate in group work, and reads inspirational books from successful people living with disabilities.

<p align="center">**Results**</p>

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. The data were gathered through interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development. I asked each participant to answer 24 interview questions. Each participant wrote a two-page letter describing their experiences regarding academics, social, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence.

The data inquiry focused on the central research question and four guiding questions. The central research question was: How do postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana describe their lived experiences? The four guiding questions include: (a) What are the academic experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana? (b) What are the social experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana? (c) What institutional factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana? (d) What personal factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Theme Development

Theme development plays a significant role in qualitative research study. The theoretical framework was based on Hosking's (2008) disability theory and Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory. This study was conducted to present the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities in the eastern belt of Ghana. In order to understand the experiences of

postsecondary students with disabilities, participants were asked to participate in interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development. Analysis from the interviews, focus group discussion, and personal letters led to important theme development that describes the experiences of the phenomenon.

I used epoché process to bracket my own personal biases and set aside my own personal opinions about students with disabilities (Moustakas, 1994). The epoché process allowed me to describe my own personal experiences regarding the phenomenon (see Appendix A). I separated my own feelings from students with disabilities' feelings during and after the interviews, focus group discussion, and letter development. I kept a journal during data collection which enabled me to write my own reactions, behaviors, events, and other important information that were not captured during audio recordings. The journal enabled me to deal with my own emotions and participants' feelings. During interviews, I felt lonely, worried and tired, but I overcame my emotions through determination. I reflected on what participants told me after the interviews and focus group discussion and added important information to the data. I used the journaling to identify and bracket personal biases from the analysis.

Semi-structured interview questions were used to collect the data. The interview consisted of 24 questions and lasted for about 60 minutes. The interviews took place at student representative council building and camp building close to the library. I used android phone and recording device to record individual interviews. After individual interviews, I conducted two separate focus group discussions consisting of six participants each. Group memberships were assigned randomly. The first group discussion was held at student representative council building and the second discussion took place two days after the first discussion in the same building. Each discussion session lasted for about 60 minutes.

I used Moustakas's (1994) and Patton's (2002) steps to guide the analysis and interpretation of data. Following focus group discussion, I asked participants to write a two-page letter to describe their academic experiences, social experiences, and institutional and personal factors that hinder academic success. Participants were also asked to include relevant information that was not captured in the interview and focus group discussion. Individual's responses were coded and added to the analysis. I listened to the audio recordings multiple times before transcription. I read and reviewed prompt letters multiple times before developing key words to form codes. I used the horizonalization process to treat all data equal. I listed important expressions and ideas and applied reduction and elimination techniques to determine significant experiences that relate to the phenomenon. I used the codes to develop textural descriptions of participants' feelings, thoughts, and motivations. Five identified themes emerged from the codes: learning, relationship and interaction, social influence, institutional factors, and determination and perseverance. Table 4 presents codes leading to themes, Table 5 presents cumulative frequency, and Table 6 presents themes by data collection approach.

Table 4

Codes Leading to Themes

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Learning	Lectures	Study skills (16)
		Lectures (45)
	Study group	Assignment and group work (34)
		Handouts (10)
		Taking notes (17)
Relationship and Interaction	Friendship Isolation	Making friends with peers (28)
		Making friends with instructors (22)
		Isolation (12)
		Peer interaction (26)

Social Influence	Games and parties Stigmatization	Watching game (38) Attending party (08) Attitude (14) Stereotype (36) Activities (08) Stigmatization (15)
Institutional Factors	Academic support Accommodation	Financial aid (16) Campus climate (09) Stress management program (14) Learning support (22) Academic advising (23) Accommodation (21)
Determination and Perseverance	Motivation and financial support Independent learner Sense of belonging Self-consciousness	Stay out of trouble (12) Motivation (24) Independent learner (11) Sense of belonging (08) Economic support (21) Self-awareness (22)

Table 5

Themes Cumulative Frequency

Themes	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency
Learning	122	23.3	23.3
Relationship and Interaction	88	16.8	40.1
Social Influence	111	21.2	61.1
Institutional Factors	105	20.0	81.3
Determination and Perseverance	98	18.7	100
Total	524	100	100

Table 6

Themes by Data Collection Approach

Theme	Data Collection Approach
Learning	Interviews
	Focus group discussion
	Prompt letter development
Relationship and Interaction	Interviews
	Focus group discussion
	Prompt letter development
Social Influence	Interviews
	Focus group discussion
	Prompt letter development
Institutional Factors	Interview
	Focus group discussion
	Prompt letter development
Determination and Perseverance	Interviews
	Focus group discussion
	Prompt letter development

As stated earlier, five identified themes emerged from analysis of the data: (a) learning, (b) relationship and interaction, (c) social influence, (d) institutional factors, and (e) determination and perseverance.

Learning

Participants described both positive and negative experiences regarding their academic journey. Participants revealed that they engage in academic discourse by solving real-world problems, asking questions during lecturing hours, applying critical thinking during assignment and group work, participating in project-based work, and taking notes during lecture hours. In the individual interviews, participants were asked to describe their general classroom experiences.

Lectures. Participants' positive experiences revolve around lectures, participatory discussion, and instructors' teaching skills which enable them to read, learn, solve, and engage in group discussion. Nine of the participants responded that they learn and obtain knowledge during lecture hours. Three of the participants indicated that study skills taught by their instructors enable them to attend lectures on time, submit assignments on time, and take notes during lectures. Kwame stated, "I read textbooks and handouts when a lecturer is not in the class just to understand topic treated previously." Eleven participants cited they participate in group discussion to share common knowledge, ideas, and learning skills for positive academic outcomes. Ama noted that her group allows her to contribute, speak, add information, and share her experience during assignment and project work. This helps Ama to achieve positive academic results.

Class participation helps students to share ideas and solve problems. All the participants stated "their instructors allow them to ask questions, share ideas, solve problems, and help each other during lectures hours. Kwame stated, "my lecturers give me maximum time to think about questions and they explain assignment and homework to me when I don't understand the questions." Yaw indicated that a lecturer once gave him a token when he answered a difficult question in class. During focus group discussion, Korley noted one of the lecturers once asked her to demonstrate a project to her peers because she was the only person who understood the project process. Nii and Enyonam added that they learn from handouts when a lecturer fails to show up for lectures.

Some of the participants' negative classroom experiences include reflection of whiteboard and intimidation. Aku, Kofi, Mawunyo, and Kojo indicated they find it difficult taking notes during lecture hours because of whiteboard reflection. Kofi asserted that he is

always behind lecture notes because he struggles to copy notes from the whiteboard. Napari stated, "some of my peers intimidate me when I attempt answering questions." His experience shows his peers do not allow him to express himself during participatory discussion because the students without disabilities think Napari cannot express himself.

Study Group. From the data sources, seven participants indicated they are part of study group. The study group allows the seven participants to access course content, evaluate and analyze project work, and share possible links to gain access to important programs on campus. In her letter, Ama noted, "I always discuss important assignment with my study group mates and they often help me to complete assignment on time." In Kofi's letter, he admitted gaining positive learning outcomes from the study group he joins. From the personal interviews, Aku stated, "my peers work with me to solve difficult homework and research work during group study." Participants' academic experiences are influenced and shaped by lectures, study skills, assignment and group work, handouts, and note taking.

Relationship and Interaction

Relationship and interaction emerged as second theme regarding postsecondary students with disabilities' academic experiences. This theme became evident through personal interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development. All the 12 participants shared their experiences regarding making friends with instructors and peers and isolation.

Friendship. In the personal interviews, Kojo described having positive relationship with his peers and instructors. Kojo stated, "I interact with my instructors during and after lecture hours by asking them questions, sending them emails regarding assignment and homework, and asking direction with regards to course contents and activities." Kwame stated, "I have developed positive relationship with an instructor, and he helps me by giving me money, directs

me on what to do and what not to do, and he encourages me to learn and stay out of troubles."

Kwame and Enyonam both admit their friendship with instructors prepared them to face

challenges ahead of them.

In the personal interviews and prompt letter development, Adamu described having

strong relationship with his instructors. Adamu stated, "instructors often allow me to stand

during lecture hours whenever my hand and waist pains excruciate." Napari described having

troubles explaining himself to instructors during and after class hours. Napari stated, "I take long

time to explain myself when instructors ask me to describe, state, list, and explain a term". Some

of the instructors listen to Napari, while others fail to listen to him. In the focus group discussion,

it emerged that students who establish positive relationships with their instructors often obtain

positive academic outcomes. Korley and Mawunyo noted in the prompt letter that their

instructors do not hesitate to guide, explain, return a call, reply a message, and solve their

problems for them.

Kwame maintains friendship for personal and academic gains. In the prompt letter

development, Kwame stated, "my friends push me when pedaling wheelchair across steep road

that leads to lecture halls." Nii wrote in the prompt letter that his friends assist and guide him

during difficult times. Nii asserted, "my friends understand my condition and they always

encourage, support, advice, and motivate me during school activities." Ama, Korley, Mawunyo,

and Enyonam described having two friends each because of their past negative encounter with

friends. Mawunyo stated, "I only have two friends in the school and apart from these two friends,

I don't reveal my secret or information to anybody." From the data sources, participants revealed

that they prefer to work with friends that understand their conditions, share their pains and

grievances, accept them as colleagues, and are ready to support and defend them when they are in need.

