

FACTORS INFLUENCING NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS TRANSITIONING  
FROM TWO-YEAR TO FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

by

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## Chapter 1: Introduction:

### Background Information

The era is changing, and new technologies are also leaving its impact on people. Without knowledge of technology and its uses, progress is impossible. In the field of engineering, medical, architecture, and others, higher education is playing an important role. In fact, it is an important mean to occupational attainment. The people are now aware of the importance of education, and so the percentage of higher educated people is increasing every year. The concept of being educated is increasing all over the World. Especially, in the United States of America, the people belonging to different communities are aware of the importance of education. However, in the United States, African Americans had been the target of discrimination and facing difficulties in getting higher education (Anonymous, 2007).

According to the U.S Department of Education and Carnegie Council (Bean, 1985), the number of enrollments of American adults is increasing in the higher education Institutions. However, still, there is a little increase in the nontraditional students of United States in the higher education institutions. This is because non-traditional students face so many difficulties, in getting admission in higher education institutions, due to several factors, such as financial issues, no preparation for higher education institute, family issues, or duties issues. Some of the nontraditional students have to leave their studies because they have to take responsibilities for their families. Some of the people are not aware of the importance of education in their lives and are more concerned about enjoyment and traveling to one country to other. However, some students, who leave their studies, have to leave their education due to health or drug abuse issues. Some of them leave their studies because their parents cannot afford it. It has also observed that

most of the students who leave their studies after two-year college are Black Americans, Asians, or Hispanic because they cannot face the discrimination and also cannot afford the high expenses of higher education (Royton, 2014).

The wars in America and Iraq and America and Afghanistan are going on, so, many of the Americans joined military forces without completing their graduation. Now, approximately two million veterans had come back from Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and so they wanted to make their career. As they had not completed their education and there were no career opportunities for them, so they decided to complete their studies. For this purpose, they are getting admission in higher education institutions (McBain, 2008). Now, these veterans are facing so many difficulties in their education because after a long time they have to make their study schedule, and secondly many of them are either single parent or having a married life due to which they have so many responsibilities. Moreover, to afford their educational expenses, they have to work in any organization for which they have to meet the workload and many other factors. These all circumstances make them unable to focus on their education in the start (McBain, 2008).

Also, economically, everyone wants to have a good living status and for that everyone is struggling harder and harder. Competition is going on, and in this era of competition, everyone wants to win. For this everyone wants to have a higher-paying position. But the issue is that higher-paying positions require specialized training and specialized education. Now the people, who want to have better living standard and higher paying positions at workplaces, are getting admissions in the higher education institutions and these students are known as non-traditional students (Salvant, 2016).

Another factor which is increasing the non-traditional students in the universities is the social issues. Now the expenses are increasing day by day, and there is high demand of the two income family. Wives and husbands, both, have to play their roles and have to earn for the family running and to meet the expenses of their social life. Also, to maintain a standard in life, high income is the demand of time for that both family heads have to work hard. This is increasing the number of women in the universities. The women who got married and started their family life, later realized that they need to complete their studies to get a better job and for that, they are getting admission in the universities and completing their education. But the issue is that they have so many responsibilities regarding their families and children along with that the completing education is a difficult step (University, 2013).

Now due to the high responsibilities and so many difficulties faced by the non-traditional students of United States, the rate of the drop out of non-traditional students of universities is at higher than the traditional students of the United States' Universities. Kasworm (2012) was the one who did his research to identify the national attrition impact of the non-traditional student of United States. According to him, now the universities are focusing to **aware the students about the** importance of education, and for this purpose, they are managing the college preparation programs for their students to make them ready for the higher education institutions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the traditional students are leaving their studies due to different reasons, and now the non-traditional students are the focus of the universities (Brock, 2010).

#### **Statement of Problem:**

The college choice decision process for non-traditional students has not attracted much research when it is compared to the multitude of undergirded studies for traditional-age students. The record of non-traditional students attending post-secondary institutions is increasingly high. It is

relatively little to no research that discloses college choice factors for these non-traditional student population. These non-traditional students face so many difficulties and barriers in the way of their education, and the purpose of this study is basically to highlight those barriers and their influence in the lives of the non-traditional students and their studies. Also, some of the non-traditional students become unable to manage their barriers. They become unable to make their schedule or to complete their studies along with their responsibilities and duties, and so they leave their graduation, or they are dropped out by the universities. To complete their education, it is very important to firstly break the barriers in the way of their higher education and then to complete their education with full devotion and attention. By doing this, they can complete their four-year education and can enjoy the learning environment in peaceful condition.

This study will not only highlight the barriers that are faced by the nontraditional students in completing their higher education but also will discuss that how these barriers affect their lives and how their later attempt to complete studies affect their lives. This study will assist in filling in the gap of literature about the factors that influence college choice of non-traditional students. By this study, the individual will be able to understand the condition and situation of the nontraditional students and the importance of the academic plans for the encouragement and comfort of the nontraditional students.

#### **The purpose of Study:**

The purpose of this study is to examine the influential factors, including institutional characteristics, rankings, socioeconomic status and financial aid influence the college choice of non-traditional students transitioning from two-year to four-year institutions. To do so, this study will call for the surveying of non-traditional students enrolled at a private two-year liberal arts college. It is expected that statistical trends will continue to show that the non-traditional student

enrollment numbers will continue to increase throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This research area is critical for those private colleges and universities that compensate for declines in traditional student enrollment by increasing the numbers of non-traditional students enrolled.

