

**EXPLORING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CAREER DECISION
MAKING PROCESS OF THIRD YEAR PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA USING AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY
FRAMEWORK**

by

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SUMMARY

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South African context

ABSTRACT

Career choice is a difficult and confusing decision that young adults face across the world. In this dissertation, the researcher gauged the voices and experiences of young adults in their third year of study in Psychology at the University of Pretoria, through semi-structured interviews conducted online via the Zoom platform. A total of 10 participants were used for the interviews. A Qualitative approach was used, utilising Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Thematic Analysis to analyse the data. Using an Ecological Systems Theoretical framework, results were located at the Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and the Macrosystem. These results built on existing literature, as well as, provided new insights into the decision making processes and the modern working environments of

Millennials and Gen Z's. The results of this study will provide career counsellors and schools with a deeper understanding of young adults' career decision making processes. Information collated could aid in development of programmes to inform career development interventions at the different systemic levels, as well as, courses and provide accurate advice suited to the individual.

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Masters in Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation/thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval.

The author declares that s/he has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for Researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

Signature 

Student name: Maria Rosa Fernandes

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Gloria Patri, et Fílio, et Spirítui Sancto. Sicut erat in princípio et nunc et semper. Et in sæcula sæculórum. Amen.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and scope

A career is viewed as the “totality of an individual’s lifetime of learning and work” (Falaye & Adams, 2008, p. 222). Louw and Louw (2015) similarly stated that a career contributed to an individual’s identity. A career provides an individual with the opportunity to be creative or productive and therefore is a form of self-expression (Louw & Louw, 2015). A career also determines an individual’s place and status in society (Louw & Louw, 2015). This could contribute to an individual’s feeling of self-esteem (Louw & Louw, 2015). According to Bandura et al., in their 2001 article entitled “Self efficacy beliefs as shapers of children’s aspirations and career trajectories”, the common factors influencing career decision making included the context in which the individual lived, educational attainment and their personal aptitudes (Falaye & Adams, 2008). The Ecological Systems Theory framework was used in this study as it best explained the influence of an individual’s environment on their career development and choices (Darling, 2007). Broadly, the influences could be grouped into the Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). Alternatively, they could be viewed as interpersonal, intrapersonal and external factors (Abe & Chikoko, 2020). This study explored the different factors that affected young adults’ career decision making. The Literature review provided a background of the factors that previous research had identified as affecting the career decision making of young adults. This study used a Qualitative research design utilising Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Thematic Analysis to analyse the findings. Ten participants were purposively recruited for this study. The participants were third year Psychology students at the University of Pretoria. Interviews were conducted with these participants to articulate and understand their opinions and experiences in making a career decision within the South African context.

The findings from the Literature review revealed that young adults faced a daunting task of choosing a career that would remain relevant in the modern technological workplace. There were a number of factors that emerged from the Literature review that influenced career decision making in young adults. The Ecological Systems Theory allowed for these factors to be broken down into the different systemic levels of the framework.

1.2 First theme of literature review

The Microsystem includes the individual and other people who are involved in the individual's immediate environment (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). The Microsystem has a significant impact on the individual as the individual interacts with this system the most, from birth to adulthood (Darling, 2007). It relates to the people the individual has direct personal contact with, as well as, groups, such as family and schooling, with direct influence on an individual's development (Weiten & Hassim, 2016).

1.2.1 Microsystem influences on career decision making

Microsystem influences such as parental influence, personality and academic achievement impacted the individuals directly and affected their career choice.

1.2.2 Gender and gender-stereotyped roles, parental influence, personality and academic achievement in career decision making

Studies in gender and gender-stereotyped roles revealed that individuals tended to choose gender-matched careers in order to avoid stigmatisation, inequality or embarrassment (Hill & Giles, 2014). Parents were influential figures who, intentionally or unintentionally, influenced what occupations their children became exposed to and the career opportunities and expectations exerted on them (Taylor et al., 2004).

Research suggested that there was a relationship between personality type and career choices (M'manga et al., 2019). Academic achievement was also an important factor for career choice as academic success in school had inspired individuals' career choice (Myburgh, 2005).

1.3 Second theme of literature review

The Mesosystem involves the reciprocal interaction between various Microsystems which can include schools, neighborhoods, parents and educators (Weiten & Hassim, 2016).

1.3.1 Mesosystem influences on career decision making

Mesosystem influences such as vocational assessment interacted with the individuals and the various Microsystem influences.

1.3.2 Vocational assessment in career decision making

Vocational assessment was important to identify and evaluate the factors that could best predict career success as this could help individuals make appropriate career choices (Maree & Taylor, 2016).

1.4 Third theme of literature review

The Exosystem represents the social setting surrounding the individual and the links between social settings that do not involve the individual, but still influence them, such as employment opportunities, competition in the employment field and job security (Chinyamurindi, 2016; Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014; Weiten & Hassim, 2016).

1.4.1 Exosystem influences on career decision making

Monetary expectation and employability were factors within the Exosystem that influenced the career decision making process of young adults.

1.4.2 Monetary expectation and employability in career decision making

Monetary expectation had an influence on career decision making as earning potential could influence career choices and choice of career was determined by potential income (Quinter & Edwards, 2011). Research showed employability and employment security were important factors in the respondents' career decisions (Myburg, 2005).

1.5 Fourth theme of literature review

The Macrosystem refers to cultures and subcultures each of which has its own beliefs and value systems (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). The overarching cultural systems impact the other systems (Darling, 2007; Dodge & Welderufael, 2014).

1.5.1 Macrosystem influences on career decision making

Familial socio-economic status and cultural background were the overarching systems that influenced young adults in their career choice.

1.5.2 Familial socio-economic status and cultural background in career decision making

Families from a low socio-economic status may have had limited access to basic needs, such as a good education (Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013). This was likely to have a limiting effect on such an individual's career decision due to inaccessibility of necessary information and skills (Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013). A family's cultural background could also influence career decision making. Those more influenced by a Western culture tended to embrace the idea of individualism (Finkelstein, 2010), while those from African and Eastern cultures tended to embrace the notion of collectivism (Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013).

1.6 Project rationale

The researcher set out to provide insight into the factors at the different Ecological levels that influenced the decisions made by third year students regarding how they selected a career. The study focused on this sub set of students because many third year students in Psychology had already determined what they would like to do as a career as it was their last year in university before graduation. In addition, many would either start working or continue studying Psychology into post-graduation.

1.7 Project aims and objectives

This study aimed to fill the knowledge gap in literature by gauging young South African adults' voices and experiences in relation to career decision making. It was, therefore, important to understand the factors that could potentially influence career development (Klopper et al., 2012). The findings may be useful to support career counsellors allowing them to develop career counselling interventions that will assess the attitude and viewpoint of students (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). The results can assist schools and career counsellors in developing career tests appropriate to the South African context resulting in advice that can be tailored to the specific needs of an individual, potentially enabling them to have increased job satisfaction later in life (Seabi, 2012). The objective of the study was to contribute to the more informed approaches in career decision making among young adults through exploring the different Ecological levels influencing career decision making.

1.8 Conclusion

A career encompasses an individual's whole life from identity and self-expression to social status and self-esteem. The Ecological Systems Theory was used because this theoretical framework best explained the influences of the environment on the individual. The Ecological Systems Theory allowed for the factors uncovered in the Literature review to be broken down into the different systemic levels of the framework. These were the Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem influences that

affected young adult's career decision making. The researcher used these different system levels of the framework to provide insight into the factors that influence the career decision making of third year Psychology students at the University of Pretoria. By exploring these factors, the researcher aimed to fill the knowledge gap in existing literature by allowing young South African adults' voices and experiences to be heard and to support career counsellors in developing appropriate career counselling interventions and career tests that could potentially increase job satisfaction.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Previous research established several important factors which influenced career decision making. The purpose of the Literature review was to provide a background of the difficulties and career decision making of young adults in the 21st Century. The various factors that affected young adults career choice was examined in relation to the theoretical framework which synthesised the various factors into Microsystem influences such as parental influence, personality and academic achievement; Mesosystem influences that included vocational assessments; monetary expectations and availability of employment classified under Exosystem influences and Macrosystem influences that included familial socio-economic status and cultural background. The factors uncovered in this chapter were aligned to the factors that influenced the career decision making of the participants in this study. These factors will therefore be discussed in this Literature review and will provide a background to the current research.

2.2. Career adaptability

Career adaptability has been defined as consisting of many different concepts. These concepts include features that are reflected in personality, motivation, attitude, behaviours, strengths and readiness (Hirschi et al., 2015). Career adaptability can also be referred to as “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions and traumas in their occupational roles” (Hirschi et al., 2015, p. 2). In addition, career adaptability can be viewed as a psychosocial strategy facilitating a connection between the person and the environment (Guan et al., 2016). Career adaptability consists of four adaptability resources: curiosity, control, confidence and concern (Guan et al., 2016). To adapt, individuals must become concerned about and plan for their future, exhibit curiosity by exploring future scenarios and exploring their environment, strengthen their personal control, responsibility and decisiveness over their vocational future (Cheung & Jin, 2016). Individuals must also increase their belief and confidence in the pursuit of their career goals and ability to solve career problems (Cheung & Jin, 2016). University students should be encouraged

to explore career possibilities in preparation of graduate employment as the workplace continues to rapidly change (Guan et al., 2016).

Recent upheavals in the global labour market, such as the coronavirus (Covid-19), increased international competition, legal contracts, as well as, widespread company restructuring and outsourcing (Rasyidi et al., 2021). All have contributed to maintained interest in career adaptability (Cheung & Jin, 2016). As a result, career choice, management and control have become of utmost importance. The ability to cope with unexpected changes within the work environment requires career adaptability (Cheung & Jin, 2016). Not only are adults required to possess the necessary mental and psychosocial resources to deal with the unexpected, career adaptability is also vital for students who will be confronting uncertain career possibilities (Šverko & Babarović, 2016). Career adaptability is an invaluable personal resource which allows students to successfully transition from learning to the working environment (Hirschi et al., 2015). As careers react to the upheavals of the global economy in the 21st Century, individuals are continually challenged to maintain a sense of self and social identity in order to cope with these unpredictable demands and changes in the vocational environment (Šverko & Babarović, 2016).

Individuals who were better at career adaptability than others shared several similarities. Individuals with high career adaptability were able to set goals for themselves and tended to spend more time nurturing, experimenting and planning ways to achieve their goals (Rasyidi et al., 2021). These individuals had a tendency to seek, proactively, new opportunities for growth in their resources and skills that could be used to manage their careers better (Rasyidi et al., 2021). Young adults who were able to show their level of career adaptability and were able to solve unexpected problems often gained an advantage over other candidates for a job (Hirschi et al., 2015).

2.3 Career decision making difficulties

Research predicted that Americans on average changed employment more than 14 times or were employed by more than 14 employers for the duration of their work lives

(Doyle, 2017). The inability to balance career and lifestyle, as well as, skills and abilities that had become redundant was cited as reasons for the quick movement between jobs (Vertsberger & Gati, 2016). Furthermore, employer and worker relations, in terms of social and contract agreements had radically changed (Maree, 2018). Thus, employees' ability to remain relevant and integrate their career and personal lifestyle have become of utmost importance (Maree, 2018).

Young adults, both nationally and internationally, are vulnerable to economic recessions and changes in the labour environment because they often lack the work experience and required skills (Yeung & Yang, 2020). Skills and expertise that cannot easily be replaced or reproduced by artificial intelligence (AI), computers or machines must be pursued (Storme et al., 2019). Research conducted in the United Kingdom predicted that 35% of jobs could be taken over by AI in the next 10 to 20 years (Davenport & Kalakota, 2019). Research has revealed that the careers lacking in social or emotional intelligence may be dominated by AI (Lu, 2022). Careers at risk included bookkeeping, data entry and receptionists (Lu, 2022). Medical and military sectors have already recorded an increase in the use of AI.

Medical machines and computer software allow surgeons to be more precise in surgery (Davenport & Kalakota, 2019). Computer aided diagnostics are replacing doctor /patient consultation and are inexpensive and easy to use (Davenport & Kalakota, 2019). Monitoring of individual wellbeing by medical devices has replaced medical general practitioners (Davenport & Kalakota, 2019). Medical professionals may be impelled towards jobs and specialties that are unique to human skills such as those requiring empathy (Davenport & Kalakota, 2019). In the military, use of drones is steadily increasing (Lu, 2022). AI machines are being used to detect patterns in military data and for building strategic plans for action (Van Den Bosch & Bronkhorst, 2018). AI can predict the success of these plans (Van Den Bosch & Bronkhorst, 2018). Furthermore, AI's are replacing soldiers, and thus, remove the psychological and emotional aspect in warfare (Van Den Bosch & Bronkhorst, 2018). AI can be mass produced unlike human soldiers. Despite this, AI cannot replace jobs that require emotional intelligence, empathy, strategic thinking, conflict resolution and negotiation (Lu, 2022). Careers in

fields such as human resources managers, writers, lawyers and psychologists could be more secure careers as technology and AI increases (Lu, 2022). Even with AI machines being continuously upgraded and reformed, AI cannot review literature, formulate problems, discuss results, evaluate and apply their practical and theoretical contributions to daily life, nor identify and understand research problems (Loebbecke et al., 2020). Given this research, young adults are burdened with a difficult and distressing task of deciding on a career that will not be replaced by AI.

Career indecision reflects the challenges or difficulties which prevent individuals from making correct career choices (Vertsberger & Gati, 2016). The difficulties in career decision making may arise when individuals begin to doubt if they have made the right choices or experience frustration within a chosen career (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018). Attaining a degree in higher education does not guarantee a position in the labour market anymore, therefore, individuals are tasked with choosing a career that will also provide them with employment (Yeung & Yang, 2020). The frustration could be the result of incompetency to master the fundamentals of the career, or perhaps, the realisation that future prospects within the chosen career are not profitable (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018). Individuals may even discover another career that is of more interest to them (Yeung & Yang, 2020). Career indecision among students was a result of their lack of knowledge about the career world or their lack in knowledge of exactly what their chosen field of study entailed (Vertsberger & Gati, 2016). Failure in satisfactory informative career counselling or having had no career counselling could result in career indecision (Maree, 2018). Interference or pressure from parents, peers, uncertainty about career choice replacement by AI or personal problems also impact career decision making (Storme et al., 2019).

2.4 Career decision making, unemployment and mental health

As a result of constant changes in the career environment, both current and future workers face increased insecurity, which in turn, increases the difficulty in long term career decision making (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018). A successful transition into the working environment is important for young adults to gain a social identity and sense of

self (Yeung & Yang, 2020). Research has shown that unemployment at a young age has lasting negative effects on an individual's career, leading to poor mental health and even suicide (Yeung & Yang, 2020). Half of all young adults aged 15- 25 years in South Africa are unemployed (De Lannoy et al., 2020). This is partly due to the demand for higher levels of skills in the workplace as a result of South Africa's economy (De Lannoy et al., 2020). Although South Africa has a high percentage of individuals completing high school, there is a lower percentage of individuals who complete tertiary education or who acquire higher level skills (De Lannoy et al., 2020). This places young adults at a disadvantage as they experience long durations of unemployment, frustration and become discouraged (Yeung & Yang, 2020).

In addition, some researchers suggested that high unemployment levels are due to the high income and financial expectations that young adults have compared to what is realistic within the labour market (De Lannoy et al., 2020). Other evidence revealed that young adults waited longer to join the labour market as a lack of work experience hindered them from securing their first job (De Lannoy et al., 2020). Employers were often reluctant to hire inexperienced individuals as unskilled workers increased training costs (De Lannoy et al., 2020). A study conducted in the Western Cape in 2017 revealed that Middle-class young adults with some work experience in high school made a better transition into the labour market than those with no experience (De Lannoy et al., 2020). Unemployment caused individuals to lose control over their lives and their future, causing mental and emotional distress (Yeung & Yang, 2020). In addition, financial difficulties may have caused some individuals to relocate, disrupting their social and emotional ties, thus, causing a significant decrease in their mental health (Yeung & Yang, 2020).

