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**Realising Value: Study-Related  
Support-Seeking Experiences**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
**Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing**  
at  
**The University of Waikato**  
by  
**Sivakumari Supramaniam**



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## **Abstract**

The idea of ‘exchange’ in Service Dominant Logic’s (S-D logic) Foundational Premise (FP) 1 (service is ‘exchanged’ for service) has retained the residual transactional concept from Goods Dominant Logic (G-D logic) as the basis of understanding of service in S-D logic. This has limited the processual understanding in S-D logic; in particular, the need to understand value as a process rather than an output. This study meets that need in presenting a holistic understanding of the individual’s valuing process for S-D logic. An interdisciplinary search of literature beyond the discipline of marketing on the term ‘valuing’ was conducted in the fields of psychology, education, and systems thinking.

This study investigates how students with disabilities realise value through study-related support-seeking experiences. Sixteen students with disabilities, who were enrolled in higher educational services in New Zealand, participated in this study. A phenomenographic approach was applied to understand the variations in ways that students with disabilities experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon. In this study, students with disabilities were selected as participants as they have higher tendencies in seeking support from others in their everyday life.

In this phenomenographic study, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted. Three broad research questions guided the exploration of how students with disabilities experience the support-seeking phenomenon. Those questions were: How do students with disabilities recognise the need for support-seeking?

What activities do students with disabilities engage in when they are support-seeking? How do students with disabilities seek support? Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for interpretation. The variations and similarities in meanings were abstracted as categories of description.

Four categories of description of Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting represented participants' conceptions of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon. Each category of description outlined both the variations in meanings and the structural aspects of experiencing the phenomenon. The four categories of description were logically displayed in an outcome space - a hermeneutical spiral - to portray the different ways of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon. The hermeneutic spiral provides a holistic understanding of the valuing process for S-D logic's view of service as a process. Hence, value is not a perceptual state at an endpoint of time, rather it is a here-and-now snapshot 'taking stock' in a dynamic process.

The second contribution this study makes to S-D logic relates to the processual understanding of value. In the process of valuing, the participants were experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon in relation to their mental acts, or structural awareness, at a moment of time. Thus, participants appreciate, and act upon their thoughts. This builds on the S-D logic's Foundational Premise (FP) 10 that the beneficiary always uniquely and phenomenologically determines value. Specifically, the second contribution of this research relates directly to the insights revealed by the phenomenography method into variations in participants' experiences of support-seeking. The research provides sound empirical support for valuing as a dynamic process,

which extends the FP10 notion of value as a static valuation at a particular point in time.

Along with the S-D logic contributions, this study contributes phenomenography as a research method that is little known in marketing. This method has the potential to understand the variations of individuals' realities as experienced. The practical implication of this study adds to knowledge of support-seeking behaviour as an avenue for businesses to engage in people's appreciation and be of service to them.

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Supramaniam (1946-1985).

# Table of Contents

<b>Title.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Setting the Scene.....	1
1.1 Research Problem .....	3
1.2 Research Contributions.....	4
1.3 Research Questions.....	6
1.4 Methodology.....	8
1.5 Research Context.....	9
1.6 Thesis Structure .....	11
1.7 My Role as a Researcher .....	12
1.8 Terminologies .....	13
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.0 Introduction.....	14
2.1 Conception of Value .....	15
2.2 Service-Dominant Logic and Value .....	17
2.2.1 Service-Dominant Logic’s Lexicon.....	20
2.3 Reciprocity.....	23
2.3.1 Reciprocity as an Exchange.....	25
2.3.2 Reciprocity as Regulated Action .....	27
2.4 Service-Dominant Logic and Reciprocity .....	30
2.5 Valuing .....	38

2.5.1	Rogers: Organism Valuing Process .....	39
2.5.2	Dewey: Experience as a base of Knowing.....	41
2.5.3	Vickers: Appreciative System .....	44
2.6	Integrative Valuing Model.....	48
2.7	Support-Seeking Behaviour.....	51
2.7.1	Compatibilities of Appreciation.....	52
2.7.2	Support: Collaborative Appreciation .....	54
2.8	Conclusion .....	56
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology and Method .....</b>		<b>58</b>
3.0	Introduction.....	58
3.1	Ontological Position .....	59
3.2	Epistemological Position .....	61
3.3	Methodology.....	62
3.3.1	An Interpretive Approach .....	63
3.3.2	Phenomenography .....	65
3.4	Research Context.....	69
3.5	Applying a Phenomenographic Approach.....	70
3.5.1	Participants: Students with Disabilities .....	71
3.5.2	Interview as a Method.....	73
3.6	Interview Stages.....	79
3.6.1	Preliminary Stage.....	81
3.6.2	Main Interviews .....	85
3.7	Process of Finding Categories of Description .....	88
	Familiarization.....	92
	Compilation .....	92
	Condensation .....	93
	Grouping .....	93

Comparison.....	94
Naming .....	94
Contrastive Comparison .....	94
3.8 Outcome space.....	96
3.9 Credibility of the Study .....	97
3.10 Limitations.....	98
3.11 Conclusion.....	100
<b>Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation .....</b>	<b>101</b>
4.0 Introduction.....	101
4.1 Categories of Description (COD).....	102
4.1.1 Category of Description 1: Knowing.....	109
Sub-category 1: Sensing .....	110
Sub-category 2: Feeling.....	113
Sub-category 3: Recalling.....	115
Sub-category 4: Realising.....	117
Internal Horizon of Knowing.....	119
External Horizon of Knowing .....	121
4.1.2 Category of Description 2: Understanding.....	123
Sub-category 1: Recognising.....	124
Sub-category 2: Preferring.....	127
Sub-category 3: Comparing.....	128
Internal Horizon of Understanding.....	133
External Horizon of Understanding.....	136
4.1.3 Category of Description 3: Judging.....	139
Sub-category 1: Anticipating.....	140
Sub-category 2: Relying .....	141
Sub-category 3: Concluding .....	143

Internal horizon of Judging.....	147
External horizon of Judging.....	150
4.1.4 Category of Description 4: Acting.....	152
Sub-category 1: Striving.....	153
Sub-category 2: Regulating.....	155
Sub-category 3: Learning.....	160
Internal Horizon of Acting.....	165
External Horizon of Acting.....	168
4.2 Outcome space.....	170
4.2.1 Hermeneutical Spiral of Understanding Support-Seeking Phenomenon.....	174
4.3 Conclusion.....	176
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications .....</b>	<b>178</b>
5.0 Introduction.....	178
5.1 S-D Logic Contributions.....	180
5.2 Methodological Contribution.....	184
5.3 Managerial Implications.....	185
5.4 Limitations and Further Research.....	186
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Appendix C .....</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Appendix D .....</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Attached Disc.....</b>	<b>205</b>

# List of Tables & Figures

## List of Tables

Table 1: Common Terminologies .....	13
Table 2: Contrasting G-D logic and S-D Logic. ....	31
Table 3: Service Dominant Logic Foundational Premises.....	36
Table 4: Analytic Steps of Abstracting Categories of Description .....	91
Table 5: Summary of Categories of Description .....	108
Table 6: The Foundational Premises of the Service-Dominant Logic restated in processual terms .....	183

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Thesis Structure .....	12
Figure 2: Integrative Valuing Model.....	48
Figure 3: The Unit of a Science of Experience, a way of experiencing something (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 88).....	105
Figure 4: The Hermeneutical Spiral of Understanding Support-Seeking Phenomenon .....	176

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.0 Setting the Scene

Exchange has been the core concept in marketing for decades (Bagozzi, 1975; Houston & Gassenheimer, 1987). The basic understanding is that it involves two or more parties who have something that is of value to the other party for an exchange (Kotler, 1988). The recent development in marketing has evolved from transactional to relational exchange (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995), bringing to the fore the importance of understanding social exchange in marketing (Bagozzi, 1995).

Social exchange is drawn from two theorists' works, Homans (1958) and Blau (1964), who focused on the interactivity aspect in an exchange (Bagozzi, 1975). Blau (1964, p. 6) conceives social exchange as "limited to actions that are contingent on rewarding actions from others and that ceases when these expected reactions are not forthcoming". In contrast, Homans (1958) claims that all aspects of reward and cost are essential in an exchange and not confined to those expected or received during the interaction. Both theorists contend that the reward and cost comprise utilitarian (desired/undesirable product) and symbolic exchanges (psychological and social gains /punishments) (Bagozzi, 1975). The symbolic aspects of psychological and social effects in terms of experience, feelings, and meanings of the parties in the exchange determine the underlying occurrence of the exchange behaviour (Bagozzi, 1975). Here, the nature of reciprocity as interdependent exchanges applies as one party's action is contingent on another

party's response (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Interdependence involves mutual and complementary arrangements and defines the basic characteristic of social exchange (Molm, 1994).

In Service Dominant Logic (S-D logic), the main Foundational Premise (FP) 1 focuses on interdependent features of mutual and complementary arrangements that form the basis of understanding of service - service is exchanged for service. The service exchange is driven by reciprocal acts of applying knowledge and skills for the benefit of another party (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Thus, service is understood as a process of applying knowledge and skills to benefit another (Vargo et al., 2010). Each party is expected to hold to reciprocal interdependence and help one another (Ballantyne et al., 2011). This brings social exchange to the centre of understanding of service in S-D logic (Varey, 2014).

It is important to understand the fundamental aspect in social exchange is that it results in "unspecified obligations" (Blau, 1964, p. 63). Social exchange creates future obligations but does not necessitate an assurance in return of the obligations as it engenders feelings and trust to discharge the obligations (Blau, 1964). This important aspect of felt meanings in reciprocal actions is ignored in S-D logic. The output (the inter-exchange of applying resources for the benefit of another) is emphasized more than the actions and meanings derived from applying the resources for and with the other party. The interactive aspects of applying resources that is essential to the understanding of service as a process is overlooked. This has resulted in a partial understanding of service as relational in S-D logic.

## 1.1 Research Problem

The central aim of my study is to understand ‘value’ as a process rather than as an output or snapshot evaluation. Thus, my hope is that this study will strengthen the understanding of service as process in S-D logic. Even though S-D logic adopts the process and not the output view, it has not completely moved away from the Goods Dominant Logic (G-D logic) understanding (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Akaka, 2009; Vargo et al., 2010). The idea of ‘exchange’ in S-D logic’s Foundational Premise (FP) 1 (service is exchanged for service) has retained the residual transactional concept from G-D logic as the basis of understanding of service in S-D logic. This has limited the processual understanding in S-D logic and has created the need to understand value as a process rather than an output. This study is underpinned by Vargo’s (2009) view that value is not a perceptual state at an endpoint of time, but keeps emerging and unfolding over time.

To achieve the aim, I conducted a phenomenographic study to understand how students with disabilities were experiencing and realising value in the context of support-seeking. From the perspective of human agency, Bandura (2006) views support-seeking as a common phenomenon for individuals to realise value. According to Bandura (2006), individuals are active agents who are capable of organizing and regulating actions to achieve their desired outcomes. However, individuals do not have all the resources, time, and energy to independently control what happens in their everyday life. Here, individuals exercise proxy agency in seeking support from others who have the resources, knowledge, and ability to realise value. In this study, students with disabilities were selected as

participants as they have higher tendencies in seeking support from others in their everyday life. This study provides an holistic understanding of the variations in ways students with disabilities experience and understand the support-seeking phenomenon.

## **1.2 Research Contributions**

This study makes significant contributions to S-D logic, methodological approaches, and has managerial implications.

### Theoretical contribution

For S-D logic, this study makes two contributions. First, the study builds on the S-D logic's Foundational Premise (FP) 10, value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. To date, there are fewer studies have been conducted to characterize the nature of phenomenologically determined value (Helkkula & Kelleher, 2010; Helkkula et al., 2012; Gronroos & Voima, 2013). The study characterizes how participants experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon in relation to their structural awareness at a point of time to realise value. Instead of phenomenology, a phenomenographic approach was adopted to understand the variations in the ways participants have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon. Here, realisation of value of support-seeking can be understood phenomenologically. Participants' ways of experiencing and understanding the

realised phenomenon substantiates S-D logic's view of value as idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual, and meaning-laden.

Second, the study offers a hermeneutic spiral of valuing as an explicit support for the S-D logic's view of service as a process. The spiral is a progression from one cycle of understanding to the next cycle. In this context, valuing is not a linear process but an iterative way of going back and forth on based on previous understanding (Gronroos, 2000; Gummesson, 2000; Helkkula et al., 2012; Gronroos & Voima, 2013). The spiral supports the view that value is not a perceptual state at an endpoint of time, but it is a here-and-now snapshot 'taking stock' in a dynamic process (Vargo, 2009).

#### Methodological Contribution

Along with the theoretical contribution, the study utilises a research method that is not commonly explored in Marketing. This is in line with Gronroos and Voima's (2013, p. 147) suggestion that research adopting service logic "may require methods that generally have been applied less frequently in marketing research though (e.g. ethnography)". Phenomenography was initially developed within the education discipline but has gained popularity in health services research. The distinctive aspect of phenomenography is that it describes the variations of participants' realities as experienced, and thus enabled understanding of participants' perspective of the support-seeking phenomenon within their individual contexts.

## Managerial Implications

In terms of managerial implications, this study contributes to knowledge relating to the four aspects of the valuing process (Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting) that provide managers with a better understanding of customers' ways of experiencing the phenomenon of support-seeking to realise value. This knowledge has the potential to enable managers to shift to a higher degree of compatibility in engaging with customers from separate appreciations (I and You) to shared appreciation of togetherness (We), according to Vickers (1983) and FitzPatrick, Davey, and Varey, (2014). This is the context in which the manager gets the opportunity to connect with the customer's appreciation and anticipate their needs, negotiate, respond, and work together in the customer's best interest for a solution (Gronroos & Ravald, 2011).

Indeed, many international companies are now working with their virtual communities purposefully to foster support and enhance genuine, meaningful relationships with their customers (Arnone, Colot, Croquet, Geerts, & Pozniak, 2010). Thus, shared appreciation enables and supports value creation to become a long-term collaborative effort between parties.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The aim of this study is to understand how students with disabilities experience and understand support-seeking to realise value. Two important questions, 'how' and 'what' aspects were posed to understand participants' ways of experiencing

and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. In this study, three main research questions were identified to guide the investigation and under each research question, sub-questions were developed as guide for interviews, as shown below.

Research Question 1: How do students with disabilities recognise the need for support-seeking?

Sub-question: What was the situation?

Research Question 2: What activities do students with disabilities engage in when they are support-seeking?

Sub-questions: What happened in that situation? How was the situation handled?

Research Question 3: How do students with disabilities seek support?

Sub-question: What was the outcome of the situation?

In the finding and interpretation stage, the four sub-questions: 1) what was the situation? 2) what happened in that situation? 3) how was the situation handled? and 4) what was the outcome of the situation?, acted as guidelines for extracting participants' expression of realities from their transcripts.

## **1.4 Methodology**

I employed an interpretive approach to understand the subjective experiences of students with disabilities and their conceptions of the support-seeking phenomenon. Phenomenography was considered as the most appropriate approach; it rests firmly on a non-dualist ontology and from the epistemological standpoint of understanding people's perspective of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. It is important to note that I considered phenomenography as the most appropriate approach as it enables me to represent the variations in participants' realities as experienced and is not confined to a degree of commonality of their support-seeking experiences of a single essence of support-seeking experience as in phenomenology.

I regard phenomenography as the best approach for my study as it provides a holistic understanding of human experiences, despite the fact that the nature of the support-seeking phenomenon was experienced and perceived individually by the participants. Phenomenography sets out to provide direct descriptions of the individuals' realities as experienced and understood (Marton, 1981) rather than provide the researcher's perspective of what s/he regards as 'the reality' experienced by others (Richardson, 1999). In this regard, phenomenology is closely aligned with the work of the marketing theorists (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989; Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989; Arnould and Price, 1993) who highlighted the lived experiences of consumers but explained the phenomenon from the researcher's perspective. This makes phenomenography distinctive (from phenomenology) because it aims to describe the phenomenon

from the participants' perspectives. These considerations are elaborated in detail in Chapter 3.

## **1.5 Research Context**

The support-seeking phenomenon can be experienced and perceived differently by different people in different circumstances. Therefore, I have conducted my study with a specific group of individuals within a particular context. I focused on understanding students' with disabilities experiences in seeking-support within their study-related context as they have higher tendencies in seeking support from others in their everyday life. The following section elaborates on three important aspects that framed my study context: higher education services, students with disabilities, and definition of 'support'.

### Higher education services

According to Statistics New Zealand (2006), 17 percent of the New Zealand population, approximately 660,300 people reported a disability. For disabled people having a quality education can be a determinant in improving their life outcomes. The New Zealand government has introduced, Kia Orite, Achieving Equity, a code of practice for an inclusive education environment for students with impairments. This code of practice helps the education providers to assist students with disabilities with equitable opportunities to achieve their potential and participate in all aspects of learning within their institutions. The education providers have established a specific unit, Disability Support Service, within their

organizations to assist students with disabilities in all aspects of their learning process.

The latest official education statistics of 2006 reported that an estimated 37,800 disabled adults or 7 percent of all disabled adults were enrolled in some form of formal education or training. The secondary schools accounted for 21 percent; polytechnics, 31 percent; universities, 23 percent and private training institutions, 9 percent respectively. My study was conducted at a university and a polytechnic in New Zealand. These institutions were selected on the basis of higher number of enrolments by disabled adults in formal education as reported in the statistics.

#### Students with Disabilities

I have adopted New Zealand Disability Strategy's (2001) definition of 'disability' as not something a person possesses but instead as a person's limitations in functional abilities in interacting with his or her environment. In my study, students with disabilities were considered as students who were not able to take part on equal terms with other students due to their temporary or permanent impairment. Students with disabilities were selected as participants for this study as they have higher tendencies to seek support to solve their problems. These students regard education as a path that could provide them with the necessary skills for a quality life as adults or to gain employments (MacArthur & Kelly, 2004). As such, these students were no longer passive but active in constructing their problems to seek support (Goode, 2007). Students with disabilities were referred to as participants throughout this study.

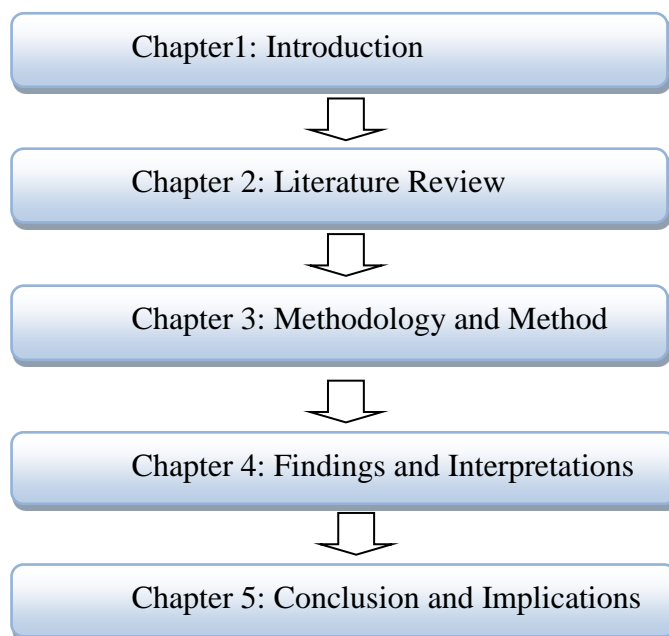
## Definition of ‘Support’

In my study, the term ‘support’ refers to the student’s perspective and not the education provider’s view of standard support that fits all. At present, the university and the polytechnic provide a range of support services such as test support, assistive technology, note-takers, sign language interpreters, and personal assistants. These standard supports are readily available for students with disabilities upon request. I am shifting away from the general understanding of standard support to terms defined as ‘support’ by students with disabilities in their environment.

## **1.6 Thesis Structure**

This study comprises 5 chapters. Chapter 1 sets the background of the study introducing the research problem, the study context, and a brief introduction on how the study was conducted. Chapter 2 provides a detailed account of the literature reviewed on the term ‘valuing’ from disciplines beyond marketing: psychology, education, and systems thinking. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology and the method applied to conduct this study. This chapter outlines the phenomenographic approach applied in this study. Chapter 4 provides in detail the findings and interpretations of this study. In this chapter, the findings were presented as ‘Categories of Description’ and displayed in an outcome space. Lastly, chapter 5 concludes the study and suggests its implications. These chapters can be summarized as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:Thesis Structure**



## **1.7 My Role as a Researcher**

My personal reflection on conducting this study revealed that I have played different roles in this study. In the interview stage, I was a listener to the participants' stories and assisted them in exploring their understanding of their experience of the support-seeking phenomenon. During the findings stage, I worked with what the participants' have expressed as conceptions of the phenomenon. At this stage, I was a reflector, categorising the participants' conceptions into distinct ways of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon using categories of description in a faithful manner. At the final stage of this study, I was an interpreter, determining the logical relationship between the categories of description and presenting the categories of description in an outcome space as a synonym for the support-seeking phenomenon.

In all these roles as a listener, reflector, and interpreter, I worked with what the participants have expressed as their realities of experiencing the phenomenon. In this study, as a researcher I have presented faithfully the participants' perspective of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon.

## 1.8 Terminologies

The following table displays some of the common terminologies that appear throughout this study.

**Table 1: Common Terminologies**

<b>Terminology</b>	<b>Description</b>
S-D logic	Service Dominant Logic
Participants	Students with disabilities
A way of experiencing	How the participant's awareness is structured-what aspects are represented as core and at the centre of awareness, and what other aspects recede to the background.
Internal horizon	Participant's core aspect that is held at centre of awareness
External horizon	The aspects that recede to the background of participant's awareness. Known as perceptual boundary.
Phenomenon	The thing as it appeared to the participant or is perceived by the participant.
Conception	Participant's ways of experiencing a specific aspect of the support-seeking phenomenon.
Categories of Description	The researcher's representation of participants' collective conceptions of experiencing the phenomenon organised into distinct categories of description.
Outcome space	Representation of the categories of description in a logical manner to represent the ways students with disabilities can experience the support-seeking phenomenon.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.0 Introduction

The shift of conceptual understanding of service in the S-D logic from a unit of output to a process of applying resources for the benefit of others (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) has created the need to understand value as a process rather than an output. This chapter meets the need to describe a holistic understanding of the valuing process for S-D logic. An interdisciplinary search on the term ‘valuing’ has been conducted in the fields of psychology, education, and systems thinking. Literature has been reviewed from these disciplines to understand the concept of valuing and the essential elements of the valuing process.

Three prominent theorists who embrace process thinking in their works were given importance in this study: in the field of psychology, Carl Rogers's view on an organism's valuing process; in education, John Dewey's work on experience as a basis for knowing, and in systems thinking, Vickers' appreciative system. All three theorists put forward progressive ideas in their respective fields. I adopted the integrative perspective of Rogers, Dewey, and Vickers to understand the valuing process, and incorporate them into Hutcheon's valuing model from the sociological perspective of humanities.

This chapter is presented with four papers that were accepted and published in the following conference proceedings: ‘Support: Can it be a value creation for positive marketing?’ in International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research (2012); ‘A holistic understanding of valuing process’ accepted for Naples Forum on Service Conference (2013); ‘Support and social business: A collaborative appreciation of engagement’ published in Australia and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (2013); and ‘Transcending the traditional understanding of reciprocity in relationships in Service Dominant Logic’ in the 17th Annual Waikato Management School Student Research Conference (2013).

## **2.1 Conception of Value**

Value can be expressed both as a noun and as a verb (Rohan, 2000). There are critical differences between these two approaches to address value. Etymologically the term ‘value’ is derived from Latin ‘valere’, be of worth or be of value (Etymology Dictionary Online, 2014). When value is used as a noun, a particular entity has the property of value embedded in it. Researchers who are focused on how much value a particular outcome can offer or what aspects of value a person is looking for view value as a noun (Rohan, 2000). In these cases, “an act of apprehension” or “valuation” (Dewey, 1939, p. 4) needs to be in place.

On the other hand, value as a verb is seen as an ‘act of appraising the worth’ (Rohan, 2000, p. 256). This act imposes a higher level of assessment in expressing

a deeper meaning of value (Rohan, 2000). This harmonizes with Dewey's view (1939, p. 5) that "the act of valuing is also emotional; it is the conscious expression of an interest, a motor-affective attitude". Thus, value is not seen as embedded in a particular entity but emerges from the appraising activities.

Understanding this distinction between value as an output or one-off phenomenon (valuation) and value as a process (valuing) is crucial to marketing theory-building. In the traditional understanding of science of reductionism, determinism, and quantification, value is understood as objective, fixed, and deliverable. However, the new understanding of science that adopts Pragmatism provides an alternative approach to understand the social phenomenon of valuing. Re-thinking science in a holistic and relational perspective brings out people's lived experiences as a form of knowledge. Thus, value judgements are an essential aspect in human experience. General aspects of Pragmatism (founded by John Dewey, and many others) are holism, emergence, continuity, and indeterminism.

This study adopts the holistic or integrative perspectives of Rogers, Dewey, and Vickers to understand valuing as processual, and found that Hutcheon, from the sociological perspective of humanities, has an apparently integrative cultural understanding of valuing. This study contributes a pragmatic (practical) structure of valuing for the field of Marketing.

## **2.2 Service-Dominant Logic and Value**

The emergence of service dominant logic (S-D logic) shifts marketing thinking away from the goods dominant logic (G-D logic). Vargo and Lusch's seminal article "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing" in 2004 has proposed a shift in the outlook of marketing, especially with regard to who creates and determines value. Under G-D logic, producers pre-evaluate value on behalf of the customers and then propose it to customers for acceptance. In other words, the producers determine value in their sphere and subsequently make the value-embedded goods available to the customers. According to this perspective, a tangible output is ideal for standardized production, storage, and delivery by the producer compared to an intangible output (i.e., service) that requires the customer's involvement in the service provision (inseparability) (Zeithaml et al., 1985). Thus, services tend to be viewed as inferior to goods (Spohrer et al., 2008). Value is expressed as a noun, a unit of output produced for an exchange in the marketplace.

