



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Understanding Challenges Facing Male Students at a South African University: Enrolment, Retention, Throughput, and Targeted Support Strategies

Munienge Mbodila¹, Kanyisa Mbali², and Musa Malongete³

¹Institutional Research and Planning Department

^{2,3}Student Life and Co-Curricula, Student Affairs Division, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jul 15, 2025	This study investigates the academic challenges confronting male students at a South African university, drawing on institutional data from the Student Tracking Unit and Institutional Research. By analyzing enrollment patterns, retention rates, dropout trends, and throughput outcomes, the study uncovers persistent gender disparities, with male students demonstrating lower enrollment figures, higher attrition rates, and weaker graduation performance relative to their female peers. Employing cohort analyses, trend evaluations, survey responses, and institutional datasets, the research pinpoints critical dropout phases, especially during the initial years of study, and reveals significant disparities across different campuses and faculties. The results underscore acute challenges at the Mthatha and Buffalo City campuses, where male students face the most pronounced struggles in academic achievement and overall well-being. The paper advocates for university-wide co-curricular programs specifically designed to address male students' needs and challenges. Furthermore, it proposes data-informed strategies for tailored interventions and strengthened support mechanisms, in alignment with the institution's Vision 2030 goals. These recommendations seek to dismantle systemic obstacles, boost retention, and advance equitable academic outcomes for male students.
Accepted: Sep 22, 2025	
Keywords	
Student Success	
Male Student	
Student Retention	
Gender Disparities	
*Corresponding Author:	
mmbodila@wsu.ac.za	

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions globally face persistent challenges in student retention, with a substantial proportion of enrolled students failing to complete their programs. Research by Museus and Quaye (2009) reveals that over 50% of students who enter higher education leave their institutions before completing their degrees. This widespread attrition phenomenon resists simple explanation, as Braxton et al. (2004) demonstrate that student departure typically stems from complex, interrelated factors rather than isolated causes. Higher education institutions worldwide increasingly recognise gender equity as fundamental to achieving sustainable development goals, yet persistent disparities continue to affect male students' academic trajectories, particularly in the Global South (UNESCO, 2022). While global attention has focused on women's historical underrepresentation, emerging data reveals a concerning trend of declining male participation across multiple national systems - from the United States where male enrollment has dropped to 40.5% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021) to the United Kingdom which has seen a 12% decline in male STEM enrollment since 2010 (Universities UK, 2021). South Africa mirrors this pattern, with male enrollment stagnating at 42% nationally despite progressive gender policies (DHET, 2021).

At the institution under the case study, institutional data reveal that this imbalance manifests acutely, with male students exhibiting 15% lower throughput rates and higher attrition, particularly in STEM fields (WSU, Student Profile Report, 2022). These disparities stem from intersecting

socioeconomic pressures (Ngwenya & Nkonki, 2020), cultural norms discouraging academic help-seeking among men (Morrell et al., 2021), and systemic barriers in under-resourced schools (Van Broekhuizen et al., 2016). The university's Vision 2030 strategic framework identifies these equity gaps as critical obstacles to its mission of inclusive growth, compounded by South Africa's broader struggles with gender-based violence and patriarchal norms (Ratele, 2019).

This paper employs institutional data, cohort tracking, and student narratives to analyse these challenges, while drawing comparative insights from effective interventions in a one of the South African Universities male mentorship programs (Bhana & Mayeza, 2022) and international models such as the U.S. Minority Male Success Initiative (Harris & Wood, 2020).

LITERATURE CONTEXT AND ENROLLMENT DISPARITIES AND GLOBAL CONTEXT

South Africa's higher education system reflects a growing gender imbalance, with male enrollment declining to just 42% of total university enrollments (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2021). This trend mirrors global patterns observed in the United States, where men now represent only 40.5% of college students and account for 71% of enrollment declines since 2016 (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2022). Similar decreases have been documented in the United Kingdom, particularly in STEM fields where male participation dropped by 12% between 2010-2020 (Universities UK, 2021). While these patterns appear consistent across contexts, South African researchers note that local factors exacerbate the issue, including economic pressures that force male students to prioritise work over studies (Ngwenya & Nkonki, 2020) and systemic educational inequalities that leave many male learners underprepared for university (Van Broekhuizen et al., 2016).