Research has shown that the longer individuals remained unemployed, the stronger the impact of the mental illness experienced (De Lannoy et al., 2020). Moreover, even after reemployment, individuals stated that their level of satisfaction did not return or increase (De Lannoy et al., 2020). This creates an extremely stressful and alarming burden for young adults who feel the need to make an appropriate career choice that will not leave them unemployed when they have finished their studies.

2.5 Career counselling

Hartung (2015), stated that “difficulties with career decision ranks among the most common reasons people seek career counseling” (p.1). In order to remain employable, adaptable and secure in a career environment, individuals should develop and use the following 5 critical skills: “critical thinking, curiosity, creativity, collaboration and communication” (Maree, 2018, p. 463). Career counsellors are encouraged to analyse developments associated with the Fifth Information Wave and the Fourth Industrial Revolution with reference to its impact on the global economy (Esbroeck, 2008). Career counsellors will, therefore, be able to assist both employed, unemployed, as well as, students and prospective workers to withstand the uncertainty, insecurities and challenges that exist due to the constant changes in the career environment (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018). At present, the possibility to help individuals in solving career decisions at different stages of their careers has become a principle part of career counselling (Maree, 2018).

Career research has developed several interventions aimed at career indecision. One such intervention aimed to identify a hierarchy of causes of career indecision, and then initiate suitable and appropriate strategies and interventions to deal with the perceived causes (Maree, 2018). Other interventions linked career indecision to problems with self-efficacy (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018). In addition, studies on adaptive behaviours within the work or personal contexts, as well as, factors relating to career decision making and inquiry have been investigated (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018). Although no consensus had been reached on a theoretical approach to career indecision, many researchers recommended the Career Construction Theory (Savikas, 2005) and Life Construction Theory (Guichard, 2009) to solve career indecision. Such theories utilized young individual’s Microsystem, Mesosystem and Macrosystem career life stories which shaped their career development. These theories also aided in resolving career indecision by altering individual’s career related decision-making style, reflecting and reasoning (Maree, 2018).

Career counsellors must recognise the importance of using career decision making strategies that are specific to the individual. Information learned about the adaptability of different strategies may be successfully used to educate the client on making career decisions (Maree, 2018). This information may instill greater confidence within the client to achieve their career goals (Storme et al., 2019). Moreover, use of the client's career decision making "profile" (the extent of factors which shape career decision making) allows the counsellor to adapt counselling interventions more accurately to the individual client's career decision making process (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018, p.5). Career counsellors may guide their clients towards the right decision, as well as, help them understand and overcome the problems that interfere with their career decision making (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018). Since career choice relies on the individual process of deciding occupational alternatives, the career counsellor can better aid the client's career decision making by awareness of each client's unique perceptions and difficulties (Storme et al., 2019). Comparing and evaluating different factors, career counselling intervention procedures and techniques should also aid the individual's self-awareness (Storme et al., 2019). As the individual is able to recognise the core aspects of their identity, career decisions and lifestyle decisions will be influenced by this identity clarity (Maree, 2018). Thus, career counsellors would need to be successful in not only guiding the client towards a right decision but also would have played an integral role in supporting and leading them to a more meaningful life and managing their career more effectively (Storme et al., 2019).

2.5.1 Globalisation and its effect on career decision making

Globalisation refers to organisations and businesses that are operating on an international or global scale (Callaghan, 2021). The need for career counsellors is increasing as the employment environment is continuously changing. School curricula worldwide adjusted to the change in the global market (Yates & Young, 2010). Subjects such as home economics and sewing have been discontinued and replaced by subjects more aligned to the global market such as business studies and foreign languages, with French and English becoming in some countries, compulsory subjects for all students (Yates & Young, 2010). This revealed that schools and governments were preparing

young adults for employment in the global market. This impacted careers and the workplace as employment for unskilled workers and public sector workers was decreasing (Callaghan, 2021). Thus, it was increasingly difficult to find employment unless individuals could find work within the global market. Global organisations like Amazon, Samsung, Apple and Tesla, whose production process was broken down using various countries for each stage of the product cycle, was partly the cause of the decrease in workers (Callaghan, 2021). This created a work environment which demanded many workers, which in turn, increased competition for the same job (Callaghan, 2021). Consequently, these global organisations could afford to sell their products at a low price, prompting counties and individuals to import their products instead of manufacturing them domestically (Callaghan, 2021). Thus, a situation was created in which even less job opportunities existed.

In order to access opportunities for employment, individuals created their own employment by creating their own businesses (Lez'er et al., 2019). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d), an entrepreneur is an individual who takes on the financial risks of setting up a business or businesses in the hope of making a profit. Young adults who were willing to change and adapt quickly and efficiently to the modern world have the traits to become entrepreneurs (Lez'er et al., 2019). In a study conducted by Lez'er et al. (2019), the results revealed that 18.1% of young adults aged 18 – 30 years were already planning to start their own businesses, with only licenses, permits and official formalities hindering them. Other research suggested that countries with increased levels of entrepreneurs tended to have lower unemployment rates (Liñán et al., 2011). In a study conducted by Budlender (2011), where 8% of individuals in South Africa were entrepreneurs or self-employed, 88% of women and 83% of men in the country were then viewed as employed. The number of entrepreneurs had increased to 11.9% by 2019 (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2019). Research by Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington (2019) stated that there had been an increase in the number of individuals who viewed entrepreneurship as a viable career option. This percentage had increased from 68.4% in 2017 to 78.8% in 2019 (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2019). Their research also revealed that 60.4% of individuals believed that South Africa had good opportunities for entrepreneurial businesses (Bowmaker-Falconer &

Herrington, 2019). These individuals also believed that they possessed the necessary capabilities and skills to run a successful entrepreneurial business (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2019). This number was likely to increase as the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown caused numerous businesses to close down and caused thousands of South Africans to lose their jobs. Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington (2019) suggested that promoting entrepreneurship as a viable career option, especially to young adults, could help South Africa to restore its economy that was greatly negatively affected due to the pandemic.

Research confirmed that contemporary young people had a higher internal locus of control than previous generations (Asante & Affum-Osei, 2019). An internal locus of control meant that these individuals believed that their actions resulted in rewards or positive outcomes (Asante & Affum-Osei, 2019). This motivated them to be more proactive and aware of entrepreneurial opportunities (Asante & Affum-Osei, 2019). An example of this was Kamaria Warren who, at the age of 7 years old, had the business idea of creating stationary that represented Black and Brown girls and sold over 14 000 notebooks, notepads and backpacks in a year (Lodge, 2015). Thus, young people had inherent positive traits to find and anticipate public needs (Liñán et al., 2011). These qualities provided them with the perfect character and traits for a career in entrepreneurship. It is important to nurture these traits in young individuals by providing entrepreneurial education that could help young entrepreneurs have more detailed knowledge about it as a career path and the specific requirements needed to attain a career in entrepreneurship (Liñán et al., 2011). Such knowledge could help many new entrepreneurs effectively begin their businesses. Entrepreneurship is a very promising area for young adults to gain employment.

As a result, career counsellors and career assessments need new strategies which understand the new generation's creativity and mindset. Career counsellors will need to provide accurate and realistic indicators and information on unconventional careers in an increasingly globalised employment environment.

2.5.2 Technological advancements in career counselling

Due to advancements in technology and the rise of virtual counselling, online counselling can be used in addition to, or in lieu of, traditional face-to-face counselling. Face-to-face career counselling can be described as an active interaction between the client and the counsellor regarding career related issues (Pordelan et al., 2020). Online counselling, on the other hand, can be defined as counselling services where the client and the counsellor communicate through the internet (Pordelan et al., 2020). Online counselling offers a valuable tool for counsellors as computer assisted career guidance systems could aid data collection and analysis (Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2022). In addition, these systems could provide relevant and useful information to those in need of career counselling services and who may be unable to have a traditional face-to-face session (Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2022). The American Counselling Association also provided career counsellors with training on ethical considerations and concerns regarding online counselling, suggesting that this type of counselling is increasing in use (Santilli et al., 2021). There are many advantages to online counselling that were not available in the past. Online counselling increases access to career counsellors and online support (Pordelan et al., 2020). The required tests are constantly available and the results can be interpreted with speed and accuracy (Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2022). Clients can also access experts with different skills from different regions of the country and reduce the cost of transportation for the counsellor and the client (Pordelan et al., 2020). Career counsellors are also able to make use of audio-visual materials such as slides, animations and videos that can be used to draw the client's attention to important factors in their career decision making, highlighting values, talents and interests (Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2022). Moreover, counsellors have recourse to a variety of client-related sources, including updated information on institutions, training, labour markets, personalized feedback and standard assessments (Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2022).

2.5.2.1 Online counselling verses face-to-face counselling

In a study conducted by Pordelan et al. (2020), the effects of face-to-face counselling and online career counselling were investigated. The study revealed that online counselling and face-to-face counselling had a significantly positive effect on self-efficacy and career decision making of individuals and no differences between face-to-face and online counselling could be established from the results (Pordelan et al., 2020). This suggested that online career counselling provided the same results as face-to-face counselling. Similarly, results of a study conducted by Nota et al. (2016) found the participants in the online intervention group had a higher level of curiosity, concern, and life satisfaction than participants in the face-to-face intervention group. Therefore, there were no negative consequences for individuals who chose online career counselling. Pordelan et al. (2020) emphasised the need for career counselling services to be available to individuals during high school and university. These services could assist individuals' understanding of self-awareness such as their personality, skills, interest and talents (Pordelan et al., 2020). In addition, counselling services could further assist individuals in their assessment of career opportunities helping them understand and ascertain employment requirements and trends (Pordelan et al., 2020). Moreover, individuals would be able to better plan their career by setting goals and looking for jobs that fitted their skills and interests (Pordelan et al., 2020). Online counselling could become a more favourable choice than face-to-face counselling as more scientific advancements, investments and research are conducted to improve online counselling (Pordelan & Hosseinian, 2022).

Researchers noted that the Covid-19 pandemic created a situation that had greatly increased young adults' uncertainty and distress over future career planning (Santilli et al., 2021). Results of Santilli et al.'s (2021) study indicated that around the world, 17.4% of young adults aged 18 – 19 years old had stopped working since the onset of the pandemic. The use of group – based career counselling during the pandemic was advantageous to young adults as it provided potential self – efficacy, social skills, peer support and self-esteem (Santilli et al., 2021). Sharing one's experiences with a group also built self-confidence (Santilli et al., 2021). The results from Nota et al.'s (2016)

study indicated that participants from the online intervention group revealed increased aspirations for the future, self-determination, understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and life satisfaction. Similarly, Santilli et al. (2021) conducted a study using online group counselling sessions to help young adults formulate realistic ideas for future career planning. Their results revealed that the group counselling sessions increased the participants' resilience, career adaptability and ability to identify realistic actions for their future career (Santilli et al., 2021).

Results of various studies confirmed that all the participants in their studies viewed online career counselling as useful. These findings revealed that online career counselling can positively and sufficiently help young adults who are in need of career support during times of distress and uncertainty.

2.6 Decision making as a cognitive process

Human behaviour is characterized by one of the most fundamental cognitive processes known as decision making (Wang & Chiew, 2008). This cognitive process involves choosing a preferred course of action from among a set of alternative choices which are based on selected strategies (Esbroeck, 2008). Researchers have cited decision making as one of the 37 essential cognitive processes in the brain (Wang & Ruhe, 2007). Three essential cognitive factors for decision making involve decision goals, a selection of alternative options and a set of choices or strategies (Wang & Chiew, 2008). The fact that the cognitive process of decision making occurs constantly (every few seconds) consciously or subconsciously makes decision making a fundamental mental process (Esbroeck, 2008). According to Wang and Ruhe (2008), the following mental processes may informally describe the cognitive process of decision making (Wang & Ruhe, 2007, p. 81):

1. To understand the decision making problem and then to “identify the decision goal in terms of Object and its Attributes”.
2. To search for alternative solutions in the Long Term Memory layer of the brain and identify criteria for practical decision making strategies.

3. To measure the alternative solutions and criteria and calculate if the search should continue.
4. To establish a set of decisions obtained in the previous searches of alternative solutions and useful criteria for decision making.
5. To select the decision(s) that are favourable based on the individual's expectation of satisfaction.
6. To reveal the decisions in a new sub Object-Attribute-Relation model.
7. To memorize and remember the sub Object-Attribute-Relation model in the Long Term Memory.

Furthermore, decision making as a cognitive process relies on the assumption that human intelligence and knowledge are constructed through a process that continuously involves understanding and adapting to various inputs in the brain (Wang & Ruhe, 2007). This information is integrated and transformed into cognitive structures (Borges et al., 2020). Thus, social constructs and representations can be significant to the individual (Borges et al., 2020). The importance of new ideas and practices can act as a guide to communication and direct individual behaviour (Borges et al., 2020). This includes establishing a sense of identity, values, beliefs and sense of belonging to a community (Borges et al., 2020).

2.7 Career decision making of young adults internationally and in South Africa

Young adults found it difficult to make career decisions that satisfied their personal, economic and intellectual goals, either because they did not have the knowledge or means to explore different career options or they did not have knowledge about the prerequisites required for a specific career (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). In a longitudinal survey conducted within the institutions of higher learning in South Africa in 2012, 45% of students dropped out of these institutions (Seabi, 2012). The reasons given included: wrong course choices and inability to meet the requirements of the curriculum (Seabi, 2012). This was supported by additional studies including those of Moodley and Singh (2015) which addressed South African Universities' student dropout rates. Of the 15 participants interviewed, 12 maintained they did not receive adequate advice when

choosing a career, citing this as one of the many reasons for their dropout of university (Moodley & Singh, 2015). Similar results were found in Manik's (2014) study which indicated that no career guidance or inadequate career guidance prior to entry into university appeared to contribute to students' dropout. One individual stated that "at school I aspired to be an accountant. I got straight A's for Accounting and Maths and thought this [career] was for me but I think I needed to know more about this career. The level of accounting at school is very different from what is taught at university" (Manik, 2014, p. 150). This showed that students were unaware of how to select subjects or modules correctly at university level and were also unaware of what subject choices in high school would prepare them for university.

A study conducted by Bhattacharya (2015), indicated that students were guided by three major factors when considering a career trajectory. These were social reasons, intrinsic reasons and extrinsic reasons (Bhattacharya, 2015). Social reasons referred to the improvement and growth an individual's career would have on society and the individual's interest in work that was helpful to a particular cause (Bhattacharya, 2015). In a study by Sinai-Glazer (2020), social workers and their clients spoke about the importance of establishing a helpful and loving relationship between them. Many of the clients described their relationship with the social worker as a familial relationship where the social worker provided a positive image of what family members should be to those who had traumatic experiences with their own family members (Sinai-Glazer, 2020). The understanding that an individual could have a positive and helping effect on others may steer young adults into a more altruistic career path. Intrinsic reasons were when an individual's skills, expertise and knowledge guided them towards a certain career (Bhattacharya, 2015). This can be seen in Abe and Chikoko's (2020) study where one participant commented; "I am a very logical thinker and naturally very curious. These traits lead me to study STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and makes learning easier as I am interested in what I'm learning" (p. 9). In another study conducted by Archer et al. (2020), females aged 10 – 18 years old who aspired to be engineers were unique in their way of thinking and were confident in their academic and scientific abilities. Thus, intrinsic qualities were important when considering a career trajectory. Extrinsic reasons included financial benefits, holidays,

low stress environments and prestige (Bhattacharya, 2015). In Moeketsi and Mgutshini's (2014) study, participants stated that they had abandoned their study choice when they realised that the financial benefits they had anticipated were no longer possible. In another study conducted on the hotel and hospitality industries, participants stated that they were discouraged from pursuing a career in that industry due to long working hours, low pay, low job status and instability of seasonal employment (Zainal et al., 2012). Evidently, extrinsic reasoning was a major factor in the career decision making process.

Career choice influences both economic position and overall life fulfilment. As such, young adults entering the workplace are tasked with selecting a career that will have lifelong implications (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). An uninformed choice at this stage has the possibility to lead to dissatisfaction and frustration later in life (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). A study conducted on South African nurses, found that 35.7% were dissatisfied with the opportunity for further advancement in their career (Klopper et al., 2012). A further 66.1% were dissatisfied with their wages which was a critical predictor for job dissatisfaction (Klopper et al., 2012). Nearly half of young South African adults were unhappy in their jobs and were looking to make changes (Bizcommunity, 2018). Universum SA's survey on job satisfaction, found that 47% of the 22 000 respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied with their job and were ready to move away from their current employers (Bizcommunity, 2018). Some of the key reasons for dissatisfaction among young adults were mismatched expectations in career development and the inability to do meaningful and creative work (Bizcommunity, 2018).