Opposed to referencing institutional, regional, or national trends, the individual student will be the unit of analysis. Primary research will be conducted within this study with the aim of harnessing a better understanding of non-traditional student college choice factors. Unlike applied research, there is no immediate solution being sought for this problem. Therefore, this study will be descriptive and exploratory. It is important that these factors be analyzed and possibly assists four-year colleges and universities with their policy and goal setting. Having current knowledge with regards to what non-traditional community college graduates consider in college choice will bring awareness to their specific needs.

### Research Questions:

Research questions of this study are as following;

- What are those barriers which influence the non-traditional students' transition from two years college to four years college?
- How does the support of family and others affect the transition of the nontraditional students to four-year College?
- How does the situations, self-confidence, and strategies of the nontraditional students affect their transition to four-year College?

## Hypothesis:

This study will examine two hypotheses and seek to answer them based on an extensive interview.

H#1- The adult nontraditional student's college choice in transitioning from a two-year to a four-year institution is influenced by institutional characteristics.

H#2- The adult nontraditional student's college choice in transitioning from a two-year to a four-year institution is influenced by college ranking.

H#3- The adult nontraditional student's college choice in transitioning from a two-year to a four-year institution is influenced by socioeconomic status.

H#4- The adult nontraditional student's college choice in transitioning from a two-year to a four-year institution is influenced by financial aid.

H#5- There is no significant difference between male and female adult nontraditional students with regards to institutional characteristics, college ranking, socioeconomic status, and financial aid that influence the college choice in transitioning from a two-year to a four-year institution of higher learning.

## Theoretical Framework:

To better understand influences on the choice of nontraditional students to transition from four-year to two-year institutions, this study will be based on Schlossberg's Theory of Transition which defines a transition as any event that results in changed routine, relationship, roles, and assumptions. For the better understanding, the type, impact, and context of the transition must be considered as four "S" which refers to the self-situation, support, and strategies.

Situation describes the socioeconomic status, age, gender, ethnicity, and health of the individual. It describes the situation of the student which affects the transition of the student. If the student is older in age, then he/she will face health issues and learn issue. In this way, the situation plays an important role to understand the issue in the transition of the nontraditional student to four-year college. Self describes the psychological resources, self-efficacy, and spirituality, commitments and values, and resiliency. If the student is confident enough that he/she can perform well, then it means he can do well in this academics. Most of the nontraditional students face self-control and self-confidence issue due to which they face difficulty in transition to four-year college. Support describes the help of family friends, institutions, and community for the stable change. However, in the absence of this support, the students have to manage everything on their own and so face so many difficulties and barriers in their academic life. Strategies describe the modification of the situation, aid in managing stress, and control of the problem. If the students have managed all the things with great strategies, then he will never face any problem in his academic life.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory allows the practitioners to understand the need of the nontraditional students through a structured approach to predict the change, measure the change, and to react to the change. This theory can be applied to any student, either young or old, either

male or female, either majority or minority, either urban or rural (Chickering, 1995; Evans, 1998).

Now, this Schlossberg's Transition Theory will be used to understand that how the self-confidence, situation, and strategies of the nontraditional students either help them or become the barrier to the transition to four-year College. It will also help to understand that how the support of the family, teachers, friends, or others effects the transition of the nontraditional students from two-year College to four-year College.

#### **The significance of Study:**

Although so many studies have been done on the barriers to nontraditional students' studies however there has not been any specific qualitative study of the barriers to the transition of the nontraditional students to four-year College. The finding of this research will help to understand that how the Schlossberg's Transition Theory helps to understand the barriers to the transition of the nontraditional student to four-year college. This study will focus on 4 "S" of the Schlossberg's Transition Theory and will make the individual understand that how the Situation, Self, Support, and Strategy becomes the barrier to the nontraditional students' transition to higher education institutions. The interviews taken for this research will provide the answer to several questions, such as how do different situations affect the transition of the nontraditional students to the four-year college? What are the major barriers to the transition of the nontraditional students to four-year college from two-year college? How does the individual's self-become a barrier to his transition to four-year college? How the support of the family, institution, teachers, friends, siblings, and others affect the transition of the nontraditional students to higher education institutions?

The target audience of the results of this research is the leaders of students affairs, top level administrators and the leaders of the academic affairs. This study will help the target audience to understand that what are the basic barriers to the transition of the nontraditional students to four-year college and how these barriers can be overcome by the students and the administration? This study will also able the administration to understand the needs, possible issues, and possible threats to the transition of the nontraditional students to four-year college. Furthermore, after understanding the barriers to the transition of the nontraditional students to four-year college, the administration will be able to make adjustments to the institutional support to help the students and will change the student affairs program of the Institute which will prove as beneficial for the nontraditional students and will help the to complete their four-year college education with great ease.

### **Overview of the Methodology**

This study is a qualitative study to analyze the barriers to the nontraditional students' transition to the four-year college. The qualitative methodology is used in this study to address the research questions (mentioned above). This qualitative methodology is based on a survey method via which, I will analyze that how the barrier is affecting the transition of nontraditional student to higher education institutions and exactly what are those barriers. The survey must be taken at a college or university where the nontraditional students will be able to provide their feedback on the survey and will be able to answer the questions in the interviews. This survey based and interview-based research will help to understand the views of the individuals about the barriers to the nontraditional students. The sample size of the survey is 100 participants. It means 100 nontraditional students will take part in this survey to give their views about the barriers to their transition to four-year college.