Retention and Throughput Barriers

Recent institutional data reveal that male students in South African universities experience significantly poorer academic outcomes, with throughput rates 15% lower than their female counterparts (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2020). The problem appears most acute in STEM programs, where first-year male attrition rates approach 35% at some institutions (WSU Institutional Research, 2022). Comparative studies show similar challenges in other developing contexts - for instance, Indian engineering programs report 30% male dropout rates (Sharma & Sharma, 2021), while Australian regional universities document 22% higher attrition among male students (Harvey et al., 2020). Qualitative research suggests these patterns stem from multiple intersecting factors, including financial pressures (Bhana & Mayeza, 2022), academic underpreparedness (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2019), and cultural norms that discourage help-seeking behaviors among male students (Morrell et al., 2021).

Institutional and Cultural Challenges

The South African higher education landscape presents unique institutional barriers for male students. Research highlights how Eurocentric curricula and assessment methods disadvantage students from rural backgrounds (Mabasa, 2022), particularly at institutions like Walter Sisulu University's Mthatha campus where 68% of male students originate from under-resourced schools (WSU Student Tracking Report, 2023). These challenges intersect with cultural expectations of masculinity that frame academic struggle as personal failure (Ratele, 2019). Similar dynamics appear in comparative studies - Kenyan universities report male students are 40% less likely to utilize academic support services due to perceived stigma (Odhiambo, 2021), while Brazilian research documents how working-class male students often abandon studies to fulfill breadwinner roles (Medrado et al., 2020).

Effective Interventions and Global Models

Evidence-based interventions demonstrate promise in addressing these challenges. South African initiatives like UKZN's male mentorship program have improved retention by 18% through structured peer support (Bhana & Mayeza, 2022), while NSFAS accommodation allowances reduced male attrition by 12% (DHET, 2022). Internationally, the U.S. Minority Male Success Initiative increased retention by 22.4% through intensive advising and early-alert systems (Center for the Study of Race & Equity in Education, 2021), while Qatar's gender-responsive STEM initiatives cut male engineering dropout by 14% (Qatar University Office of Institutional Research, 2022). These

programs share common methodological approaches, combining quantitative tracking of student progress with qualitative assessment of student experiences (Tinto, 2017).

Institutional Context

Research indicates that male students often face unique academic, social, and psychological challenges that impact their university performance. National and global studies link these disparities to factors including academic preparedness, financial constraints, social integration difficulties, and lower engagement with available support structures. Within the institution under the case study, the Student Tracking and Institutional Research operate two core functions: analysing student and learning programme data and carrying out institutional surveys to generate actionable insights where these data were drawn from. The institution under the case study strategy incorporates these insights within its Directorate of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation and aligns its student success goals with the broader Vision 2030 strategy. Key priorities include leveraging data analytics to drive innovation, enhance student success, and promote institutional research to monitor cohort progression effectively.

Purpose of the Study

Current retention literature provides limited insight into how institutional support programs specifically enhance academic persistence among male students in South African universities. This gap between theoretical understanding and institutional practice necessitates further research to improve retention and graduation outcomes for male students (Tinto, 2005). The present study investigates persistence factors for male students participating in the "Men of Purpose" initiative, a student support program designed to address gender-specific challenges. Focusing on this intervention, the research explores two key questions:

1. What factors did male participants in the "Men of Purpose" program identify as critical to their persistence toward degree completion?
2. How do the program's components contribute to improved retention rates among male students at WSU?

The study's findings aim to provide the institution administrators and student support professionals with evidence-based insights for developing targeted retention strategies. By examining the program's effectiveness through participants lived experiences, this research contributes to both institutional practice and the broader discourse on male student retention in the South African higher education context.

