

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND PARENTS'
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND ON CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG
ADULTS**

by

Reshoketswe Ledwaba

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SCOPE OF THE DISSERTATION

For this Master's dissertation of limited scope (50% of the total Master's degree), the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology prescribes an article format. This format involves four chapters: an introductory chapter, a literature review chapter, a research article (presented as Chapter 3), and a conclusion, limitations and recommendations chapter.


TECHNICAL AND REFERENCE STYLE

In this dissertation, I have chosen the publication guidelines of the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP)* to structure my dissertation and article. Therefore, the APA style was followed in terms of the technical editing and referencing.

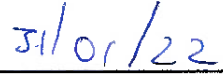
DECLARATION

I, Reshoketswe Morulaneng Ledwaba, student number 50548905, for the degree Master of Commerce, declare that "The influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on career aspirations of young adults" is my own work, and all the sources utilised and cited have been indicated or acknowledged by means of complete references.

I declare that ethical clearance has been obtained from the College of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Research Committee (Annexure A) at the University of South Africa and that informed consent (Annexure B) was given by all participants to conduct the research.



Signature



Date

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I would like to thank the almighty God who makes all things possible, who kept me throughout the process and granted me wisdom and strength to keep going.

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SUMMARY

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND ON CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS

by

Reshoketswe Ledwaba

Degree: Master of Commerce (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)

Supervisor: Dr A van Niekerk

In South Africa, socio-economic inequality has a profound negative impact on various socio-economic levels, including education and the success of many young adults and their career aspirations (Buthelezi et al., 2009; Sayed & Van Niekerk, 2017). Therefore, this study aimed at exploring the influence of the educational background and socio-economic status of parents on the career aspirations of young adults. A qualitative study was employed to explore the unique lived experiences of the participants. The focal point of the study was the process young adults follow towards formulating their career aspirations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted as a data collection method. The aims of the study required purposive sampling as a method to analyse the data and content analysis was used to extract themes and sub-themes. The study found that the educational background and socio-economic status of parents inform how much access young adults have to knowledge and resources and would increase their confidence and possibility to pursue their career aspirations. Recommendations were made to organisations, industrial and organisational psychologists, and career counsellors on how to best support young adults and come up with initiatives that could be implemented in their journeys towards becoming fulfilled employees.

KEY WORDS

Career aspirations; socio-economic status; young adults; qualitative; semi-structured interviews; purposive sampling; content analysis; behaviourism; interpretivism.

ISIFINYEZO

UMTHELELA WESIMO SEZENHLALO NOMNOTHO KANYE NESIMO SEMFUNDO YABAZALI KWIZINTSHISEKELO ZAMA-CAREER ZABANTU ABASEBASHA

ENingizimu Afrika, ukungalingani kwezenhlalisano yabantu nakwezomnotho kunemiphumela emibiki kakhulu kumazinga ehlukenene kubantu nakwezomnotho, okubandakanya ezemfundo kanye nempumelelo yabantu abasha abaningi kanye nezintshisekelo zabo ngama-career (Buthelezi et al., 2009; Sayed & Van Niekerk, 2017). Ngakho-ke, lolu cwaningo lunenhloso yokuqhwanda ngomthelela womsusa kwizimo zabazali kwezemfundo kanye nezimo zenhlalisano yabantu nakwezomnotho kwizintshisekelo zama-career zabantu abasha. Kusetshenziswe ucwaningo lwenqubo ye-qualitative ukuqhwanda ngezipiliyoni zabantu ababambe iqhaza. Ucwaningo lugxile kakhulu kwiprosese elandelwa ngabantu abasha ekwenzeni izintshisekelo zama-career abo. Kusetshenziswa ama-semi-structured interviews njengemethodi yokuqoqa ulwazi. Inhloso yocwaningo ibidinga ukwenza i-purposive sampling njengemethodi yokuhlaziya ulwazi kanti futhi nokuhlaziya ingqikithi yodaba ukucaphuma ama-theme nama sub-theme noma izihloko nezihlokwana. Ucwaningo luthole ukuthi imvelaphi yezemfundo kanye nesimo sabazali kwezenhlalisano yabantu nezomnotho kuyisakhelo sempumelelo enkulu yokuthi abantu abasha bafinyelele kangakanani kulwazi kanye nemithombo yosizo, kanye nokwenyusa ukuzithemba kwabo kanye namathuba okulandelela izintshisekelo zama-career abo. Kwenziwe izincomo kwizinhlangano, ama-industrial and organisational psychologist, kanye nabeluleki ngama-career ukuthi bangasekela kancono kanjani abantu abasha, kanye nokuqhamuka nezindlela zokubasiza kuhambo lwabo lokuba ngabasebenzi abanempumelelo.