Interview questions for this research will cover the four areas, which include situation, support, strategies, and self. The participants of this survey must have completed their two-year college, and they must be a nontraditional student who faced difficulties in transition to four-year college. For the survey or the interview, the introductory letters will be sent to all participants to invite them to take part in the survey and to give their precious response to this research. The introductory letter will explain the purpose of the study and the purpose of participation of the participants. A pre-survey will be conducted first to have a general introduction of the participants and then further survey, and interviews will be arranged with the participants. For the survey purpose, I will use Jackson State University's online survey software by which it will be easier for the participants to give response to each question.

There will be so many participants who will take part in survey and interviews but then by fake response and other issues, I will filter only survey sheets of 100 participants and will analyze that how the self, support, strategies, and situations affected the transition of the nontraditional students to four-year college.

### Definition of Key Terms

*Nontraditional Student*- Students considered to be 25 years or older (although age alone is not a defining characteristic) usually do not live on campus, and in general are not attending college full time(Beane, 1985).

*College choice model*- A model which includes a range of postsecondary educational decisions among which are (a) the decision of students to continue their education at the postsecondary level, and (b) the decision to enroll in a specific postsecondary institution. The model consists of three stages: predisposition, search, and choice (Hossler, 1989).

*Predisposition stage-* A stage of the College Choice Model in which individuals develop occupational and educational aspirations, as well as intentions to continue education beyond secondary level(Hossler, 1989).

*Search stage-* A stage of the College Choice Model in which the student accumulates and assimilates information necessary to develop the student's short list of institutions to attend (Hossler et al., 1989).

*Choice stage-* A stage of the College Choice Model in which students select, apply, and enroll in college (Hossler et al., 1989).

### **Organization of the Document**

This chapter provides the overview, purpose, and significance of the study. Chapter two provides a review of the literature related to college choice in America, college choice models, upward transfers to four-year institutions. Chapter three will present a detailed description of the methodological aspects of this study including population, sample, instrumentation and data analysis procedures. Chapter four will present the findings. Lastly, chapter five will provide the summary, recommendations, and conclusions of the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter two provides a review of the literature related to college choice in America, college choice models, upward transfers to four-year institutions. The major focus of the research is the barriers to the nontraditional students, such as readiness, confidence, personal control, support, and independence.

To understand the importance of this study, the very first thing is to understand that who these nontraditional students are actually? According to the definition of the non-traditional students, the student who is older than 25 years, who had left his studies due to any family issues or financial issues and experienced a delay in the enrollment in the higher educational institutions, who work either part-time or full time along with his studies to meet his financial demands, who has other dependents like children, family, sibling, or parents, and the one who is single parent is said to be non-traditional student of United States (Shillingford, 2013).

### Barriers to Non-traditional Students:

Marrion (2001) presented his study in which he discussed that in the United States of America, the number of non-traditional students is increasing day by day. Many students who did not continue their education is now coming back to the universities and colleges to complete their four-year education. Now there is a need to discover that what were those issues or barriers which made them leave their education. There should be proper identification of the problems and the barriers in the way of the higher education of the individuals. This identification will further help to manage the plans to overcome or to minimize the barriers so that everyone will be able to complete the education on time. In this way, the students' transition from two-year college to the four-year college will be easy (Bow, 2001).

When the students do not enroll in four years college and give priority to other issues than the education, then they face so many difficulties in their lives. Not only in their lives but they also face so many issues in their career. Finally to get higher-paying jobs and to meet the financial issues of the family, the non-traditional students again join their colleges for the completion of four-year education. However, there are so many factors which become a great hurdle in their ways of education.

Now actually the problem of the transition of the non-traditional students to four years college exists on a nation level in U.S.A. According to Gas work, (Kasworm, 2012), the colleges or universities should provide a comfortable environment to the non-traditional students and must provide more options for the better serving to nontraditional students. Also, the records are showing that there is 23% increase in the nontraditional students enrolled in graduation colleges and only 9% increase in the traditional students enrolled in the graduation colleges. This means in the classes of higher education, there is the majority of the nontraditional students, and so the universities and colleges must take care of their rights and comforts (Kasworm, 2012).

Moreover, it is not about majority or minority rather it is about the encouragement of students. When they join college after a long gap, then they need extra attention and care to perform well in the class. Especially, in the United States, the local universities is having more than 80% of the nontraditional students which need proper education strategies and relaxed learning environment (University, 2013).

Also, when the non-traditional students join the higher education institutions, then they face so many barriers, such as problems in confidence, readiness, self-control, and independence. The nontraditional students need to review their previous contents, and so they become unable to

perform so actively during classes. That is why sometimes they lose their confidence and do not take part in any academic activity. Just because they need time to become comfortable with the environment of the university and their fellows and with their teachers, so they begin to think that maybe they are a misfit for the higher education institutions.

Non-traditional students need the extra support of the teachers and their fellows to complete their education and to perform well in their academic activities. Now the teachers play a vital role and can guide the proper ways of attempting the academic assignments, tests, and exams. Also, the class fellows and the seniors can guide the nontraditional students to perform well in their academics.

Now the universities are encouraging the nontraditional students by providing them easy learning formats and online programs for better understanding of the contents. Although these all struggles by the universities are so much beneficial, there is need of struggles of university leaders to address the barriers and hurdles to the nontraditional students at graduate level. However, when we come to the basics, then the problem starts when the students do not enroll in the four years college after the completion of two years college.

