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**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**A qualitative exploration of the career guidance
experiences of learners from a rural school in Eshowe.**

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science in Industrial/Organizational Psychology in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College)

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved late parents, Thandi Proteacea Mkhize and Nkosinathi Amon Mzolo.

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I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals for their unwavering support and encouragement during the completion of my dissertation:

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- To my family and friends, who never cease to encourage and inspire me.
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ABSTRACT

The current study explores the career guidance experiences of learners attending a school situated in a rural area. The researcher's motivation stemmed from her personal interest in the subject matter. Her aim was to make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge that explores the career guidance experiences of young individuals residing in rural regions. The researcher posits that enhancing the caliber of education in rural locales will enable the youth in these regions to make judicious career choices and foster their role as conscientious contributors to the nation's economy. A comprehensive analysis of the existing literature reveals an inadequate amount of information in the South African context pertaining to the career guidance experiences of learners in rural locales.

The objective of this study is to ascertain the encounters and obstacles faced by learners enrolled at High School X, situated in a rural locality in Eshowe. The focus is primarily on Grade 12 learners, as there is a dearth of South African research on this particular group of learners in rural schools. This study delved deeper into the methods by which learners obtain career-related information and the limitations they encounter in terms of career guidance counselling and decision-making.

This research is a qualitative study that employed snowball sampling to select participants from a single rural high school located in Eshowe, KwaZulu Natal. The research utilised semi-structured interviews as a data collection method and applied thematic analysis to analyse the gathered data.

The present study was framed by utilising social constructionism and career construction theories as theoretical frameworks. The theory of social constructionism elucidates the cognitive processes through which learners in rural educational institutions perceive, comprehend, and construct their social environment. The aforementioned theory facilitates comprehension of how the rural context influences the professional trajectories of young people. The second theoretical framework, known as "career construction," elucidates the process by which individuals establish a professional trajectory through their actions, which are shaped by the interplay between personal factors and the social milieu.

The findings of the research indicate that learners attending rural schools encounter difficulties with regards to career guidance due to various factors such as the unavailability of subject choices and a career guidance counsellor, inadequate financial resources allocated to rural schools, substandard infrastructure, inadequate road networks and transportation, insufficient access to electricity, and a dearth of learning resources. The study highlights several challenges, including the discouragement of female learners in rural schools from pursuing science and engineering professions. The study revealed that participants identified positive career guidance experiences wherein their families, schools, classmates, and friends served as career advisers and role models. These individuals provided support to the participants in selecting their subjects and careers. Research has indicated that young people tend to prioritise the pursuit of their career passions over occupations that are currently in high demand within the job market. Insufficient access to dependable

information regarding scarce skills and employment opportunities post-graduation is a prevalent issue among youth residing in rural regions. Additionally, it was found that career fairs, campus tours, and online resources were deemed significant sources of career-oriented information for addressing obstacles related to career guidance. The research suggests that the provision of career guidance counsellors in schools located in rural areas can be an effective strategy to address the negative experiences that young people encounter with regards to career guidance. The research suggests that it would be beneficial to provide assistance and motivation to young people residing in rural regions to pursue professions that necessitate rare abilities and are presently propelling the 21st century economy. These professions include careers in information technology and engineering, among others. It is imperative to implement measures aimed at fostering supportive and enabling working environments for young girls to gain the confidence to make informed career choices while also taking action to address gender discrimination in the workplace. Additional measures ought to be implemented to allocate greater financial resources towards rural educational institutions or to assess the efficacy of the current funding allocation in such schools.

DECLARATION

I, Njabulo Mkhize, declare that.

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - Their words have been rewritten, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
 - Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed inside quotationmarks, and referenced.

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CHAPTER ONE: SETTING THE SCENE

1.1 SUMMARY

The following chapter provides an overview of the research study. The background and problem statement of the study indicate some of the pressing issues experienced by young people attending rural high schools in relation to Career Guidance. The aims and objectives of the study are presented below. The structure of the research study is offered to provide the reader with an overview of the study.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The present research study was formulated with the aim of acquiring a deeper understanding of the distinct encounters of young individuals in South Africa who attend a rural high school, which has been anonymized as High School X. The research focused on exploring the methods by which learners in a rural high school institution encounter Career Guidance. The research was characterised by an exploratory approach and employed semi-structured interviews as a means of eliciting in-depth, qualitative information. The present study was conducted to explore the perspectives of learners' real-life encounters with Career Guidance and their comprehension of career prospects within their distinct milieu. The findings of this inquiry were utilised to propose forthcoming recommendations.

1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The issue of elevated youth unemployment rates in South Africa exacerbates the existing challenges encountered by young individuals hailing from impoverished and remote regions. Access to superior education and the potential for a prosperous professional trajectory remain unattainable for them. There exist multiple challenges that impede learners from completing their high school education, such as financial constraints, inadequate educational resources in remote regions, social influence, parental aspirations, and apprehensions regarding future career opportunities. The fundamental principle underlying career guidance is that learners who engage in career education will attain the requisite knowledge and competencies to make well-informed choices regarding their vocational trajectories. The aim of career education is to enhance an individual's capacity to make informed career choices that align with their values, priorities, and aspirations. Despite the importance of job expositions as a means of fostering professional engagement among highschool learners, there exists a dearth of research on this subject, particularly in relation to learners hailing from underprivileged high schools.

The majority of research in this particular area focuses on individuals who are enrolled in higher education institutions,

such as colleges and universities. In most countries, educational institutions continue to serve as the primary access points for formal vocational guidance and counselling provisions. School-based career education holds significant value due to its potential to impart knowledge to a large number of young individuals. The conventional emphasis on career guidance and life orientation (LO) in educational establishments centres around providing career-related knowledge. The aforementioned tasks may encompass the dissemination of information regarding the courses that are currently offered, expounding upon the various career trajectories that are available, pinpointing specific vocations, and providing insights into the state of the labour market. Throughout their academic tenure, learners typically engage in one of two categories of activities: either they gain knowledge about the professional sphere or they partake in classroom-based exercises that facilitate the acquisition of competencies essential for career management, such as job experience. Finally, individualised career counselling can provide guidance to both groups and individuals in a personalised setting, providing distinct career pathways and support in making a well-informed decision regarding their career. This form of counselling can be conducted either individually or in a collective setting.

Despite this, it has been observed that rural school learners are not receiving adequate career guidance services from a qualified career guidance professional. It has also been noted that the only mode of education that incorporates career education content into its curriculum is LO. A career guidance counsellor or expert, as well as a school guidance counsellor, provides guidance and resources to learners on a range of personal and academic concerns and issues. The main duties of these professionals involve providing guidance to learners as well as educators, conducting group counselling sessions aimed at fostering the personal and academic growth of learners, and offering advice and direction to high school learners as they navigate their career paths. Rural schools are unable to provide certain services for their learners due to budgetary constraints imposed by the allocated budget for these remote high schools. Individuals residing in underprivileged regions perceive LO as a beacon of optimism for substantial vocational counselling provisions.

The current approach to career education is beset by several issues, including the limited duration of career guidance sessions, the presence of overcrowded classrooms, and the absence of tailored training for LO instructors. Apart from the issue of unemployment and inadequate education, this situation poses several challenges for learners attending rural schools in terms of making well-informed decisions regarding their career paths. From a vocational standpoint, it is imperative for these minors to possess a clear understanding of their desired profession. Additionally, as responsible members of society, they are expected to contribute to their local communities and facilitate the growth of the economy. The current state of career guidance in rural schools is insufficient to provide young individuals from these areas with the necessary guidance to make informed decisions regarding their careers. Further improvements are required to address this issue. The contemporary challenges of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity necessitate a re-evaluation of the approach to career guidance in secondary schools, particularly among policymakers. Failure to address this issue may lead to a significant surge in youth unemployment, a notable rise in the number of graduates with oversubscribed higher education degrees, a substantial downturn in the economy, and an exacerbation of the

socioeconomic divide. The current state of education in rural South Africa is deemed insufficient, prompting the need for collective action within the community to create an improved system. This can be achieved through the establishment of community schools that foster a culture of learning and teaching, resulting in the production of high-achieving learners. The current discourse centres on the detrimental effects of state capture and corruption on the ethos of efficiency, honesty, and expertise within state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and entities like the South African Revenue Service (Sars).

The process of restoring the culture and addressing issues pertaining to infrastructure, systems, personnel, and leadership will require a significant amount of time. The educational system remains unchanged. In order to ameliorate the deplorable condition of primary and secondary education in the nation, it is imperative that all members of the community espouse a unified and enduring perspective. The education system of a nation is a primary objective for individuals or groups aiming to undermine it. The advancements made by the government in implementing a democratic system within the country imply a need for a reassessment of its approach towards the standard of education. Approximately thirty years following the establishment of a democratic government, schools that have been historically underprivileged continue to experience a dearth of resources that are essential for enabling learners to make informed decisions regarding their education and career paths. High School X, similar to numerous rural schools in South Africa, requires a comprehensive approach to education to enable its learners to reap the benefits of career guidance opportunities. The aim of this study is to explore the guidance provided to learners at High School X in pursuing a professional career, the challenges they may have faced in this pursuit, and the contextual factors that may have influenced their experiences.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The topic of career guidance garners significant interest from a diverse range of stakeholders in South Africa, including but not limited to basic and higher education ministers, employers, social media users, teachers, principals, psychologists, and young individuals. The rapid evolution of the labour market, augmented by a surge in unemployment rates, an expanding wealth disparity, and an increasingly uneven distribution of educational opportunities, are all contributing factors to this phenomenon, as noted by Smith, Thomas, Snoswell, Haydon, Mehrotra, Clemensen, and Caffery (2020). As per the findings of this research, this particular concern exhibits a notably extensive prevalence in relatively remote areas. Rural educational institutions persist in encountering challenges in obtaining a satisfactory level of education, similar to the pre-democratic era. The substandard nature of the education they are compelled to receive has a dual impact on both their educational attainment and vocational trajectories, thereby constraining their prospects for eventual achievement. The reviewed literature indicates that individuals' vocational choices are positively influenced by receiving beneficial career guidance from experts in the field. However, according to Seybold and Hill (2001), a challenge arises as learners enrolled in educational institutions situated in rural regions lack the opportunity to avail themselves of the services of career guidance experts. The provision of career guidance services to learners in rural schools in South Africa and their effectiveness in facilitating informed career decision-making remain areas of

limited understanding. Insufficient information exists regarding the provision of career guidance to learners attending rural schools and their familiarity with contemporary employment opportunities. There is a lack of research in this area; hence, the objective of this study is to generate a comprehensive and insightful understanding regarding the present condition of career guidance facilities in rural educational institutions. Consequently, efforts are made to increase awareness regarding the significance of providing career guidance services to the young people attending rural schools. This information is primarily intended for stakeholders such as the Department of Education, policymakers, school administrators, educators, and parents.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore the career guidance experiences of learners enrolled in a rural school situated in a rural setting, with a specific focus on those in their final year of high school. This is in response to the persistent demand for further research in this domain that delves deeper into the rural school context and the unique career-related challenges faced by learners in such settings.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school.
- To identify the challenges, constraints, and opportunities that learners in a rural school experience with respect to career guidance.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.7.1 Main question:

How do learners in a rural school experience career guidance?

1.7.2 Sub questions:

1. How do learners receive career information at their school?
2. What information did they receive about subject choices and careers?
3. How does career guidance information assist learners in making career choices?
4. What are the challenges, constraints, and opportunities learners from a rural school experience with respect to career guidance and career decisions?

1.8 RATIONALE

Due to the high rate of unemployment and emerging unique careers, there has been a fast-growing body of knowledge in the area of careers and quality of education; however, there are few published studies on career guidance that focus on

the rural context in South Africa. Perspectives that focus on career guidance and career education are evolving over time as the world of work evolves, and they are the solutions that career counsellors adopt to assist with career guidance; however, in rural areas, there are no career counsellors. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to the literature in what is considered a very important area, given the career-related challenges experienced by learners in rural schools.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research study aims to provide valuable insights for current and potential learners, educators, the school board, and the principal of High School X, as well as other rural schools in South Africa. This study's goal is to provide insight into the common obstacles faced by a typical public rural high school in South Africa, as well as the experiences of learners with regards to career guidance. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this research exploration will yield potential efficacious approaches for addressing and resolving the vocational obstacles that learners in rural educational institutions confront on a daily basis, to a certain degree. South Africa, being a developing country, needs to keep going in its efforts to address the challenges of scarce skills and career-related matters to prevent a potential surge in youth unemployment and poverty. Currently, the provision of high-quality education poses a significant challenge due to the increasing prevalence of ill-informed career choices and declining levels of engagement between teachers and learners (Statistics South Africa, 2013). This challenge is expected to exacerbate in light of the rapid evolution of work, the emergence of novel career paths, the gradual obsolescence of traditional vocations, and the advancement of technology. The delivery of high-quality education is contingent upon the efficacious execution of educational policies and effective school leadership (Fouche, Rothmann & van der Vyver, 2017), in addition to the sustenance of learner motivation and their general welfare (Denhere, Ngobeli & Kutame, 2010).

Hence, it is imperative to broaden the scope of the remedies aimed at mitigating uninformed vocational choices and soaring unemployment levels. This entails involving other governmental entities, including the labour and transportation departments, as well as employers, beyond the educational domain. It is imperative that the Department of Education ensure that the Department of Transportation enhances transportation infrastructure in rural regions. Additionally, departments responsible for infrastructure ought to be apprised of their obligation to ameliorate roads and bridges in rural areas. The present research's goal is to demonstrate the significance of offering career specialists to educational institutions to facilitate further exploration of career options and identify those that are likely to thrive in the foreseeable future. This is intended to prevent young individuals from selecting professions that may result in unemployment, confusion, distress, regret, and a sense of failure despite investing considerable effort in their academic pursuits (Vazi, Ruiters, Van den Borne, Martin, Dumont & Reddy, 2013). The aim of this study is to explore the career guidance experiences of learners and identify existing sources of career information. The ultimate goal is to provide insights that can inform decision-making by the Department of Education and other stakeholders, with a view to enhancing the quality of education in rural schools and improving the delivery of career guidance services. The study's purpose is to generate interest among learners and the education department while also offering valuable insights to other South African citizens regarding pressing issues such as oversubscribed university courses, a shortage of in-demand skills for the

contemporary workforce, high unemployment rates, the necessity for subject and career guidance experts who remain current, and the decline in economic growth within the country. The youth population is widely regarded as a critical component of a nation's future prospects. As valuable resources, it is imperative that they are given due consideration with regard to their perceptions of the labour market and the prevailing trends that influence it. Neglecting this aspect could potentially jeopardise the prospects of a sustainable economy and the emergence of responsible citizens who are committed to effecting positive change in society, as well as transforming the education sector for the better.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Learners residing in remote regions often encounter specific obstacles associated with their surroundings, rendering their encounters with career guidance (CG) distinct and a matter of widespread significance. The following chapter provides an overview of the literature that pertains to the present study. The introductory section of the chapter entails an in-depth review of the notion of career guidance (CG), presents an in-depth definition of CG, and explores CG in both rural and non-rural educational institutions within the South African milieu. The chapter presents a critical analysis of the conventional methodologies employed in the field of career psychology, specifically Super's Theory and Holland's Person-Environment Fit. The final section of the chapter delves into the necessity of developing indigenous or alternative career theories. It explores the concepts of career construction and narrative approaches to career guidance, emphasizing their applicability within the South African context.

2.2 CAREER GUIDANCE

As per Jackson, Ferns, Rowbottom and McLaren's (2017) assertion, Career Guidance (CG) is a process aimed at aiding individuals in making informed decisions and resolving educational, personal, and vocational challenges. This refers to a technique aimed at aiding individuals in making suitable adjustments to their personal circumstances. Shepiliev, Semerikov, Yechkalo, Tkachuk, Markova, Modlo and Kiv (2021) posit that CG is a structured service aimed at facilitating individuals' self-understanding, encompassing their needs, aptitudes, abilities, interests, perceptions, goals, and limitations. This approach aims to provide individuals with essential and pertinent knowledge regarding themselves and their surroundings. In the professional realm, the term "guidance" pertains to the provision of aid or counsel aimed at facilitating an individual's acquisition of knowledge and competencies pertaining to the diverse career paths available to them, as well as their ability to navigate professional opportunities across their lifespan (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

The subject of CG has garnered significant attention in academic research due to the swift pace of technological progress and consequential transformations in the professional sphere. According to Hooley and Sultana (2016), there exists a plethora of career options, exceeding 250, and with the emergence of new opportunities, individuals require career guidance to ascertain the most appropriate path for themselves. According to Thornton (2021), career guidance encompasses various programmes and resources designed to assist individuals in effectively and successfully managing their career progression. According to Maree's (2020) perspective, in order to enhance one's understanding and analysis

of CG, it is crucial to acknowledge the dynamic nature of this service and approach it as a process rather than a fixed construct. Maree (2022) asserts that the contemporary job market has undergone a paradigm shift, whereby individuals are no longer selecting jobs, but rather creating them. Determining one's life goals is a crucial decision that holds significant weight in an individual's life. The lack of reliable information is a significant impediment to individuals' ability to make informed decisions, particularly in light of contemporary work patterns, as noted by Gati, Levin, and Landman (2019). According to Pillay (2020), there is a need to prioritise CG and development services in South Africa, particularly in light of the country's history of colonial exploitation and underdevelopment, which resulted in people of colour being predominantly perceived as manual labourers. The ramifications of uninformed career decisions are a cause for concern in light of increased opportunities and decolonization efforts. The issue at hand carries significant gravity, both on an individual and a societal level, and it is imperative that measures are taken to tackle it. According to Modiba and Sefotho (2019), inadequate or non-existent career planning can lead to adverse economic, mental, and emotional consequences for both individuals and families. Pitan and Atiku (2017) contend that in light of worldwide and regional economic patterns, employment markets, and the issue of youth unemployment, it is imperative for CG services to acknowledge the altered nature of the workplace, which encompasses the informal sector of employment. It is crucial that CG services are accessible to all individuals rather than being limited to a privileged few.

Since South Africa's democratic transition, there has been a lack of career guidance literature that specifically examines the advancement of CG implementation, particularly in rural schools (Gardiner, 2015). The present state of formerly disadvantaged rural schools has been significantly influenced by the legacies of apartheid and colonialism (Whiston, Mitts & Li, 2019). The extent of research conducted on South Africa's educational system is limited. The concerns pertaining to CG in rural areas are expected to persist as a significant concern for pupils enrolled in distant educational institutions, as per Gardiner's (2015) findings. The objective of the present inquiry is to explore the manner in which learners in rural educational institutions encounter CG.

2.3 CAREER GUIDANCE IN NON-RURAL SCHOOLS

Modiba and Sefotho (2019) assert that the implementation of CG in South Africa during the 1930s was a privilege exclusively afforded to the white population. Consequently, the aforementioned privilege is still being upheld by them in contemporary times. As per legal regulations, it was mandated that white learners in South Africa during the apartheid regime (1948-1994) were provided with weekly 30-minute sessions of CG instruction, whereas their Black counterparts were not afforded the same privilege (Makola, Saliwe, Dube, Tabane & Mudau, 2021). Dama (2020) reported that affluent learners were assessed by private psychologists to assist them in making informed decisions regarding their academic pursuits and professional aspirations. The individual's career prospects were not limited due to the customization of their CG, which allowed for deliberate career decision-making prior to matriculation into post-secondary institutions. Therefore, it remains a challenge in post-apartheid South Africa to address the disparities in CG between high schools located in rural and non-rural areas (Chandler, Burnham, Riechel, Dahir, Stone, Oliver &

Bledsoe, 2018). Contemporary urban schools are observed to derive greater advantages from CG in comparison to their peers in rural schools. Qualified psychologists are still utilized by private schools, and their CG procedures have been firmly established, as noted by Du Plessis (2014).

The government has made efforts to reduce the disparity in accessibility to CG. As per the Department of Education (DoE) report in 2011, the responsibility of arranging career-oriented field trips for Grade 12 learners beyond regular school hours was acknowledged by them. These events are commonly structured as career expositions, where experts within a specific industry deliver presentations on career opportunities. The Department of Education (DoE) has implemented measures to collaborate with various key players, such as Higher Education and Training Institutions (HETI), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), Higher Education South Africa (HESA), the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and private enterprises, in order to distribute the responsibility of arranging career expositions and conducting career symposiums (Miles, 2015). Regrettably, learners residing in urban localities are commonly provided with more convenient access to such events, whereas learners inhabiting rural areas frequently remain unnoticed. According to Dama (2020), learners who attend schools in affluent areas are afforded certain privileges, such as access to services and resources that are typically found in urban areas. This is due to the fact that these schools are often located in close proximity to important activities and libraries, making them more convenient for learners to utilize.

Nyoka (2020) notes that School Liaison Officers (SLO) are able to visit a greater number of urban schools compared to rural schools, when providing CG services to high schools. Wallace (2014) suggests that learners in non-rural schools are better able to utilize CG services due to their socioeconomic circumstances, which include access to the internet, parents with higher-paying jobs, and better technological skills. Dama (2020) adds that these learners are able to navigate the internet and access helpful CG information. Despite efforts to transform school systems and reduce historical disparities in educational resources, Jonck and Swanepoel (2021), suggest that progress has been limited. Holman makes the point that when decisions must be made, CG makes it easier to make informed decisions. According to Mokoena and van Breda (2021), learners are afforded the opportunity to make informed decisions regarding their preferred work environment and the requisite qualifications necessary for achieving success. Urban schools with sufficient resources are able to employ licensed psychologists, which allows non-rural schools to maintain this advantage. According to Morton, Ramirez, Meece, Demetriou, and Panter (2018), learners who attend urban schools possess a higher level of career-related knowledge compared to their counterparts from rural schools. Jonck and Swanepoel (2021) conducted a study involving 430 learners from seven schools in the Mangaung area of the Free State. The study found that the type of school a learner attended had a statistically significant impact on the delivery of CG services, the personal impact of these services on the learner, and the learner's understanding of potential career paths. The present discovery aligns with the assertion posited by Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) that the reception of career guidance (CG) is significantly influenced by the type of educational institution, as the availability of resources to provide such services varies across different school types.

According to Eliamani, Richard, and Peter (2014), there is a correlation between the affluence of schools and the size of their classes. They contend that schools with greater financial resources tend to have smaller class sizes, which in turn enables teachers to provide more personalized attention to each learner. Mestry (2020), posits that reduced class sizes facilitate an environment that is conducive to providing individualized instruction that caters to the unique learning preferences of learners. According to Mhlanga and Moloi's (2020) study, learners who progress through their academic journeys in smaller class sizes demonstrate enhanced academic performance and attain greater educational accomplishments. According to Blankstein, Noguera, and Kelly (2016), the presence of superior teaching staff in schools can often be attributed to the comparatively higher salaries offered at such institutions. Private educational institutions offer state-of-the-art science and mathematics laboratories that facilitate innovative pedagogical approaches. According to Oluwajodu, Greyling, Blaauw, and Kleynhans (2015), conventional private schools' teacher training programs are associated with higher costs but offer learners the opportunity to engage in practical internships with various businesses. Traditional career counseling prioritizes the advancement and personal evolution of learners. According to Howard's (2013) research, the library provides satisfactory amenities and secure transportation alternatives. Furthermore, as per the research conducted by Onyema, Eucheria, Obafemi, Sen, Atonye, Sharma and Alsayed (2020), it has been observed that these educational institutions provide supplementary education beyond the conventional methods of teaching through textbooks and class discussions.

Learners from non-rural schools also obtain CG knowledge from LO subject and CG practitioners in addition to the advantages mentioned above (Dlamini & Nkambule, 2020). The benefit for children attending these schools, according to Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett (2020), is that CG practitioners are more educated in CG services than LO instructors. In addition to these advantages, wealthier school pupils are more likely to have parents who benefited from easy access to extensive CG services. As a consequence, children from affluent schools have the chance to seek career guidance from their educated parents (Goodyear, Lichtenberg, Hutman, Overland, Bedi, Christiani & Young, 2016). This result is consistent with Pillay's (2020) claim that it's important to remember the extreme inequality in South African society, where some children grow up in homes with highly educated, prosperous parents who can help them with career prospects and who also send their children to expensive private schools that support them with different levels of CG. This shows that, as compared to learners from rural high schools, learners from non-rural schools had distinct perceptions of CG. When compared to learners whose parents are not educated, children with educated parents are more likely to be well prepared for higher education learning and the world of work (Nong, 2016).

Notwithstanding, it remains a fact that significant modifications in career guidance (CG) are imperative in South Africa, and that learners hailing from affluent high schools are also deficient in the essential resources for receiving all-encompassing CG services (Kenny & Fabio, 2018). The prevalence of youth unemployment, dearth of critical skills, elevated incidence of academic stress-induced anxiety and depression among learners, and the substantial count of university dropouts are indicative of the phenomenon under consideration (Oliveira & Araújo, 2022). According

to Dama (2020), the career guidance system in South Africa has faced several challenges since its implementation, and therefore requires greater attention across all educational institutions, including both rural and urban settings. However, particular emphasis should be placed on underprivileged areas.

2.4 CAREER GUIDANCE IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit, and Van Deventer (2016) have reported that despite the 29-year existence of democracy, the quality of education offered in numerous rural schools remains substandard. Dube (2020) posits that rural South African schools, which have historically been marginalized, encounter greater challenges in implementing educational reforms compared to their privileged counterparts, and face difficulties in sustaining such changes. This contributes to the notion that rural regions in South Africa experience a state of disadvantage and limited access to resources. The challenge of addressing CG poses a significant obstacle to the educational advancement of rural schools. Donohue and Bornman (2014) reported that the implementation of CG in Black African communities occurred at a later stage compared to other racial groups. Additionally, the authors noted that educators lacked adequate training to effectively deliver CG services. Dlamini and Nkambule (2020) assert that the introduction of career education in black schools occurred in 1981, following the Soweto uprisings of 1976. According to Naidoo and Taylor's (2021) assertion, the implementation of CG in South Africa's marginalized areas continues to encounter persistent challenges, such as inadequate teacher proficiency in CG, insufficient teaching resources, and substandard infrastructure.