In S-D logic, service is seen as a primary base for all exchange, in which a product represents a tool for service provision (Lusch & Vargo, 2006). S-D logic moves away from the G-D logic's view of production of a unit of output to a "process of doing something for and with someone" (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 2). In S-D logic, service has been defined as a process of applying one's resources (knowledge and skills) for the benefit of another party (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This process involves two activities: applying competences (knowledge and skills) and integrating the competences with other resources to derive benefit

(Sprohrer et al., 2008). The knowledge and skills of the interacting parties are understood as “resource inputs for a continuing value creation process” (Lusch et al., 2008, p. 6). Thus, customers are no longer viewed as passive receivers of value but active participants in the value creation processes (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). The reciprocal actions between the interacting parties create opportunities to influence each other’s value creating activities (Gronroos & Ravald, 2011). As a result, value creation becomes understood as an interactive process (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

In S-D logic, value creation shifts from the producer sphere to an interactional process of resourcing, not limited to the producer and the beneficiary but acknowledging all parties involved in the value creation (Lusch, et al., 2008). The level of participation in applying one’s knowledge and skill for the benefit of another varies between individuals on their own terms (Vargo et al., 2010). The ‘producer’ and the ‘customer’ distinctions disappear (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Thus, knowledge and skills (operant resources) become the essential components in the value-creation process (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Knowledge and skills applied ‘purposefully’ for the benefit of the other party with an anticipation of a beneficial service in return drive an exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). However, the beneficiary remains the final determiner of value of his or her service experience (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

The S-D logic Foundational Premise (FP) 6 that the customer is always a co-creator of value, implies that value creation is interactional (Vargo & Lusch,

2008). This interactional view is not limited to subject and object but also includes the subject's activity in relation to the object (Frondizi, 1971). Dewey (1939) pointed out that the terms 'appreciate' and 'appraise' have similar etymological roots and have been used interchangeably. In S-D logic, the beneficiary (subject) conducts the act of appraising or valuing, and determines the value of his or her service experience. This view aligns with Sanchez Fernandez and Bonillo (2007, p. 443) that value is an "on-going assessment within an evolving customer relationship". According to Gronroos (2000), the customer perceives value at every act and subsequently reflects that perception in the anticipation and perception of the next act. The overall accumulation of perceptions of interrelated acts which can be good, neutral, and poor forms the perception of an episode. Finally, a sequence of related episodes forms an accumulated value perception of the overall relationship. In this exercise, value is not formed in a linear progression but in an iterative way of going back and forth (Helkkula et al., 2012), in reflecting the earlier perception in the anticipation and perception of the subsequent act.

In summary, there is a distinct difference between G-D logic and S-D logic on the understanding of value. In G-D logic, value has been expressed as a noun, a unit of output with embedded value while in S-D logic, value is a verb, a valuing process. However, while S-D logic adopts the process and not the output view, it has not completely shifted away from the G-D logic understanding (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Akaka, 2009; Vargo et al., 2010). This is evident in the lexicon used in the S-D logic's Foundational Premise (FP) 1 that does not reflect the processual understanding of value.

### **2.2.1 Service-Dominant Logic's Lexicon**

In 2004, Vargo and Lusch developed eight Foundational Premises (FPs) of S-D logic. These eight Foundational Premises were later revised and extended to 10 Foundational Premises (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Foundational Premise (FP) 1, which states that service is the fundamental basis of exchange, is the principal premise in S-D logic that focuses on the application of knowledge and skills for the benefit of another. The key element of reciprocity drives an exchange in S-D logic – service is exchanged for service. According to Ballantyne et al., (2011, p. 206), “each party expects to get what they want by helping the other party get what they want”. Each party has intention to offer something of value to another party and subsequently expects conversations, dialogue, and adjustments to take place (Ballantyne et al., 2011). Thus, in FP1 knowledge and skills is considered as something of value to another party and exchange is driven by reciprocal acts of helping each other. The following discussion focuses on the lexicon ‘knowledge and skills’ and ‘exchange’ used in FP1.

First there is knowledge and skills. According to Houston and Gassemheimer (1987, p. 5), “a service requires that the entity possess assets that can be converted into performance that has potential value to another entity”. The asset can be a unique knowledge or skill, that can viewed as an ‘offering’, “once it is presented as being available for exchange” (Houston & Gassemheimer, 1987, p. 5).

Vargo et al., (2008) have the same explanation that experience and knowledge are considered as ‘offerings’ for a possible exchange:

Our experience and knowledge, and the experience and knowledge of others in the marketplace, provide hints as to what is reasonable to exchange for some new capability. But measuring exchange value in this way – through human judgement and operationalized in the market - is not necessary for a service system to provide value to another system. (p. 150)

In other words, the applications of knowledge and skills that arise from an individual’s experiences are regarded as ‘offerings’, which are proposed to other individuals as potential resources. This stage becomes the connecting point for individuals to communicate to one another. The proposed knowledge and skills can be accepted, rejected, negotiated, or unobserved by the individual in need of the resources (Vargo et al., 2008). Therefore, the proposed application of knowledge and skills is not necessarily of value to another individual.

The individual in need of the resources can exercise control of his or her value-creating process by initiating and inviting other individuals who have the resources (knowledge and skills) to join into his or her value-creating process (Gronroos, 2011; Zuboff & Maxmin, 2002). Here, the invited individual gets an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills with other individuals. Each individual will apply their knowledge and skills in working towards a value proposition (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006; Hilton et al., 2012). The value proposition is derived from a process of negotiation between and among the

individuals to reach agreement on their contributions of resources to realise the value proposition (Hilton et al., 2012). When the individuals enter into an agreement, resources are integrated with the aim that they will individually realise the value of the proposition (Hilton et al., 2012). In the process of applying resources, the individual's initial knowledge and skills can be modified and evolve to new knowledge and skills in "knowledge renewal" (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006, p. 340).

In brief, knowledge and skills are seen as offerings as they possess potential value that is yet to be realized. The resource integration process transforms the offerings (knowledge and skills) from potential to realised value for individuals through their own evaluative judgement at a point of time (valuation).

The second term is exchange. S-D logic advocates that service is the fundamental basis of exchange. Service is defined as the "application of specialized competences (operand resources-knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes, and performance for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself" (Lusch & Vargo, 2006, p. 43). In S-D logic, operand resources are resources that are acted upon to produce effect, and operant resources are those being employed to act upon the operand resources (and other operants) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). According to this view, the customer is an operant resource and a "collaborative partner with whom value is co-created" (Lusch et al., 2008, p. 12). This implies that service is "a process of doing something beneficial for and in conjunction with some entity" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p. 26).

However, in FP1 the relational view of service is not emphasized. Instead, the residual concept of ‘exchange’ from G-D logic is the basis of the general understanding of service in S-D logic, with the exchange driven by reciprocal acts of applying knowledge and skills for the benefit of another party (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The ‘exchange’ concept in S-D logic tends to limit individual’s relationship to individual episodes (transactional) rather than a continuous process of flowing from one episode to another (relational). As such, it is important to understand whether S-D logic recognises reciprocity as a condition of individual episodes in a relationship or as the basis for continuation in a relationship.

The following section deepens understanding of reciprocity in relationship, by focusing on reciprocity as a condition for individual episodes of relationship (transactional) or a basis for a long-term relationship (relational).

### **2.3 Reciprocity**

According to the Oxford Dictionary, ‘reciprocity’ is “the practice of exchanging things or privileges with others for mutual benefit”. Etymologically, the term ‘reciprocity’ is derived from the Latin word ‘reciprocus’, which means moving backwards and forwards (“Reciprocity”, 2014).

Gouldner (1960), who holds that (1) inter-exchange and (2) mutual benefits are conditional features of reciprocity, describes reciprocity thus:

A is functional for B helps to account for A's own persistence and stability only on two related assumptions: (1) that B reciprocates A's services, and (2) that B's services to A is contingent upon A's performance of positive functions for B. (p. 153)

This view of reciprocity as a form of obligation that people owe one another due to their previous interactions is the understanding preferred by most scholars.

Bagozzi (1995) points out that obligation comes with "felt meanings". According to Gendlin (1962, p. 12), experiencing is a "felt meaning" or "inner sense" that cannot be reduced to units of explanation. This is consistent with the term 'mutual', which etymologically derives from 'feelings' (Etymology Dictionary Online, 2014). In other words, the term 'mutual' implies a way of experiencing feeling and actions in doing things with others. People's interpretation of their reciprocal actions generates meaning to them (Keysar et al., 2008) and forms understanding to initiate action (Bagozzi, 1995). Here, individuals are self-generating purposeful and intentional actions (Bagozzi, 1975). In this sense, reciprocity is not limited to an inter-exchange of give and take (Keysar et al., 2008) or an obligation or duties owing others (Gouldner, 1960). Rather, reciprocity is a form of self-regulating exercise in co-ordinating actions in a relationship (Bagozzi, 1995).

The following sub-sections discuss the key differences between reciprocity viewed as an exchange and reciprocity viewed as regulated action in a relationship.

### **2.3.1 Reciprocity as an Exchange**

According to Houston and Gassenheimer (1987, p. 11), reciprocity is “the process whereby mutual exchange of acceptable terms is actualized, it is a social interaction in which the movement of one party evokes a compensating movement in another party”. One party initiates an action to be followed by another party who reacts. Here, both parties need to judge that they have equality in knowledge, power, and resources if they are to maintain a relationship (Palmer, 1996).

According to Becker (1986), ‘fittingness’ (stability in the relationship) and ‘proportionality’ (balanced exchanges) are important outcomes of reciprocal actions. In order to have stability in the relationship, the recipient needs to sense that the service-in-return is good for them and judged as a good fit as a return to them. Here, the service-in-return must be similar to goodness of service given (service exchange for service). Along with fittingness, people need to be satisfied with the proportion of benefits received from the reciprocal exchange. Inequality in the gratifications received hinders the participants’ investment in the relationship. Therefore, equality in relationship and equivalent gratification from an exchange are two important aspects of maintaining a relationship.

The first aspect is equality in relationship. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), parties need to maintain equality in relationship without exercising ‘coercive power’ in order for trust and commitment to exist in a relationship. When parties sense that they are no longer in a stable relationship, they tend to engage in opportunistic behavior. As a result, the use of power and opportunistic behavior erodes trust between parties and subsequently weakens the commitment ties in a relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

The second aspect is equivalent gratification. According to Malinowski (1932, cited in Gouldner, 1960 p. 169) “reciprocity is realized in the equivalent arrangement of reciprocal services”. Gouldner (1960, p. 173) states that “people should help those who help them, and, therefore, those whom you have helped have an obligation to help you”. Here, obligation to help depends on people’s judgement of what is value for them at the time (Gouldner, 1960). Thus, this aspect becomes unconditional for the continuation of relationship.

To conclude, it should be noted that previous discussion of equality in relationship and equivalent gratification tend to imply relationship as a single episode. People conduct their valuation at the end of the episode and consider their preference for whom would they engage with next. According to Bagozzi (1995, p. 276), reciprocity is “a social glue and shock absorber that, temporarily at least, satisfies the parties to an exchange, within reasonable bounds”. In other words, there is no assurance of continuation of episodes in forming relationship with the same

people. Reciprocity understood as an exchange tends to be limited in the establishment of long term relationships.

### **2.3.2 Reciprocity as Regulated Action**

Reciprocity as regulated action is an important distinction. People strive to be in control of what affects them in their environment (Bandura, 1995). They exercise self-efficacy to regulate events in their lives, which allows them to have some control to realise desirable outcomes and pre-empt undesirable ones. Self-efficacy refers to “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura 1995, p. 2). Thus, a person’s initiative to act is guided by their judgements (Bandura, 1982).

People do not have all the resources, time, and energy to independently control what happens in their everyday life. In these circumstances, people exercise socially mediated agency (proxy agency) in seeking others who have the resources, knowledge, and ability to support them (Bandura, 2001). Here, people are reaching out to others to enhance their own resources in achieving their desirable outcomes (Paltrinieri & Degli Esposti, 2013). People work reciprocally with others to accomplish their desired outcomes, which would otherwise be difficult to achieve individually (Bandura, 2001). Reciprocity becomes an important feature in self-regulation (Bandura, 1995).

According to Rothschild (1999), people are motivated to behave reciprocally in the relational sense when they feel others are accommodating their self-interest in a timely manner. In other words, people's choice to reciprocate depends on their interpretations of the interpersonal situation (Keysar et al., 2008). A person's trust increases when they judge others are engaging in non-opportunistic behaviour (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This subsequently increases people's commitment when they feel the other party cares about them and are working in their best interest for a solution (Vivek et al., 2012). Parties are working together beyond their individual self-interest towards a common understanding for a solution (Ballantyne et al., 2011).

People's commitment towards a shared purpose eliminates the 'power-over' conflict (Bandura, 1995), and increases trust and commitment in a relationship. People tend to conduct valuation that brings a particular episode in the relationship to a temporary close and initiate further action to maintain connection with the situational partner. This endless flow of episodes reflects an on-going relationship.

In brief, reciprocity as an exchange (transactional reciprocity) indicates a single episode where one party initiates and this is followed by another party reacting to bring the episode to a close. Here, parties are regarded as separate individuals who possess knowledge, skill, and ability that are of value to one another. From this perspective, when the parties seek reciprocity both tend to struggle for power in their relationship and for fairness in their exchange. Each person interprets and

gains meaning of the reciprocal actions (Keysar et al., 2008). As a result, people's valuation brings the episode to a resolution. In this situation, people's relationship with others is limited to single episodes.

On the other hand, the notion of reciprocity as regulated action (relational reciprocity) explains that people are working collaboratively for a common understanding towards a solution. Parties are no longer holding to their individual knowledge, skill, and ability but are willing to listen, think, and work together in a shared appreciation (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006). According to Bandura (1995, p. 2), "without commitment to shared purposes that transcend narrow self-interests, the exercise of control can degenerate into personal and factional conflicts of power". In shared appreciation, conflict of power can be avoided as individuals trust and show commitment in working together for a solution; that is, collaborating. Parties are working collaboratively with the aim of realising value independently (Hilton et al., 2012). The aspects of trust and commitment that are built in shared appreciation tend to support long-term relationships.

To summarise, reciprocity as an exchange indicates individual episodes of relationship which come to a resolution with valuation. In contrast, reciprocity as regulated action indicates an ongoing relationship in which a valuation is a temporary evaluation before re-connecting in the next episode. The following section addresses how reciprocity has been positioned in Service Dominant (S-D) logic. It is essential to understand whether S-D logic views reciprocity as a

condition of individual episodes in a relationship or as the basis for long-term relationship.

## **2.4 Service-Dominant Logic and Reciprocity**

S-D logic explains that service is the fundamental basis of exchange – service is exchanged for service. Service is defined as application of knowledge and skills for the benefit of another or the entity itself (Vargo & Lusch, 2006). In S-D logic, the customer is an operant resource and a collaborative partner with whom others are working in value creation (Lusch et al., 2008). Thus, service reflects a process of doing something for and with others (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). A customer creates value for themselves and others (Gummesson, 2007). Thus, reciprocity is central to the service centered view of S-D logic.

For a better understanding of S-D logic, Lusch, Vargo & Malter (2006) have summarised the S-D logic way of thinking in relation to G-D logic, as reproduced in the following table:

**Table 2: Contrasting G-D logic and S-D Logic (Lusch et al., 2006 p. 268).**

<b>Goods Dominant Logic (G-D)</b>	<b>Service Dominant Logic (S-D)</b>
Goods	Service(s)
Tangible	Intangible
Operand Resources	Operant Resources
Asymmetric Information	Symmetric Information
Propaganda	Conversation
Value Added	Value Proposition
<b>Transactional</b>	<b>Relational</b>
Profit Maximization	Financial Feedback

Table 2 indicates that S-D logic adopts a relational perspective rather than transactional. According to Lusch and Vargo (2008, p. 93) “whenever there is specialization and division of labor, specialists become interdependent”. When the interdependency increases, it has the potential to increase collective actions that are inherently relational (Lusch & Vargo, 2008). In other words, interdependency increases reciprocity and simultaneously builds relationship. Thus, according to S-D logic, interdependency builds relationship.

However, Gouldner (1960) referred to Malinowski's (1932) view of reciprocity and interdependency as follows:

Reciprocity entails a mutual dependence and [is] realized in the equivalent arrangement of reciprocal services ...' Here reciprocity is conceived as the complement to and fulfillment of the division of labor. It is the pattern of exchange through which the mutual dependence of people, brought about by the division of labor, is realized. Reciprocity, therefore, is a mutually gratifying pattern of exchanging goods and services. (p. 169)

Based on Gouldner's view, reciprocity in interdependency is viewed as an exchange, a transactional perspective as in G-D logic. This indicates that S-D logic is rooted in understandings that persist from exchange as viewed in G-D logic. Many other marketing intellectuals (Grönroos, 1994; Gummesson, 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995) have similar concerns that "exchange in S-D logic implies a transactional orientation" (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p. 31).

This is evident in the S-D logic Foundational Premise (FP) 1, in which the relational application of service is not emphasized. The idea of 'exchange' forms the basis of the general understanding of service in S-D logic. The exchange is driven by reciprocal acts of applying knowledge and skills for the benefit of another party (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The key aspect of reciprocity drives an exchange in S-D logic – service is exchanged for service. In FP1 knowledge and skills are considered to be of value to another party, and exchange is driven by reciprocal acts of helping each other (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006). Here, the output

(application of resources for the benefit of another) is emphasized more than the actions of applying the resources for and with another party. The interactive process of applying resources that is essential in the understanding of service is overlooked in S-D logic.

The understanding of exchange in S-D logic focuses on the sender-responder model of the communication of applying and sharing knowledge for the benefit of another party. Individuals co-operate with one another in making the adjustments to the value proposition for a personalized exchange. According to Anderson and Narus (1990, p. 45), co-operation is “similar or complementary co-ordinated actions taken by parties in interdependent relationships to achieve mutual outcomes or singular outcomes with expected reciprocation over time”. Here, individuals tend to be in separate appreciations (I and You) holding to their own knowledge and skills, but agree to come together in coordinating actions for a solution (FitzPatrick, Davey, & Varey, 2014). In this context, both aspects of inequality in relationship and unequivocal gratification of service hinder the development of trust and commitment necessary to establish long-term relationships. The understanding of reciprocity as exchange in S-D logic tends to foreclose on individual episodes of valuation. Subsequently, this has resulted in the partial understanding of service as relational in S-D logic.

On the other hand, S-D logic’s Foundational Premise (FP) 6 states that a ‘customer is always a co-creator of value’. Customers are no longer seen as passive receivers but active resource integrators in the creation of value (Lusch &

Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) view a customer as a competent resource who possesses knowledge and skills, is willing to experiment and learn, and engages in active dialogue. A customer viewed as a resource integrator for creating their own value implies that they exercise their self-efficacy to organise and mobilize resources for their own interest.

Payne, Storbacka, and Frow (2008) explain that a customer conducts a series of activities in their value creation process and these activities need to be supported by a firm to create value for both the firm and the customer. Thus, customers are consuming what they are producing for themselves. Toffler (1980) identifies customers as prosumers in this sense. In S-D logic, customers are both prosumers and co-creators of value (Gummesson, 2007). In pursuing their interest, customers regulate their actions and work together with others to attain their desired outcomes (Paltrinieri & Degli Esposti, 2013): customers understand that co-operation and collaboration are the means to create valued outcomes from interactivity.

Here, individuals are no longer in separate appreciations (I and You) but in shared appreciation (We or togetherness) (FitzPatrick et al., 2014). In shared appreciation, individuals can be involved in a process of thinking together and sharing their knowledge and skills without defending them or competing. In this process, the individuals are communicating their meanings and creating a common understanding relative to a problem. Trust and commitment tend to exist in shared appreciation. Individuals gain meanings from their interpretations of

actions (Keysar et al., 2008). Therefore, valuation conducted at each episode brings the episode to a temporary close, which allows for the individual to initiate further action to connect to the next episode; this flow of episodes reflects a more complete understanding of on-going relationships among people. Vargo (2009, p. 375) states that relationship in S-D logic is formed based on “joint, interactive, collaborative, unfolding, and reciprocal roles in value creation”. Thus, reciprocity understood as regulated action is consistent with S-D logic’s view of relationship.

An analysis of S-D logic’s 10 foundational premises shows that seven out of the 10 foundational premises are inclined towards the understanding of reciprocity as regulated action. This indicates that understanding reciprocity as regulated action is central to the S-D logic way of thinking. The following Table 3 distinguishes the understanding of reciprocity evident in each of the foundational premises and emphasises the key phrases within the published expressions of the foundational premises that reflect the understanding of reciprocity as regulated action.

**Table 3: Service Dominant Logic Foundational Premises (based on Vargo & Lusch, 2008 p. 7)**

<b>FPs</b>	<b>Foundational Premise</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Form of reciprocity</b>
FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange	The application of operant resources (knowledge and skills), “service”, as defined in S-D logic, is the basis for all exchange. Service is exchanged for service	Reciprocity as an exchange
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange	Because service is provided through complex combinations of goods, money and institutions, the service basis of exchange is not always apparent	Reciprocity as an exchange
FP3	Goods are a distribution mechanisms for service provision	Goods (both durable and non-durable) <u>derive their value</u> through use- the service they provide	Reciprocity as regulated action
FP4	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage	The comparative <u>ability to cause desired change</u> drives competition	Reciprocity as regulated action
FP5	All economies are service economies	Service (singular) is only now becoming more apparent with increased specialization and outsourcing	Reciprocity as an exchange
FP6	The customer is always a <u>co-creator of value</u>	Implies value creation is <u>interactional</u>	Reciprocity as regulated action
FP7	The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions	Enterprises can offer their applied resources for value creation and <u>collaboratively (interactively) create value</u> following acceptance of value propositions, but cannot create and/or deliver value independently	Reciprocity as regulated action
FP8	A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational	Because service is defined in terms of <u>customer-determined benefit</u> and co-created it is <u>inherently customer oriented and relational</u>	Reciprocity as regulated action
FP9	All social and economic actors are <u>resource integrators</u>	Implies the context of value creation is networks of networks (resource integrators)	Reciprocity as regulated action
FP10	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically <u>determined by the beneficiary</u>	Value is <u>idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual and meaning laden</u>	Reciprocity as regulated action

In summary, reciprocity is an important aspect of S-D logic's view of relationship. However, lack of clarity in differentiating between co-ordinating obligations of helping one another in reciprocity as an exchange, and collaborative actions in working towards a solution in reciprocity as regulated action has retained the residual transactional reciprocity or transactional exchange conception in S-D logic (Supramaniam et al., 2013). This is consistent with Vargo, Lusch, and Akaka's (2010) view that S-D logic has not fully moved away from the G-D logic way of thinking. As such, it has created the need to understand value as a process rather than an output. My study fills the need in describing a holistic understanding of the valuing process for S-D Logic. Interdisciplinary search beyond the marketing field on the term 'valuing' has been undertaken in the fields of psychology, education, and systems thinking.

The following section discusses the literature reviews from these disciplines that have been integrated to understand the concept of valuing and the essential elements of the valuing process.

## 2.5 Valuing

An interdisciplinary search to understand the term ‘valuing’ has been conducted in the fields of psychology, education, and systems thinking. The work of three theorists deserves special attention: in the field of psychology, Carl Rogers's view on an organism’s valuing process; in education, John Dewey’s work on experience as a basis for knowing; and in systems thinking, Vickers’ appreciative system. Each of them has made significant contributions in their respective fields. Rogers (1902-1987), an American psychologist, was the co-founder of the humanistic approach to psychology. He is widely acknowledged as the father of psychotherapy research and regarded as the 6th most distinguished psychologist of the twentieth century (Famous Psychologists, 2014). Dewey (1859-1952), was an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer who contributed extensively in education and social reform. Dewey was one of the early founders of the philosophy of pragmatism and a co-founder of functional psychology. Dewey, a major influence in progressive education and liberalism, has been seen as ‘the philosopher’ of the twentieth century in comparison to Aristotle in the past. Vickers (1894-1982) was regarded as a social systems scientist, who was a practitioner rather than an academician. He introduced the appreciative system describing human activity and his research work was adopted by researchers in the Open University. The International Society for the Systems Sciences has awarded the Sir Geoffrey Vickers Memorial Award annually since 1987 to commemorate his contributions to systems thinking.

The following section explains how the valuing approaches of these three theorists have been addressed in their respective fields and the interrelationships of these approaches in forming a comprehensive understanding of valuing for S-D logic. Hutcheon's valuing model will be used to integrate these three theorists' views to gain insights into how individuals react in their environment and how values are formed through actions.

### **2.5.1 Rogers: Organism Valuing Process**

Rogers (1964, p. 3) describes the whole process of valuing as an "organismic valuing process". Rogers uses the term 'organism' as a generalised characteristic of all organisms and denotes the term 'person' to refer to human realisation of his or her organism nature (Bozarth & Brodley, 1991).

In an organism valuing process, a person's preferential behavior addresses two different values: operative values and conceived values (Rogers, 1964). Operative value relates to the propensity of living things to prefer one object to another (Morris, 1956). The actual direction of preference is evident towards a particular object and others are rejected. In contrast, conceived value refers to preferential behaviour that is managed by an anticipation of certain outcomes. These values are desirable or conceived as preferable.