Catherine, during a conference, presented a study about the barriers to the nontraditional students and opportunities for them. She discussed that when the students complete their two years college and then are ready to transit to four years college, then they face so many difficulties. Some of them cannot afford the educational expenses, and that is why they have no other option but to leave the education. Some of them have to look after their families, such as siblings and parents, and so they have to leave their education. Conclusively, there are three types of barriers

which affect the nontraditional student's transition from two-year college to four years college (Cash, 2013). These obstacles are;

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### College Readiness as Barrier:

Julia Duncheon (2014) presented his research in which he concluded that the readiness is the greatest barrier for the nontraditional students. He said;

*“College readiness discourse is a barrier for nontraditional students which tend to focus on the individual student rather than the context of sociocultural in which the individuals are embedded.”*(Duncheon, 2014)

College readiness is a factor which describes how much ready a student is to get admission in four-year college. Many high schools are now focusing on preparing their students for college admissions and registrations, but some schools are not focusing on college readiness. It is not the fault of the individual that he or she is not prepared for the college admission. Now, it has become a part of business by which the high schools have been ranked. The schools which are preparing their students for the college admission are ranked higher than the colleges which are not preparing their students for college. Also, the universities or four-year colleges are now just giving admissions to the students by their preparations and so in this way some students have been neglected even though they are capable of transition to four-year college. Especially the communities like black Americans are facing such issues.

Most of the Black American institutions do not prepare their students for the college. Also, their parents are not well aware of the importance of college readiness. The negligence of the institutions and parents becomes a barrier for the nontraditional students, and they face difficulties in transition to four-year college. Some scholarships are also announced by college readiness and are known as college readiness scholarships. These scholarships are provided by students' college-ready skill development. These scholarships also raise the competition among

the students. However, for some programs of the four-year college the college readiness is not even necessary, or sometimes the non-prepared students are more capable of getting admission in college but just because of their negligence at college readiness become a barrier to their education.

Dilworth, in 2004, also presented his study in which he discussed that no doubt college readiness is of great importance for the students because it helps them to get admission in better college. But, somewhere, the college readiness has increased competition amongst the students and so many students who deserve to get admissions, become unable to perform well just because of college readiness. In the early age of life, the students can never understand the importance of college readiness, and so they become unable to get the higher education, and finally they become unable to get a higher education. In this way, college readiness becomes a hurdle to the nontraditional students, and later they realize that higher education is not only important to make their lives meaningful, but also it was important to improve their financial condition.

If the students get a higher education, then they will get better opportunities to earn and will get better jobs. This will help them to get good wages and to bear the financial expenses of families. When the family background becomes strong, then the new generation and children will be able to get the education in best institutions and also there will be no hurdle for higher education. Better financial conditions will help to attend college and to save money for their future. Also, it will help them to get better and proper academic courses. But for this all they need to be prepared for four-year college and to get a higher education. So, by his research, he concluded that college readiness is although necessary for the four-year colleges, but somewhere it plays a vital role in becoming a barrier to the nontraditional students to get admission in better institutions (Dilworth, 2004).

Ed Trust (2010), presented his study to guide the parents of the nontraditional students to guide their children for better preparation for their career and college. He demonstrated in his study that it is not enough to provide the high school education to the children rather it is very important to get higher education to stand confidently at the competition level and to stand in the society as a strong entity.

Especially, the African Americans have a poor background, and for have a bright future, it is important to get higher education and then to get higher jobs and then to earn better for their families. He guided the parents of the African Americans to select the proper high schooling for their children. He guided them about the appropriate timing at which the parents can guide their children about the preparation of colleges and selection of career. He also highlighted the hurdles which the African American Students face at higher education institutions and these hurdles can only be eliminated by increasing the enrollment of African Americans in higher education institutions. He finally concluded by his research that the parents should guide their children for the college readiness. If they don't guide their children, then the college readiness will become a hurdle for the education of nontraditional students, and they won't be able to get admission in graduation colleges (Trust, 2010).

Ursula S. Aldana (2014), presented a college preparatory model for the high schools in which he not only discussed the cultural respect but also discussed the improvement of the academic outcomes. He did his research on the Urban Catholic High Schools to design a college preparatory model for the Black American's Communities, such as Latino and African American Students. In his study, he followed the survey pattern in which he conducted the interviews to the students and the teachers of the Catholic High Schools. The results of his survey indicated that only a few Catholic high schools are focusing to provide a better educational environment to the

African American students and to prepare them for their future education and better career. During his survey, he asked different questions to the participants and asked them about the better way to prepare the students for their future education. As the conclusion of his study, he discussed different points that are necessary for preparing the children or the students for the higher education colleges or institutions. He discussed that the college readiness is of great importance because if the students are not prepared for the college, then they may face so many difficulties in the transition from two-year college to four-year college. In this way, the college readiness can be proved as a barrier for nontraditional students (Aldana, 2014).

Rayton R. Sianjina, in 2014, presented his study about the preparatory plan for the nontraditional of United States. He observed the statistical data to analyze that with which ratio nontraditional students are enrolling in the high education universities at the high rate and their enrollment is affected by the college readiness so there should be some plans for the college readiness of the nontraditional students. In his research he prepared a plan according to which the nontraditional students will be prepared for their future education and their further stepping will be evaluated by the survey to check that either those guidelines were helpful for them or not (Royton, 2014).

### Confidence as a Barrier:

Confidence is the thing which either makes the man successful or becomes the cause of failure of that man. This is what happens to the nontraditional students. Because of their responsibilities and so many financial issues, they become less confident and so they face the failure in their academics. In this way, confidence becomes a hurdle or barrier to their education.

Xi Lin, in 2016, presented his study in which he discussed the barriers and the challenges for the nontraditional students enrolling in colleges in the United States. He showed by his survey that commitments of the multiple roles, insufficient family support, lower level of self-confidence, and insufficient social support are the main barriers for the nontraditional students during the transition from two years to four-year college.