Students may base their choices on external influences (Exosystem and Macrosystem influences) such as monetary expectation, employability or cultural background (Chinyamurindi, 2016; Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013; Quinter & Edwards, 2011). Intrapersonal influences (Microsystem influences) such as personality (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014) and interpersonal influences (Mesosystem influences) such as vocational assessments (Maree & Taylor, 2016) could be significant. Microsystem influences such as parental influence could pressure students greatly. Such influences

could also have a considerable impact on career choice as some parents may steer their children toward a career path that is better suited for the family needs (Taylor et al., 2004). In Abe and Chikoko's (2020) study, 100% of the participants stated that their family had some influence in their career choice and acknowledged they made the best career decisions when in their family's learning environment or around their families. In addition, due to parental pressure, some individuals chose a career that did not match their personality which caused dissatisfaction later in life (Louw & Louw, 2015).

Gender may also impact career decision making and the roles of men and women may be different in some cultures (Hill & Giles, 2014). Some cultures encourage men and women to pursue the same career choice, such as the American culture (Buser et al., 2012). In other cultures, however, women who pursue the same careers as men are often belittled as in the Thai culture (Wesarat et al., 2016).

Despite the growing body of knowledge and evidence relating to career decision making, research which specifically addresses South African young adults and their experiences to career decision making is lacking (Seabi, 2012). A knowledge gap exists with even less having been written about the factors used in career counselling to help individuals achieve a career, particularly in South Africa (Seabi, 2012). Given the high failure and dropout rates in South Africa, it is necessary to explore and understand the factors that lead young adults towards a certain career in order to minimise dropout and increase career satisfaction (Seabi, 2012). In reality, a career choice is often decided with little awareness or experience of the real world (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Young adults are forced to make critical career decisions at a stage when they often do not realise the importance of their decision and may not be informed fully about their choices. Some researchers have expressed the importance of career counsellors, teachers and parents to have dialogue and communication with young adults about their career choice (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). This entailed creating awareness of prospective career fields, shortlisting jobs that aligned with their interests and preferences and exchanging views between parents, teachers and career counsellors (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). In so doing, an environment where the individual has all the information needed to make an accurate career choice is established.

2.8 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework utilised in this study was the Ecological Systems Theory. This theory allowed for the factors uncovered to be broken down into the different systemic levels of the framework.

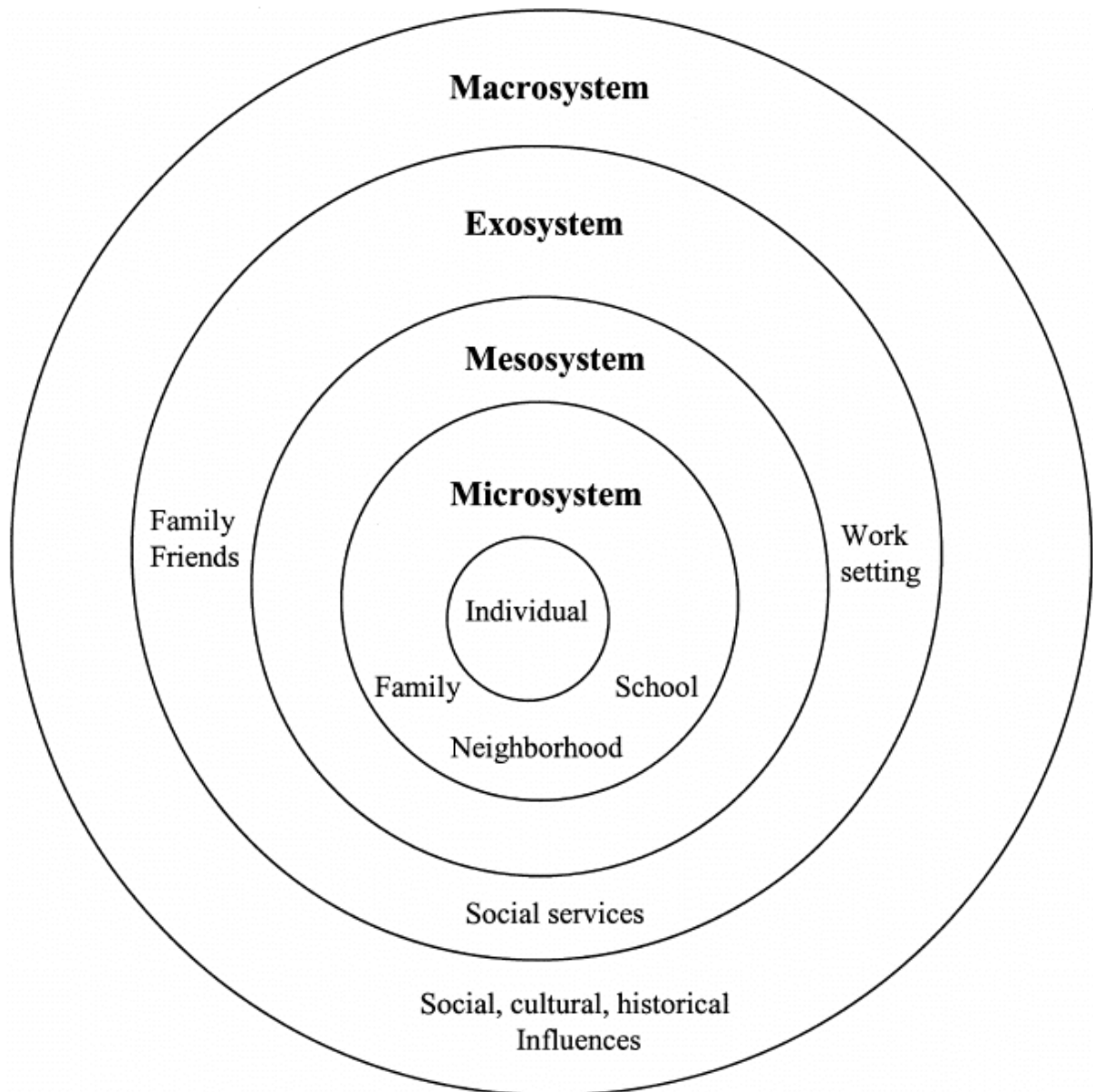
2.8.1 Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1965) Ecological Systems Theory offers a framework by which individuals' relationships within communities and society at large can be examined (Darling, 2007). The theory was chosen for this study as it explained the internal and external factors that influenced an individual's career choice since it took into account the individual and the context in which the individual lived (Darling, 2007).

The theory identifies five environmental systems which impact how an individual acts and the decisions they make, including decisions regarding career choice (Darling, 2007). Bronfenbrenner sees the individual as existing in several different systems, all of which interact in a complex manner (Darling, 2007). At the centre of the systems is the individual (age, gender, education level, personality traits etc.) (Buser et al., 2012). Moving outwards into the Microsystem, factors include the individual and other people that are involved in his/her immediate environment (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). The Microsystem has a significant impact on the individual as the individual interacts with this system the most, from birth to adulthood (Darling, 2007). It relates to the people the individual has direct personal contact with, as well as, groups, such as family and schooling, with direct impact on an individual's development (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). The Mesosystem involves reciprocal interaction between various Microsystems and can include schools and neighbourhoods and interaction between parents and educators (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). The Exosystem represents the social setting surrounding the individual and the links between social settings that do not involve the individual but still influence them, such as employment opportunities, competition in the field and job security (Chinyamurindi, 2016; Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014; Weiten & Hassim, 2016). Lastly, the Macrosystem refers to cultures and subcultures each of which has its

own beliefs and value systems (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). The overarching cultural systems impact the interior systems (Darling, 2007; Dodge & Welderufael, 2014).

Fig. 1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Swanson et al. (2005). *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory* [Photograph].
Researchgate. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579403000361>

The Ecological Systems Theory best explained the interpersonal, intrapersonal and external characteristics that played a role in an individual's choice of career. The interview questions in this study were structured so that answers could be examined in relation to these systems, identifying how factors given by third year Psychology students at the University of Pretoria fitted into this framework and how the findings compared to those in previous studies. This allowed the research to have an element of understanding regarding the individual and the context in which that individual lived to determine what made them choose their career path.

2.9 Factors influencing career decision making based on the theoretical framework

Based on the Ecological Systems Theory framework, the factors influencing career decision making can be broken down into the Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem influences.

2.9.1 Microsystem influences on career decision making

The Microsystem influences uncovered were gender and gender stereotyped roles, parental influence, personality and academic achievement.

2.9.1.1 Gender and gender stereotyped roles

Gender-stereotyped notions have and continue to influence the career decisions of young adults (Buser et al., 2012). Findings by Hills and Giles (2014), investigating American tradition and cultural attitudes towards gender roles, found that American women remained economically, socially, and politically disadvantaged when compared to men. In Hills and Giles's (2014) study, men earned more and worked longer hours than did women. Men were more likely than women to have a degree and women were more likely to be married and have children, which affected their hours of work and salary (Hills & Giles, 2014). American women were regarded as passive, while men were regarded as active, with the ability to make rational decisions (Hill & Giles, 2014). These traditional American views were similar to South African traditional views

(Seabi, 2012). Both cultures established characteristics of strength, decisiveness and independence as masculine while empathy, communication, and collaboration were viewed as feminine attributes (Seabi, 2012). In an interview with 13 females in Public Relations in South Africa, most of the participants stated that women were able to communicate better than men and were therefore, more suitable for a career in Public Relations (Seabi, 2012). In addition, a study in Thailand, indicated that men were perceived as more industrious than women (Wesarat et al., 2016). Thai women were still expected to be responsible for household duties and were expected to work as nurses and teachers, while men were known to have jobs as police and military officers (Wesarat et al., 2016). Similarly, in South Africa, women tended towards stereotyped gender roles (Rarieya et al., 2014).

Stereotypical gender roles were present at a young age as daily primary school practices may have discouraged young women from pursuing their studies in male- dominated subjects such as sciences (Rarieya et al., 2014). Rather, females were encouraged towards gender normal roles with regards to domestic and physical labour such as keeping the classroom clean (Rarieya et al., 2014). These gender stereotypes were central characteristics of exclusionary practices that resulted in girls underachieving, as well as, leaving school (Rarieya et al., 2014). This was confirmed in Lourens' (2014) study where questionnaire responses over a four-year period (2011-2014) found that the main barriers faced by female employees in male-dominated workplaces were: sexism, lack of peer respect, not being taken seriously, gender discrimination, not being able to cope with the hostile environment, being underestimated and seen as weak. Most studies affirm gender- matched careers in order to avoid stigmatisation, inequality or embarrassment (Lourens, 2014). Work environments that women considered uncomfortable affected their choice of career and their aspirations in their career (Lourens, 2014). Hills and Giles's (2014) study also showed gender differences in the speciality preference of medical students. Males were more likely to be interested in surgery, while females were more likely to be interested in general practice, paediatrics and gynaecology. These results were similar to Buser et al.'s (2012) results in which a questionnaire was administered to 397 final year high school students from four schools in and around Washington. The results showed that 40% of males chose the science

profile, while only 17% of females chose the same profile (Buser et al., 2012). Only 8% of males chose the humanities profile, while 15% of females made this choice (Buser et al., 2012).

In contrast, a study by Gati and Perez (2014), found that the gender gap decreased in 31 features related to career choice in 2010 as compared to 1990. North American women were increasingly challenging the traditional stereotypes and were accepted into male-dominated career positions (Buser et al, 2012). They were not influenced by gender stereotypes, peers or society in choosing a career (Buser et al., 2012). In their study, 97.4% of women chose a career in Engineering and Technology because it provided an opportunity to do interesting work and 73% agreed that they chose this career because they were good at maths and science in school (Buser et al., 2012). Similarly, in South Africa, initiatives such as Women in Engineering Leadership Association (WELA) were launched in order to encourage women to pursue careers in male-dominated careers (Lourens, 2014). The goal of this initiative was the personal, professional and academic, growth of women in engineering, thereby, helping to attract and retain women in a career position where they would normally experience fear and insecurity about how they would be perceived and treated in this traditionally male-dominated field (Lourens, 2014).

Lourens (2014) stated that one way to counteract gender stereotypes was to have a mentor or role model. A role model can be described as a person who embodies the ideas or successes that an individual finds attractive and desires to imitate these attributes and achievements (García – Holgado et al., 2020). According to Lourens (2014), research revealed that access to these role models and mentors seemed to have influenced the individual's academic achievement, career choice, job performance and promotions. In order to investigate this, García – Holgado et al. (2020) created a mobile application where real women from different backgrounds shared their life stories, achievements and working experiences in STEM as a way to facilitate role models for young girls. All of the participants in their study agreed that having a role model in a field of study they were likely to pursue had a positive and motivating effect to continue their career path in that field (García – Holgado et al., 2020). In addition, men are also

moving toward more female dominated careers such as nursing, dental assistants, receptionists, librarians and archivists (McDowell, 2015). In a study conducted in the United Kingdom, the number of men entering nursing increased from 9.2% to 10.7% in just five years (McDowell, 2015). In order for gender stereotyping to decline, society needs to stop viewing careers as either male or female (McDowell, 2015).

2.9.1.2 Parental influence

Career decision making can be influenced by the family environment (Dodge & Welderufael, 2014). Parents are influential figures who, intentionally or unintentionally, influence what occupations their children become exposed to and the career opportunities and expectations exerted on them (Taylor et al., 2004). Some studies have shown that individuals are often reluctant to pursue a career that their parents disapprove of (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). This could also be seen in Dodge and Welderufael's (2014) study, where they used the Ecology of Human Performance Model (EHP) to examine the relationship between the individual, their environment and their activities including choices made when choosing a career path. The results showed that parents were a barrier to career choice as unfavourable attitudes towards a certain career impacted the students' choice (Dodge & Welderufael, 2014). This would create a learning environment for children that motivated them to pursue the same careers as their parents (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). Of the 300 respondents who were selected randomly from 10 secondary schools in Nigeria, in Olaosebikan and Olusakin's (2014) study, 48.36% of the respondents agreed that their parents influenced their career path and that their parents' line of business had influence over their career choice.

Similarly, researchers agreed that the occupation orientation and aspirations of parents made children familiarise themselves with the same occupational values and roles of their parents (Dodge & Welderufael, 2014). This was in part due to the lack of information given in high school, causing students to turn to their family, peers and media for information on a career path (Dodge & Welderufael, 2014). The results from Dodge and Welderufael's (2014) study also revealed that a majority of the students stated that they had conversations with their parents, teachers and peers or observed

their parents at work to gain ideas about potential careers. This was supported by the findings in Taylor et al.'s (2004) study in which a survey was administered to parents of incoming first year university students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The results revealed that the son's occupational status was similar to the father's occupation. Similarly, the daughter's occupational aspirations often resembled that of their mother's (Taylor et al., 2004). This was found to be due to parental expectations, as well as, parental support and encouragement for their children to pursue careers that were similar to their own (Taylor et al., 2004).

2.9.1.3 Personality

Although personality assessment is a quantitative measure, it was important to include in this study as many researchers believed that career choice was an expression of one's personality (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). These assessments determined internal factors such as personality type and skills (Weiten & Hassim, 2016).

Personality can be defined as individual characteristics that influence cognitions and behaviours in different contexts (Louw & Louw, 2015). Personality assessment aims to identify salient personality characteristics and match these to the requirements of occupations (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). The Big Five personality traits of Goldberg are Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism (Louw & Louw, 2015). According to Louw and Louw (2015), the Big Five personality traits can be described as follows:

1. Openness to experience is the inclination to be interested in variety, independent and imaginative
2. Conscientiousness is the affinity to be disciplined and prepared
3. Extraversion is the propensity to be fun-loving, warm and sociable
4. Agreeableness is the tendency to be trusting, supportive and sympathetic
5. Neuroticism is the likelihood to be self - blaming anxious and emotionally unstable

Research suggested that there was a relationship between personality type and career choices (M'manga et al., 2019). In a study of 3 large-scale universities where 270 Malawian undergraduate students were randomly selected, The Big Five Inventory (BFI-10), General Decision-Making Styles Questionnaire (DGMS) and Career Expectation Questionnaire were administered (M'manga et al., 2019). The results revealed that science students scored higher in areas of management, competition, learning, entrepreneurship and freedom in career expectation when compared to liberal arts students (M'manga et al., 2019). Females exhibited higher extroversion than males in their career expectation (M'manga et al., 2019). Thus, personality traits influenced both personal and gender characteristics.