During focus group discussion, participants agreed that they interact with their instructors and peers when they need help, clarification, direction, and information about academic programs. Enyonam stated, "I personally interacts with my peers by asking them to direct and guide me when I don't understand anything." Yaw asserted, "I always interact with my peers when working in groups and asking for clarification about assignment and lecture timetable." Kofi always stay away from peer influence because he does not want to be deviant or bad person in the school. In the personal interviews, eight of the participants responded that they always feel happy when they are with their peers.

Isolation. Positive peer relationship helps students to persist and attain positive academic outcomes, but negative peer interaction leads to isolation. In the individual interviews, Napari stated, "I feel like being alone because many of the students without disabilities laugh and call me names when I talk." Napari always stay away from students who call him "vibrator" and "dumb." Four participants responded that they feel bad, depressed, and sad when they are with their friends. Nii and Kwame indicated that they stay away from peers to avoid being called "disadvantaged person", "four-legged", and "cripple." Nii asserted, "I always feel sad when my peers talk to me anyhow." In his letter, Nii stated, "when I experience name calling on campus, my mood changes and I feel like isolating and staying away from my peers for the rest of my life." In the personal interviews, Enyonam stressed that she often isolate herself from peers except two friends who understand her condition.

Social Influence

Social influence surfaced as the third theme regarding postsecondary students with disabilities social experiences. During personal interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development, social influence became evident. Some of the participants described watching games and participating in student representative council week celebration. Participants who described participating in games and parties indicated that they partake in games and parties to overcome anxiety, depression, and balance academic work.

Games and Parties. In his letter, Kojo stated, "I feel being part of the school during student representative council week celebration". In the letter and focus group discussion, nine participants indicated they often engage in school activities, watch premier football games, and attend parties with peers during weekends. Adamu stated, "when I finish doing homework, exercise, or research work at the weekends, I often play cards and games with my peers to relieve tension." Yaw, Korley, and Enyonam watch games with peers, attend student representative council week celebration, and dance in church every Sunday. Kofi stated, "I combine social life with academic work to maintain good academic standing". Yaw stated, "I engage in student representative council week celebration to get rid of anxiety, depression, and stress." Participants described avoiding unnecessary parties, games, and celebrations during busy schedules.

Stigmatization. During the focus group discussion, some of the participants described experiencing stigmatization, stereotypes, and negative attitudes from some of their peers during games. Participants revealed that games such as football, volleyball, and basketball are often hosted at Golden Technical Institute. Nii recounted how a student without disability stigmatized him during sport activity. Nii stated, "a male student without disability told me, you are cripple

and don't worry yourself over a mere school activity which would not benefit you." Napari

stated, "a male student made fun of me during school games that I should not kick and tap a

student in the shoulder." Adamu indicated a peer once told him volleyball game is two-hands

game and that one-hand people should clear off for strong people to play. Kwame noted in the

prompt letter that a student without disability once used derogatory statement on him when he

was watching game. The student without disability said, "cripples too like games." Since that

incidence Kwame made up his mind not to watch games or partake in any social activities in the

school. Kwame added, "the way peers without disabilities look at me during games make me

isolate myself from them because I do not want to be stigmatized and stereotyped." As

participants discussed their social experiences on campus, it became more evident that social

influence affects students with disabilities' lives.

Institutional Factors

Data gathered through personal interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letters

revealed that institutional support helps students with disabilities to persist in their schooling and

studies. Factors such as financial aid, campus climate, stress management programs, academic

advising, and accommodation affect students with disabilities.

Academic Support. The institution supports some of the students with disabilities by

giving them financial aid. Kwame and Korley described receiving financial aid to pay part of

their school fees. Kwame stated, "the financial aid helps me to pay part of my school fees and

buy textbooks and handouts without stressing myself about where to get money to buy them."

Nii, Napari, and Kofi noted in the prompt letter that they wanted financial aid, but the school

turned them down. Nii indicated that the financial aid rejection from the school affected his

academic work.

Participants indicated that campus stress management center promotes relaxation exercises, management skills, and meditation techniques. During focus group discussion, participants revealed that the school's psychologists teach them how to use problem-solving skills to cope with challenges. In the personal interviews, six of the participants described participating in campus stress management programs. Korley stated, "stress management programs enable me to persist in the school, it helps me to prepare myself towards courses and activities." Yaw stated, "I attend stress management programs in order to overcome challenges." Nii wrote in the prompt letter that he adjusts and organizes himself through stress management programs. The stress management programs help participants to persist, organize and prepare for exams, assignment, and project work.

Participants revealed that the school's learning support programs help them to learn on their own, push them to explore opportunities, encourage them to persist, and enable them to maintain good academic standing. Ama revealed that the school's practical programs enable her to access computers, laboratory, and tools. Ten of the participants indicated that the library and the school WiFi enable them to complete assignment on time, research on their own, and complete group work on time. Yaw, Kojo, and Napari revealed during focus group discussion that instructors support them to learn by giving them textbooks, handouts, drawing boards, and other tools. Napari stated, "the school's learning support relieves me from stress and prepares me to withstand academic challenges." Korley revealed that the school's WiFi enables her to complete multiple assignments on time and watches programs on YouTube and Facebook during leisure time.

From the data sources, participants revealed that some instructors have taught them how to prepare PowerPoint presentations. Participants present project work without challenges.

During focus group discussion, eight participants discussed using the school projectors during seminars and proposal presentation. Mawunyo stated, "an instructor gave my group one of the school projectors to present project findings." Mawunyo stressed that her group scored high marks in that course because the presentation was well organized.

     Accommodation. Inaccessible accommodation presents challenges to students with disabilities. Some of the participants indicated that the school's structures are not disability friendly. Participants revealed that all the dormitories lack ramps and elevators. Kwame stated, "the school moved me to a different hostel because the formal hostel was not disability friendly." Kwame pedals his wheelchair two miles across steep road every day in order to attend lectures. Kwame often think about transferring from the school to another school that can harbor his condition. During focus group discussion, Nii, Adamu, Ama, Enyonam, and Yaw raised concern about the school's structures and described struggling every day when walking from dormitories to attend lectures. Adamu revealed that he feels pain when accessing lecture halls, student representative council building, and administrative buildings because the stairs put strain in his injuries. Ama indicated that the lecture hall stairs affect her daily movement.

Determination and Perseverance

     From the data sources, determination and perseverance emerged as theme that qualifies participants' description about personal factors that impact their persistence. During personal interviews, focus group discussion, and letters, participants described that staying out of troubles, motivation, independent learning, sense of belonging, economic support, and self-awareness are factors that help them to persist in the school. All the participants indicated they stay out of troubles to focus on academic work in order to persist. Aku stated, "I make sure I don't get into trouble and I make sure I follow the school rules and regulations by doing what is right." Kojo

stated, "I am able to persist because I follow what the school tells me to do, I respect instructors, administrators, and peers." Kofi persists in the school by doing what is right and respecting authorities.

Motivation and Financial Support. All the participants felt both internal and external motivation help them to persist in their studies. During focus group discussion, Aku, Korley, and Mawunyo indicated that they are motivated to study, submit assignment on time, and conduct research. Aku's internal motivation comes from personal goals which enable him to attend lectures on time and participate in school extracurricular activities, whereas his external motivation comes from instructors' and peers' support. From the prompt letter development, Enyonam stated, "I persist because I am determined and motivated to study hard to pass all the courses." Enyonam's internal motivation stems from personal goals which enable her to learn as much as possible, while her external motivation comes from her parents' support and encouragement. Napari asserted that he persists in the school because he is determined to complete the program on time. Napari motivates himself by having the "mindset that he can do it." He also gets inspiration from individuals with disabilities that have succeeded in life.

Six participants wrote in the letter that they persist in the school when their financial needs are met. Kofi, Ama, and Adamu described persisting when they pay their school fees on time, buy handouts and textbooks, and buy necessary tools needed for course work. Adamu stated, "I feel comfortable when my parents support me financially, but when my parents cannot provide what I need for the course, I feel like dropping out of the school." Nii revealed that financial challenges negatively affect his studies. Nii stated, "thinking about how to pay my school fees and securing accommodation sometimes affect my studies." Some of the participants feel isolated and depressed when they have no one to discuss their financial needs with. Yaw

indicated the demised of his father has negatively affected his financial needs and that he is thinking about deferring the course.

Independent Learner. One factor that was common during focus group discussion was independent learning. Participants agreed that one must learn to study on his or her own in order to persist in the school. Aku, Ama, and Yaw revealed that they persist in the school because they have mastered to be independent learner. Ama indicated that she makes informed choices and takes responsibility for her own learning activities. Ama's learning strategies enable her to reflect on academic activities, organize herself, learn, gather important information, and examine her strengths and weaknesses. Yaw stated, "I do independent research after lecture hours to broaden my knowledge and it makes learning easy for me." Independent learning helps participants to write exams with confidence.

Sense of Belonging. During focus group discussion, participants indicated that sense of belonging helps them to persist in the school. Yaw revealed he feels sense of belonging in the school because instructors and administrators understand his condition. Napari stated, "when instructors and peers help me, it makes me feel stronger sense of belonging in the school." Kojo feels stronger sense of belonging because his instructors and peers love him. Kojo stated, "I persist in this school because feeling sense of belonging always make me participate in school activities and associate myself with my peers." From the data sources, participants revealed that when they feel less than worthy, marginalized, and threatened in the school, they become sad and feel like withdrawing from the school.

Self-Consciousness. One of the factors that participants revealed was self-awareness. All the participants revealed they are aware of the school climate. Nii stated, "I am aware that the school lecture halls are not disability friendly." Kwame stated, "I know I need people to push me

when pedaling the wheelchair across steep roads; therefore, I always ask peers for help." Four of the participants revealed that they politely ask peers to lend them lecture notes after lectures because they know they always struggle to copy from the whiteboard.