According to Jonck and Swanepoel's (2019) assertion, rural school learners are the most affected in terms of (CG) due to their dependence on teachers and families who possess limited knowledge of CG. The (LO) pertains to a secondary education curriculum that encompasses (CG) subject matter. The field of inquiry pertains to the examination of the individual's self in connection with other individuals and the broader social context. Spaul (2015) delineates that the subject matter encompasses various domains such as self-awareness, environmental awareness, responsible citizenship, healthy and productive living, social engagement, recreation and physical activity, and career prospects. The present study defines LO as a compulsory educational domain that equips learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed career choices, thereby facilitating their active engagement in the economic and social domains of South Africa.

Consequently, educators of LO are accountable for instructing learners on professions and occupational alternatives within the framework of South Africa. According to Dreyer (2017), it is plausible to regard LO teachers as fundamental components of the educational framework. Nonetheless, the insufficiency of CG instruction for (LO) educators has resulted in a disparity in rural educational institutions. Modiba and Sefotho (2019) have noted that the implementation of the LO curriculum in South African classrooms has presented numerous challenges for educators of LO. Modiba and Sefotho (2019) have reported that LO teachers experience confusion, feelings of incompetence,

and inadequate training, which highlights the necessity for professional development and training. The aforementioned studies are consistent with the research conducted by Makola, Saliwe, Dube, Tabane and Mudau (2021), which highlights that a significant number of (LO) educators in economically disadvantaged regions exhibit deficiencies in their knowledge and proficiency pertaining to (CG).

Modiba and Sefotho (2019) conducted a study at two secondary schools located in the Lephalale Municipality of the Waterberg District. The study revealed that in South Africa, Career Guidance (CG) is typically delivered and instructed by teachers who lack awareness of the dynamic changes occurring in the labor market. Consequently, these teachers are unable to provide adequate guidance to learners to help them reflect on the evolving trends in the labor market. According to Preston and Barnes (2017), educators situated in rural regions encounter difficulties in accessing relevant information that can effectively illustrate diverse facets of professions and career options. According to Mojapelo and Dube (2017), educators encounter difficulties in aiding learners to explore the range of employment opportunities across various economic sectors, work environments, and job functions within each of these sectors. The aforementioned results align with those reported by Dlamini and Nkambule (2020), which highlight the challenge of educators disseminating CG material via learning objects. According to a teacher who took part in Dlamini and Nkambule's (2020) research, the LO was discussed and the teacher expressed concerns regarding the insufficiency of training and information on career development, counselling, and guidance. According to Dlamini and Nkambule (2020), there are limited career opportunities that are shared among individuals, and the information shared is also limited. Additionally, during this time, Grade 12 learners are provided with college application forms and given assistance with completing them. This underscores the necessity for the government to scrutinize the CG training curricula accessible to LO educators, alongside the quantity of LO instructors in remote educational institutions.

Gallo (2020) suggests that the government should provide initiatives that facilitate collaboration among employees, corporate governance professionals, employers from diverse industries, and LO high school teachers to comprehend the labour market demands in South Africa. As per the findings of Shava and Heystek (2019), this approach is expected to facilitate the provision of curriculum guidance and direction to high school learners by LO teachers. Schafft (2016) posits that the development of a comprehensive strategy by LO teachers is contingent upon their collaboration with individuals who possess expertise in the current state of the labor market. It is imperative for the government to allocate funds towards facilitating the professional development of LO teachers in the area of CG (Castro & Villafuerte, 2019).

According to Echazarra and Radinger (2019), the provision of funding to equip teachers with pertinent knowledge in rural schools has been a persistent challenge for the government. Insufficient career information provided by Life Orientation (LO) teachers due to limited hours allocated to the subject and overcrowded classes poses a challenge for learners in rural schools (Cruz Arcila, 2018). As a result of a limited number of educators instructing LO in rural educational institutions, a considerable number of learners are allocated to each teacher, leading to the neglect of

individual learners' CG requirements (Nachtigal & Director, 2019). According to Haug's (2017) argument, the provision of CG services creates a disparity between rural and non-rural schools in terms of accessibility. The aforementioned factors indicate the financial limitations that rural educational institutions encounter when delivering services.

Banerjee, Stearns, Moller, and Mickelson (2017) have observed that the challenge of financial constraints encountered by black learners enrolled in historically disadvantaged schools remains prevalent in our nation. Educators encounter various challenges in the domain of LO, while the vocational choices made by adolescents are influenced by a multitude of underlying factors such as familial socioeconomic status and expectations. In some societies, it is a prevalent practice for an adult offspring in a household to pursue a job after finishing their secondary education to furnish monetary assistance to their parents. Blaik Hourani and Litz (2019) have reported that the vocational choices of young people residing in underprivileged regions of South Africa are frequently impacted by their familial networks. Consequently, it is a frequent occurrence for individuals to engage in professional pursuits that may not be in accordance with their individual inclinations, but are deemed essential for the provision of financial sustenance to their families.

According to Haßler (2020), adhering to a career path chosen by one's parents may require young individuals to endure courses that do not align with their interests and lack sufficient information, aside from the limited knowledge imparted by their parents and peers. Maila and Ross (2018) assert that if young individuals rely solely on their families' recommendations when making career decisions, they may end up pursuing careers that do not align with their inherent talents and capabilities. Geza, Ngidi, Slotow, and Mabhaudhi (2022) posit that a misalignment between an individual's personality, career aspirations, and chosen profession can lead to career confusion, increased undergraduate dropouts in higher education institutions, and ultimately, a higher incidence of unemployment. Gallo (2020) posits that the elevated levels of unemployment in underprivileged regions create a self-perpetuating cycle that intensifies the prevalence of poverty. The apartheid system resulted in restricted career options and academic performance for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, parents of young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds have limited access to career-related information (Daniëls, Hondegheem & Dochy, 2019). Maila and Ross (2018) posit that parents who have received formal education tend to accord greater importance to their children's education. Consequently, parents who are employed and possess a higher level of education tend to offer their offspring greater prospects for attaining advanced academic qualifications compared to those who lack education and employment. As per Githui, Njoka and Mwenje's (2018) findings, the probability of a young adult aged between 20-34 years pursuing Higher Education (HE) is low in instances where their parents did not complete higher education, a trend that is prevalent in rural areas. According to Gallo's (2020) argument, the likelihood of a child from a rural area in South Africa attending only elementary school is contingent upon their father's educational attainment, specifically if their father also attended only elementary school.

Burnette, Pollack, Forsyth, Hoyt, Babij, Thomas and Coy (2020) contend that individuals who have a family member with

a university degree are almost twice as likely (odds of 1.9) to pursue higher education. This study holds significance in comprehending the influence of spatial disparities, specifically between rural and urban areas, on the accessibility of information in higher education. Additionally, it can aid in reinforcing efforts directed towards bridging this gap, as noted by Githui, Njoka and Mwenje (2018). The matter at hand pertains to the persisting legacies of apartheid, whereby children of previously privileged parents enjoy an advantageous position in making career decisions due to their parents' comprehensive comprehension of career education, as opposed to children of previously marginalized parents who lack such support. According to Taole and Mawela (2017), the financial limitations are emerging as a primary obstacle for the youth to avail comprehensive and well-established CG services.

The results are congruent with the findings of Githui et al. (2018), which demonstrate that children residing in rural regions encounter financial challenges while attending career fairs to partake in career-oriented discussions. The career fairs suggested by educators are typically situated in urban and rural areas, necessitating significant travel expenses that may be prohibitive for learners hailing from low-income schools. According to Mpungose (2020), the educational system of the country is not meeting the needs of young individuals in schools that were previously marginalized. According to Ronksley-Pavia Barton and Pendergast (2019), parents of young individuals face a significant challenge in prioritizing their children's education and career goals while also fulfilling their basic needs. According to Cuervo and Acquaro's (2018) assertion, although these educational institutions do not impose tuition fees, guardians are still required to cover the expenses of their children's uniforms and textbooks using the government's modest social grant. It is conceivable that an individual may contemplate the financial feasibility of providing transportation for their children to participate in career-oriented discussions, given their existing responsibilities and obligations.

According to Githui, Njoka and Mwenje 's (2018) study, the SLO involved in the research contended that the primary challenge associated with disseminating career-oriented information to rural schools is their geographical location. According to Githui et al. 's (2018) assertion, the limited number of schools visited per day in rural areas is attributed to the considerable distance between them, whereas in urban areas, up to five schools can be visited within a day. The aforementioned discoveries underscore the challenges that adolescents residing in rural regions encounter in accessing sufficient CG services, primarily due to geographical barriers. In the context of South Africa, it can be observed that the upbringing of an individual in a rural setting exerts a notable influence on the nature and caliber of their caregiver and the guidance provided by them. The statement made by Weiss and Reville (2021) highlights the gradual progress of the democratic government in enhancing the state of education in schools that were previously marginalized. Moreover, this illustrates that adolescents residing in rural regions and enrolled in rural educational institutions will not be able to avail superior CG as compared to their urban peers. The significance of spatial inequality in perpetuating other forms of inequality holds a crucial position in the South African discourse, necessitating undivided attention (Gillis, 2019). According to Githui et al. (2018), there exists a notable spatial dimension to the issue of inequality in both educational and occupational opportunities. Masinire 's (2015) study highlights a concern related to geographic location, as evidenced by a participant's reported difficulty in meeting application deadlines and test writing dates due to delayed

postal delivery. According to Masinire's (2015) research, a female participant alleged that she was refused an offer at the Westville Campus of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal due to her failure to meet the acceptance deadline. The university, however, presented her with an alternative course that had available spots, which she declined on account of her lack of knowledge regarding the course's content. Dlamini and Nkambule (2020) discovered a comparable issue in a study conducted in Ixopo. One university student reported not having received a (CG) during their high school education. Despite this, they applied for a teaching position with the belief that it would not take long to secure employment. However, the student was unable to enroll in the teaching course due to it being at full capacity. According to Dlamini and Nkambule (2020), the student contended that her acquaintances had recommended that she pursue a Social Science program, despite her lack of familiarity with the subject matter. Additionally, she expressed uncertainty regarding potential career opportunities associated with a degree in Social Science. The student in question possessed a certain degree of familiarity with both the withdrawn and full courses, yet were deficient in their awareness of alternative vocational pathways that aligned with their academic accomplishments.

According to Njoko and Nkambule's (2018) study, SLO has identified a significant challenge in communicating with rural schools, namely the lack of access to computers in most of these schools. This obstacle makes it difficult for SLO to provide timely and relevant information to rural schools. The study conducted by Maila and Ross (2018) revealed that residing in a rural area poses significant challenges. One of the issues raised by participants was literacy, as they expressed difficulty in comprehending the content of career handbooks despite having access to them.

According to Downes and Roberts (2018), the capacity to read and comprehend written material is crucial for effectively utilizing available information. A significant proportion of youth residing in rural regions lack internet connectivity within their educational institutions, with a negligible fraction possessing smartphones. According to Kormos and Wisdom (2021), individuals who possess mobile phones may lack the financial resources to purchase data bundles and may also lack the necessary skills to effectively navigate the internet. According to Githui et al.'s (2018) research, individuals utilize internet cafés to submit university applications due to their inability to afford internet data bundles. However, accessing internet cafés incurs a financial burden that they cannot bear. Additionally, a majority of the participants lack computer proficiency and are unacquainted with technological advancements. Maila and Ross (2018) assert that community libraries are perceived by rural children as a viable means of accessing career-oriented resources. In contrast, Maila and Ross (2018) reported that some of the study's participants expressed experiencing financial constraints that hindered their ability to commute to the library via taxi. Additionally, these participants noted that their parents were unable to provide sufficient financial support to facilitate more frequent visits to the library for career guidance. The individual's understanding of potential career paths and institutions of higher learning is restricted due to the aforementioned disadvantages. The ramifications of this phenomenon extend beyond the individual experiences of youth residing in rural locales, and have implications for the broader national economy. Dlamini and Nkambule (2020) posit that research indicates a correlation between the absence or inefficacy of CG in rural schools and the issue of

youth unemployment. The results indicate that community schools are not providing sufficient career guidance to their learners. Consequently, the absence of career objectives among learners results in a lack of incentives to remain enrolled and driven in their academic pursuits. Individuals who ultimately pursue higher education often opt for credentials that are not in high demand by employers. According to Goforth, Yosai, Brown, and Shindorf (2017), employability is eventually lost.

Cuervo (2020) argues that neglecting to provide young people with access to career guidance services and information regarding career options will result in the perpetuation of critical skills shortages in the country. It is therefore imperative to prioritize the assistance of young people in this regard, as they represent the future of the nation. According to Avery and Hains (2017), the persistence of oversaturated career paths among young individuals may contribute to the aggravation of unemployment rates and the perpetuation of poverty. The present study seeks to shed light on the significance of exploring the manner in which CG is tackled in rural schools, given the larger proportion of the South African populace residing in rural areas and the potential missed opportunities for employers. The objective is to provide relevant stakeholders with valuable insights. If young individuals make informed and prudent career choices, they will possess the necessary skills that are sought after in the job market. According to Lee, Weis, Liu, and Kang (2017), the problem of limited expertise will be mitigated.

According to Githui et al. 's (2018) study, research on postsecondary education has predominantly attributed the vulnerability of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to financial limitations. According to Murphy's(2020) argument, the recruitment methods utilized by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have led to the disregard of rural learners. This is evidenced by the inability to access multiple rural schools for CG information, which is attributed to issues of location and funding availability. Mokher, Lee, and Sun (2019) propose that the investigation of information access, or its insufficiency, be undertaken and identified as a hindrance to higher education (HE) for rural communities.

In addition, adolescents hailing from rural regions encounter economic challenges in abstaining from pursuing a profession post their matriculation. This is due to the fact that pursuing a career necessitates a specific number of years spent at a university undertaking a course, which may extend beyond the anticipated duration owing to inadequate financial backing and limited financial assistance that these Masinire's (2015) research on the career development of youth from marginalized schools revealed that the majority of participants reported individuals receive or have received prior to enrolling in higher education institutions (Albright & Hurd, 2018). selecting a career path in order to occupy their time after completing matriculation, provide financial support for their families, and ensure access to basic necessities. The study conducted by Masinire (2015) revealed that participants provided a reduced number of responses when prompted to discuss their career preferences or personal decisions. Instead, the responses were primarily focused on external factors such as family background, historical background, and financial background when discussing career-related decisions. The aforementioned studies demonstrate the influence of multiple factors

on the career choices of learners.

Numerous historically marginalized communities continue to experience the socio-economic disparities engendered by the Apartheid regime. The statement underscores the significance of contextual factors in understanding the vocational decisions of adolescents (Kaur & Singh, 2019). McMahon (2018) posits that individuals are open systems whose perceptions of reality are shaped by their interactions with the environment. The environment, in this context, refers to interpersonal factors, and it is noteworthy that individuals are both influenced by and exert influence on their environment. The experiences of learners attending schools in rural areas are shaped and validated through continual engagement with their surroundings and social interactions.

To investigate the perceptions of young individuals from rural schools regarding CG, it is essential to comprehend the historical marginalization they faced in terms of career education access. Additionally, it is crucial to acknowledge the impact of apartheid-era injustices on the current perceptions of CG among young individuals (Tran, Hardie, Gause, Moyi & Ylimaki, 2020). The historical disenfranchisement resulting from the apartheid system, coupled with limited access to educational resources, has significantly influenced the career development of Black South Africans. Maila and Ross (2018) reported that a considerable proportion of the study's participants lacked technological resources such as computers (10) and science laboratories (7). A majority of the participants (8) in the study reported inadequate resources in their schools to support a comprehensive CG program.

A number of learners expressed their satisfaction with the quality of CG offered at their respective schools, while a minority of respondents (8) reported the absence of CG services at their schools. According to Masinire's (2015) findings, a significant number of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the educational system, citing inadequate provision of CG and information by educators as the primary reason for their discontent. Randall (2019) posits that individuals from rural areas may have limited access to valuable post-secondary education information, which can result in inadequate preparation and knowledge regarding educational options and opportunities. Consequently, the duration of their completion is prolonged or they may eventually withdraw from the program.

According to the study conducted by Maila and Ross (2018), a majority of the participants, specifically 8 out of 15, reported that they did not receive any career advice. The study's participants asserted that their educators were deficient in providing sufficient and valuable information pertaining to CG. Maila and Ross (2018) conducted a study wherein the participants expressed aspirations of becoming a doctor and an engineer, respectively. However, the subjects these participants studied were not directly related to these professions. According to Dama's (2020) research findings, it was revealed that while teachers of LO were cognizant of their responsibilities, they were deficient in the necessary competencies to effectively prepare learners with the essential knowledge to make informed career choices that aligned with their respective fields of expertise. Jones, Wilson, Clark, and Dunham (2018) posit that a challenge arises in that adolescents are required to make decisions regarding their academic pursuits despite their limited familiarity or exposure to diverse fields or professions.

The situation is further aggravated for learners residing in remote regions, who encounter even more limited availability of resources and information. According to Maila and Ross (2018), some learners reported that the CG offered at their educational institutions was of high quality. However, a significant number of learners expressed that their schools either lacked or provided insufficient CG. A significant proportion of high school learners are not provided with CG or recommendations regarding tertiary education by their educators. According to Githui et al. 's (2018) research, the primary source of information for all twenty (20) learners was the Central Application Office (CAO) handbook. The study revealed that the learners had limited access to other sources of information. The handbook was a crucial resource for the educators, as it represented the sole means by which the SLOs could disseminate information to rural schools, which are typically underserved by Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and support. Inadequate targeting of rural schools by certain higher education institutions during the promotion of their courses and resources can result in learners experiencing distress and irrational fears when making career decisions, as noted by Lackey and Tompsett (2018).

The higher education sector seems to be allocating inadequate efforts towards the promotion of the recently introduced online Central Admission Procedure (CAP), alongside other alternatives to higher education such as community colleges, Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, and vocational training. According to Saleh and Mujahiddin (2020), a considerable number of learners experience uncertainty regarding the application process, timing, and acquisition of Financial Aid (FA). The aforementioned factors could potentially influence the perceptions of learners towards higher education. Paudel (2021) contends that financial constraints continue to impede the ability of needy learners to pursue higher education and training, despite the allocation of supplementary funds to enable their attendance at fee-free schools. Consequently, higher education becomes unachievable and inaccessible for underprivileged children.

2.5 TRADITIONAL CAREER APPROACHES/THEORIES

This paper explores two prominent theories in the field, namely Super's theory and Holland's person- environment fit theory. Ismawati and Iswari (2022) assert that Super's career development theory and Holland's person-environment fit theory are based on the trait and factor approach. In 1908, Frank Parsons, a prominent figure in the advancement of vocational guidance movements, formulated the trait and factor approach. Parsons formulated this approach based on the underlying assumption that individuals perform optimally when they are placed in roles that align with their competencies. Agunzi, Momoh, and Mallum (2020) posit that the trait and factor approach originated from the positivist paradigm, which has been widely utilized in research due to its objective, value-neutral, and unbiased nature, as well as its emphasis on consistency and generalizability. The trait and factor theory posit that it is feasible to impartially evaluate both personal aptitudes and the characteristics essential for particular occupations. Armitage and Amar (2021) posit that the aforementioned proposition implies that individuals will be paired with employment opportunities that align well with their skills and interests. According to Ficanysha and Iswari (2022), the

impact of Parsons' work on career counseling remains significant in contemporary times. Consequently, these two theories persist in dominating the professional realm and are cited as exemplars for characterizing an individual's career advancement, premised on the notion that they operate autonomously from their environment and that an individual's disposition originates from within.

2.5.1 SUPER'S THEORY

The focus of this discussion is on Super's theory of career development, which falls under the category of life-span development theories. The process of career development is commonly conceptualized as a five-stage progression that spans from early childhood to late adulthood. Blustein (2013) posits that the process of self-concept development and its application is an integral part of the study of reality, which encompasses various social, economic, and cultural factors. According to Swanson and Fouad (2014), self-concepts refer to an individual's perceptions of personal characteristics that are developed through interactions with the environment. Moreover, as per Super's (1963) findings, the notion of self is commonly delineated as a representation of oneself in a particular role, circumstance, capacity, performing a specific set of tasks, or within a certain web of connections (Super, 1976). An individual's self-perception regarding their physical attributes such as muscularity, flexibility, and agility is structured within the framework of their role self-concept as an athlete. According to Super (1957) and Super et al. (1963), individuals' career choices and outcomes are influenced by their efforts to align their self-concepts with work roles. According to Rounds and Jin (2013), individuals who possess knowledge of their perceived abilities tend to make independent career choices. The evolution of self-concepts can have an effect on the synthesis process between an individual and reality. Such changes can occur over time. Hou, Wu, and Liu (2014) posit that the development of self-concept entails an individual's acquisition of knowledge about their interests and abilities, as well as an understanding of the demands of various occupations. The aforementioned phenomenon occurs within the life stages delineated by Super, which are characterized as a continuous and enduring progression (Minola, Criaco & Obschonka, 2016).

The developmental stages of human life can be categorized into various phases, with the first stage being the Growth stage, which spans from birth to 14 years. During this stage, individuals undergo development through their interactions with adults who serve as role models. Positive experiences facilitate the growth of personal interests, self-worth, and independence. The lack of development of these skills may lead to emotions of estrangement and powerlessness. During the period of exploration between the ages of 14 and 25, individuals may engage in part-time or holiday work to test out their initial career choices. The Establishment phase typically involves a trial period during one's late twenties, followed by a period of stabilisation in one's thirties, culminating in a final decision. The area of interest pertains to the maintenance of a certain entity within the age range of 45 to 65. Individuals who persist in their current work trajectory may experience a lack of progress, while others may aspire to pursue novel objectives. According to Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer, and Ng (2015), individuals aged 65 and above tend to exhibit a decrease in work productivity, changes in job responsibilities, and a decline in both physical and mental capabilities. Additionally, they may selectively disengage

from work activities. The stages proposed by Super are founded upon the life stages that are commonly experienced by individuals in our societies, as noted by Obschonka, Hakkarainen, Lonka, and Salmela-Aro (2017). Hirschi, Freund, and Herrmann (2014) state that Super's stages were initially categorized by age, but later acknowledged that they are not exclusively age-dependent. Individuals may experience multiple iterations of specific stages or encounter prolonged periods of stagnation within a particular stage (Kim, 2022). Jiang (2017) cites Super's proposition that the five stages of development may be a modifiable process, wherein individuals may traverse through distinct stages at varying points in their lifespan. Super termed this process as minicycling. The construction and solidification of an individual's self-concept occurs at all stages of life through personal experiences. Rossier (2015) posits that successful completion of developmental tasks indicates an individual's preparedness to progress to the subsequent developmental stage. Moreover, career maturity is attained by individuals as they age and progress through various developmental phases. Super's proposition suggests that the development of one's career is a continuous and ongoing process. The concept of maturity is associated with an individual's preparedness to confront developmental tasks encompassing biological, social, and cultural norms (Hook, Watkins Jr, C Davis, Owen, Tongeren, & Ramos, 2016).

Despite Super's theory considering external factors, there have been critiques of its validity. According to Greer's (2015) assertion, Super's theory has been criticized for overemphasizing the significance of the individual while underestimating the influence of environmental factors and culture. The critique is predicated on the underlying premise that the attainment of a prosperous professional trajectory is contingent upon the efficacious realization of one's self-concept. Super's theory acknowledges contextual career factors; however, some scholars have criticized it for not fully considering the impact of discrimination and limited opportunities experienced by individuals from marginalized communities (Savickas, 2015). Moreover, individuals hailing from collectivistic societies or possessing a more interconnected sense of self, such as South Africans, may find that the emphasis on individual choice overlooks the importance of the family or group dynamic (Jung & Takeuchi, 2018).

According to Hartung's (2013) assertion, Super's notion that the optimal career decision entails actualizing one's self-concept has its roots in the American cultural values of individual independence and decision-making. The significance of relationships in the framework of work and life is often undervalued. Tenne, Rossman, Rephael, Blsrael, Krupinski-Ptaszek, Lapkiewicz, and Oron (2019) contend that social connections can have both positive and negative effects, and that social support, in its various forms, can serve as a beneficial connection. Weigert, Schmidt, Boothe, Müller, Dibrov, Jain and Myers (2018) posit that social support comprises a range of actions, including but not limited to promoting a sense of inclusion or social cohesion, bolstering self-assurance or self-worth via emotional support, establishing goals, furnishing targeted recommendations, guidance, or knowledge through informational support, and aiding with concrete assistance such as monetary aid and childcare. According to DiPaola and Wagner's (2018) argument, social connections that are unfavorable or contentious may serve as impediments and stressors for individuals striving to progress in their professional endeavors. Given that relationships are situated within social and

cultural milieus, it is imperative to gain a comprehensive comprehension of these contextual factors. According to Edwards and Cooper's (2013) assertion, Super's assertion that an individual demonstrates career maturity by accomplishing tasks linked to a specific developmental phase has been challenged. According to Crowley and Head (2017), career maturity is characterized as the degree of preparedness that an individual attains, indicating that it is a fixed attribute rather than a dynamic one that is influenced by external factors and interpersonal relationships.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned objections, which were acknowledged by Super himself, his theory pertaining to career development remains one of the most widely accepted theories for comprehending the process of career development (Claussen, Grohsjean, Luger & Probst, 2014). Johnston (2018) notes that the approach adopted by the individual in question has resulted in a shift in focus from singular adolescent or young adult career decision making to a comprehensive comprehension of the various factors that influence career behaviors throughout an individual's lifespan. The theory exhibits evident implications for the field of counseling. Super's developmental model, which has been refined over several decades, remains highly relevant in comprehending professional life behavior across the lifespan. However, it may be necessary to modify certain aspects of the theory when working with clients from specific cultural backgrounds.