He further discussed that the nontraditional students have multiple roles, such as employees, parents, spouses, etc. In his research, he especially focused the female nontraditional students and then compared them to the male nontraditional student and showed that females are experiencing more competing pressure, financial issues, and responsibilities than men (Bauer, 1990). Due to these responsibilities, the females face psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and others. These issues are caused by the family challenges and institutional challenges. As a result, the students become less confident and face so many barriers in enrolling in higher education institutions (Lin, 2016).

The confidence plays a vital role in the success of the student. When the student has less confidence, then it would increase the personal stress and the negative emotional state of the students. Because of this stressed condition, the students will never be able to perform well in his academics. Generally, nontraditional students have strong motivation and clear goal when they

re-enter into the college, and so they perform so well as compare to the traditional students (Compton, 2006). But due to the responsibilities outside the college, nontraditional students lack the confidence in the abilities and become less satisfied with their academic results and performance.

In 1991, Novak and Thacker investigated the level of satisfaction in nontraditional students. He discovered that 85% of the participants felt strained and 68% participants felt satisfaction. This shows that the most of the nontraditional students lack their confidence due to the pressure of conflicting time demands, jobs responsibilities, and anxiety. Aging also plays its role. Traditional students are younger than the nontraditional students, and so they perform well. On the other hand, due to the aging effect of the nontraditional students, they become unable to perform well and to learn with confidence in the class (Novak, 1991).

Furst continued his research to show the confidence as a barrier to nontraditional students and revealed that non-traditional females are especially the victim of lack of confidence rather than the male nontraditional students. The females are usually self-doubting, and they have higher anxiety issues rather than male nontraditional students of the female traditional students. Especially the African American students become the victim of the confidence issue, and so they become unable to perform well in their academics.

Renn and Reason (2013) noted that when students consider which college to attend, the variety of institutions from which to choose can be overwhelming. Colleges and universities in the United States are public, private, or for-profit; focus on liberal arts curricula, professional curricula, or research and scholarly preparation; and offer two- and four-year degrees in person, online, or in hybrid formats. They noted that institutional missions of some institutions,

specifically community college, Tribal Colleges and Universities, comprehensive universities, HSIs, and HBCUs, focus on the access for traditionally underrepresented student groups. Perna & Titus (2005) cited that some students considered the proximity of future institutions, prestige, and financial aid offerings. However, the choice of the college affects the students' educational future and his confidence too. When the students are well prepared for the college, and he is aware of all policies of the college, then he will be confident regarding each and everything. On the other hand, the students who are not aware of the policies of the institute and everything is new for them then they will lack their confidence, and so they will not take the time to perform well in their academics (Perna, 2005).

Kezar (2000) did his research on the barriers to the nontraditional students and showed that they lack their confidence due to the timing conflicts and responsibilities conflicts between the jobs and the colleges. There should be some proper plan according to which the higher education institutions should focus on student recruitment as a cooperative venture within the new global marketplace to stay competitive and manage their share of the market effectively. This comes about as the ideals of lifelong learning have altered the values of traditional education which consequently pressure traditional institutions to attract nontraditional students into traditional programs to replace their enrollment losses of traditional college students (Kezar, 2000).

### Personal Control as a Barrier:

Nontraditional students face so many barriers and challenges, these challenges makes them less confident, and so they also lack their personal control on things which become a barrier to their education. When the students try their best to perform well but due to stress and timing conflict they become unable to manage then they lose their personal control and so it causes anxiety to nontraditional students. Most of the students, when they lose their personal control on things, become so frustrated regarding their academics and so they decide to leave the college.

A study conducted by Lee & Frank (1990) attempted to add to existing research on college-going behaviors of 1980 high school graduates while focusing on the graduates who attended community colleges. Lee & Frank (1990) analyses examined family background and demographics, and student behaviors and experiences in high school and college characteristics and behaviors related to educational persistence. Characteristics of these students who did and did not transfer to four-year colleges were compared. The article also presented a causal model which included the background and high school experiences that would increase the likelihood of transfer of these students to a four-year college.

The sample and data for the study were taken from the High School and Beyond (HS & B) longitudinal study of almost 30,000 1980 high school seniors, from over 1,000 high schools. Information was gathered on a large subsample of these students for two years (1982) and four years (1984) after high school graduation. The authors' analysis investigated the "probability of transfer from two-year to four-year colleges for students who attended community college either full-time or part-time during any semester of the first two years after high school (1980-1982), resulting in a sample of 2,500" (Lee, 1990)

The model used consisted of five constructs, each operationalized by a set of variables. The five constructs used were: "student background (social class, race and gender), on students' academically related behaviors in high school (curricular track, attendance at a Catholic high school, homework done, number of academic mathematics courses taken, tenth-grade educational aspirations, and parents' interest in academically related activities)" (Lee & Frank, 1990). Second, the authors "estimated the combined effect of student background and high school behaviors on high school outcomes (academic achievement, grade point average (GPA), and whether the student applied to college while in high school)" (Lee & Frank, 1990). Third, "the effects of background, high school outcomes were estimated on community college behaviors" (including semester hours of credit earned, a semester of full-time enrollment, college grades, and some semesters in which mathematics and science courses were taken) (Lee & Frank, 1990). Finally, the effects of all of the constructs were evaluated to determine the probability of transfer from a two-year college to a four-year college.