AMATHEMU ABALULEKILE

izintshisekelo ngama-career, abantu abasha, ama-interview e-qualitative, semi-structured, i-purposive sampling, ukuhlaziya ingqikithi, i-behaviourism; i-interpretivism

SETSOPOLWA

Ka Afrika Borwa, tlhokego ya tekatekano mabapi le ekonomi ya setšhaba e na le seabe se sego seo se sa kgahlišego maamong a mehutahuta a ekonomi ya setšhaba, go akaretšwa thuto le katlego ya bafsa ba bantši le ditlhologelo tša bona tša go hwetša mešomo (Buthelezi et al., 2009; Sayed & Van Niekerk, 2017). Ka fao, dinyakišišo tše di ikemišeditše go lekodišiša khuetšo yeo maemo a thuto le maemo a batswadi go ekonomi ya setšhaba di nago le yona go ditlhologelo tša go hwetša mešomo ka bafsa. Go dirišitšwe dinyakišišo tša boleng ka nepo ya go lekodišiša maitemogelo a go swana a nnoši a bakgathatema. Nepišokgolo ya dinyakišišo e bile tshepedišo yeo bafsa ba e latelago ge ba hlama ditlhologelo tša bona tša go hwetša mešomo ye itšego. Dipoledišano tše dipotšišo tša tšona di sego tša hlangwa peleng di swerwe bjalo ka mokgwa wa go kgoboketša tshedimošo. Maikemišetšo a dinyakišišo a nyakile gore go dirwe sampole ya maikemišetšo bjalo ka mokgwa wa go sekaseka tshedimošo gomme tshekatsheko ya diteng e šomišitšwe go hwetša merero le merero ya ka fasana. Dinyakišišo di utollotše gore maemo a thuto le maemo a batswadi go ekonomi ya setšhaba di laola ka fao bafsa ba ka kgonago go fihlelela tsebo le methopo gomme se se tla oketša boitshupo bja bona le kgonagalo ya gore ba latele ditlhologelo tša bona tša mešomo ye itšego. Go dirilwe ditšhišinyo go mekgatlo, go bašomi ba tša menagano ba ka diintastering le ba ka dikhamphaning, le go baeletši ba tša mešomo mabapi le ka fao ba ka thušago bokaone bafsa le go tla ka masolo ao a ka phethagatšwago ka leetong la bona gore ba fetoge bašomi bao ba kgotsofetšego.

MAREO A BOHLOKWA

ditlhologelo tša go hwetša mešomo; bafsa; ya boleng; dipoledišano tše dipotšišo tša tšona di sego tša hlangwa peleng; sampole ya maikemišetšo; sampole ya maikemišetšo; tshekatsheko ya diteng; boitshwaro; tlhathollonyakišišo

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CHE: Centre for Higher Education

DHET: Department of Higher Education and Training

DPME: Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

IOP: Industrial and Organisational Psychology

LIET: Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectory

LO: Life Orientation

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

NSFAS: National Student Financial Aid Scheme

SCCT: Social Cognitive Career Theory

SES: Socio-Economic Status

UNISA: University of South Africa

SLT: Social Learning Theory

CHAPTER 1

SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

This dissertation presents the findings from a qualitative study that was conducted as a result of the researcher's interest in how the perceptions of career success is influenced by socio-economic status and parents' educational background among young adults. This chapter will provide a general overview of the problem that was investigated and the theoretical basis of the topic. The research design and the paradigm lens, through which the research topic was viewed, are also discussed.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

South Africa is one of the most disproportionate countries in the world (Keeton, 2014). The gap that lies between rich and poor in our society is quite significant and this becomes evident in the purchasing power of people from different social divisions. Keeton (2014) proposes that the level of inequality is partly due to the fact that the amount of employment that was created during the last 20 years barely kept up with the growth of South Africa's labour force. Sayed and Van Niekerk (2017) propose that regardless of the establishment of democratic institutions and inclusive socio-economic rights for all citizens, within a complex map of policy frameworks, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. Sayed and Van Niekerk (2017) further suggest that, with the quality of the education system being substandard, persistent inequality of access and fragmentation in achievement levels, further reflects this trend.