The entire process of valuing is not permanent but keeps evolving with new experiences (Rogers, 1964). Every moment of what a person is experiencing generates meaning to them (Gendlin, 1962). Gendlin (1962, p. 12) states that experiencing is a “felt meaning” or “inner sense” that cannot be limited to verbal explanations. As such, a person weighs, chooses, and rejects what he or she is experiencing on the basis of whether at that moment the experience actualizes his or her organism or not (Rogers, 1964).

Therefore, the person is central to their own valuing process, sensing what is enhancing them as an organism and rejecting what is not. Their own sense of experiencing provide meanings to them about what is considered good and what is bad for them (Rogers, 1964). They solely trust their own organism in making decisions and are not influenced by other parties (Rogers, 1964). This is what generates operative values. Over time, the person learns to use their experiencing as a referent in which they form accurate conceptualizations that direct their behaviour (Rogers, 1964). Here, conceived values are formed, values which are not conceptualized by others but emerge from personal experiences.

In valuing, a person is exposed to both moments of experiencing as well as to the traces of their past experiences. Thus, a person’s evaluation is guided by both their momentary feelings and learned values from similar experiences (Rogers, 1964). The person trusts their organism as to what is of value for them at a particular moment and direct their action towards it. This actualisation tendency functions in every person, is a motivational construct of living every moment,

maintaining the wholeness, and striving for change (Bozarth & Brodley, 1991). In addition, they are open to the outcome of their actions and make relevant adjustments to correct errors. Although the person is exposed to others' feedback they regard that information as external and less significant relative to their own actions (Rogers, 1964).

In summary, the entire valuing process is initiated by an individual's bodily-felt meaning. According to Gendlin (1965, p. 135), feeling is "how we are alive in the environment, and therefore we feel, in a bodily way, the whole context of our living". Therefore, an organism's valuing process should be viewed as an integration process involving the individual valuing in relation to his or her environment. Rogers' organism valuing process gives a deeper insight to how a person weighs and confirms their values based on what they are experiencing and how they direct their action towards it. On the other hand, Dewey takes an alternative perspective in viewing experience as the source for knowing.

### **2.5.2 Dewey: Experience as a base of Knowing**

According to Dewey et al., (1917), the traditional view of experience is based purely on knowledge about what has happened in the past and "reference to precedent" (p. 7). Dewey moves away from viewing knowledge as an absolute and certain to uncertain knowledge that emerges from a valuing activity. According to Dewey (1938), experience does not solely depend on an individual's body and mind, but instead, "experience is always what it is because of a

transaction taking place between an individual and what, at that time, constitutes his environment” (p. 25). In other words, external sources come into interaction with the individual’s body and mind and subsequently form the situation or environment. The environment comprises any conditions that “interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). Dewey viewed a situation as an “episode (or field) of disequilibrium, instability, imbalance, disintegration, dysfunction, breakdown ....occurring in the ongoing activities of some given organism or environment system” (Burke, 1994, p. 22).

Thus, experience is viewed as “a process of undergoing; a process of standing something; of suffering and passion, of affection in the literal sense of these words” (Dewey et al., 1917, p. 10). Dewey further explained that a person is not merely a passive receptor of the experience that he or she is undergoing but an agent or reactor who experiments with the undergoing in a way that influences what may happen. In other words, experience “in its vital form is experimental, an effort to change the given; it is characterized by projection, by reaching forward into the unknown; connexion with a future” (Dewey et. al., 1917, p. 7).

A key aspect of experience is that experience instructs the body to form an attitude of desire and purpose to act upon the experience (Dewey, 1938). This is what Dewey (1938) recognized as an active part of experience changing the conditions of experience that the individual had. This active part of doing results in consequences that jointly forms the individual’s perception (Dewey, 1934). The

relationship between the actions and consequences therefore generates meanings and forms knowledge for the individual (Dewey, 1934). This active part of experience happens continuously as long as the living entities interact with their environmental conditions (Dewey, 1934).

Dewey's conceptualization of interaction interlinked with the principle of continuity forms other important aspects in an experience (Dewey, 1938). The principle of continuity enables the individual to flow from one situation to another with minimum difficulty. The knowledge and skill learned from one situation act as tools for individuals to comprehend and handle the situation that follows more effectively (Dewey, 1938). This process of learning continues throughout the individual's life.

In conclusion, Dewey's approach to experience as a basis of knowing helps us to understand the world as experienced by individuals (their reality). Dewey argued that the world that we experience is real and not fixed. Thus, there are no universal solutions or answers to situations, but knowing activity enables the individual to tailor a possible solution based on the experienced situation. Dewey further claims it is a continuing process of experimenting and enduring the consequences of the action – a process of shaping and reshaping in moving towards a desired outcome. In addition to Rogers' and Dewey's work, Vickers' appreciative system provides more insights into the valuing process.

### **2.5.3 Vickers: Appreciative System**

Vickers proposed the ‘appreciative system’ as a model of how humans comprehend and react to their environment (Regev et al., 2011; Varey, 1998). Williams (2005) points out that the process that Vickers modeled is central to humanity. According to Vickers (1968), humans inherently have the capacity to respond and act according to their appreciation of the situation. Vickers added that to be human, one has to be experiencing relations, showing accountability, and responding to a situation in its own terms (Williams, 2005). In an appreciative system, there are three essential judgements one has to make: reality judgement, value judgement, and action judgement. Wyk (1997) further explains that these judgements are a sequential process: first, a reality judgement of “what is the case?”, followed by a value judgement on “what ought to be the case?”, and finally an action judgement about “what to do?” that results in action that can resolve the differences between what is experienced and what is desirable.

The reality that an individual observes (reality), and its comparison with the norm (standard) in a particular setting, is what Vickers (1968) refers to as ‘appreciation’. Vickers (1968, p. 191) further elaborates that “facts are relevant only by reference to some judgement of value and judgements of value are meaningful only in regard to some configuration of fact”. As such, appreciation comprises conjointly related judgements of reality and value (Vickers, 1968). Vickers further elaborates that the actual setting of reality and value is unknown and can only be apparent in judgements. The exercise of these reality and value judgements tends to change the appreciative setting. An individual’s ability to

make a judgement depends on mental capacity, the availability of information, and the current state of readiness to see and value (Vickers, 1968). In addition, most of the problems individuals try to solve depend on their own appreciative setting, making it difficult for others to confirm without making assumptions about how the judgements might have been made (Vickers, 1968). As such, individuals take action based on their own appreciative setting, in the context of their own judgements of reality and value.

### **Appreciative Process**

Vickers' appreciation is viewed as a cyclical process in which individuals make sense of the world that they are in (Checkland, 2005; Stowell, 2012). The initial stage of the process relates to how individuals construct their reality. An individual's interest and concern will be the starting point of the cycle for the individual to construct their situation (Vickers, 1983). The individual's interests and concerns are shaped by their earlier experiences of "perceptions, interpretations, judgements, and action" (appreciative setting) (Checkland, 2005, p. 287).

Next, the person will make a reality judgement by selecting relevant facts from that situation (Vickers, 1983). At this stage, the person's readiness to see forms reality for them. In other words, a reality judgement is what an individual prepares to sense in themselves and in their environment (Regev et al., 2011). The reality judgement enables the individual to understand 'what is the case' of the present

situation (Stowell, 2012). Burt and Heijden (2008) view this stage as a process of sense-making based on the perceived facts of the situation.

Once the reality judgement has been made, the individual weighs the situation as desirable/undesirable, or positive/negative, and might seek corrective action (Burt & Heijden, 2008) towards ‘what ought to be the case’ (Stowell, 2012). At this juncture, the individual is making a value judgement. They are weighing the reality in relation to their values, norms, standards, and beliefs, which are the outcomes of their earlier cycle of appreciative setting (Checkland, 2005). These values, norms, standards, and beliefs are not fixed, but “changed and developed by the very process of applying them” (Vickers, 1968, p. 144). As such, the criteria of what is good/bad, and acceptable/unacceptable, depend on the individual’s judgement of the situation.

The third stage of the appreciative process is action judgement. At this stage the individual seeks an answer to the question ‘What shall I do about it?’ based on the reality and value judgements made in the first two stages (Stowell, 2012). Thus, reality and value judgements come together in the need to take appropriate action. This action not only affects the present situation, but embodies conditions for future experiences (Checkland, 2005); from their action judgements, the individual learns the features that have been considered important and those that have been ignored in the perceived situation.

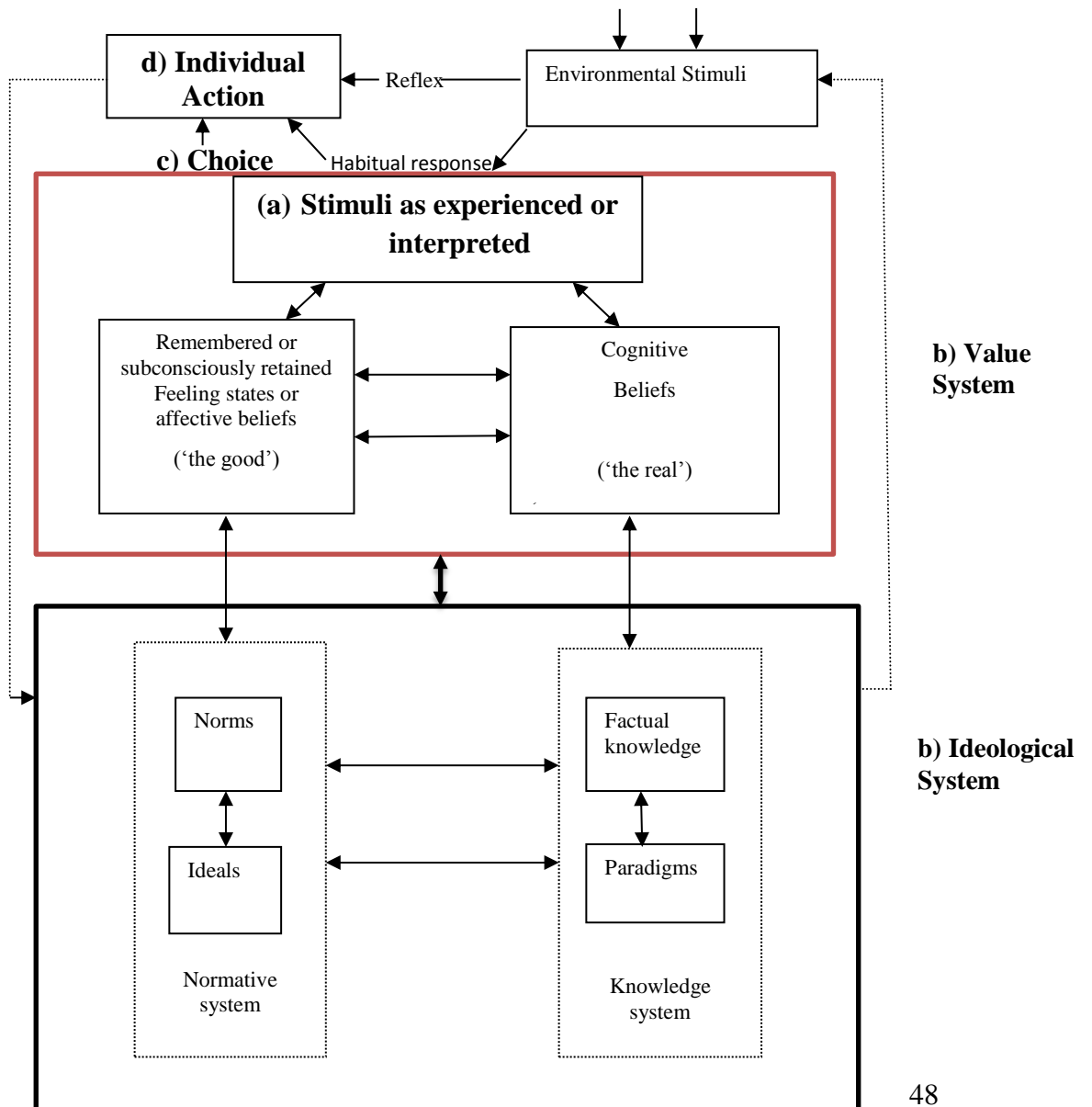
According to Checkland (2005), the whole appreciative process is a continuous cycle. In each cycle, the standards, norms, and values are revised in relation to the immediate setting of reality and value (appreciative setting). Checkland (2005, p. 289) contends that this model is “groundless and self-creating”, as it has no absolute set of settings, but rather the settings keep changing with the individual’s judgements. Therefore, the appreciative process represents an epistemology rather than ontology, as it reflects the reality of how individuals make sense of what they are experiencing. The process of appreciation consists of perceiving, judging, and desiring relationships (with others – people and resources) through actions (Blackmore, 2005) that involve interactions with others.

In summary, Rogers, Dewey, and Vickers tend to have similar insights about the valuing process. All claim that an individual (person) has the tendency to strive, based on his or her own reality as experienced and perceived. The individual strives to improve or to bring changes to the condition being experienced guided by their prior experiences. Thus, all three valuing approaches address valuing as an endless cyclical process in which the individual has the freedom to choose, appreciate, and to act upon their thoughts. Therefore, the valuing process involves thinking, addressing feelings, communicating, and acting with others (Hutcheon, 1972; Heise, 1983). The process can be explained by the core concepts of interaction, participation, experience, and reflection (Quisumbing, 2002). These core concepts are consistent with the S-D Logic Foundational Premise (FP) 10 that recognizes value is idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual, and meaning-laden (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

## 2.6 Integrative Valuing Model

The subsequent section integrates the work of the three theorists Rogers, Dewey, and Vickers into Hutcheon's valuing model (Figure 2). The resultant Integrative Valuing Model is helpful in representing person as a valuing organism who goes through valuing as a process. I highlight four key areas in bold type within Figure 2 below, before discussing them more fully in the sections following the figure.

**Figure 2: Integrative Valuing Model**



a) Stimuli as experienced or interpreted

Hutcheon (1972) holds that from inception individuals choose inputs from their environment and perceive the situation as desirable or undesirable. Individuals can recognize the situation based on their own values or commonly shared conceptions of what is desirable (norms, ideals, and culture). At this stage, the individual's perception constructs the reality (Vickers, 1968).

b) Value system and Ideological system

Hutcheon (1972) has identified two systems that work together jointly in setting the situation as desirable or undesirable. The first is the knowledge system that enables the individual to recognize and reason about the stimuli experienced as 'the real'. This reality is further appraised by the individual's normative system as desirable or undesirable (the good/the bad) in accordance with the individual's norms and values. Vickers (1968, p. 137) views the same process as 'appreciation', "the observation of the actual and its comparison with the norm". Vickers (1968) explains that the appreciation is in relation to conjoint judgements of reality and value in a particular setting and it is not possible for others to confirm how one has made the judgements.

c) Choice

The individual is central to the valuing process, deciding what is acceptable and what other factors should be ignored in that situation (Rogers, 1964). Once the individual discovers what is needed in that situation, the individual then devises

an action for the solution. However, Vickers (1968) claims that action may or may not follow as an outcome of an appreciation.

d) Individual action

The individual learns from their action's consequences which features to regard as important and which others can be ignored (Checkland, 2005). In this process, the individual's action is not guided purely by the standards or norms symbolised by their culture but determined together with environmental stimuli (Hutcheon, 1972). Hutcheon (1972, p. 182) regards the process as "growth-enhancing reappraisals of one's entire value system". The relationship between the individual's action and enduring the consequences forms a continuous process of learning for the individual (Dewey, 1938).

In summary, individuals appreciate their situations and subsequently decide on taking corrective actions if needed. According to Bandura (2006) individuals do not have all the time, knowledge, and skill to solve their problems independently. As such, they desire relationships through their actions with others who have the resources to support them. The subsequent section discusses this support-seeking behaviour in relation to how individuals respond to their everyday life experiences.

## **2.7 Support-Seeking Behaviour**

From the perspective of human agency, people are regarded as agents who are capable of organizing, are active in regulating actions, and who are accountable for those actions (Bandura, 2006). Dewey et al. (1917), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000), and McColl-Kennedy (2012) have the same explanations that individuals are active agents who mobilise resources in creating value. However, individuals do not always have direct control over what affects them in their environment. Therefore, they appreciate their situation and subsequently take appropriate action to resolve their problems if needed. In taking action, people can blend any of the three modes of agency: individual, proxy, and collective (Bandura, 2006). In most circumstances, individuals cannot solve their problems without support from others. They exercise socially mediated agency (proxy agency) in seeking support from others who have the resources, knowledge, and ability to support them (Bandura, 2006). Here, people's support-seeking behaviour can be categorised as their initiative in engaging with others for a shared understanding (Vivek et al. 2012). According to Vickers (1983), appreciation compatibility needs to coexist between interacting parties in order to proceed jointly towards a common understanding. Thus, it is essential to consider the degree of compatibility in engaging in one's appreciation.

The following sub-section discusses Vickers' ascending levels of appreciation compatibilities in engaging with others. Vickers (1983) has identified seven levels of appreciation compatibilities that can overlap and co-exist between the interacting parties.

### **2.7.1 Compatibilities of Appreciation**

Vickers' appreciation compatibilities range from no compatibility (violence, threat), to moderate compatibility (bargain, information, persuasion), and to high compatibility (argument, dialogue). The first level of communication is violence. Violence does not promote communication between individuals as it decays trust and provokes responses against it. The next level is threat, a form of aggressive communication of directing the other party to 'do it or else'. Trust exists to the limited extent of fulfilling the conditions imposed by the threatener. At this level of communication there is no compatibility of appreciation between the interacting parties.

The third level of communication is bargain. Bargain implies each interacting party has some degree of shared assumptions that the other party will negotiate on terms and carry out the agreed action. However, each party has the freedom to conduct separate appreciations on the best bargain they can have, or to withdraw from the negotiation. The subsequent level is information. At this level the receiver must be assured that the giver's appreciative system is compatible to meet the receiver's needs of information. But in the act of giving and receiving information, to some extent the appreciative system can be altered. This leads to the next level of communication, persuasion. Here the giver tries to influence the receiver regarding the situation and subsequently tries to change the setting of the appreciative system.

In these three levels of communications (bargain, information, and persuasion), the interacting parties tend to have moderate levels of compatibility in engaging with one another. The interacting parties tend to hold to their individual appreciations and limited effort is shown in shared appreciation.

The fourth ascending level is argument, in which both parties tend to be in a mutual process but each party tries to alter the other party's appreciation and withhold their own. Subsequently, this level ascends to the next level of dialogue, where each party tends to share their appreciations without challenging the other's appreciation. Here, both parties are listening and thinking between and within themselves for a shared understanding (Schein, 1993). Each party no longer maintains individual appreciations but is willing to come together for some degree of shared appreciation.

In summary, it is important to understand the degree of compatibility in engaging with people. Individuals who are working with others need to shift from separate appreciation zones of 'I' and 'You' (bargain, information and persuasion) to shared appreciation of togetherness or 'We' (dialogue). This ascending level of communication from separate appreciation to shared appreciation enables people to establish trust with one another. Individuals trust others in shared appreciation as they feel that the interacting parties care about them and are working in their best interest for a solution (Vivek et al., 2012). Here, their trust increases as they perceive others are engaging in non-opportunistic behaviour (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Individuals feel they are in a meaningful interaction where they can openly

share their concerns and views that are valued by others (Holton, 2001). Trust is essential for effective collaboration (Holton, 2001). In shared appreciation individuals are engaging in a meaningful interaction and relying on each other's contributions to work towards a solution. Both parties are listening, thinking, and working together to reach a mutual understanding (Schein, 1993). Hence, in a shared appreciation, parties establish trust and work collaboratively in a mutual understanding. The aspects of trust and commitment formed in shared appreciation are able to support long-term collaborative relationships with individuals.

The following sub-section discusses how support can be an avenue for firms to gain opportunities to engage in customers' appreciations and work collaboratively towards mutual understanding for solutions.

### **2.7.2 Support: Collaborative Appreciation**

Support is not merely an enhancement of customer service or a fix to goods/service problem (Zuboff & Maxmin, 2002). Here, support has a deeper meaning and includes commitment from a firm to be accountable for people's consumption experiences (Zuboff & Maxmin, 2002), in which goods or services are the mediators for an ongoing relationship between firm and customers. The term 'support' emphasizes individuals' perspective of being "supported and cared for" (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012, p. 8) rather than a firm's perspective of standard support that fits all problems.

According to Vivek et al. (2012), customer engagement can be initiated either by the customer or by the firm. Customer support-seeking behaviour can be categorized as the customer's initiative in engaging with a firm for a shared understanding. Here, the firm gains an opportunity in "supporting customer-initiated engagement" (Vivek et al., 2012 p. 137). According to Zuboff and Maxmin (2002), the underlying purpose of business needs to be redefined to focus on supporting people. Thus, the role of the firm becomes supporting customers' value creation processes and working collaboratively for mutual benefits (Payne et al., 2008; Gronroos & Ravald, 2011).

Support offers mutual benefits for both parties in the relationship. For people, support allows their voices to be heard, responded to, and taken into consideration for possible solutions (Zuboff & Maxmin, 2002). On the other hand, companies committed to support will be better able to establish collaborative relationships and subsequently produce meaningful outputs (goods/services) that are valued by customers. The company, then, is more flexible in working together with customers to produce solutions they value. In the context of support, both firm and customers are engaging in a meaningful interaction and working together in a shared appreciation. Both parties are relying on each other's contributions and working collaboratively in producing beneficial outputs (Payne et al., 2008). Thus, support becomes a collaborative appreciation between parties (Supramaniam et al., 2013).

Here, value creation is no longer predominantly controlled by the firm but becomes a collaborative effort between parties (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Each participant plays a part in contributing value for themselves, and for the other party (Vargo et al., 2008). These collaborative efforts enable effective utilization of resources and avoid the wastage caused by producing outputs that are not desired by people (Varey, 2012). In addition, people are more prone to integrate resources appropriately to arrive at meaningful outcomes. Value destruction through misuse of resources that fails to meet the expectation of the other party (Plé & Caceres, 2010) can be avoided in the process of support.

In summary, customers' support-seeking behaviour or customers' initiated engagement create an avenue for firms to engage in customers' appreciation and be of service to them (Supramaniam et al., 2012). Here, a culture of collaboration prevails in creating mutual benefits for all (Rosenberg & Van West, 1984).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

Reciprocity is an important aspect of S-D logic's view of relationship. However, the current understanding of reciprocity as an exchange, with obligations of helping one another, has retained the residual transactional understanding of service in S-D logic. In an attempt to align with S-D logic's view of service as a process, literature was reviewed from other disciplines beyond marketing - psychology, education, and systems thinking and integrated into Hutcheon's valuing model to understand an individual's phases of valuing. The literature

provides support for S-D logic's view of value as not a perceptual state at an endpoint of time, but as a process that keeps unfolding over time (Vargo, 2009).

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter has been an interesting journey for me as a researcher because I needed to justify a research approach that is not widely known in the marketing discipline. My study investigates how students with disabilities realise value through their support-seeking experiences. The aim of my study is to understand how students with disabilities experience and understand support-seeking. As such, the following research questions were identified to guide my investigation:

1. How do students with disabilities recognise the need for support-seeking?
2. What activities do students with disabilities engage in when they are support-seeking?
3. How do students with disabilities seek support?

In my study, I have adopted a phenomenographic approach that was initially developed within the educational field and has gained popularity subsequently in health services research. In this chapter, I discuss the ontological and epistemological stances that provide the justification for selecting a phenomenographic approach for this study. Thereafter, a detailed research procedure in which I apply the phenomenographic approach follows.

### **3.1 Ontological Position**

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and what can be known about it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). There are ontological assumptions about how reality is known. For example, a dualist ontology is based on the notion of two realms where there is a separation between the knower (subject) and known (object). There are two worlds, a subject and an independent world (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). According to Sandberg (2005), a dualist ontology implies understanding the two entities independently: a subject on its own and the object in itself. Based on a dualist assumption, our experience is viewed as a separate entity (object) that can be perceived by another entity, our mind (subject). Thus, experience is based on the knowledge of what happened in the past, which is referred as precedent (Dewey et al., 1917).

In a non-dualist ontology, the knower (subject) and known (object) are not isolated entities, but internally related to one another. In non-dualist ontology, the person and the world are considered to be in one relationship (Marton & Booth, 1997). According to Barnard et al. (1999, p. 217), there is “a link, a relationship, a tension, an equilibrium” between the subject and object. It is claimed that there is no independent meaning to the subject and object without relating to one for the other (Barnard et al., 1999). Thus, our experience is viewed neither separately in the person nor the world, but in an internal relationship between the two. It is a process of coming to know that precedes our knowledge (Dewey et al., 1917).

I ascribe to a non-dualist ontology, where the person (knower) and the world (known) are not separate entities but constitute an inseparable relation. This ontological stance helps to enable the research process access direct views of people's realities as experienced (Schembri & Sandberg, 2002). It provides a more holistic sense of understanding individuals' experiences in their environment.

As a researcher, I have moved to a non-dualist ontology from a reductionist point of view whereby people's experiences are understood by separating the whole into parts and the explanation of the whole can be summed up by understanding the individual parts (see Ostreng, 2007). Instead of taking the reductionist's view of understanding people's experience as objective and existing as separate entities, I am committed to a holistic sense of people and the world as one relation.

Central to holism is the understanding of the relationships between the parts in terms of "interconnectedness, interdependencies and interactions" (Ostreng, 2007, p. 12). In holism, the understanding of the whole is considered more than or different from the sum of its components (Ostreng, 2007). Thus, the non-dualist ontological stance enables this study to aim for a holistic understanding of the ways that students with disabilities experience and understand a phenomenon.

## 3.2 Epistemological Position

Epistemology reflects how one gets to know reality or “who can be a knower” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). A non-dualist ontology entails the assumption that the subject (the person) and object (the world) are inseparable, and people are actively involved in making sense of what they are experiencing (Schembri & Sandberg, 2002). People’s meanings stem from their own lived experiences.