From his research, he concluded that there are many factors which affect the students' transition from two-year college to four-year college, but for this transitions, confidence and self-control play as barriers. When the students are not prepared for the college, then their transition to four-year college becomes difficult for the students. This is because they become unable to perform confidently and so they lack their personal control on things and in confusion they make mistakes. These mistakes not only cause the failure in the academics but also affect the lives of the nontraditional students.

Most of the time, the people can confuse with confidence and self-control and consider them same term. However, both are totally different terms the confidence is the term used to indicate that how ready the student is to perform well in the academics or how well he is aware of his

knowledge. Sometimes the students are confident enough about the knowledge, but even then, due to the other responsibilities, they lack their personal control. Personal control comes in different terms, such as the person can feel like he is helpless and cannot perform well, or the person become frustrated and aggressive and begins to show annoyed behavior to the people who decrease the efficiency and affect the reputation of the students and so become hurdle in the students' transition to four-year college.

Wang (2012) also showed that Self- concept, and self-control are the psychological attributes which act as a significant predictor of upward transfer. The variables measuring external demands including being married, being a parent, and work hours, all had a negative effect on upward transfer. Full-time enrollment and continuous enrollment had a positive effect and were significant predictors of upward transfer. Wang concluded in his research that

*“The self-concept plays an important role in the academics of nontraditional students and is associated with better chances of transfer among nontraditional students attending community colleges” (Wang, 2012).*

The significance of this study is, as Wang (2012) noted, the "the first to explore the impact of self- concept on community college transfer, this study confirms the theoretical perspective that self- concept promotes positive behavior and improves performance." Specifically, self- concept may have a significant relationship to full- time and continuous enrollment, and transfer to a four- year institution. This is because self-concept enhances the self-control of the student and so the student becomes able to perform well. However, if the student lacks his self or personal control on things, then it affects the academics of the students in the worst way and causes the failure of the transition to four-year college (Wang, 2012).

### Support as Barrier:

Family support, friend's support, and colleague's support play an important role to provide relief to the nontraditional students whereas, in the absence of this support, the students become unable to perform well. Nontraditional students are older than the traditional students, and so sometimes they feel shame to ask for the help, and this affects their academics. Also, most of the traditional students do not like to support the nontraditional students just because they consider them less compatible. Also, most of the nontraditional students are Black Americans due to which they become the victim of discrimination, and nobody supports them or encourage them for their education. The absence of support becomes the barrier for the nontraditional students' transitions from two-year college to four-year college.

Sackett (2001) presented his study in which he discussed the major cause of the inequality in education and learning opportunities. According to him the support of the teachers and parents play a vital role in becoming a barrier to the education of nontraditional students. He discussed that there are many economic, social, and political factors that include racism and tensions have a great impact on the college admission process across the United States (Avery, 2009). These factors are the major cause of the inequities in learning opportunities for the different communities in the United States (Sackett, 2001). Some communities also face income disparities due to which they cannot represent themselves among college graduates in U.S. African Americans are one of those communities of United States. Although different organizations and the Government itself have taken so many changes to improve the Black American's access to the higher education (Bahr, 2010). They are also trying to overcome the effects of age, ethnicity, race, and economic background but still the discrimination has been

playing a major role in becoming the hurdle for the easy access of African American towards higher education.

In 2003, St. John presented his study in which he discussed that no doubt the teachers and the educational institutions play their very important role to support the nontraditional students for their studies but the major role is played by parents. Children mostly learn by their home environment if the parents will guide them to choose their career and better four-year college for the better higher education then there will be no issue of college readiness, and it will be easier for the students to get admission in the four-year college. The parents should play very positive, important, and responsible role regarding their children. Also, the major social theory of social attainment and educational attainment argues that parents play very important role in the guidance of their children for the selection and registration of the higher education institutions. This is very important for them to have a better life. If the parents do not support their children, either financially or morally, then the students will never be able to perform well in their academics (St. John, 2003).

Hossler and Foley (1995) also discussed the barriers to the nontraditional students and noted that although rankings might not provide an accurate description or evaluation of college quality, they strongly influence students in their college choice process. College and university rankings have been both heavily used and widely criticized by the public and by those in higher education. Cremonini, Westerheijden, & Enders (2008) cited that there have been many efforts to explain and improve the use of rankings. For now, rankings provide students with an at-a-glance ordering of institutions by type, field, or area, which ultimately may influence students' decisions about which institution to attend. However, the ranking should be by the student's comfort and

peaceful environment which must encourage them to achieve the personal control of things and to perform well.

A great institution is not the one who can teach well or who have qualified staff rather the better institution is the one who can make their students more confident and raise their personal control on academics. The nontraditional students are torn between their job and the college at that time there are more chances of anxiety and lack of personal control. The teacher and the institution must play their positive role to help them and should provide them a comfortable environment in which they must gain their personal control to perform well in academics. This will make the student more confident, and he will accept it that he can do it well. Once the student gains his personal control on academics and management, then nothing can act as a barrier for that student (Cremonini, 2008).

Most of the students do not get family support, and so they become unable to perform well in academics. The support includes the moral support, guidance, and the financial support. If the family cannot support financially, then the student become unable to meet the expenses of his education, and as a result, he has to get any job to cover his expenses. This results in the timing conflicts with the job and college or other issues, due to which the students become unable to focus on their education. Research shows that the students who have a strong background and are rich. Their parents can support them for everything. They can get better guidance by getting tuitions or can get enough cash to fulfill the expenses of the education, and so they perform well. On the other hand, the students who do not get support from their family they become unable to perform well in their academics.