Theoretical Frameworks and Policy Implications

This research draws on multiple theoretical perspectives to interpret findings. Tinto's (1975) integration theory helps explain academic and social isolation among male students, while Connell's (2005) theory of masculinity frames resistance to help-seeking behaviors. Critical race theory (Zamudio et al., 2011) illuminates how institutional structures disadvantage black male students specifically. These frameworks inform policy recommendations, including targeted academic support (CHE, 2020), financial aid reforms (DHET, 2021), and curricular changes to address diverse learning needs (Mabasa, 2022).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

The study employs mixed methods by analysing quantitative cohort data from the university's enrolment and academic progression databases between 2020 and 2023, disaggregated by gender, campus, and faculty. Cohort analysis tracks students who enrolled in the same academic year, enabling the identification of dropout and throughput patterns over time. To complement quantitative analyses, qualitative data were collected through multiple channels. First, a Stop-out Survey was administered to students who had temporarily or permanently discontinued their studies, capturing valuable insights into the multifaceted drivers of attrition and revealing distinct campus-specific challenges. Additionally, the study incorporated rich narrative data from the institution's "Man of Purpose: A Connection Day" initiative. This co-curricular event provided male students with a dedicated platform to articulate their academic and personal challenges, offering

first-hand perspectives on barriers to success. The combination of survey responses and event feedback created a comprehensive qualitative dataset that deepened understanding of male students' experiences.

Participants

This study draws its population from students across all campuses, providing a comprehensive view of institutional trends. A notable example is the Mthatha campus, which exhibited a significant decline in registered male students from 6,152 in 2021 to 5,710 in 2023, a decrease of 442 students over two years. Concurrently, female enrolments increased by 514 students, widening the gender gap to a notable difference of 2,648 students in favor of females. This pattern is not isolated to Mthatha but reflects a broader, university-wide trend of declining male enrolment and growing female representation, underscoring the need for targeted, campus-specific interventions to address gender disparities.

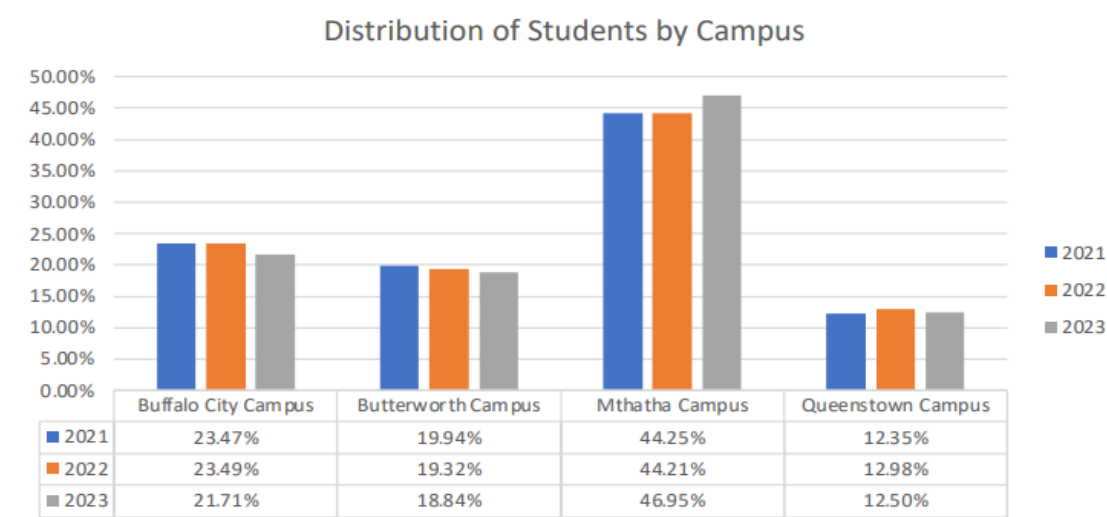


Figure 1: Enrolment Distribution by Campus between 2020 - 2023

An analysis of gender distribution shown in Figure 2, reveals a significant and growing demographic trend, characterized by a consistently higher enrolment of female students compared to males a gap that has widened notably between 2021, 2022 and 2023.