Marton & Booth (1997) explain this in relation to a learner,

There is not a real world “out there” and a subjective world “in here”. The world is not constructed by the learner, not it is imposed upon her; it is constituted as an internal relation between them. There is only one world, but it is a world that we experience. (p. 13)

A non-dualist ontology takes neither the positivist view that external reality exists independently as facts nor the subjectivist view that knowledge is based purely on mental constructions (Svensson, 1997). Rather a non-dualist ontology positions knowledge as relational, “created through thinking about external reality” (Svensson, 1997, p. 165). Therefore, knowledge is created in relation to the subject (the person) experiencing and the object (the world) as experienced (Saljo, 1997). In other words, people’s conception is in relation to the part of reality as it is experienced and understood (Marton & Booth, 1997). As such, different individuals have different ways of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon, depending on the context of experience. Knowledge understood as relational can

be described best as “a qualitative change in a person’s way of seeing, experiencing, understanding, conceptualizing something in the real world” (Marton & Ramsden, 1988, p. 271).

People’s conceptions describe knowledge (Svensson, 1997) and can be accessed through their experiences (Marton, 1981). As such, investigating individuals’ experiences potentially enables this study to understand their conception of reality as they experience it. A qualitative methodology offered me an opportunity to design my study to have an understanding of the perspectives of students with disabilities on their experiences and understanding of the support-seeking phenomenon.

### **3.3 Methodology**

The choice of methodology for this study depends on both considerations of ontology and epistemological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The theoretical underpinning for the qualitative methodology in this study is a non-dualistic ontological stance and a holistic view of the ways students with disabilities experience a phenomenon. It is also based on the epistemological standpoint of understanding individuals’ conceptions.

Qualitative research is a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible”

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Qualitative research helps to manifest a phenomenon that is less known to others. Therefore, qualitative researchers study a phenomenon in people's natural setting, making an effort to make sense or interpret the phenomenon based on meanings people give to them. Correspondingly, the decision to use a qualitative research is appropriate as this study aims to manifest participants' ways of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon. Individuals' experiences and understandings of a phenomenon are subjective knowledge for others to understand without interpretations. Thus, I employed an interpretive approach to gain understanding of the participants' ways of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon.

### **3.3.1 An Interpretive Approach**

An interpretive approach enables an understanding of participants' subjective meaning process (Markula et al., 2001). Many interpretive researchers align their research approach with phenomenology to support a holistic understanding of people's subjective experiences (Markula et al., 2001). However, I adopt phenomenography, an alternative interpretive approach to phenomenology.

Phenomenography is an empirical qualitative approach that identifies "different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them" (Marton, 1988, p. 144). It was developed within the educational context in Sweden by Ference Marton and his colleagues to understand the different ways that students experience learning.

Phenomenography was not developed based on a phenomenological philosophy as such, but the approach does have important similarities to phenomenology (Svensson, 1997) as both the approaches focus on describing a phenomenon but for different purposes. Etymologically, the term ‘phenomenon’ is derived from Greek ‘phainomenon’, ‘that which appears or is seen’ (Etymology Dictionary Online, 2014). Phenomenography, with the suffix ‘graph’, aims to describe the variations in ways people experience and understand a phenomenon (Marton, 1981). It “becomes the act of representing an object of study as qualitatively distinct phenomena” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 110). In contrast, phenomenology, with the suffix ‘logos’ acknowledges the variations in people’s experiences but aims to identify intersubjective commonality in order to clarify the structure and meaning that constitutes the “singular essence” (Barnard et al., 1999, p. 214) of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 1999; Goulding, 2005).

Like other qualitative research approaches, phenomenography takes the view that subjective knowledge is the object of research, but phenomenography holds that within the subjective knowledge there is “meaning and understanding that reflects various views of the phenomena” (Barnard et al., 1999, p. 215). Phenomenography aims to reveal this variation in the ways people experience and understand a phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). In these ways, phenomenography both builds on and differs from previous research by marketing scholars (e.g., Belk et al., 1989; Craig Thompson et al., 1989; and Arnould & Price, 1993) that emphasizes consumers’ lived experiences but typically presented the findings as a singular essence of a phenomenon from the researcher’s perspective.

Phenomenographic results remain purposefully at a descriptive level of the participants' understanding and the outcomes are presented as categories of description and outcome space. Categories of description refer to the collective meanings of the participants' understandings, which describe the different ways a phenomenon can be understood (Larsson & Holmstrom, 2007). An outcome space is a representation of these categories of description in a logical manner to show the ways people experience a phenomenon. Thus, the study aims not to reach for a singular essence of a phenomenon (as in phenomenology) but to reveal the variations in ways students with disabilities experience and understand a phenomenon.

The subsequent section explains the aspects of a phenomenographic approach that justify the selection of the approach for this study.

### **3.3.2 Phenomenography**

The research approach of phenomenography has distinctive aspects that help to recommend it as the most appropriate approach for this study. These aspects are that it adopts a non-dualist ontology, takes a second-order perspective, is categorised as a qualitative approach, focuses on variations, and provides a holistic view of a phenomenon. All these aspects align with the ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions of this study. The following section discusses these aspects in depth.

First, phenomenography adopts a non-dualist ontology stance where people and the phenomenon are not separate entities but constituted in one relation. According to Marton (2000):

From a non-dualistic ontological perspective there are not two worlds: a real, objective world, on the one hand, and a subjective world of mental representations, on the other. There is only one world, a really existing world, which is experienced and understood in different ways by human beings. It is simultaneously objective and subjective. An experience is a relationship between object and subject, encompassing both. (p. 105)

Saljo (1997, p. 173) explains a non-dualist stance as a position where “the internal (thinking) and the external (the world out there) are not posited as isolated entities”. People and the phenomenon are not separate but in interrelationship that generates meaning (Reed, 2006). Thus, experience is established in the internal relationship between the person and the phenomenon (Linder & Marshall, 2003).

Second, phenomenography takes a second-order perspective or a ‘from-the-inside’ approach to describe people’s realities as experienced rather than the first-order perspective or ‘from-the-outside’ describing what the reality is (Marton, 1981). Thus, the second order perspective does not take the researcher’s perspective as the base of investigation. This is central to phenomenography as it describes the world as experienced by the learner (phenomenon) rather than world as it is (noumenal) (Marton, 2000).

Third, phenomenography is a qualitative approach that focuses on people's description of their ways of experiencing a specific aspect of reality. It emphasises conceptions as a central form of knowledge constituted as a relation between a person (the learner) and the phenomenon (that which to be learned) (Marton & Booth, 1997). The meaning of something for someone at a point of time is in relation to the parts or aspects of the phenomenon that are recognized and held in focus (Marton & Booth, 1997). This process makes one person's experience of a situation qualitatively different from others.

The relation between a person (learner) and the phenomenon (what needs to be learned) can be explained using Dewey's perspective of experience. Dewey (1977, cited in Connell, 1996) emphasizes that:

knowers and knowns should not be viewed as dualistically as isolated elements, but rather as transactionally related (namely integrated and coordinated activities where thoughts, actions, and feelings transact within a context of ongoing behaviour and within a particular matrix of experience. (p. 401)

Dewey (1917, p. 59: emphasised) holds that, "the significant distinction is no longer between the knower and the world; it is between different ways of being in and of the movement of things; between the brute physical way and a purposive, intelligent way".

Fourth, phenomenography focuses on variations in ways that people experience a phenomenon. According to Marton and Booth (1997), the way a person experiences a phenomenon is not the phenomenon itself but a fragment of the phenomenon from the person's perspective. Thus, individuals are seen as "bearers of different ways of experiencing a phenomenon" (Marton & Booth, 1997, 114). Even though people might experience different aspects of a phenomenon, these variations can be described, conveyed, and understood by others (Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002).

Finally, phenomenography provides a holistic view of the investigated phenomenon. Phenomenography reveals the variations in ways people experience a phenomenon as collective regardless of "whether the differences are differences between individuals or within individuals" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 124). The results of a phenomenographic study are presented as categories of description and an outcome space. Categories of description show the variations and similarities in ways people experience a phenomenon. These categories of description are logically structured in an outcome space to show the complexity of the phenomenon that can be experienced.

In summary, I considered phenomenography was the most appropriate approach for the study as it allowed me to meet the objective of this study, to gain a holistic understanding of participants' ways of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon. According to Akerlind (2005, p. 72), the phenomenographic approach provides "a way of looking at collective human experience of

phenomena holistically, despite the fact that such phenomena may be perceived differently by different people and under different circumstances”. The subsequent section discusses how the study was focused within a specific context.

### **3.4 Research Context**

The study aimed to understand how students with disabilities experience and understand support-seeking. As such, the investigated phenomenon for this study was support-seeking. The support-seeking behaviour of students with disabilities marks the departure point of this study.

According to Marton and Booth (1997, p. 111), “a capability for acting in a certain way reflects a capability of experiencing in a certain way”. Marton and Booth (1997) emphasize that we act according to the way we experience our world. Therefore, people’s support-seeking behaviour is in accordance with the way they have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon.

Phenomenography, as well as other qualitative research approaches, regards subjective knowledge as useful for understanding people’s experiences. Barnard et al. (1999, p. 215), claim that “within the subjective knowledge, there is meaning and understanding that reflects various views of the phenomena. These various views are judged to be fundamental to the way in which we act, understand, form our beliefs, and experience”. Bandura (2001) addresses this as

phenomenal consciousness that regulates our actions. According to Bandura (2001), phenomenal consciousness, is where the external reality delivers information to activate the regulative acts non-consciously. In others words, people's world as it is understood gives information for the individuals to regulate their actions. However, people do not always have direct control over what affects them in their environment. Therefore, people appreciate their situation and subsequently take appropriate action to correct the situation if needed. In taking action, people can blend any of the three modes of agency: individual, proxy, and collective (Bandura, 2006). In most circumstances, individuals cannot solve their problems without support from others. People tend to exercise socially mediated agency (proxy agency) in seeking support from others who have the resources, knowledge, and ability to support them (Bandura, 2006).

In recognising people's support-seeking behaviour can differ within contexts, this study focused on understanding the support-seeking phenomenon within a specific context, higher educational services. The subsequent section details my study procedure employing a phenomenographic approach within the specific context of higher education services.

### **3.5 Applying a Phenomenographic Approach**

This study was conducted at a university and a polytechnic in New Zealand. The institutions adhere to the Human Rights Act 1993, and Equal Opportunities and Freedom from Harassment Policy in providing inclusive tertiary education

environments for students with disabilities. A specific unit was established within both institutions, the Disability Support Service, to cater to the learning needs of students with disabilities. Sixteen students with disabilities who presently engage with the Disability Support Service participated in this study.

It is important to clarify the term ‘disability’ used in my study. It refers to a student’s condition of not being able to take part in the normal life on an equal level with other students due to their temporary or permanent impairment (New Zealand Disability Strategy, 2001).

In both institutions, the Disability Support Service currently supports the following students: those with hearing and/or visual impairment; students who are having difficulties reading or writing due to cognitive function; and students with physical disabilities that prevent them moving around independently. The next section elaborates the decision to select students with disabilities as participants, and of a discussion interview as a method to reflect on experiences of students with disabilities in relation to the phenomenon of support-seeking.

### **3.5.1 Participants: Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities represent a small percentage of the student population enrolled in higher education institutions. Students with disabilities were selected

as participants for this study as they have higher tendencies to seek support from others to solve their problems (MacArthur & Kelly, 2004).

The general understanding is that people with disabilities are passive recipients and unable to cope with their everyday life situations independently (Thomas, 2004). This generalisation has led many to think that people with disabilities need help and willingly accept others who intervene in their lives. This thinking has changed to where people with disabilities are no longer seen as passive but active in constructing their problems (Thomas, 2004). According to Goode's (2007) research, students with disabilities have come to terms with their impairments and proactively access learning and teaching. These students were found to be no longer battling with the system but demanding their entitled rights for support. Here, the term 'support' emphasizes the student's perspective rather than a third party's perspective of standard support that fits all.

A purposeful sampling method was employed in the study because students with disabilities have higher likelihood to have experienced the support-seeking phenomenon. This enabled the study to have students who could share richer descriptions of their experiences and conceptions of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). According to Trigwell (2000), pre-selection of participants with rich conceptions of realities means that they are able to manifest extreme variations in the ways they have experienced the phenomenon. Here, the primary aspect of the phenomenographic approach is not to subgroup, compare, or forecast people's conception of a phenomenon, but to express the variations in ways people

interpret their reality (Marton, 1981). Therefore, this study focuses was on the ways students with disabilities experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon as a whole, and not on their specific individual disabilities.

According to Bruce et al. (2004), there should be a sufficient number of participants in a research project to capture the variations in people's conceptions. Between 15 to 20 interviews are considered as adequate to reveal the breath of variations and to be within a manageable depth of descriptions (Trigwell, 2000). In traditional qualitative research, researchers cease the number of participants once the information reaches a saturation point when no new category emerge (Morse, 1994). However, in phenomenography, 15 to 20 interviews have proven to be adequate to attain saturation of categories (Dunkin, 2000; Trigwell, 2000). In this study, saturation of categories occurred with 16 participants (15 from one institution plus one from another institution) when the researcher noted that no additional aspects of categories were emerging in the process of abstracting the categories of description. The purpose was not to achieve a representative sample of students with disabilities across multiple institutions; rather, the purpose was to capture the variations in participants' experiences and to achieve saturation in aspects of categories. Therefore, in this study sampling ceased at 16 participants.

### **3.5.2 Interview as a Method**

In phenomenographic research, the interview is the most common method used in data collection (Marton & Booth, 1997). I employed face-to-face interviews with

my participants as it enables them to speak freely about their experiences and it gives me as a researcher the opportunity to check their meanings constantly as they share their experiences (Bruce et al., 2004). The focus of the interview was to understand the different ways the participants have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon. Therefore, the interviews were not focused on understanding the individual or the support-seeking phenomenon separately, but on the relation between both of them. Each interview contributed a fragment of understanding as to how the phenomenon has been experienced and understood (Yates et al., 2012).

Interviews were semi-structured to encourage the participants to reflect on their experiences without leading them to a response to specific questions (Trigwell, 2000). The following section provides details on the design of the interviews that were conducted.

### **3.5.2.1 Semi-structured interview**

The aim of the phenomenographic interview is to manifest the ways the participants have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon. Therefore, an interview guide was prepared in advance to initiate a flow of conversation with the participants. The interview guide comprised the following questions: What was your support-seeking situation? How did you handle the situation? What happened as you did so? How did things work out as a result? Each question was designed to trigger the participant to think and reflect on their

experiences. The response to a particular question helped to develop a trail of other questions for a fuller understanding of the participant's experience.

For example, the following trail of questions was from one of the interviews conducted in this study. Participants were identified with numbers to remain anonymous in the study. The extracted quotes are cited according to the participant's number and the page number of their transcript (see Appendix C).

‘How do you recognize that you are having this problem?’ (T5:2)

‘What was the experience like? How do you know?’ (T5:2)

‘Do you realise that during the examination?’(T5:2)

‘Throughout the process of the examination you felt the same way?’(T5:3)

The probing questions played a significant role in exploring the different aspects of the participant's experience. Even though the interview guide was in place, the probing questions in each interview which directed the path of conversations were different (Marton, 1988). When participants were doubtful or in a fuzzy state and said ‘I don't know’, ‘I can't remember’, or ‘I'm not sure’ the interview guide helped to direct the participant's attention to the next question.

The interview aims to capture the variations in ways participants experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon. According to Marton & Booth (1997, p. 159), “the very same ways of experiencing something can be found in

such diverse acts as learning, problem-solving or remembering”. People’s conception varies depending on the aspects of the phenomenon discerned and held in focus (Marton & Booth, 1997). Therefore, each participant contributed to some part or aspects of support-seeking phenomenon as experienced. I employed a critical incident technique method to capture the variations between the participants’ ways of experiencing the phenomenon.

### **3.5.2.2 Critical Incident Technique**

A critical incident technique is an appropriate method to “describe a real-world phenomenon based on thorough understanding” (Bitner et al., 1990, p. 73). Chell (1998) describes the critical incident technique method as,

a qualitative interview procedure which facilitates the investigation of significant occurrences (events, incidents, processes, or issues) identified by the respondent, the way they are managed, and the outcomes in terms of perceived effects. The objective is to gain understanding of the incident from the perspective of the individual, taking into account cognitive, affective and behavioural elements. (p. 48)

A critical incident technique (CIT) method was employed as it takes the participant’s perspective of expressing their understanding of a phenomenon in their own words (Gremler, 2004). In this study, participants were asked to describe their support-seeking experiences in relation to incidents of their choice. As the participants told their stories, I asked questions in line with their

expressions about those incidents. Here, the participants' stories captured the specific descriptions of incidents that they identified as critical incidents (Bitner et al., 1990).

Then, I interpreted the identified critical incidents from the participant's perspective. This exercise is different from traditional CIT research using a content analysis approach where the categorised incidents are based on the researcher's perspective. In this study, the aim is to understand the variations in ways the participants have experienced and understood the phenomenon of support-seeking. According to Marton and Booth (1997), the variations can be reflected in the different aspects of the support-seeking phenomenon that are discerned and held in focus, and those aspects that recede to the background of awareness. Here, a participant's conception corresponds to the ways of experiencing a specific aspect of a phenomenon (Sandberg, 1997). Thus, the CIT method enables the researcher to reveal the variations in ways participants have experienced the phenomenon through their own stories.

CIT studies treat the participants' stories as reports of facts (Gremier, 2004). People are seen as storytellers who provide accurate and objective reports, which then can be classified as facts to explain events (Hopkinson & Hogarth-Scott, 2001). However, Saljo (1997) questioned the use of utterances or verbal expressions gathered through interviews as indicators of ways of experiencing in phenomenography research. The author's concern was whether people's utterances could be considered as a way of talking or a way of experiencing. In

other words, the clarity issue involving the difference between what is meant and what is said needs to be addressed (Saljo, 1997). The following section addresses participants' utterances as indicators of ways of experiencing.

### **3.5.2.3 Utterance /Verbal expression**

According to Anderberg (2000), an utterance comprises more than a word but not necessarily a sentence or proposition in language usage. In this study, I adopt Brentano's (1874) idea of intentionality to explain that utterances are participants' intended meanings expressed in words. Brentano's (1874, cited in Morrison, 1970 p. 28) claim that "all mental phenomena are acts", positions thinking as an intentional act. Brentano holds that thinking is always about a referred object, resulting in different thoughts in line with the intentions we have (Anderberg, 2000). Thus, people may use different language terms to describe the same conception (Svensson, 1997).

Intentionality is central to the term 'conception' in phenomenography referring to the different ways people experience and understand a phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). People's ways of understanding a phenomenon can be explained by the distinction between 'what' and 'how' aspects. The 'what' aspect explains what the subject aims at, and the 'how' aspect describes how meaning is formed (Larsson & Holmstrom, 2007). Others can know people's understanding of a phenomenon through their communication and action (Saljo, 1997). However,

Svensson (1997) believes people's conception is most accessible through communication.

Therefore, during the interview sessions participants were asked to clarify the meanings of the utterances used. I reiterated the participant's words to confirm their meanings. Follow-up questions were useful in assisting the participants to think, pause, and reflect on their understanding of the support-seeking phenomenon. Each interview, therefore, involved a process of reflecting and confirming with participants in order to understand their intended meanings in relation to their own understanding of support-seeking phenomenon. The next section elaborates in detail on how the interviews were conducted.

### **3.6 Interview Stages**

Before starting the interviewing process, I had to apply for ethical approval from the university to conduct the study. Due to the sensitivity of the study involving students with disabilities, the ethics application was carefully drafted with supporting documents. A participant information sheet was prepared explaining the following: the purpose of the research, the potential risk involved and the provision of counselling, the nature of voluntary participation and withdrawal rights, an assurance of confidentiality of the interviews and protection of the participants' identities. A consent letter for each participant, the interview guide, and a pamphlet were the other documents submitted with the ethics application. The ethics committee was thorough with the application ensuring all reasonable

steps were addressed explicitly to comply with the university's regulation pertaining to research involving disabled students.

The ethics committee suggested that another institution participate in the study. Following the approval of the ethics application, I approached a polytechnic that has a Disability Support Service unit similar to the university in the same vicinity. The choice of a nearby institution was for the flexibility of conducting interviews in both institutions simultaneously. I wrote to the Coordinator of Disability Support Service at the polytechnic about my interest in conducting the study. The coordinator spoke to the management and gained their consent to allow me to conduct the study. I was asked to submit a copy of the approved ethics and other supporting documents to them.

The research commenced at the same time in both institutions. The interviews were conducted in two phases. The first phase was the preliminary stage, where five students with disabilities from the university participated. At this stage, no students with disabilities from the polytechnic volunteered to be a part of the study. The second phase was the main interview process involving 11 students with disabilities. Almost all participants are from the university and only one from the polytechnic. The researcher could not achieve an equal balance of participants from both institutions because the student participation was on a voluntary basis.

The next section discusses the interview process and thereafter, the reflections from the interview phases.

### **3.6.1 Preliminary Stage**

#### **Interview Process**

I established guidelines according to three stages in the interview process: pre-interview, interview, and post-interview. At the pre-interview stage, I approached the Coordinator of Disability Support Service at the university and polytechnic to inform their students about the research. The coordinators were briefed on the research and assured that the students' welfare would be given utmost priority throughout the interviewing process. The coordinators agreed to send out a group email with attachments of the participant information sheet and a copy of a pamphlet outlining the research to their students. Students who were interested in participating in the research were asked to contact me directly.

At the initial stage, 14 students from the university showed interest in participating in the research and none from the polytechnic. However, in the process of scheduling the interviews, only five students agreed and turned up for their interviews. The coordinators agreed to have the interviews conducted in the same building as the Disability Support Service unit during office hours to ensure the counselling services were available for the students in time of discomfort. The coordinators were aware of the scheduled interviews and supported this study by allocating the interview rooms.

For the interviews, I was equipped with an interview guide, a laptop, and a dictaphone for recording purposes. Before the interview started, some time was

reserved to understand any special arrangements needed for the student and a brief introduction of both parties. The room had a lounge setting with sofas and was adjacent to a pantry for coffee, which created a relaxing atmosphere for the interviews. The interview started with me explaining the purpose of the study, reaffirming the ethical aspects of confidentiality, protection of identity, withdrawal rights, and consents in participating and recording their interview. When the participant agreed and gave a written consent to participate, the interview started with the participant relating their support-seeking experiences.

The aim of the interview was to understand the ways the participant experiences and understands the support-seeking phenomenon; therefore, questions were focused on probing the participant's expressions of reality, and following up on those expressions. This kind of interview allows the participant to be in a dialogue with the researcher (Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002). The participant got the opportunity to pause, think, and recall their experience at their pace, and I listened and asked questions about their experience without prior assumptions. The interview guide was useful to encourage a flow of conversation with the participant. Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for interpretation.

At the post-interview stage, all interviews were transcribed word by word as spoken by the participants. According to Reed (2006), a participant's intonation, pauses, and other reflections can be eliminated in transcribing, as spoken words transcribed accurately tend to be the base for phenomenography research. Here,

transcribing without any restatement allows the transcripts to secure the participant's intended meaning of the phenomenon as expressed (Sin, 2010). Two other academic researchers were involved in listening to the recorded interviews, checking on the accuracy of the transcripts, and providing their perspectives at the interpretation stage.

The following section discusses the reflections on the interviews conducted at the preliminary stage. Here, the reflection helped to gain insights to improve interview techniques for the subsequent interviews. This is a common practice in qualitative research that is often viewed as a progressive way of improving this study (Creswell, 2003).

## **Reflection**

I found three aspects associated with the preliminary interview that needed to be re-considered prior to the subsequent interviews. The first aspect was the participants' willingness to share their experiences: I found that students with disabilities had rich support-seeking experiences but their willingness to share depended on how comfortable they were with me as a researcher. Therefore, a brief explanation of my role as a listener to the participant's stories at the beginning of interview helped the participant to be more relaxed in sharing their experience. The participants were keen to share their experiences when I as the researcher showed interest in knowing more about their stories. I found that

listening and showing genuine interest helped the participants to stay connected with me as the researcher.

The second aspect was asking the right probing questions. I experienced that understanding the participant's meanings, and simultaneously posing the next probing question was a skill that I improved after each interview. I made it a practice to transcribe the interview immediately after the session and made a list of questions asked in the interview. Here, I learned to understand how my questioning could be improved before moving on to the next interview. I found that the exercise was useful to improve probing questions for the subsequent interviews. I noticed a gradual improvement from one interview to the other.

The final aspect was the use of the interview guide. I noticed that participants shared other aspects of their life stories along with their support-seeking experiences. Here, I learned to listen with patience and asked question from the interview guide to focus on the support-seeking experience. I managed to maintain a balance of respecting each participant's views and as well as exploring the research area. My interview guide helped this study to trigger the topic of conversations that the participants wished to share about their support-seeking experiences. I noticed that structuring the interview questions more broadly enabled the participants to determine the dimension of support-seeking experience that they wished to share.

Reflections from the preliminary interviews were useful insights for me to conduct the second phase of interviews. The second phase was conducted soon after the preliminary stage. The interview procedure remained similar to that followed in the preliminary stage. The next section elaborates how the second phase of interviews was carried out and thereafter, I present reflections on the process.

### **3.6.2 Main Interviews**

At the second phase of the interviews, I received more responses from the university's students with disabilities to participate in the study. Nine new students with disabilities emailed their interest and another four students with disabilities from the earlier stage were interested in continuing their participation in the study. Out of the 13 university students with disabilities who showed interest, 10 students participated in the interviews. In addition, two students with disabilities from the polytechnic emailed but only one student attended the interview. In total, 11 students with disabilities participated in the second phase of the interviews.