2.9.1.4 Academic achievement

Academic achievement is also an important factor in career choice. In Myburgh's (2005) study, 89% of the respondents stated that their mathematical skills, hard work and academic success were the principle factors that had influenced their career decision making. However, academic achievement was also found to negatively influence career perceptions (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). In their study, Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014) found that the majority of the respondents (78%) identified the heavy workload and thus, the possibility of not achieving high grades during their studies as the principle reason respondents would not successfully complete their studies. Unrealistic expectations of high grades and personal goals also resulted in failure to pursue expected careers as (44%) attributed high expectation of grades to possible failure (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). When they did not meet these grades, respondents became discouraged to continue (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014).

2.9.2 Mesosystem influences on career decision making

Vocational assessments were included in the Mesosystem influences on career decision making.

2.9.2.1 Vocational assessment

Similar to personality, vocational assessment is a quantitative measure and was important to include in this study as many individuals received vocational assessments during high school to determine their skills and aptitude.

Vocational Psychology focuses on appropriate career decisions through the use of tests (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). Maree and Taylor (2016) stated that gender, cultural, socio-economic and educational factors should always be considered for career counselling to remain relevant. Yet, only a few psychometric tests in South Africa have been developed for South Africa's diverse population (Maree & Taylor, 2016). Thus, the results of tests that did not take into account a South African context were less accurate and less helpful to South African students. These assessments directed young adults into a career that best fitted with their personality type (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). Therefore, it was important to include vocational assessments in this study determining careers. Maree and Taylor (2016) stated that it was important to identify and evaluate the factors that could predict career success the best as this could help individuals make appropriate career choices. The researchers created the Maree Career Matrix (MCM) and administered it to 1106 Grade 11 learners in Gauteng (Maree & Taylor, 2016). The results revealed that the MCM would aid career counsellors and their clients in their career decision making and help individuals choose careers that would allow them to have successful lives and make meaningful contributions to society (Maree & Taylor, 2016).

There is a lack of vocational and career services available to young people in South Africa. According to Maree (2012), most learners in South Africa, especially those from a low socio-economic status, received little or no career counselling at school. Thus, career choice was based on inadequate information (Maree, 2012). Maree (2012) argued that measures of achievement, personality and aptitude were developed for use mainly within the White population, along with few tests available that take race into account. It was, therefore, important to develop career tests appropriate for South Africa's diverse population (Maree & Taylor, 2016). These would assist individuals in making

viable career decisions (Maree & Taylor, 2016). Thus, the need for assessments that could evaluate young people's career adaptability and could allow career counsellors to aid individuals' ability to adapt to changes in work contexts, learning and studying (Maree & Taylor, 2016). This would give them a wider selection of careers for which they would be better suited (Maree & Taylor, 2016). This dissertation assisted in developing career tests appropriate for South Africa by exploring factors that influenced career decision making. Advice could then be adapted to the specific needs of an individual and their background.

2.9.3 Exosystem influences on career decision making

Exosystem influences on career decision making included monetary expectation and employability.

2.9.3.1 Monetary expectation

Monetary expectations are influential in the decision of a career (Quinter & Edwards, 2011). Quinter and Edwards (2011) administered a questionnaire and carried out interviews with their respondents. The results revealed that 46% of respondents indicated that a lack of financial assistance was a critical factor in their career choice (Quinter & Edwards, 2011). In addition, earning potential influenced career choices as, on average, 58% of the respondents chose being financially rewarded and successful as their primary goal in career choice, meaning career choice was determined by potential income (Quinter & Edwards, 2011).

2.9.3.2 Employability

Factors that influenced career decision making were the availability of employment, academic achievement and monetary expectation of a career. Myburgh (2005) noted that job security and job availability were important deciders of a career choice. Research conducted by Myburgh (2005) at the University of Pretoria resulted in 478 questionnaires completed by first-year accounting students. The respondents' profiles

revealed that Asians represented 9.9%, blacks 21.2% and whites 68.9% of the sample (Myburgh, 2005). All three racial groups ranked employability as the most advantageous factor of an accounting career and job security as the second most favourable factor of their career decision (Myburgh, 2005). In addition, Chinyamurindi (2016) conducted unstructured interviews with 40 participants that were registered with the University of South Africa and found that employability and employment security were important factors in the respondents' career decisions. One respondent stated that they "considered the high unemployment rate in the country, so for me, a career in media was to be avoided [in] favour [of] something more employable" (Chinyamurindi, 2016, p. 395).

Similar results were found in Kenya as part of Quinter and Edwards's (2011) study which included 332 high school students. A large number of students (47.3%) strongly agreed that availability of employment influenced their career choice (Quinter & Edwards, 2011). In addition, employment security emerged with more than 50% agreeing that employment security influenced their decision (Quinter & Edwards, 2011). These similarities confirmed that students' career choices and decisions were influenced by what a particular career was likely to give them in return.

2.9.4 Macrosystem influences on career decision making

The Macrosystem influences on career decision making consisted of familial socio-economic status and cultural background.

2.9.4.1 Familial socio-economic status

Mhlongo and O'Neill (2013) suggested that families from a low socio-economic status may have limited access to basic needs, such as food and a good education. This was likely to have a limiting effect on such an individual's career decision due to inaccessibility of necessary information and skills (Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013). This was evident in Mhlongo and O'Neill's (2013) study where semi structured interviews were conducted with 15 respondents in their first-year of study at UKZN,

Pietermaritzburg campus in the Faculty of Humanities. The results of the study revealed that socio-economic status and familial support emerged as important factors when students made career decisions (Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013).

Research suggested that individuals with limited education and income were unlikely to achieve their career goals (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). This was noticeable in Olaosebikan and Olusakin's (2014) study, where 46% of respondents stated that lack of resources prevented them from achieving their career goal and 15% of respondents stated that their poor quality of education prevented them from achieving their career goals. In addition, large and small sized families were affected by limited income. Parents with large families tended to have less money to finance tertiary education for each child as their money often went towards food and clothes for the whole family (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). Even small underprivileged families with a maximum of 4 people could not also, afford to pay the high university fees that were required (Dodge & Welderufael, 2014). In Dodge and Welderufael's (2014) study, 41.6% of the respondents stated that lack of money was a barrier to their career and nearly half of these stated that they came from a small family with 4 or less individuals in a household.

2.9.4.2 Cultural background

A family's cultural background could also influence career decision making. The cultural backgrounds in South Africa are very diverse. Those more influenced by a Western culture tended to embrace the idea of individualism, which stressed the needs of the individual over the needs of the group as a whole (Finkelstein, 2010). In this cultural context, Western people were seen as independent and autonomous, while those from African and Eastern cultures tended to embrace the notion of collectivism (Finkelstein, 2010; Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013). Collective cultures viewed a career decision as a process that included the collective needs of the family and community (Mhlongo & O'Neill, 2013). The people in this community tended to work together to create harmony and group cohesion rather than focusing on individual satisfaction (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). In Nigeria, individuals with a strong sense of family

obligation felt the need to reciprocate their parents' benevolence offered to the community in order to continue their family's name and reputation (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). In a study conducted with 194 undergraduates from a large metropolitan university in South-Eastern America, personal fulfilment that a career might give was particularly important for individuals who came from cultural backgrounds that valued individualism (Finkelstein, 2010). Those from a collectivistic culture, were more likely persuaded by social pressures rather than individual desires to choose a certain career (Finkelstein, 2010).

2.10 Conclusion

Young adults have to make important career decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. The outcome of choosing a career path that is unsuitable to them will have significant personal and psychological consequences. In the modern 21st Century, individuals need to be aware of the current developments in their field of work and keep abreast of potential new opportunities and skills. In addition, they must make wise and timely decisions. This means that individuals need to be able to adapt to the changing work environment in order to remain employable. The research provided above showed that there were a number of factors that influenced career decision making in young adults. Career decision making can be a daunting task and individuals often face many difficulties before or during this process. Little is known about young adults' difficulties and how they can overcome these difficulties to choose a career path within the South African context. Therefore, this study focused on third year Psychology students' voices and experiences in exploring career decisions in the 21st Century. Findings from this study could direct further research which explores factors required to create valid, updated career tests and which reflect contemporary skills and opportunities available to young adults in South Africa. In addition, this study could encourage research directed at identifying specific changes in the work environment which are relevant to South Africa in the 21st Century.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A Qualitative research approach was used as the study attempted to provide an understanding of the factors that influenced career decision making experiences from the perspective of third year Psychology students at the University of Pretoria. Qualitative research includes talking to people which is an excellent way of gathering information (Griffie, 2005). However, sometimes this may not be easy as people tend to speak in a way that is unstructured (Griffie, 2005). Semi-structured interviews are a way of speaking to people that is orderly and partially structured so that the researcher can acquire the most relevant information (Willig, 2013). This form of data collection requires listening and paying attention to what is being said (Willig, 2013). It is also about being open minded to what other people say in a non-judgemental way (Willig, 2013). Semi-structured interviews allow a comfortable and safe environment for people to share their thoughts and experiences (Christensen et al., 2015). Hermeneutic Phenomenology is a Qualitative research method that allows researchers to study how traditions, culture and experiences shape normal daily routines and practices (Oerther, 2020). This method elicits stories from participants as a means of understanding and works concurrently with interviews.

3.2 Materials and methods

The research approach utilised by the researcher is Hermeneutic Phenomenological research. This approach works well with interviews as it gives the interviewee a voice to describe their thoughts, feelings and experiences in their career decision making. Hermeneutic Phenomenology Analysis and Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the data. Both were needed to analyse the findings in this study as Hermeneutic Phenomenology Analysis was needed to provide the researcher with a comprehensive description of the factors driving the career decision experiences of the participants and Thematic Analysis was needed to identify common themes throughout the interviews.

3.2.1 Hermeneutic Phenomenological research approach

A Hermeneutic Phenomenological approach seeks to understand the factors that reflect and give meaning to individuals' lived experiences with regards to a phenomenon (Abe & Chikoko, 2020). Hermeneutic Phenomenological research is embedded in hermeneutics, a method of interpreting philosophical text (Oerther, 2020). Initially, the term hermeneutics referred to the understanding or interpretation of written texts (Kafle, 2011). However, Wilhelm Dilthey, a German philosopher, viewed hermeneutics as a methodology that could be used to "reveal the unseen world of lived experiences" (Kafle, 2011, p. 181).

In this approach, the researcher aimed to create rich and deep accounts of a phenomenon through intuition, while focusing on uncovering the meaning of the data rather than accuracy (Oerther, 2020). Hermeneutic Phenomenology also avoids using prior knowledge (Fuster, 2019). In using this approach, bracketing becomes a difficulty (Fuster, 2019). Bracketing is a qualitative process in which the researcher suspends any prior knowledge or previous experiences in order to describe the phenomena (Tufford & Newman, 2012). To overcome this difficulty, it is necessary that the researcher acknowledge their assumptions and state them clearly in the study (Tufford & Newman, 2012). In addition, there may be many different possible perspectives on a phenomenon (Oerther, 2020). Therefore, Hermeneutic Phenomenology does not have a step by step method (Oerther, 2020). The researcher will need to perform five research principles that interact with one another (Fuster, 2019). According to Fuster (2019) the five principles for Hermeneutic Phenomenology are:

1. Committing to an enduring phenomenon or concern
2. Having a clear perspective toward the question being asked
3. Examining the experience as it is lived by others
4. Describing and explaining the phenomenon through writing and rewriting
5. Considering part of the texts and the texts as a whole

Hermeneutic Phenomenology is an advantageous research method as it allows researchers to describe and articulate how normal, daily practices and routines, childhood experiences and daily challenges affect individuals' lives (Oether, 2020). Hermeneutic Phenomenology attempts to provide the best opportunity to "give voice" to the experiences of individuals (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1292). The focus is on understanding shared experiences by searching for themes and interpretively engaging with the data (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The shared experiences of the researcher and the participant is used to analyse what is familiar, common and self-evident to the researcher (Abe & Chikoko, 2020). The process involves a "hermeneutic circle" in which the researcher constantly goes back and forth between part of the text and the text as a whole, to establish truth by discovering and interpreting phenomena (Willig, 2013, p. 44). This process was achieved through semi-structured interviews between the researcher and individuals. This study aimed to explore and interpret the factors motivating the experiences of third year Psychology students in their choice of career.

3.2.2 Sampling

The researcher included 10 participants in their third year of Psychology at the University of Pretoria. This sample size allowed for the unfolding of new ideas. It was small enough so that extensive, case-oriented analysis could still be achieved (Christensen et al., 2015). The researcher also noted that data saturation begun by the last participant (Participant 10) and no new themes and ideas emerged. As a result, the researcher decided to only include 10 participants in the study. The sample included both male and female participants. All races were welcomed to participate, however, research participant willingness was of great significance in recruiting for this study. Recruitment took place from the pool of third year Psychology students at the University of Pretoria's Hatfield campus. Restrictions due to COVID- 19 meant that recruiting was done electronically via the University of Pretoria's ClickUP page. The information that was provided in the Study Invite can be seen in Appendix A. This Study Invite was placed on all third year Psychology modules using the announcement tool on ClickUP via third year coordinators. Lecturers also placed an announcement in their respective modules. Through this announcement, participants were invited to

contact the researcher via email to indicate their interest in participating in the study. The researcher then invited interested members to a scheduled Zoom meeting to conduct the interviews. The reason behind selecting video call interviews was due to continued Covid-19 and the possibility of future lockdowns that would deter students from coming to campus. This approach was the best possible alternative to traditional face-to-face interviews where the researcher could take into account non-verbal cues and was more personal than audio calls.

Purposive sampling to identify participants was used. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where individuals of the target population are chosen due to the qualities they possess (Christensen et al., 2015). A researcher starts with specific qualities and traits in mind that they wish to examine and then pursue research participants who possess the full range of these qualities and traits (Christensen et al., 2015). This involved identification and selection of individuals who were in their third year of Psychology at the University of Pretoria. Both males and females from all races were chosen in this study and also those who had access to the internet. The data was stored electronically in a file that is password protected. Only the researcher and the supervisor have access to the file and all files and back-up files will be fully deleted after 15 years according to the Psychology Department's regulations.

3.2.3 Data collection

This study made use of semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange where the interviewer attempts to elicit information from the interviewee (Willig, 2013). This meant that the questions raised were predetermined, but the interviewer was free to ask for clarification from the interviewee regarding their answer (Griffie, 2005). The questions posed to the participants were open ended and non-directive so that the question itself did not influence the answers given in order to better reflect the students' personal experiences (Willig, 2013). Thus, the researcher could identify and explore the different factors described by the interviewees as important to their career choice. Data collected from these interviews was specific to the South African context in order to fill the gap in the current literature and was also

aligned to the Hermeneutic Phenomenological research approach. Interactive interviews allowed for follow-up questions in order to achieve more precise answers (Christensen et al., 2015). An interview guide was used to ensure that all set questions were answered (Willig, 2013). This interview guide can be seen in Appendix B at the end of this dissertation. The duration of interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes in order to understand the investigated phenomenon. Open – ended questions such as, “what does a career mean to you?” and “what factors do you think influenced your career decision making as a young adult?” were included. The interviews took place via video calls using Zoom as a platform. The video calls were recorded. The consent form for recordings can be seen in Appendix C. During the interviews, the interviewer was able to rephrase or simplify questions that were not understood by the interviewees (Alshenqeeti, 2014). As a result, more appropriate answers and more accurate information were collated.

The researcher used the first interview as a Pilot interview to test the internet connection, observe how the questions were perceived and answered, as well as, assess the interview method. The Pilot interview participant (Participant 0) was also included in the data analysis with the other participants. Thus, a total of 10 participant interviews were recorded and analysed.