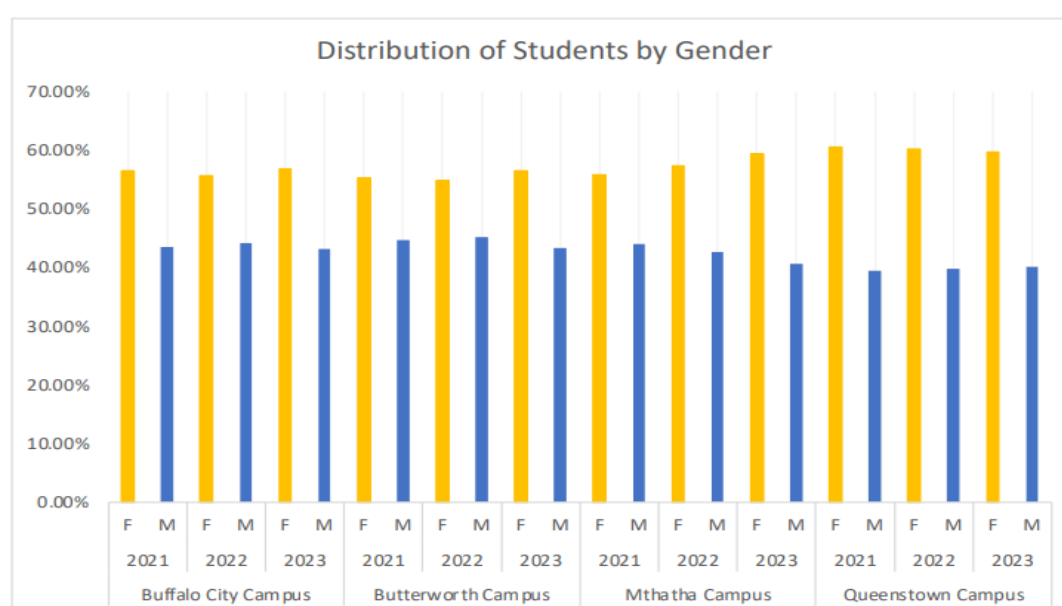


Figure 2: Student Distribution by Gender from 2020-2023

This pattern is especially pronounced at larger campuses such as Mthatha and Buffalo City. The decline in male student numbers underscores a need for targeted interventions to promote gender

balance, including tailored support programs and outreach initiatives aimed at improving male enrollment and retention.

RESULTS

Enrolment Trends

A longitudinal analysis of gender distribution reveals significant and ongoing shifts in student demographics. Between 2021 to 2023, the Mthatha campus alone saw a notable decline in male student enrolment, dropping from 6,152 to 5,710, while female enrolments increased from 7,845 to 8,359. This resulted in a gender gap of 2,648 students in favour of females; a trend reflected across other campuses. One key driver appears to be the consistently higher matriculation performance of female students, which increases their eligibility for university admission. The illustration of this trend is shown in Figure 3 below.