I followed a similar interview process to that followed in the preliminary stage except that a few students with disabilities preferred to have their interviews in rooms available in the central library of the university. This was mainly due to their tight schedule of classes during the semester and their preference to have their interviews in-between classes in the library. The Coordinator of the

Disability Support Centre was aware of the change in interview venue. Six interviews were conducted in the library and four interviews at the Disability Support Centre at the university. The polytechnic participant had the interview in a meeting room arranged by their coordinator.

The following section elaborates on my reflections on the second phase of interview conducted in both institutions.

### **Reflection**

In my experience, the second phase of the interviews generated richer descriptions from participants. I believe that I had become more familiar with the probing techniques that I learned throughout the process. However, I found that two aspects influenced this stage of the interviews.

The first aspect was the interview venue. Participants were more relaxed in the informal room setting arranged by the Disability Support Service centre compared to the study rooms in the library. The study rooms are available on hourly basis and designed to facilitate students' discussion. I noticed that participants' kept track of time during the interviews held in between classes. Overall, I noticed that each interview tended to be different in terms of its context: setting, interview slots, and participant's commitment to engage. Therefore, at the end of each interview session, I wrote brief notes to record details of the interviews.

The final aspect was the participant's ability to express his or her own understanding. I found that some participants were expressive and detailed in their description. On the other hand, there were participants who seemed to describe less even with the help of probing. These participants appeared to be having difficulty in recalling and remembering their own experiences. I realised that not all participants are equal in terms of expressing their experiences but treated all participants as equal contributors to the phenomenon that was being studied.

In summary, overall the interviews were conducted without much difficulty as participants did not experience any discomfort that needed them to be referred to a counselling session. The interpretation process commenced soon after all the interviews were conducted. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed word by word into written scripts for interpretation. At the transcribing stage, two other researchers were involved in listening and checking on the accuracy of the transcripts. The transcripts represent the textual form of participants' expressions of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon. I then used the individual transcripts collectively to interpret the variations and similarities in participants' ways of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon.

The variations and similarities of meanings were abstracted as categories of description representing dimensions of how the participants understood the phenomenon. In the next section, I outline the process of abstracting the categories of description from the participants' transcripts.

### **3.7 Process of Finding Categories of Description**

The purpose of this study was to understand the variations in ways the participants have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon. The primary outcomes of this study resulted in categories of description and an outcome space. Categories of description represent participants' conceptions of the support-seeking phenomenon as experienced and an outcome space maps the logical relations between these categories of description.

Categories of description are formed as the researcher works to understand participants' conceptions and organize them into similarities and variations in ways of experiencing the same phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). Each category of description then represents a way of experiencing the phenomenon. There are three criteria identified by Marton and Booth (1997) for the quality of a set of categories of description:

- i) Each category of description needs to be a distinct way of experiencing the phenomenon.
- ii) The categories need to be in a logical relationship with one another.
- iii) A limited number of categories of description need to be used to represent the variations in ways of experiencing the phenomenon.

Categories of description are the object of study representing the participants' conceptions of reality as experienced. As such, the study may or may not have all

possible conceptions of the support-seeking phenomenon (Barnard et al., 1999). Nevertheless, following analytic steps of interpreting the participants' conceptions while preserving the participants' descriptive language helps to ensure their conceptions will be revealed (Barnard et al., 1999). Therefore, I followed the series of analytic steps recommended by Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) to represent the participants' conceptions in this study. Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) have identified seven steps that set a clear procedure that I found useful for this study. The following discussion outlines the steps I followed to abstract categories of descriptions from the participants' transcripts.

The study aims to allow the categories of description to emerge from the collective meanings of participants' transcripts. Therefore, the following practices put forward by Akerlind (2012) were helpful for me to allow the categories of description to emerge and not to be pre-determined in advance. First, the researcher should set aside any pre-assumptions on how the phenomenon can be experienced, have an open mind about the participants' ways of experiencing the phenomenon and avoid drawing early conclusions on the categories of description. Second, to ensure the collective views of participants' conceptions are maintained, the researcher should read the entire transcripts in an iterative manner rather than focusing on individual transcripts and their categories. Third, the researcher should look for variation in meanings across the transcripts, and then search for the structural relationships between meanings.

The following section outlines how the categories of description were abstracted from the participants' transcripts following Dahlgren and Fallsberg's (1991) proposed seven analytic steps. The identified steps are 1. Familiarisation; 2. Compilation; 3. Condensation; 4. Grouping; 5. Comparing; 6. Naming; and 7. Contrastive Comparison. Even though the steps are in a sequential order, the categories of description were abstracted in iterative manner (McCosker et al., 2003) throughout the interpretation process.

Table 4 as shown below provides a snapshot of how steps 2 to 6 were conducted in this study. Step 1 was familiarisation with the entire transcripts conducted throughout the process and Step 7 involved contrastive comparison of description of each category and between categories. As such, these two steps were not shown within the table.

**Table 4: Analytic Steps of Abstracting Categories of Description**

Interview Questions	Participants' Expressions of Realities
<p>What was the situation? (Step 2-Compilation)</p> <p>(Step 3 –Condensation)</p>	<p><u>Sense</u> "I just get the sense the place is maybe, you kind of feel like the normal people are over here, and weird people over here" [TP1:3]</p> <p><u>Feeling</u> "I was conscious of feeling increasingly frustrated" [T1:4]</p> <p><u>Recall</u> "I constantly look back" (T5:3)</p> <p><u>Realise</u> "it was so painful that I couldn't open the doors"[T2:2]</p>
<p>What happened in that situation?</p> <p>(Step 4- Grouping) (Step 5-Comparison)</p>	<p><u>Recognize</u> "...the work load was huge for me"[T5:2]</p> <p><u>Preference</u> "I need someone who's preferably not deaf and who can write fast" [TP4:6]</p> <p><u>Compare</u> "this is my experience in [] good experience this is my experience at the actual [] and it was really really dreadful" [TP4:4]</p>
<p>How did you handle the situation?</p> <p>(Step 6-Naming)</p>	<p><u>Anticipate</u> "I was thinking worst case scenario you know like oh my goodness I won't have a test" [T11:2]</p> <p><u>Rely</u> "It was my own idea really" [T2:6]</p> <p><u>Conclude</u> "it was difficult to keep going with it as it drained me so much. So I ended up stop not going" [T8:3]</p>
<p>What was the outcome of the situation?</p>	<p><u>Strive</u> "if I kind of felt it's coming on I'll be like I need to do something so I actually take action" [T10:2]</p> <p><u>Regulating</u> "I will literally complain to the tutor and go, you need to fix this" [T7:6]</p> <p><u>Learning</u> "I need to fail that paper actually to learn that lesson I reckon" [T3:11]</p>

## **Familiarization**

The first step was familiarization. At this stage, I listened to the audio-recorded interviews several times and I read and reread the whole set of transcripts throughout the process. At this initial stage, I tried to understand the ways of experiencing from the individual transcripts. I posed two questions to myself: what is the participant focusing on? and how does the participant explain it? I made short notes identifying the important things the participant was saying. As my reading continued, I became more open to interpretations and kept going through the transcripts to make sense of the earlier comments made.

## **Compilation**

The familiarization step was followed by compilation. Here, four research questions acted as guidelines in extracting participants' expression of realities that significantly addressed these questions. The interview questions were 1) what was the situation? 2) what happened in that situation?, 3) how was the situation was handled?, and 4) what was the outcome of the situation? The respective expressions of realities were coded and compiled according to the questions. Here, I prepared a worksheet comprising a table with three columns: the first column with the list of research questions; the second column with participants' illustrative quotes; and third column with my interpretation of meaning. This worksheet allows me to work iteratively to sort the participants' quotes according to the relevance of the questions.

## **Condensation**

The third step was condensation. Here, the extended expressions of realities were reduced to identify the key answer to a particular question. At this stage, the selected utterances that were found to be most relevant to the question were chosen. The selected quotes become a pool of meanings that provided the basis for interpretation. Here, the exercise moved from looking at an individual transcript to the pool of collective meanings of all transcripts. However, each quote was labelled to identify the transcript it belonged to and the collective quotes represented meanings for a particular question. This enables the quotes to have relevance to both individual as well as collective context to form groupings in the next stage.

## **Grouping**

The next task was grouping the selected utterances into similar ideas to form tentative categories. At this stage, the utterances identified the similarities in ways the participants addressed the same issue. Here, I noticed that the participants' used different terms but tended to signify the same underlying meaning in addressing the issue. Therefore, grouping was done based on viewing "x is seen as y" with supporting quotes from the transcripts (Lybeck et al., 1988, p. 101).

## **Comparison**

The fifth step was comparison, to distinguish preliminary categories from one another. The associated quotes in each category formed a boundary to be differentiated from another category. However, this was the phase where the quotes were arranged and re-arranged to reflect the group attributes. At this stage, I included an additional step in identifying the sub-groups for each category. These sub-groups were named to reflect the essence of the category.

## **Naming**

At this stage, categories were labelled tentatively in accordance with the essence and the quotes represented. Each category represented participants' focus of attention on a specific aspect of reality as they experienced it.

## **Contrastive Comparison**

Finally, the last step was contrastive comparison reflecting the description of each category and the in-between categories. Here is the first outcome of the study, a set of categories of description that is distinctive in nature featuring the different ways the participants experienced the support-seeking phenomenon. Each category of description had a set of quotes from the transcripts that was able to define the nature of it. At this stage, I had tentatively labelled the categories of

description that emerged from the interpretation. According to Akerlind (2007), bringing additional researchers to provide feedback on the ways the interpretation was done enables the study to make more contributions to complete understanding of a phenomenon. Akerlind (2007) further argues there are no right or wrong outcomes in a phenomenography study but more or less outcomes depending on the interpretations made to understand the study. As such, two other academic researchers were involved in the process of listening to the audio interviews and providing their perspectives on how I had conducted the initial classifications of categories of description for the study. The researchers were also involved in the subsequent stage of confirming the structural relationships between the categories of description presented in an outcome space. According to Marton (2000, p. 105), an outcome space turns out to be a mirror image of a 'phenomenon', "the things as it appears to us" contrasted with Kantian 'noumenon', "the thing as such". The following section discusses the outcome space that communicates the different ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon.

### **3.8 Outcome space**

The outcome space consists of a set of related categories of description that depicts the different ways of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon and the relationship between them (Marton & Booth, 1997). According to the originators of phenomenography, Marton and Booth (1997), an outcome space stands to reveal the nature of the support-seeking phenomenon and the distinct ways the participants have experienced and understood the phenomenon.

The qualitatively different ways of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon are often viewed to form an hierarchical inclusive structure, in which some ways of experiencing are more complex than others (Marton & Booth, 1997). However, the structure of an outcome space does not necessarily have to be a linear hierarchy but it may contain branches (Akerlind, 2012). The outcome space can also be presented in a graphical presentation depicting the way the categories of description are related to each other (Bruce et al., 2004). In this study, the outcome space is presented in a form of a spiral. Etymologically, the term ‘spiral’ is derived from the Latin word ‘spiralis’, which in figurative sense is a ‘progressive movement in one direction’ (Etymology Dictionary Online, 2014).

In summary, the primary aims of this study were to describe the different ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon and to illustrate logically the relationship between the ways of experiencing the phenomenon in an

outcome space. Thus, the outcome space in my study comprises the support-seeking phenomenon as well as the distinct ways that it can be experienced.

### **3.9 Credibility of the Study**

In this study, the non-dualist ontology (multiple realities) and subjectivist epistemological stance (variation in conceptions) limited the expressions of realities to be replicated for the purpose of reliability and validity. Therefore, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) 'trustworthiness' concept replaces reliability and validity checks for this study.

To establish the 'trustworthiness' for the study, I aim to describe participants' interpretation of realities in a faithful manner (Sandberg, 1997). Interviews were transcribed verbatim and two other academic researchers listened to the recorded interviews and confirmed the transcribed scripts.

In addition, inter-judge agreements were determined to find out the percentage of agreement on the initial classification of the categories of description. The two academic researchers were involved in reading the transcripts, and confirming the degree of agreement, based on my reasoning in deriving the initial classification of categories. According to Sandberg (1997), the researcher cannot be separated from intentionally constructing the categories of description based on the researcher's interpretation of individuals' conceptions of reality.

Therefore, a detailed research procedure was established and discussed in the earlier sections to demonstrate the selection of the participants, formulation of research questions, conducting the interviews, transcription of interviews, and the sequential steps followed in coding the transcripts to categories of description. This allowed me as a researcher to exhibit how the research had been conducted to others in achieving a faithful interpretation of each participant's conception of reality (Sandberg, 1997).

### **3.10 Limitations**

The study aims for a holistic understanding of students' with disabilities ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. However, the conducted study has limitations in the following aspects: research context, student with disabilities as participants, and the outcome space's contribution to understanding the phenomenon.

The study was conducted within the educational context, to understand how students with disabilities experience and understand the support-seeking phenomenon in relation to their studies. According to a human agency perspective, people do not have all the resources, time, and energy to control independently what happens in their everyday lives. As such, they try to connect with others who have the resources and ability to support them to achieve the outcomes they desire (Bandura, 2001). Therefore, support-seeking is a common phenomenon in people's everyday lives that can be investigated across different

contexts. However, this study provides insight on how students with disabilities have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon within their study context.

The research design, which focused on selecting students with disabilities as participants, entailed several constraints. Due to the sensitivity of interviewing students with disabilities, the scheduled interviews needed to be conducted in the proximity of counselling services. As such, the interviews conducted during the office hours limited the flexibility and availability of the students with disabilities for their interviews. This resulted in fewer interviews conducted relative to the number of students with disabilities who volunteered to participate in this study. Nevertheless, the numbers of interviews were in the required range to reveal the variations in ways the students with disabilities experienced the phenomenon.

Finally, in this study it is not possible to claim that the outcome space has represented all the possible ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. The outcome space in this study represents the variation in ways the participants have experienced and understood the phenomenon. The participants' willingness to reflect on what they have experienced during the interviews played an important part in representing the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon. In spite of this, the study contributes to the understanding of the different ways the participants have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon. The study provides a starting point

for other researchers to explore the support-seeking phenomenon (e.g., in other contexts, with other populations).

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter provides an insight into the ontological and epistemological stance that provided the base for my choice of method in this study. This study adopts a non-dualist ontology and epistemologically viewed participants' perspectives of experiencing and understanding the phenomenon. This study aims to gain a holistic understanding of the variations in ways students with disabilities experience and understand the support-seeking phenomenon. As such, the phenomenographic approach was considered to be the most appropriate approach as it rests firmly on the ontological and epistemological stance of this study, and it can provide a holistic view in representing the variations in ways students with disabilities experience and understand the support-seeking phenomenon. Therefore, a detailed research procedure employing the phenomenography approach was demonstrated in this study.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses four key findings about valuing as a process. More specifically, the findings relate to the aspects of valuing abstracted as the four categories of description: 1. Knowing; 2. Understanding; 3. Judging, and 4. Acting. Categories of description represent the variation in the ways that the participants have expressed their experience and understanding of the support-seeking phenomenon. An outcome space reveals the relationship between these different ways of experiencing the phenomenon. As a basis for the detailed description of results I began by briefly describing categories of description and outcome space in general.

I then move on to discuss the four categories of description (Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting) in three parts. First, they are discussed in relation to the categories of description which were abstracted from the participants' transcripts. Second, in each category of description, the referential aspect that denotes the meanings of selected participants' expressions of realities, is identified from the transcripts. Third, the structural aspect of each category that represents the structure of awareness is explained in terms of internal and external horizons.

The discussion of the categories of description is followed by the final goal of this study which is to represent the categories of description in an outcome space. The outcome space comprises a set of related categories of description that represents the variation in the ways the support-seeking phenomenon can be experienced. An outcome space closely represents “the thing as it appears to us” as in a phenomenon (Marton 2000, p. 105).

#### **4.1 Categories of Description (COD)**

The interpretation process started with familiarisation with the interview transcripts. The 16 interviews, that resulted in 165 pages of transcripts, were read collectively to abstract the similarities and variations in the participants’ ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. I employed a systematic process of interpretation proposed by Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) comprising the following seven stages that were conducted iteratively: familiarisation, compilation, condensation, grouping, comparing, naming, and contrastive comparison. In this chapter, discussion focuses specifically on contrastive comparison, describing the sub-categories of each category and exhibiting the relationship within and between these subcategories.

Before moving on to discuss contrastive comparison, it is important to understand the connection between participants’ conceptions and how these relate to categories of description. Categories of description represent the variation in ways of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon expressed by the participants.

Each category of description represents a conception or way of experiencing a specific aspect of reality (Sandberg, 1997). According to Marton and Booth (1997), terms such as ‘conceptions’, ‘ways of understanding’, ‘ways of comprehending’ and ‘conceptualizations’ have been used interchangeably as ‘ways of experiencing’ in phenomenographic studies. Therefore, it is important to understand that categories of description were used to represent the participants’ conceptions in a faithful manner and not claimed to be equivalent to them (Bowden, 2000).

Marton and Booth (1997) made a clear distinction between conceptions and categories of description by explaining:

When we talk about “a way of experiencing something” we usually do so in terms of individual awareness...When we talk about “categories of description” we usually do so in terms of qualitatively different ways a phenomenon may appear to people of one kind or another. Thus, “categories of description” refer to the collective level. (p. 128)

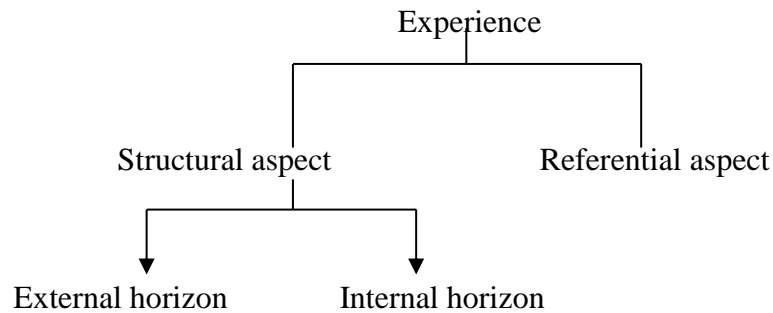
As such, conception refers to an individual’s ways of experiencing a specific aspect of reality and categories of description represent the collective conceptions as experienced by the individuals.

Marton and Booth (1997) state that a way of experiencing depends upon the individual’s awareness. Marton (2000) claims that the term ‘awareness’ is employed interchangeably with the term ‘consciousness’. These terms are commonly used to indicate a division into two categories: awareness

(consciousness) as opposed to unawareness (unconsciousness/subconsciousness) (Marton, 2000). A person is considered to be aware of one thing or a few things at a point of time and all other things are categorised as outside the person's awareness. Marton and Booth (1997) moved from this dichotomic sense of these terms to a structural differentiation of awareness. They identified two important features in human awareness. First, one cannot be aware of everything at the same time in the same way. This accounts for the variations between individuals in experiencing a similar phenomenon. Second, one can be aware of everything but not in the same way. Here, the awareness is layered. Some aspect of a reality becomes the core (figure) and held in the focus of awareness, and others recede to the surroundings of the core (ground). Therefore, "qualitatively different ways of experiencing something can be understood in terms of differences in the structure or organization of awareness at a particular moment or moments" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 100). In other words, the same person can experience in different ways corresponding to the aspects of the phenomenon that is discerned and are simultaneously held in focal awareness at a point of time.

A way of experiencing, therefore, relates to the way a person's awareness is structured (Marton & Booth, 1997). It comprises two aspects: a 'what' aspect that relates to a focused object (referential aspect), and a 'how' aspect, which relates to the act (structural aspect). These two aspects, referential and structural, can be explained using Marton and Booth's (1997) illustration as provided below:

**Figure 3: The Unit of a Science of Experience, a way of experiencing something (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 88).**



The structural aspect of experiencing comprises two elements: the external horizon and internal horizon. The external horizon refers to the “way in which the phenomenon we experience in a certain way is discerned from its context, and ...how it is related to its context as well” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 89). To experience something is to discern a whole from its context, and simultaneously show its relationship to the context and other related contexts. The internal horizon refers to discerning the whole as parts and simultaneously being able to relate these parts to each other as a whole. Both external horizon and internal horizon represent structural aspects involving discernment of the whole from its context as well as discernment of the parts and their interrelationship within the whole.

In order to discern something from its context, one has to recognise and identify it as a particular thing. Here, a person assigns meaning to it, which is referred to as the referential aspect. Structure, therefore, implies meaning and at the same time, meaning implies structure. Both structural and referential aspects are experienced together and closely related to each other (Marton & Booth, 1997).

In summary, a way of experiencing something (comprising both the structural and referential aspects) is the “set of different aspects of the phenomenon as experienced that are simultaneously present in focal awareness” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 101). Therefore, each participant in this study contributes some aspect of the support-seeking phenomenon as experienced and understood by that person. Categories of description were used to represent these collective participants’ conceptions.

In the next section, the discussion focuses on contrastive comparison, presented in two parts. First, the discussion focuses on the categories of description that denote the participants’ conceptions of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon. Here, each category of description comprises sub-categories that use selected participants’ expressions of realities to exhibit the richness of the participants’ conceptions. The participants’ expressions of realities are identified by the participant’s number and the page number of the interview after each quote. As the interviews were conducted in two phases, the participants were identified as ‘Transcript Preliminary’/ ‘TP’ for the first phase of interviews and ‘Transcript’/ ‘T’ for the second phase of interviews. Second, the structural aspects of each category of description are discussed in terms of internal and external horizons. This distinction helps to understand which aspects of support-seeking phenomenon were focused as core in participants’ awareness (internal horizon) and which other aspects of the phenomenon receded to the surrounding of the core (external horizon).

In this study, four categories of description represented participants' conceptions of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon: Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting. The following table provides a summary of these categories of description with sub-categories using significant elements of selected participants' quotes, before discussing them in detail in the next section.

**Table 5: Summary of Categories of Description**

Category of Description	Sub-category	Significant Elements of Participants' Quotes
Knowing -A way of becoming aware	Sensing	<i>"I just get in there and try and don't want to get attention try to be okay, was not letting me to do it" (TP2:5)</i> <i>"And, halfway the timeframe, it was quite clear to me, that I was just not going to get done" (T1:5)</i>
	Feeling	<i>"I just felt like I'd run a marathon even though it was still morning" (T8:7)</i> <i>"I felt personally. Like the whole sexual abuse thing is a key event in my life and a lot of my life today revolves around what happened" (TP5:3)</i>
	Recalling	<i>"the primarily stuff I was going to describe here I have described...I mean probably a few things I haven't recall yet" (TP1: 5)</i> <i>"But it still doesn't stop you from remembering how you felt before" (T6:3)</i>
	Realising	<i>"...very early on I realised he was having trouble hearing what I said" (TP4:2)</i> <i>"It got the past the point of me able to manage it well" (T8:3)</i>
Understanding -A way of comprehending	Recognising	<i>"the whole tendon thing flared up and so, I couldn't do an interview, and I couldn't transcribe an interview for weeks" (T2:9)</i> <i>"at the same time I could just see the time disappearing and my ability to get this written was just evaporating" (TP4:5)</i>
	Preferring	<i>"I need someone who's preferably not deaf and who can write fast" (TP4:6)</i> <i>"if I had to talk and I could talk through in my examination, than would have written it down. I would be fine" (T5:3)</i>
	Comparing	<i>"A lot of stuff you have to look at it differently. You have to take problem to solve it. Which one is better and stuff like that" (T3:9)</i> <i>"this is my experience in [institution] good experience this is my experience at the actual [institution] and it was really really dreadful" (TP4:4)</i>
Judging -A way of assessing	Anticipating	<i>"I have thought about it if this turns up a problem tomorrow and can I ask that lady and could I borrow her reaction time" (TP2:5)</i> <i>"I'm going to fail, my teachers going to dump me, my friend going to laugh at me. My families going to be disappointed with me" (T5:4)</i>
	Relying	<i>"I don't like to be told you have to do it this way. I like to do it my way" (T2:11)</i> <i>"But sometimes, depends on the situation and depends on the level...Okay because it affects other people let's talk to other people that it affects" (T11:6)</i>
	Concluding	<i>"I never got all the parts and so it ended up being, the proposal such a hassle that I decided just to get a full time job for summer instead of making the movie" (T1:4)</i> <i>"I have to go back and see that person but I ended up seeing another doctor, and a counselor called [], a different one" (T8:4)</i>
Acting -A way of striving	Striving	<i>"I've got the tendency to drive myself" (T2:11)</i> <i>"I actually feel better about it because you have to take the initiative you can't long for others to do it for you which is actually quite important" (TP2:8)</i>
	Regulating	<i>"I sought help with that a little bit by going to make counselling appointments" (T8:2)</i> <i>"I work with them to get some help" (T8:4)</i>
	Learning	<i>"I needed to fail that paper actually to learn that lesson I reckon" (T3:11)</i> <i>"I should have probably gone and met with him and said this is the situation and said I'm afraid this what is going to happen, probably I should have. So I learn from that" (T2:12)</i>

### **4.1.1 Category of Description 1: Knowing**

In this category of description, the way of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon was described as Knowing. Knowing is a way of becoming aware of reality or 'what is the case' the participants were experiencing. I found that participants expressed different forms of Knowing what they were experiencing through their utterances such as 'sense', 'feel', 'realise' and 'recall'. I have used words such as Sensing, Feeling, Realising, Recalling instead of 'sense', 'feel', 'realise', and 'recall' as the sub-categories' headings to avoid a deterministic tone in describing the participants' ways of experiencing the phenomenon.

The following section explores in detail each of these forms of Knowing that has emerged from the participants' expressions of realities. The findings were presented with the explanation of each sub-category supported by the participants' expressions of realities.

### **Sub-category 1: Sensing**

In this sub-category, the participants experienced Sensing in three aspects that enabled them to become aware of what they were experiencing.