2.5.2 HOLLAND'S THEORY

According to Sharif (2017), Holland's vocational choice theory posits that individuals tend to choose environments or circumstances that align with their personality orientations. According to Rocconi, Liu, and Pike (2020), this particular approach emphasizes the significance of behavioral style or personality types in determining one's career choice. Holland (1997) posits that individuals seek out environments that enable them to utilize their skills and competencies, express their opinions and values, and undertake feasible tasks and responsibilities. According to Foutch, McHugh, Bertoch, and Reardon (2014), individuals are inclined towards specific job positions due to the requirement of a work setting that fulfills their personal needs and promotes their well-being. The classification of individuals into distinct career paths based on their personality type has been a significant area of study. Holland's theory of vocational choice posits that there are six distinct personality types, each represented by the acronym RIASEC. The acronym RIASEC refers to the six personality types, namely Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional, as identified by Ayriza, Triyanto, Setiawati, and Gunawan (2020).

At its fundamental level, the theory posits that individuals can be initially categorized based on their degree of similarity to each of the six personality types, as stated by Zainudin, Rong, Nor Yusop, and Othman (2020). Pierce and Johnson (2017) posit that individuals tend to exhibit the traits and actions associated with a particular type to a greater extent as their resemblance to that type increases. An individual who exhibits characteristics akin to type (R-Realistic) is inclined towards manual labor, engaging in activities that involve crafting, repairing, assembling, or constructing objects, and operating mechanical equipment. According to Sheldon, Holliday, Titova, and Benson (2020), there is a tendency for individuals to prefer working outdoors. According to Yilmaz (2017), professions that possess Realistic attributes

comprise of a pilot, farmer, horticulturist, builder, engineer, armed services personnel, mechanic, upholsterer, electrician, and computer technologist. An individual exhibits a trilateral symbol (e.g., RIC or SAE). The initial character of the code denotes the principal interest category of an individual, which is expected to exert a substantial influence on their vocational satisfaction and selection. According to Watson (2006), the second and third letters in the Holland Code are considered secondary interest aspects. Although they may have a lesser influence on career selection, they are still significant factors to consider.

Holland's approach to comprehending career selection has led to his prominence in the realm of career counseling and practice, as per Yilmaz's (2017) findings. According to Holland and Rayman (2013), the theory has made noteworthy progress in the conceptualization of career interests and career choice, the development of interest inventories, the structuring of employability, career counseling, and the arrangement of career education curricula. The statement made by Nawabi (2014) suggests that the subject matter has incited a noteworthy volume of empirical investigation within the domains of career, industrial, and organizational psychology. Holland's typology is supported by a multitude of research studies. Nevertheless, there exist critics of this approach, notably due to the notable overrepresentation of females within the top three personality types, namely artistic, social, and conventional (Zahour, Benlahmar, Eddaouim & Hourrane, 2020). According to Gitonga's (2014) argument, Holland's theory has faced criticism due to its perceived gender bias, with men generally exhibiting greater career-based prediction validity than women. According to Sudhana, Ameen, and Isaac (2020), Holland argues that the observed phenomenon is attributable to societal pressures that steer women towards professions that are predominantly female.

During the early stages of life, disparities in occupational preferences between genders become apparent, and various research works have established a correlation between these differences and socialization and cultural convictions (Jahn & Myers, 2014). Notwithstanding this, there persists a tendency to associate female roles more frequently with caregiving responsibilities, as opposed to pursuing careers in fields such as engineering, which are commonly perceived as being more suitable for men on account of their greater physical demands. There exists a societal association between social interest and femininity, while mathematical interest is commonly associated with masculinity. According to Wang and Degol (2013), a considerable number of female students tend to steer clear of subjects that are perceived to be more masculine, while a majority of male students tend to avoid subjects that are perceived to be more feminine. In contrast, male students exhibit a predilection towards pure and applied sciences, whereas female students tend to display a preference for social sciences. Several studies have observed variations in occupational preferences among males and females, with most asserting that socialization obstacles are the primary cause (Fouad, Singh, Cappaert, Chang & Wan, 2016).

Glossenberg, Tracey, Behrend, Blustein and Foster (2019) posit that the enduring influence of women's conventional roles as homemakers and caregivers extends to all aspects of their professional lives. Solomon, Radovic, and Black (2016) assert that a significant number of women strategize their professional trajectories with the aim of balancing their

multiple roles. According to Bimrose's (2019) findings, women tend to reduce their career aspirations as they age due to the increasing demands of family responsibilities. This suggests the need for further research to be conducted regarding the influence of gender and culture on both career development and career selection. It is imperative for career counselors and researchers to recognize and duly contemplate the disparities that exist among gender, racial, and ethnic groups.

According to Puccio, Miller and Acar (2019), there have been recent contentions regarding the applicability of the theory, which suggest that there is insufficient conclusive evidence to establish a connection between congruence and outcomes such as satisfaction and productivity. In South Africa, a country characterized by high levels of poverty and unemployment, individuals from the Black South African community may be compelled to pursue careers in fields that may not align with their personal preferences, but are essential for the provision of financial support to their families (Andreea-Elena, 2014). The dearth of employment opportunities and poverty in South Africa's black population results in limited career prospects. In the era of Apartheid, individuals of Black ethnicity were not assigned job roles based on their individual dispositions. Despite this, certain individuals opted to persist in unfavorable working environments that were not commensurate with their aptitudes and preferences, as they required a means of livelihood to provide sustenance for their families and children (Tracey, Wille, Durr II, & De Fruyt, 2014). The findings indicate that the predominant focus of Black South Africans may not be on job satisfaction in light of the difficulties associated with securing employment (Nye, Su, Rounds & Drasgow, 2017). Zahour, Eddaoui, Ouchra and Hourrane (2020) contend that despite the democratic governance of the nation, a significant proportion of the populace persists in engaging in employment that is incongruous with their individual dispositions, owing to the prevalence of poverty and a surging rate of unemployment. The lack of access to education that is both of high quality and free is identified as a significant impediment for many Black South Africans in their pursuit of careers that align with their individual personalities, as noted by Johnson and Muse (2017). A significant number of Black South Africans reside in such circumstances, and any strategy for vocational guidance must be attuned to these concerns. The study conducted by Jemini-Gashi and Bèrxulli (2017) highlights the significance of considering contextual factors while administering career counselling assessments that are imported to South Africa.

Holland's theory has been subject to criticism, with some scholars highlighting its limitations such as the shortcomings of trait factor theories and the possibility of individuals modifying their environments and personal characteristics (Meireles & Primi, 2015). The theory endeavours to align work-related and personal characteristics that are adaptable and amenable to modification. The career choice of an individual can also be influenced by environmental factors. As exemplified by Su and Nye (2017), in the event that an individual experiences dissatisfaction with their role as an insurance claims examiner, they may endeavour to modify specific facets of the position without necessitating a change in its official designation. The significance of this matter is notably pronounced in South Africa, where individuals frequently encounter elevated levels of unemployment and poverty (Nye, Prasad, Bradburn & Elizondo, 2018). The decisions individuals make regarding their careers are influenced by contextual factors. As a result of being deprived of

access to higher education during the apartheid era, a significant number of South Africans received inadequate education, which has resulted in a dearth of skills and limited employment opportunities, forcing them to accept whatever work is available (Vondracek, 2020). Hansen and Wiernik (2018) argue that Holland's theory is limited in its ability to fully acknowledge the obstacles that individuals from disadvantaged communities encounter in their career progression. This is due to the theory's initial development within the context of Western societies, which were characterized by privilege and advantage, and its failure to account for the diverse socioeconomic realities of South Africa.

The cultural validity and applicability of the Self-Directed Search (SDS) and Holland's model in the context of South Africa have been called into question due to the potential for differing interpretations of the model's six broad interests in the country compared to the United States (USA), as noted by Ktoridou and Epaminonda (2014). Livingston, Bost, and Copeland (2021) have suggested that career interests can be subject to alteration based on various factors. One such factor is the collectivist value of "ubuntu," which prioritizes the act of aiding others over one's own self-interest. According to Guan, Deng, Fan, and Zhou (2021), individuals in South Africa may exhibit characteristics that align with Holland's S-Social personality type, which is attributed to their collectivist values. In response to the challenges confronting career development assessment in South Africa, Bemath (2020) has suggested alternative approaches to career counselling that enable the use of more pertinent assessment techniques and more efficacious career guidance.

2.6 ALTERNATIVE CAREER APPROACHES/ THEORIES

Chant (2020) posits that the conventional methods of Career Guidance have been subject to criticism, leading to a demand for novel and culturally appropriate approaches to Career Guidance in the South African milieu. The unique challenges faced by the South African populace and labor market are specific to the country's multicultural context, necessitating enhanced career research within its borders (Maree, 2017; Maree, 2018; Maree, 2019; Maree & Maree, 2021). The utilization of Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich & Developed (WEIRD) theories and assessments is prevalent in South African career development evaluations, as noted by Di Fabio and Svicher (2022). Albien (2021) argues that there exists an excessive dependence on psychometric evaluations, with a corresponding emphasis on individual factors rather than contextual factors. Maree (2020) has reported that South Africa is confronted with a significant deficit in essential skills. The South African labor market is still largely comprised of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Bohlmann, Chitiga- Mabugu, and Mushongera (2021) have identified a significant discrepancy between the skill sets possessed by young individuals and the available employment opportunities. There is a scarcity of individuals possessing particular specialized competencies. According to Einarsdóttir, Björnsdóttir, and Lerkkanen (2020), there is a significant deficit in scientific and technological competencies. In areas where such employment opportunities are available, the younger generation lacks the requisite skills to pursue them.

According to Maree's (2020) assertion, in addition to a critical skills shortage, the nation experiences a significant illiteracy rate. According to Gati, Levin and Landman-Tal (2019), the illiteracy rate refers to the proportion of individuals

within a specific age cohort who lack the ability to read and write. According to Jonck and Swanepoel (2019), a concern regarding literacy in career guidance services for youth is that certain individuals may lack comprehension of the terminology utilized in career guidance evaluations. Inadequate comprehension of the task at hand may result in outcomes that lack dependability (Jude, 2018). According to McMahon's (2018) findings, individuals who are evaluated in a language that is not their native tongue may exhibit performance differences compared to if they were assessed in their primary language. According to Mareer's (2021) assertion, the prevalence of illiteracy in South Africa is closely intertwined with the historical legacy of apartheid that persisted prior to the country's transition to democracy in 1994, as well as the socio-economic context of a nation in the process of development. The impact of Apartheid was extensive, resulting in the reinforcement of inequalities based on race and gender, as well as poverty (Mareer, 2021). The present research corroborates the results of the South African Government's (SAG) (2022) investigation, which indicates that the attainment of universal literacy, encompassing individuals of all ages, is yet to be realized and continues to be a dynamic objective (Mkonza, 2022).

According to Maree (2020), the implementation of contextualized career guidance strategies can enable career guidance practitioners to address the concern of literacy among the youth. It is imperative for counselors to exercise caution while evaluating disadvantaged youth, ensuring that the assessment scores are not influenced by their reading and writing abilities (Miles & Naidoo, 2017). In order to attain this objective, novel and innovative methods of evaluation necessitate development. It is imperative for counselors to adopt a facilitative approach as opposed to a prescriptive one, wherein they refrain from assuming the role of an authority figure who solely dictates the thought process and decision-making of their clients. According to Owusu-Agyeman (2021), it is imperative that clients are granted the autonomy to express themselves, behave, reason, and make decisions independently. According to Pasha's (2020) proposition, it is imperative to guide clients towards acknowledging accountability for their personal decisions and growth. The feasibility of this proposition is contingent upon the utilization of comprehensive approaches by career counselors in the provision of guidance services. According to Maree (2020), it is recommended that career guidance counsellors employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative, as well as objective and subjective methods.

According to Rossier, Cardoso, and Duarte (2021), the implementation of an integrative approach can lead to favorable outcomes if executed with meticulous attention. In 2018, Maree conducted a single-case study that was intrinsic in nature. The study involved a participant who was purposefully selected. Two newly developed instruments were utilized to showcase the practical application of the innovative approach. According to Maree (2018), the intervention facilitated the identification of career-life themes by the participant, which subsequently led to the selection of a field of study that would allow for the integration of work into their life, the creation and realization of a prosperous life, and the ability to make significant social contributions. The present study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, in order to investigate the potential efficacy of this integrative approach. The proposition is made that the implementation of blended career guidance services

may serve as a viable resolution to the prevalent career guidance challenges in South Africa.

Scholars such as Maree and Symington (2015), Maree (2020 a; b), and Hartung, and Cadaret (2017) have emphasized the significance of employing innovative techniques and interventions to facilitate individuals in reflecting on their career narratives. This process of reflection enables individuals to elicit genuine guidance from within, which can aid in overcoming career-related uncertainties, hesitations, and lack of confidence. The provision of genuine guidance is positively associated with the embracement of self-authorship in one's professional life narratives, and it promotes decision-making that considers internal experiences such as beliefs, desires, emotions (Rungqu, 2019; Sensoy-Bridgick & Bridgick, 2022), and overall welfare (Maree, 2018). According to Maree's (2021) assertion, it is imperative to consider approaches as complementary rather than contradictory.

The two entities in question ought to be considered as possessing equal value and capable of enhancing one another. Tsuda-McCaie and Kotera (2021) argue that it is important to recognize the value of both traditional and alternative approaches, and that one should not be used to replace the other. According to Zunker's (2015) perspective, counselors have the authority to utilize both established and innovative models and techniques to facilitate their clients' active engagement in the career guidance counseling process. According to Watson and McMahon (2020), it is evident that in a multicultural society, no two individuals possess the same framework or narrative. The implementation of a blended approach to career guidance services is imperative in the intricate societal context of South Africa, with the aim of mitigating the adverse effects of elevated levels of unemployment, particularly in rural areas.

According to McLaren's (2017) perspective, the rate of unemployment is a crucial concern that can be addressed through alternative methods of career guidance. Bohlmann, Chitiga-Mabugu, and Mushongera (2021) reported that on June 16, 2021, the President delivered a speech to the nation commemorating the Soweto uprising, a student protest that occurred in 1976. The President expressed concern over the high unemployment rate among young people in the country, which he deemed a national crisis. Specifically, he noted that over 50% of South Africans aged 16 to 24 are currently unemployed. Bohlmann et al. (2021) contend that despite more than four decades of striving for recognition and attention to their predicament, young individuals continue to face unemployment. According to Marumo and Sebolaneng (2019), the issue of youth unemployment is a significant challenge that exists in reality. The issue of unemployment in South Africa is distinctive in its contextual nature, as it arises from a complex interplay of interconnected factors (Mago, 2018). Patel, Khan, and Englert (2020) assert that the unemployment rate in South Africa can be traced back to its history of colonization and apartheid. The career guidance services that are currently advocated for by social activists have historical roots in the practices that were used to restrict disadvantaged individuals from pursuing managerial and professional careers during the Apartheid era. As a result, the applicability and efficacy of such services in disadvantaged contexts are subject to scrutiny and uncertainty (Choung & Manamela, 2018). According to Cooper (2014), psychologists were employed to generate reports that indicated the unsuitability of black individuals for certain occupations, such as engineering. According to Kanjere and Choenyane (2021), psychologists endeavored

to address the requirements of marginalized communities and counteract apartheid policies.

Therefore, the field of career psychology faces a lengthy path towards achieving impartiality for individuals who are socially or economically disadvantaged. In addition, given the dynamic nature of the contemporary labor market, it is imperative that young individuals undergo periodic evaluations through career guidance assessments that are regularly updated. This is necessary to enhance their prospects of securing employment in the future and to ensure that they remain employable over time (Laher & Cockcroft, 2014). Effective strategies must involve a thorough examination of the life narratives of young individuals, which may impede their ability to pursue a range of professional paths (Rabie, 2017). It is imperative for younger generations to engage in a process of unlearning the notion that individuals from disadvantaged and advantaged backgrounds are inherently destined for divergent outcomes, a belief that has been deeply ingrained over time. It is imperative to equip the younger generation with knowledge pertaining to nascent career opportunities, obsolete skill sets, and vanishing professions. Additionally, it is essential to educate them on the dynamic and unpredictable nature of contemporary career trajectories, as posited by Rakshasa- Loots and Laughton (2022). According to Loyd, Derlan, Smith, Norris, Richter, and Roeser (2019), the field of career psychology must undergo a significant overhaul in order to maintain its relevance in light of the rapidly evolving world of work and the trust that individuals place in it.

The field of Career Psychology should incorporate interventions aimed at assisting marginalized groups in coping with economic changes. These interventions should be designed to aid individuals who are unemployed, disabled, women, laid off, or facing oppressive working conditions (August, 2017). The provision of career guidance services by practitioners can be instrumental in assisting marginalized groups, particularly young individuals, in constructing and adapting their careers. It is essential for these groups to comprehend that a career is a continuous process of learning throughout one's life (Becker, Engelbrecht, Boonzaaier, Finch, Meiring & Louw, 2017). The implementation of this measure is expected to mitigate the prevalent issue of youth unemployment and narrow the skills gap between demand and supply, thereby yielding a favorable impact on the national economy.

The third salient concern confronting the nation pertains to the elevated rate of attrition in tertiary institutions. Mokoena and van Breda (2021) have identified a significant issue in higher education institutions, namely the high rate of dropout, particularly among undergraduate students. This challenge cannot be comprehended in a vacuum, but rather must be considered in conjunction with the aforementioned issues as well as other matters that have not been addressed in this investigation. Hermülheim, Pilz González, and Loerbroks (2021) have defined university dropout as the act of leaving the higher education system without obtaining a (first) graduation or subsequently re-entering. This phenomenon is prevalent in numerous countries and has significant societal and economic consequences. An individual hailing from an underprivileged background, whose parents are unemployed and lacks basic literacy skills, and has limited exposure to career counseling during the formative years of secondary education, may encounter challenges in making an informed decision regarding their chosen career path. Furthermore, it is plausible that in the event of this child's

enrollment in a university, they may encounter insufficient familial support throughout the duration of their academic program, potentially leading to an escalation in anxiety and stress levels, ultimately culminating in the decision to discontinue their studies (Weybright, Caldwell, Xie, Wegner & Smith, 2017).

Recognizing that one has selected an inappropriate academic program can serve as a valid justification for discontinuing one's education. According to Hall and De Lannoy (2019), the majority of students commence their academic planning during the ninth grade, a period during which they are still in the process of discovering themselves. The academic setting of a university provides ample opportunities for self-discovery. However, in the event that a student realizes that they have chosen an unsuitable degree program, it may result in their discontinuation of studies (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Maree (2021) suggests that the aforementioned issue can be prevented by implementing career guidance strategies that take into account the subjective nature of a learner's career perception. In order to obtain comprehensive information regarding the career guidance experiences of disadvantaged learners, it is imperative for a career guidance counsellor to have a thorough understanding of the subjective world of the learner. According to Wilkinson, Pettifor, Rosenberg, Halpern, Thirumurthy, Collinson, and Kahn (2017) it is imperative to consider the environment in which young individuals operate, as it significantly influences their decision-making process. Decontextualizing them from their surroundings is not feasible, as they play a pivotal role in every choice they make. According to Wood, Kiperman, Esch, Leroux, and Truscott (2017), conventional methods of career guidance are insufficient in addressing the issue of high dropout rates in higher education institutions. This is because these methods prioritize objectivity and rationality in evaluating an individual's aptitude for vocational pursuits.

The distinctive difficulties and obstacles encountered by the nation are exclusive to South Africa and demand the most creative resolutions to tackle them. As per the findings of Timmis, Mgqwashu, Naidoo, Muhuro, Trahar, Lucas, and de Wet (2019), it can be inferred that the populace encountering the aforementioned issues and obstacles in South Africa primarily hails from rural regions and townships, with the youth cohort being the most susceptible. Young individuals who are disadvantaged tend to have insufficient career identities and knowledge, leading to uninformed decisions regarding their career paths. Moscoviz and Evans (2022) posit that making uninformed career choices often results in dissatisfaction among young individuals with their chosen career paths, potentially leading to school dropout. As per Mutanga's (2018) findings, a significant proportion of university students discontinuing their studies is a leading cause of elevated youth unemployment rates and an increased need for essential competencies in the job market. The withdrawal of a student from a university results in a loss of both time and financial resources. Bakker, Verhaegh, Kox, van der Beek, Boot, Roelofs, and Francke (2019) contend that government funds allocated towards supporting young individuals in completing their studies, with the aim of cultivating future valuable members of society and bolstering the country's economy, are being squandered due to a rising number of dropouts. Ahmed, Sharif, and Ahmad (2017) suggest that career guidance counsellors should re-evaluate their current and conventional methodologies to effectively tackle the challenges encountered by underprivileged youth.

Maree (2020) posits that alternative perspectives suggest that career decisions are influenced not only by individual characteristics, but are also intricately intertwined with the surrounding social environment. Alternative perspectives posit that an individual's career decision-making process is influenced by external factors, their socioeconomic class, and shared experiences. According to Dlamini and Nkambule (2020), it is imperative to recognize that the societal context in which young individuals reside and encounter life has a substantial influence on their career development and subsequent employment opportunities, despite the fact that career choices are personal decisions. This perception is relevant when evaluating career guidance as a means of addressing youth unemployment. Assistance and encouragement are crucial for younger individuals seeking to establish themselves, particularly in a formal job market that is saturated and demands innovation and creative thinking (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019). In order to ensure inclusivity, it may be necessary to adapt and reposition career guidance models and theoretical perspectives, particularly in economically disadvantaged countries (Pillay, 2020). Theron (2020) asserts that conventional methods of career guidance were not indigenous to South Africa, but were introduced and modified in the region. The aforementioned methodologies have their origins in the European and American settings. The implicit values of autonomy and individualism are highly regarded in the worldview of Europe and Western nations. Collectivism is highly valued by South Africans, who also subscribe to the Ubuntu philosophy (Ungar, Connelly, Liebenberg & Theron, 2019). According to Sanusi and Spahn's (2020) argument, the essence of Ubuntu is centered on exhibiting compassion and prioritizing human dignity in one's actions, thoughts, and interactions with others. The utilization of Ubuntu implies a concern for the well-being of others. The term "*Ubuntu*" can be interpreted as "I exist because we exist" or "I am because you are." It is commonly held that human beings are unable to exist autonomously. According to Mwipikeni (2018), connection, society, and caring are essential for their coexistence as they are interdependent. The utilization of foreign standards to evaluate indigenous individuals results in the disregard of their unique worldviews. According to Barnes, du Plessis, and Frantz (2021), disadvantaged young individuals may suffer negative consequences if they depend on foreign career guidance practices.

Insufficient familiarity of career guidance professionals with the contextual background of their clients may lead to inadequate career choices and subsequent lack of success in their chosen careers (Smith, Bell, Bennett & McAlpine, 2018). In order for career guidance assessments to produce accurate and dependable outcomes, it is imperative that the career guidance professional possess proficiency and familiarity in administering such assessments across a range of contexts (Brown & Lent, 2017). Zacher, Rudolph, Todorovic, and Ammann (2019) argue that career counsellors must adapt and reframe their services to assist individuals in preserving, enhancing, and potentially restoring their employability within the contemporary economy. The awareness of the transformation plan is imperative for career guidance, improvement, and counseling practice to provide suitable services. This is akin to the critique aimed at psychology and psychotherapy models, which necessitates the adoption of novel approaches that cater to the needs of all service recipients. Luckett (2019) has been cited.

Lembani, Gunter, Breines, and Dalu (2020) have posited that interventions aimed at mitigating social inequality and oppression may have positive implications for individuals' health and overall welfare. Within the South African context, there exists a persistent demand for career research that is more relevant to the local context. The contextual demands of South Africa necessitate the implementation of career development theories and services that are rooted in indigenous knowledge. Akosah-Twumasi, Emeto, Lindsay, Tsey, and Malau-Aduli (2018) have raised inquiries concerning the suitability of western theories in the local context, due to their importation or adaptation. The need for Indigenous career theories that are suitable for a diverse cultural context is currently on the rise, as noted by Rowe and Zegwaard (2017). The objective of the present investigation is to enhance our comprehension of career counselling by conducting a more comprehensive analysis of the encounters of underprivileged rural students from rural educational institutions, while acknowledging the significance of the setting.

2.6.1 CAREER CONSTRUCTION APPROACH

Contemporary alterations in the realm of employment, workforce composition, technological advancements, and vocations have rendered the comprehension of career trajectories through conventional career development frameworks arduous in present times. Why? The contemporary labor landscape is subject to perpetual restructuring and transformation (Nalis, Kubicek & Korunka, 2022). According to Porzak's (2018) assertion, contemporary transformations in the workplace require individuals to prioritize adaptability and versatility over steadfastness and constancy. Piróg and Rachwał (2019) posit that the presence of employees with diverse skill sets is necessary to ensure adaptability in the workplace. This adaptability allows employees to remain relevant and essential even when certain skills are no longer required. According to Rossier, Cardoso, and Duarte (2021), individuals who are incapable of adjusting their skill set may encounter unemployment, disorientation, and psychological distress.