Research Question Responses

This research sought to understand the lived experiences of postsecondary with disabilities in the eastern belt of Ghana. The research questions consisted of central research question and four guiding questions. Disability and student persistence theories were used to guide the research questions. The central research question sought to understand how postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana describe their lived experiences. The four guiding questions sought to understand the postsecondary students with disabilities' academic and social experiences and institutional and personal factors that promote persistence. Participants' statements during personal interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development were coded and organized into five themes. The five themes reflected the central and the four guiding questions.

Central Research Question

How do postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana describe their lived experiences?

The central research question was developed to understand the general lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities. Analysis of the responses to the personal interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development revealed five themes. These themes were supported by the central and four guiding questions. The theme of *Learning* emerged as participants described that their lives are centered round academic activities through lectures, study skills, exams, homework, textbooks and handouts, and instructors' influence during

lectures. Participants in this study described experiencing both positive and negative learning development. Most of the participants described sharing ideas during lectures, school activities, and project presentation. Participants utilize the school library, computer laboratory, and Wifi to broaden their knowledge. Participants felt their lives are shaped by instructors, administrators, peers, and the school environment. Kojo stated, "my peers help me to do assignment and they have been good to me in this school" (Personal communication, March 6, 2021). Kojo feels his positive encounter with his friends enable him to cope with academic work.

Themes related to *Relationship* and *Interaction* were coined out of participants' description regarding their interaction with instructors, administrators, and peers. From the data sources, participants described making friends with their instructors, administrators, and peers. Some of the participants expressed that their peers treat them better, while other participants felt bad attitudes from their peers does not encourage them to achieve their academic goals.

The theme of *Social Influence* emerged as participants described watching football games, attending parties, and experiencing stigmatization and stereotypic threat from their peers during sport activities. Participants revealed that some of their peers call them names such as "four-eye", "cripple", "eyes-close", and "four-legged" during sport activities. The theme of *Institutional Factors* emerged as participants described experiencing challenges such as inaccessible lecture halls and lack of financial support. Four of the participants described their daily encounter during lecture hours as appalling, bad, and not fair because whiteboard affects their eyes. Five of the participants described experiencing pains when going for lectures as the result of inaccessible lecture halls. They revealed that the lecture hall stairs affect their legs when they climb it. The themes of *Determination* and *Perseverance* emerged as participants described staying out of troubles, applying sense of belonging to persist in the school, motivating

themselves by learning from successful people with disabilities, and applying learning strategies to overcome academic challenges.

The research participants experienced the phenomenon through love, grief, thought, sense of experience, and textural qualities. The themes in this study were used to create participants' textural description. The school's curriculum is designed to engage participants during and after lecture hours, group work, and research work. Participants interact with their peers during lectures, school activities, student representative council week celebration, games, and parties. Participants structural description is based on love, pain, isolation, and stigmatization they encounter during lectures, games, and school activities.

Guiding Question One

What are the academic experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Participants described attending lectures and receiving knowledge through courses taught by their instructors. Participants described developing study skills which enable them to study and conduct research, participate in group work, and take notes in order to cope with busy academic schedules. Participants sit in lecture halls for lectures which last about 2-3 hours depending on the course offered. Most of the participants shared the view that their instructors sometimes ask them to answer questions and they do that to ensure every student participate in academic programs. Ama stated, "I am part of a group that shares knowledge, ideas, and information, and we solve academic problems together". Negative experiences during lecture hours include name calling, gestures, and whiteboard interference. Napari described experiencing gestures and name calling from his peers when he answers questions in class.

From the data sources, participants revealed making friends with instructors and peers. Participants interact with their instructors during and after lecture hours and they ask instructors to explain or direct them on what to do regarding assignment, homework, and project work. Some of the participants described experiencing negative attitudes from peers who do not understand their condition. Napari stated, "some of my peers are not tolerant and they do not allow me to express myself during class discussion, but they rather shut at me and tell me to sit down." These behaviors from students without disabilities do not allow students with disabilities to contribute their part during class discussion. Due to heavy class load, participants have developed strategies that allow them to handle many courses per semester. Ama reported that she studies three courses every day. All the participants indicated they use the school library and the computer laboratory to do assignment, project work, and personal studies.

Guiding Question Two

What are the social experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Most of the participants reported that they are happy with their peers during games, while others disclosed that they are not happy with their peers during games and student representative council week celebration. Kofi feels his engagement in social programs on campus prepares him to overcome academic challenges. Due to negative socialization encounters, Kwame has vowed not to participate in any campus game or sport activity. Two participants have made up their mind not to bother themselves with celebrations and games. Seven participants indicated though they participate in school games, sport activities, and celebrations, they avoid attending or engaging in games during busy schedules.

Some of the participants mix academic life with socialization to overcome depression, anxiety, and academic stress. Korley and Mawunyo attend party during weekends to balance academic stress. Korley stated, "when I finish homework, assignment, and notes during the weekends, I make sure I socialize just to prepare my mind for academic work." She enjoys life to the fullest, but she makes sure she completes class work, homework, and assignment before engaging in any celebration or participating in any game. Three participants noted their academic performance seems to improve after engaging in games and playing cards with friends. Adamu stated, "my grades are now better compared to when I was not engaging in any social activity on campus". Yaw added that he uses common sense to socialize, he socializes when he is done with exercise or tired reading textbooks and handouts. Enyonam watches comic skits on Facebook and YouTube with her two friends during leisure period.

Guiding Question Three

What institutional factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana*?*

Participants account regarding institutional factors that impact persistence includes financial support, campus climate, stress management programs, learning support, academic advising, and accommodation. Two of the participants receive financial aid. To be eligible for financial aid, the student must be Ghanaian, enrolled in academic programs, maintain satisfactory grades, have no criminal records, and demonstrate financial need. Kwame expressed his satisfaction with the school's financial aid system as positive system that enables him to overcome academic challenges. The school helps Korley to pay part of her school fees. Korley stated, "the school's financial assistance reduces financial burden on me, and I am able to buy all the handouts and textbooks instructors want us to buy." One participant shared his displeasure

when the school failed to give him financial aid. Nii became frustrated and developed anxiety when the school failed to assist him financially.

Five of the participants indicated that the school's environment negatively affects their daily movement. Kwame, Ama, Adamu, Enyonam, and Yaw live in hostels that are not disability friendly. Kwame's hostel is about a mile away from lecture halls and he pedals wheelchair across steep roads before going for lectures. Ama stated, "most of campus roads are rough and I find it difficult assessing the roads when going for lectures." Adamu stated, "though I love the school and its programs, I have been thinking about transferring to different school because of inaccessible offices and buildings." Some of the participants indicated the school's environment helps them to learn on their own. Aku, Kofi, Mawunyo, and Kojo reported that they take advantage of the school's vast shades and utilize the benches under trees to do assignment and group discussion. Aku stated, "I sit on the benches under the trees to relax, reflect, plan, and think about strategies that will enable me pass all courses." The positive effect enables the four participants to persist in the school.

Some of the participants reported they receive learning support from the school. Participants shared positive experiences with academic advising. Ama and Enyonam cited they receive advice from instructors and administrators. The academic advice enables them to overcome challenges, persist, and pass exams. Kwame stated, "instructors tell me to learn, stay away from troubles, submit assignment on time, utilize the school library and Wifi, and report students who threatens me because of my condition." Aku's positive encounter with academic advising enables him to persist in the school. Some of the participants attend stress management programs to build their self-confidence and reinforce their learning strategies in order to persist

and overcome academic challenges. Nii, Korley, and Yaw reported that stress management programs strengthen them to overcome stress, anxiety, and depression.

Guiding Question Four

What personal factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Participants reported that they persist in the school because they stay out of trouble, motivate themselves, learn on their own, and feel sense of belonging. Aku noted he stays out of trouble to focus on academic work, maintains good name, strengthens himself during hard times, and completes project work on time. Nii stays out of trouble to avoid dismissal from the school. All the participants motivate themselves to persist in the school by reading articles about individuals with disabilities that have achieved success in life. Napari stated, "I do research about successful people and their ways motivate me to study hard, persist, overcome challenges, and complete exercises." To overcome academic challenges, some of the participants have mastered how to learn on their own. Aku stated, "I am an independent learner and I always make sure I read textbooks, handouts, and journals in order to get good grades in all the courses." Participants that learn on their own always use the school library, computer laboratory, the school WiFi, and take advantage of important programs for their own benefit.

Participants who feel a sense of belonging reported persisting in the school. Some of the participants reported their peers understand their condition and they support them to do assignment, project work, and school activities. Participants that reported stigmatization and stereotypic threat during school activities and games indicated they "feel less than worthy" when they are around some of their peers. Participants feel relieve when their financial needs are met. Some of the participants indicated they cannot learn and concentrate when they have not pay

school fees, buy textbooks, and afford daily needs. Yaw stated, "I sometimes feel like quitting when my financial needs are not met." The students with disabilities described persisting in the school when they do not think about financial challenges.