The researcher first obtained informed consent from the participants to participate in the study which can be seen in Appendix D. The participants were also required to read the participant information sheet seen in Appendix E before continuing with the interview process. After this, the researcher asked the participants for their consent to begin recording the interview. Some participants opted for video call, while others switched off their camera and opted for an audio call. The researcher then asked the participants the required questions, while also asking additional and follow up questions in order to clarify their answers. Most of the interviews lasted between 20-30 minutes. While some used the full 45 minutes, others used only 15 minutes for their interview. Those who had a short interview time were undecided on their career choice and therefore, could not give detailed answers as to why they chose Psychology as a career path. After the last question on the interview guide was asked and answered, the researcher also

initiated a conversation with the participants to ask if they had questions for the researcher. The majority of the participants asked the researcher for advice on how to be selected for the Honours Degree, why the researcher chose to pursue an Academic Masters Degree and what it entailed. Some also commented that they found the study interesting and commended the researcher on this choice of topic.

3.2.4 Data analysis

The interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher and the transcripts were then analysed by means of Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis. The aim of the analysis was to provide a comprehensive description of the factors driving the career decision experiences of the participants (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The role of the researcher was to use reflexivity in the process of data analysis (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Reflexivity is the process by which researchers recognise and reflect on how their questions, methods and position might affect the data produced in a study (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The researcher can use empathy or related previous experience to assist the analysis and interpretation of the data (Abe & Chikoko, 2020). Analysis of interview recordings was achieved by the researcher immersing herself in the data collected (Abe & Chikoko, 2020). This involved viewing the recordings multiple times in order to produce meaning from the entire data (Willig, 2013). The data was also analysed by using Thematic Analysis. The focus was on identifying common themes developed inductively from the data collected (Anderson, 2007). The researcher identified and labelled emergent themes or codes (Willig, 2013). The codes were documented in a codebook (Abe & Chikoko, 2020). This list identified connections and differences between the codes (Willig, 2013). The codes were then categorised into meaningful themes, together with quotations that illustrated each theme (Abe & Chikoko, 2020).

After the interviews were completed, the researcher stopped recording the interview and immediately wrote down her impression of the participant and his/her answers. The researcher also began transcribing the interviews shortly after they were completed so as to be able to accurately transcribe the participant's words and phrases that may have been disconnected during the recording. The researcher first began to analyse each

interview individually, creating themes from each interview. Following this, the researcher looked at all the interviews as a whole and identified common themes occurring frequently, as well as, themes that were unique to an individual interview. The researcher colour coded each theme and placed them in a table as shown in Table 2 of Chapter 4. The participants' demographic characteristics were also noted and summarised in Table 1 of Chapter 4.

3.2.5 Dependability, confirmability, credibility and transferability of the study

The researcher attempted to achieve dependability and confirmability by ensuring the consistency of the research findings (Christensen et al., 2015). Use of an audit trail to replicate the data was used to facilitate this (Merriam, 2002). An audit trail is a detailed description of how the data was collected, how the categories were derived and the decisions made (Merriam, 2002). A pilot interview served as a practice to the interview questions and received feedback on the topic, as well as, the interview method (Griffee, 2005). The study also ensured credibility by using triangulation and member checking (Christensen et al, 2015). Credibility refers to the extent to which a study is reliable and relevant, especially with respect to the level of agreement between participants and the researcher (Griffee, 2005). Data triangulation is comparing at least two sources of data (Christensen et al, 2015). This was achieved through member checking, when the researcher would ask participants for their feedback on the researcher's conclusions to determine if the findings reflected their experiences (Christensen et al., 2015). This ensured credibility as the participants either confirmed or denied whether the researcher's conclusions truly reflected their experience. The study was limited to the context of the students at the University of Pretoria. The ideas from the study can be transferable to other populations where there is a gap in clarity and understanding of the phenomena (Moon et al, 2016).

3.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations included ensuring privacy of personal information, providing appropriate communication and information about the interviews and research in order

to obtain informed consent (Christensen et al., 2015). The informed consent sheet and the participant information sheet can be seen in Appendix D and E. Anonymity could not be ensured with interviews as the researcher was in contact with the participants. However, use of numbers or pseudonyms in the study ensured the privacy and confidentiality of participants when the findings were reported (Willig, 2013). The participants were also informed that they had a right to withdraw from the study without the fear of being penalised (Willig, 2013). After the interview, the participants would have access to any publications arising from their participation in the study (Willig, 2013). Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee, reference number HUM002/0721.

3.4 Conclusion

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and interviews worked concurrently and gave the best possible chance for individuals to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences towards choosing a career path. Purposive sampling was used in this study as the researcher needed specific characteristics from the population, that is, the participants needed to be in their third year of study, a registered student at the University of Pretoria for 2022 and had access to the internet for Zoom interviews. The researcher used an audit trail, a pilot interview and member checking, in order to achieve dependability, confirmability and credibility of the study. The only difficulty of this study's research method was ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. These, however, were achieved by using numbers or pseudonyms for the individuals that participated in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explored the results of the study. A summary of the results was tabulated in Table 1. This was followed by a detailed account analysing the results and a discussion of the results with reference to the Literature review.

The results provided and outlined the themes of the study and identified common themes that occurred frequently, as well as, themes that were unique to an individual interview.

4.1.1 Brief profile of each participant

Table 1 Demographics of the participants

Participant 0 – pilot interview	20 year old Black female studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Psychology and Criminology.
Participant 1	23 year old Black female studying for a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Human Physiology, Genetics and Psychology.
Participant 2	21 year old Coloured male studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Psychology and Sociology.
Participant 3	46 year old Black female studying Psychology only.

Participant 4	24 year old Chinese male studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Psychology and Criminology.
Participant 5	21 year old White male studying a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Psychology and Criminology.
Participant 6	21 year old White female studying for a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Genetics, Psychology and Human Physiology.
Participant 7	22 year old Black female studying for a Bachelor of Social Work, majoring in Sociology and Psychology.
Participant 8	21 year old White female studying for a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Genetics, Psychology and Human Physiology.
Participant 9	21 year old White female studying a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Psychology and Criminology.

This is a summary of the participants' demographic characteristics

4.2 Results

The researcher used Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis and Thematic Analysis that allowed the following themes in Table 2 to emerge:

Table 2 Participants' description of the factors underlying their career choice

Key Findings	Themes	Number of Students (out of 10)	Description of Outcomes
Microsystem	Personality	10	100% of participants stated that their career matched their personality. Common remarks made were "it's my passion" and "I've always found it interesting". 7 participants also stated that they wanted to "help people".
	Exposure	8	80% of participants chose a career in Psychology after having been exposed to mental illness or consulting with psychologists.

	Parental influence	5	50% of participants stated that their family/parents played a role in their choice of career.
	Undecided	4	A total number of 4 participants were undecided in their career path and as to why they chose Psychology in their third year of university.
	Academic achievement/ Second choice	2	2 participants stated that Psychology was not their first choice of career.
	Gender	1	Only 1 participant stated that gender and gender stereotypes affected their career decision making.
Mesosystem	Interpersonal relationships	6	Over half of the participants stated that speaking to either their teachers, student advisors, family friends or individuals at career expositions helped them to choose their career path.

	Vocational assessments	1	Among this category, only 1 participant stated that they had completed a career test.
Exosystem	Monetary expectation/ Financial stability	2	A small number of participants (2) stated that financial stability was an important factor in choosing a career.
	Employability/ Job security	1	Only 1 participant stated that job stability was an important factor in their choice of career.
	Discrimination	1	1 participant stated that discrimination was one factor that pushed him/her towards Psychology as a career choice.
Macrosystem	Media	9	Approximately 90% of participants used media to find out about their career choice.

	Familial socio-economic standing	2	2 participants explained that their career choice was affected or hindered by familial socio-economic factors
	Cultural background	2	A total of 2 participants cited their cultural background.
	Covid– 19	1	1 participant reported that Covid -19 affected their career.

This is a summary of the coding scheme used to explain the career decision making process in the present study

4.2.1 Key findings – Microsystem influences

4.2.1.1 Theme 1 – Personality

This theme was the most prominent in the study. All participants stated that their choice in Psychology was a good match to their personality. Although almost all of the participants were not administered a personality test during the course of their recent career path, many individuals used the words “passion” or “love” when describing their choice in a Psychology career.

One participant stated:

[It's] something that I love and enjoy doing (Participant 3, line 169).

When describing what a career meant to the participants', many stated that:

...it's a place where you can grow and live out your passions (Participant 8, line 90).

...it's something you enjoy, you have a passion for (Participant 4, line 120).

Some participants were very self-aware of their personality type, even without a personality test to assess them, and noted that Psychology was the best career path that suited the type of person that they were. One participant said:

...I'm leaning towards Research Psychology because I've been...very theoretically strong in terms of academics (Participant 2, line 171-172).

Another participant voiced that:

I looked at the type of person I was, I was like, okay, and so mainstream jobs aren't for me. I can't be the person that sits behind a desk with no interaction with anyone. I really enjoy people (Participant 5, line 137-139).

This same sentiment was shared with Participant 9 who explained that:

...I never saw myself as becoming a scientist that was like, strict and logical...I felt like I needed room to let my mind just to be a bit more open...and in Psychology, I found so many things were opening up in terms of just your mind-set...it gave me the opportunity to think more broadly (Participant 9, line 208-214).

Over half of the participants expressed that one of their main reasons for choosing Psychology as a career was because they wanted to “help people”. This can be seen in Participant 7’s interview, in which the phrase “I want to help people”, “helping people” or a similar feeling was used eight times throughout the interview. Similarly, some participants’ expressed:

I like the general idea of being able to help people who struggle with their daily lives (Participant 8, line 80).

And

...those [experiences] influenced me to pursue a Psychology career, you know, make a difference in people’s lives (Participant 6, line 221-222).

However, some participants did not have such intense reactions to their career choice as the other participants. This was as a result of Psychology being a second choice in career and also being undecided in their career path. When questioned about their feelings towards their careers, in particular to Psychology, these participants stated that:

...I really do like it. I just grew to like it (Participant 0, line 190).

And

... [It] really [does] interest me (Participant 1, line 171).

Although these participants were not as enthusiastic or passionate about Psychology as the other participants, their responses still showed that their personality matched a career in Psychology as they still enjoyed it and found it interesting.

4.2.1.2 Theme 2 – Exposure

The second prominent theme came under Microsystem influences, in which most participants cited exposure to some form of mental illness as one of the main reasons they chose Psychology as a career path. Some participants were exposed to Psychology or psychologists through their own counselling sessions.

One participant stated:

I was taken to see a psychologist and I really liked it (Participant 0, line 241).

Another participant explained that they found out about Psychology through their therapist and started speaking to her about it as a career option:

...she was open to speaking to me about, like, how it's going to be and stuff like that and she gave me a lot of interesting leads to follow up on in terms of good literature to help me prepare...for my career one day (Participant 5, line 229-232).

Many of the other participants were exposed to mental illness through either a family member, friend or romantic partner. Two of the participants were exposed to mental illness through a family member. One participant remarked:

I have a younger brother...he's diagnosed with ADHD (Participant 4, line 159-160).

Another participant stated:

...my mother had a lot of depression, depressive episodes (Participant 6, line 219-220).

A further two participants explained that they were exposed to mental illness through their friends:

One lady that I was studying with at Wits...she nearly killed herself (Participant 3, line 297-298).

I had a friend in primary school who was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder (Participant 6, line 102).

Another two participants stated that their romantic partners exposed them to mental illnesses:

I had a couple of friends and my ex-girlfriend in school who had depression
(Participant 2, line 252).

I had an ex, right. He was, like considered as, as abnormal because he was starting to fail his subject (Participant 7, line 191-192).

All of these participants stated that because they were exposed to these mental illnesses, this became a major turning point in their career choice. The participants expressed their need to be able to interact with individuals experiencing any mental disorder, their desire to empathise with such people as humans and ultimately help them to lead normal lives.

4.2.1.3 Theme 3 – Parental influence

Parental influence accounted for 50% of the participants' reasons for choosing a career path in Psychology. This number was less than was anticipated by the researcher. These participants were influenced either through having a parent who had a career in the field of Psychology, or through suggestions from parental figures that influenced their choice of career.

Participant 1 shared:

I saw my stepfather...he was a clinical psychologist and I got that inspiration from him (Participant 1, line 117-118).

Another participant stated that he used to observe his father having conversations with people and the participant asked his father how he was able to engage with other individuals in the way that he did. The participant explained that:

...at some point in time, [my father] mentioned the word Psychology... and from that day I was interested in [Psychology] (Participant 4, line 345- 349).

Other participants had parent/s who were engaged in careers unrelated to Psychology, but the participants were able to merge both Psychology and their parent's career into a suitable career for the participant. This is evident with Participant 5 who stated that his interest in forensic psychology stemmed from his mother's career in law:

I've read a lot about case files and stuff and my mum...has a law degree so she's worked on a few cases and stuff. So I've had sort of first-hand experience with that (Participant 5, lines 149-151).

Some participants were not influenced by their parent's career path. One participant was pushed into a more intellectual career path than had initially been wanted:

I wanted to become a biokineticist and everybody said to me, "no, that's a waste of your brains don't do that"... that definitely nudged me to more intellectually demanding sort of fields (Participant 2, line 186-188).

Another participant stated that although her parents did not pressure or influence her into any specific career path, both she and her parents shared the same values:

I value education and my parents' value education (Participant 3, line 166-167).

In contrast, some participants were not influenced by their parents during the course of their career decision making.

One participant stated that his parents were not supportive of his choice in career:

...my parents' weren't fully on board with the idea of me studying Psychology
(Participant 4, line 212-213).

Another participant shared that she chose a career completely different to her family:

...my family, as I said, we're farmers, farm people for generations and generations...so for me going off and studying Psychology...it's very strange...uncharacteristic of my family (Participant 6, lines 273-284).

4.2.1.4 Theme 4 – Indecisiveness

Indecisiveness was a concerning theme that emerged from 4 of the participants' interviews. Some were undecided about which field of Psychology they wanted pursue, while others were unsure about a career in Psychology altogether.

Participant 0 revealed that she would:

...love to be a clinical psychologist and probably also, maybe, a neuropsychologist, but I really don't know how to... get to that part (Participant 0, line 136-137).

This similar view point was shared by Participant 9 who also noted that:

...I've been contemplating going into neuropsychology or health psychology...it's still a bit more on the fence (Participant 9, line 111-114).

When asked about what Participant 1 and 7 planned to do in the future with their course/programme they had chosen, both stated that they were “not entirely sure” (Participant 1, line 105) and “not sure” (Participant 7, line 137). This was a common answer for Participant 7 as the phrase “I’m not sure” was used 5 times throughout the interview.

4.2.1.5 Theme 5 – Academic achievement and Psychology as a second choice of career

Academic achievement or the specific requirements for a particular career was not significant with most of the participants, except for 2 of them.

One participant did not have high enough grades to pursue her first choice of career:

I wanted to do engineering, but my marks were not good enough (Participant 0, line 162).

When asked further about Participant 0's reason for choosing Psychology, she stated:

I actually started liking Psychology... but [it] wasn't my initial choice (Participant 0, line 163-170).

The other participant did not meet the requirements needed for his first choice in career:

...essentially I wanted to go into the Special Forces for a while, but at the time I was very unfit (Participant 5, line 208-209).

When questioned about choosing a career in Psychology, participant 5 explained that:

... [forensic psychology] was sort of a combination of two things that I loved (Participant 5, line 210-211).

4.2.1.6 Theme 6 – Gender and gender stereotyped roles

Only 1 participant had an experience with gender and gender stereotyped roles. This participant shared that she wanted to become a detective in the police force, but was discouraged by her family:

...when I told my parents this...their automatic response was you're a girl...you're a girl and that's not usually a job that girls do (Participant 8, line 214-218).

When questioned further as to why her family believed the police force was not a job for a female, participant 6 explained that:

...they mainly just pointed out that it was very violent and me being a girl, is something that I shouldn't be exposed to (Participant 6, line 237-238).