According to Schwarz and Munro (2022), it is imperative for employees to adapt to the changing times. Watson and McMahon (2020) argue that the ability of employees to adapt to change is contingent upon their flexibility and mobility. As technology advances, organizations tend to replace outdated methods with more contemporary approaches, rendering the former less effective over time. According to Tsuda-McCaie and Kotera (2021), certain individuals who previously occupied roles deemed crucial may face unemployment due to businesses seeking expedient and effortless methods to accomplish those responsibilities. This suggests that individuals who do not possess the requisite competencies for the contemporary era may become unemployed. According to Stoltz and Barclay (2019), individuals will be compelled to contemplate their career choices in a significant manner. Career development models are relevant in this context.

Watson (2013) posits that career development models serve as a means of rescuing individuals who are struggling to adapt their professional lives to meet the contemporary demands of the workplace. As per the research conducted by Urdzina-Merca and Dislere (2018), this necessitates the need for revised career development frameworks. The career construction model is a career development framework that emerged as a result of shifts in the characteristics

of work, technology, and the workforce. The emergence of vocational guidance in the late 20th century can be attributed to the increasing number of individuals seeking novel forms of career guidance to effectively navigate the transformative shifts in their work and lifestyle patterns (Albien, 2018).

According to Ahmet, Eryilmaz, and Çubukçu (2020), conventional methods of vocational counselling that relied on measures such as aptitude tests and statistical profiling are insufficient in preparing individuals to effectively adapt to the dynamic nature of the labor market and the current state of the economy. Dix (2020) posits that the Career Construction model was developed as a complementary framework to traditional career guidance models, utilizing a qualitative methodology. Career Construction Theory posits that careers are constructed gradually over time, rather than being selected outright (Argyropoulou, 2021). Borgen and Edwards (2019) assert that the model is highly versatile in its implementation as it considers the contextual factors of the individual, rather than fragmenting individuals into objective models of career development. This methodology considers the individual as a holistic entity, subject to diverse external influences (Borgen & Edwards, 2019).

According to Bright and Pryor's (2019) assertion, individuals possess fragments of narratives that, when integrated, provide an account of their vocational inclinations. An instance of a child who experienced the loss of a mother due to the inattentiveness of healthcare professionals in a government-run medical facility may develop a desire to secure a well-paying occupation in order to finance access to private medical care. This narrative has the potential to assist individuals in comprehending their career trajectory when shared with a vocational advisor (Maree, 2021). Career construction counselling has the potential to aid individuals in the process of dismantling and rebuilding their professional trajectories, thereby offering a range of advantages. In the process of career counselling, it is possible for the career counsellor to identify and take note of certain narratives that may be considered myths, yet hold a considerable impact on an individual's career trajectory (Fabio & Bernaud, 2018).

The relevance of this issue is particularly significant within the South African context, owing to deeply entrenched cultural values, colonial influences, and the legacy of apartheid, as noted by Franklin and Stebleton (2020), Maree (2019, 2020), and Watson (2006). Franklin and Stebleton (2020) posit that the policies of apartheid engendered certain misconceptions regarding career opportunities, which persist to this day and exert a notable influence on the upcoming workforce. During the apartheid era, individuals of white ethnicity were exclusively allowed to occupy skilled positions, whereas individuals of black ethnicity were restricted to unskilled positions. As a result, a prevailing belief among many individuals of African descent is that individuals of European descent are incapable of performing tasks at the same level as themselves and that leadership roles are exclusively reserved for those of European descent. Harless and Stoltz (2018) reported that the participants acknowledged the concept that they possess an innate intellectual inferiority in contrast to individuals of Caucasian descent.

The vocational trajectories of youthful individuals continue to exhibit indications of this phenomenon. As per the account of a participant in Maree's (2021) study, the individual opted for a general stream during their Grade 10 education, citing

that the subjects of science and math were perceived as being reserved for individuals of Caucasian and Indian descent. According to Heinrichs, Hermülheim, González, and Loerbroks (2021), there exists a prevalent belief among individuals of African descent that associates a boss with a white person. Consequently, when referring to a black person occupying a higher position, they may use the term *Umlungu*, which translates to white person. According to Irving, Borgen, and Hoejdal (2020), it has been observed that young children of black ethnicity often articulate their aspiration of attaining a white identity in their adulthood. In order to prevent the perpetuation of certain behaviors or beliefs to future generations, it is necessary to engage in a process of unlearning. Subsequent cohorts shall not derive any advantages from the aforementioned entities. The career construction model aims to aid individuals in debunking detrimental career misconceptions and reconstructing their careers in a manner that is beneficial to their professional growth and development (Karacan-Ozdemir & Ayaz, 2021).

According to Kozielska, Piorunek, Podgórný, and Drabik-Podgórna (2020), the career construction model promotes the perception of one's professional life as a narrative, wherein the individual assumes the roles of both the protagonist and the author. Career construction counselors facilitate the process of envisioning subsequent chapters in personal career narratives. During periods of challenging transitions or ambiguity, individuals may encounter situations akin to "writer's block," which can be surmounted by initially conceptualizing fresh plotlines, subsequently articulating them, and ultimately executing them (Maree, 2020). The utilization of a career construction approach has the potential to yield positive outcomes for young individuals in rural school settings. This approach fosters self-expression through the narration of personal experiences. The collaborative efforts of a counselor and young individuals can result in the development of a career trajectory that yields favorable outcomes for both the youth and society at large.

2.6.2 NARRATIVE APPROACH

The postmodern approach to career guidance, known as the narrative approach, emerged in the late 1990s and was widely embraced in 2007, as noted by McMahon (2018) and Maree (2021). Narrative Career Counselling is a process that provides assistance to individuals who are seeking to articulate their life story in its entirety (Kaliris & Issari, 2022). According to Shefer (2018), the process of narrative career counselling involves actively participating in the client's narrative and utilizing it to guide their career decisions and actions, as well as to facilitate their adjustment to their current situation. Narrative career counselling aims to aid clients in recounting their personal narratives within the context of their respective geographical, economic, historical, and cultural backgrounds. It is noteworthy that culture plays a crucial role in the practice of narrative career counselling, as per McMahon (2018). The comprehensive nature of narrative career counselling is evidenced by its consideration of numerous factors, rendering it a holistic and inclusive approach. This stands in contrast to contemporary traditional career counselling, which tends to detach the client from their context. The prevailing view among scholars is that the South African context is conducive to a narrative approach in the field of career counselling (Bright & Pryor, 2019). Moreover, as per Maree's (2021) findings, the

ability to narrate stories is a source of pride for Africans, and these accounts provide intricate insights into the lives of African individuals. According to McMahon (2018), actively engaging in the narratives of individuals can facilitate a deeper comprehension of their identity, origin, and future aspirations. This knowledge can serve as a beneficial asset in supporting their professional development. The Narrative Approach is widely considered as the most effective method for addressing the subjective elements of career counseling. The approach has been cited in contemporary career psychology literature as a means of revitalizing the field and as a potential solution for career guidance counselors to address the requirements of the modern-day workplace (McMahon, Bimrose, Watson, & Abkhezr, 2020; Miles & Naidoo, 2017; Owusu-Agyeman, 2023).

Maree (2021) posits that this particular approach is a reaction to the demand for indigenous research on the theoretical and practical components of career counseling assessment. Franklin and Stebleton (2020) argue that the current demand for localized research and contextually appropriate methods in career guidance is a result of apprehensions that the traditional, impartial outlook of career counseling disregards individual interpretations. Harless and Stoltz (2018) have observed that the interpretations of clients' professional trajectories are diverse and are shaped by a range of factors, including cultural, social, economic, and historical circumstances. According to Maree (2022), clients undergo personal experiences that influence their career life narratives, necessitating that counsellors consider their context when providing assistance. According to Piróg and Rachwal's (2019) assertion, the Narrative Approach addresses the deficiencies in career counselling that are not covered by conventional career approaches. The approach places emphasis on the subjectivity of clients and their active involvement in the development of their careers, which is often overlooked by traditional approaches. Sensoy-Bridgick and Bridgick (2022) posit that the process of career counselling can be enriched by promoting the construction of meaning, which is facilitated by providing clients with the opportunity to narrate their personal experiences and engage in introspection.

Chant (2020) posits that the implementation of narrative career counselling can enhance the reflective practices of researchers and foster self-reflection and reflexivity among clients. In addition, the present study aligns with the research conducted by Maree (2018) and Borgen and Edwards (2019), which suggests that career counsellors can facilitate clients' self- and career development by focusing on their internal emotions. Moreover, the study highlights the significance of narrative career counselling, where the process of making meaning is considered central (Charokopaki, 2019). The statement also corroborates the assertion made by Cadaret and Hartung (2021) that individuals must engage in self-reflection in a world that is characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability. According to Watson and McMahon (2020), Narrative Career Counselling involves guiding clients to re-evaluate their existing career narratives and effectively communicate the subjective significance they attribute to life experiences through introspection of their thoughts and actions. The process is characterized by a compassionate approach towards clients.

Pasha (2020) posits that reflexivity has the potential to enhance self-awareness, bolster self-esteem, and serve as a catalyst for action and progress. According to Maree (2021), the utilization of a narrative approach can have a significant

effect on clients as it enables them to delve into key life themes, develop their sense of self, establish successful lifestyles, and contribute to society. The utilization of narrative has gained popularity in contemporary career counseling practice due to its comprehensive approach to career guidance. Although the body of evidence supporting narrative career counselling is currently limited, it is steadily expanding (Chong, Nen, Xiong, Mei, Koh, Subhi, & Pui, 2021). Although narrative career counseling has been in existence for over two decades, it remains a relatively nascent field in both practical application and scholarly investigation (Erturk, Seggie, Kiziltepe, & Rodopman, 2019).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL APPROACH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study adopts two theoretical frameworks. These include Social Constructionism and Career Construction Theory (CCT). This section will first cover the Social Construction approach, then the reason it is appropriate for the study, and finally the Career Construction theory (CCT) and why it is appropriate for the investigation.

3.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Social Constructionism is a theory proposed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman in their book "The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge" published in 1966. According to this theory, humans get knowledge of the world around them through social interaction, and most of what they perceive as reality is based on shared assumptions (Holstein & Miller, 2017). Burr and Dick (2017), assert that this theory highlights the importance of context and social interactions in making sense of the environment. As a result, it does not ignore human subjectivity when evaluating human experiences. Tiefer (2018), contends that subjectivity is important in qualitative research since it is often what the researcher is seeking to understand about how people perceive, comprehend, and construct the social world. Galbin (2014), asserts that context can be referred to as economic, social, physical, cultural, worldview, historic, gender, and political context. As a result, considering the environment in which social interactions occur aids in a better understanding of why certain events occur only in particular settings (Bøe, 2021).

Exploring the Career Guidance (CG) experiences of young people in rural schools, for example, requires the researcher to recognize that this area has unique difficulties that are not seen in urban schools (Lohr, Krause, McClelland, Van Gorden, Gerald, Del Casino Jr & Carvajal, 2021). In rural schools, poor resource provision, sanitation, connectivity, and limited career advice are more common than in private, well-resourced schools; this knowledge is crucial in understanding people in relation to their context (Taylor, 2021). Social Constructionism's perspective that realities produced, or knowledge developed will differ depending on the circumstances adds to the significance of the context (Dombrowski, 2020). This theoretical framework advocates that because realities are socially constructed, they can be transformed as society evolves over time and is constantly influenced by social forces such as human influences, politics, culture, history, and dominant discourses (Ratner, Pavon-Cuellar & Rios-Martinez, 2020).

The purpose of utilizing the Social Constructionism theory for this research study is because it is useful in analyzing both the background and Career Guidance experiences of young people attending a rural school. Young people who attend a rural school are social beings that interact with their surroundings, which in this case is a rural setting. In their interactions with the world, young people produce, change, and interpret information (Burr & Dick, 2017). Social Constructionism theory is useful for learning more about how the rural context influences the types of opportunities and obstacles that young people in rural regions encounter in terms of Career Guidance and how professions are constructed by society through time (Galbin, 2014). There is a need to have more studies narrating the young people attending rural schools as this allows their unique career experiences to be investigated and understood more thoroughly.

3.3 CAREER CONSTRUCTION THEORY

According to Zacher, Rudolph, Todorovic, and Ammann (2019), Career Construction suggests that individuals create a career through their behavior, emanating from the interaction between individual factors and the social environment. Career Construction Theory is useful in understanding the centrality of career choice in an individual's life. The theory explains the role of context in which career meaning is made (Cameron, 2022). Cameron (2022) argues that Career Construction Theory provides an understanding of career development using constructivist and narrative approaches. Narrative approaches understand that people talk, behave and view experiences through their backgrounds and cultures (Gulsen, Secim & Savickas, 2025).

The narrative approach stresses the importance of life themes when trying to make sense of a career as a narrative (Dix, 2020). The approach moves away from the quantitative methods of conducting career counseling to a qualitative approach (Dix, 2020). Narrative approaches understand that people, as changing social actors, communicate, act, and create meaning in their own settings and cultures. In other words, it considers career decisions to be a complex process understanding that the vocational narrative is formed by the rising complexities of living in a diversified social context (Wang & Hofkens, 2020). A narrative approach is useful for this study as it enables us to understand the Career Guidance experiences of learners from a rural school as a holistic process. This means that this approach helps us understand that the career journey of these young people is shaped by many different life aspects, such as culture and context, rural setting in particular. This approach is also useful in understanding these learners as active agents in their career stories. According to Li (2021), one of the fundamental principles of constructivist theory is that individuals are creators of meaning. A constructivist assumption is that knowledge about careers is significantly improved if personal meaning becomes the core task of the counseling process (Maree, 2018). Career Construction Theory suggests that individuals construct their careers by attaching meaning to their vocational behavior and occupational experiences (Cameron, 2022). A career represents a subjective construction that imposes personal meaning on memories, present experiences, and future aspirations by using a life theme that patterns the individual's life. Individuals have various life themes that shape their career experiences (Ortiz-Vilarelle, 2023). The purpose of utilizing this approach is that it helps the researcher explore life themes that shape the career experiences of learners from a

rural school. The global economy of the twenty-first century, with its digital revolution and employee migration, makes one wonder about careers, particularly how people can negotiate lifespans of job changes without losing their sense of self and social identity. This theory will be a good guide in understanding how learners construct their careers from their perspectives in the digital era.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As per Kothari's (2004) definition, research methodology pertains to the precise procedures or methodologies employed to explore, choose, analyze, and assess data pertaining to a particular topic. The process of identifying a researcher's approach to research is carried out in a systematic manner to ensure the attainment of accurate and reliable findings that align with the researcher's goals and objectives, as stated by Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017). This chapter describes the research study setting and the various methodological aspects. These are the research approach, design, data collection method, the process of selecting participants, the research tools that was used, data analysis, data trustworthiness, and concludes with ethical considerations.

4.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research employed a qualitative methodology to explore the career guidance experiences of learners attending a rural high school. Miller, Chan, and Farmer (2018) explicate that qualitative research involves the collection and analysis of non-numeric data, such as audio, videos, or words, to comprehensively comprehend concepts, thoughts, or experiences. According to Jacobs and Tschötschel (2019), the utilization of this approach enables the acquisition of comprehensive comprehension and perception regarding a particular matter, as well as the generation of potential areas for future research. The objective of this research is to enhance knowledge of the career guidance experiences encountered by learners in rural educational settings. The study's additional aims encompass obtaining a thorough understanding of the concerns associated with the career guidance experiences of these learners. This is the reason why the study adopted a qualitative methodology. Devi and Shanmugalakshmi (2020) posit that qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that prioritizes the exploration of individuals' perceptions and interpretations of their circumstances with the aim of comprehending their social realities. The contextual nature of the subject matter must be taken into consideration by researchers, as noted by Maree (2018).

The significance of this study lies in its pertinence and applicability, as it is imperative to have knowledge of the cognitive growth experiences of students in a rural educational setting. By enabling them to interpret their experiences and discern how they make sense of their daily challenges, a deeper understanding can be gained. Rural school students encounter distinctive challenges that are also contingent on their context, and they construe these challenges in varying ways (Rude & Miller, 2018). The qualitative approach recognizes that each of these challenges and experiences is situated within a particular context. The utilization of this methodology enabled the researcher to exhibit sensitivity towards the contextual factors of the learners. It is imperative for researchers to comprehend that rural

regions have historically been subjected to marginalization and continue to experience economic deprivation. Moreover, a confluence of factors inclines young people from these regions towards uninformed vocational decisions. The lives of these individuals are impacted by a range of factors, including socioeconomic status, cultural background, historical experiences of apartheid and colonization, personal beliefs, societal norms and expectations, racial identity, social class, familial relationships, socialization processes, and gender. Consequently, it is imperative for researchers to exercise caution while interpreting the experiences of these young people, ensuring that they are not viewed in isolation from the aforementioned factors. The aforementioned factors possess significant implications and insights that can facilitate the understanding of the customary existence of rural young people (Coady, Lopez, Marichal, & Heffington, 2019). Kostere and Kostere (2021) posit that the qualitative approach is characterized by its exploratory nature, as it endeavors to elucidate the underlying mechanisms and rationales that govern a particular social phenomenon or initiative within a specific context. Its primary focus is on explicating the 'how' and 'why' of the phenomenon in question. The aim is to facilitate our comprehension of the social environment and the underlying causes of phenomena. This study is pertinent for comprehending the factors contributing to the academic challenges encountered by learners from a rural high school in relation to their career guidance. Additionally, it offers insights into the underlying reasons for the prevailing circumstances in rural regions. In addition, the utilization of a qualitative methodology facilitated a flexible approach that enabled a deeper exploration of the narratives shared by the participants, thereby revealing a genuine understanding of their lived experiences and modes of existence.

According to Del Fante and Di Nunzio (2021), utilizing a qualitative approach can facilitate a comprehensive comprehension of the reasons behind the marginalization of these regions, the factors that contribute to their present condition, and the potential solutions to tackle these problems. As a researcher in this study, the aim was to enhance understanding of the experiences of learners from a rural school in regards to their career guidance from their own perspectives. This approach was taken as the learners themselves are the primary authorities and specialists on their own lives and experiences.

4.3 SAMPLING

To begin, a sample is defined as "a small set of cases a researcher selects from a large pool and generalizes to the population" (Neuman, 2011, p. 240). One of the key components of a good research design is sampling. Sampling in a research context is the method for selecting a portion of individuals or data from a defined population to include in a study (Parker, Scott & Geddes, 2019). This study used snow-ball sampling method. A non-probability sampling technique known as "snowball sampling" involves finding a starting subject, who then refers the researcher to additional potential participants (Lune & Berg, 2017). The first subject was recruited, and she agreed to refer the researcher to other subjects who met the requirements to take part in the study (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaie 2017). There are two types of sampling: probability and non-probability, according to Bhardwaj (2019). Non-probability sampling was used for this study because it enabled the researcher to establish a preliminary understanding of a small group of learners from a rural

school (Etikan, & Bala, 2017).

Bailey (2019) posits that non-probability sampling is a type of sample selection that utilizes non-random techniques to select a cohort of participants for a study. In contrast to probability sampling, non-probability sampling and its techniques do not seek to achieve a representative sample of all members of a large population within a smaller group of participants. Kirchherr and Charles (2018) noted that the study's participation is not equally accessible to all members of the population. A researcher might aspire to acquire the viewpoints of a particular cohort of individuals predicated on their geographical situation or distinguishing features. To ensure sufficient information about the viewpoints of a particular group, it is logical to select a sample consisting of individuals who meet the established criteria (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The selection of participants was based on non-random criteria through a non-probability sampling method, which resulted in the likelihood of not every individual being included. Sharma (2017) posits that non-probability sampling is utilized to acquire preliminary insights into a limited or insufficiently researched populace.

Nicholls (2017) posits that potential participants sourced through key informants possess expertise and familiarity with the subject matter being studied. This study aims to explore the contextual and career guidance experiences of learners who attend a rural school. The sample size utilized in the study comprised eight individuals. The chosen sample size was sufficient to acquire comprehensive information regarding the topic under consideration. Gill (2020) asserts that in qualitative research, a small sample size is typically suitable and employed due to the need for an in-depth exploration of participants.

The research enlisted individuals who were in grade 12 in their secondary education and were within the age range of 17 to 20. This is attributed to the expectation that these learners were in the process of preparing for higher education with the subject matter being studied. This study aims to explore the contextual and career guidance experiences of learners who attend a rural school. The sample size utilized in the study comprised eight individuals. The chosen sample size was sufficient to acquire comprehensive information regarding the topic under consideration. Gill (2020) asserts that in qualitative research, a small sample size is typically suitable and employed due to the need for an in-depth exploration of participants. The research enlisted individuals who were in grade 12 in their secondary education and were within the age range of 17 to 20 years. This is attributed to the expectation that these learners were in the process of preparing for higher education. The participants hail from the town of Eshowe and are currently registered as learners at High School X, a rural educational institution located within the same vicinity. The school's accessibility was obtained through a formal correspondence directed to the school principal, wherein a request for authorization to carry out research was made. The third appendix comprises a document in the form of a letter, that was issued by the principal of the educational institution, indicating their endorsement. Furthermore, a formal request was submitted to the Department of Education (DOE) via an application letter seeking authorization to gain access to the school. The letter of approval can be found in Appendix one.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION

The research employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews as a data collection method. Semi-structured interviews are characterized as comprehensive interviews that comprise pre-determined open-ended inquiries, as defined by Brown and Danaher (2019). The aforementioned approach is a qualitative data collection method that involves the use of predetermined open-ended queries to elicit responses from participants (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). The primary objective of utilizing semi-structured interviews as a data collection method was to acquire comprehensive insights from the research participants, who possess individual viewpoints, attitudes, beliefs, experiences, opinions, and thoughts concerning contextual and career guidance experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2019). According to Evans and Lewis (2018), researchers are able to collect data on novel exploratory subjects through the use of these tools. The utilization of this particular interview format was deemed suitable due to its inherent flexibility, which enabled the researcher to engage with learners in a more dynamic manner through the use of follow-up questions, comments, and probes (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). The interview questions were formulated based on relevant literature pertaining to the subject matter.

Individual interviews were conducted with each participant within a time frame of 45 minutes or less. According to Ngozwana (2018), the utilization of individual interviews facilitated participants ability to express themselves freely, as opposed to focus groups where certain participants may feel intimidated by the presence of others. The researcher employed a set of pre-established inquiries to be posed during the semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule is included in Appendix seven. The interviews were conducted via the digital communication platforms of Zoom and WhatsApp, and the respondents were advised to secure a noise-free environment to ensure an uninterrupted interview process. Despite being aware of the limitations associated with conducting interviews via Zoom and WhatsApp, such as network connectivity and load shedding issues, the researcher opted to utilize these platforms due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic affecting the country. Virtual communication tools are considered the most effective means of interacting with participants while maintaining a physical distance. The researcher employed audio recording as a means of ensuring precision in the process of data collection and subsequent analysis. Prior to the interview session, consent was obtained from the participants for the recording of the interviews. The entirety of the interview material was captured in audio format and subsequently transcribed, with the explicit consent of both the parents and participants, as well as the assent of the learners. The interviews yielded valuable interpretive, exploratory, and insightful data, which was duly acknowledged. Consequently, various forms of data have been securely stored in a locked setting.

4.4.1 Data processing

The audio recordings were transcribed using a verbatim transcription technique. The researcher transcribed the verbatim speech of the study participants. Verbatim transcription refers to the approach of converting spoken words into written text as a means of processing data (Loubere, 2017). According to McGrath, Palmgren, and Liljedahl (2019),

the ultimate objective is to accurately capture a message as it was originally spoken. This necessitated acute auditory perception and scrupulous attention to detail. According to Rutakumwa, Mugisha, Bernays, Kabunga, Tumwekwase, Mbonye, and Seeley (2020), the creation of verbatim records cannot be achieved through haphazard typing and listening.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Following the process of data collection through interviews, the audio-recorded data underwent transcription. Following the transcription of the data, a thematic analysis approach was utilized to analyze the collected information. According to Carlson, Stenberg, Reisenhofer, Chan, Cruz, and Chan's (2019) definition, thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves identifying patterns or themes within the data. The utilization of thematic analysis was deemed most suitable for this study due to its versatility as a data analysis technique, which enables researchers to generate novel concepts and insights from the data (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). King and Brooks (2018) assert that thematic analysis is a versatile research method that can be customized to suit the requirements of various research endeavors. The aforementioned approach to data analysis is characterized by its ease of accessibility and iterative nature, which enables the researcher to engage in a cyclical process of data evaluation (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2019) and King and Brooks (2018) assert that the utilization of thematic analysis is a valuable approach to investigating the perceptions of diverse study participants, recognizing shared and unique characteristics, and offering unforeseen insights. Thematic analysis is a valuable method for identifying key components within a large dataset due to its emphasis on meticulous data management, which ultimately leads to the production of a structured and coherent formal report (King & Brook, 2018). The chosen methodology was deemed appropriate as it facilitated a review of the varying viewpoints held by learners enrolled in a rural educational institution. An approach of this nature serves as a valuable instrument for exploring the perspectives of study participants. The methodology employed facilitated the researcher's identification of commonalities and disparities, given the extensive data gathered from the study participants. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), conducting a thematic analysis entails a thorough and repetitive review of the collected data to ensure precise and reliable interpretations. The systematic identification and categorization of information patterns across the entire dataset was undertaken to gain insights into the shared experiences of the participants. The present study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework to conduct data analysis. The following paragraphs provide a detailed account of each stage.