Summary

This chapter presented the results and analysis of the study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. Twelve participants took part in this study. The data were gathered through personal interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development. Five themes emerged from the coding interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development. The five themes include learning, relationship and interaction, social influence, institutional factors, and determination and perseverance. The result of the analyses addresses the central research question and the four guiding questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. Disability and student persistence theories guided the central and four guiding questions. In this chapter, the findings are linked with disability and student persistence theories. Twelve students with disabilities participated in this research. Data were collected from participants through interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter development. This chapter presents the overview, summary of the findings, discussion of the findings and implications regarding relevant literature, implications regarding methodological and practical, delimitations and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

This research examined the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana. Through coding and analysis of data collected from student participants, five themes were emerged: (a) learning, (b) relationship and interaction, (c) social influence, (d) institutional factors, and (f) determination and perseverance. These themes helped answer the central and four guiding questions.

Central Research Question

How do postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in the eastern belt of Ghana describe their lived experiences?

Participants' responses to the central research question revealed topics and themes related to learning, relationship and interaction, social influence, institutional factors, and determination and perseverance. Participants acknowledged that their experiences are centered around

academic work, instructors, peers, social interaction, and institutional climate. Participants

indicated that they experience learning development through study skills, lectures, assignment,

and homework. Students with disabilities interact with their instructors, administrators, and peers

during and after lectures. Many of the participants described having positive relationships with

their instructors and peers, whereas a few other participants balance academic work with

socialization in order to adjust themselves in the school. Through interaction and socialization,

some of the participants indicated that while interacting and socializing with peers at the school,

they experienced disability-related name calling, stigmatization, and stereotyping.

Participants' responses revealed both positive and negative experiences regarding the

school's infrastructure. Some of the participants described utilizing the school's benches to study

during their leisure periods, but five participated indicated inaccessible lecture halls and offices

affect their movement. Five of the participants described experiencing physical pains when

walking to classrooms to attend lectures. To persist in the school, participants described

developing strategies such as daily study skills and motivation. Participants motivated

themselves by setting goals, creating study space, setting study schedules, studying hard, staying

positive, and managing their stress levels in order to persist in their studies.

Guiding Question One

What are the academic experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden

Technical Institute in Ghana?

Participants described using learning strategies to study, participating in group work,

buying textbooks and handouts, taking note during lecture hours, and making friends with their

instructors and peers. Participants also described sharing knowledge, ideas, and information with

instructors and peers. During lectures, participants are asked to answer questions through

definition, explanation, description, listing, illustration, and examples. Some of the participants enjoy lecture times, but two participants described experiencing intimidation in a form of "scolding", "yelling", "glaring", and disability-related name calling from some of their peers during lecture hours. All the participants described doing exercise, homework, group work, and research work. Participants reported that they use the school library and computer laboratory to do research work and assignment. However, five of the participants described finding it difficult to access the library and computer laboratory because the buildings are not disability friendly. Some of the participants revealed that their positive interaction with their instructors help them to secure better grades. The positive interaction means cooperative relationship between participants and their instructors. The positive interactions have to do with how instructors support participants in learning activities, encourage participants to learn, monitor learning discourse, and expand participation and learning through feedback. The overarching themes that emerged from the data collected which answered guiding question one includes *learning* and *relationship and interaction*.

Guiding Question Two

What are the social experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

The social experiences of postsecondary students at the research site led to the emergence of *social influence* as a theme. Participants described watching games, partaking in school activities, and attending parties. Four of the participants watch games with their peers during weekends, but four other participants described experiencing disability-related name calling and derogatory comments from their peers during games. The four participants who experienced disability-related name calling during games described getting angry and leaving the park

immediately. Some of the participants described experiencing positive academic outcomes after engaging in school activities and partaking in student representative council week celebration. Participants felt they experienced positive academic outcomes because the school activities strengthened and enhanced their connections such as learning in groups and feeling sense of belonging in the school.

The school games and student representative council week celebration enabled participants to feel sense of engagement. Student participants felt sense of engagement during participatory discussion. Sense of engagement enabled participants to ask their peers questions and directions during group discussion. Social integration prepared some of the participants to overcome academic challenges, but other participants described avoiding games and week celebrations in order to concentrate on course work. Social integration also prepared participants by helping them to overcome stress, anxiety, depression, and fostering sense of self-worth. Participants described that social integration enabled them to hang out with their peers, fit into the institution, maximize opportunities for academic connections, and develop healthy social lifestyles on campus. Participants who described negative experiences during games and school activities acknowledged that some of their peers intimidate them and described getting angry and leaving the park to avoid any further provocations and derogatory statements from peers.

Guiding Question Three

What institutional factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana*?*

Some of the participants reported receiving financial aid in the school. Two participants indicated that the financial aid helps them to buy textbooks and pay part of school fees. One of the participants reported he could not cope with academic work when the school denied him

financial aid. The participant did not quit the school, but his parents took a loan from a bank to support his financial needs in the school. Stress management program was deemed as an important factor that helps participants to persist in their studies. The stress management program in the school is a program for all students, but the students with disabilities take opportunity of the program in order to overcome depression and stress. Some of the participants indicated that they persist in the school because of the learning support they receive from instructors, counselors, administrators, and peers. Instructors help participants to persist in the school by giving them advice, direction, quick feedback, handouts, and tools. Five participants indicated they struggle to access lecture halls and many administrative offices because the stairs impede their access to the buildings.

Guiding Question Four

What personal factors impact the persistence of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute in Ghana?

Determination and *perseverance* were the overarching themes that emerged from the data for guiding question four. Participants use determination and perseverance as measures to withstand academic challenges as well as by setting goals to complete course work on time, and study hard by reading many books and handouts every day to catch up with academic activities. With the perseverance, participants indicated that they do not blame other students for their academic failures, works hard to improve their grades, never give up, and asks instructors and peers for help whenever they need assistance regarding homework and groupwork. All the participants reported staying out of trouble as means of persisting in the school. Participants reported that they are motivated to study hard in order to pass courses. Some of the participants indicated that they take their instructors' and administrators' motivation seriously in order to

learn, submit assignment on time, stay focus on academic work, and believe they can do it. To overcome academic challenges, participants have developed learning strategies such as independent learning and multiple learning. Participants who indicated getting better grades learn on their own during the night and dawn. They did not indicate studying in groups or studying with other students interfered with their learning. Participants asked for help, used feedback to their own advantage, and committed to using study skills to support their learning.

Discussion

The findings of the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute helped contribute to the generalized knowledge base about the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana. The two theories that guided the study were: Hosking's (2008) critical disability theory and Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory. The five themes identified from the data collected in this study are supported and associated with the empirical and theoretical literature presented below.

Empirical Literature

The literature found in Chapter Two presented data about the experiences and challenges of postsecondary students with disabilities (see for example, Braun & Naami, 2019; Dell' Olio et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2013), perception of students with disabilities (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017), influence of social factors that impact college students (Fleming et al., 2017), and accommodation (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). Instructors help postsecondary students with disabilities by holding extensive office hours and giving them opportunities to use projectors and recordings during and after lecture hours (Mamiseishvili, & Kock, 2012; Quinlan et al., 2015). In this study, some of the participants revealed that their instructors support them by giving them projectors, computers, and learning tools to present project work. The result of this dissertation

supports Quinlan et al.'s (2015) findings regarding instructors' support during project work and the work of Mamiseishvili and Kock (2012) who noted postsecondary institutions improve students with disabilities academic and learning performance by assisting students with disabilities with persistence seminar programs and disability support programs.

Instructors use strategies such as interactive activities, class discussion, and demonstration to engage students with disabilities (Black et al., 2015; Riddell et al., 2005). In this study, participants revealed their instructors engage them during and after lecture hours by giving them the opportunities to explore, inquire, and solve problems. Participants revealed their instructors ensure maximum class participation through discussion, demonstration, and questions. The result of this dissertation supports Black et al.'s (2015) and Camacho et al.'s (2017) findings regarding students with disabilities' interactive activities and class discussion experiences. Black et al. (2015) and Camacho et al. (2017) indicated that students with disabilities hold the view that their academic performances are shaped by instructors' teaching methodologies and the support they receive from their instructors and peers during lecture periods. In this research, participants revealed that their instructors and peers help them to solve questions during class discussion and project presentation.

Fichten et al. (2014) revealed that postsecondary students with disabilities devote adequate time into studies after lectures. In this study, participants revealed completing assignment, homework, and project work through study skills. They indicated that study skills help them to read, research, explore, solve, identify, and address real world problems. Students with disabilities maintain positive relationship with their peers and share unique and important information with them during and after lecture hours (Oshea & Meyer, 2016). Throughout the research, participants revealed that their academic experiences involve active lectures that span

from Monday to Friday. Their experiences during active lectures include positive and negative interactions with their peers, instructors' assistance, group discussion, and note taking. Ama described her academic experiences as follows:

> I have been experiencing both positive and negative encounter in this school. I came to this school to study, but I didn't know academic work is so involving. I wake up early morning to study for about two hours before taking my bath. I walk about a mile to attend lectures. Before going for lectures, I think about the challenges ahead of me. The challenge is the stairs, it affects my daily movement. During lectures, I interact with my instructors and peers. The instructors have been good to me. During my first year, some of the students without disabilities were looking at me like crazy. I always ask lecturers for help and they have never failed me. Due to my positive relationship with lecturers, I have good academic standing.