Taylor and Yu (2009) advise that in South Africa, for many years or even centuries of institutionalised inequality, the social shape was stratified in the sort of manner that access to wealth, status and power, was dispensed primarily based totally on race. This was attained by putting in place laws that regulate people's access to resource (education, housing, employment opportunities, health facilities etc). Therefore, history ensured that economic resources were assigned based on race. This does not help in understanding or unravelling race and class in South Africa (Taylor & Yu, 2009).

McKeever (2017) endorses this and argues that critical to educational inequality is the central role it plays in determining most other forms of social inequality at any given moment and over time. Even though political change happened relatively quickly in the 1990s, changes in the distribution of education could not hope to keep pace because such a large proportion of those currently living in South Africa went to school during the apartheid era (or even before). As a result, inequality continues to affect populations today, 20 years after the transition to democracy (McKeever, 2017).

According to the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME, nd), the post-apartheid government sought to establish new strategies of improving communities, these strategies were aimed at helping the less fortunate sustain themselves. This includes both social assistance programs and welfare services that aim to empower people. Buthelezi et al. (2009) agree and cite that after the fall of the apartheid order in 1994, the South African Ministry of Education began to change its curriculum to provide quality education to all students, especially in disadvantaged environments. Buthelezi et al. (2009) report that the DPME's goals include redressing the inequalities of past apartheid policies and ensuring that sufficient information about different career options is available for learners so they can make more informed decision. Buthelezi et al. (2009) also revealed that as part of an important process of curriculum restructuring in the 1990s, subjects from the old system of career guidance and careers were introduced into the current school curriculum as part of Life Orientation (LO). research area

However, as the DPME (nd) reports, the partnership between Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) has not yet been able to meet all the demands for developmental social welfare services, and as a result, economic inequalities still exist. Maila and Ross (2018) argue that based on literature that is currently available, the post-1994 government has done quite well in increasing the level of participation for Africans, Indians and Coloureds.

When Badat (2015) reflects on the report of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the researcher suggests that notwithstanding the progress that has occurred since 1994, there exists some gaps in higher education, that is in terms of quantity and in a lot of instances, quality, whereby racial, gender, class and other

discrepancies still continue. The DHET (2012) further reports that the universities' financial assistance programs are overwhelmed by the number of university enrolments, and even with efforts to bring balance between historically black universities and those that were previously advantaged, the inadequacy of resources significantly affects the ability of the historically black universities from "properly fulfilling their prime function – providing good undergraduate degrees to poor, rural students" (DHET, 2012, p.12).

When analysing societal inequalities and the contrast that is clear among South Africans, one would tap into the history of South Africa before 1994, where certain policies denied specific racial groups access to opportunity. Phillip et al. (2014) argue that giving limited rights to black people was coupled with limiting their asset ownership and prescribed that they play an adjunct economic role in society. This in turn was heightened by unequal rights and opportunities across the broader scope, from access to fundamental services and amenities to education and health.

Meiring et al. (2018) agree with this and report that the colonial and apartheid rule set the tone for certain structural, socio-economic repercussions, such as the marginalisation of certain racial groups with regard to access to economic resources and opportunity, quality education and political activism, remain crucial of challenges.

'At the end of March 2019, South Africa's quarterly poverty statistics were released. According to these statistics, 30.4 million out of 56 million people in South Africa officially live in poverty. Additionally, 49.2% of this poor population is black African women' (Modise, 2019 May 3). Furthermore, poverty in the country is more prevalent in communities which were at a disadvantaged previously, or rural areas. Finally, and most pertinent, poverty is ascendent in South Africa (Modise, 2019). In an environment where more than half of the population is impoverished, and their most basic needs are not being met, it is very unlikely that an individual will think about getting access to higher education or even pursue a career that requires one to commit to more than three years of education.