One aspect in which participants came to know what they were experiencing was through their Sensing Experiences that implied meanings to them. Some participants experienced interactions with the external environment and others experienced sensations within their bodies. According to Gendlin (1962), we understand the world through our bodily interaction with it. The interaction between experiencing and something that functions as a symbol generates meanings to individuals. Symbols can be anything that can function as pointers or markers, such as objects, persons, actions, and situations (Gendlin, 1962). Dewey (1938) offers the same explanation that experience is formed through the transaction that takes place between an individual and what, at that time, constitutes the individual's environment.

These Sensing Experiences direct the participants' attention to attend to something. Dewey (1910, p. 72) explains these Sensing Experiences as "undefined uneasiness and shock" that appear first, where an individual directs their attention to find out 'what is the case?' Vickers (1983) states that an individual's interest and concern to know what something is directs their attention. This inwardly directed attention makes the 'undefined uneasiness and shock' noticeable (Scheler, 1973).

These experiences are not within a person's control but just like other Sensing Experiences that are always ongoing in individuals. Gendlin (1962, p. 11) refers to experiencing as "concrete experience ...the raw, present, ongoing functioning (in us)". For example, the participants expressed their Sensing Experiences in these words:

*"I just get the sense the place is maybe you kind of feel the normal people are over here and then the weird people over here" (TP1:3)*

*"...when I get nervous, one of my muscles in my leg shakes" (T11:8)*

*"I do have a quite a fair bit of not being in control even though I know that is very little that we can control in life" (T3:8)*

In another aspect, participants underwent these sensing experiences in a continuous and immediate manner, which repeatedly drew their attention to attend to them to uncover the implied meanings. Gendlin (1962) claims this Sensing Experience is there for everyone and becomes only noticeable when one wishes to direct attention to it to uncover its meaning. Here, the participants had a choice whether or not to focus on understanding these Sensing Experiences in order to address further the experiential outcomes. For instance, the participants expressed Attending using these expressions:

*"Things keep popping up" (T8:4)*

*"I just get in there and try and don't want to get attention try to be okay, was not letting me to do it" (TP2:5)*

*“I was trying, trying, trying, and trying with one way, and just getting harder and harder” (T5:10)*

*“I start noticing the pain, it only bothered me when I’m getting out of a swimming pool” (T2:5)*

In other aspect when participants chose to continue to focus on a Sensing Experience, they described a pre-conceptual moment. At this point, participants were consciously aware of what they were experiencing even though they lacked the precise forms to represent it. Gendlin (1962) confirms that the sense of experiencing is not vague in individuals, but what is vague, is what it represents. For instance, participants expressed Becoming Aware using these expressions:

*“...it suddenly occurred to me that might be a good idea” (TP1:3)*

*“And, halfway the timeframe, it was quite clear to me, that I was just not going to get done” (T1:5)*

*“I’m quite convinced, I probably got pre-disposition to RSI” (T2:11)*

*“I know my body. I know when I’m tired now. I know when, I know the signs” (T3:12)*

*“I’m looking at the handwriting and going, this looks like alien” (T7:6)*

## **Sub-category 2: Feeling**

In this sub-category, participants expressed Feeling in relation both to emotions and to felt meaning. First, Feeling was expressed as an emotion. Here, participants were aware about how they felt in experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon. They expressed their emotions in words such as ‘hopelessness’, ‘depressed’, ‘frustration’, ‘tired’, ‘stressful’, ‘painful’, ‘scared’, ‘upset’, ‘drained’, ‘anxious’, ‘awful’, and ‘nervous’. Gendlin (1962) views Feeling as a referent that directly refers to a felt meaning. Here, individuals employ symbols in the form of words to make the meaning explicit. Some participants even used metaphors such as ‘going through hell’ or ‘felt like I’d run a marathon’ to describe how they felt when they were experiencing the phenomenon. Metaphors are used when an individual can not identify a parallel symbol to refer to their felt meaning. Metaphors are a novel form of symbolization that represents some familiar symbols from the past that are applied to a new experience, and in doing so, creates a new meaning (Gendlin, 1962). Participants’ sense of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon or their felt meanings was described to others by words which articulated their meanings. However, not all felt meanings could be articulated in words to be expressed to others. According to Gendlin (1962, p. 27), “very little of what we ‘are’, ‘mean’, or ‘feel’ is ever in the form of explicit verbal symbols or visual images”. For example, participants expressed Articulating their Emotion using these words:

*“...it’s just the feeling of real hopelessness, a feeling of like I guess gloominess” (TP1:3)*

*“I was tired” (TP3:4); (T3:11); (T3:12); (T4:2); (T8:4)*

*“Increasingly frustrated” (TP4:5); (T1:4); (T2:2); (T2:10); (T4:6)*

*“...most stressful” (TP4:2); (T5:2)*

*“I felt I was going through hell” (TP5:2)*

*“I just felt like I’d run a marathon even though it was still morning”  
(T8:7)*

*“Um, that’s how I was feeling at that time but I didn’t know it, I didn’t  
know how to voice that to him” (T8:5)*

Second, Feeling was expressed as a felt meaning of being in a situation. Participants were aware of the content they were experiencing. Here, participants described the situation that they were in and how they felt overall being in that situation at that point of time. The descriptions help understanding of the participants’ focus aspect in that situation. Gendlin (1962) claims that a meaning always comprises some parts that are focused to be symbolised and others parts that are yet to be symbolised at a given moment. This is consistent with Marton and Booth’s (1997) view that some aspects of a reality become the core and are held in focus, and others parts of the meaning recede to the background. Likewise, Dewey (1934) regards our consciousness as an ‘island’ where we find the meaning in our awareness and should not be mistaken as the whole continent, because there are other parts in the meaning which are still uncovered. For instance, participants expressed Situating the Feeling using these words:

*“The Moodle thing overwhelming a lot of stuff you don’t have no idea  
about new things to pick it up” (TP2:3)*

*“You automatically excluded from the group even though the tutor didn’t make me feel excluded by not be able to present what you can’t possibly do” (TP2:7)*

*“I felt personally. Like the whole sexual abuse thing is a key event in my life and a lot of my life today revolves around what happened” (TP5:3)*

*“I felt like every time he looked at me he’d kind of just be like well how do I make myself feel better” (T5:5)*

### **Sub-category 3: Recalling**

The sub-category Recalling comprises Remembering and Relating. Some participants indicated they had pre-existing knowledge about what they have experienced, but others were not able to recall precise detail of those experiences. Many participants had to think for some time before Recalling the incidents as remembered. Some participants were doubtful and others were guessing. We can understand Recalling as participants employing deliberative acts in thinking about the experienced situations and reflecting on them. Recalling implies that individuals have the potential to have known something similar to what they were experiencing and which enabled them to reject inaccurate symbols to represent the current experience (Gendlin, 1962). Individuals have inexplicit meanings in every instance of their thoughts but these are only made explicit when a person focuses on their felt meaning. Without the felt meaning, “things are nothing but blind stimuli or chance sources of pleasure or pain” (Dewey, 1910, p. 171).

For example, participants articulated Remembering by using these expressions:

*“I can’t remember how long the assessment period I can’t remember if it was one hour or two hour but it was about half way through” (TP4:5)*

*“I don’t know. Just try to do it, I guess” (T3:8)*

*“Umm, I can’t really remember” (T6:4);(T10:4)*

*“the primarily stuff I was going to describe here I have described...I mean probably a few things I haven’t recall yet” (TP1: 5)*

*“it does pop up but it’s not in my mind constantly because I’m not worrying about it” (T8:6)*

Participants became aware by focusing on what they were experiencing and simultaneously Relating it to their past memories or personal associations with it. Here, participants compared what they were experiencing with the experiences they had in the past. Dewey (1910) states that sensing a problem directs the mind to survey past memories, in order to discover which ones correspond with the present experiencing. In this exercise, participants also discovered that what they were experiencing was something new and they have no recollection of it in their earlier memories. According to Gendlin (1962), experiencing is concretely felt regardless of whether the conceptualisation of it is known or not to the individual.

Participants, for example, expressed Relating using these words:

*“...there’s a bit of precedent, before I go into the actual problem itself”*

*(TP1:2)*

*“It really gave me the feeling had it before” (TP2:7)*

*“I wasn’t sure what was I’m going to do. So I did what my father told me to do” (T5:3)*

*“I constantly look back” (T5:3)*

*“But it still doesn’t stop you from remembering how you felt before”*

*(T6:3)*

*“...for a while I thought, don’t know. I don’t have prior experience”*

*(T4:2)*

#### **Sub-category 4: Realising**

This sub-category of Knowing represents the participants Realising that the sense they were experiencing was having an effect on their activities. When participants faced difficulties coping with the implications of the sensing experiences on their ability to carry out their daily activities, they became fully aware of a problem. For example, they spoke of being not able to walk, open doors, and communicate. The effect of the experiencing resulted in the participants becoming aware of a problem or what the reality was for them in that situation. According to Dewey (1910, p. 72), when the sensing experience is “felt with sufficient definiteness”, one acts consciously to solve the problem. Here, an individual’s concern and

interest is the initial point for the individual to construct their situation (Vickers, 1983). For example, participants expressed Knowing the Real in these comments:

*“...we might not even recognise it unless it affects us the most” (T9:9)*

*“I also started to experience the results of a stroke, the hand not moving, not able to walk all those sorts of things” (TP3:1)*

*“...very early on I realised he was having trouble hearing what I said” (TP4:2)*

*“it was so painful that I couldn't open doors” (T2:2; 2:5)*

*“It will be very hard to do anything” (T9:2)*

*“I never had to really do it, balance my time as much before” (T8:2)*

*“It got the past the point of me able to manage it well” (T8:3)*

*“I began to realise that actually the real problem” (TP1:2)*

## **Internal Horizon of Knowing**

The following section represents participants' aspects of Knowing that are focused and held in awareness. The discussion is on the interrelationship of the sub-categories of Knowing: Sensing, Feeling, Recalling, and Realising.

Participants became aware of what they were experiencing through Sensing, Feeling, Recalling, and Realising. Participants gained awareness of the meaning of their experiencing through the interplay of bodily interaction with their environment, the language used to articulate what they were experiencing, and their thoughts. Knowing, therefore, can be understood as an unfolding process whereby the participants initially became aware of a pre-conceptual stage through to being fully aware of what they were experiencing.

Sensing was the initial stage where a participant became aware of a felt meaning through bodily interaction with the environment. In line with Gendlin (1962), this was a pre-verbal, pre-conceptual stage whereby a participant became aware of a felt meaning before he or she could articulate or conceptualise it. Here, the felt meaning was structured in many ways and was not necessarily equivalent to any one particular meaning. As such, different concepts and vocabularies emerged depending upon the participant's choice of applying the meanings that corresponded to their felt meaning. If the participant wished to attend to the felt meaning or spoke from it, further structuring or carrying forward of the experiencing took place.

When the participant attended to the felt meaning, he or she started to think about the felt meaning. Here, the participant concentrated on the felt meaning and recalled their past memories, images, and personal associations with it. At this stage, the participant employed both the bodily felt meaning and thoughts together to discover the appropriate words or symbols that could fit to describe what he or she was experiencing momentarily. The participant repeatedly focused on felt meaning to discover the possible word or symbol to represent it. Here, language played a part to help the participant to articulate the implicit meanings in words. According to Gendlin (1962), at any point of time, the symbols held in awareness by a participant to represent the implicit meanings are few. As such, some parts of implicit meanings remained not symbolised at that momentary point of experiencing. Participants used words such as Feeling as a direct reference to describe their felt meaning. At this point, the participant was aware of a symbolised felt meaning that was reflecting on a problem.

When the participant started to experience the effect of the Sensing in a definite manner, then the experiencing was carried forward for further structuring. Here, the participant attended to the experiencing and employed the selected word (symbol) to bring forth more words to explain the meanings of what they were experiencing. This process enabled the participant to become fully aware and able to realise a problem or situation.

## **External Horizon of Knowing**

In this section, the perceptual boundary of Knowing is discussed in relation to three aspects: related events, multiple feelings, and the presence of others. Participants have expressed that these three aspects co-present in the process of becoming aware of what they were experiencing.

Related events: Participants, in general, became aware of what they were experiencing within their study-related contexts. However, some participants experienced other related events that took place while studying, but outside the immediate study setting; for example, being hospitalised or using recreational facilities. Thus, the participants' contexts were broader than the study context.

Multiple feelings: For some participants knowing involved many feelings; these participants became aware of different feelings simultaneously. According to Gendlin (1962), experiencing a feeling denotes a sense of a situation. Therefore, these participants were experiencing more than one situation at that point in time.

Presence of others: As participants do not live in isolation, people around them were able to observe what they were experiencing. Some participants relied on others' observations and their values to become aware of what they were experiencing.

For instance, participants expressed these responses within the perceptual boundary of Knowing:

*“I was doing law” (TP1:2)*

*“I was hospitalised” (TP3:1)*

*“A big part of the problem that was because of both the conditions that I had and all the medication that I have to take” (TP2:2)*

*“...kind of upset and anxious, stress” (T8:3)*

*“...you got a whole lot of different thing, there’s anger towards the person, there’s sympathy towards the person” (T11:8)*

*“It was clear that he was not coping” (T4:2)*

*“I did what my father told me to do” (T5:3)*

In summary, the category of description of Knowing has been discussed in terms of referential and structural aspects. The referential aspect was represented with participants’ expressions of realities to denote the participants’ assigned meaning of Knowing and the structural aspect was discussed in terms of internal and external horizons. The internal horizon of Knowing comprises four sub-categories: Sensing, Feeling, Recalling, and Realising. These four sub-categories co-present with three other aspects from the external horizon: Related events, Multiple Feelings, and Presence of Others.

### **4.1.2 Category of Description 2: Understanding**

In this second category of description, the way of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon was experienced as Understanding. Understanding is a way of comprehending what the participants were experiencing. Participants expressed that they recognised what they were experiencing through the act of observing and thinking about their felt meanings. Some participants comprehended the meanings and showed preferences in their situations, while other participants weighed up and concluded that their situations were desirable or undesirable for them.

The subsequent section discusses in detail the participants' ways of Understanding with the explanation of each sub-category of Understanding: Recognising, Preferring, and Comparing.

## **Sub-category 1: Recognising**

In this sub-category the participants expressed two aspects: having felt meaning and thinking meaningfully to symbolise what they were experiencing. These two aspects enabled the participants to recognise the meaning of what they were experiencing.

One aspect that participants experienced was felt meanings. Some participants felt the meaning of having a problem. Other participants felt it through the effect of their bodily experiences. Participants were aware of their felt meanings. The felt meaning acted as a referent to call forth symbols representing the meaning (Gendlin, 1962). For example, participants expressed having felt meaning using these words:

*“I was having all kind of problem left right and centre” (TP1:2)*

*“...the work load was just huge for me” (T5:2)*

*“the whole tendon thing flared up and so, I couldn’t do an interview, and I couldn’t transcribe an interview for weeks” (T2:9)*

*“at the same time I could just see the time disappearing and my ability to get this written was just evaporating” (TP4:5)*

In relation to another aspect, participants described Thinking about the felt meaning and Recognising words that symbolise what they were experiencing. Some participants used words such as ‘miserable’ and ‘tired’ that called forth the

meanings of what they were experiencing. Here, the participants were aware of specific symbols that represented the meanings of what they were experiencing. A symbol becomes meaningful when it calls forth in individuals their felt meanings (Gendlin, 1962). However, other participants used symbols such as the word 'stronger' that could act as a pointer to differentiate what they were experiencing. The symbol acted as a marker to refer to the feeling without specifying it (Gendlin, 1962). For instance, participants expressed Symbolising using these words:

*"I knew that wasn't going well. I knew there was very little chance of me passing again and it would just make me miserable basically" (T3:10)*

*"I know I'm getting tired I know my mind cannot take any more information" (TP3:4)*

*"knowing that my reaction time is not fast enough and trying with the other hand thinking the other side is slightly stronger" (TP2:7)*

Participants recognised what they were experiencing when they had immediate Understanding of the felt meaning. Some participants recognised their limitations, while the others recognised their strengths and weaknesses. These participants employed symbols that adequately conceptualised their felt meanings. Here, the symbol and the felt meaning have a one-to-one relationship that calls forth the meaning (Gendlin, 1962). Dewey (1910, p. 119) coined this relationship "familiar acquaintance" in which the understanding is "direct, prompt, and immediate"- technically known as 'apprehension'. Dewey (1910, p. 120) states that words such

as “see, perceive, recognise, grasp, seize, lay hold of” belong to this direct mode of Understanding.

However, some participants only partly recognised their felt meanings. These participants recognised some parts of their felt meanings and others remained unclear. For example, a participant stated that “I didn’t know all of the parts”. Here, the participant must have possessed some understanding of the parts before they could claim not knowing all of them. At this stage, the participant discovered that they were lacking in understanding of some parts of the felt meanings and symbolised the parts of the felt meaning they have understood. This is in line with Gendlin’s (1962, p. 113) view that “a felt meaning is always partly unsymbolized”. For instance, participants expressed Recognising in these comments:

*“After that I was very aware that I had to take regular breaks” (T2:5)*

*“I’m good at narrowing it down but I’m not, wasn’t good enough to put into a proposal” (T1:4)*

*“It’s not so much that I don’t know, it’s just I can’t write it down fast enough” (T5:4)*

*“I didn’t know all of the parts, and I couldn’t find anything that would show me and I couldn’t find anyone that would put me in the right direction” (T1:3)*

*“I can’t do it and probably it’s me” (TP2:5)*

## **Sub-category 2: Preferring**

The sub-category of Preferring comprises two aspects: Desiring and Speculating. The participants expressed that they desired a solution and speculated about the solution to provide better outcomes for them relative to what they were experiencing.

In relation to one aspect, participants expressed that they think about possible solutions. Here, some participants became aware of what would be a desirable situation for them in relation to what they were experiencing. They knew their preferences and options that they had at that point in time. Finally, the participants decided on a possible solution for their situation. This is in line with Dewey's (1910) explanation of the term 'suggestion' that implies a tentative idea that pops into an individual's mind as a possible solution to a problem. For example, participants expressed Desiring using these expressions:

*“Usually I will try to think about something else whether be video games”*  
(T3:15)

*“I need someone who's preferably not deaf and who can write fast”*  
(TP4:6)

*“My preference I don't have to do for rest of his life”* (T4:9)

*“I could have done my exam in a Dictaphone”* (TP4:4)

*“If I can't I always got the option of getting the software”* (T2:4)

*“I could properly do Maths. So I switch to Science instead”* (T3:9)

In relation to the other aspect, the participants suggested their preferences based on what they were experiencing. These participants were comparing their present situation with their desired solution. They were Speculating that the desired solution could have resulted in better outcomes for them compared to what they were experiencing. Dewey (1910) states a ‘suggestion’ has some degree of speculation in it as it leaps from a present situation to an unknown. For example, participants expressed Speculating in these ways:

*“I could have talked it into a Dictaphone. And here is my answer, that would have worked better than having that particular writer” (TP4:4)*

*“if I had to talk and I could talk through in my examination, than would have written it down. I would be fine” (T5:3)*

*“I think to myself if I had the extra time I would have done absolutely so much better” (T5:3)*

### **Sub-category 3: Comparing**

In this sub-category of Comparing, participants comprehended what they were experiencing in two aspects: Observing and Contrasting their reality with their desired state.

In relation to one aspect, the participants were thinking about what they were experiencing in order to comprehend their reality. Some participants noted that they focused their thinking on some aspect of reality and not the “big picture”.

Here, these individuals' readiness to 'see' forms the nature of reality for them (Vickers, 1983). This is consistent with Marton and Booth's (1997) view that some aspects of reality are held in focus as core and others recede to the surroundings.

Some participants observed that their past experiences assisted them to understand what they were experiencing at a particular point in time. These participants recognised that familiar symbols such as 'good experience' from the past enabled them to apprehend felt meaning in the present. Here, the participants recognised and conceptualised what they were experiencing (e.g. fatigue) and that enabled them to handle the situation in a better manner. Participants' own actions, for example "started taking my breaks", helped them to understand what would be good for them. According to Checkland (2005), individuals learn from their own actions what features have been important to them and those that they have ignored in a perceived situation.

Most participants relied on their thinking to reason about what they were experiencing. Some participants realised what they were experiencing was something new and more complex than in their previous experiences. According to Gendlin (1962, p. 27), "any aspect of experiencing has very complex 'unfinished' orders". This explains that any experiencing that led to symbolising at a given point, has possibilities for more symbolisation to occur subsequently. The reason is that it depends on the individual's point of view, as to which symbol they choose to apply to represent their felt meaning at that time.

Other participants expressed their Understanding of what they were experiencing from their observation and reflecting on it as a possible action. Here the participants' felt meaning directs them to take an action. Gendlin (1962, p. 139) explains that "feeling is our 'possibilities' for action in the world (the situations we are in)". Vickers (1983) has the same understanding that action may or may not follow as an outcome of an individual's sense-making of a situation. For instance, participants expressed Observing in these comments:

*"...because I'm concentrating so much at one single thing I'm thinking so much of the little picture than the big picture" (T5:3)*

*"In the moment it's very hard to think what would be better this but with hindsight I can look at this is my experience in [institution] good experience" (TP4:4)*

*"I'm managing fatigue a lot better" (T3:11)*

*"Once I started taking my breaks, I erred on my side of looking after myself" (T2:5)*

*"It takes me ages to understand things that I would have got it easily before" (T3: 5)*

*"Because Google can only tell you so much; you actually need to go and see someone" (T1:3)*

Some participants expressed that they observed their situations from multiple perspectives, before recognising a situation as a problem. Here, these participants' felt meanings gave signals for them to identify a situation as a problem that needs

to be solved. They expressed that they conducted a comparison as a way to solve their problem.

Some other participants employed symbols to reflect on the meanings that they were experiencing. For example, they used words such as “dreadful”, “frustrating”, and “simple”. Here, these participants achieved some understanding from conceptualising their felt meanings and simultaneously contrasted these symbolised meanings to their other experiences. For example, these participants used words such as “good” versus “dreadful”, and “simple” versus “detail”. Here, the participants gained more meanings about what they were experiencing. According to Dewey (1910), this process is termed as reasoning that is conducted on the problem before adopting a particular idea or suggestion to solve it.

Some participants weighed up their situation through this exercise of reasoning and concluded what would be good for them in that situation. At this point, the participants made a value judgment, ‘what ought to be the case’ for them (Vickers, 1983). For example, participants expressed ‘Contrasting’ in these statements:

*“A lot of stuff you have to look at it differently. You have to take problem to solve it. Which one is better and stuff like that” (T3:9)*

*“this is my experience in [institution] good experience this is my experience at the actual [institution] and it was really really dreadful” (TP4:4)*

*“I had to listen and then I have to speak. I thought that actually more frustrating and then just doing an interview every 2<sup>nd</sup> week” (T2:13)*

*“Every time I ask a question, they give me the simplest answer and someone else will ask a question and then they would give them a much more detail answer” (T5:4)*

*“I erred on my side of looking after myself rather than getting the work done” (T2:5)*

*“I did think about dropping the paper but I managed to keep going” (T6:4)*

## **Internal Horizon of Understanding**

The following section outlines participants' core aspects of Understanding held in awareness. The discussion focusses on the interrelationship of the sub-categories of Recognising, Preferring, and Comparing.

Participants understood what they were experiencing in three aspects. In one aspect, participants recognised some meanings of what they were experiencing from what they have symbolised. In another aspect, participants took a step further to sense the relationship between the partly symbolised felt meanings and what they were experiencing as a problem. In a further aspect, participants conducted more inquiries on the suggested symbolisation before confirming it as a solution to their problem. Understanding, therefore, is a process of comprehending in which meanings are temporarily conceptualised and held in order to develop them further for adequate understandings of what the participants were experiencing. Dewey (1910, p. 119) views this mode of Understanding as indirect or mediated understanding which is not immediate ('delayed') and goes in circles ('roundabout').

In Recognising, participants gained some meaning about what they were experiencing. They observed and thought meaningfully to recognise symbols that called forth the felt meanings in them. Here, participants recognised and employed the symbols that resonated with what they were experiencing. At this stage, the participants apprehended the felt meanings immediately. According to

Dewey (1910), this mode of Understanding is direct where the felt meaning and the symbol that it represents are similar to a certain degree.

However, participants also became aware that they felt more meanings compared with what they had symbolised. They now had some aspects of felt meanings that were symbolised and some other aspects of meanings that were unsymbolised. According to Gendlin (1962), when no parallel symbols are readily available, a person creates a new way to symbolise the meaning further. Here, participants thought about their problem by bringing these partly symbolised and unsymbolised felt meanings together. At this point, Dewey (1910) states that an idea or a suggestion arises in the mind as a first indicator to solve a problem. This is what participants experienced as Preferring, a desirable solution compared with their existing situation.

In Preferring, participants became aware of a possible solution (suggestion) to their problem. Here, participants expressed that they had preferences and options that could provide better outcomes for them in relation to what they were experiencing. Dewey (1910) explains that a suggestion is more of a speculation as it leaps from the present state to something absent, which cannot be pre-determined in advance. Here, participants became aware that they needed more meanings to verify the suggestion or idea before adopting it as a solution to solve their problems. As such, participants compared the suggested solution with what they were experiencing as a way to reason out more meanings to it.

In Comparing, participants were involved in observing their reality as experienced with their desired state. Here, participants' readiness to see configured their reality (Marton & Booth, 1997; Vickers, 1983). Participants expressed that their past experiences and actions enabled them to comprehend what they were experiencing. This is in line with Checkland's (2005, p. 287) views that our experiences of "perceptions, interpretations, judgements, and actions" shape our understanding of a situation. Participants also expressed that what they were experiencing was far more complex than their previous experiences. As such, participants observed their situation not in the same way but in different ways. According to Vickers (1968, p. 191), "facts are relevant only by reference to some judgement of value and judgements of value are meaningful in regard to some configuration of fact". Therefore, participants weighed their situation as desirable or less desirable depending on their judgement of value at that point in time. Here, participants comprehended what ought to be the case for them in that situation.