Students with disabilities who develop a positive relationship with their instructors and peers stand the best chance of experiencing positive academic outcomes (Mutanga & Walker, 2017; Thomas, 2016). Students with disabilities mingle easily with their peers who have knowledge about disability. Studies show that instructors who have knowledge about disability often help students with disabilities to learn, solve, and pass courses with little or no challenges (see for example, Jaasveldt & Ndeva-Nderava, 2015; Mutanga & Walker, 2017; Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). Participants in this study revealed their positive relationships with instructors helped them to overcome academic challenges. The positive relationships helped participants to approach their instructors for assistance and direction regarding homework and project work. Student participants believed their instructors provide them quick feedbacks to questions regarding assignment or homework due to the existing positive relationships they have with their

instructors. The positive relationships enabled participants to solve academic problems with little or no challenges. The students with disabilities felt it is important to establish good relationship with their instructors because it will enable the instructors to teach and guide them on what to study, what to research, and what to expect in exams. Yaw described his experiences with instructors as follows:

> I interact with my instructors for clarification, explanation, and guidelines. I know I am in the school to lean, but at the same time I don't hide myself from the instructors after lecture hours. I once went to Building Technology master's office and he advised me to stay away from bad influence and drugs. I took his advice serious, and I have vowed to study very hard. I also email one of the instructors and he always give me feedback. His feedbacks help me to understand questions.

Students with disabilities engage in social activities to ensure successful academic integration. Some of the students with disabilities avoid social participation because of negative attitudes from their peers. Current studies show social participations between postsecondary students with disabilities and their peers presents challenges (see for example, Aquino, 2016; Nel et al., 2015; Polo Sanchez, 2017; Schwab et al., 2018). The challenges that occur from students' social participation include stereotypic threats, stigmatizations, and marginalization (Desombre et al., 2018; Hong, 2015). Participants in this research indicated they partake in social activities in order to enjoy, improve academic studies, and relieve themselves from stress, anxiety, and depression. Participants who described absenting themselves from sport activities and games indicated they do not want their peers to stigmatize them, laugh at them, and call them names. Some of the participants indicated their peers call them names such as "four-eyes", "vibrator", "four-legged", "cripple", "bad luck", and "one-hand" during sport activities. These stereotypes

and name calling discouraged the students with disabilities from interacting with their peers, participating in games, and seeking help or advice. Kwame described his social experiences as follows:

> I don't like engaging in social activities because some of the students without disabilities think disabled students shouldn't participants in sports. I once experienced negative attitude from one of the students without disabilities. During school games, he told me to go home and relax because cripples have nothing to do with running and football. My encounter with that student has made me not to worry myself over school games. As at now, I am at peace with my soul, and I will never partake in sport activities in the school.

Postsecondary institutions help students with disabilities to persist by improving their learning and academic outcomes, providing persistence programs such as student-success training and stress management program, giving them aid, and assisting them with tools (Mamiseishvili & Knock, 2012). Sprong et al. (2013) revealed that postsecondary students with disabilities often complain about accommodations, lecture halls, and hostels. Braun and Naami (2019) reported that postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana often complain about inaccessible environment. Some of the participants described utilizing the school's library, computer laboratory, and internet to their own advantage. Participants utilize the school's academic advising and learning support departments to address their challenges. Instructors and administrators advise participants to seek counseling when they feel the students need someone to talk to. This helps participants at the research site to persist in school.

Good accommodation such as lecture notes, waivers, PowerPoints, hostels, and lecture halls, help students with disabilities to persist, but inaccessible accommodations stress students with disabilities (Tsagris & Muirhead, 2012). Accommodation enables postsecondary students

with disabilities to participate in extracurricular and non-academic activities (Lombardi et al., 2012; Mull & Siltington, 2003). Muzemil (2018) revealed most postsecondary institutions in Ethiopia have inaccessible lecture halls, libraries, hostels, offices, and clinics. In this research, five participants indicated that inaccessible lecture halls and administrative offices, library, and student representative council building negatively affect their daily movement. The result of this dissertation supports and expands studies by Braun and Naami (2019), Muzemil's (2018), Sprong et al. (2013), and Tsagris and Muirhead (2012) who reported that inaccessible university buildings affect students with disabilities' movement and health.

Students with disabilities persist when they attend stress management programs. Postsecondary institutions help students with disabilities to overcome stress and anxiety by providing them opportunities to attend seminars and stress management programs (Moisey, 2014; Shaw & Dukes, 2013). The stress management programs at Golden Technical Institute help the students with disabilities to reflect on their lives, relax, and think about opportunities that can help them. Participants indicated that the stress management programs revolve around meditation techniques, cognitive behavioral therapy, and exercise. The student participants added that psychologists teach them sleep habits, relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and stretching, and how to eat quality food. The psychologists organize training for the students with disabilities twice every month. Six of the participants revealed that campus stress management programs help them to understand life stressors. They attend the program in order to avoid distress and anxiety.

Through perseverance and determination, postsecondary students with disabilities can overcome academic and social challenges. Postsecondary students with disabilities use strategies such as self-knowledge, self-advocacy, and perseverance and resilience to overcome academic

challenges (see for example, Hengsen & Weaver, 2018; Ju et al., 2017; Wehmever, 2007).

Participants in this research indicated they persist through a sense of belonging, stay out of

trouble, learn on their own, and motivate themselves. Postsecondary institutions require every

student to comply with its rules and regulations. Participants in this study indicated they stay out

of trouble by following the school rules. All the participants revealed they apply self-awareness

strategies to their own advantage in order to persist in their studies. Five participants reported

they know the school's lecture halls and structures affect their daily movement.

Determination and perseverance help postsecondary students with disabilities to persist

and graduate on time (Barber, 2012). Postsecondary students with disabilities who are

determined to graduate often believe they can do it (Lee et al., 2014). This study helps extend the

literature regarding personal factors that affect postsecondary students with disabilities. The

results of this dissertation suggests that self-determined students with disabilities set their own

goals to complete assignments on time, adopt study skills, and make decisions on what to do and

what not to do.

In the related literature, Francis et al. (2019) and Hong (2015) reported that some

postsecondary instructors demean, insult, discriminate, and stereotype students with disabilities.

In this research, participants revealed that their instructors respect and help them during and after

lecture hours. Participants also admitted that their instructors have never called them disability-

related names or insult them during and after lecture hours. This research contradicts Francis et

al's (2019) and Hong's (2015) findings about distrust and cynicism between students with

disabilities and their instructors as the result of instructors' negative attitudes towards disability.

The related literature also revealed that postsecondary students without disabilities often

cyberbully students with disabilities by calling them derogatory names through Facebook,

Twitter, and Instagram (see for example, Crosslin & Golman, 2014; Selkie et al., 2015). Though participants described experiencing discrimination and disability-related name calling from their peers, they denied experiencing cyberbully from their peers through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Theoretical Literature

This study was grounded in two theories, Hosking's (2008) critical disability theory and Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory. The disability theory examines disability challenges, oppression, and marginalization (Reaume, 2014; Titchkosky, 2015), whereas student persistence theory examines students' institutional, social, and academic integration (Severiens & Schmidt, 2008). Disability theory provides important framework centered round descriptive and normative description and challenges associated with disabilities (Ingham, 2018).

Critical Disability Theory

Critical disability theory centers disability as lived reality by looking at individuals with disabilities' social rights, perspectives of individuals with disabilities' needs, multidimensionality, equality within a framework of diversity, oppression, challenges, and individuals with disabilities' voices (Hosking, 2008). Stereotypes, discrimination, and words and images used to describe disability negatively affect individuals with disabilities (Hosking, 2008). Participants in this study described their experiences regarding academic, social, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. Participants described experiencing both negative and positive interactions with their peers. Name callings such as "four-legged", "one-eye", "crippled", "eyes close", and "bad luck" were common derogatory words used against participants.

Participants revealed the negative interactions occurred during games, celebrations, and lecture times. This supports the work of Findley et al. (2015) and Aquino (2016) who reported that postsecondary students with disabilities experience discrimination, name calling, and negative attitudes from their peers. The disability theory examines social barriers and various limitations students with disabilities face (Ingham, 2018; Wieseler, 2018). In a critical race and disability study, Gillborn (2015) noted that most individuals with disabilities in the United Kingdom often encounter discrimination, name calling, and stereotypic threats during school games such as football and volleyball. In this research, participants expressed experiencing discrimination and name calling during games, parties, and student representative council celebration. This aligns with the work of Mertens et al (2011), Findley et al. (2015), and Aquino (2016) who reported that students with disabilities experience discrimination, name calling, and harassment on college campuses. The stereotypic threat, name calling, and discrimination were the causes of participants' isolation and unwillingness to participate in sport activities.

Participants' interrelationships, social environment, social advantages and disadvantages, and institutional factors that impact persistence are linked to Hosking (2008) seven principles of disability theory. To understand individuals with disabilities' perspectives through disability theory (Hosking, 2008), participants' descriptions about the phenomenon were linked with the seven principles of disability theory: (a) the social model of disability, (b) multidimensionality, (c) diversity, (d) rights, (e) voices of disability, (f) language, and (g) transformative politics. The five themes that emerged from the data were compared with the seven elements of critical disability by looking at participants' description regarding social and academic activities and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. Elements such as rights, transformative politics, voices of disability, and language were common in this research as participants

described partaking in school games and week celebration, experiencing discrimination and name calling in the school, and forming study groups to solve problems. In this research, participants revealed they interact with their instructors and peers during and after lecture hours. Positive interactions among participants, instructors, and peers help the students with disabilities to overcome academic and social challenges.

The models of disability based on critical disability theory focus on disability as a social construct, individual's knowledge about disability, and institutional and environmental factors that affect individuals with disabilities (Hosking, 2008). As evidenced from the themes *learning*, *social influence,* and *institutional factors,* participants felt their interactions during lecture hours and games provided them the opportunity to excel, explore, and navigate important programs on campus. Participants who expressed maintaining few friends on campus revealed sharing ideas, information, and knowledge among themselves. The personal relationships ensure healthy academic discourse among the students with disabilities, instructors, administrators, and peers. This research aligns with Dukes et al. (2017) and Lightfoot et al. (2018) who noted institutional support and positive interactions increase students with disabilities confidence, encourage the students with disabilities to explore campus support systems, maintain personal growth, and share important information with friends during group discussion and socialization.