4.2.2 Key findings – Mesosystem influences

4.2.2.1 Theme 7 – Interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal relationships involved any social interactions that the participants had with others regarding their career decision making. This included career expositions, teachers/lecturers, friends, and other professional individuals who helped the participants decide their career path.

One participant stated that in grade 11 and Matric, a career exposition helped him decide his career:

... I spoke to the representative of Humanities and they showed me... the requirements that you need... what it entails... and then I was hooked. That's when I decided this is what I want to do (Participant 2, line 266-269).

Many other participants also took advantage of the abundance of school and University staff and resources when looking into Psychology as a career. Participant 6 was made aware of genetic counselling through her biology teacher in high school:

My biology teacher brought it up one time as...a possible career path and I looked into it... so it's like the two things that I find really, really interesting... that's exactly what I would like to do (Participant 6, line 138-142).

Participant 9 made use of the “faculty student advisors” (Participant 9, line 175) when she consulted with them about the Psychology modules. She also made use of the workshops offered by the Psyche Society at the University of Pretoria:

...they had someone who is a neuropsychologist speak and that was really interesting to get that perspective... from a work-like perspective (Participant 9, line 288-289).

Participant 8 made a switch from a career in genetics to a career in Psychology because of her Psychology lecturer and how he managed to bridge theory and real life:

...he talked a lot about the cases that he handled. With each lecture, he would give us an example of how that specific lecture related to a case that he had personally worked on... after listening to him...I would have more of an impact in people's lives if I do Psychology (Participant 8, line 158-165).

Another participant spoke to family friends who worked in the field of Psychology in order to find out more about it:

...I got to talk to them a little bit to get an understanding of what they do ... and they basically told me a little bit more about the degree and what it entails
(Participant 4, line 285-291).

Participant 5 spoke to a “few practicing forensic psychologists” (Participant 5, line 168) while in the process of looking into forensic psychology as a viable career choice.

4.2.2.2 Theme 8 – Vocational assessments

Surprisingly, only 1 participant completed a career test. Participant 8 stated that in Matric, she completed a career assessment that helped her choose her career path:

...we did career assessments and Psychology, like becoming a psychologist was...the first option for me... so I think that made a huge difference in....deciding what I want to do (Participant 8, line 179-182).

4.2.3 Key findings – Exosystem influences

4.2.3.1 Theme 9 – Monetary expectation/ financial stability

Monetary expectation and being able to pay for basic necessities was prominent with 2 of the participants in their definition of a career. When asked what a career meant to them, one participant stated that he made a change from a Philosophy career path to Psychology because of money:

I can't be a philosopher... even someone with a degree in Philosophy does not have any money. You know, they're running very short on money and all those things. So the career, the definition of a career at the time for me was something that can sustain you (Participant 2, line 138-142).

Similarly, Participant 6 expressed that:

...a career to me would be stability. So being able to financially support yourself (Participant 6, line 112).

4.2.3.2 Theme 10 – Employability/ job security

Only 1 participant cited employability and job security as a factor for their career choice. This participant explained that he had to think realistically about his career choice. He stated that at the beginning of his career decision making process, he thought about which field would give him the most security:

...[I] considered going for a safe option in terms of studies. I thought of doing maybe a Bcom...a needed job... I was even thinking of transferring to Education for the sake of job security... I think job security became a big aspect of career choice (Participant 2, line 132-135).

4.2.3.3 Theme 11 – Discrimination

Discrimination as a factor for career decision making is an important one within the South African context. One participant experienced racial discrimination during his

youth and noted that this is what prompted him into Psychology, to be able to understand why and how such discrimination occurs:

... I was the only Chinese there...there was a certain incident that happened that night and it...irritated me a bit and I really wanted to understand why from that day... I was, like, ridiculed for my race (Participant 4, line 382-385).

4.2.4 Key findings – Macrosystem influences

4.2.4.1 Theme 12 – Media

This theme emerged as the largest one after Personality. 90% of the participants stated that they were exposed to Psychology through the media, either through their own research or through movies and social media. Only 1 participant did not cite the media as playing a role in her career decision making.

Many of the participants used Google as means to gain more information about their choice in Psychology as a career. One participant stated that:

... when you hear about, let's say for example Psychology, and you don't really know what it is, you open the internet, Google and get more information (Participant 1, line 161-162).

Other participants used Google to find books or articles relating to their interest in Psychology:

...I just typed...what is Psychology on Google and that gave me a page...one article into another (Participant 4, line 358-360).

Similarly, Participant 5 noted that books influenced his career decision making in forensic psychology greatly:

...just a lot of reading up on case files and then now...cementing it off when I read Gerald Labuschagne's book (Participant 5, line 161-162).

Participant 9 also used several websites to gain detailed information about neuropsychology:

...I've looked on Cognition&Co and...Dr Sharon Truter's website (Participant 9, line 270-274).

Some participants were influenced by documentaries, mainly through the crime documentaries on serial killers. When asked about what situations or individuals influenced her career decision making, one participant remarked:

I'm going to have to go back to the documentaries...I love them (Participant 0, line 263).

Likewise, Participant 6 stated:

...I had this hobby of looking up on my own time, as a hobby looking into Psychology things. Looking into how people's brain's work, you know, serial killers stuff (Participant 6, line 168-169).

Another participant explained that:

...watching YouTube, those like documentary lectures...was really stimulating and I really enjoyed it (Participant 2, line 195-196).

One participant used social media as a way to gain information about Psychology. Participant 9 stated she used:

Facebook pages on child psychology... and just perspectives on child psychology...and [how this is] something that's quite relatable...I can see how this is really something valid to look into (Participant 9, line 245-249).

Other participants noticed the number of mental illnesses highlighted on social media which made them want to pursue a career in Psychology:

...what I see in...social media, what is happening and the suicide rates because...they can't manage their Psychology (Participant 3, line 300-302).

And

...social media has, at this point, become more aware of all the mental issues that people face on a daily basis... and it kind of puts in more in your face (Participant 8, line 140-147).

4.2.4.2 Theme 13 – Familial socio-economic status

Two participants cited their familial socio-economic status as a factor that affected their career decision making. One participant first began studying at Varsity College, but had to leave due to a lack of funds:

... I had to drop out because my family couldn't afford it. I don't come from a particularly affluent family (Participant 2, line 206-207).

This participant continued to explain that receiving a bursary from the University of Pretoria allowed him to follow his dream:

...I had this almost dream of studying Psychology and now I had a bursary which enabled me to do that (Participant 2, line 209-210).

In contrast, Participant 3 had to put pursuing her passion and furthering her education aside as she experienced a tragedy in the family that forced her into a paying job:

...my dad passed away. I think I was doing my final year of my general degree and then there was no one to take care of the family. So there is reason why I couldn't continue, I was already under pressure in my third year and then I had to look for a job (Participant 3, line 494-497).

After providing for her siblings and mother during her young adulthood, Participant 3 was now able to return to University and continue studying her passion, Psychology.

4.2.4.3 Theme 14 – Cultural background

The researcher found the concept of cultural background interesting. The researcher was able to gain a deeper understanding of an African culture perspective on mental illness as Participant 3 explained:

... I come from African culture, some other people who are going through stress... they are becoming sangomas. And when you look at it, it's the, it's not a spiritual gift, they are going through mental illness (Participant 3, line 313-316).

Participant 3 continued that she lost contact with her best friend after the friend was convinced she had a “gift” and was told by traditional spiritual leaders that her friends and family were “bewitching” her when in fact, all she needed was some mental health help:

She was told your family members are the ones, are the reason why you're like this and she blocked, she disowned all family members. Your friends are doing this to you and then we're all blocked. She disowned everybody (Participant 3, line 335-337).

Participant 4 briefly spoke about the cultural stereotype of Asians and how his parents wanted him to conform to this:

... I'm Asian so my parents weren't fully on board with the idea of me studying Psychology... they more preferred me doing Engineering or Medicine or something more Asian-y (Participant 4, line 212-214).

4.2.4.4 Theme 15 – Covid – 19

Only 1 participant revealed that the Coronavirus pandemic affected her career. This could possibly be due to Participant 3 being the only participant in the study who was working or had work experience prior to studying third year Psychology. Participant 3 stated:

...I've been retrenched twice... I joined a company and then Covid came...I was impacted negatively (Participant 3, line 101-108).

However, Participant 3 managed to use this as an opportunity to begin studying again and she decided to study Psychology at the University of Pretoria.

4.3 Conclusion

A total of 15 themes emerged from the participants. Some of these themes supported the studies considered in the Literature review, while other new themes were noted. All of the themes will now be discussed in the next chapter and be linked to the reviewed literature.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

Several themes identified in the previous chapter provided the researcher with a wide range of factors allowing insight into the career decision making of young adults. The themes identified included the influence of personality, parental influence, gender and gender stereotyped roles, vocational assessments, monetary expectation/financial stability, employability/ job security, familial socio-economic standing and cultural background. There were noted similarities with the literature identified in Chapter 2 of this study. The researcher will comment on any similarities and/or differences noted in the reviewed Literature and the Results. The themes of exposure, indecisiveness, interpersonal relationships, discrimination, media and Covid-19 were new themes that emerged from the results of the study and will also be discussed extensively in this chapter. The chapter will be divided into the four key findings: Microsystem influences, Mesosystem influences, Exosystem influences and Macrosystem influences.

5.2 Microsystem influences

The results of the study provided new insights into the relationship between the individual and their Microsystem influences. The results of the study supported Darling's (2007) statement that the Microsystem had a significant impact on the individual as the individual interacted with this system the most. Not only did Microsystem influences have the most themes (6), it also identified personality as the greatest career influencing factor by the participants. These results for the theme of personality were similar to other research such as Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014), M'manga et al. (2019) and Dodge and Welderufael (2014).

5.2.1 Personality

Personality is inherent in every person and determines how individuals respond to the environment around them (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). The participants in this study stated that personality was the most decisive influence in their career decision. This was similar to M'manga et al.'s (2019). In contrast to M'manga et al.'s (2019) study,

participants in this study did not indicate that they took a personality test. The participants in this study indicated that their personality was a good match to their career choice in Psychology by using words of emotion such as “love” and “passion”. Thus, they were aware of their personality type without being administered a test. In determining the effects of personality on choice of career as a public accountant, Dibyaguna and Budiarta’s (2020) research revealed that personality had a positive and significant effect on career choices as a public accountant. An individual who had a personality that was characterised by discipline, diligence, hard work, and willingness to accept difficult assignments, was more likely to succeed as a public accountant (Dibyaguna & Budiarta, 2020).

Similarly, the participants in this study who had a keen interest in understanding how people think and behave were more likely to succeed in a career in Psychology. The findings of this study in which the participants stated that they chose a career in Psychology because they wanted to help people was consistent with the findings by Sinai-Glazer (2020). Sinai-Glazer (2020) investigated the trusting and loving relationship between social workers and their clients. The social workers in their study made the effort to be helpful and caring influential figures to the clients (Sinai-Glazer, 2020). As a result, the social workers made a positive impact on their client’s lives. The participants in this study who had an innate desire to help others would therefore have a beneficial and fulfilling career in Psychology.

Most of the current literature revealed that researchers administered personality tests to the participants as in Sheldon et al.’s (2020) study in which the Holland Occupational Orientations was administered to measure the six RIASEC orientations, as well as, the Comprehensive Relative Autonomy Index (C-RAI). It was established that the Holland scores were important positive predictors of participant’s choice of career (Sheldon et al., 2020). All results in past and current literature, including the results of this study in which all 10 participants stated that their personality matched a career in Psychology, supported personality as an important influencing factor to career choice.

5.2.2 Exposure to mental illness

Exposure to mental illnesses through other people or through their own experience of it was an alarming theme that emerged in this study. In a study by Huang et al. (2019), results revealed that in the past 30 years, most mental disorders became more common in China. Mental disorders were mainly prevalent in conditions involving alcohol-use, anxiety, drug-use and mood disorders (Huang et al., 2019). Likewise, a study by Peterson et al. (2019) found that there was significantly increased recognition of alcohol use and depressive disorders in South Africa from pre and post implementation of their Care Model within 12-months. Depression increased from 5.8% to 16.4% and alcohol use disorder increased from 0% to 13.8% (Peterson et al., 2019). Both results in these studies supported the findings of this study as 80% of current participants were exposed to mental illness either through someone else or through having experienced it themselves. It is important to note that the results of this research indicated that the participants' were exposed to mental illnesses before the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, exposure to mental illness had already influenced them to choose Psychology as a career choice in their third year of University. Research showed that the Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa increased the prevalence of mental health illness /disorders by at least 20% in the target population as many stressors were accentuated during this time (Kim et al., 2020). This suggested that exposure to mental illnesses was likely to be a significantly important factor in the career decision making of future generations.

5.2.3 Parental influence

Parental influence was another important factor in career decision making both in related literature and in this study. Individuals interact with their parents from birth and continue to do so into their adulthood (Darling, 2007). As a result, parents were influential figures in the participants' lives as half of the participants (50%) in the study indicated that parental influence was one of the reasons for choosing a career in Psychology. This was similar to Olaosebikan and Olusakin's (2014) study in which 48.36% of the respondents confirmed their parents influenced their career choice. Similarly, Dodge and Welderufael (2014) confirmed that a majority of students stated

that they had conversations with their parents or had observed their parents at work to gain ideas about potential careers. Parental influence was also evident in the results of this study as some participants had observed their parents or were able to merge their passion for Psychology and their parents' occupations together into a suitable career option. These studies revealed that young adults familiarized themselves with their parent's occupations and interests and then fostered within themselves similar parental occupational values and roles. In addition, parental influence enabled these individuals to broaden their research on careers and find suitable options.

However, the other 50% of the results in this study did not support the results in the reviewed literature. Olaosebikan and Olusakin's (2014) and Dodge and Welderufael's (2014) studies revealed that individuals were often reluctant to pursue a career that their parents disapproved of and that parents' unfavourable attitudes towards a certain career impacted the students' choice of career. This proved untrue for some participants who expressed that although their parents disapproved of their career choice in Psychology, they still pursued it. Also, other participants chose a career completely different from their parents.

There are a number of studies that affirm that parents have a significant influence over their children's career development and choice. Parents often encourage or discourage certain behaviours, interest and abilities to align with what they view as an appropriate career path. This study provided a new insight into the relationship between parents and their influence over their children. Half of the participants were influenced by their parents, while the other half were not. This revealed that although parents still influenced and shaped a large part of their children's lives, parental influence was becoming less dominant than reported in previous studies conducted in the past.

5.2.4 Indecisiveness from multiple career options or career indecision

Indecisiveness was an unexpected theme that emerged from the results of the study. This was disconcerting to the researcher as these participants were in their third year of University and were still undecided in their career choice. Surprisingly, they were even

uncertain whether Psychology was a viable career option for them. Levin et al. (2022) conducted a study on the five types of career indecision. These were individuals who were unmotivated, generally indecisive, unrealistic, uninformed and conflicted (Levin et al., 2022). The participants in this study fell into the generally indecisive type (3 participants) and the conflicted type (1 participant). The results of Levin et al.'s (2022) study revealed that females had a greater likelihood of being indecisive. Individuals who were conflicted stated that they had multiple career alternatives (Levin et al., 2022). The results of this study supported these claims as all the participants who stated they were undecided in their career choice were females. In addition, one participant was conflicted over what career choice to make. The indecision involved choosing neuropsychology or health psychology as a career option. These results suggested that career indecision remained a core topic of concern for individuals and career development.

5.2.5 Academic achievement/ Psychology as a second choice of career

The results of this study built on existing evidence from Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) where one participant in their study stated that her lack of academic grade marks prevented her from choosing her preferred career path. In addition, Tentama and Abdillah's (2019) study was consistent with the findings in this study as individuals who had low academic achievement tended to be hesitant in choosing and determining their career path. Low academic achievement was confirmed in this study as the participants who did not have the required qualifications to be accepted into their first choice of career were uncertain and undecided about an alternative career path. This suggested that being unable to have the academic requirements for a particular career made the process of career decision making harder as individuals needed to look for alternative career options that might not have matched their aspirations (Tentama & Abdillah, 2019). The results of this study supported Olaosebikan and Olusakin's (2014) study in which expectations of high grades and personal goals resulted in failure to pursue expected careers. This was evident in some participants who were unable to meet the requirements for their first choice in career either due to a lack of grades or by not meeting the required physical abilities. These results suggested that academic

achievement or being unable to meet the requirements of a particular career forced individuals to reconsider their career path, making the career decision process more difficult for them.