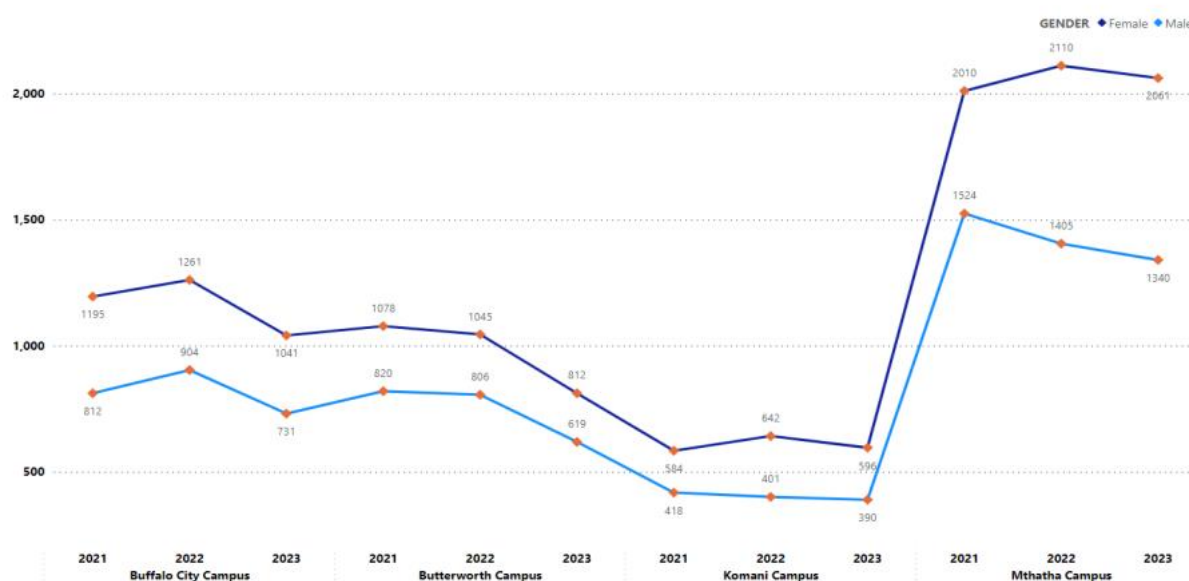


Figure 3: Enrolment Trends Analysis per Campus

These evolving dynamics underscore the importance of evidence-based strategies to address gender disparities. While growing female enrolment reflects positive strides toward equity, the decline in male participation signals a need for targeted interventions. By understanding these trends, WSU can develop inclusive policies that support retention and success for all students, reinforcing its commitment to a balanced and representative academic community.

Dropout, Retention, and Throughput Analysis

According to the institutional data, the dropout rate for male students in the cohort entering in 2020 was 26.2%, nearly double that of female students (14.1%) as shown in Figure 4.

– Analysis of the 2020 Cohort

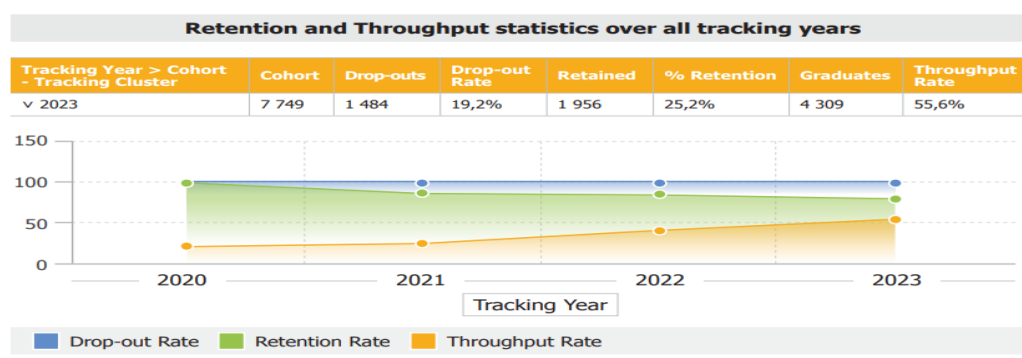


Figure 4: Analysis of the 2020 Cohort

The Analysis of the 2020 Cohort, this is a group of students who registered in the same year and likely to finish their qualification in the same year. Dropouts were most frequent in the first and second years of study. Figure 4 also shows the throughput rate students completing their degrees within expected timeframes was substantially lower for males (44.7%) compared to females (63.4%). Retention data showed males were less likely than females to progress year to year, especially in STEM faculties like Engineering and Information Technology, which recorded high dropout rates, possibly due to workload and academic pressure. Figure 5, give a summary of this cohort Gender-Based Analysis.

– Gender-Based Analysis of the 2020 Cohort

Retention and Throughput statistics in the last tracking year by gender							
Gender	Cohort	Drop-outs	Drop-out Rate	Retained	% Retention	Graduates	Throughput Rate
♀ Female	4 508	634	14,1%	1 014	22,5%	2 860	63,4%
♂ Male	3 241	850	26,2%	942	29,1%	1 449	44,7%
TOTAL	7 749	1 484	19.2%	1 956	25,2%	4 309	55,6%

Figure 5: Gender-Based Analysis for the 2020 Cohort

A critical component of our retention strategy involved understanding the drivers behind student attrition. There was a need to also check from the Stop-out Survey insights, which revealed that a significant majority 82,33 of respondents who had paused or quit their studies were undergraduates in their first three years, and amongst that group 57,24% of them males see Figure 6. This finding powerfully confirms the heightened vulnerability during early academic phases and provides a clear mandate for targeted interventions.