Along with the family support, the support of the teachers for the better guidance of the students also matter a lot and helps the students to perform well. In short, in the absence of proper and strong support the students' transition to four-year college is higher affected.

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### Independence as Barrier:

Some people consider dependence as a curse and so get frustrated to depend on their parents and family for a little thing, but the importance of dependence can only be known by the nontraditional students. No doubt independence seems quite great to live a happy life, but in actual, the case is totally different. When the students become independent, then they have to face so many difficulties. They have to earn for them; they have to arrange residence for them, they have to manage food for them as well. Independence becomes a headache for them.

When the students depend on their parents or family, they not only enjoy the financial support of the family but also enjoy the care, fun, food, and other stuff. When they become independent, then they have to focus on their earning and food, and then they become unable to manage between their job and studies which affect their transition to four-year college.

Ronny Washington (2013) also highlighted the barriers to the nontraditional students during their transition to four-year college, and so he concluded that the family support and the dependence act as a blessing for the students. In the absence of family support of the independence make the life so hectic and busy. That is why the nontraditional students cannot perform well. Sometimes the students have to work day and night to meet the expenses of their education and to complete the academic tasks along with their job workload. This affects their academics because when they are not in peaceful condition or situation then how can they perform well in their academics (Washington, 2013)?

Karen L. Milheim (2005) also discussed the barriers to the nontraditional students, and he discussed that now the number of nontraditional students in the colleges is increasing. According to him, nontraditional students possess a wide variety of characteristics, and they are well

motivated to get an education in proper because they know the importance of education in their lives. However, due to the independence, they have to earn and have to manage their all tasks by their own, and so they become unable to concentrate 100% on their academics. In this way, the independence affects the students and so becomes hurdle or barrier for the nontraditional students (Milheim, 2005).

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## Theoretical Framework

To better understand influences on the choice of nontraditional students to transition from four-year to two-year institutions, this study will be based on Schlossberg's Theory of Transition which defines a transition as any event that results in changed routine, relationship, roles, and assumptions. For the better understanding, the type, impact, and context of the transition must be considered as four "S" which refers to the self-situation, support, and strategies.

- Situation describes the socioeconomic status, age, gender, ethnicity, and health of the individual. It describes the situation of the student which affects the transition of the student. If the student is older in age, then he/she will face health issues and learn issue. In this way, the situation plays an important role to understand the issue in the transition of the nontraditional student to four-year college.
- Self describes the psychological resources, self-efficacy, and spirituality, commitments and values, and resiliency. If the student is confident enough that he/she can perform well, then it means he can do well in this academics. Most of the nontraditional students face self-control and self-confidence issue due to which they face difficulty in transition to four-year college.
- Support describes the help of family friends, institutions, and community for the stable change. However, in the absence of this support, the students have to manage everything on their own and so face so many difficulties and barriers in their academic life.
- Strategies describe the modification of the situation, aid in managing stress, and control of the problem. If the students have managed all the things with great strategies, then he will never face any problem in his academic life.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory allows the practitioners to understand the need of the nontraditional students through a structured approach to predict the change, measure the change, and to react to the change. This theory can be applied to any student, either young or old, either male or female, either majority or minority, either urban or rural (Chickering, 1995; Evans, 1998).

**Self:**

Keith et al. presented their study in which they discussed the dispositional barriers. Dispositional barriers consist of the poor learning perceptions, age concerns, and negative past educational experience. Some students have fear over their learning abilities. They have not much confidence in their abilities, and so they think that they will never be able to perform well in their academics. Especially the nontraditional students are of age 25 or above, so they don't feel comfortable while studying with younger. They become a victim of anxiety and begin to consider that they can never perform well in their educational results. Because of so many responsibilities the fear of failure also makes them unable to perform well in their academics (Keith, 2007).

The very first thing is that when the students again join the universities, then they need to recall all the previous learning, which they had learned in two years college. They need to make their mind fresh and need to recall and review all the contents of their previous studies courses. Because of the long gap between the college and university, the students become dumb and so they need time to come back to their schedules for the proper academic activities.

Also, the non-traditional students have to pay attention to their families, jobs, and other matter. Because of this, they become unable to focus with 100% attention towards their academic activities. This long gap of education is resulting in the delay of assignments, low grades in tests,

failure in examinations, increase in absentees, and increase in drop out situations. Although the students work hard to get back to their studies because of several duties and workload and responsibilities, they become unable to perform well.

Moreover, the universities know that non-traditional students cannot properly pay attention towards their studies and need time and relaxation for their academic activities. Due to this reason, most of the universities do not provide a comfortable environment for the non-traditional students. This makes the educational situation more difficult for the non-traditional students, and as a result, they decide to leave the education again or are dropped out by the universities (University, 2013).

### **Support:**

Keith and et, al (2007), in their study, also discussed the institutional barriers. They said that the nontraditional students face so many institutional barriers. They are not familiar with the college preparation due to which they become unable to get admission in the college or face difficulty for the process of registration. The high school must play their role and should inform the students to prepare for the college classes. Moreover, some students who get admission in the institutions are unable about the policies and terms of the college, and so they face so many difficulties regarding academics. The non-traditional students are employers at some workplace. Sometimes, they face working hour conflict. Their job timing and university timing become same due to which they become unable to focus on their studies (Keith, 2007).