5.2.6 Gender and gender stereotyped roles

While previous research focused on gender and gender stereotyped roles, the results in this study demonstrated that gender was not a major influencing factor. Hills and Giles (2014) stated that more men held a university degree than women. This study challenged this assumption as 7 out of the 10 participants were women who were currently working on achieving a degree. According to Lourens (2014), most studies affirmed gender- matched careers in order to avoid stigmatisation, inequality or embarrassment. The results of this study proved gender matching as insignificant as a low number of female participants stated gender, as a factor, influenced their career decision making. This could be because Psychology as a career was already viewed as a more feminine career option. Moreover, 3 out of the 7 female participants were studying highly scientific based subjects such as Genetics and Physiology which were considered more male dominant options. The results of this study were aligned with Buser et al.'s (2012) study in which North American women were increasingly challenging the traditional stereotypes and were not influenced by gender stereotypes, peers or society in choosing a career. Very few, if any studies have been completed on the question of whether young women still feel stigmatised in the modern contemporary working world. Keune et al. (2019) commented that although men were still more likely to graduate from the sciences than women, the proportion of female researchers was increasing worldwide. Due to women being more represented in all types of careers and women shifting public perceptions of their abilities, it is possible that gender stereotyping is on the decline (Keune et al., 2019).

The majority of the women in this study did not cite gender and gender stereotyped roles as a reason for choosing a career in Psychology. This was consistent with the results found in Kazi and Akhlaq's, (2017) study where none of the respondents indicated that their gender discouraged career decision making. However, one

participant in this study did state that gender and gender stereotyped roles affected her career choice. This participant stated that she was steered away from a career in the police force because of being a female. In addition, Kazi and Akhlaq's (2017) study also noted that only one female participant stated that her family was against her choice of career as they felt that it was unsafe for a female. These findings were consistent with Wesarat et al.'s (2016) results that men were known to have jobs as police and military officers, while women were not. This suggested that gender and gender-stereotyped roles still had some influence on female career decision making as some cultures and societies still viewed men as more capable than women, although this was very minimal.

Gender stereotyping is not a thing of the past and measures should be taken to include women in all professions, as well as, provide them with a safe and professional workplace (Begeny et al., 2020). Recent studies suggested that gender stereotyping and bias were still present in the modern labour environment, despite women being highly represented (Begeny et al., 2020).

5.3 Mesosystem influences

The results of this study contributed to a clearer understanding of the reciprocal interaction between various relationships in an individual's life. It also provided a better understanding of vocational assessments and what was needed to provide career counsellors with adequate information about career decision making.

5.3.1 Interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal relationships provided the largest influencing factor in the Mesosystem. This was unsurprising as the Mesosystem involved the reciprocal interaction of the individual with his/her immediate environment (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). Teachers and schools play an important part in shaping the desire and perceived possibility of career trajectories for young adults (Archer et al., 2020). This means that any and all social interactions between the individual and others are examined. Based on the results of this

study, interpersonal relationships included teachers, student advisors, family friends and individuals at career expositions who helped the participants to choose Psychology as a career. Numerous studies had shown that individuals' perceptions of their teachers or other people in a high academic standing had an impact on their motivation, academic achievement and engagement with that subject (Mameli et al., 2019). When individuals were encouraged to act freely and were academically independent, a positive learning environment was created. In addition, interpersonal relationships were established which contributed to the individual's perception of themselves as responsible individuals, with an active role in their career path (Mameli et al., 2019). The results of this study supported these findings as four of the participants were influenced by their teachers/lecturers/career exposition representative's positive and encouraging attitude towards that subject. In addition, family friends and their interest and willingness to provide answers to the participants, all contributed to a positive learning environment where the participants were able to gain more knowledge and information about Psychology and chose it as a viable career option.

5.3.2 Vocational assessments

Maree and Taylor (2016) stated that it was important to identify and evaluate the factors that could best predict career success. These factors could help individuals make appropriate career choices (Maree & Taylor, 2016). One participant stated she used a vocational assessment that helped her to choose Psychology as a career option. Maree and Taylor (2016) also stated that vocational assessments were important guides for individuals to have successful lives and make meaningful contributions to society. However, the results of the study contradicted this statement as 9 out of the 10 participants did not undergo any vocational assessment, yet all of the participants indicated that they were happy with their choice of career. Furthermore, 70% of them wanted to help people and make a meaningful contribution to society.

This study supported Maree's (2012) claim that there was a lack of vocational and career services available to young people in South Africa. The lack of vocational assessments was evident as 90% of the participants did not complete a vocational

assessment in high school to determine their aptitude, strengths and weaknesses. Avram et al. (2019) commented that many young adults were not taking career tests because many individuals believed that they needed to think “inside the box” (Avram et al., 2019, p. 876). This meant that individuals who did not have the personality to match the career options “in the box” would not be on the career test and therefore, not achieve an accurate assessment from the test (Avram et al., 2019). Thus, the view by many was that career tests were unreliable and not valid. Maree and Taylor (2016) stressed the importance of developing career tests appropriate for South Africa’s diverse population. This was also proposed in Avram et al.’s (2019) study in which they believed that vocational assessments did not take into account circumstances, socio-economic and cultural differences. Researchers such as Connelly and Reardon (2020) proposed to update the effective strategies of John Krumboltz (1970) and his Happenstance Learning Theory. This theory explains that many people choose careers out of luck or because of unplanned life events (Connelly & Reardon, 2020). Krumboltz (1970) suggested that career tests should be used to facilitate learning and career counsellors should focus on helping individuals understand what the next career step should be, rather than encouraging them to make career choices (Connelly & Reardon, 2020). He also stated that having an open mind was more advantageous than finding a career match on a career test (Connelly & Reardon, 2020). Gladding (2019) also suggested applying Donald Super’s (1980) perspective which viewed career development as a lifelong process where one’s skills and interests changed over time. This meant that a career test could be inaccurate as it did not account for the skills and interests which individuals had not yet acquired (Gladding, 2019).

Many of these studies, as well as, the current study, all revealed that career tests did not have an impact on career decision making or career satisfaction. Many researchers believed that career tests could cause disappointment, frustration and confusion to those taking it (Gladding, 2019).

5.4 Exosystem influences

The Exosystem influences of this study built on the existing interpretation in which social settings did not involve the individual directly, but still influenced them (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). Employment opportunities, competition in the employment field and job security were all factors that were present in this system (Chinyamurindi, 2016; Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014).

5.4.1 Monetary expectation/ financial stability

Monetary expectations and financial stability were influential in the decision of a career for two of the participants. These results confirmed existing evidence which Quinter and Edwards (2011) revealed in their study that career choice was determined by potential income. One participant made a career change from Philosophy to Psychology because of the lack of future income in pursuing a career in Philosophy and another participant chose Psychology so that she could have financial stability. These results also built on existing evidence by Moeketsi and Mgutshini's (2014) and Zainal et al. (2012) who found that individuals abandoned their first career choice due to the low financial rewards it provided and were often discouraged to pursue a career where they would receive low pay.

Little literature exists, if any, which states that monetary expectations or financial stability does not influence career decision making. All literature supports monetary expectations or financial stability as affecting career decision making such as those found by the researchers above. This could be because most individuals expected that their career would be able to provide them with a comfortable life. As a result, past and present literature, including the results of this study, revealed that monetary expectation or financial security was a factor in career decision making. Participants who did not state that finances were an influencing factor in their career decision, possibly did not think it was appropriate to state finances as a factor for their choice to the researcher but in all possibility were still influenced by it.

5.4.2 Employability/ job security

The similarity in the results of Myburg (2005), Chinyamurindi (2016) and Quinter and Edwards (2011), in which all three studies suggested that employability and job security were important factors in an individual's career choice, corresponded with the results of one participant in this study who stated that job security was an important aspect of career choice for him. Based on the results of other studies, job security, income and job availability were frequent factors that affected career decision making of young adults. In a study by Abdo (2016), job security and a high income were rated as the most important factors for career choice among Art students.

However, the rest of the participants did not cite employability or job security as important in their choice of career. This could possibly be due to the participants' failure to take this factor into consideration when they chose Psychology as a career or they viewed Psychology as already offering an extensive employment market for them. These results suggested that employability/ job security among younger individuals was not an important factor in these participants' decision making process.

5.4.3 Racial discrimination

Discrimination was an important factor that emerged from the results of the study. This is important as South Africa has a history of racial discrimination. Despite the end of apartheid in South Africa, racial discrimination still persists. While the results of this study showed that racial discrimination was a motivating factor for only one participant in choosing Psychology as a career, the results of other studies revealed that people of colour suffered from more discrimination than White people in the workplace and thus, racial discrimination had an impact on job satisfaction (Shum et al., 2020). The results of Shum et al. (2020) and those of other researchers revealed that racial discrimination still existed in the modern work place and many individuals were likely to have feelings of anxiety and guilt, avoid social gatherings, question their abilities and resign from their job due to a hostile work environment. Similarly, Offermann et al. (2014)

suggested that subtle discrimination (for example, preferring a White candidate over a Black candidate with equally positive qualifications), whether done consciously or unconsciously, had equally damaging effects on the individual as blatant discrimination (such as vandalising the victims property or restricting individuals of colour into buildings or promotions).

The results of this study did not align with the results of other studies. From the results of this study, racial discrimination was interpreted to be more of a motivating factor in career choice than a barrier to career decision making and job satisfaction. The participant in this study stated that one of the reasons he was motivated to choose Psychology as a career was to understand why racial discrimination happened to him. Other studies found racial discrimination had a negative impact on job satisfaction and career choice.

5.5 Macrosystem influences

The results of this study provided new insights into the Macrosystem influences on career decision making. The Macrosystem incorporates cultures and subcultures each of which has its own beliefs and value systems (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). These cultures and subcultures seemed to have a powerful influence over some of the participants as they had no control over whether their culture and value system exerted positive or negative effects on their lives and career decision making.

5.5.1 Media

Young people frequently use mainstream media to learn about life-related issues, job markets and different professions. In this study, media had thus, ignited an interest in a particular career and motivated them to make career decisions. The media, which in this study comprised of the internet (web searches such as Google search engine and web pages from the Google search engine), movies/series and social media (Facebook, Instagram etc), constituted the largest influencing factor in the Macrosystem. It was also the second largest influencing factor in the study as a whole with 90% of the

participants citing the media as a way to obtain information about Psychology as a career choice. These results were consistent with those of Yunusa et al. (2022) in which they found media to be an important factor in students' career decisions. The individuals in their study were significantly influenced by movies, characters, the internet, books and newspapers (Yunusa et al., 2022). Similar results were obtained in this study, in which many of the participants used the internet, books and movies to choose Psychology as a career choice. While some participants used the media to gain more information about a topic that interested them, others were completely captivated by what the media was portraying to them as an attractive career choice. The notion that young adults were heavily influenced by the media and social media was confirmed by Yang and Chang (2022) who stated that many universities shared news and messages relating to their staff and student's achievements and careers on social media. This could influence many individual's career choices and aspirations. Contrary to evidence provided by Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) where their study stated that the media did not influence the career choices of their participants, this study revealed that most of the participants were influenced by the media.

Currently, streaming services such as Netflix and DSTV are broadcasting more crime based and serial killer documentaries such as "Criminal Minds", "I Am A Killer" and "Night Stalker: The hunt for a serial killer" in which criminologists, psychologists and law based careers are often portrayed. Young adults are attracted to these documentaries as they are continuously advertised and receive high critical acclaim. The power of media, as noted from the results of this study, revealed that young adults were being influenced by what the media portrayed. This was similar to Yang and Chang's (2022) research in which they also indicated that the media reflected the individual's environment. The type of news and messages that young adults were exposed to in the media reflected the social environment, thus, there were strong correlations between career decisions and what young adults were exposed to on social media (Yang & Chang, 2022). However, when the exaggerated publicity of such movies and series in the media had ended and another movie or series that portrayed a different career (such as lawyers, engineers etc) aired, young adults would likely change their career trajectory to the one portrayed by the current media. This also has been suggested by Njogu

(2019) whose study discussed the potential media exerted in causing changes in reasoning, attitudes and behaviour among students.

Many of the participants stated that people using social media were beginning to be more honest about the mental health issues they experienced. Research suggested that individuals with mental illnesses, including psychotic disorders, depression, anxiety, as well as other mental illnesses, accounted for 70% - 97% more with online presence than the general population, with younger individuals at the higher end of the percentage (Naslund et al., 2020). Other studies found that individuals with mental illnesses used social media as a means to share their experience, seek more information and search for treatments available for their mental illness (Yang & Chang, 2022). In addition, social media also provided a support system where others facing similar mental health problems could give and receive support and advice (Yang & Chang, 2022). This had influenced some of the participants desire to help those struggling with mental health concerns and, thus, chose a career in Psychology in order to achieve this goal. However, social media could also negatively impact an individual's mental health. Research in which 43 studies exploring the effect of social media on young people was reviewed by Naslund et al. (2020). The negative effects of social media included: social isolation after being rejected by others, depression and anxiety from feeling the need to have the same social life as others, cyberbullying and increased exposure to harmful content such as suicide (Naslund et al., 2020). Some researchers have suggested that there was a greater mental health crisis in young adults' use of social media as social networks replaced in person interactions and could contribute to individual's feelings of loneliness and other mental health concerns (Yang & Chang, 2022).

Therefore, the media has a strong influence in the lives of modern individuals. Media has the power to transform and shape the thought patterns, behaviours, mental health and careers of young adults. The results of this study suggested that the identity of many of the participants was tied to the media. This revealed that the media was a powerful system that not only controlled the source of information individuals were exposed to, but it also created individuals who were dependent on the media to fulfil their goals and

manage how they thought and behaved. The media also offered them a career trajectory for their lives.

5.5.2 Familial socio-economic status

Familial socio-economic status was not a major factor in the participants' career decision making. While some participants did cite a lack of money for university fees or changes in the household that caused money to become scarce, these participants did not let their family's economic troubles affect their career. Similar to these results, Kazi & Akhlaq's (2017) study also revealed that most of the participants stated that financial constraints did not prevent them from pursuing the career of their choice. These results contradicted the statements by Mhlongo and O'Neill (2013), in which they suggested that families from a low socio-economic status could have limited access to basic needs and a good education, thus, having a limiting effect on an individual's career decision. The results of this study also contradicted research by Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014) and Dodge and Welderufael (2014) who suggested that individuals with limited education and income were unlikely to achieve their career goals and that a lack of money was a barrier to individuals' career choices.

There is no current research being conducted about the effect of familial socio-economic status on the career decision making of young adults in South Africa. Therefore, this research was relevant as it provided some insight into the socio-economic status of some of the participants in this study who applied for NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) and were granted a student loan to achieve their career goals. Some participants found employment and only after having saved enough money, continued with their career goals in Psychology. This suggested that individuals who did not have a high socio-economic status did not, or no longer, relied on their family to pay for their university fees. Rather, they sought personal financial aid or were willing to delay preferred studies and work independent of their family until they could afford to study in the career of their choice.

5.5.3 Cultural background

Cultural background also was not a major factor in the participants' career decision making. Only two participants mentioned their culture during the interview. These results differed from those of Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014) who stated that individuals with a strong sense of family obligation felt the need to reciprocate their parents' benevolence afforded to the community in order to continue their family's name and reputation. The participants in this study who stated cultural background as a factor were from African and Asian cultures that tended to embrace the notion of collectivism. However, they did not feel the need to place their parents or communities above their career passion and career choice. This could be due to Westernisation and assimilation of Western attitudes in foreign cultures, as young adults were adopting a more Western culture (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2020). The results of this study refuted the results of Akosah-Twumasi et al.'s (2020) study which explained that collective cultures expected conformity, social interdependence, respect for elders and obedience. The participants in this study resisted their parents' desire of conforming to a more appropriate career path as they chose Psychology as their career choice.