Maila and Ross (2018) argue that the economic challenges that force students from low-income families to defer or delay from studying and relieve their family from

financial strain is an important consideration. In fact, Ngesi (2003) states that being underprivileged discourages choices of relevant educational programmes and careers for students. Such students tend to avoid committing to a career path that takes long periods of training, which their financial position cannot support. This means students who come from disadvantaged families are not given the free will to make independent decisions about their careers. According to Ngesi (2003), the findings make a clear depiction that despite the limited available public resources, a high level of skill shortage and the urgent need to raise the income level of the poor, high dropout rates and student failure are major problems in schools and South. African Higher Education Institutions.

An individual's perception of what career success is does not end at what they can and cannot afford. Knowledge is crucial, and knowledge is acquired from the environment to which we are exposed. Parents, teachers and role models provide guidance and encouragement to pursue some career paths. A study conducted by Jones et al. (2008) found that the challenge is that young people find themselves pressured to make uninformed decisions about courses to study. Among rural students, this escalates, because their access to information is even less. Some students reported that the career guidance provided at school was adequate, while others felt that the orientation provided did not meet their goals (Jones et al., 2008).

When the Freedom Charter stated that "doors of learning shall be open to all" (Congress of the people, 1955), it launched a whole new era of the majority having access to better education and better jobs. The goal of this policy was to enable people access to better jobs, improve the socio-economic status of the majority of South Africans and to close the gap between social classes. According to Sayed and Van Niekerk (2017), in the post-apartheid period, there has been a controversy over socio-economic rights of people in terms of distribution of resources and access to basic needs (e.g education). The transition is taking place, but at a very slow pace.

Nyoka et al. (2014) believe insufficient level of education impacts prospects of social mobility significantly and a lot of young people are face with lives of fewer opportunities and a lowered sense of self-determination. In South Africa, an individual's socio-economic status significantly impacts the type of education they gain access to. Many

disadvantaged schools lack basic learning resources (e.g textbooks and laboratories), all of which are considered important for the overall development of learners; especially when it comes to self-confidence development, which can affect a student's educational and career aspirations. Although development occurs mostly in urban suburbs, marginalized communities often end up with limited services (Rohleder et al., 2008).

As individuals, we all have a desire to be successful, to occupy roles that are fulfilling to us and this is reflected in the career choices we make. For example, one may aspire to be a nurse because of their love for helping people and have an impact on social welfare, while another person may aspire to be in any profession that gives them the ability to improve their current socio-economic conditions. Therefore, our career aspirations can guide our perception of career success.

Therefore, based on the socio-economic conditions of our country, can one afford to choose a career based on passion or is the primary goal of individuals to improve their socio-economic status? Can we also go to the extent of saying, because an individual was able to eradicate poverty in the home, they are set to be having a successful career? Are there standards that must be met, or boxes that must be ticked to conclude that one has a successful career?

Individuals' career expectations and expected career outcomes have been changing in today's post-modern society (De Oliveira et al., 2019). Within a mutable working world, it is crucial for individuals to establish a purpose about their life experiences, career paths and perception of success instead of being complacent about society's expectation (Savickas, 2012).

Career success is defined as 'the individual's accumulation of positive work-related and psychological outcomes from the work experience' (Judge et al., 1995, p.3). The construct "career success" has been adequately discussed in the career literature. The term is usually discussed from two key perspectives: objective and subjective. Objective career success is normally described as those accomplishments that can be easily observed by others such as promotions, hierarchy level and job title, whereas

subjective success represents one's own idea of success based on what they deem as valuable (Hite & McDonald, 2007).

Career success is not a static or general concept, but a social perspective that stems from one's values, choices and beliefs, and environment (Dries et al., 2008). From a social point of view, career success can be determined by an individual's socioeconomic status.

Mueller et al. (2015) suggest that Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) suggests that one's career choices and goals would be best understood through the interactivity of various factors, these include individual, background, and other correlated/distal influences. The interactivity between environmental, social, and personal factors, directly and indirectly shape how one would expect their future career prospects play out and increase motivation to follow through (Loera et al., 2013). SCCT maintains that choices that are related to one's career development would be best understood as being a result of the complex interaction between individual factors such as self-efficacy; background factors, such as, gender or socio-economic background, and prior achievements (Mueller et al., 2015).

For the purpose of the study, contextual factors include young adults' socio-economic backgrounds and their roles in shaping career choices and eventually what success means to them. Thomson (2018) argues that students from socioeconomically disadvantaged families are disadvantaged in school because they lack a learning environment at home, which affects their academic success at school. In particular, reading at home, over many years, has been shown in many large-scale international studies to be one of the biggest influences on student success. Early on, parents of higher socioeconomic status can provide their children with financial support and household resources for individualized learning. As they are likely to have a higher level of education, they are also more likely to provide a nurturing home environment to support cognitive development (Thomson, 2018).