Campus of Affiliation		
Buffalo City Campus	93	26,19%
Butterworth Campus	60	18,48%
Komani Campus	41	11,82%
Mthatha Campus	155	42,76%
(Blank)	4	0,75%
GRAND TOTAL	353	100,00%
Gender		
Female	161	42,49%
Male	190	57,24%
Prefer not to say	1	0,18%
(Blank)	1	0,08%
GRAND TOTAL	353	100,00%
Home Province		
Eastern Cape	258	72,94%
Free State	8	2,05%
Gauteng	15	3,42%
International Student	2	0,90%
KwaZulu-Natal	45	12,95%
Limpopo	8	2,85%
Mpumalanga	3	0,88%
Northwest	3	0,75%
Western Cape	9	2,92%
(Blank)	2	0,34%
GRAND TOTAL	353	100,00%

Figure 6: Stop-out Survey Insights

The highest stop-out incidences occurred at the Mthatha Campus (42.76%) and Buffalo City Campus (26.19%), suggesting localised challenges related to campus infrastructure, program difficulty, or social factors. Figure 7, indicated that respondents from Engineering and IT faculties accounted for the largest stop-out percentages (28.21%), highlighting the need for discipline-specific support.

Qualification Level		
Postgraduate	53	16,86%
Undergraduate	298	83,02%
(Blank)	2	0,12%
GRAND TOTAL	353	100,00%
Year of Study		
First year	115	30,79%
Second year	90	25,63%
Third year	86	25,91%
Fourth year	27	7,67%
Other	28	8,32%
(Blank)	7	1,68%
GRAND TOTAL	353	100,00%
Faculty of Affiliation		
Faculty of Economic and Financial Sciences	60	17,54%
Faculty of Education	40	10,52%
Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology	91	28,21%
Faculty of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences	32	9,04%
Faculty of Management and Public Administration Sciences	53	14,12%
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences	20	4,56%
Faculty of Natural Sciences	50	13,63%
(Blank)	7	2,37%
GRAND TOTAL	353	100,00%

Figure 7: Stop-out Survey Insights by level per Faculty

Qualitative Data from the Men of purpose intervention

The "Men of Purpose" intervention is a targeted, holistic program designed to address the specific academic, social, and psychological challenges faced by male students at the university. Based on the qualitative data, it is not just an academic support program, but a character-building and mentorship initiative aimed at:

- **Reframing Masculinity:** Shifting male identity from one of disengagement, silence, and destructive habits to one defined by purpose, leadership, and mutual accountability.
- **Creating a Supportive Brotherhood:** Building a positive peer community that replaces negative influences with a network of support, mentorship, and positive peer pressure.
- **Proactive Engagement:** Actively drawing male students into the university's support ecosystem through tailored, relatable, and accessible channels.

Its core purpose is to improve retention, graduation, and overall well-being by equipping male students with the tools, mindset, and support system to thrive in university and beyond.

From the men of purpose event, here are feedback here is a strategic plan to transform the identified challenges into actionable solutions within the "Men of Purpose" framework:

Challenge 1: Poor Class Attendance & Underutilization of Support Services

A central finding that emerged from the dialogue with participants was the self-reported confirmation that male students frequently neglect regular class attendance and underutilize the

very support services designed for their academic success. This admitted pattern of disengagement and resource aversion highlights a critical gap between institutional offerings and student behavior, establishing a clear imperative for targeted interventions that not only make support more accessible but also actively work to dismantle the stigma associated with seeking it.

Challenge 2: Negative Peer Influence & Silence on Wrongdoing

A significant challenge identified was the adverse impact of peer influence, particularly from older students, on the academic engagement of their younger counterparts. This dynamic often manifests in the normalization of skipping classes, prioritizing social activities over studies, and dismissing the value of academic support systems. Instead of fostering a culture of mentorship and positive academic modeling, these interactions can inadvertently perpetuate cycles of disengagement, undermining the academic progress and integration of new students into the university environment.

Challenge 3: Neglect of Psychosocial Well-Being & Not Seeking Help

The findings underscored that the psychological and social well-being of students represents a critical yet under-prioritized dimension of the student experience, necessitating a more focused and proactive institutional response. It became evident that existing support structures are either insufficient or inadequately promoted, leading to gaps in mental health care, a lack of belonging, and unmet social integration needs. Consequently, there is a compelling imperative for the university to elevate well-being from a peripheral concern to a central strategic priority, integrating robust psychosocial support into the very fabric of academic life to foster a more resilient, inclusive, and successful student community.