Phase one: Familiarizing yourself with the data

The researcher acquainted herself with the research data by reviewing the audio recordings obtained during the interview sessions. At this juncture, the researcher resorted to taking handwritten notes to document any initial reflections and concepts that surfaced during the process of listening to and scrutinizing the data. After carefully listening to the audio recordings, each tape was transcribed with precision. Upon completion of the transcription process, the researcher engaged in multiple readings of the transcripts in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the extensive

information encapsulated within them. The transcripts were adequately elucidated. This approach facilitated the exploration of significance, ideas, and patterns within the gathered data. The coding process involved documenting and utilizing various interpretations, concepts, and patterns, as outlined by Braun and Clark (2019).

Phase two: Generating initial codes

The present stage commenced subsequent to the researcher's review and acquaintance with the data and the formulation of a preliminary inventory of concepts and intriguing aspects extracted from the data. According to the definition provided by Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021), a code is a linguistic unit that functions as a marker for a specific segment of written or spoken language. The function of a summary is to provide a concise representation of the main points of a given topic, thereby serving as a convenient reference for more intricate details. The process of coding involved giving equal attention to each data item, followed by the identification of significant portions of the datasets, as stated by Braun and Clark (2019). It was imperative to conduct a thorough review of the data in order to discern noteworthy information and appropriately assign relevant codes during the coding process. Distinct codes were assigned to intriguing data that conveyed equivalent significance. The primary objective of coding in this research was to identify comparable patterns in the manner in which learners from a rural school encounter career guidance.

Phase three: Searching for themes

In this stage, the researcher undertook an in-depth review of the codes generated, identified patterns and similarities across them, and initiated the process of constructing thematic categories. The scope of themes is wider in comparison to codes. Frequently, multiple codes are consolidated under a unified theme. The extracts that were associated with a particular code were systematically categorized into distinct themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), the purpose of creating themes is to emphasize significant aspects of the data in relation to the topic of the study.

Phase Four: Reviewing potential themes

In this phase, the researcher conducted a verification process to ensure the quality of the themes generated, which involved a reassessment of their relevance to the coded data. This procedure was additionally conducted to validate the pertinence and precision of the themes as faithful portrayals of the entire dataset. The gathered data was subjected to a comparative analysis with the identified themes to ascertain any potential gaps.

Phase Five: Defining and naming themes

The process of defining and refining themes in this research was executed by revisiting the compiled data excerpts for each theme and conducting a comprehensive analysis of them. During this phase, the themes were defined and named by the researcher. The process of defining themes involves precisely articulating the meaning of each theme and assessing its contribution to facilitating the comprehension of data. This ensured that the themes maintained consistency without being redundant. The process of theme naming involved generating a brief and comprehensible heading for every theme.

Phase Six: Producing the report

The ultimate stage entails producing a comprehensive account of the acquired data in the form of a narrative. The researcher made an effort to create a coherent and interesting narrative that had support from additional academic sources.

4.6 THE STUDY'S TRUSTWORTHINESS

There are four key aspects of trustworthiness that need to be established in qualitative research (Wiltshire & Ronkainen, 2021). The qualitative researcher ensured that the credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability of the study are established for the study to be valid and reliable (Naidoo & Mutinta, 2014).

4.6.1 CREDIBILITY

Credibility is the first aspect or criterion that the researcher established; it is the most critical aspect of establishing trustworthiness (Pace, Pluye, Bartlett, Macaulay, Salsberg, Jagosh & Seller, 2012). The researcher linked the research study's findings with reality to demonstrate the truth of the research study's findings (Denzin, Lincoln & Giardina, 2006). The credibility of qualitative research was established while the research was taking place. The researcher used triangulation method to ensure that findings are credible (Nowell et al., 2017). Triangulation involves using many methods, information sources, observers, or theories to obtain a complete understanding of the issue being studied (Weijer & Emanuel, 2000). To enhance credibility, this study used well-established research methodologies that the literature stated were appropriate for the study of learners from a rural school. Snowball sampling was used to identify participants for the study, which involves matriculant students at a rural school. To promote open and truthful responses, the researcher created rapport with participants and invited them to reject to participate and leave from the study at any time without repercussions. During the data analysis phase of the research, the researcher frequently reflected on the literature to discover any themes or patterns and to aid in the appropriate interpretation of the results.

4.6.2 TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability is the second aspect of trustworthiness the researcher established. Transferability is how qualitative research demonstrates that the research study's findings apply to other contexts; in this case, other settings can suggest similar conditions, similar populations, and similar issues (Nowell et al, 2017). During the analysis phase of the study, research findings were frequently compared to one another in order to discover study themes. Furthermore, the study's background and theoretical foundation on which it was centred on were offered to enhance transferability to various contexts (Vanclay, Bainesm & Taylor, 2013).

4.6.3 CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability is the third aspect the researcher established. Confirmability is the level at which the study's findings are

free from bias (Braun et al., 2006). The study's findings reflected exactly what the participants said. Researcher to minimize bias ensured that her influences and motivation do not distort the data or result in misinterpretation of data. The researcher addressed this issue by providing data analysis steps to strengthen the evidence that findings accurately represent key informants' responses (Nowell et al., 2017).

4.6.4 DEPENDABILITY

Dependability is the last aspect the researcher established. Dependability is the level at which the study can be replicated by other researchers and still yield the same findings (Braun et al., 2006). To establish this trustworthiness, the researcher provided a detailed and rich description of how the study was conducted (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher provided methods and enough information on her report for this aspect to be achieved. Methods of data collection and data analysis is provided.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior beginning the study, official permission from the Department of Education was obtained. The response was favourable, and authorization to perform the study at High School X was given, with reference number: 2/4/8/4041. (Refer to appendix one). The consent was granted under the condition that the learning process at school is not disrupted during data collection. After that, the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal granted ethical clearance, with protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004510/2022 (refer to appendix two). After gaining authorization from the DOE and ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the researcher submitted approvals to the school principal of High School X. The researcher met with the principal of the school and explained the study aim. The principal granted the researcher access to the school.

With approval to carry out the study granted, various ethical concerns such as participant anonymity, privacy, and autonomy needed to be addressed. The participants' names were protected by assigning each of them a pseudonym. The study also did not provide the name of the school where these participants enrolled. Participants were told that any information revealed during the interviews would be kept strictly confidential and utilized only for the purposes of the study. Participants were also informed that they were under no obligation to participate in the research and could leave at any time.

4.7.1 INFORMED WRITTEN CONSENT AND TRANSPARENCY

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form immediately before the interviews. According to Salmons (2017), informed consent is the agreement or approval a researcher obtains from participants who have been given full details about the reason for conducting the study, the whole process of the study, and the possible outcomes of the study. A study involves participants between ages 17-20. Parental or guardian consent was requested for participants below 18 years before approaching these minor participants. An informed consent form addressed the issues of confidentiality,

non-maleficence, beneficence, justice, right to withdraw, and anonymity. The study's aims and purposes were explained in detail to participants in a written and verbal manner. Informed consent guarantees that potential participants comprehend entirely what they are being requested to do and that they are educated if there are any possible negative results of such participation (Laghari, Halepoto, Memon & Parveen, 2017).

The non-maleficence principle was addressed by informing participants that they will be protected from any harm that might result from participating in the study (Lie & Witteveen, 2020). However, there is no research without risks, therefore participants were informed that it is a researcher's responsibility to minimize harms and to maximize benefits that might result from participating in the study (Williams, Burnap, Sloan, Jessop & Lepps, 2017). The aim is to protect the well-being of the participants. At any stage of the research process, participants had the freedom to withdraw from the study (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017).

The researcher ensured that in all stages of the study, participants will be treated with fairness and equality (Dhai, Behrens, Cleaton-Jones, Labuschaigne, Moodley, Mahomedm & Nienaber, 2019). The researcher selected potential participants fairly and ensured that the study's burdens rest on those who will benefit from the research (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Duarte, Paixão, and Silva (2019), one of the terms on which informed consent stands is that participants' confidentiality will be protected. Participants remained anonymous to protect their identities and to respect their right to privacy. Participants were given the contact information of the researcher and the supervisors in case they had any questions, concerns, complaints, or objections.

4.8 ONGOING RESPECT FOR PERSONS

Respect for persons required both respect for the autonomy of individuals and protection of persons with diminished autonomy (Benn, 2017). Participants was given respect from the beginning, during, and after the study, and was informed of the study's purpose. Their identities were protected, and they were given autonomy, to decide if they want to participate or not (Bender, Cyr, Arbuckle & Ferris, 2017).

4.9 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed how the many elements of this research were organized and carried out. This chapter also dives into the reasons behind the selected research design, sample, methods of data collection, and data processing methods, as well as how these relate to the study's aim. In order to ensure the accuracy of the research, the researcher additionally considered some of the hidden factors. While keeping all of this in mind, the following chapter will give data analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5. INTRODUCTION

The present study was formulated with the aim of obtaining a deeper understanding of the distinctive career guidance encounters encountered by students in their final year of secondary education at a particular institution, denoted as High School X. The study's objective was to explore the methods by which students encounter, acquire, and comprehend career guidance. The present chapter undertakes an analysis of the themes and subthemes that have been derived from the data, utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach for conducting thematic data analysis. The data unveiled three distinct themes. 1) The provision of career guidance opportunities. 2) The obstacles encountered in the provision of career guidance. 3) The determinants that impact the career decision-making process of young individuals. The forthcoming chapter will explicate the outcomes of the data analysis, accompanied by an in-depth review of the literature to culminate in a comprehensive discussion synthesis, incorporating the themes and sub-themes.

5.1 CAREER GUIDANCE OPPORTUNITIES

According to this research findings, a majority of the learners, specifically 62.5%, indicated that they were provided with sufficient information to aid them in selecting their preferred subjects. On the other hand, a quarter of the participants reported that they did not receive any guidance during the subject selection process. Additionally, 12.5% of the learners reported that they received moderate guidance in choosing their subjects, but still felt that they required more information to make informed decisions.

5.1.1 *Career talks and Career expos*

The term "career talk" pertains to an individual imparting knowledge regarding their own career trajectory that has facilitated their success, in addition to providing broader industry perspectives and emerging recruitment patterns (Williams & Mangan, 2016; Makola et al., 2021). According to Coello, Goodman, Miettinen, Saxena, Schütze, and Thiele (2023), career talks may be incorporated into all-day workshops or exhibitions, while Gebbels, Gao, and Cai (2020) suggest that they may also be organised as a concise seminar featuring one or two speakers. The educational institution organizes career expos, inviting representatives from various industries, businesses, and the community to showcase the diverse range of opportunities available to its students post-secondary education (Aggarwal & Shrivastava, 2021). The utilization of school career expos can facilitate a comprehensive approach to career planning for students by providing them with information regarding potential future career paths. This, in turn, can assist them in making more informed decisions regarding their subject choices and "Set Plan" decisions (Vail, Farnsworth, Allen, Arora, Anderson & Janes, 2023).

According to Noko, Ngoepe, Van der Walt, and Mojapelo's (2017) primary discovery, the career expo plays a critical role in aiding students in their decision-making process regarding their future. The research findings suggest that career expos have the potential to mitigate the information gap prevalent among the majority of South African students enrolled in rural schools.

The findings of this research show that only during a job fair held by the municipality, with transportation supplied by the school, did participants learn information about careers. The career expo's attendees said that hearing about other people's professional trajectories made the event very beneficial. P3# said that as a woman in science, she found hearing other women from different backgrounds share how they overcome challenges in their personal life and challenges in choosing careers to be really exciting. The attendees also had the chance to learn about opportunities in several job categories. However, not all Matric students were able to make it to this job fair. According to attendees interviewed, only students majoring in science, math, and accounting were selected to attend the career fair. The Mayor, officials from Kwa-Zulu Natal colleges, students from different high schools, and individuals who recounted their professional experiences were all present at the event, according to participants who were invited to the expo.

Due to the higher number of attendees, the schools were compelled to choose a limited number of students to participate in the expo. The selection process of high school X did not include students from the general stream, but rather prioritized those from the science and accounting streams. The implication is that the institution prioritizes students pursuing science, mathematics, and accounting majors when offering career development prospects. The individuals in the general stream conveyed that they are not accorded precedence with regards to career-oriented prospects within their educational institution. One of the participants expressed concern about the possibility of being disregarded in this aspect. This observation was made when the aforementioned participant was queried regarding potential professional prospects:

At school, we never experienced kind of thing. We are in matric now, and the only things we know are doing practicals inside the school, especially Grade 12 C, 12 C is neglected at school because not so long-ago Grade 12 A and B were selected to go and study somewhere, and others went to Eshowe and Empangeni but 12C didn't go there (sadly) I can say there is nothing we get about our careers. We don't go out to learn about careers. We get nothing without what is offered inside the school, and I can tell that we will not till we finish Matric. (P7#)

Towards the end of term 3 DUT visited us at school and shared with us information about the subjects we need to pass so that we can achieve the goals that we have, Jah I can say that it's the people that came.

In addition to expressing concerns about being disregarded, the participant also reported experiencing feelings of sadness. As previously stated, the sole courses accorded precedence in the twelfth grade curriculum of this educational institution are those pertaining to science and accounting. An opportunity pertaining to career prospects was presented to the students when representatives from Durban University of Technology (DUT) visited the school to provide information regarding the courses offered by the institution and the corresponding prerequisites. The students had the opportunity to attend a career exposition where they were able to listen to a presentation by DUT, which was particularly relevant to their academic backgrounds in the fields of science and accounting. In comparison, the non-specialized stream had limited access to employment prospects solely through visits from DUT. Students who were absent during the DUT visit were unable to participate in the career talk or expo. In the present research, it was observed that a couple of individuals did not partake in a career exposition event, resulting in their absence from the DUT career talk. Both of these participants belong to the general stream. The findings suggest that, notwithstanding the endeavors of local governments to convene career-oriented dialogues among rural schools, there persists a challenge in catering to the needs of all students.

The assertion that science is perceived as the domain of the future is valid. However, it is imperative to involve students pursuing general and art courses in these undertakings to enhance their comprehension of their respective areas of specialization. An additional issue pertains to the perception among students in general that there existed a bias towards certain individuals in attending a career exposition. These learners did not take into account alternative explanations, such as inadequate funding to meet the needs of all individuals or the quantity requested by the local government. The study's participants expressed concern not only regarding the frequency of their attendance at career expos, but also with the passage of time. The individual indicated that they acquire knowledge about such occurrences belatedly. Chapter two's literature review highlights that young individuals acquire knowledge about careers and the necessary information to make informed career choices at a relatively late stage in life. The opportunity to attend a career expo was only presented to them during their twelfth year of formal education.

Grade 12 students have made definitive decisions regarding their academic streams, with some having also determined their intended courses post-matriculation. The matter arises when students receive supplementary information pertaining to their preferred academic disciplines. In conclusion, the dearth of pertinent career information may lead young individuals to commit avoidable errors and make suboptimal career choices. This chapter addresses the issue of insufficient information as a distinct topic. The research conducted on this topic reveals that the school in question lacks a career counselor who can provide adequate career guidance services. Due to the absence of a career counselor at the educational institution, students depend on diverse sources of information regarding careers, which may lack reliability. The students' encounters with career guidance have encompassed disregard, letdowns, and perplexity.

5.2 CAREER GUIDANCE CHALLENGES

5.2.1 Geographic location as a challenge

Each response from the participants featured the term "rural," which was conspicuously prominent. The majority of the responses provided during the interviews were expressed with respect to the geographical setting of their educational institution.

Ok...what I can say is that as an individual who lives in a rural area, it's true that sources of career guidance are very limited because firstly there are no career counselors who guide us. So, we have to get information by ourselves, and sometimes you don't even know where to begin if you want to search for information about careers, but Jah the issue is with limited sources. (P5#)

Yes, I think here in a rural area, eh... in rural schools we don't have something that motivates us. We don't have something that makes us keep going; maybe we can get something like laboratories, like science labs, or maybe we can do practicals. (P6#)

It does have an influence a lot because when we look at rural areas, we don't get information. The information we get is information from textbooks, we have to sit down and read, and we don't get a chance to experience things live. (P7#)

Oh, that's easy, since I live in a rural area, I grew up shepherding cows and taking care of livestock. What I like the most about living in a rural area is that I love stick fights that boys and men participate in, I enjoy sticks fighting a lot. I also love the sport, I love soccer because in other places stick fights are not regarded as a sport, it is only common in rural areas not in areas like Durban. (P8#)

Oh Jah, there is an impact because we live under circumstances that determine what we do. Situations that we are faced with are the ones that make us decide if we want to work hard or not. Our situations guide us. Some of us grow up in bad situations with many disadvantages as you know that in rural areas some of us walk long distances. That makes one want to be something one day that will change such situations so that the next generation will not have to go through the same issues. (P8).

Mmmh, what I would say, is it changes my aspirations in the way that, schools in rural areas.... are related to the thinking that if a person is attending school in a rural area, their careers have to be low than a person who is from urban schools. So, I think attending a school in a rural area and choosing careers that I choose will make a difference to these opinions and ideas from others. (P1#).

I think the place is also a factor, the way place is because in urban areas they have access to information about opportunities whereas here in rural areas, first of all, we have the issue of electricity, ...ok we have

the issue of the network like so we can't access most of the things like those in urban areas. (P1#).

In rural areas, we have the issue of not having enough resources to assist us at school. (P4#).

Participants contrasted their experiences with those of peers from urban areas in the replies listed above. In their remarks, P1# and P8# compared their experiences to those of young people from schools with advanced facilities. They believe that since urban children have access to resources, they do not face the same challenges as them. They firmly feel that the situations faced by pupils in urban schools are different from their own. The research discussed in chapter two typically backs up these findings. The study's findings under this sub-theme demonstrate that despite the democratic transition that took place almost three decades ago, there is still a serious issue with educational disparity between urban and rural schools. According to Herr (2008), it might be difficult to understand career guidance or individual conduct apart from the social contexts in which they take place. Continual encounters with societal norms, the media, and behavioral expectations always influence how people behave and choose careers.

One of the circumstances participants reported as having an effect on their career objectives was the difficulty of having to walk far to go to school. This outcome is consistent with the fact that rural regions often have scattered communities. Dispersed settlement is one of the main types of settlement patterns used to classify rural settlements (Bright, 2018). Due to high school X's remote location, pupils who do not reside nearby take a community bus to go there every day; the bus price is R20 for journeys into town and R18 for excursions relating to school. Other students pay a monthly fee to hire vehicles that take them to and from school every day. These findings imply that High School X students who cannot afford to use the bus or rent an apartment nearby must walk to school each day. Students who miss the bus must walk to school since there is only one bus each day in this area, and it departs at seven in the morning.

The challenges faced by the study participants are compounded by their status as matric students, who are required to attend school early in the morning and remain until late in the afternoon. It is imperative that the students embark on the bus within the designated time frame of 2:00 to 2:30 pm, as failure to do so will result in the alternative option of walking home. The aforementioned proposition posits that in situations where students are required to simultaneously attend to the teacher's instruction and be concerned about catching the bus, their learning outcomes may be compromised due to the divided nature of their attention. The students' attention during the final instructional hours in the classroom is divided due to their apprehension about missing their transportation home. Students who lack the financial means to access transportation are compelled to traverse long distances on foot, resulting in physical exhaustion. The concentration of these students is also affected. Academic achievement is considered a significant indicator of the quality of education, and in South Africa, it has been observed to be on a decline.

Numerous studies have indicated a correlation between the academic underachievement of students and the geographical placement of educational institutions within a given locality (Landa, Zhou & Marongwe, 2021). There exists a positive correlation between the distance of students' residence from the school and their suboptimal academic performance. According to Hopson, Lidbe, Jackson, Adanu, Penmetsa, and Abura-Meerdink (2022), there exists a noteworthy correlation between the academic performance of students and the proximity of their school, provided that they attend school consistently. The research conducted by Mhiliwa (2015) discovered that extended travel time from students' residences to educational institutions resulted in tardiness and hunger, thereby elevating the likelihood of academic attrition. Moreover, students who are required to commute a considerable distance on a daily basis to attend classes tend to allocate less time towards academic pursuits and relaxation, resulting in a delayed morning routine. Moreover, traversing long distances on foot can be both physically and mentally exhausting, as noted by Zuckerman (2022).

According to Wheaton, Chapman, and Croft (2016), certain students may arrive at school feeling fatigued both physically and mentally, and may experience pressure. According to Matingwina (2018), students may experience challenges in maintaining focus on their academic pursuits once they return home, potentially leading to suboptimal academic performance. The results of this study are in line with those of Ngidi and Essack's (2022) research, which was done in rural primary schools and found that low socioeconomic situations are the cause of children travelling vast distances to school. According to their research, young children who walk a great distance to school not only become tired at school but also run the danger of being hurt. It was discovered that young individuals, particularly females, who walk to school run the danger of being sexually assaulted. Due to the high prevalence of crime and rape in South Africa, young children traveling to school in rural regions must do so in terror and are thus at risk (Baloyi, 2023). It is difficult for young people in rural regions to prioritize their professions when their fundamental daily requirements are not satisfied, according to the literature reviewed in chapter two of this paper.

According to Mhlanga and Moloji (2020), it is unreasonable to expect these young people to make thoughtful professional choices when they are struggling to get dependable transportation, money to attend school, or even safe transportation. This is a constant problem for students who reside in rural areas without access to a road. Additionally, pupils who lack the time to study at home may struggle to grasp the courses they find difficult (Ngidi & Essack, 2022). Because students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds sometimes struggle to pay for transportation and must eventually walk, the issue is impacted by the participants' financial situation. As a result, it is essential to understand how social factors interact to influence young people's professional growth in rural regions (Ngware & Mutisya, 2021). The frequency with which pupils attend class is influenced by both the socioeconomic status of the students and the state of the local infrastructure (Phiri, Ndlovu, Dube, Nyathi, Ncube & Tshuma, 2020). A student's career, academic performance, and achievement are negatively impacted by irregular attendance (Peteros, Ypil, Vera, Alcantara, Fulgencio, Plando & Jr, 2022).

In addition to having lower academic and professional self-efficacy, people from economically poor homes usually get less

advice and support from their parents about their job choices (Metheny & McWhirter, 2013). Alexander (2017) argues that persistent child poverty is particularly worrisome since it may have particularly negative consequences and restricted opportunities that linger into adulthood. Children who grow up in persistent poverty and the stress that comes with it are more likely to struggle academically, physically, and mentally, including after experiencing trauma. They are also more likely to act violently, get pregnant as teenagers, and have lower lifetime academic achievement (Wadsworth, 2012). More study should be done on the needs of economically disadvantaged rural students in order to create interventions and better skilled career advice counselors due to the high prevalence of poverty in rural regions.

Three of the eight study participants of this study said that the geographic location of a rural area had no bearing on their career aspirations. A rural area school does not affect a person's career choices, according to P5#, who thinks that a person's values, interests, abilities, and strengths should determine their career. Nevertheless, the aforementioned participant failed to consider that an individual's values and interests are not formed in a vacuum, but rather are shaped by various external factors, including but not limited to the community, family, educational institutions, and socioeconomic status. Personality is an important consideration when evaluating a person's future occupations (Holtrop, Oostrom, van Breda, Koutsoumpis & de Vries, 2022). Careers that emphasize and reward specific personality qualities are more likely to attract people with such personalities (van den Hee, van Hooft, & van Vianen, 2020). For example, politicians and salesmen typically exhibit these traits (Simonet & Castille, 2020) as well as persuasion, confidence, and assertiveness. One's perception of their ability will determine what jobs they think they are capable of doing (Sui, Qin, Ned & Sun, 2021). In selecting a job route, fundamental convictions are important variables that might be taken into account. If the individual is aware of what is most important to them in life and in their profession, their alternatives may be restricted. Family, religious convictions, cultural traditions, self-expression, happiness, and the capacity to make a difference in the lives of others are a few examples of personal values (Rukh, Dang, Olivo, Ciuculete, Rask-Andersen, & Schiöth, 2020).

Angelini (2023) posits that the presence of a nurturing and supportive atmosphere is a determinant in the selection of a career trajectory. During early childhood, children commence the development of self-concept and self-efficacy beliefs, which shape their perceptions of personal identity and abilities. According to Ghetta, Hirschi, Wang, Rossier, and Herrmann (2020), children have the potential to discover their innate abilities and acquire novel proficiencies in environments that foster learning and provide support. According to Bajaba, Alajhar, and Bajaba (2021), fostering a child's self-esteem and shaping their professional aspirations can be achieved primarily through the provision of affirmative encouragement, reassurance, and commendation for authentic exertion. P5# confidently responded to an inquiry regarding her post-secondary educational plans. Her interests appear to be aligned with the objective of aiding individuals, as she displays a keen fascination in the well-being of others and their social interactions and lifestyles. The participant expressed her fascination with contemporary illnesses that afflict individuals. Furthermore, she noted that upon comparing the fields of science and accounting, she came to the realization that her aptitudes were better suited to the former. Consequently, she aspires to pursue a health science degree, which pertains to the field of medicine.

The participant's academic pursuits, disposition, hobbies, and ethical principles are congruent with her aspired professional trajectory. The findings indicate that personality traits continue to exert influence on career selection, notwithstanding the influence of educational institution location on the vocational aspirations of young individuals. One's personality can facilitate the process of selecting a career path and remaining committed to a vocation that is congruent with their values and preferences. Churchill and Khan (2021) posit that certain young individuals persist in pursuing their aspirations despite facing challenges. These individuals refuse to allow their upbringing to impede their ability to attain their goals or harbor lofty aspirations.