Through the application of disability theory, researchers examine academic integration and its challenges (Wieseler, 2018). The value of academic integration was evident in this research. Participants revealed engaging in academic discourse with their instructors and peers during and after lecture hours. Some of the participants indicated that peers allow them to express themselves during group work, and instructors and administrators allows them to celebrate and engage in student representative council politics. These interactions help

participants to understand questions and project guidelines and feel part of the school. These findings support Hosking's (2008) and Severiens's (2008) disability studies as the authors indicated that individuals with disabilities have the right to form, join, and participate in school games, politics, and celebration on college campus. Some of the participants revealed their peers sometimes make fun of them by calling them names during and after lecture hours. Napari revealed he does not like interacting and engaging in class discussion because his peers call him "vibrator." Yaw described his academic integration as follows:

> I always interact with my peers during and after lecture hours. I play games with my friends during my leisure period. When I don't understand anything, I ask my peers to explain the concept to me. We often share ideas during group study. This helps me to study with confidence because I know students and instructors are there to help me when I need their assistance.

Student Persistence Theory

Postsecondary students with disabilities are likely to persist when they are socially and academically integrated into the institution (Tinto, 1975). Institutionally, postsecondary students with disabilities need accommodations to integrate and engage in academic activities (Bialka et al., 2017). In this research, five participants complained about inaccessible lecture halls. The five participants described that the school's lecture halls lack lifts, and the stairs affect their legs. Some of the participants described thinking about seeking to transfer into different schools because of inaccessible lecture halls and dormitories. French (2017) and Tinto (1975) indicated postsecondary students with disabilities achieve sense of belonging when they positively interact with instructors and peers during and after lecture hours. Participants agreed that they felt a sense of belonging whenever they experience positive interactions with their peers or instructors.

Participants revealed that their peers and instructors help them whenever they do not understand homework and project work. The result of this study supports Tinto's (1997, 1998) and Mutanga and Walker's (2017) studies as the researchers reported that college students with disabilities experience both negative and positive interactions during sport activities, student representative week celebration, and group discussion. In this research, participants described experiencing positive interactions when their instructors and peers helped them to solve and address issues regarding homework and project work. Participants' negative experiences include stereotypes, name calling, and discrimination. The negative experiences discourage participants from engaging in sport activities and week celebration.

Postsecondary institutional factors such as financial aid and academic advising enable students with disabilities to learn, adjust, and prepare themselves to integrate into the school (Tinto, 1975). In this research, participants indicated that their academic integration centers round the financial aid, learning support, and academic advising they receive in the school. Two of the participants indicated that financial aid enabled them to academically integrate into the school because it helped them to buy study materials, learn, and study in groups. This research supports the work of Lindstrom et al.'s (2009) and Perna and Finney (2014) who indicated that financial aid helps postsecondary students with disabilities to integrate, learn, persist in their studies, and overcome attrition.

Students who are unable to integrate academically stand the chance of dropping out of school (Tinto, 1997), while students who feel connected with fellow students and instructors are likely to persist in school (Severiens, 2008). In accordance with Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory, participants in this research revealed that their interaction with peers and instructors help them to persist. Postsecondary institutions require all students to pass courses

before proceeding to next level. Participants revealed learning in groups helped them to solve questions. Postsecondary students with disabilities who academically and socially integrate are more likely persist and less likely to drop out of school (Choi et al., 2019; Tinto, 1997, 1998). Majority of the participants agreed that social integration helps them to enjoy, relax, think, and balance academic work. Some of the participants expressed dissatisfaction regarding social activities. Those who expressed dissatisfaction believe their peers made them to move away from social integration. Some participants expressed experiencing stereotypes and discrimination from their peers. Eleven participants expressed positive interaction with their instructors, but one participant described experiencing negative encounter with an instructor. The one participant revealed his instructor failed to respond to his questions and inquiries.

Implications

Twelve participants described their lived experiences regarding academic, social, and institutional and personal factors the impact persistence. The implication of this research fills the gap in literature regarding the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities. Participants revealed both negative and positive academic experiences, social integration, and institutional and personal factors.

Theoretical Implications

The implications are centered round Hosking's (2008) critical disability theory and Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory. Critical disability theory was selected for this study because the seven elements of disability describe students' academic, social, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. Tinto's student persistence theory was selected based on the premise that students' academic and social integration influences their persistence.

Participants' academic experiences and descriptions can be linked to Hosking's (2008) critical disability theory. Participants expressed that their academic lives are centered around lectures, assignments, homework, project work, and interactions. Participants described balancing course work and intensive lectures with study skills and personal learning. On their leisure periods, participants utilize the school library, computer laboratory, and internet. Since participants complained about the school's inaccessible lecture halls and offices, institutions should improve school structures by making sure all lectures and offices are disability friendly.

Evaluating and assessing students with disabilities' perspectives through disability theory (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2017), participants revealed their desire for financial aid. Two participants who indicated receiving financial aid outlined the importance of financial aid in their academic journey. The two participants revealed that financial aid sets them from financial distress. It is recommended that postsecondary institutions should support students with disabilities financially. This will enable students with disabilities to focus on academic studies and avoid attrition.

Participants attributed their academic successes to positive interactions, institutional support, social influence, and determination. Postsecondary institutions should hold seminars for all students and teach them about the importance of social integrations and factors that improve persistence. Some of the participants' negative encounters could have been avoided if students without disabilities understood disabilities. Academic integration improves student development and enhances grade performance (Murry et al., 2014). Participants indicated they formed study groups to benefit themselves. Through this study skills, postsecondary institutions should counsel students with disabilities about the importance of forming academic study groups.

Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory posits that social integration influences students' academic development. Participants revealed they participate in games and school activities in order to improve and save themselves from academic stress. It is recommended that postsecondary institutions teach all students about the benefits of engaging in games and school activities. Through games, students meet their peers, instructors, administrators, policy makers, and educators. Students with disabilities who engage in games and school activities are likely to meet someone who will assist them. It is also recommended that postsecondary institutions should provide alternative games for students with disabilities. This will encourage the students with disabilities to feel sense of belonging.

Empirical Implications

This study contributes to existing literature regarding the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities' academic and social experiences and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. The literature revealed the existence of both positive and negative interactions among students with disabilities, instructors, and peers (Francis et al., 2019; Maranzan, 2016; Plotner & May, 2017). Participants in this research revealed both positive and negative interactions with their peers. Eleven participants revealed that all their instructors treat them good, listen to them, give them feedback, and help them to solve problems. Only one participant described having negative encounter with an instructor. Gilson and Dymond (2012) revealed that some postsecondary instructors fail to support or respond to students with disabilities because they are tired of the students with disabilities. One of the participants, Napari, reported that one of his instructors failed to respond to his emails, questions, and concerns because the instructor was tired of him. As a result, Napari may stop asking instructors questions and may be emotionally damaged. Postsecondary institutions should train instructors

and administrators about how to respond to students with disabilities' needs. Instructors should support students with disabilities by allowing visual impaired students to sit in front chairs, enlarging images and characters on screens for visual impaired students, and adjusting tables and laboratory equipment for mobility impaired students. Instructors should communicate with students with speech impairments through email in order to address their questions regarding homework, exercise, and project work.

The research literature indicates that negative public perceptions about students with disabilities negatively affect students with disabilities' motivation, academic success, program choice, and social interaction (Akin & Huang, 2019). Participants' responses revealed some of the students without disabilities hold negative perceptions about disability. Some of the students without disabilities think students with disabilities should not engage in sport activities because of their disabilities. This negative perception may affect students with disabilities' emotions, academic integration, and persistence. Postsecondary institutions should create disability programs to educate students without disabilities about the impact of discrimination, stereotype, name calling, and negative perception.

Individuals with disabilities who have experienced positive relationships often share information with their peers and instructors (see for example, Morina, 2019; O'Shea & Meyer, 2016; Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). Majority of the participants reported having good relationships with their peers and instructors because their peers and instructors understand their conditions. Some of the students without disabilities support and encourage students with disabilities during lecture hours, group work, and project work. The positive relationships encourage students with disabilities to feel sense of belonging in the school; thereby, maintaining good academic standing. Postsecondary institutions should review relationships between students

with disabilities and their peers and develop peer-to-peer mentoring programs, or other formalizing programs to foster supportive relationships.

Poorly built stairs, exits, walkways, ramps, and hostels frustrate postsecondary students with disabilities (Gavu et al., 2015). This research supports Gavu et al.'s (2015) findings which revealed postsecondary students with disabilities find it difficult to access lecture halls and administrative buildings because the buildings lack lift, and the stairs are poorly built. Five participants complained about the school's hostels, lecture halls, roads, and administrative offices. Postsecondary institutions should build ramps next to stairs on first floor and elevators to assist students with disabilities. This will enable students with disabilities to access buildings without thinking about how to attend lectures, seminars, and participatory programs. Some postsecondary institutions support students with disabilities by providing their needs and giving them assistive technologies (Asselin, 2014). This research adds to the literature regarding institutional support. Four participants expressed having troubles reading, writing, and seeing lectures notes on whiteboard. Postsecondary institutions should provide more projectors to departments in order to solve lecture irregularities.