Challenge 4: Lack of Mentorship & Guidance

A critical barrier to student success identified in the research is the persistent reluctance among male students to seek out and utilize the psychosocial support services offered by the institution. This hesitancy to access vital resources—ranging from counseling and mental health care to academic advising and peer support groups—leaves them without the necessary tools to effectively navigate the significant pressures of university life. This underscores an urgent need to re-evaluate and redesign outreach and support mechanisms to make them more accessible, destigmatized, and strategically aligned with the specific needs and communication styles of male students.

Challenge 5: Alcohol Abuse & Engagement in Fruitless Activities

A significant gap was identified in the availability and uptake of mentorship, with male students demonstrating a marked reluctance to seek out academic and personal guidance. This absence of structured, supportive relationships with leaders or role models leaves them without critical navigational tools for their university journey, impacting both their academic performance and personal development. This highlights a pressing need for the institution to proactively establish and promote formalized, relatable mentorship programs that actively connect students with faculty, professionals, and peer leaders who can provide the necessary guidance and support.

Challenge 6: Hostile, Competitive Environments & Interpersonal Conflicts

The research indicates a troubling pattern of disengagement; wherein male students often abstain from participating in structured extracurricular programs. In the absence of these constructive outlets for social connection, personal development, and entertainment, many resort to alcohol consumption as a primary form of leisure. This frequently escalates beyond recreational use into problematic alcohol abuse, which subsequently undermines academic performance, compromises mental and physical health, and fosters a campus culture that normalizes harmful coping mechanisms. This clear correlation between a lack of engagement in positive activities and the rise of detrimental behaviors underscores an urgent need for the institution to develop and aggressively promote appealing, male-inclusive co-curricular programs that provide alternative forms of community, purpose, and recreation.

Challenge 7: Engaging in Activities with Little Long-Term Value

A key insight from the data is that male students frequently allocate their time to activities offering immediate gratification but little long-term value, such as excessive socializing or unstructured

leisure. This pattern of engagement ultimately serves as a significant distraction, diverting focus and energy away from essential academic pursuits, valuable co-curricular opportunities, and crucial long-term career preparation. This misalignment of priorities not only jeopardizes their academic performance but also hinders the development of the skills and experiences necessary for post-graduation success. Addressing this issue requires proactive initiatives that demonstrate the tangible benefits of strategic time management and provide accessible avenues for involvement in meaningful, value-added activities.

DISCUSSION

The evidence suggests that male students at the institution under case study are disproportionately affected by academic, cultural, and social challenges that hinder their progress through university. Early dropout rates and low throughput underscore the cumulative impact of these challenges, which likely relate to preparedness, support engagement, upbringing, cultural masculinity, and external life pressures. According to student feedback during the engagement, males tend to adjust to the university later than females. Students have also raised the issue of responsibility, which most male students do not take when it comes to their academic and personal lives. The identified challenges reveal a complex interplay between institutional structures, peer culture, and individual behavior, collectively contributing to disengagement and underperformance among male students. These are not isolated issues but rather interconnected factors that create a self-reinforcing cycle of academic and personal stagnation. Feedback from the “Man of Purpose” initiative, male students reported that they often avoid activities that could support their academic and personal growth while readily engaging in unhelpful behaviours. This results in low use of co-curricular activities and available student support services. A recurrent theme was keeping quiet about wrongdoing, with students admitting they frequently fail to confront peers’ bad behaviour in residences and public areas, which feeds into toxic cultures. They also described environments shaped by competition, judgment, and hostility rather than mutual support, highlighting interpersonal conflict as a key challenge. In addition, they acknowledged that men often pursue activities with little long-term value, which takes attention away from academic commitments, structured programs, and career preparation. Campuses with larger student populations and more competitive or demanding academic programs face the most acute issues. Targeted student-centred intervention strategies are necessary to improve male student outcomes. These may include transition programs, enhanced counselling and academic advising tailored to male students’ needs, proactively engaging males with support services, and developing peer mentoring programs to counter adverse social and cultural influences. Furthermore, program-specific academic support, especially in STEM faculties, could mitigate dropout risks. The institution’s alignment with its Vision 2030 and Academic Strategic Plan emphasises utilising institutional research and analytics to guide these efforts, ensuring interventions are data-driven, target specific, and regularly evaluated for effectiveness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the underperformance and attrition of male students at higher education is a complex but achievable goal. The study’s findings confirm the necessity of targeted, gender-responsive support structures alongside continuous institutional research to monitor progress.