## **External Horizon of Understanding**

Participants were aware the existence of “a bigger issue” in relation to what they were experiencing. In this section, the “bigger issue” (perceptual boundary) is discussed as external horizon in relation to three aspects: unsolved problems, time, and presence of others.

Unsolved problems: Participants’ observations determined the nature and the difficulty of a problem. Some participants observed what they were experiencing and determined it as a severe problem before acting upon it. Other participants observed a problem as less detrimental at that point of time. As such, some of the problems remained unsolved. According to Gendlin (1962), problems can remain unsolved unless it was sensed and felt that the meanings were unresolved.

Time: Some participants considered that they did not have sufficient time to comprehend what they were experiencing. Other participants regarded time as a constraining factor where they comprehended meanings that they could recognise and left behind the unrecognised meanings to be attended to later. Therefore, time is seen as deficient for these participants to have a full comprehension of what they were experiencing.

Presence of others: Some participants described how they could observe what others were experiencing. Here, their observations provided them knowledge about what ought to be the case for these people who were experiencing the

situation. In addition, some other participants became aware of what was the reality for others.

For instance, participants expressed these views within the perceptual boundary of Understanding:

*“Because of trying to talk to him about the bigger issue which really made me anxious” (T8:5)*

*“I guess for the first time ever I was forced to kind of apply for an extension on an assignment. I’ve never had to do that before but it was just because my depression becoming so bad” (TP1:2)*

*“I was like no, this is utterly ridiculous. It's 6% of my grade, I mean if I lose that. I still able to get A+” (T5:10)*

*“I didn’t have enough time to sort out all in my hand and then put it on paper. And, learn how to put it on the paper” (T1:5)*

*“Look for the questions that I can and do them. So I will come back later if I have more time” (T3:3)*

*“I guess because of the time factor, you just have to keep going and hand in” (T6:3)*

*“He should have had the support in the first 6 months” (T4:4)*

*“And, I’d come home and he hadn’t done any work. He just would find anything else to do. So, obviously, cognitively he couldn’t do it anymore.” (T4:5)*

In summary, the category of description of Understanding has been discussed in terms of referential and structural aspects. The referential aspect was represented by participants' expressions of realities to denote the participants' assigned meaning of Understanding and the structural aspect was discussed in terms of internal and external horizons. The internal horizon of Understanding comprises three sub-categories: Recognising, Preferring, and Comparing. These three sub-categories co-present with three other aspects from the external horizon: Unsolved problems, Time, and Presence of others.

### **4.1.3 Category of Description 3: Judging**

In this category of description, the way of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon was described as Judging. Judging is a way of evaluating what the participants were experiencing. Some participants described that they went through mental rehearsals of possible consequences before adopting a solution. Participants, in general, expressed that they relied on their felt meanings and its conceptualisations as referents for their behaviour. Some other participants described that they emphasised significant features in a situation before finalising a decision.

The following section discusses the participants' ways of Judging with the explanations of each of its sub-categories: Anticipating, Relying, and Concluding.

## **Sub-category 1: Anticipating**

The sub-category of Anticipating comprises Rehearsing and Foreseeing. In one aspect, participants expressed that they were Rehearsing in their minds like “little role plays” as to what they were expecting from a situation. These participants referred to it as a “mind map”. Some participants described that they were thinking about the possible consequences in a situation. Some of these participants expressed that they were thinking about the worst consequences and others were considering possible actions to avoid these consequences. This is what Dewey (1922) claims is deliberation, a tentative mind rehearsal to find out the possible consequences of actions. According to Dewey (1922), these mind rehearsals enable one to foresee the consequences of an action before the actual event happens. For instance, participants expressed Rehearsing in these words:

*“So literally to start thinking about doing like little role plays in my head to see how it should be worded and laid out. Then if I get stuck, I will just get a piece of paper and do like a whole bunch of circles with words and branch out to other circles with words. A mind map” (T7:3)*

*“I was thinking worst case scenario you know like oh my goodness I won’t have a test” (T11:2)*

*“I have thought about it if this turns up a problem tomorrow and can I ask that lady and could I borrow her reaction time” (TP2:5)*

In another aspect, some participants became aware that these consequences would have implications or risks for them if appropriate actions were not in place. Some

participants used words such as “I’m going to” to indicate the possible implications that could happen to them. Some of them described more than one implication, while the others described a chain of implications. According to Dewey (1910), individuals have the capability to think and develop possible signs in advance of the future consequences. As such, individuals’ deliberate acts of thinking of the consequences enable them to regulate their actions accordingly (Bandura, 2001). For example, participants expressed Foreseeing in these comments:

*“I realised that was going to have implications on my progress in my PhD because you have to write every 6 months” (T2:2)*

*“There were serious risk I guess, at some points especially I actually going to fail my assignments and papers or something, if don’t do something” (TP1:4)*

*“I’m going to fail. Oh I’m going to lose all this time that we have started” (T11:2)*

*“I’m going to fail, my teachers going to dump me, my friend going to laugh at me. My families going to be disappointed with me” (T5:4)*

### **Sub-category 2: Relying**

In this sub-category of Relying, some participants stated that they trusted their instincts or feelings in deciding what was right or wrong for them. These participants relied on their instincts as they were usually unaware of the

consequences of their actions. This is inconsistent with Rogers's (1964) view that individuals consider both contents in awareness (instincts and feelings) and those denied in awareness (consequences) as referents to guide their behaviour. Other participants described that they relied on their minds for ideas and perspectives even though their conceptualisations might differ from the others. According to Gendlin (1962) meanings are formed in the interaction of felt experiencing and mind (logical symbolisation). Thus, meaning is something that is directly felt and referred but not necessarily known (Gendlin, 1962).

Some participants expressed the view that they were central to their own values and actions. Other participants claimed that these values were not known to others unless they were under obligation to explain them. This aligns with Rogers's (1964) view that individuals' values reside within themselves and are not influenced by others. In contrast, some participants expressed the view that they valued others' opinions depending on the situation. Here, individuals positively valued being sensitive to others (Rogers, 1964).

For instance, participants expressed Relying in these comments:

*"I do first trust my instincts about something is right thing to do or not often I don't know what will happen where I'm going to end up but as long as I guess I'm feeling what I'm doing then it places" (TP1:6)*

*"It was my own idea really" (T2:6)*

*“Ultimately I try typically argue my own perspective, if it is different I don’t really mind” (T9:5)*

*“I didn’t really want to do that. Because I felt it’s misusing” (T2:3)*

*“I don’t like to be told you have to do it this way. I like to do it my way” (T2:11)*

*“You don’t want to explain that to people unless someone has to know all this bound by confidentiality” (TP2:6)*

*“But sometimes, depends on the situation and depends on the level... Okay because it affects other people let’s talk to other people that it affects” (T11:6)*

### **Sub-category 3: Concluding**

The sub-category of Concluding comprises two aspects: Evaluating and Deciding. In one aspect, some participants expressed that they were “coping with few different things”. Here, these participants were doubtful because they experienced ambivalence. At one extreme, they wanted to go ahead with a decision (“to do the papers”) while at the other, they were reluctant as they experienced negative feelings (“scared”, “depressed”). These participants related their feelings as anticipations of possible consequences. Some other participants expressed that they were weighing up the relative importance of features in their decisions. Here, these participants considered features that they had to retain and features that they had to eliminate. Other participants emphasised features based on the anticipated

outcomes. These participants expressed words such as “I knew I’d fail straight off” revealing that they were aware of the features that would cause them negative outcomes.

According Morris (1956), living beings have the tendency to prefer one object to another. Here, the actual direction of a preference for a particular object is evident and others are rejected. This response is partly inborn and partly managed by an anticipation of certain outcomes.

Dewey (1910) explains this as:

In part it is instinctive or inborn; but it also represents the funded outcome of long familiarity with like operations in the past. Possession of this ability to seize what is evidential or significant and to let the rest go is the mark of the expert, the connoisseur, the judge, in any matter. (p. 104)

For example, participants expressed Evaluating using these expressions:

*“I think I was coping with few different things. I think I want to do the papers right, but the same time I was really quite scared. I was quite depressed” (TP1:4)*

*“But at the same time, like I said I was quite depressed and quite disorganized and I was quite scared all over place and I was quite scared what happens if things went off the rails” (TP1:4)*

*“I was like well I either sacrifice one and do with an excellence and then get the rest not achieved or all achieved” (T5:4)*

*“Decide that maybe I should pay attention to some of them so that I can do my courses better” (T8:4)*

*“I think I was like the logical decision for me is not to sit this test tomorrow because it would be a failure. Like I knew that I’d fail straight off” (T11:7)*

In relation to another aspect, the participants made judgements or decisions to bring a situation to resolution. Some participants considered that the best decision for them was to solve the problem independently. However, other participants decided to seek support from others, for example “seeing another doctor”. Here, the individuals exercised socially mediated agency (proxy agency) to seek support from others (Bandura, 2006). Some other participants used words such “hassle” and “drained” to express their difficulties in solving their problems. Some of these participants decided to drop their problem temporarily and moved on to do other things, while others decided to leave the problems unsolved. For example, participants expressed Deciding using these words:

*“I didn’t think they would be aware if somebody else transcribed it. So I decided to do them myself” (T2:3)*

*“I have to go back and see that person but I ended up seeing another doctor, and a counselor called [], a different one” (T8:4)*

*“I never got all the parts and so it ended up being, the proposal such a hassle that I decided just to get a full time job for summer instead of making the movie” (T1:4)*

*“it was difficult to keep going with it as it drained me so much. So I ended up not going” (T8:3)*

## **Internal horizon of Judging**

In relation to the internal horizon of Judging, the discussion focussed on the interrelationship between the sub-categories of Anticipating, Relying, and Concluding. This section describes participants' core aspects of Judging held in awareness.

Participants evaluated what they were experiencing in three aspects: Anticipating, Relying, and Concluding. Each of these aspects plays a role in a judgement to bring a situation to resolution. In one aspect, participants were involved in making the consequences explicit in judgement. In other aspect, participants were relying on their instincts and conceptualisations to support their judgments. In a further aspect, participants made a judgment to bring the situation to a closure.

In Anticipating, participants were involved in thinking deliberately about the consequences. Here, participants made explicit the consequences through mind rehearsals and anticipated the consequences in advance. These mind rehearsals enabled the participants to become aware of the implications of these consequences before the actual event. Therefore, anticipating enabled the participants to make explicit the possible consequences and its implications before proceeding towards a judgement. This is consistent with Dewey's (1910) view that individuals develop and arrange artificial signs in their minds to remind them in advance about the consequences and the ways to secure and avoid them.

In Relying, participants needed more support for their claims before considering the judgement as valid for the situation. Here, the participants relied on their felt meanings before concluding the judgement. Participants relied both on their instincts and mind to provide meanings for them as to what they were experiencing. This aligns well with Gendlin's (1962), Hutcheon's (1972), and Vickers's (1968) views that meanings emerged from the interaction of felt experiencing and logical symbolisations. Here, meanings are drawn from individuals' direct references to what they have felt in their awareness (Gendlin, 1962). However, this study partly satisfies Rogers's (1964) view that meanings are formed from both content of awareness and denied awareness.

In Concluding, participants reached a point where they could make a judgement to bring the situation to a resolution. Participants conducted evaluation by selecting the relevant features and rejecting the irrelevant ones. Here, participants emphasised those features that they have anticipated for positive outcomes and eliminated features that could cause them negative outcomes. This is consistent with Dewey's (1910), Morris's (1956), and Rogers's (1964) views that individuals have inborn tendencies to select and reject features based on their felt meanings and anticipation of outcomes. Participants' judgements finally brought closure to the situations. Here, participants decided either personally or through assistance from seeking others to solve their problem. This is consistent with Bandura's (2001) view that people blend any of the three modes of agency: individual, proxy, and collective to manage their situations.

However, not all situations were solved immediately as there were situations that were delayed and others remain unsolved. This aligns with Vickers's (1983) view that action may or may not follow as an outcome of an individual's appreciation.

## **External horizon of Judging**

According to Dewey (1910, p. 114), every judgement is synthetic as it “leaves the mind with an inclusive situation within which the selected facts are placed”. Here, the participants hold together the significant features with other aspects before making a decision. This forms the external horizon of Judging. In this section, the external horizon of Judging is focused on two aspects: past experience and time.

Past experience: Participants have experienced difficult problems that have caused them “misery” or “became a stressor”. Here, the participants have decided to end these feelings of discomfort with immediate judgements not to solve the problems. Some of these participants have no or few similar experiences from the past. According to Dewey (1910), an individual’s trained mind is the one that decides how long one handles a problem before solving it. As such, past experiences from previous situations enabled the participants to have better trained minds to handle difficult problems.

Time: Participants experienced time deficit in their situations that led them to make prompt judgements. This is consistent with Dewey’s (1910, p. 38) explanation that deficiencies in time lead one to make “snapshot and superficial judgement”.

For instance, participants expressed these views within the perceptual boundary of

Judging:

*“...but it’s most logical option to just put my misery to an end for now”*

*(T1:6)*

*“So in the end I found myself unable to keep going back because it was also became a stressor” (T8:3)*

*“one reason why I decided that it wasn’t going to work because I don’t know how to” (T1:6)*

*“No, I don’t have to do it now. Can I do it when I have more experience? Yes.” (T1:6)*

*“I just came to the conclusion, well I don't have enough time to do them all perfectly” (T5:4)*

In summary, the category of description of Judging has been discussed in terms of referential and structural aspects. The referential aspect was represented with participants’ expressions of realities to denote the participants’ assigned meaning of Judging and the structural aspect was discussed in terms of internal and external horizons. The internal horizon of Judging comprises three sub-categories: Anticipating, Relying, and Concluding. These three sub-categories co-present with two other aspects from external horizon: Past experience and Time.

#### **4.1.4 Category of Description 4: Acting**

In this category of description, the way of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon was categorised as Acting. Acting is a way of Striving to achieve the participants' desired outcomes. Some participants described that they strived and acted deliberately to make things happen for them. Other participants expressed that they exercised self-regulation by working reciprocally with others. Some other participants described the consequences of their actions and its implications for them.

The following section discusses the participants' ways of Acting with the explanations of each of its sub-categories: Striving, Regulating, and Learning.

## **Sub-category 1: Striving**

The sub-category of Striving comprises two aspects: Directing and Deliberating. In Directing, some participants expressed that they sensed unresolved feelings that got their attention and directed them to take action. Some other participants described the sensing experiences as having commanded them to take specific actions. This is what Scheler (1973) addresses as conation, a translated term of ‘Streben’ in the German Dictionary for Striving. According to Scheler (1973) conation is experienced as a movement away from the state of restlessness (feelings) to something desirable. Here, the conation itself sets the directionality of actions (Scheler, 1973). For example, participants expressed Directing in these comments:

*“And, eventually in January I thought I really should do something this about because this is not going away” (T2:2)*

*“if I kind of felt it’s coming on I’ll be like I need to do something so I actually take action” (T10:2)*

*“I guess for the first time ever I was forced to kind of apply for an extension on an assignment I’ve never had to do that before” (TP1:2)*

In Deliberating, some participants expressed they took initiative without depending on others and some of them expressed it as “tendency to drive”. According to Bandura (2001), people become agents who take intentional actions to make desired things happen. Some participants claimed that they made a lot of effort and worked harder to accomplish as much as they could. Bandura (2001)

views these as proactive commitments towards one's intentional actions. However, some other participants expressed that making a lot of effort drained their energies and subsequently they sought support from others. According to Bandura (2001) people do not have all the resources to achieve independently what they want. Therefore, they exercise socially mediated agency to connect with others who have the resources to support them.

On the other hand, many other participants continued to work harder but at a slower pace which affected their performance. Some participants expressed that they tried to find alternate ways to solve their problems. These participants were acting within their limitations towards their purpose. This is consistent with Scheler's (1973) view that 'being-able-to-do' depends on one's capacity (possibilities and impossibilities) at a point of time. For instance, participants expressed Deliberating in these statements:

*"I actually feel better about it because you have to take the initiative you can't long for others to do it for you which is actually quite important"*  
(TP2:8)

*"I've got the tendency to drive myself"* (T2:11)

*"I work a lot more harder you know, it's a challenging task so I'm going to put more effort into it"* (T11:6)

*"I usually get as much done as I can"* (T3:2)

*“And, putting a lot of effort into trying to keep going with my studies and stuff took out a lot of energy out of me. So I went to see the counsellor to try and sort out the personal stuff” (T8:3)*

*“I slowed my interviews down to one every fortnight, which affected my performance” (T2:3)*

*“I will try to find another way to fix it” (T7:4)*

## **Sub-category 2: Regulating**

The sub-category of Regulating comprises three aspects: Willing-to-do, Reciprocity, Working together, and Accommodating.

Participants were proactively fixing their problems. Some of them approached their tutors, others their counsellors, and some others their lecturers to resolve their problems. Some participants expressed that they considered professional services in situations in which they were no longer in control to assist others. Other participants expressed that they put in a lot of effort into seeking support as a way to solve their problem. Scheler (1973) explains that when one is willing-to-do something then the willed purpose can be realised. Bandura (2001, p. 6) confirms this as the key characteristic of personal agency “the power to originate actions for a given purpose”. Bandura (1995) views this characteristic as self-efficacy, the confidence people have in their abilities to organise and execute

actions to manage a situation. For example, participants expressed Willing-to-do in these comments:

*“I will literally complain to the tutor and go, you need to fix this” (T7:6)*

*“I'm bogged down so I mean eh eh obviously made a decision to see counsellor again” (TP1:4)*

*“I sought help with that a little bit by going to make counselling appointments” (T8:2)*

*“I think I actually spoke to the lecturer when I realised there was an exam and no one had told me about arrangements that were made for me” (TP4:4)*

*“It all just came really to a grinding halt until I started to consider that I actually needed to take legal recourse to get him the support” (T4:2)*

*“...most recent thing that I had seeking support over, probably, kind of biggest effort I made things about my problems” (TP1:5)*

However, some participants expressed that they acted independently in some situations whereas in others they needed people's guidance. Other participants described that they were looking for genuine people's guidance to help them in a professional manner. Many other participants expressed that they sought support for purposeful reasons and claimed that with support they could achieve what they had desired. Here, people are reaching out to others for access to enhance their own resources in achieving their desirable outcomes (Paltrinieri & Degli Esposti, 2013).

Some participants Work Reciprocally with others to achieve their desirable outcomes. This is consistent with Dewey's (1917) explanation that people are not passive receptors of what they are experiencing but agents or reactors who experiment with ways for possible things to happen. As such, people Work Reciprocally with others to accomplish their desired outcomes, which would otherwise be difficult to achieve individually (Bandura, 2001). For instance, participants expressed Working Reciprocally with others in these comments:

*"I usually just go and research whatever I don't know. But, in this instance I actually need some actual person to person guidance" (T1:4)*

*"you are looking for genuine concern to help someone, you would expect that the genuine concern is given back in a professional manner" (T4:7)*

*"Well I guess I don't usually ask for support unless I really really want to do it or the reason I want to get somewhere so I don't usually ask people to support in general yeah because quite simply I can't do it" (TP1:6)*

*"That I know with the support I can actually get there" (T5:10)*

*"I went and did a bit more and then, I think I send to him again. I think he made a few suggestions and I probably changed it and submitted it" (T6:4)*

Some participants expressed that they worked with others to get some help for their problems. Other participants claimed that they disclosed full information enabling others to cooperate with them to find a solution. While, some other participants expressed that all parties contributed some aspects that formed joint

efforts in sorting and figuring out solutions. This aligns with the view of Lusch et al. (2008) that all parties are involved in value creation. As such, participants were no longer separate entities but became collaborative partners with whom others were working for solutions. Participants, for instance, expressed Working together in these comments:

*“I work with them to get some help” (T8:4)*

*“I think we have to tell them everything, obviously you give them the best description of the people. Umm just cooperate” (T11:9)*

*“But if it’s a problem that I can’t solve, I will come and see the [institution] office, talk to them about it. Then they will probably find a solution for it” (T7:4)*

*“Every single one of those things so little but it's a kind of like you are in a step ladder...But I don't have the amount of rungs that I need so it's almost like everybody just puts a little bit, put in a rung and that allows me to climb to the top”(T5:8)*

*“In this situation it’s quite nice. Yeah to have like to walking over to the test, and having her to say look it’s okay. We are going to get sorted. Like don’t worry about it. We will all figured it out” (T11:4)*

Participants generally expected people to be more supportive in their situations. Some participants described that people ought to understand and know the reasons for others seeking their support. Other participants expected people to show some empathy about their situations rather than merely adhering to the administrative or

bureaucratic processes. Some other participants expressed the view that people involved in support would be able to be appreciative if they had similar experiences. Others described that a bit of compassion, understanding, and one-to-one interaction would help them in their situations.

Some participants expressed that people who failed to listen attentively were merely responding. According to Vickers (1983), appreciation compatibility needs to co-exist between interacting parties in order to proceed jointly towards a common understanding.

Others claimed that people assumed that standard support (e.g. handouts) would fit for all without understanding the individual's needs. Here, the 'standard support' can be categorised under goods dominant logic (G-D logic) perspective in which one party pre-evaluates value on behalf of the other party and then proposes it for acceptance. For example, participants expressed Accommodating in these statements:

*"I guess the most important thing is for people to understand and know why you need the help" (T3:13)*

*"some empathy for the client's position will go a long way rather than simply following administrative or bureaucratic processes" (T4:10)*

*"I think if people work in these areas of support, appreciate something until you walk in someone's shoes" (T4:10)*

*"I think a bit more compassion and understanding" (T11:5)*

*“Yeah, I guess just like having one-to-one time really helps” (T10:4)*

*“So not really listening but sitting back and going. Yup she is a thing and she got that and responding without actually listening to me properly” (T8:3)*

*“she gave me some hand-outs and that is not really ideal for me. Because I cannot read the hand-outs” (T7:2)*

### **Sub-category 3: Learning**

The sub-category of Learning comprises three aspects: Resulting, Trying, and Shaping. In Resulting, participants expressed that they became aware of the meanings of their actions. Some participants expressed that they experienced feelings (‘way out of my pressure’), while some others noticed the changes made by the adopted solutions, and many others observed the improvements in their current state. According to Gendlin (1962), we feel meanings such as ‘this’ and ‘that’ and recognise these meanings using symbols to represent them. As such, meanings can be experienced as felt, thought, and observed (Gendlin, 1962).

Other participants noted that they felt the meanings independently while some others observed others’ reaction to their meanings. This is consistent with Gendlin’s (1962) view that felt meaning can be directly observed by an individual and indirectly observed by others through their expressions.

Some other participants observed that they felt the meanings in a context. Some participants felt satisfied in a given context while others felt disappointed about not having the right supports. According to Gendlin (1962), felt meanings ought to be understood within a context. Otherwise, symbols used to represent the meanings will be superficial and not as they are intended to mean within a particular context. For example, participants expressed Resulting using these words:

*“Well, certainly helped me since I worked my way out of my pressure”*  
(TP1:4)

*“So, she, the psychotherapist recommended I have the wrist support thing which made a huge difference”* (T2:7)

*“she said I can also offer you a room by yourself and you up to go to toilet, and have food in the examinations and stuff. And, that just made life so much easier”* (T5:2)

*“I didn’t feel as if I was being put down I felt as if I was being supported”*  
(T2:11)

*“But I see them they were my support, and I was rest of the flat’s support”*  
(T11:9)

*“I haven’t actually had to go the counselors very often but it has been very helpful in seeing her the few times that I have”* (T10:2)

*“Given the circumstances very satisfactory yeah”* (TP1:6)

*“With different support it would have been a better piece of work”*  
(TP4:5)

In Trying, participants expressed that they were trying a sequence of attempts in order to achieve their desirable outcomes. Some participants conducted fewer attempts and came to conclusions to discontinue their actions. These participants came to the resolutions of ending the episodes with valuations. Others kept trying and simultaneously learned from their actions to realise their desirable outcomes. Here, these participants made valuations of each episode to bring the episode to temporary closure and initiated further actions to connect to the next episode. This is what Dewey (1938) describes as a continual process of experimenting and enduring the consequences of the actions. For example, participants expressed Trying in these comments:

*“I went to one tutorial and I then I went to another one, then I stopped. I tried not to go to those tutorials because the tutor was no help” (TP5:3)*

*“I guess the counselling I’m doing now is the one stage like I might finish this and maybe at some point I might be doing something else...I guess you know like a stage of different treatments you try, like try one thing see how it goes try the other thing how it goes it probation until you get start kind of realising what you want and the better you can seek effective help effective treatment” (TP1:7)*

In Shaping, participants learned from their actions and formed knowledge that shaped their understanding to handle subsequent situations. Some participants described that they learned from bad consequences such as failing a paper. Other participants learned to ask for help in advance and some others expressed they were proactively working on their current problem. Some others learned from

their reflections as to what could have been done to avoid the consequences. Many participants stated that they learned to make gradual improvements in their performance. These participants learned from their earlier episodes to manage subsequent episodes more effectively. Dewey (1938, p. 140) explains that “conclusions reached in one inquiry becomes means, material, and procedural, of carrying on further inquiries”. This is consistent with Gummesson’s (2000) view that pre-understanding that is formed in an earlier episode helps a person to comprehend a subsequent episode.