Personal factors such as economic support, study skills, and sense of belonging help students with disabilities to persist (Herbert et al., 2014; O'Neil et al., 2012). Postsecondary students with disabilities apply sense of belonging to relate with their peers and instructors (Vaccaro et al., 2015). In this research, participants revealed that they apply sense of belonging, motivation, and self-awareness to overcome academic challenges. Participants apply self-awareness as strategy to relate with their peers, obey school rules and regulations, and focus on academic studies. Postsecondary institutions should support students with disabilities by giving

them the opportunity to explore persistence programs that will enable them to overcome academic challenges.

Practical Implications

This study may help policy makers, educators, and institutions to address students with disabilities' academic and social needs. Postsecondary students with disabilities find it difficult to access course work, struggle with assignments, and time management (Van Hees et al., 2014). Participants' experiences in this research may help institutions to draft policies to help postsecondary students with disabilities to persist in the school and complete programs without challenges. Participants indicated that they share knowledge, ideas, and suggestions during group work. Some of the participants revealed better academic performances due to their involvement in group work. Students with disabilities in different institutions can learn from participants' experiences to better their academic performances.

Instructors employ instructional methods such as class discussion, participatory teaching methodologies, and instructors' assistance during lectures to help students with disabilities to persist and overcome academic challenges (Camacho et al., 2017; Quinlan et al., 2012). Participants admitted their instructors use participatory methodologies during lecture hours and often ask them to explain, discuss, list, illustrate, and solve real world problems. Two participants expressed experiencing negative encounters with their peers during participatory discussion. Institutions should hold seminars and orientations to teach students about the importance of participatory discussion.

Social participations between postsecondary student with disabilities and students without disabilities demonstrate challenges (Schwab et al., 2018). Participants described both positive and negative encounters during social activities. Nine of the participants indicated that

social participation enables them to reset their mind, relax, enjoy, and overcome challenges. Three participants expressed boycotting social activities as the result of discrimination and name calling. Institutions that have students with disabilities should consider the results of this study by enacting rules and regulations to prevent discrimination and stereotypic threat from instructors, administrators, and peers. Postsecondary institutions should investigate disability-related discrimination and harassment incidents and respond appropriately by sanctioning perpetrators. To effectively increase disability awareness on college campuses, institutions should weave disability concerns and individuals with disabilities' rights into the curriculum, counsel the victim and the perpetrator, and encourage students with disabilities to report disability-related discrimination and stereotypic threats to authorities.

Institutional factors that negatively affect postsecondary students with disabilities include inaccessible buildings, lack of institutional support, poor lectures, poor curriculum, and inadequate learning strategies (Riddell et al., 2005; Sprong et al., 2013). Participants described inaccessible lecture halls and offices, inaccessible hostels, and inaccessible library. Participants also admitted using the library and the computer laboratory to their own advantage, but they expressed difficulty in accessing the facilities. Postsecondary institutions should take note of participants challenges and build disability friendly lecture halls, hostels, offices, and laboratories. It is recommended that Ghana Education Trust Fund should help postsecondary institutions to build disability friendly buildings.

Postsecondary students with disabilities develop personal factors such as strategic plans, feeling driven, setting goals and objectives, participating in social activities, sense of belonging, and perseverance to overcome academic challenges (Russak & Hellwing, 2019). Participants in this study described learning on their own, applying sense of belonging, motivating themselves,

applying self-awareness, developing friendships, and involving in group work, project work, and note taking. All the participants described staying out of trouble and following rules and regulations. Participants who receive financial aid reported feeling happy and less financially challenged. Postsecondary institutions, policy makers, and non-governmental organizations should help students with disabilities across Ghana by giving them the opportunities to develop themselves and supporting them financially through scholarships. Participants described participating in campus stress management programs to overcome anxiety and depression. At the research site, the stress management center on campus offers relaxation exercises, resilience and help-seeking, and meditation techniques. Postsecondary institutions should publish students' testimonies regarding stress management programs on Facebooks, YouTube, and other social media platforms to encourage students to partake in stress management programs. Postsecondary institutions should also weave stress management techniques such as relaxation exercises, meditations, and cognitive behavioral therapy strategies into curriculum.

Delimitations and Limitations

The purpose of using transcendental phenomenological approach in this research was to obtain adequate information about the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this research to contribute to Hosking's (2008) disability theory and Tinto's (1997, 1998) student persistence theory, and the related literature, the research focus was on postsecondary students with disabilities' academic and social experiences and institutional and personal factors that affect persistence. There are three delimitations and two limitations associated with this research. The three delimitations are: (a) the criteria for participants' selection were delimited to students with disabilities who are 18 years old and above, (b) recruitment was delimited to 12 participants at saturation point, and (c)

the research site was delimited to one school. Participants' age requirement delimited inclusive research participation as the voice of students with disabilities who are less than 18 years would not be heard. Dukes (1984) suggested that researchers can study three to 10 participants in a phenomenological research. The study was delimited to 12 participants based on Duke's (1984) suggestion and Liberty University suggested range of 10-12 participants. Limiting recruitment to 12 participants delimit large number of students with disabilities' experiences regarding academic, social, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. The research site was delimited to one postsecondary institution in the eastern belt of Ghana. There is possibility that the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities in other institutions in Ghana would reveal different results.

The two limitations in this research are: (a) sampling was limited to students with documented disabilities and (b) response bias. The research criteria were limited to documented students with disabilities who attend Golden Technical Institute. There may be students with hidden disabilities who could have provided detailed description of their lived experiences, but this research was limited to students with documented disabilities. I used Moustakas' (1994) epoché process to state my biases and preconceived ideas (see Appendix A), but my ideas and biases may be poorly considered or ill-conceived. With the response bias, some of the participants may have answered the questions to the maximum satisfaction, but others may have been hesitant to provide adequate information to the questions. Though the interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter questions were open-ended, it is possible some of the participants openly described their lived experiences more than others due to the nature of the questions.

Recommendation for Future Research

This research examined the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities in the eastern belt of Ghana. The study was limited to one postsecondary institution in Ghana. In order to obtain adequate information and complete description of postsecondary students with disabilities, future researchers should consider adding more postsecondary institutions to the research. There are limited studies regarding the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana (Braun & Naami, 2019). This study should be repeated to add more views, information, and experiences to postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana. Future researchers should also examine the experiences of junior and senior high students with disabilities in Ghana.

Some of the participants indicated they avoid social activities in order to focus only on academic activities, while others engage in sports, games, and week celebrations. Future researchers should consider investigating the effect of social integration on postsecondary students with disabilities. This may enable future scholars, educators, and researchers to understand the impact of social integration on postsecondary students with disabilities. Four participants indicated the school's environment, structures, and buildings negatively affect their studies, health, and persistence. Future researchers should examine the impact of college environment on postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana.

Participants revealed that they develop strategies to study, engage in group work, solve problems, and participate in school activities. I would recommend that future researchers should examine strategies postsecondary students with disabilities employ to overcome attrition in Ghana. I used transcendental phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute. I would recommend that

future researchers should use case study approach to examine the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities. The case study may allow future researchers to explore or examine cases over time through in-depth data collection, reports, and case themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities at Golden Technical Institute (a pseudonym) in the eastern belt of Ghana. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods. Twelve participants participated in this research. The study consisted of one central research question and four guiding questions. The data were collected through personal interviews, focus group discussion, and prompt letter.

Through data analysis, five themes were identified. The five themes are: learning, relationship and interaction, social influence, institutional factors, and determination and perseverance. Participants revealed both positive and negative experiences regarding academic, social, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence. Participants indicated that their academic experiences revolve round lectures, assignment and homework, project work, group studies, note taking, and school activities. Some of the participants participate in social activities such as games, sport activities, parties, and celebrations, while others avoid participating in school games, parties, and celebrations due to stereotype, discrimination, and name calling. Five participants revealed the school's lecture halls, hostels, and administrative offices negatively affect their persistence. Participants indicated they develop personal strategies such as independent learning, motivation, self-awareness, and sense of belonging in order to persist in the school. Critical disability theory and student persistence theory were applied to link

the empirical and theoretical literatures. The empirical and theoretical literatures showed

correlation between participants' experiences and the literature.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Biases and Preconceived Ideas

Biases/Preconceived Ideas

In my secondary and postsecondary education, I have met couple of students with disabilities. Most of the students with disabilities that I met in postsecondary school often complain about how students without disabilities treat them. I expected students with disabilities would suggest improvements to disability services, describe negative comments about instructors, administrators, and students without disabilities. I expected students with disabilities would give positive description regarding social and academic integration. Below represent my biases and preconceived ideas towards students with disabilities,

1. Most instructors often favor postsecondary students with disabilities.

2. Postsecondary with disabilities do not pay attention to detail.

3. Postsecondary with disabilities do not like associating with peers.

4. Postsecondary institutions need to do a better job of supporting students with disabilities.

5. Postsecondary institutions need to train faculty members in order to maximize students with disabilities' academic outcomes.