Key recommendations include:

- Implementing early identification and targeted support for at-risk male students, particularly in their first two years.
- Create a male-focused transition program to introduce the students to varsity life.
- Enhancing awareness and utilisation of counselling and academic advising services.
- Developing campus-specific interventions, prioritising Mthatha and Buffalo City.
- Tailoring academic support to high-risk faculties such as Engineering and IT.
- Employing cohort tracking analytics as a vital tool for ongoing monitoring and intervention effectiveness.
- Provide a student voice male-centred platform for education, expression, inputs, and dialogue.
- Integrate workshops on emotional intelligence, non-violent communication, and conflict mediation into the program curriculum.

- Have mentors work with students to create visual roadmaps that connect their daily habits (e.g., attending class, joining a club) to their long-term academic and career aspirations.
- Bring back successful male alumni who can credibly share how they navigated similar challenges and how their choices impacted their careers.

Authors' Contributions

MM, MKM, and KM jointly conceived the study. MM designed the methodology. MM, MKM, and KM conducted the literature review. MKM, and KM, both coordinated student engagement, gathered qualitative data from the "Man of Purpose" initiative, and worked collaboratively on data interpretation. All authors contributed to drafting the manuscript, developing the discussion and recommendations, and approved the final version of the paper.

All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all male students that participated in the Man of Purpose event, who shared their ideas and concerns. Further the authors, would like to acknowledge the support given.

REFERENCES

1. Museus, S. D., & Quaye, S. J. (2009). Toward an intercultural perspective of racial and ethnic minority college student persistence. *The Review of Higher Education*, 33, 67-94. Retrieved from http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/review_of_higher_education/v033/33.1.museus.pdf
2. Braxton, J. M., Hirschy, A. S., & McClendon, S. A. (2004). Understanding and reducing college student departure. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report* (Vol. 30, No. 3). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
3. Bhana, D., & Mayeza, E. (2022). Gender and education in South Africa: Masculinities and marginalization. *HSRC Press*.
4. Council on Higher Education. (2020). Vital stats: Public higher education 2018. *CHE*.
5. Department of Higher Education and Training. (2021). Statistics on post-school education and training. *Government Printer*.
6. Mabasa, L. (2022). Gender parity in South African universities. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 36(2), 45-67.
7. Morrell, R., Jewkes, R., & Lindegger, G. (2021). Hegemonic masculinity/masculinities in South Africa. *Men and Masculinities*, 15(1), 11-30.
8. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2022). Current term enrollment estimates. *NSCRC*.
9. Ncontsa, V., & Shumba, A. (2019). The nature and causes of learner attrition in South African universities. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(1), 112-130.
10. Tinto, V. (2017). Through the eyes of students. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 19(3), 254-269.
11. Van Broekhuizen, H., Van der Berg, S., & Hofmeyr, H. (2016). Higher education access and outcomes for the 2008 national matric cohort. *Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers*.
12. WSU Institutional Research. (2022). Student progression and throughput report. *Unpublished institutional data*.
13. Adams, T., & Lee, R. (2021). Barriers to academic success: Understanding early university attrition. *Journal of Higher Education Research*, 45(3), 214-230.
14. Harris, M., & Brooks, D. (2017). Male students and help-seeking in higher education: Breaking the stigma. *Education and Mental Health*, 12(2), 89-104.
15. Jones, P. (2022). Peer support networks and male student retention: A critical review. *Journal of Student Affairs*, 38(1), 15-29.
16. Mbodila, M. (2025). Man of Purpose: A connection day report. Student Tracking Unit, Walter Sisulu University (*Presentation*)
17. Smith, J., & Johnson, K. (2020). Gender disparities in higher education: Enrollment, retention, and graduation. *International Journal of Educational Equity*, 10(1), 45-59.
18. Thomas, L. (2019). Understanding student dropout in STEM disciplines. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 73(4), 317-332.
19. Williams, S. (2018). Campus context and student success: Identifying institutional factors affecting retention. *Journal of College Student Development*, 59(5), 567-584.