5.2.2 Lack of proper career-related information as a challenge

According to Blake's (2020) argument, the high school period is considered to be the most precarious stage in an individual's professional trajectory. The majority of students tend to make suboptimal career decisions as a result of ambiguity and inadequate comprehension. The provision of career guidance is a crucial aspect of enhancing students' knowledge and understanding of the diverse range of career paths that are accessible to them. Career guidance counselors provide guidance to students regarding current economic trends and employment opportunities based on their level of knowledge, academic background, and expertise. They are ideal individuals to inquire and explore potential career paths, whether they are established or innovative yet fitting. Many students may not be cognizant of potentially profitable career paths, such as astrophysics, computer forensics, bartending, and various others. Career guidance counselors assist individuals in making well-informed decisions by conducting thorough research and offering effective guidance. According to Rabie, Visser, Naidoo, van den Berg, and Morgan (2021), the role of career guidance counselors is to furnish students with crucial information and aid them in making optimal career decisions.

Career counselors strive to remain knowledgeable about prevailing market demands and cutting-edge operating systems (Otwine, Matagi, Kiweewa, & Ainamaani, 2022). Effective career planning establishes a strong basis for an individual's future and furnishes them with a distinct trajectory to focus on their goals. Nonetheless, devising a career plan can prove to be a challenging endeavor for both employed individuals and students in the 10th or 12th grade. The potential of numerous students is constrained by insufficient awareness regarding diverse occupations, ambiguous information concerning contemporary trends, and various other factors (Ajayi, Moosa & Aloka, 2022). Adolescents in secondary education are making consequential determinations regarding their prospective paths without adequate knowledge of the diverse array of educational and occupational opportunities available to them. The insufficiency of career counselors in rural regions results in inadequate access to career-related guidance for young individuals. Career counselors provide their expertise to assist individuals in selecting the most suitable career path. According to Makola, Saliwe, Dube Tabane, and Mudau (2021), career counselors offer assistance to students in situations where educational institutions are unable to provide sufficient guidance.

The primary responsibility of a counselor is to offer individuals who require assistance with valuable guidance. According

to Bhat and Stevens (2021), the absence of career experts or specialists in rural areas poses a challenge for young individuals who seek guidance in making informed decisions regarding their career paths. According to Uleanya, Uleanya, Naidoo, and Rugbeer (2021), a significant proportion of adolescents receive insufficient or no professional guidance outside of their households, leading them to pursue inadequate educational pathways that do not align with the demands of the job market and business requirements. The study's participants made career decisions without the guidance of a career specialist, resulting in some of them making several errors. During the interview, P5# contended that the absence of Career Guidance counselors in their school has resulted in the students having to independently gather information about career options, which at times can be a daunting task as they may not know where to begin. Career guidance was not provided to any of the study's participants by a professional career counsellor. The career choices of individuals were influenced by various factors such as their families, schools, friends, or other individuals.

According to Owusu, Owusu, Fiorgbor, and Atakora (2021), the act of obtaining career-related information from acquaintances, family members, and educational institutions is a practice that presents both advantages and disadvantages. The phenomenon of young individuals opting for courses based on their parents' preferences could potentially pose a drawback. According to Jemini-Gashi and Kadriu (2022), there exists a phenomenon where certain parents aspire to fulfill their unfulfilled childhood aspirations through their children. A young person harboring aspirations that require fulfillment may experience adverse consequences. According to Qamhieh, Sammaneh, and Demaidi (2020), the deference that young individuals exhibit towards their seniors may be attributed to a sense of reverence. The African proverb '*Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*' is widely recognized and suggests seeking guidance from those who have previously navigated a similar path. Its translation is "ask the way from those who have gone through it" or "Direction is asked from those who have walked the path." The aforementioned proverb pertains to the virtue of humility. Acknowledging the existence of individuals who possess superior knowledge and skills, and recognizing the necessity of acquiring knowledge from them, requires a display of humility. According to Diale (2022), it is important to demonstrate respect towards elderly individuals, regardless of whether they are biologically related or not, as they have a significant impact on one's upbringing. Additionally, humility is another trait that should be cultivated. Some of the individuals involved in this research were provided guidance by their parents and educators. Certain individuals adhered to their parents' guidance owing to their affection and reverence towards them, rather than due to their personal interest in the disciplines. Some of the participants opted for specific subjects based on parental recommendations. According to the participants' accounts, selecting courses that their siblings had previously taken was influenced by their siblings' positive feedback regarding the subjects' quality and potential enjoyment. The study results indicate a lack of instances where the participants expressed disagreement with the recommendations made by their families. Therefore, it is imperative to thoroughly examine all facets of life while exploring the vocational encounters of young individuals, particularly given the profound influence that a seemingly uncomplicated adage can have. Adhering to this adage is of utmost importance, particularly in rural regions where customs and heritage remain deeply ingrained (Buthelezi, 2022).

Consequently, it is logical that a significant proportion of the participants exhibited conformity with the career guidance provided by their parents or teachers, as evidenced by the absence of dissenting opinions. The aforementioned proverb highlights the importance of history in shaping an individual's future. The study's results indicate that P6# expressed his intention to pursue agricultural science after completing his Matric. The participant cited his upbringing in farming and his father's influence as the reasons for his career choice. Additionally, the participant mentioned that agriculture is his father's aspiration. The study conducted by Rolandi, Brunori, Bacco, and Scotti (2021) reveals that agricultural practice is a predominant activity in rural regions, as opposed to urban areas. Consequently, it is not surprising that young individuals hailing from these regions aspire to pursue careers in farming and agriculture, as highlighted by Rijswijk, Klerkx, Bacco, Bartolini, Bulten, Debruyne, and Brunori (2021). The participant identified as P8# demonstrated a keen interest in the field of Soil Science. The participant expressed a desire to pursue a career as a self-sufficient Soil Scientist, citing a passion for agriculture and a belief that their upbringing tending to livestock and farmland has equipped them with the necessary skills and knowledge for this profession.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, it is evident that the youth necessitate the aid of a Career Guidance specialist to acquire vocational information. According to Öztemel and Yıldız-Akyol (2021), the inclination of young individuals to pursue a career path based on the preferences or recommendations of others may result in their enrollment in courses that are not compatible with their aptitudes and interests. According to recent research conducted by Wang and Jiao (2022), individuals who enroll in courses that do not align with their interests are less likely to achieve success. Lukandu, Koskei, and Dimba (2020) also found that some students may need to repeat modules or subjects as a result of this lack of engagement. Various incidents or factors exert an influence on the elevated rate of attrition within institutions of higher education. The phenomenon of student attrition occurs when individuals come to the realization that they are unable to effectively manage the demands of coursework and the associated stressors. According to Ibrahim, Hock, Handrianto, Rahman, and Dagdag (2021), certain students experience dual stressors from both their academic coursework and familial obligations. The source of familial pressure on students is rooted in their aspiration to avoid disappointing their parents. According to Howard and Ferrari (2022), if a parent is available to provide a nurturing atmosphere that facilitates informed career decision-making, then it is not problematic for them to be invested in their child's career choices. The problem of not understanding the course requirements is another career-related issue that emerged from improper CG among participants. Concerned that they had not been given correct information regarding the qualifications needed for their intended career sectors, two research participants voiced their worry. P2# said that she was ignorant that in order to become a Chartered Accountant (CA), she also needed to have a strong background in pure math. She did discover, however, that if she achieves a level seven in math literacy, she would be accepted to an extended curriculum where she will first study pure mathematics before moving on to the accounting stream. This participant said that the fact that it was already term four and she had only achieved a level four for math literacy in term three increased her stress. She would have chosen pure math over math literacy in grade ten if she had been given the right advice. In addition, there are not many colleges in South Africa that provide a longer accounting program to students who did not

take pure math in high school.

The assertion suggests that the realization of her aspiration is contingent upon obtaining a level seven in math literacy during her matriculation final examination. Failure to attain the aforementioned grade would necessitate exploring alternative courses or recommencing her studies in either grade ten or eleven. Participant 6, also encountered an issue related to requirements. Participant 6 acknowledged that he was unaware of the prerequisite of a level three in pure mathematics for pursuing a career in agricultural farming. However, he inadvertently pursued a course in mathematical literacy. The matter at hand pertains to the individual's pursuit of a career in a math-related field, which necessitates the acquisition of a level five or six in mathematical literacy. As per the account provided by the participant, they were taken aback upon receiving the information and experienced a sense of being confronted with a significant issue. With the exception of Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET), there is a limited number of universities specializing in agriculture that provide courses for individuals who have fulfilled the requirements of math literacy.

One of the concerns expressed by the participants pertains to the notion that an individual's geographic origin dictates the suitable career paths that they should pursue after high school. This issue was brought up by P1#, who continued by stating that people's perceptions might alter if they chose a vocation that was not one they often associate with those who attended school in rural regions. Participant 8's issue with their profession was that their opinions periodically changed. This participant clarified that his issue was that he had multiple objectives in grades ten, eleven, and twelve. As a result, it is feasible for someone to pick scientific courses in grade 10 with the goal of becoming a doctor, only to change their mind in grade 11 and want to pursue a career in acting or accountancy. People are capable of changing their thoughts. All of the participants had different job goals when they were younger than they have now. The misunderstanding, said participant 8, is the result of incomplete information. He argued in his conclusion that the problem emerges when they get to experience what the profession entails in the real world and that sometimes they just get interested in specific career sectors due to the alluring titles of such occupations.

The findings indicate that despite being provided with information, young people may not necessarily receive accurate guidance to facilitate informed career choices. Despite the concerns expressed by the participants, they demonstrated courage by sharing their strategies and aspirations for correcting misconceptions about rural regions. Some individuals expressed their commitment to exert effort in order to prevent the forthcoming generation of rural areas from encountering the difficulties currently confronting young people. If the government directs its attention towards these domains, it can foster greater innovation that can contribute to the economic advancement of the nation. These individuals have a promising future.

5.2.3 Lack of resources as a challenge

According to Mdiya and Mdoda (2021), the challenges faced by rural schools are unique to their context and require

significant effort to overcome. Insufficient resources pose a significant impediment to achieving academic success. Furthermore, inadequate state funding, subpar teacher qualifications, and the instruction of multi-grade classes are additional factors that contribute to this challenge (Dube, 2020). One of the participants in the study discussed the issue of insufficient resources at their educational institution, as revealed by the research findings. The participant clarified that the procurement of A4-sized paper for assignments, class evaluations, and academic notes would be the responsibility of the students themselves. The interviewee expressed that the high cost of these papers poses a challenge for them, particularly when they are not provided with them in an academic setting. This demonstrates that in the assessment of the educational and vocational backgrounds of rural students, their financial situation must not be overlooked. The absence of notes due to financial constraints on stationery may have an adverse impact on a student's academic performance. As per the findings of Nhlamulo and John (2020), it is observed that parents residing in rural areas of South Africa are predominantly engaged in low-skilled occupations, possess limited educational qualifications, and tend to exhibit relatively lower levels of appreciation towards education. Consequently, the instructional and educational procedures in these educational institutions are significantly affected due to the financial constraints of parents, which hinder their ability to procure supplementary resources that are essential for teachers (Nicolaides & Dlodla, 2023). According to Masoga and Shokane (2020), a common occurrence in rural schools is the absence of tangible resources such as educational facilities, libraries, and computer science laboratories. P6# was queried about the potential impact of attending a rural school on his career aspirations. In response, he asserted

“Yes, I think here in a rural area, eh... in rural schools we don't have something that motivates us. We don't have something that makes us keep going; maybe we can get something like laboratories, like science labs, or maybe we can do practicals. Maybe we can do theory and practicals that would help us, but because we are here in a rural area, we do not have labs, and most of the time we don't do practicals it's hard to learn important things. We just focus only on theory, in theory, we are taught things, and we can't do things for ourselves so that we can prove what we learn is true and we can observe it; so sometimes rural areas face such challenges, the issue of not doing practicals while the schools in urban areas do practical's and they get to understand better than us. Urban area schools do both theory and practicals while schools in rural areas only do theory, sometimes practicals are very important to do.”

Chisholm (2005) posits that there exist inevitable discrepancies between urban and rural schools with regards to the availability of resources and amenities. Afzal, Tajik, Shamatov, and Fillipova (2022) argue that infrastructure backlogs and disparities are more prevalent in rural areas and exhibit significant unevenness in distribution across provinces. High School X lacks laboratory facilities and computer access for science students. According to Richards and Stambaugh (2021), it is recommended that every child be afforded the chance to acquire knowledge and develop computer literacy skills. Regrettably, this is not the case for pupils enrolled in High School X. This illustrates that, notwithstanding the government's endeavors to extend its outreach to rural communities, such as the deployment of computer

systems and establishment of laboratories, certain rural schools are not being provided with these amenities. When queried about the potential influence of residing in a rural area on her vocational aspirations, P4# provided the following reply:” *Yes, there is an influence!*

Because some subjects we are doing require certain equipment to work with, we have to know how to use it because it's the only thing that can help to do a specific practical. In rural areas, most of the time we don't have enough of such equipment. If I can make an example, learners who are doing electrical, need to use a computer from grade 10 until grade 12, so since we live in a rural area, we haven't used computers, and there are no computers. So, when learners face this challenge, it's the issue when it's time to proceed with their electrical studies in universities, they will have to face another challenge of being unable to use a computer. It is hard to use something you are not familiar with. In rural areas, we have the issue of not having enough resources to assist us at school.”

The deficiency or insufficiency of these essential services results in a decline in the quality of education provided to each student. The assertion has been made that the enhancement of digital development and digitalization may confer benefits upon rural schools. Nonetheless, due to the insufficient consideration given to the distinctive circumstances encountered by these schools in the face of continuous digital advancements, digital inequalities persist and exert an influence on educational institutions situated in rural areas (Duma, Mlambo, Mbambo-Mkwanazi & Morgan, 2021). Digital development (ICT) addresses the concerns pertaining to the utilization and accessibility of information and communication technologies. According to Hennessy, Harrison and Wamakote (2010), Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as computer networks, mobile phones, smartphones, and laptops are utilized in educational institutions to improve the quality of teaching and learning resources.

Chisango, Marongwe, Mtsi and Matyedi (2020) conducted a study in rural schools and identified various impediments that hinder the widespread adoption and utilization of ICTs in education. Factors that contribute to this issue are the prevailing work environment, inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, which encompasses computer hardware and internet connectivity, educators' attitudes towards ICTs, and a scarcity of technologically proficient instructors (Mutambara & Bayaga, 2021). According to the statements made by the research participants during their interviews, it was suggested that the availability of laboratories, computers, power, and internet connectivity could potentially enhance their educational capabilities and career opportunities. The primary impediments to career advancement for rural residents, as identified by study participants, include inadequate access to essential resources such as laboratories, computers, stationery, gardens (for agricultural students), connectivity, and electricity. The individuals expressed that the utilization of laboratories could facilitate the execution of experiments and the observation of the practical application of theoretical concepts learned in class. The notion that laboratories facilitate comprehension of academic material learned in class and from textbooks is prevalent among students.

The absence of laboratories was a major concern expressed by the participants. The statement suggests that a mere understanding of theoretical concepts may not be adequate for science students to fully grasp their academic disciplines. Upon being queried about the potential impact of attending a rural school on his professional aspirations in the realm of horticulture, a participant pursuing studies in the field of agricultural sciences responded:

"It does have an influence a lot because when we look at rural areas, we don't get information. The information we get is information from textbooks, we have to sit down and read, and we don't get a chance to experience things live. Like Agriculture at school, there are gardens, but we haven't been in those gardens so that we can see proof of things we learn. We are always in class reading books only, there is nothing else. I can say the influence is huge because we are just fed textbooks only."

The respondents of this research opine that the availability of the alternative to integrate theory and practice is indispensable for their scholarly achievements, however, they are deprived of this prospect. The prevailing view among participants is that they do not favor receiving exclusively theoretical information. They contend that they are frequently exposed to theoretical concepts in the classroom, whereas students enrolled in urban schools are afforded opportunities to participate in hands-on activities. Ramnarain and Hlatshwayo (2018) conducted a study on the state of infrastructure in rural schools in South Africa. The study found that the implementation of inquiry-based learning (IBL) faced several challenges, as reported by teachers. These challenges included inadequate laboratory space, insufficient teaching resources, time constraints in completing the syllabus, and large class sizes, which negatively impacted teachers' willingness to adopt IBL. In the realm of science curriculum enhancement, inquiry-based learning (IBL) has been a significant area of emphasis for a considerable duration, as evidenced by the works of Dunne, Mahdi, and O'Reilly (2013); Aldahmash, Mansour, Alshamrani, and Almohi (2016); and Wang and Hofkens (2020).

Crawford, Capps, van Driel, Lederman, Lederman, Luft, and Smith (2014) note that the majority of conversations pertaining to reform-based science education incorporate the term "inquiry." Anderson (2007) suggests that the term "inquiry" can be utilized to characterize the efficacy of science education and acquisition. The study's participants who were engaged in scientific pursuits were unable to partake in inquiry-based learning (IBL) due to insufficient resources. Electricity is another resource that is insufficient in High School X. According to P1#, the absence of electrical power in remote regions poses a challenge in terms of obtaining career-related resources and accessing online information. The availability of network and electricity poses a hindrance to students' ability to engage in uninterrupted academic pursuits and access information at their convenience. Pillay (2020) posits that the selection of careers by adolescents is influenced by a multitude of factors, some of which may not necessarily have a significant impact on the ultimate outcome. One notable trend is the increasing utilization of the internet and its related content as a means to influence decision-making processes. Recent research conducted by Sinkkonen, Puhakka, and Meriläinen (2018) has established a significant correlation between internet usage and prudent professional decision-making.

The availability of reliable and effective career guidance services is of utmost importance in assisting young individuals to make informed decisions, particularly given their increasing dependence on online resources for information and future planning (Levine & Aley, 2022). The prevalence of online resources for career guidance in the contemporary era may appear to be extensive; however, cautionary advice has been issued regarding the exclusive dependence on this approach (Borbély-Pecze, 2020). The reliance of several governments on property taxes as a means of revenue for education and the comparatively lower property values in rural areas as opposed to urban areas results in a situation where rural school districts often function with funds that are below the average (Maiden & Stearns, 2007). Insufficient funding and staffing in schools have been found to result in heightened stress levels for both students and educators (Mahmud, Amat, Abu Bakar & Ku Johari, 2022). The promotion of energy, particularly electricity, as a catalyst for socioeconomic advancement is a justifiable endeavor by the South African government, as stated by Njikelana (2019). Cai (2020) contends that, akin to other regions on the continent, rural communities in South Africa encounter challenges associated with inadequate infrastructure. The lack of fundamental electrical infrastructure has a detrimental effect on development efforts, particularly in such areas.

According to Indah and Rarasati (2020), South Africa possesses significant energy potential, and various alternative energy sources are available to provide electricity to remote rural regions. However, these sources are not explicitly considered in the discourse surrounding energy provision. The consideration of alternative energy sources is often neglected in the construction of schools situated in remote areas due to the absence of grid-connected electrical infrastructure in many of these locations. The matter of rural poverty exhibits a strong correlation with the quality of rural education and its potential for development, as posited by Rakhmonov, Berdishev, Khusanov, Khaliknazarov, and Utegenov (2020). According to Gemassmer Daam and Reibsch (2021), the limited availability of resources in remote areas significantly constrains the possible educational achievements that could be realized. The aforementioned statement suggests that a significant proportion of minors residing in underprivileged, rural areas of South Africa are not receiving their entitled share as per the law.

5.2.4 Gender issue

The treatment of individuals in the workplace is significantly influenced by gender norms, as highlighted by Baron, Scorgie, Ramskin, Khoza, Schutzman, Stangl, and Delany-Moretlwe (2020). The study's results indicate that the aforementioned role not only commences in the professional setting, but is also present in secondary education institutions. Despite the increased rights and opportunities afforded to women and girls in contemporary society, complete gender parity remains a distant goal (Chang & Milkman, 2020). According to Spade's (2013) findings, gender disparities in the educational experiences of students commence during their pre-school years and persist throughout their academic journey. According to Barnett (2007), educators, including parents, play a crucial role in shaping the career trajectories of adolescents, particularly females. One noteworthy discovery of the study was that a female participant presented a distinctive and noteworthy challenge in comparison to her peers. The individual contended that she faced minimal

hindrances in regards to selecting her academic disciplines, with the exception of receiving negative feedback for opting for the math, engineering, and science streams. As a result of her gender, her parents and educators held the belief that she would encounter difficulties in these particular academic disciplines. The participant reported that there exists a prevalent belief among her parents and the educational institution that science and engineering are fields predominantly favored by males. Therefore, her survival is unlikely.

"I didn't face many challenges because I got support from my parents and at school. The only thing is that they judged me for doing the subjects I am doing. They believed that I will not be able to do them because they believe that these subjects are hard. They believe that these subjects are most taken by men so I will not survive. I proved them wrong, and I will continue doing them further "(P4#).

This demonstrates that although some women have excelled in fields traditionally dominated by men, there remains a significant journey ahead for women to demonstrate their sufficiency and proficiency. The prevalence of men in Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) fields persists due to various challenges, including the gender wage gap and preconceptions (Andrade, 2022). As per a report published in March 2022, the representation of women in the engineering profession in South Africa is limited to a mere 7%. There exist divergent perspectives regarding this matter; however, certain research studies suggest that the primary reason for the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields is not due to their lack of requisite skills, but rather due to societal conditioning that perpetuates the notion of female inferiority and incapability to compete with their male counterparts (Bowen, Peihua Zhang & Edwards, 2021). Several studies conducted by Akinlolu and Haupt (2020), Samuel, Magwagwa, and Mazingi (2020), Munyeka and Maharaj (2022), and Garner and Van Staden (2022) have demonstrated that certain women, despite possessing the necessary abilities, opt not to pursue STEM careers due to apprehensions regarding their potential for success.

According to Kuo, LoVette, Slingers, and Mathews (2022), female employment is limited by gender norms in both developed and developing nations. Social norms that have long been in place and are ingrained in a variety of social factors, such as culture and values, are challenging for people to externalize them. These views and beliefs include the notions that women belong in the home and are good with children (Ngidi, 2022). For some vocations, such as mechanical engineering jobs, women are not emotionally or physically capable (Hendrickx, Mothupi, Cooper, De Meyer, Knight, Michielsen & Tabana, 2022). A good man provides for the family, and neither his wife nor the girls in the family should be required to work. According to numerous sociologists, a crucial element contributing to this phenomenon of gender role is the process of socialization among the youth, whereby parents frequently provide their offspring with toys based on their gender. Toys marketed towards boys tend to promote the development of problem-solving abilities and curiosity, while toys marketed towards girls tend to emphasize traits such as nurturing and passivity (Enaifoghe, Dlelana, Durokifa & Dlamini, 2021).

Naidoo and Taylor (2021), argue that during early childhood, it is typical for children to exhibit dichotomous thinking, frequently selecting toys that align with gendered expectations and norms. The initial impact experienced by children has

a lasting effect on their inclinations and professional aspirations, resulting in a distinct gender-based occupational disparity whereby women tend to occupy nurturing positions while men are more prevalent in the fields of science and engineering (LoVette, Sullivan, Operario, Kuo, Harrison & Mathews, 2022). The gendered dominance of certain fields poses a challenge for individuals of the underrepresented gender to achieve success within those fields, as the occupation's image may hinder their ability to penetrate and thrive (Parry & Gordon, 2021). Nevertheless, there exist numerous instances of women pursuing careers in male-dominated fields and vice versa. This implies that although socialization plays a significant role, it is not the sole determinant of an individual's future. However, there are societies that continue to strongly uphold these values (Jayachandran, 2021). There are individuals, including the parents and educators of participant 4, who maintain the belief that women are incapable of achieving success in male-dominated fields such as engineering. Hence, it is imperative to address and modify stereotypes in order to enhance the functioning of both genders in society and the economy. This obligation has a pervasive impact on various domains of an individual's life, encompassing their familial experiences, educational instruction, workplace interactions, and encounters in public spaces (Aventin, Gordon, Laurenzi, Rabie, Tomlinson, Lohan & Skeen, 2021).

All individuals contribute to the formation and elimination of these misunderstandings. The accomplishment of this goal is of collective interest to all of every citizen. Bhushan, Fisher, Maman, Speizer, Gottfredson, Phanga, and Rosenberg (2021) posit that the resolution of the significant shortage of ICT skills and the high unemployment rate in South Africa lies in the elimination of obstacles that impede women's entry into STEM careers. Encouraging greater participation of women in the IT sector can aid in filling open positions and advancing technology for the digital economy. Encouraging girls, women, and other underrepresented groups to consider engineering as a viable career option could potentially lead to a rise in the overall number of engineers in the field. This highlights the importance of community and societal efforts in promoting diversity and inclusivity in the engineering profession. Wamoyi, Ranganathan, Mugunga, and Stöckl (2022) assert that, apart from inadequate representation, women face additional obstacles that impede their entry into the field of information and communication technology (ICT). These challenges include insufficient resources, exorbitant expenses associated with higher education, and the persistent gender pay gap in many ICT firms, where men continue to receive higher remuneration and are regarded as superior leaders. The heightened involvement of women in the workforce is expected to result in the formation of more diverse teams and aid in the mitigation of elevated unemployment rates.

The objective of this research is to enhance comprehension of the specific career guidance encounters of rural students, particularly those that lead to unemployment and ill-considered vocational decisions. The present study suggests that individuals such as teachers and parents may impede efforts to increase the representation of women in STEM fields by dissuading students, particularly female students, from pursuing high-demand courses such as engineering. Therefore, it is imperative for both parents and educators to engage in acquiring knowledge about the prevailing employment patterns and sought-after competencies, particularly in academic institutions such as High School X, which are devoid of career guidance experts, as evidenced by this study. It is recommended that the government provide

professional development workshops to educators in remote areas, aimed at equipping them with the necessary skills to guide their students towards well-informed career decisions. Educators can acquire fundamental principles for addressing vocational issues within their learning environments and discover methods for directing students to the appropriate resources for sufficient career guidance.