APPENDIX B: Map of the Study Area
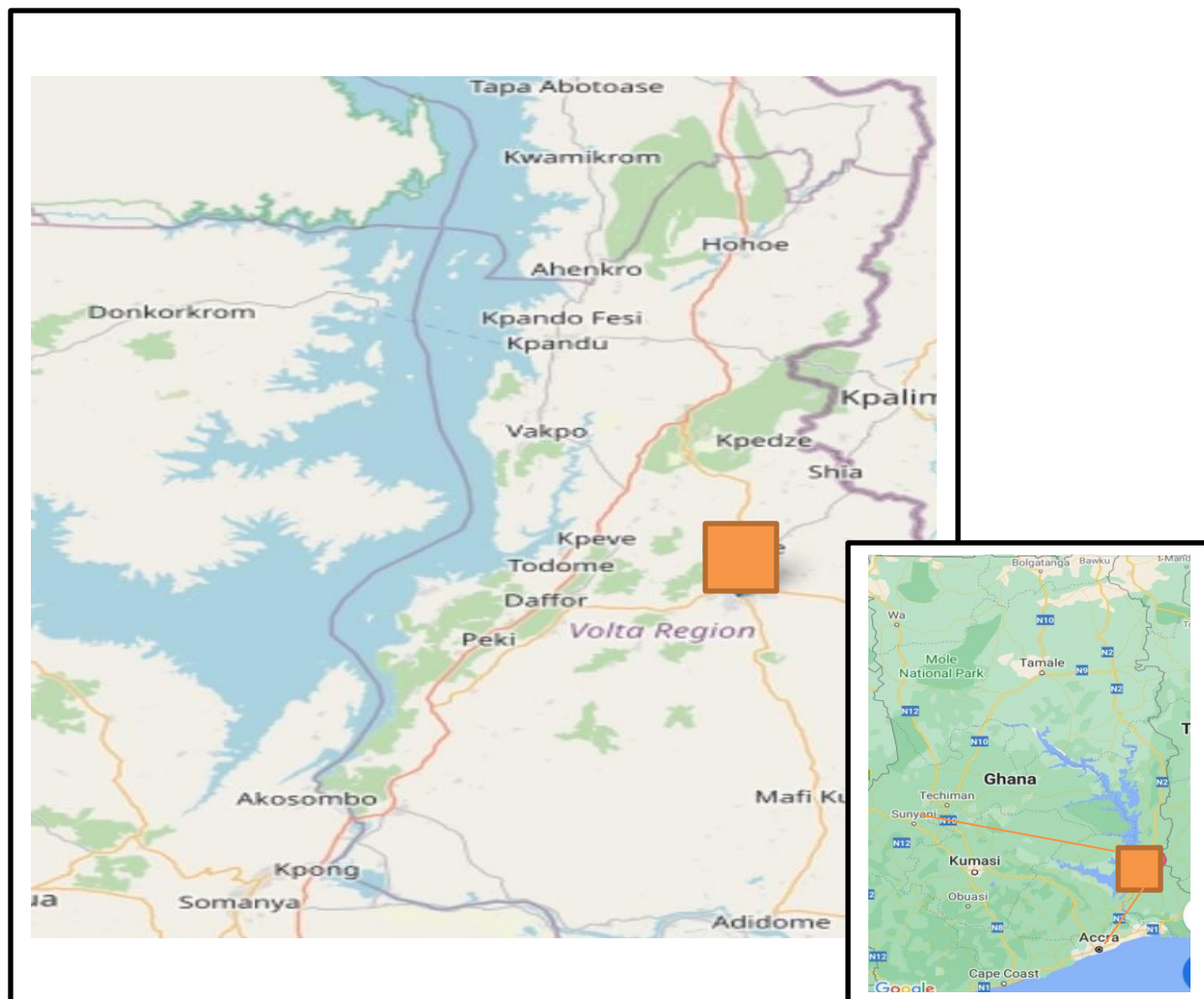
APPENDIX C: Consent Form

Consent Form
The experiences of students with disabilities: A phenomenological study of postsecondary
students in Ghana
Shadrack Agyekum
School of Education
Liberty University

You are invited to participate in a research study about the experiences of students with
disabilities: A phenomenological study of postsecondary students in Ghana. In order to
participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, must be college student, and must have
disability. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. A maximum of 12-15 participants
will participate in the research. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before
deciding whether to take part in this research project.

Shadrack Agyekum, a Doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is
conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of the study is to examine the lived experiences of
postsecondary students with disabilities at ████████████████████ in the eastern belt of Ghana.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in a face-to-face interview. Interviews will last 60 minutes and will be
   digitally audio-recorded.
2. Review the recording transcription of your interview. You will have an opportunity to
   make any corrections and suggestions before data analysis. The review process will take
   approximately 60 minutes.
3. Participate in a recorded focus group discussion of about 5-6 participants regarding these
   same topics and it will be digitally audio-recorded. Focus group discussion will last 60
   minutes.
4. Write a two-page letter to describe your experiences regarding academic, social,
   institutional factors, and personal factors.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you
would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.
However, the results of this study may provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of
postsecondary students with disabilities regarding academic, social, and institutional and
personal factors that impact persistence.

Compensation: As a token of appreciation for participating, each participant will receive a
GHC100 gift card at the end of the study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Participants' names will be coded. Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Data will be stored on an encrypted password protected computer and back-up drive. After three years, all electronic data will be deleted, and paper-based documents will be shredded. Only the researcher and a professional transcriber will have access to these recordings, and the professional transcriber will not be able to link recordings to any identities. I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or any school system. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Shadrack Agyekum. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at +1(804) █████ or shad████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Rollen Fowler, at █████████.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2485, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Name and Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Signature of Investigator   Date

APPENDIX D: Interview Questions

Interview Question

1. What were your educational background experiences prior to college?

2. What are you studying?

3. Why did you choose to study this program?

4. Why did you choose to attend this university?

5. Describe your general experience in classroom. Are you happy to be in the school? Why or why not?

6. What is the relationship between you and teachers during and after class hours? Do you think the school support you to learn? Why or why not?

7. Tell me about tools and facilities that help you to learn in the school? Do you like the facilities? Why or why not?

8. How do you feel being with students without disabilities?

9. How do you feel being with the teachers and administrators?

10. What is your experience with bullying?

11. What is your experience with name calling?

12. What is your experience with discrimination?

13. How do you interact with teachers? What type of interaction do you have with teachers?

14. How do you interact with students without disabilities? What types of interactions do you encounter with students without disabilities?

15. How do you interact with your peers during activities?

16. What assistive technology has been supportive to you?

17. What opportunities has the school given you to learn on your own?

18. How does structures and tools in the school help you to learn?

19. How has the school's support helps you to assess learning? Does the support help you to complete assignment on time?

20. What is the experience of walking to school?

21. What is your experience with administrative support?

22. In your opinion, what institutional factors impact persistence?

23. In your opinion, what personal factors impact persistence? What do you do to personally stay organized, meet your goals, and self-advocate?

24. What else would you like to add about your experiences that has not been covered/addressed by the questions I have asked you?

APPENDIX E: Focus Group Questions

Group discussion questions

1. What attracted you to this institution?

2. What factors impact your academic studies?

3. What are your social experiences in the school?

4. What institutional factor impact persistence?

5. What do you wish your professors and peers understood about living with a disability?

6. What do you think instructors should do to support your studies?

7. What are things you wish your peers understood about you and your social and academic needs at this institution?

APPENDIX F: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 8, 2021

Shadrack Agyekum

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY20-21-184 The experiences of students with disabilities: A phenomenological study of postsecondary students in Ghana

Dear Shadrack Agyekum,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the date of the IRB meeting at which the protocol was approved: February 8, 2021. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make modifications in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update submission to the IRB.
These submissions can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX G: Request for Permission Letter

Shadrack Agyekum
School of Education
Liberty University
1971 University Blvd
Lynchburg, VA 24515
+1(804)-███████
Shad███████████

10/13/2020

████████████
████████████
████████████
████████

Subject: Request for permission to conduct research

Dear ████████████

As a graduate student in the school of education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree. The title of my research project is "The experiences of students with disabilities: A phenomenological study of postsecondary students in Ghana" and the purpose of my research is to examine the lived experience of students with disabilities at ██

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at ██████████████████████. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to shad██████████████. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,
████████████

Shadrack Agyekum.

APPENDIX H: Permission Letter from Research Site

Mr. Shadrack Agyekum
School of Education
Liberty University
1971 University Blvd Lynchburg, VA 24515
 Virginia, USA

Dear Sir,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letter on the subject above dated 13th October, 2020 was received in the Office of the Registrar on 25th January, 2021.

 We write to inform you that approval has been given you to collect data on students with disabilities at ███████████████.

 This approval is given on grounds that, data collected from the University shall be used for academic purposes only.

Please contact ████████████████, the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies at ██ ████████████████████████ for further arrangements.
Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

███████████

SENIOR ASSISTANT REGISTRAR (OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR)
 FOR: REGISTRAR
Cc:
    Vice-Chancellor Ag.
    Pro- Vice-Chancellor
    ███████████

APPENDIX I: Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter

[Date]

[Recipient]
[Title]
[Company]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[Address 3]

Dear Student,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine the lived experience of students with disabilities at ███████████████████████████ of Ghana, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, a college student and have disability, and are willing to participate you will be asked to (1) participate in an interview session where I will ask 24 questions related to academic and social experiences, institutional factors, and personal factors that impact persistence (2) participate in a focus group discussion regarding these same topics (3) submit two-page letter to describe your academic experiences, social experiences, and institutional and personal factors that impact persistence; (4) Review the transcript of your interview and focus group discussion. I will audio record all interviews and focus group discussions for transcription purposes. It should take approximately 2 hours for you to complete the procedures listed. Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

I have attached consent document to this letter. In order to participate, please complete and return the consent document to me at your earliest convenience. Please email me at ████████████████ or give it to me during interview. If you have questions, please contact me at: +(804) ██████ or email me at ███████████████. Thank you for your consideration.

As a token of appreciation for participating, each participant will receive a GHC100 gift card at the end of the study.

Sincerely,

Shadrack Agyekum
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
+███████████████████