Griffin and Hu (2019) stated that although the participants in their study fulfilled their parental expectations in choice of career and were regarded favourably by their parents and culture, the individual's personal interests were not fulfilled. In addition, their satisfaction and performance could decline in the future (Griffin and Hu, 2019). This was the sentiment of one of the participants in this study who became aware that the career his parents wanted him to follow was not what he wanted to do. He decided to go against their wishes in order to fulfil his own career goals and satisfaction. Many studies and research exist on the differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures and how these affect individuals in their career decision making. This suggests that culture or assimilation of Western culture is an increasingly important factor to be studied in career decision making and in creating appropriate career approaches for individuals.

5.5.4 Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic that began in late 2019 should be taken into account when considering career decision making. Although only one participant stated that Covid-19 affected her career, it is important to discuss this theme as the pandemic has implications for future career choice. Covid-19 provided a “career shock” for many individuals around the world as there was widespread job insecurity, loss of income and social distancing (Akkermans et al., 2020, p. 1). Covid-19 has also had a significant impact on mental and emotional health of individuals. Researchers have agreed that the Covid-19 crisis had and continues to have a tremendous impact on society, both in the short term (a health crisis) and in the long term (an economic crisis) (Baert et al., 2020).

According to Baert et al. (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic affected individuals in several ways: fear of losing their job, fear of missing out on a promotion, reduction in wages and fewer job opportunities available. These were reasonable concerns as over 600 000 individuals lost their jobs during the South African Covid-19 lockdown (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The loss in employment was felt by one of the participants in this study as her employment was terminated due to downsizing in the company as a result of Covid-19. In a study by Byrnes et al. (2020), their findings revealed that 20.2% of the respondents stated that the Covid-19 pandemic affected their choice of speciality in their medical studies. Thus, Covid-19 affected all aspects of life.

Despite the negative consequences and implication for individuals’ careers and mental health, Akkermans et al. (2020) stated that the Covid-19 crisis had positive considerations for career outcomes. These included opportunities to explore new careers and change, as well as, increased job satisfaction as many individuals began to appreciate having a source of income (Akkermans et al., 2020). There was a greater life balance due to many individuals and companies shift to working from home, a re-evaluation of individuals career trajectories and broader life aspirations as some individuals began to come to terms with their own mortality after experiencing the death of family members, friends or watching the death toll rise on the news (Akkermans et al., 2020).

The negative career consequences caused by Covid-19 also resulted in positive aspects such as opportunities for career development, skill upgrades and changing work arrangements that would not have normally come about (Akkermans et al., 2020). This was true for one participant in this study who decided to further her education after losing her job due to the pandemic. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will influence career decision making among young adults for many years to come. Young adults may seek employment where they are most likely to retain their position despite negative global events.

5.6 Millennials and Gen Z generations in career decision making and the work place

Millennials are individuals born between the years 1981-1996 and Gen Z's are individuals born between the years 1997-2012 (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). All the participants fell into these two generations, therefore, it was important to identify how these generations thought, behaved and how they are changing the work environment.

Millennials share common historical events and experiences that shape their values, attitudes and behaviours (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). The environment in which they grow up plays a major role in shaping their personalities (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). In particular, the increasing influence of the media and technology in shaping their personality (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). Millennial workers have different values, attitudes and expectations about work than previous generations (Russo et al., 2020). In a study by Yadav and Chaudhari (2020), Millennials reported a high preference for materialistic rewards, valued leisure time over work, indicated a strong preference for work/life balance, and wanted to make a meaningful contribution to society. They also expressed a need to have superiority over others (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). As a result, Millennials tended to place greater value on extrinsic rewards, had a sense of job entitlement and expected a high salary (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). This could be due to Millennials having a high level of education (Yadav &

Chaudhari, 2020). In addition, Millennials chose careers which provided freedom and creativity in their work (Russo et al., 2020). Russo et al. (2020) noted that a key quality of Millennials was open-mindedness and this could be advantageous in a Psychology career. Millennials were socially conscious individuals who had a desire to change their society for the better (Russo et al., 2020). A majority of the participants in this study stated that they wanted to help people and make their lives better. Therefore, Millennials are everyday innovators who believe in the power of activism and are more interested in social issues than institutions (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). They care about supporting others and are concerned about social and environmental change that impacts all individuals positively (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020).

While Millennials are technology “savvy”, Gen Z individuals are technology “natives”, who have spent their lives immersed in technologies that are essential to how they live, learn and make decisions (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020, p. 854). Gen Z are accustomed to the importance of individuality which leads them to the expectation that they can “pick and choose” what they want to do (Chillakuri, 2020, p 1283). Gen Z’s are always connected to the internet and respond quickly to all activities they perform, including making decisions (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). Gen Z’s are more confident, are focused on their own personal growth and prefer frequent communication over lengthy communication (Chillakuri, 2020). As Gen Z’s spend most of their time online, social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are used for communicating and gaining knowledge about the world and trends (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). Individuals in Gen Z want to learn at their own pace and want to be active in their learning and work (Chillakuri, 2020). Many of the Gen Z individuals have not yet entered the world of work. Hernandez-de-Menendez et al. (2020) predict that Gen Z’s will want to work without fixed hours or place, prefer unconventional professions, place more importance on materialistic goals and technology, look for job opportunities world-wide instead of in their home town and try different careers to find the one that suits them best.

Millennials and Gen Z’s are very materialistic individuals who view money and expensive items as important to life satisfaction (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). This is

because Millennials and Gen Z interpret monetary rewards as an expression of their value, worth, competence, sense of self and happiness (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). Thus, financial reward in a career will be of great importance to them. Research into Millennials and Gen Z's in the workforce is important as these two generations are changing conventional workplace expectations to place more importance on their own career goals and needs. Thus, understanding their needs and beliefs is important to generate appropriate methods, approaches and opportunities for their employment and satisfaction in life.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the factors that affected career decision making which emerged from the Results and how these were consistent or differed from other research. The Ecological System Theory revealed important influences on the participants' career decision making. Personality was found to be the most important factor in career decision making among the participants and confirmed other independent studies. This was unsurprising as a majority of the participants were either Millennials or Gen Z's who placed their own needs and goals above all else.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 Limitations

This study initially proposed to interview 12 participants, but 10 were recruited. This was sufficient for the study as data saturation occurred with the researcher noting that the participants mentioned the same themes and no new themes emerged by the last participant (Participant 10). All participants needed to be proficient in English as the interviews were conducted in this language. Consequently, the researcher was aware that English was not the first language for some of the participants and as a result, the understanding of the questions was limited. In addition, their ability to communicate their experiences to the researcher could have been hindered. The reflexivity of the researcher could have biased the interpretation of the results as the researcher used her own previous experience in career decision making. This could have skewed the results. The information gathered from the semi-structured interviews was specific to a small target population. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalised to other groups outside of the target population. Some participants did not turn on their camera to allow the researcher to gauge their non-verbal cues. Thus, the participants intended communication, may have been interpreted differently by the researcher. The researcher's ability to member check the results of the study with the participants was also hindered as some participants did not respond to the researcher's attempts at obtaining feedback. Thus, it was difficult to check and affirm accuracy of the researcher's interpretation and correct errors which participants may have perceived as inaccurate.

6.2 Recommendations

Firstly, future studies should include more participants into the pilot study to gain a better understanding of the interview questions and answers. Secondly, the study did not administer any personality tests to the participants, yet personality was seen as the most influencing factor among participants. Therefore, future studies on career decision making in which personality tests are administered should be conducted to increase the validity of the results. Thirdly, future studies should broaden their research to other faculties and to other year groups in order to better generalise the findings. Fourthly,

future research should be conducted on the Gen Z generation's career decisions once a majority of them have entered the workforce. This could confirm or disprove the predications made by Hernandez-de-Menendez et al. (2020). In addition, future research should investigate the change in attitude brought about as a result of assimilation of the Western culture into foreign cultures. These findings should be included in future career approaches. Fifthly, research should be conducted on whether more young adults are choosing a career as an entrepreneur and if their skills and characteristics correspond with those of a successful career. Lastly, career tests should reflect the diverse career possibilities available in being self-employed and account for the skills and interests of Millennials and Gen Z.

6.3 Conclusion

This study attempted to explore factors that influenced the career decision making process of third year Psychology students at the University of Pretoria through semi-structured interviews. Existing literature found that there were a number of factors that influenced career decision making in young adults. These included personality, exposure to mental illness, parental influence, and indecisiveness from multiple career options or career indecision, academic achievement/ Psychology as a second choice of career, gender and gender stereotyped roles, interpersonal relationships, vocational assessments, monetary expectation/ financial stability, employability/ job security, racial discrimination, media, familial socio-economic standing, cultural background and Covid-19. All of these factors fell into the Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem of the Ecological System Theory. Making a career decision could be a challenging task and individuals often faced many difficulties prior to or during this process. However, most young adults were able to navigate their way through these and chose a career that suited them.

In order to achieve the aim of the study, that is, to fill the knowledge gap in literature by exploring young South African adults' voices and experiences in relation to career decision making, the study adopted a Qualitative research approach, using Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Thematic Analysis to analyse and extract themes from the

interviews that were conducted. The themes that emerged reflected the participants' experience in choosing a career in Psychology and the process reported to make that career decision. The participants spoke about how their personality was a major influencing factor in choosing Psychology as a career. They also indicated how the media influenced their decision and became a significant and influential information tool regarding Psychology as a career. It was also found that exposure to mental illness and disorders played a role in the participants' career choice as many were exposed to the mental illnesses either through people close to them or through their own experience of it. Another major theme revealed was the significant effect of participants' interpersonal relationships with people of academic stature including their teachers, lecturers, as well as, people in general whom they had contact with and had discussed their career choices.

All of the themes that have emerged, indicate that these young adults used a variety of factors in order to make a career decision. They often consulted with different sources of information in order to gain some clarity and sought out alternatives to their career decision making. Young adults used their own experiences to choose a career path that would likely help their community or others in some way. They were also likely to choose a career in which they gained a better understanding of themselves even if this went against parental, cultural and societal norms.

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Appendix A

STUDY INVITE

PARTICIPATE IN A CAREERS RESEARCH STUDY

HELP CONTRIBUTE TO MORE INFORMED APPROACHES IN CAREER DECISION MAKING

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?	WHY PARTICIPATE ?	WHO CAN PARTICIPATE ?
THE RESEARCHER IS EXPLORING YOUNG ADULT'S VOICES AND EXPERIENCES IN CAREER DECISION MAKING IN ORDER TO INFORM AND CREATE CAREER TESTS APPROPRIATE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT	YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WILL CONTRIBUTE VALUABLE INFORMATION THAT CAN HELP OTHERS TO MAKE INFORMED AND APPROPRIATE CAREER CHOICES	• MEN AND WOMEN IN THEIR THIRD YEAR OF PSYCHOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA • ABLE TO ATTEND INTERVIEWS THROUGH THE INTERNET VIA ZOOM

INTERESTED? JOIN NOW!
SEND AN EMAIL TO U16034156@TUKS.CO.ZA



Appendix B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

- How are your studies going?
- Are you enjoying your course/ programme you have selected?
- What does a career mean to you? How would you define a career?
- What do you plan to do in the future with your course/ programme?
- As a third year student in psychology, please can you tell me what factors you think influenced your career decision making as a young adult? (Probe for intrapersonal, interpersonal and macro level influences)
- What resources/services influenced your career decision making? (Probe for intrapersonal, interpersonal (career assessment, career counselling etc) and macro level influences (media, internet etc))
- Can you think of a situation/s or individual/s that influenced your career choice? (Probe for macro influences (finances, career opportunities, situations such as COVID etc)

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT FOR RECORDING

I....., have been informed that my responses during the interview of the study entitled: “Exploring factors that influence the career decision making process of third year psychology students at the University of Pretoria using an Ecological Systems Theory framework” will be recorded and hereby give my consent for audio and visual recording to be conducted for the intended purposes of this research study. I understand that the information which will be recorded is for academic purposes only and that the content will appear in a research topic.

I understand that 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 researcher then I may contact:

The researcher: Maria Fernandes on +27 (0)63 8353871/ u16034156@tuks.co.za

Signature 

The supervisor: Kamilla Rawatlal on +27 (0)12 420 3430 /kamilla.rawatlal@up.ac.za

Signature



.....
Signature of participant

.....
Date

Appendix D

INFORMED CONSENT

I.....am agreeing to participate in a study on “Exploring factors that influence the career decision making process of third year psychology students at the University of Pretoria using an Ecological Systems Theory framework”.

This study will be conducted by Maria Fernandes, who is a student at the University of Pretoria. I understand that:

- Taking part in the study is completely voluntary
- I agree to maintain confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and the researcher during the interview
- I may refuse to answer any question asked during the interview
- I may drop out of the study at any time without any negative consequences
- My name or identity will not be revealed
- I will be provided with a summary of results at my request

- I am aware that participating in this research study will not have negative or positive consequences in a personal capacity.
- I acknowledge and give permission for the interviews to be recorded (Please tick)
☐
- 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 researcher then I may contact:

The researcher: Maria Fernandes on +27 (0)63 8353871/ u16034156@tuks.co.za

Signature 

The supervisor: Kamilla Rawatlal on +27 (0)12 420 3430 [/kamilla.rawatlal@up.ac.za](mailto:kamilla.rawatlal@up.ac.za)

Signature



RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

e-mail: psychology.rescom@up.ac.za

.....

.....

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix E

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

TITLE OF THE STUDY

Exploring factors that influence the career decision making process of third year psychology students at the University of Pretoria using an Ecological Systems Theory framework.

Hello my name is Maria Fernandes, I am currently a Masters student at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. You are being invited to take part in my research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the following information carefully, which will explain the details of this research project. Please feel free to ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence career decision making. Little is known about why young South African adults choose their careers and I have decided to conduct a study on third year psychology university students. The overall aim of this study is to explore the influences that led individuals to choose their career.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You will be invited to participate because you are a third year psychology student at the University of Pretoria.

- You will be excluded if:
 - You are not a third year psychology student

- You are not a current student at the University of Pretoria
- You do not have access to the internet

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The Zoom video called semi-structured interviews are expected to have a running time of about 30-45 minutes. In this study participants will be interviewed individually and the interviewer will ask each participant several questions. The interviews will be video-recorded and will provide complete confidentiality and anonymity of the participant. There is no correct or incorrect answers to the interview questions. The study aims to identify the viewpoints and experiences of the participants and individuals are encouraged to give their own personal opinions and experiences relating to the questions to be asked.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to continue to participate if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide not to take part in the study there will be no negative consequences or penalization.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality will be ensured by assigning code names/numbers to each participant, and this will be used in all research notes and documents. No personal information will be connected to the interview data. The findings will be disseminated through conferences and publications. Reporting of findings will be anonymous, only the researchers will have access to the information. Please note participant information will be kept confidential, except in cases where the researcher is legally obliged to report incidents such as abuse and suicide risk.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no direct benefit to you for participation in this study, however, I hope that information obtained from this study may yield responses that will be analysed in order to make meaningful inferences that can be used to develop contextually relevant information regarding why individuals choose their career path. The information can help future generations to make more informed career decisions.

WHAT ARE THE ANTICIPATED RISKS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no foreseeable risks

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT SOME FORM OF DISCOMFORT OCCUR AS A RESULT OF TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Should you have the need for further discussions after the interviews, an opportunity will be arranged for you. The research will have minimal risk to you if you choose to participate.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Electronic information will be stored for period of 15 years. Participant information in hard copies of raw data will be locked in the cabinet and electronic data will be kept in a file that is password protected in the Department of Psychology

WHAT WILL THE RESEARCH DATA BE USED FOR?

Data gathered from the participant would be used for research purpose that include Masters Dissertation, conferences, academic journals and for further research in the form of secondary data analysis.

WILL I BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

NO, you will not be paid to take part in this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. Ethical approval number is HUM002/0721. A copy of the approval letter can be provided to you on request.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

The findings of the research study will be shared with you by Maria Fernandes after one year or two years of completing the study. Participants can contact the researcher via u16034156@tuks.co.za.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE CONCERN, COMPLAINT OR ANYTHING I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE STUDY?

If you have questions about this study or you have experienced adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided below. If you have questions regarding the rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the researcher, please contact the supervisor whose contact details are below

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and, in advance, for participating in this study.

Researcher

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