Siddle, in 1996, also discussed these issues in his research. But his research was confined to the Black American Community. In the confidence development of the African American Students, institutions played their very important role. The teachers worked hard to make the positive

learning environment for the students and to make them comfortable in American society. Although there was a shortage of facilities for the African American Schools and Colleges even though the teachers worked day and night to provide the best knowledge to the students in a best possible way. They not only educated the students but also they cared for them and groomed them to fight against discrimination and to be confident to stand for their culture and identity. These institutions make the students aware to get prepared for the college and to be aware of the registration process and policies of colleges. This helps the students to meet the institutional barriers (Siddle Walker, 1996).

Lucas, in 1994, also discussed the same that, in the twentieth century, the White institutions were playing their role to discourage the Black Community for their struggles for a higher education. Southern higher education institutions were treating African Americans so harsh and most of them had banned their admissions because of the discrimination. The evidence of this harshness is that The University of Mississippi denied the admission of James Meredith just because of his race. Another incident happened when the governor of the state of University of Alabama stood at the door of University to oppose the Autherine Lucy's admission (Lucas, 1994). Still, in 2016, some White Institutions are making hurdles for the Black Americans to get their education with comfort, and so they become unable to complete their studies.

### **Situation:**

Keith, in 2007, represented a study about the situational barriers, according to which situational barriers are the barriers which depend on the situations of the students. The situation may be different, and according to that situation, the student's life may be affected. There are different types of situational barriers some are;

- Employment.
- Family Obligations.
- Civic Involvement.
- Transportation Issues.

After completing the two years college when the students get jobs then they become unable to manage between their job and college. When the students start their job or career, they want to focus on that and want to perform well at their workplace. On the contrary, they begin to neglect their studies and become unable to perform well in their academics. The students are torn between the student identity and the employee identity. They become unable to prioritize that which thing is more important either their job or their career. Also, the workplace demands time and devotion towards work, due to which the students have the lack of time for their studies.

Another factor which affects the students' studies is family obligations. In the United States, most of the people are facing unemployment issues due to which they cannot fulfill the requirements of their children and so the children, who are dependent on their parents, have no other option but to leave their education because of financial issues. Some children have to take care of his/her sick parents or have to look after the family due to different circumstances, and so they leave their studies and devote their lives for their parents. Especially Black Americans and Asians face such difficulties.

Some students have so many outside responsibilities within the community due to which they become unable to perform well in their academics. Such as the Black Americans, who have to fight for their rights and against discrimination, sometimes get indulged in their other

responsibilities and activities and so they become unable to complete their education and leave their academic life.

Some students live far away from four years college or universities and to get a higher education, they have to pay a high amount for transportation, or they have to spend their lives in hostels. Due to this issue, the students become unable to afford the educational expenses and finally decide to leave their college (Keith, 2007).

### **Strategy:**

Abena Salvant (2016) presented his study about the barriers to nontraditional students and discussed that non-traditional students face so many difficulties and barriers in the way of their education and the purpose of this study is basically to highlight those barriers and their influence in the lives of the non-traditional students and their studies. Also, some of the non-traditional students become unable to manage their barriers. They become unable to make their schedule or to complete their studies along with their responsibilities and duties, and so they leave their graduation, or they are dropped out by the universities. To complete their education, it is very important to firstly break the barriers in the way of their higher education and then to complete their education with full devotion and attention. By doing this, they can complete their four-year education and can enjoy the learning environment in peaceful condition. However, it is a bit impossible because leaving a job can cause the financial issue which may cause the disturbance in the expenses of education and finally the student may leave the education due to high expenses. And to manage the job along with the education is hectic. It is not only a problem for the student, but also it is an issue for the university environment. This may affect the university environment in a way that late submission of the academic works may disturb the class schedules

and class discipline. However, no the universities are providing a comfortable environment to the non-traditional students for encouraging them to complete their studies with great ease and devotion (Salvant, 2016).

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## Appendix (A)

### Introductory Letter

Date

Participant Name Participant Address Participant City, State and Zip Code

Dear Participant,

I am a student enrolled at the University of \_\_\_\_\_ where I am pursuing my doctoral degree. I am writing to ask for your help. Would you be interested in participating in a study of barriers to the nontraditional students' transition to four-year college? The purpose of this study is to investigate how nontraditional students' education is effected by their situation, self, support, and strategies while moving in, moving through, and moving out of the college process. This study is being conducted for educational purposes and could be used by the college to determine how to better address the needs of nontraditional students. Selection for this study is limited, so if you are interested return your Participant Presurvey as soon as possible! Information from the Participant Pre-survey will be used to determine if you meet the minimum criteria for this study as well as demographic data that will be reported in aggregate form in the study results. Your answers are completely confidential, and participation is voluntary. If you participate, you will receive a gift card as a form of appreciation for your participation. You can greatly help by sharing your experience! If you have any questions or comments about this study, I would be happy to talk with you. Thank you very much for helping with this important study!

Sincerely,

## Appendix (B)

### Survey Sample

Please take a few minutes today to answer each question on the survey as completely and accurately as possible. Your responses will be processed confidentially and anonymously and only grouped data will be made publicly available.

1. Do you study in \_\_\_\_\_ College?

- Yes
- No

2. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_ drop-down      From 18 years old

3. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

4. What are of which type?

- Traditional student
- Nontraditional student.

5. How often do you absent in a month?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 or more

6. How many hours are you spending overall on doing homework in a week?

- \_\_\_\_ drop-down 0-100

7. How many credits are you taking?

- \_\_\_\_\_ drop-down 0-33

8. How many hours per week are you working?

- \_\_\_\_ drop down 0-100

9. Have you attended any AP Course?

- Yes
- No

10. Do you want to join Higher Education College?

- Yes
- No

11. What are the major barriers which you face in the transition to four-year college?

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