Another group of participants expressed they learned to push away the “ideal standards” imposed by others on them. These participants were aware of the “ideal standards” and acted momentarily on what was good for them in that situation. According to Locke (1690, p. 710), “these are men whose understandings are cast into a mould, and fashioned just to the size of a received hypothesis”. Here, Locke explains that these people do not deny the existence of their ideal standards but employ the standards based on their own reasoning to situations. For instance, participants expressed Shaping using these expressions:

*“I needed to fail that paper actually to learn that lesson I reckon” (T3:11)*

*“I try to ask for help earlier” (T6:9)*

*“There is different parts, different proposals. I haven’t written a proposal since. I’m scared of it right now and now I’m taking a paper on how to write proposal” (T1:3)*

*“I should have probably gone and met with him and said this is the situation and said I’m afraid this what is going to happen, probably I should have. So I learn from that” (T2:12)*

*“every time I perform really I learn a little more about how I need to improve like which is why a lot of performance experience thing is good thing” (T10:10)*

*“it was a kind of what my ideal standard was and what everybody has set for me. It was a kind of like of my ideal standard finally pushing through all of this rubbish people have told me over years and years and years” (T5:7)*

## **Internal Horizon of Acting**

The following section represents participants' core aspects of Acting held in awareness. The discussion focusses on the interrelationship of the sub-categories of Striving, Regulating, and Learning.

Participants' ways of acting towards their desirable outcomes can be discussed in three aspects. These three aspects are connected to the acts of willing. In one aspect, the participants initiated acts towards their will (willing-to-be). In another aspect, participants regulated their actions to achieve their purpose (willing-to-do). In a further aspect, participants bear the consequences of their actions. Here, they learned from the consequences and will their actions (will-to-act) in the hope of achieving their desired outcomes.

In Striving, participants felt the meanings that urged them to move away from a restless state to something desirable. Here, the participants' tendencies to drive formed the directionality of their actions. Participants became aware of their directions and took deliberate actions to approach their purpose (willing-to-be). This aligns with Bandura's (2001) view that people become agents through their intentional actions in making desired things happen. However, participants became aware that their deliberate actions were constrained by their capacities to act. According to Scheler (1973), the knowledge of being capable or incapable of doing (being-able-to-do) depends on the immediate sense and is not based on their

past experiences. As such, this formed the context where the participants regulated their actions to manage their situations.

In Regulating, the participants exercised their self-efficacy and took a course of actions towards their purpose. Here the participants moved a step forward from intentional to purposeful actions. Bandura (1982) views self-efficacy as one's generative capability to organise and execute a course of action directed towards purposeful behaviour. Participants were willing-to-do certain actions that enabled them to enhance their resources to reach their desired outcomes. Here, participants were willing to engage and work reciprocally with others. This is consistent with Bandura's (2001) view that people do not have all the resources, time, and energy to control what affects them in their environment. As such, they exercised proxy agency to engage with others to secure their desirable outcomes. Participants worked with others towards a common understanding of solutions. According to Vickers (1983), appreciation compatibility needs to co-exist between parties to proceed towards mutual understanding. As such, participants were expecting others to appreciate their situations by accommodating their needs.

In Learning, participants became aware of the consequences of their actions. According to Bandura (2001), an agent has the ability to organize and execute actions towards a purpose but not its outcomes. As such, participants bear the consequences of their actions. Participants felt, observed, and noticed the meanings of their actions within their context. This aligns with Dewey's (1934) explanation that the relationship between an individual's action and consequences

generate knowledge for the individual. At this point, participants evaluated whether to continue or discontinue their actions towards their desirable outcomes. Participants who decided to continue with their actions (will-to-act) employed the knowledge as a pre-understanding to handle the situation that follows. This is what Dewey (1938) describes as a continual process of experimenting and enduring consequences of actions – a process of shaping and reshaping in heading towards a desired outcome.

In addition, participants also learned to consider values that have been important and those that they have ignored in their situations. According to Checkland (2005), people learn to modify their in-built readiness to see certain features as more important than others from their actions and the judgements that proceed from it. As a result, participants learned to consider values that they have used previously.

## **External Horizon of Acting**

The perceptual boundary of Acting is discussed in relation to the presence of others in terms of their appreciation and observations.

Others' appreciation: Participants expressed that they felt like others treated them as the subjects of experiments. Participants explained that others responded based on their understanding of the symptoms and recommended solutions for them. Participants also felt that others were judgemental of whatever they said and expected them to have the common knowledge needed to do something. These responses have resulted in participants' fears that people might not understand them and have particular ideas about them. According to Holton (2001), people will share their views and concerns openly when they feel others are in meaningful interactions with them.

Others' observations: Participants expressed that others observed their situations and sought support on their behalf when they were no longer able to do it by themselves. Here, the individuals cope with their problems by involving others as co-problem solvers (Berg, Meegan, & Deviney, 1998).

For instance, participants expressed these views within the perceptual boundary of Acting:

*“I felt like a guinea pig, like that my stuff that was so important to me was a kind of maybe like a doctor like she got that like that syndrome you need to give her these” (T8:3)*

*“it's one of the toughest time because people was so judgmental on every single thing you said” (T5:5)*

*“But, you know how everyone expects you know how to do it. They didn't really go into it” (T1:3)*

*“There is fear people might not understand you and people might have a particular idea about you all that kind of stuff” (TP1:6)*

*“In fact actually it was my family who booked my first counselling appointment because I was too down in the dumps to do it myself” (TP1:3)*

In summary, the category of description of Acting has been discussed in terms of referential and structural aspects. The referential aspect was represented with participants' expressions of realities to denote the participants' assigned meaning of Acting and the structural aspect was discussed in terms of internal and external horizons. The internal horizon of Acting comprises three sub-categories: Striving, Regulating, and Learning. These three sub-categories co-present with two other aspects from the external horizon: Others' appreciation and Others' observation.

The categories of description of Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting represent participants' conceptions of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon. Each category of description outlined referential and structural aspects of how the phenomenon was experienced. This involved the variations in meanings of experiencing the phenomenon and structural awareness of those meanings. The identified categories of description can be logically displayed in an outcome space to portray the different ways of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon. Thus, the subsequent section discusses how the identified categories of description have been logically viewed and displayed in an outcome space to understand the support-seeking phenomenon.

## **4.2 Outcome space**

The study employs an outcome space to represent the categories of description, Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting. The outcome space portrays the distinctive aspects of a phenomenon and the logical relationship between them (Marton & Booth, 1997). In this study, the outcome space represents the different aspects of support-seeking phenomenon as experienced and understood by the participants.

I found that experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon comprises four distinctive aspects: Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting. These aspects of the support-seeking phenomenon can be logically viewed as follows:

- Knowing as a way of constructing a situation
- Understanding as a way of comprehending a situation
- Judging as a way of assessing a situation
- Acting as a way of striving in a situation

These four distinctive aspects of Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting can be brought together with the work of theorists Rogers, Dewey, and Vickers, and incorporated into the valuing model of Hutcheon. The connections between all four of these scholars have been discussed in the earlier section of categories of description. I integrate their work and my interpretations of the findings to enable deeper discussion of the four aspects of the support-seeking phenomenon revealed in this study.

#### Knowing as a way of constructing a situation

In this study, participants became aware of what they were experiencing through their bodily interaction with the environment, the language used to articulate the meaning of their experiences, and their thoughts. This is consistent with Hutcheon's (1972) view that an individual experiences or interprets meanings from external stimuli (stimuli as experienced or interpreted). Dewey (1938) similarly explains that external sources interact with an individual's body and mind and subsequently construct the situation. Vickers (1968) has the same view that an individual's readiness to see forms the situation.

### Understanding as a way of comprehending a situation

Participants in this study, comprehended meanings of what they were experiencing from what they had symbolised. This is identified by Hutcheon (1972) as a knowledge system that enables an individual to recognise and reason about the stimuli as experienced ('the real'). This reality is further appraised by the individual's normative system as to what is desirable or preferable in the situation. This is what the participants have experienced as Preferring, a desirable solution to their situation. Participants expressed that they observed their reality as experienced compared with a desirable state. This is consistent with Hutcheon's (1972) explanation of two systems (knowledge and normative) that jointly work in appraising a situation as desirable or undesirable ('the real' versus 'the good'). Vickers (1968) views the same process as 'appreciation', observing the reality as experienced as compared with the desired state.

### Judging as a way of assessing a situation

Participants expressed that they made judgements to bring a situation to a resolution. They relied on their instincts and understanding to support their judgements. This aligns with Rogers's (1964) view that individuals are central to their valuing process, deciding what is acceptable and what other features need to be ignored in a situation. Hutcheon (1972) addresses this as a choice made through assessing a situation.

## Acting as a way of striving in a situation

Participants expressed that they strived and acted deliberately to achieve their desired outcomes. This was the context where participants sought support from others who have resources, knowledge, and ability to support them. This is consistent with Vickers's (1968) view that an individual devises actions once they have considered that the situation needed to be changed. Dewey (1938) and Hutcheon (1972) have similar view that the individual's actions and enduring the consequences form a continuous process of learning for the individual.

In this study participants were attempting to solve what they sensed, felt, and realised as a problem or situation. The aspects of Knowing, Understanding, and Judging can be logically viewed as activities involved in the process of observing and reasoning about a situation so as to improve one's decision to act. For each of these activities participants conducted observations by directly referring to what they were experiencing and gained meanings as it appeared to them. Here, participants derived their meanings from their structuring or organization of awareness at a moment of time. Participants discerned some parts of reality to be held in the centre of awareness and other parts of reality receded to the surroundings. The significance of layering the awareness to core and surrounding enabled the participants to experience meanings as 'phenomenologically' felt by them. As such, each participant was considered unique in terms of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. Participants used this phenomenon-related information to make judgements on what actions to follow to correct the situations. If participants felt the need to take actions, then they exercised socially mediated agency to seek support from others. Participants

learned from their actions and knowledge was formed to understand and handle subsequent situations.

All these four aspects of the support-seeking phenomenon can be displayed in a hermeneutical spiral. The spiral is a progression from one cycle of understanding to the cycle that follows. At each cycle an individual conducts a valuation and forms a pre-understanding that helps them to comprehend the next cycle (Gummesson, 2000). In this context value is not a perceptual state at a point of time or static, but keeps unfolding over time (Vargo, 2009).

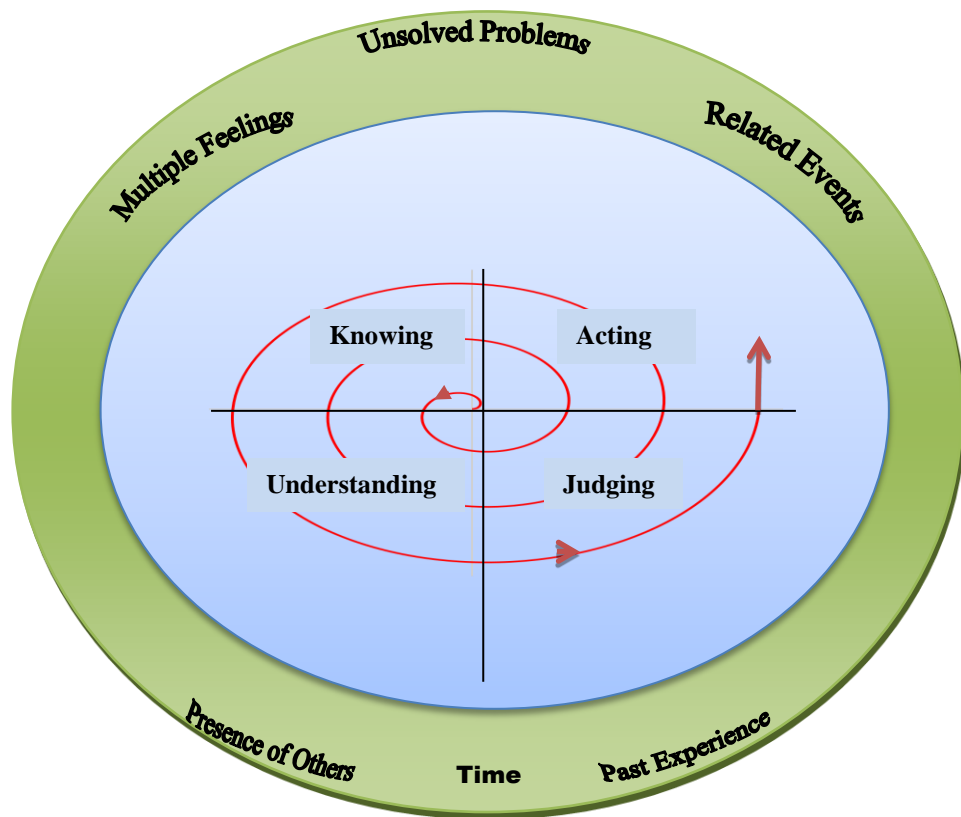
#### **4.2.1 Hermeneutical Spiral of Understanding Support-Seeking Phenomenon**

According to Gummesson (2003), a hermeneutical spiral exhibits a dynamic process view of moving from one cycle of understanding that furnishes the pre-understanding to the cycle that follows. This endless process of progression of meanings from one cycle to another improves one's understanding.

Gummesson (2003) further explains that meanings are given within a context. This is consistent with Marton and Booth's (1997) view that the referential aspect that represents a meaning is experienced simultaneously with the structural aspects of it comprising the internal and external horizons. Participants were experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon as perceived in awareness ('phenomenologically'). This is shown as the internal horizon and the

external horizon in Figure 4 below. The internal horizon represents participants' experienced and understood aspects of support seeking: Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting and the relationship of these aspects as whole in a spiral. The external horizon represents the context in which other aspects co-present as a part of the surrounding environment of the internal horizon. The other aspects were unsolved problems, time, related events, multiple feelings, past experiences, and presence of others.

**Figure 4: The Hermeneutical Spiral of Understanding Support-Seeking Phenomenon**



Legend:  Internal Horizon  External Horizon

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The outcomes of this study are presented in the form of categories of description and an outcome space. Categories of description represent participants' collective meanings of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. In this study, categories of description: Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting, were participants' ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. The work of the three theorists (Rogers, Dewey, and

Vickers) incorporated into Hutcheon's valuing model was found useful to explain the four aspects of the support-seeking phenomenon. These aspects were logically displayed in an outcome space in a hermeneutical spiral to show the complex structure of support-seeking phenomenon that can be experienced.

# Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications

## 5.0 Introduction

This study brings to light that the idea of ‘exchange’, which appears in S-D logic’s Foundational Premise (FP) 1 (service is ‘exchanged’ for service), has retained a residual meaning of the transactional concept from G-D logic and limited the understanding of service as a process in S-D logic. As a result, value being the most important concept in S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2012), needs to be understood as a process rather than an output. In order to understand value as a process, one has to probe people’s valuing phenomenon that emerges and unfolds over time for individuals (Flint, 2006).

My study aimed to understand how students with disabilities were experiencing and realising value in the context of support-seeking. The study provides a holistic understanding of the variations in ways the students with disabilities have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon. Three main research questions were designed to address the aims of this study: 1) how do students with disabilities recognise the need of support-seeking? 2) what activities do students with disabilities engage in when they are support-seeking? and 3) how do students with disabilities seek support? In order to provide a sound theoretical base for conducting this study, I integrated the work of four key theorists relating to the concept of valuing and the essential elements of the valuing process. I brought together the work of Dewey (education), Rogers (psychology), Vickers

(system thinking), and Hutcheon (sociology) in the Integrative Valuing Model. I offer this model as a contribution to researchers who are working to understand valuing as a process.

In brief, the findings showed that participants recognised the need of support-seeking through their bodily felt meanings and thoughts. Four activities, Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting represented participants' conceptions of experiencing the support-seeking phenomenon. Participants expressed that they strived and sought others' supports to achieve their desirable outcomes.

The interpretation of this study resulted in a hermeneutical spiral, providing a holistic understanding of the valuing process for S-D logic which is subjective, contextual, personal, and phenomenologically determined. An attempt has been made to re-express the S-D Foundational Premises in processual terms for a coherent understanding of service as a process. This study also contributes a research method that is less explored in the marketing discipline, phenomenography, which has the potential to assist researchers to understand people's realities as experienced. Another important implication of this study is that it provides an avenue for businesses to have meaningful interactions with customers and be of service to them. The following section discusses the study's theoretical and managerial implications, before suggesting further research.

## 5.1 S-D Logic Contributions

This study makes two theoretical contributions to S-D logic. First, the study builds on the S-D logic's Foundational Premise (FP) 10, value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. The aspect of phenomenologically - determined value has not been well addressed to date (Helkkula & Kelleher, 2010; Helkkula et al., 2012; Gronroos & Voima, 2013).

My study contributes to phenomenological understanding of value. In this study, participants' ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon occurred in relation to their mental acts or structural awareness, at a particular point of time. Here, participants discerned some aspect of reality to be focal and held in awareness (internal horizon), and other aspects to recede to the background (external horizon). These two horizons together constitute what the participants have understood as a phenomenon. This is in line with Brentano's (1874, cited in Morrison, 1970, p. 29) view of intentionality that "every mental (act) has an object, something it refers to". In other words, every mental act carries meanings directed to a perceived object. Thompson et al. (1989) have the same understanding that all aspects of human experience are intentional phenomena. As such, participants in this study experienced and determined value that was understood in their consciousness as a phenomenon. In other words, the participants had to appreciate, and act upon their thoughts to determine value. This extends Vargo and Lusch's (2012, p. 5) Foundational Premise 10 that "the beneficiary always uniquely and phenomenologically determines value". Therefore, value is a realised phenomenon for the beneficiary.

In this study participants were unique, as different participants have expressed different aspects of the support-seeking phenomenon as they experienced it. This indicates that participants' structural awareness of experiencing and understanding the phenomenon at a point of time were different. These participants have discerned some aspects of reality to be focused (internal horizon) while others remained in the background (external horizon). It is important to understand that participants have experienced and understood the support-seeking phenomenon within the interrelationship of both horizons, internal and external. In other words, participants' ways of experiencing and understanding the phenomenon were in relation to their contexts. Therefore, value that was perceived and understood in consciousness as a phenomenon differs among the participants. This study justifies S-D logic's view of value as idiosyncratic ('personal'), experiential ('as experienced'), contextual ('co-constitution of internal and external horizons'), and meaning laden ('perceived and understood in consciousness').

Second, this study contributes to a holistic understanding of the valuing process for S-D logic. Categories of description of Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting represent participants' conceptions of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. These activities, Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting can be logically viewed as participants' ways of attempting to solve what they sensed, felt, and realised as a problem: Knowing as a way of constructing a situation; Understanding as a way of comprehending a situation; Judging as a way of assessing a situation; and Acting a way of striving in a situation. These activities can be logically viewed as a process of observing and

reasoning about a situation that improves one's decision to act, which can be displayed in a hermeneutical spiral.

This study presents the hermeneutical spiral of valuing as explicit support for S-D logic's view of service as a process. In this study, participants expressed that they made valuations and learned from their actions whether to continue or discontinue their actions towards their desirable outcomes. Participants who have decided to continue with their actions employed the knowledge from their previous understanding to handle subsequent situations. Thus, participants were experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon in a spiral motion of flowing from one cycle of understanding to another. This supports the idea that value is not a perceptual state at an endpoint of time, rather it is a snapshot assessment conducted in a dynamic process (Gronroos, 2000; Gummesson, 2000; Vargo, 2009; Helkkula & Kelleher, 2010; Helkkula et al., 2012; Gronroos & Voima, 2013).

For a coherent reflection of service as a process for S-D logic, an attempt has been made to re-express the Foundational Premises in processual terms. The following table 6 reflects the restatement of foundational premises accompanied with revised explanations.

**Table 6: The Foundational Premises of the Service-Dominant Logic restated in processual terms**

Foundational Premise	Revised Foundational Premise	Explanation of Revised Foundational Premise
FP1 Service is the fundamental basis of exchange	FP1 Service is the fundamental basis of <i>relational</i> exchange	The <i>reciprocal</i> application of operant resources (knowledge and skills), “service”, as defined in S-D logic, is the basis for all exchange. Service is <i>relationally</i> exchanged for service
FP2 Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange	FP2 Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of <i>relational</i> exchange	Because service is <i>realised</i> through complex <i>interactions</i> of goods, money and institutions, the <i>reciprocal</i> service that is the basis of exchange is not always apparent
FP3 Goods are a distribution mechanisms for service provision	FP3 Goods are mechanisms for <i>potential reciprocal service</i>	<i>Value is realised when goods support reciprocal service among actors</i>
FP4 Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage	FP4 Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage	The comparative ability to <i>enable desirable</i> change drives competition
FP5 All economies are service economies	FP5 All economies are service economies	Service (singular) is only now becoming more apparent with increased specialization and outsourcing <i>in interdependent systems that support value creation</i>
FP6 The customer is always a co-creator of value	FP6 The customer is always a co-creator of value	Implies value creation is an <i>interactive process</i>
FP7 The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions	FP7 The enterprise cannot deliver value, but rather propose valuations	Enterprises <i>reciprocally apply</i> resources to support value creation and collaboratively (interactively) <i>enable value creation</i> following <i>agreement</i> of value propositions, but cannot create and/or deliver value independently
FP8 A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational	FP8 A service-centered view is inherently <i>actor</i> oriented and relational	Because service is defined in terms of <i>actor-determined benefit</i> and co-created it is inherently <i>actor-oriented process aligned with relationality</i>
FP9 All social and economic actors are resource integrators	FP9 All social and economic actors are resource integrators	<i>Actors interact in processes of resource re-configuration</i>
FP10 Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary	FP10 <i>The phenomenon of value is realised in the actor’s own situation in valuing outputs of resource configuration</i>	<i>Valuing is a situated judgement of appreciative action</i>

## **5.2 Methodological Contribution**

Phenomenography is a qualitative research approach that is little known in marketing. The approach describes the variations in ways people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of phenomena (Marton, 1988). The approach rests firmly on a non-dualist ontology view of human beings and the world as inseparable entities. As such, the epistemological standpoint of phenomenography is based on intentionality (Marton & Pang, 2008). Knowledge is viewed as relational, neither formed purely based on observation of facts nor rational assumptions in the mind (Barnard et al., 1999). Knowledge is formed in relation to the aspect of reality as experienced and understood (Barnard et al., 1999).

Many marketing scholars (Thompson et al., 1989; Schembri & Sandberg, 2002; Schembri, 2006; Heinonen et al., 2010; Gronroos & Voima, 2013) view taking people's perspective of experiencing provides a holistic way of understanding people's experiences. Here, phenomenography can be a useful approach as it emphasises the structure of meanings that distinguish qualitative ways of experiencing a phenomenon and not a researcher's perspective of what is the phenomenon for others (Belk, et al., 1989; Arnould & Price, 1993). My study suggests phenomenography has the potential for researchers who aim to understand individuals' ways of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon.

### **5.3 Managerial Implications**

Along with the theoretical and methodological contributions, my study stands to add to knowledge regarding how customers' support-seeking behaviour or customers' initiated engagement can offer opportunities for companies to engage in customers' appreciation and thus be of more meaningful service to them (Supramaniam, et al., 2012).

In particular, the findings of this study contributes to knowledge relating to the four aspects of valuing process (Knowing, Understanding, Judging, and Acting) that provides companies with a better understanding of their customers' appreciations in seeking support to realise value. This knowledge could enable managers to achieve a higher degree of compatibility in engaging with their customers, shifting from separate appreciations (I and You) to a shared appreciation of togetherness (We). In this shared appreciation of togetherness, the manager would be better able to connect with the customer's appreciation and thus anticipate their needs, negotiate, respond, and work together for a solution that is in the customer's best interest.

Thus, customers' support-seeking behaviour presents companies with vital and strategic opportunities to engage in their customers' value-realising processes. In this study, participants acted purposefully to enhance their resources to achieve their desirable outcomes. Participants were willing to engage and work reciprocally with others who have the resources, skills, and knowledge to support

them. This aligns with Bandura's (2006) view that people exercise socially mediated agency to access others' resources or expertise to secure their desirable outcomes. This is the context in which companies can have a better understanding to connect with customers' appreciation in anticipating their needs, negotiate and subsequently support the customers' value creation process (Gronroos & Ravald, 2011).

Gronroos (2006, p. 323) expresses that companies "should support the customers in a value creating way". Zuboff and Maxmin (2002) have a similar view that the underlying purpose of businesses needs to be redefined to support people. Many international companies are working with their virtual communities to foster support and build relationships with their customers (Arnone et al., 2010). In the context of support, both companies and customers can engage in meaningful interactions and work collaboratively in producing beneficial outputs (Payne et al., 2008). Customer's support-seeking behaviour can be an avenue for companies to engage in customer's appreciation in a meaningful way that can build a long-term collaborative relationship with them.

## **5.4 Limitations and Further Research**

This study aims to provide a holistic understanding of students' with disabilities various ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. It is not possible to claim that this study has represented all aspects of students' with disabilities conceptions of experiencing the support-seeking

phenomenon. This study is limited to what the participants have expressed as ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon. Nevertheless, this study can be a starting point for other researchers to embark on exploring and demonstrating the different ways of experiencing and understanding the support-seeking phenomenon.

From the perspective of human agency, people intentionally act to secure the desired outcomes (Bandura, 2006). Seeking support is a common phenomenon in people's lives in order to make desired things to happen. This study has focused on a particular group of people (students with disabilities) within a specific context (education). Further research can be conducted to investigate the importance of the support-seeking phenomenon in value-realising processes across different populations and contexts. For example, building on the work of Zuboff and Maxmin (2002) on the 'Support Economy', future research could explore how a customer experiences the support-seeking phenomenon in customer-to-customer interactions via social media and others.

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# **Appendix A**

Ethics Application

Information Participant Sheet

Consent Form for Participants

Pamphlet

Group Email

Interview Guide

## **Appendix B**

Participants' Consent Copies

## **Appendix C**

A Copy Transcript (Participant 5) – in reference to Chapter 3 (Methodology)

## **Appendix D**

Summary of Worksheet

## **Attached Disc**

Audio Files

Full set of Transcripts

Complete set of Worksheets