5.3 Factors that influence students' career decisions

5.3.1 Family

The findings of this research indicate that families exert a noteworthy impact on the vocational choices made by their children. The present discovery aligns with the findings of Shumba and Naong, (2012), whose research highlighted the significant role of the family in shaping the vocational choices of children. Five out of the eight participants in the present study reported that their families were present to provide guidance or aid during their selection of subjects at the tenth-grade level. The data suggests that a significant proportion of young individuals rely on their families, particularly immediate kin such as siblings and parents, as their primary source of guidance regarding career decisions. The findings presented are in alignment with Mtemeri's (2019) investigation on the impact of family on the vocational trajectories of high school students. The study revealed that akin to the current results, siblings and other extended family members have a diminished effect on the career paths of students. In their quantitative research study, Shumba and Naong (2012) investigated the factors that impact the career aspirations of first- and second-year university students. Their research findings lend support to the notion that families in South Africa play a significant role in shaping students' career choices and aspirations. The responses of the majority of the participants presented substantiation of this assertion.

I didn't face many challenges because I got support from my parents and at school (P4#). It's my bigger sister, she was doing them then I saw that this is the right path (P4#).

To do Agric was my parent's decision. My parent forced me to do agriculture because when I was growing up, I used to do farming, and then my father wanted me to do agriculture because I love it and enjoy it (P7#).

Ah... it's my sister. My older sister: was doing them, and I also developed an interest in them (P3#).

Ok... because I love Bachelor of Civil Construction. Since I am doing Civil and Civil engineering, I see that there are more job opportunities in Civil Construction than in Civil Engineering. It happens not to get a job after studying Civil Engineering, and then you end up sitting at home, I saw that with my older sister after she completed Civil Engineering. She ended up wanting to do teaching, then I changed my mind about doing Civil Engineering and chose to go for Civil Construction (P3#).

Mmmh.. well, I am doing accounting (laughing) because my brother is doing it (P1#).

The person that I look up to is Mr. Sibiya, my teacher. I can say he is my role model because of how he is living his life and taking care of people like how he used to advise us as learners, maybe if we do something that is not right. I can say that he is my role model because of how he is taking care of his life. The reason why he influenced me, it's because of the life that he is living. I feel like I owe it to my mother and if I can become a man like Mr. Sibiya, I would appreciate it a lot because I will feel like I made it (P6#).

*Jah... I prefer this course because to me it's like nature you know..., I grew up doing it and teachers have given me more knowledge about it as I am doing agriculture, even though I haven't done practicals but the theory did some changes. I know... I know a lot now, I don't know everything, but I know better now, so the reason why I am choosing this is that I will be fulfilling my father's dreams you know.... Becoming something that he loves because that is what he taught me when I was growing up, so like agriculture, it's inside me. So, I think doing it will be the right choice.....
Jah (P6#).*

According to Abe and Chikoko (2020), the career choices of individuals can be influenced by their family members, both directly and indirectly, even though such decisions may have personal implications. According to Mampanej's (2015) findings, families play a significant role in shaping the career decisions of young individuals by providing them with explicit or implicit guidance and information. Participant P6# responded that while his teacher serves as a role model, he acknowledges a debt of gratitude to her mother for influencing his choice of subject. The maternal affinity towards certain subjects instilled a sense of obligation in him to pursue them, despite the absence of explicit counsel from his mother. According to the participant, he intends to pursue a course in agriculture upon completion of his high school studies, as this would enable him to realize his father's aspirations. The participant holds the belief that his father established a strong foundation in agriculture for him, resulting in the participant's innate ability to engage in farming practices. The individual holds the belief that his father and educators played a pivotal role in fostering his heightened enthusiasm towards the field of agriculture.

Participant 7 was motivated to pursue a career in agriculture due to his farming-based upbringing, which was directly influenced by his father. The aforementioned conclusion implies the plausibility of participant 7's father having made a prior determination that his offspring would pursue agricultural studies. As per the recommendations of previous research studies (Yunusa, Jaafar, Ismail & Othman, 2022), certain parents opt to make decisions regarding their child's career choices and the requisite educational training prior to the child attaining the age of 12. The limited exposure of children to alternative occupations and career paths is a concern. The lack of knowledge among children results in missed employment prospects. Participant 7 asserted that his father coerced him into selecting agriculture as a course of study, as he believed it would be the most advantageous option for his offspring. The results of this study

align with the argument put forth by Mampane (2015) that parents offer ample assistance in making career choices that tend to reflect their own.

According to Suryani and George (2021), parental decision-making regarding their children's career paths often involves the perception of their offspring as an extension of themselves. Consequently, parents endeavor to impose their unrealized ambitions and aspirations onto their offspring as a means of enforcing their own expectations and unfulfilled objectives. Mampane (2015) posits that the preponderance of research results have demonstrated reliability, indicating that adolescent aspirations are influenced by parental aspirations or goals for their children. In many instances, parental career decisions are predicated on the presumption that they possess superior knowledge regarding what is optimal for their offspring. According to Dos Santos (2021), children are subject to suffocation and are compelled to engage in a profession that they did not choose, resulting in a lifetime of labor. As per the "Job Satisfaction 2016" survey conducted by Timesjobs.com, a majority of 60% of employees expressed dissatisfaction with their current job roles, while a significant proportion of 80% were contemplating a career switch. According to Judge, Zhang, and Glerum's (2020) study, a significant proportion of participants, specifically 30%, reported that they were searching for a new job due to the perceived lack of purpose in their current employment.

Taheri, Miah, and Kamaruzzaman (2020) contend that selecting a career path that ignites a child's passion and captivates their interest is of paramount importance. It is imperative for parents to guide their children towards the career path that is most suitable for them. Parents should exercise caution and refrain from committing common mistakes when providing guidance to their children regarding career choices. The occurrence of conflicts stemming from such circumstances can exacerbate the complexity of resolving the dilemma of career planning. It is not uncommon for parents to be unaware that they can seek the guidance of career counselors to help their children make informed decisions about their career paths (Loan, 2020). The provision of career counseling services to students has been found to result in notable advancements in their ability to identify their aptitudes and align them with suitable career paths. It is common for parents to draw comparisons between their child's career aspirations and those of their acquaintances, as they desire their offspring to pursue a similar life trajectory as their peers. It is important to consider that the efficacy of a particular approach may vary among individuals, as noted by Basalamah and As'ad (2021).

Guidance for Career Guidance Counselors provide an optimal intermediary position as they acknowledge and understand the viewpoints of both minors and guardians. Due to their objectivity, career counselors offer a balanced perspective that aids both parties in understanding the details of potential career trajectories. According to Nemteanu, Dinu and Dabija (2021), Career Guidance Counselors possess expertise in human behavior in addition to their proficiency in career guidance. Counselors utilize their knowledge and expertise to motivate and guide individuals towards achieving favorable outcomes. According to Rinny, Purba, and Handiman (2020), selecting the optimal career path is a crucial decision for both parents and children, and it serves as a fundamental point of departure. The research has identified several factors that influence the career guidance experience of students residing in rural regions.

Therefore, it is imperative that all these factors, including the family, participate proactively in enhancing their comprehension of their children's aspirations and refrain from excessively impeding their career choices. This study advocates for future research to be conducted in the aforementioned areas, with the objective of closely examining factors that impede the ability of students from rural schools to achieve their maximum potential. The second subtheme within the overarching theme of factors influencing students' career guidance experiences pertains to the impact of the educational institution attended by students on their career guidance experiences. This subtheme is in line with the family subtheme. The analysis encompassed both advantages and disadvantages while considering the impact of educators and peers.

5.3.2 School

The academic institution in which an individual is enrolled exerts a substantial influence on their selected career trajectory. The identification of one's preferred profession and the influence of family are significant factors in career decision-making for learners. Additionally, educators play a crucial role in shaping their students' career choices. According to Barnett (2007), educators, similar to caregivers, are perceived as significant individuals or exemplars in the prospective professional pathways that adolescents opt for. The findings of this research indicate that 10th-grade pupils are aided in their selection of academic disciplines by educators, peers, and fellow students. The subsequent responses provided by the research participants demonstrate the impact that educational institutions, educators, and peers had on their experiences. Participant 7 was queried regarding his level of enjoyment in studying his academic subjects, which include Consumer Studies, Tourism, Agricultural Science, Mathematical Literacy, IsiZulu, Life Orientation, and English.

Consumer studies, my friend was doing it and it was not hard for him so I thought I can also do it. (P7#).

The aforementioned response posits that certain pupils may hold the belief that they possess comparable aptitudes to their fellow classmates and associates, potentially leading to the exertion of social influence among peers. Mtemer (2019) asserts that peer influence holds significance as it has been demonstrated to impact professional decision-making. The influence of peers on students has been studied extensively in various countries. Failer and Failer (2013) and Alika (2010) conducted research in the United States, while Abbasi and Sarwat (2014), Edwards and Quinter (2011), Shumba and Naong (2012), and Kimiti and Mwova (2012) conducted studies in Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya, respectively. The studies found that students were impacted by their peers in a range of ways, such as through peer counseling, peer relations, peer advice, and friendships. The objective of peer counseling is to engage in an examination of emotions, cognitions, and concerns with the aim of achieving a lucid comprehension. According to Odirile (2012), peer counseling involves establishing a connection, providing feedback, and offering assistance. The findings of this investigation suggest that in the absence of appropriate vocational counseling, students resort to seeking advice

from their peers.

When students lack access to proficient career counseling and guidance from instructors, they resort to seeking mentorship from their peers. As per the studies conducted by Njeri (2013) and Okiror and Otabong (2015), it has been observed that students in Kenya tend to seek guidance on employment-related issues from their peers who have undergone similar experiences. This trend is particularly noticeable when other viable sources of assistance, such as career counseling services provided by educational institutions, fail to function as expected. Currently, High School X lacks an efficient system for providing career guidance. Peer mentoring is taking place. One of the study's participants made a career decision based on guidance received from an upperclassman at his educational institution. Upon being queried regarding the individual or entity that influenced the determination of the subject in question, the aforementioned respondent provided the following response:

Well, when I was in grade 8 there was a girl that was doing grade 11 at that time, she is the one I looked up to. She was doing science and was very smart. She was very bubbly, and she was always in the top 10, and she will get position two most of the time. We became close with her, which helped me because she asked me what I want to be when I grow up and advised me to take science subjects because they have many opportunities. I gained confidence because of this girl; I saw that things are possible. When she explained to me, I was motivated, so I can say she is the one who influenced me to choose my subjects

The present research demonstrated that the vocational choices of students are impacted by their social network. The aforementioned statement aligns with Bandura's social cognitive theory, which posits that peers serve as agents of social learning by virtue of their ability to model and endorse behavioral patterns, as well as provide a standard for assessing and confirming one's own effectiveness (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). The individuals held the belief that their peers, including friends and classmates, were providing career guidance that was influenced by peer interactions. The statement mentioned above is consistent with prior research that has demonstrated that professional education is acquired through peer interactions, as evidenced by studies conducted by Hashim and Embong (2015) in Malaysia, Kimiti and Mwova (2012); Migunde, Agak and Odiwuor (2012); Alike and Aluede (2019) in Kenya. The phenomenon of peer pressure can elicit either positive or negative outcomes. The ability to make decisions is greatly influenced, particularly in regards to selecting an academic discipline or profession. According to P.V. Rama Sasank, the director of Conduira, peer pressure exerts a noteworthy influence on three domains, namely career choice, tertiary education, and personal development.

Rama Sasank expressed that the crucial element lies in the realization that the decision was influenced and proven to be erroneous at a later stage. Nonetheless, in the majority of cases, the situation has already reached an advanced stage by that juncture. Given that the study participants are currently enrolled in high school, it is plausible that they may not possess immediate cognizance of the outcomes of peer influence. However, it is likely that they will gain such knowledge in due course. The findings indicate that the professional experiences of young individuals are significantly

impacted by their social networks. Du Plessis and Vidwans ' (2020) findings indicate that the career aspirations of the participants exceeded their present lived experiences, particularly with regards to their individual sense of self, familial, communal, and educational contexts. The influence of role models, specifically older classmates and teachers, on young individuals is a crucial aspect to consider when contemplating career planning (Tey, Moses & Cheah, 2020). The study participants have identified teachers as influential figures and role models within the school environment, constituting the second factor.

Participant 6 provided a response when queried about the individual or entity that impacted the decision-making process of the subject in question.

The person that I look up to is Mr. Sibiya, my teacher. I can say he is my role model because of how he is living his life and taking care of people like how he used to advise us as learners, maybe if we do something that is not right. I can say that he is my role model because of how he is taking care of his life. The reason why he influenced me, it's because of the life that he is living. I feel like I owe it to my mother and if I can become a man like Mr. Sibiya, I would appreciate it a lot because I will feel like I made it.

Adolescents experience a sense of obligation to emulate the lifestyle and conduct of their parental figures, resulting in a perceived burden to conform to their expectations. Moreover, it is believed that emulating the behavior of role models can lead individuals to attain similar levels of success and fulfillment in life (Löwe, Rinne & Sonnabend, 2022). The aforementioned underscores the importance of educators' conduct within educational institutions, as they may not fully comprehend the scope of their indirect impact on their pupils. According to Osuizugbo, Kukoyi, Abisuga, and Ibrahim (2022), it is recommended that educators offer their pupils with motivational and positive messages. The research outcomes indicate that the educational institution implemented a strategy for tenth-grade pupils, whereby educators assemble a gathering where a scholar, a guardian, and an instructor deliberate on the selection of academic disciplines. Despite being mentioned by only one of the eight participants, it can be deemed a prudent decision. This strategy involves a collaborative dialogue among a parent, educator, and learner to assess the child's abilities and potential.

The participant who raised this matter proposed that the educator would take into account the student's academic performance in grade 9, discern their proficiencies, and determine the most suitable academic pathway for them. Students are queried regarding their level of enjoyment of the recommended academic pathway. The findings indicate the degree to which educators and parents residing in rural regions are endeavoring to support and engage in their children's academic pursuits and prospects, notwithstanding the absence of vocational guidance experts employed within these educational institutions. As per the feedback provided by students, a perceived limitation of the school is the financial barrier that prevents some students from attending an adequate number of career expositions during their high school years. Consequently, a number of students feel that the school has not fulfilled their expectations in this regard. The deficiency of infrastructure and resources within the educational institution, which was further examined as a distinct

subtheme in this chapter, was identified as a contributing factor to the unfavorable career guidance experiences of students in the school context, as revealed by this study. The objective of this research was to comprehensively examine the obstacles and difficulties encountered by students residing in rural regions and their impact on their vocational aspirations. A more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by young students in rural schools and their impact on the quality of education can yield significant benefits for the basic education department at both local and national levels, provided that all relevant factors are duly considered.

5.3.3 Individual's interest

'You've got to find what you love,' Jobs says.

Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it (Naughton, p 4, 2011).

The aforementioned excerpt constitutes a segment of Steve Jobs' address to the graduating class of Stanford University in 2005. Steve Jobs achieved success as an entrepreneur and Chief Executive Officer of Apple Computer and Pixar Animation Studios. Gallo (2010) highlighted the significance of pursuing a career based on personal passion in his speech to the graduating class of Stanford University. Isaacson (2012) posits that given the significant amount of time an individual spends at work, it is highly unlikely for them to experience job satisfaction if they harbor negative feelings towards their occupation. As per the findings of this study, individuals tend to prioritize their interests and objectives over market opportunities. The majority of respondents cited their hobbies and interests when queried about their desired occupations. When queried about the primary determinants influencing their decision-making process, a minority of less than 40% of respondents identified job availability as a crucial factor, while none of the participants indicated that a "high salary" played a significant role in their selection of a particular field of study.

Amankwah-Amoah, Khan, Wood, and Knight (2021) and Clemens (2021) have observed that students tend to prioritize their personal interests over employment prospects when making career choices. The aforementioned statement is supported by the findings of the research. Half of the students indicated that they had chosen their desired occupations of their own accord. A number of individuals conveyed their satisfaction with their respective professions, whereas some placed greater emphasis on their leisure pursuits. Gal and Geiger (2022) posit that there exists a phenomenon whereby students fail to pursue the necessary education and skills required to secure gainful employment in industries experiencing a significant shortage of labor. The subject matter under discussion has generated significant debate regarding the extent to which the economic status of a nation permits individuals to pursue either the available job opportunities or the ones that align with their personal interests (Hoang, ANieti, Olcer, Chen, Chong, & Nguyen, 2021; Baert, Neyt, Siedler, Tobback, & Verhaest, 2021).

As per the literature expounded in the second chapter, the high unemployment rate prevalent in South Africa exerts

significant pressure on the youth to secure any form of employment for the sake of their survival. The prevailing aim among unemployed graduates in South Africa is to secure any form of employment that would allow them to sustain their households, irrespective of the level of job satisfaction it may offer (Tuckman & Serrat, 2022; Agostini, Colauzzi, & Amaducci, 2021). South Africa has experienced prolonged challenges with regards to unemployment, specifically among the youth demographic. The unemployment rate among young individuals has consistently exceeded that of older citizens in the country, irrespective of their level of educational achievement (Maskaeva & Msafiri, 2021). As per the findings of Statistics South Africa (2013), the probability of securing employment or gaining entry into the labor market is considerably lower for younger individuals in comparison to their older counterparts.

The African continent recognizes the nation (South Africa) as a leading player in the academic industry, boasting 26 state institutions and 130 licensed private higher education providers. However, the employability prospects of its graduates are comparatively lower, as reported by Webb (2021). Annually, a significant number of newly graduated individuals, estimated at 250,000, enter the South African workforce. However, the employment rate among this group is relatively low, with only around 30% securing employment opportunities (Geza, Ngidi, Slotow & Mabhaudhi, 2022). According to Mseleku (2022), South African graduates face a significant challenge in securing employment, and even when they do, they are often underemployed. According to Wakefield and Swanepoel (2022), there exists a phenomenon of underemployment among graduates, whereby they engage in employment that is either supplementary to their income in fields that are not related to their career or are remunerated with wages that fall below the legally prescribed minimum. According to Hall and Kudlyak (2022), a popular motivational trend among young individuals on social media encourages them to pursue any job opportunity until they secure a position that aligns with their career aspirations or academic qualifications. The underlying message suggests that failure to do so may result in prolonged unemployment and negative emotional states.

Research conducted by Rosenberg (2022), Muremela, Kutame, Kapueja, and Adigun (2021), and Musakuro and de Klerk (2021) has shed light on the phenomenon of young individuals pursuing careers that align with their interests and subsequently facing unemployment, especially in fields that are not in high demand in the labor market. According to Naicker, Singh, and van Genugten (2022), there is a positive correlation between the demand for certain occupations, such as engineering and technical jobs, and the likelihood of young people who express interest in these fields securing employment. The Republic of South Africa has a notable need for skilled professionals with technical expertise, including but not limited to technicians (Hartmann, Zagato, Gala, & Pinheiro, 2021), plumbers (Brunello, & Wruuck, 2021), engineers, and electricians (Soudien, Reddy, & Harvey, 2021). These are the types of competencies required to drive economic growth. Bag, Pretorius, Gupta, and Dwivedi (2021) contend that proficient educators are imperative for the nation to deliver high-quality instruction in classrooms, which is contingent on the district's high-quality training.

The study findings suggest that despite a limited number of students expressing interest in pursuing engineering, it is imperative for the department of education to establish channels of communication with high schools, particularly those situated in rural areas. This will enable the implementation of interventions aimed at enhancing students' understanding of the issue of skill shortages in the country and its impact on the economy. Sumberg, Fox, Flynn, Mader, and Oosterom (2021) suggest that students should take into account the requirements of the country prior to registering for highly subscribed courses in tertiary institutions. The study did not find any evidence to suggest that the participants had knowledge of the employment prospects in South Africa. The aforementioned results underscore the necessity of fostering cooperation among corporations, governmental entities, and pertinent stakeholders such as educators and policymakers to address the knowledge deficit that youth face in relation to career paths.

Chapter two of the literature highlights the significance of employers' involvement in educating young individuals about the market. The studies presented in this chapter emphasize the prioritization of specific skills by the younger generation, as discussed by Rzemieniak and Wawer (2021). The prioritization of personal career interests over market demands remains a subject of ongoing debate. Given the rapidly evolving nature of work, further research in this area is warranted, as noted by O'Keeffe, Johnson, and Daley (2022). It is imperative that the government and education ministers devise effective strategies to educate primary school students about the existence of oversaturated university courses that can lead to increased unemployment rates. It is imperative to ensure that individuals are adequately apprised of the modifications occurring in their work environment and the potential impact of these alterations on the entire populace of the country (Rummel, Akkermans, Blokker, Gelderen, 2021). In his State of the Readiness address on higher education delivered on February 1st, 2022, Minister Blade Nzimande contended that there is a notable trend among young individuals to pursue enrollment in higher education institutions and courses that are already oversubscribed. According to Jordaan (2022), the Minister asserted that courses that are oversubscribed have a correlation with an elevated rate of unemployment among young people. The aforementioned illustrates the cognizance of education ministers regarding the tendency of most youths to opt for professions that offer limited employment prospects. Consequently, it is recommended that ministers refrain from reiterating the acknowledged issue and instead concentrate on devising viable remedies to mitigate this concern. Williams (2021) suggests that universities should prioritize the education of digital technology experts, as well as those in the fields of teaching, accounting, economics, and entrepreneurship. To achieve this, the nation should engage in forecasting future trends to identify the upcoming occupations that will be in demand (Alvarez de Mon, Merladet & Núñez-Canal, 2021).

In the present study, a research participant reported during the interview that all of her academic subjects were progressing satisfactorily, with the exception of Mathematics. Upon being queried about her difficulties with mathematics, the participant articulated that the subject is inherently challenging and that the instructor responsible for teaching it encounters difficulties in conveying the material. The participant held a strong conviction that the teacher in question lacks the necessary qualifications to effectively instruct in the subject of mathematics. The participant went on to say

that due to the lack of math teachers at their school, students really do not understand the subject. The findings of the present investigation align with the research carried out by Mabena, Mokgosi, and Ramapela (2021) pertaining to the determinants that impact the self-assurance and academic performance of mathematics students in the province of Mpumalanga, South Africa. The study's results indicated that multiple factors exerted an influence. Insufficient proficiency in pedagogical subject matter and inadequate professional preparation were identified as factors that impacted the quality of teaching among educators.

This suggests that it is imperative for the government to intervene across all tiers of education and evaluate the efficacy of the support being provided to these minors. Studies conducted on public schools have indicated a dearth of math and science teachers in rural regions, despite some of them possessing specialized training in these domains (Mabena, Mokgosi, & Ramapela, 2021; Taylor, 2021). Studies conducted in public high schools located in townships have revealed similar outcomes regarding the scarcity of teachers in the fields of science and mathematics (Twani, 2021). The objective of this research is to assess the various obstacles that impede students from pursuing their desired career paths. The availability of highly qualified teachers in rural areas may mitigate the reluctance of young individuals to pursue careers in science and engineering, even if these fields are not their primary interests. Individuals can cultivate a sense of assurance in their pursuit of these professions provided that they possess a firm comprehension of the pertinent subjects and trust in their educators.

5.4 Conclusion

As per the results of the study, students enrolled in rural schools attribute their unsatisfactory career guidance experiences to factors such as gender stereotypes, the geographical remoteness of their educational institution, inadequate and imprecise career-related information, tardiness in the dissemination of pertinent information, and insufficient learning resources. In addition, it is noteworthy that individuals do not solely encounter negative experiences, but also positive ones. These may include being extended invitations to career fairs, receiving visits from universities to their educational institution to disseminate career-related information, receiving familial support, receiving institutional support, and receiving support from peers. Research suggests that parents and educators should exercise prudence in guiding students towards career-related decisions. This is due to the fact that there are cases where parents may have a strong inclination to select a career path for their child, which can have negative implications for the child's future professional prospects. The subsequent chapter will delve into the study's summary and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The present research offers a qualitative snapshot of the Career Guidance experiences of eight (8) learners in a typical public rural high school situated in Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal. The objective of the study was to generate results that could potentially benefit numerous present and future rural high school students at High School X, provide insight to the department of education regarding the current state of rural schools, and have positive implications for schools throughout South Africa.

6.2 Summary of the study findings

The present research exploration was carried out in a specific rural school located in the Eshowe region, with the objective of identifying the challenges and experiences encountered by learners in their educational institution. This study was motivated by the lack of pertinent research conducted in South Africa pertaining to this particular area. The present study employed exploratory qualitative methodologies to explore the career guidance experiences of learners attending a rural school. The researcher commenced the study by selecting an initial participant who satisfied the criteria of the present research, and subsequently employed the snowball sampling method to locate further participants who also met the criteria. The initial participant displayed a strong willingness to volunteer to assist locate additional study participants. The data obtained from the research participants was gathered through the utilization of semi-structured interviews and subsequently subjected to Thematic Analysis.

The research findings indicate that learners primarily acquire information pertaining to their career paths through various sources, including career expositions, family members, teachers, friends, classmates, school mates, and online resources. Despite the availability of resources to aid in subject and career selection, a significant number of learners encountered obstacles in making well-informed decisions regarding their career paths. The primary issue at hand is that the aforementioned sources of information cannot be deemed entirely dependable, as those who furnish career-related information are not necessarily qualified as career guidance professionals or counselors. The reliability of the information obtained from these modes is contingent upon the expertise of the informant. In instances where learners received guidance from their siblings, it was observed that the information imparted was often influenced by the career paths and knowledge of said siblings. Therefore, the amount of information that high school learners receive is restricted, which can be challenging for them as they have a considerable journey ahead of them before their career paths become clear.

The study indicates that parental influence is the most significant factor in determining learners' academic and career choices. The study's results indicate that parents exhibit a proclivity towards encouraging their children to pursue career paths that align with the parents' perceptions of suitability, rather than prioritizing their children's personal interests. Therefore, a significant number of learners experience a state of perplexity upon reaching a stage in their academic journey where they are required to submit applications to institutions of higher education. The impact of parents on a child's development is considerable, followed by the influence of siblings, classmates, schoolmates, the school itself, and finally, personal interests. The study results did not ascertain whether the subject of LO offers career education to learners. There is a lack of reported instances in which students have indicated that they receive education on career paths within the context of Life Orientation subject. This sign indicates that the subject recommended by the Department of Education for providing career education in high school is not fulfilling its intended purpose of disseminating relevant information. In addition, it should be noted that not all learners at High School X were afforded the chance to participate in career expositions, as such opportunities were only extended to those enrolled in science and accounting courses. The participants contended that their school places emphasis on science and commerce in terms of career guidance services. Research indicates that the school's limited financial resources have resulted in prioritization of science and commerce.

According to the findings of this study, the majority of learners' career-related difficulties are caused by inadequate funding for rural schools. Lack of resources at the school is a consequence of limited funding. In this study, amenities including scientific labs, gardens, electricity, stationery, and computer labs were found to be lacking among learners. These materials are crucial for a high-quality education, particularly in the modern world where job and career security are not always assured. As the economy, globalization, and technology improve, new occupations are forming, current careers are evolving, some of them needing new specialized skills, and some existing careers may eventually become wholly redundant (Cai, Khapova, Bossink, Lysova & Yuan, 2020). Rural learners, who make up a large portion of the country's population, would be left behind in this new economy if they were refused access to computers and labs (Coetzee & Veldsman, 2022). Study findings indicated a significant issue with resources that interferes with pupils receiving a great education. A research study also reveals that there is a shortage of appropriate transportation and infrastructure. Limited transportation options and inadequate roads and bridges are problems. According to this study, there is only one bus that children can take to go to school; therefore, if their parents cannot afford to pay for the monthly transportation costs of staff transport, the pupils will have to ride the bus. There are instances where learners miss the bus because of the time it arrives. Additionally, research shows that learners who cannot afford transportation costs walk daily from home to school. Due to the large distances they must cover each day, most learners find it exhausting to walk. As a consequence, they do poorly in school and devote less attention to their careers.

This study has indicated that the geographic location of Eshowe is a significant factor contributing to the lack of access to career guidance services experienced by learners. It is believed by learners that the lack of access to career guidance services is due to the rural location of their school. The individuals are cognizant of the fact that their urban counterparts are provided with superior services in comparison to the services that are available to them in rural regions. There were numerous learners' complaints regarding issues with connectivity and electricity. During the period of attending High School X, the school lacked access to electricity. This was not due to load shedding but rather a result of insufficient funds to purchase electricity. The matter of electricity poses a disruption to the functioning of the educational institution, as the absence of electrical power results in a reduction of instructional time available for learners. The educational institution is impacted by the dual factors of power outages and electricity costs. The learners contended that in the absence of electricity and network connectivity, their ability to access information on the internet is impeded, and the distance to internet cafes is considerable. The learners additionally contended that the scope of information available to them through internet searches is restricted, as there is no authoritative figure to verify the accuracy of the information they encounter. Furthermore, certain pieces of information obtained from the internet may prove challenging to comprehend without external aid. In addition to the unverified information that learners may obtain from the internet, research has shown that the timing of information acquisition is also a concern. The matter of time was a prevalent topic among the interviewees during their respective interviews. The learners contended that it is common to experience a change in career aspirations in each academic year, particularly as one acquires pertinent information gradually over time.

A study has indicated that learners are typically provided with career-related information at a relatively late stage in their academic journey. Specifically, the study found that participants tended to receive the most pertinent information during their twelfth grade, and many expressed a desire to have received this information at an earlier stage in their education. The delays in accessing pertinent information indicate that certain learners made avoidable errors, such as opting for math literacy instead of pure mathematics. The matter of mathematics was prevalent among the majority of participants, with some encountering difficulties in this subject and others experiencing confusion between mathematical literacy and pure mathematics. The results of this study indicate a greater necessity for the presence of subject selection and career guidance counselors in rural educational institutions. The delayed receipt of information caused numerous regrets among learners. The present study's results are consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, which posits that rural regions often experience delayed access to information as a result of the geographic positioning of their educational institutions (Bakshi & Fernando, 2022). The study's additional findings concerning gender stereotypes were particularly significant to the researcher. The research findings indicate that female learners encounter discouragement when pursuing science and engineering fields due to the persistence of certain teachers and parents who maintain the belief that these domains are better suited for male learners. Female learners who pursued this career path despite facing discouragement have expressed their desire to challenge the persistent notion that science and engineering are exclusively male domains. The students contended that they would persist with science at the

university level due to their personal enjoyment of the subject matter.

6.1 Recommendations

The recommendations aimed at mitigating the issues identified in the present research exploration are discussed hereafter.

The cause of the elevated unemployment rate among the youth demographic has been attributed to inadequate education, training, and professional background. Access to social networks that can provide information on education, the job market, employment opportunities, and job access is limited for young individuals (Mann, Denis, & Percy, 2020). The researcher suggests that a multifaceted and integrated approach is necessary to tackle the deficiencies in skills, human capital, and information that young individuals encounter, given the numerous factors that impact their entry into the labor market. To facilitate informed career decision-making among learners, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education collaborate with career guidance counselors, school principals, teachers, the Ministry of Labor, and parents. The involvement of employers is a crucial factor in the provision of career guidance (Rizwan, Serbaya, Saleem, Alsulami, Karras & Alamgir, 2021). Research has indicated that there is a positive correlation between workplace visits, career discussions in educational settings, and enhanced employment opportunities (Rosvall, 2020). Effective career guidance requires significant participation from various stakeholders in the workforce, including employers, employees, trade unions, and industry organizations. When executed effectively, this type of hands-on training can augment career guidance by providing young people with practical insights into various occupations and how they correspond with decisions regarding education and vocational preparation (McCarthy & Pecze, 2020).

The researcher suggests that the Department of Transport (DoT) allocate sufficient funds towards enhancing the infrastructure of roads, bridges, and transportation accessibility in rural regions. This recommendation is based on the findings of the study, which revealed numerous challenges pertaining to these services in Eshowe. Learners utilize a single bus as a means of transportation to their educational institution, incurring a daily cost of R36 per learner. In the event that a student fails to board the school bus, they will be left with the options of either trekking a considerable distance on foot, availing themselves of staff vans, or being marked absent from their scheduled classes. The scheduled time for the school bus transportation service availed of by learners is exclusively at 7:00 a.m. To ensure convenient daily transportation for learners in this locality, it is recommended that the Department of Transportation intervene and support alternative modes of transportation. Improvements can be made to rural roads to facilitate the operation of taxis in proximity to residential areas where learners reside, alongside vans and buses. The availability of multiple modes of transportation may result in a reduction in transportation costs, particularly for financially disadvantaged learners who are unable to bear the daily transportation expenses. The existing body of literature provides evidence to corroborate the notion that improved rural road infrastructure enhances mobility and diminishes travel duration

(Kaiser & Barstow, 2022). The intervention by the Department of Transportation (DoT) in the Eshowe region is expected to result in a reduction in the frequency of learner absenteeism due to missed school days, early departures to catch transportation, or walking home after sunset. Additionally, the availability of reliable transportation is anticipated to enhance learner focus and engagement during class time. Based on the literature reviewed, it has been found that fatigue and inadequate sleep and rest are associated with diminished concentration among learners who commute over extended distances. Sufficient sleep and reduced anxiety regarding school attendance are conducive to young individuals' ability to approach their professional pursuits with greater earnestness and informed decision-making (Ebrahimi, Aeon, Lee & Wang, 2020).

The study revealed that a significant proportion of learners expressed dissatisfaction with the delayed provision of precise career-related information. The learners expressed dissatisfaction regarding the tardiness of the information provided to them. The researcher suggests that principals should introduce career talk programs to learners at an early stage, specifically in Grade 8, as a measure to mitigate this issue. This would enable learners to become familiar with the concept of career exploration. If learners receive the necessary information early on, they are less likely to settle for certain courses or career fields due to a perceived lack of options later on. There has been a reduction in the number of learners opting for courses that are unfamiliar to them and a decrease in the proportion of learners that have opted for math literacy instead of pure mathematics.

The researcher suggests that reliable and accurate information should be provided to learners by parents, teachers, and school administrators, even in the absence of career guidance counselors, to prevent potential regret regarding subject and career choices. Furthermore, the timing of information delivery is also emphasized as an important factor. One potential strategy for achieving this objective involves offering professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their competencies in subject matter selection and career guidance. Additionally, facilitating parental involvement in their children's academic pursuits may also prove beneficial. Additionally, it is recommended by the researcher that every learner be provided with the opportunity to partake in career exhibitions whenever feasible. This is due to the fact that, apart from being entitled to an education, each and every child possesses the right to receive career guidance, and it is imperative that no child be excluded from this opportunity (Sultana, 2020; Maluleke, Powell & Pillay, 2022; de Kadt, 2020).

The researcher suggests that the educational institution should employ additional and competent mathematics educators to facilitate the effective instruction of this subject matter to learners. If there is an increase in the number of math teachers, every learner will receive the necessary attention. The existing body of literature provides evidence to suggest that inadequate pedagogy may arise as a result of a reduced number of educators and an increased number of overpopulated classrooms (Matsepe, Maluleke & Cross, 2019). The provision of funding by the Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Education to rural schools has the potential to attract more experienced teachers. The department has the capacity to provide additional workshops to educators, thereby facilitating their professional development. Consequently, a reduced number of educators will opt to transfer to metropolitan and independent educational

institutions in pursuit of more favorable career opportunities. The researcher suggests that in order to enhance the preparation of teachers, it is advisable to provide them with instruction on gender issues that are prevalent in the community. For instance, the discouragement of young girls who aspire to pursue careers in science and engineering, as observed in this study. Given the significant impact that teachers can have on their learners, it is imperative that they avoid dissuading female learners from pursuing scientific career paths. In order to enhance the representation of young girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, educators should capitalize on the opportunity to cultivate self-assurance in young girls with regards to scientific pursuits (Brown, Ernst, DeLuca & Kelly, 2017).

The researcher's ultimate suggestion is that the Department of Energy should enhance the accessibility of electricity in remote regions. Improving the quality of education for learners who frequently encounter unreliable power supplies poses a significant challenge. The aforementioned recommendations are not limited solely to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education but are also relevant to the Department of Transport. The statement suggests that the enhancement of educational benchmarks in remote regions necessitates a holistic approach and the participation of multiple departments. This statement aligns with the proverbial phrase "collaboration yields greater results/working together we can do more"; it is incumbent upon all individuals to take proactive measures towards effecting positive societal change.

6.4. Recommendations to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education

Rural Schools Need Career Guidance Counsellors Too!

This section provides additional recommendations to the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department, policymakers, and the South African government. The findings suggest that rural schools should offer subject selection and career guidance services. The study indicates that inadequate career guidance is a prevalent issue in schools, which hinders learners from making informed and practical decisions about their future and selecting options that lead to success. It is recommended that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education allocate funds towards the construction of science and computer laboratories, as well as the provision of classroom supplies such as stationery, to enhance the academic performance of learners. The third point of the research study proposes that government officials and policymakers undertake an evaluation of existing educational policies to enhance their efficacy in addressing the concerns raised by learners residing in rural areas. The interconnectivity and contextual embedding of career guidance issues for young individuals residing in rural areas have been revealed through research findings. Thus, it is advisable that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education adopt a thorough strategy to address these concerns. It is recommended that regular meetings and workshops be established as supplementary measures to educate stakeholders in the field of education about the challenges faced by youth residing in rural regions.

6.5. Limitations encountered by the researcher

The researcher faced certain obstacles while carrying out the present study. To gain entry into the research field, it was necessary to arrange a meeting with the school's principal and deputy principal. The principal and vice principal of the school recommended a specific group of learners for me to interview, thereby advising me to depart from my current snowball sampling method of data collection. In this particular scenario, it was incumbent upon me to elucidate and facilitate the principal's comprehension of the research methodology employed in my study. Following an explanation of the research methodology, I proceeded to implement the appropriate sampling technique as prescribed. An additional obstacle encountered was the interest expressed by fellow learners from the school who also wished to participate in the interviews. Consequently, the principal requested that a minimum of 20 learners be interviewed. I reiterated to the principal the importance of following a research proposal, specifically emphasizing the methodology section for data collection. One of the intriguing challenges that was encountered involved a visit to the principal's office, where a group of learners were seeking career guidance and inquiring about potential opportunities to apply the subjects they were currently studying in school. Following interviews with their peers about career paths, learners began to inquire about similar topics. The utilization of Zoom as a data collection tool presented a challenge in the form of issues related to electrical power and connectivity during the data gathering process. Furthermore, the data collection process was time-consuming due to the fact that it was conducted during a period when learners were preoccupied with their final matriculation examinations. As a researcher, it was imperative to demonstrate respect for their time and accommodate their busy schedules. Nonetheless, as the learners were concurrently anticipating responses from universities regarding their admission for the upcoming academic year, they perceived it to be exceedingly advantageous to undergo an interview pertaining to their career.

6.6. Conclusion

The study's results suggest that High School X learners from Eshowe possess the necessary abilities, despite encountering various obstacles in career guidance within their rural educational institution. As such, it can be inferred that these learners are capable of overcoming these challenges. Career guidance counselors are necessary for young individuals residing in rural areas to achieve their maximum potential. The research revealed that individuals face various obstacles in their careers, encompassing both external and internal factors. These challenges include difficulties arising from familial and personal circumstances, academic

demands, insufficient access to career-related information, and inadequate provision of resources. Further obstacles encompass gender-based biases and stereotypical attitudes towards females in the fields of science and engineering.

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HR Weekly plan

1. HR policy

1.1 to review and go through the HR policy (**Review the current HR policies**).

2. Leave file

2.1 Fixing the Leave file

3. Holding a session for late-coming candidates. (**Employee punctuality and attendance policy**)

4. Performance support and motivation

4.1 Share weekly videos and motivational quotes.

4.2 Aligning motivation quotes and videos with the organization's **objectives, mission, values (e.g. High performance)**, and **goals**.

4.3 Looking at the factors that influence employee performance and productivity (e.g. working relationship between employees and managers).

5. Training content and resources

5.1 Drawing the training plan.

5.2 Sending out training need analysis

6. Staff wellness

6.1 Inform staff members that the HR is open to come when have personal issues and issues in a workplace that might affect their performance.

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HR Weekly plan

1. HR policy

1.1 to review and go through the HR policy (**Review the current HR policies**).

2. Leave file

2.1 Fixing the Leave file

3. Holding a session for late-coming candidates. (**Employee punctuality and attendance policy**)

4. Performance support and motivation

4.1 Share weekly videos and motivational quotes.

4.2 Aligning motivation quotes and videos with the organization's **objectives, mission, values (e.g. High performance)**, and **goals**.

4.3 Looking at the factors that influence employee performance and productivity (e.g. working relationship between employees and managers).

5. Training content and resources

5.1 Drawing the training plan.

5.2 Sending out training need analysis

6. Staff wellness

6.1 Inform staff members that the HR is open to come when have personal issues and issues in a workplace that might affect their performance.

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Appendix 1 Letter of Approval from the Department of Basic Education



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1063

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Ref.:2/4/8/4041

Ms N Mkhize

Mpumalanga Township
HAMMERSDALE
3700

Dear Ms Mkhize

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE CAREER GUIDANCE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS FROM A RURAL SCHOOL IN ESHOWE"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 04 April 2022 to 02 April 2025.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

KING CETSHWAYO DISTRICT

Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 05 April 2022

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

Appendix 2 Research Ethical Clearance from the Research Ethics Committee



19 September 2022

Njabulo Mkhize (217021516)
School of Applied Human Sc
Howard College Campus

Dear N Mkhize,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004510/2022

Project title: A qualitative exploration of the career guidance experiences of learners from a rural school in Eshowe

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 06 January 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 19 September 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/ms

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 3 Request letter to Principal & letter of approval

Mazisi Kunene Road,
Glenwood
Durban
University of KZN
Durban
4041



“A qualitative exploration of the career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school in Eshowe.”

Project Information Statement/Letter of Invitation to School Principal.

My name is Njabulo Mkhize, and I am a Master of Social Science (Industrial Psychology) student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN). I am conducting research on career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school. under the supervision of Shanya Reuben and Shaida Bobat. The Provincial Department of Education has given me the approval to approach your school for my research. A copy of their approval is contained with this letter. I invite you to consider taking part in this research. This study will meet the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee of the UKZN.

Objectives of the research

- 1.To explore the career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school.
2. To identify the challenges, constraints, and opportunities that learners in a rural school experience with respect to career guidance.

Significance of the Research Project

The research is significant in three ways:

- 1.It will provide information about learners' career knowledge
2. It will provide information about what influences learners' thinking about careers.

3.It will provide schools and teachers with a greater understanding of the influence of the school on the career development of learners.

Benefits of the Research to a School.

- 1.Dissemination of results to a school, Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Education, and the broader public
- 2.The results may inform curriculum development in career education

Research Plan and Method

The data will be collected using semi-structured interviews. Due to COVID 19 regulations. Interviews will be conducted through Zoom/ Skype/ to avoid close human contact. The participants will be required to be in a quiet space during interviews to avoid distraction. Permission will be sought from the learners and their parents prior to their participation in the research. Only those who consent and whose parents' consent will participate in the study. The researcher will administer individual semi-structured interviews with participants through Zoom/Skype/. The interviews will be conducted for approximately 45 minutes with each participant. All information collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and neither the school nor individual learners will be identifiable in any reports that are written. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The role of the school is voluntary, and the School Principal may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty.

School Involvement.

Once I have received your consent to approach learners to participate in the study, I will

- arrange for informed consent to be obtained from participants' parents
- arrange a time with your school for data collection to take place.
- obtain informed consent from participants.

Further information

Attached for your information are copies of the Consent Form and also the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form.

Invitation to Participate

If you would like your school to participate in this research, please complete and return the attached form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Njabulo Mkhize

Researcher

UKZN

Shanya Reuben

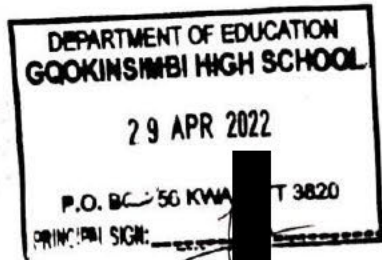
Supervisor

UKZN

Shaida Bobat

Co-supervisor

UKZN



Gqokinsimbi Comprehensive
Technical High School
Emasundwini Reserve
Eshowe
3820

29 April 2022

Ms N. Mkhize

Mpumalanga Township

Hammersdale

3700

Dear Ms. Mkhize

Re: Permission to Conduct Research Project entitled "A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE CAREER GUIDANCE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS FROM A RURAL SCHOOL IN ESHOWE" at Gqokinsimbi Comprehensive Technical High School.

Kindly be informed that I have received and reviewed your request for permission to conduct research in the school, and I approve of this research to be conducted at our learning institution.

Please also note the following:

- Ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
- Ensure learner's confidentiality.
- Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
- Adherence to conditions of conducting research proposed by the Department of Education of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Wishing you success during your research project.

Yours Faithfully

Mr. MJ Dlamini (Principal)

Head of the School

Date: 29 April 2022

Appendix 4 Informed Consent

Title of the research study: A qualitative exploration of the career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school in Eshowe.

Researcher: Njabulo Mkhize

Supervisor: Shanya Reuben Co-

supervisor: Shaida Bobat

Address: University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) College of

Humanities

School of Applied Human Sciences

Howard College

I (name & surname) have been informed about the study entitled "A qualitative exploration of the career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school in Eshowe" by Njabulo Mkhize.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any treatment or care that I would usually be entitled to.

If I have any further questions concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at (0 [REDACTED] / 217021516@stu.ukzn.ac.za/ [REDACTED])

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 0312604557/0312603587- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Additional

consent, where applicable hereby

provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO Video-

record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO Use of my

photographs for research purposes YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Appendix 5: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent

My name is Njabulo Mkhize, I am a Master's candidate studying a Master of Social Science degree in Industrial Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, South Africa. I am currently conducting a research study titled: "A qualitative exploration of the career guidance experiences of learners from a rural school in Eshowe".

The aim of the study is to explore the career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school which includes identifying the challenges, constraints, and opportunities learners experience with respect to career guidance. Your child's school was purposively selected to be the school to participate in the study. I am requesting your permission to allow your child to participate as a learner in this study. Participation in the study is purely voluntary and the information will not be passed on to any other person. Your child is assured confidentiality.

Participation means that your child will partake in an interview, and this will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The main aim of the interview will be to understand the career guidance experiences of your child. The transcripts associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible to myself and my supervisors only. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the University, it will be disposed of by shredding. The information is for academic purposes only, designed to enhance our knowledge and understanding of career guidance experiences of learners attending a rural school. You can refuse to allow your child to take part or allow your child to participate and withdraw from the study at any time. Before you sign this form, please feel free to ask any questions about this study.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had all your questions answered, and decided to allow your child to take part in this study. If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher at:

Email: 217021516@stu.ukzn.ac

or

My supervisors: D.r. Shanya Reuben and Ms Shaida Bobat from the Discipline of Psychology, HowardCollege Campus, University of KwaZulu Natal.

Contact details: Email:reuben@ukzn.ac.za number: 031-266-2861/ Email: bobats@ukzn.ac.za number: 031-266-2648 or research office through

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel:0312604557/0312603587 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research

DECLARATION

I(Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and nature of the research project and offer consent for my child _____ (enter child's full name) to participate in the research project.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to allow my child to participate. I understand

that I am at liberty to withdraw my child from the project at any time, should I so desire.I

consent to have the interview:

YES/ NO

I consent to have the interview recorded:

YES/ NO

SIGNATURE OF PARENT

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix 6: Learner Assent letter

Title of Research

A qualitative exploration of the career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school in Eshowe.

Name of Researcher

Njabulo Mkhize

It is important to note that, before agreeing to participate in this research study, you need to read the following explanation of the study. This statement describes the purpose, benefits, risks, discomforts, and precautions of the study. Your right to withdraw from this research project will be described and note that no guarantees or assurances can be made as to the results of the study. The following information will be explained to you again by the researcher in detail and in terms that are easier to understand.

Explanation of Procedures

This study is designed to qualitatively explore the career guidance experiences of learners from a rural school. I am Njabulo Mkhize, a master' student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard College Campus, I am conducting this study to understand better the challenges and opportunities that learners attending a rural school face in relation to career guidance. If you consent to take part in this study, you will be requested to attend an online interview that will be conducted through Zoom. You will be requested to have access at least to one of the platforms mentioned above. The interviews will take 45 minutes and will be recorded. As a participant, you will also be requested in advance to ensure that during the interview you are in a comfortable space, where you cannot be interrupted by people or noise.

Risks and Benefits

There are no risks involved in participating in this study. We hope that the study will create the following benefits: generate a better understanding of career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school atEshowe; (2) suggest ways in which learners from a rural school can be supported in making career choices; (3) Stimulate more research on career guidance experiences of learners from a rural school so that the bodyof empirical knowledge about this group can be augmented

Confidentiality

The information you will provide will be treated confidentially and will be anonymous as no name or information can be linked to you personally. The information that will be shared during the interview will be treated confidentially and will be recorded and reported anonymously. Reporting of research information will only be done at an individual level.

Withdrawal without repercussions

Participation is voluntary and refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty. Each participant is free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any given moment in time

Costs or Payments

There will be no costs involved in taking part in this research study. No participant will receive any payment to participate in this research project.

Questions

Should you have any problems or queries, please direct them to Njabulo Mkhize (researcher) at [REDACTED] / 217021516@stu.ukzn.ac.za or to Shanya Reuben (supervisor) at Reuben@ukzn.ac.za or Shaida Bobat (co-supervisor) at Bobat@ukzn.ac.za.

Agreement

This agreement states that you have read and received a copy of this informed consent. Your signature below indicates that you understand the parameters of your participation and agree to take part in this research study.

Signature of Participant (Learner) _____

Date _____

Participant's Name _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

ASSENT FORM (for learners)

Title of Research

A qualitative exploration of the career guidance experiences of learners in a rural school in Eshowe

Name of Researcher

Njabulo Mkhize

I confirm that I have read and understand the information given in the informed consent for the abovementioned study.

I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions about it, and have had them answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

I understand that the data gathered from this study will be accessible to other professionals at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and that the results will be published.

I agree to take part in this research project.

Signature of Participant (learner) _____

Date _____

Participant's Name _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix 7: Interview Topic Guide

1. What do you understand career guidance to be?
2. What are your interests and hobbies?
3. Which subjects are you doing at school?
4. Do you enjoy doing the subjects you are doing at school?
5. Who or what influenced you to choose subjects you are doing?
6. What did you want to be when you were a child?
7. What is career guidance according to your understanding?
8. Do you think you have received sufficient career guidance which helped you make your subject choice/career choice?
9. What are challenges do you experience with respect to career guidance?
10. What career opportunities have you experienced with respect to career guidance?
11. Do you think attending a rural area school influences your career aspirations?
12. Are you planning to study after matric? If yes
13. What are you planning to study?
14. Why do you prefer that course?

APPENDIX 8: Turn It in Originality Report

Turnitin Originality Report

Processed on: 17-Jul-2023 3:17 PM CAT
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Njabulo Mkhize's MSSIOIP Dissertation turn-it-in
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