Chen et al. (2018) agree with this and argue that parents in high SES (Socio-economic status) families can afford to invest in their children's education in terms of time and knowledge, and they are prone to nurture a healthy parent-child relationship. Parents

start being involved in their children's education at home while also providing an environment safe enough for appropriate learning experiences, coupled with support to occur. (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

The development of vocational aspiration would count as a feature of one's personal development. It begins with the child becoming aware of different work-related experiences, especially when the child begins to notice different work-related experiences and careers. During this time, the child perceives different people doing different types of vocations in their environment. Their ideas about jobs are, in the initial stages, very crude and fantastic. At a later stage these ideas give rise to both general and specific interests, which in turn are realised in subsequent educational and vocational activities (Ginzberg et al., 1951).

Jungen (2008) proposes that while perception suggests career choice is a reflection of one's own decision, research indicates otherwise, that career choice is sometimes a result of other factors. Parents have been found to be one of the biggest influence when selecting a career path. Ginzberg et al. (1951) cite that the role of the family in vocational development should be considered from social, psychological and economic points of view. Not only does the family provide opportunities for the satisfaction of many needs, but it also creates new needs. It is here that the child develops attitudes towards various types of work or careers. The accessibility or inaccessibility of certain occupations largely depends upon economic resources of the family and in general upon family support.

The first environment we are exposed to is our immediate family; our values and beliefs are shaped by that very environment. What is right and wrong is learnt from a young age and it is from our families and parents that we establish our values system (Schunk & Usher, 2012). At a young age, it is easy to make a career choice; a child will be able to choose an ideal career, based on what they would like to do, but as they get older and the realities of their environment set in, the process of making a career decision becomes more complex. According to Howard and Walsh (2011), younger children are more prone to express their ideal career aspirations, which may represent their flawless and phenomenal perceptions of their vocations of interest. As children get

older and become aware of their contextual challenges, their career choices may be a reflection of the perception of their environment.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Visagie and Koekemoer (2014) suggest that career success has traditionally been defined by objective metrics such as promotions, rewards, and senior positions. The conventional view of careers, usually defined as accelerated ascent within a single organizational hierarchy, has been replaced by what we call protean career, a career process known for its boundaryless, self-directive nature and it is governed by one's internal values and the goal is usually to attain psychological success. (Hall et al, 2018).

Various authors (Arthur et al., 2005; Heslin, 2005; Visagie & Koekemoer, 2014) have proposed a number of definitions for career success. However, the social cognitive theory recognises the influence of one's environment in forming a worldview and eventually how they would define career success. An individual's environment also includes the amount of information to which they are exposed. According to Ginzberg et al. (1951), the amount of information available pertaining to various occupations depends upon the socio-economic standing of the family. Generally, the upper-class people tend to aspire to professional, business and administrative jobs, while the lower-class people tend to aspire to skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs (Ginzberg et al., 1951).

After democracy was established in South Africa and some laws were amended, it became necessary to meet the socio-economic needs of most of South Africa.. According to Sehoole and Adeyemo (2016), there was a need and demand for transformation in higher education and the purpose of this transformation was to fulfil its requirements a balanced education system in South Africa. Central to this need for transformation was a belief in the capacity of higher education to create an environment where opportunities for self-fulfilment are realised; to encourage free exploration of intellect ; to respond to societal and economic needs; and to produce new knowledge for a modern economy (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2004).

This was done with the belief that higher education would provide the opportunity for increased access to information, expand knowledge and eventually improve the socio-economic situation for most disadvantaged communities. Sehoole and Adeyemo (2016) further state that higher education that is in line with the goal of democracy is the cornerstone for increased participation in economic and social life. Higher education will strengthen equity and social justice by using skill, competencies and acquired knowledge as a basis for social advancement. It is for this reason that a higher education system that was defined by an imbalance regarding access, physical and epistemological access (Cele & Brandt, 2005) to gain learning opportunities, we could not promote the building of democratic values and an unbiased society, so we had to redesign. The value and relevance of South Africa's higher education system needs to be evaluated in terms of providing equal access and opportunities to all South Africans (Sehoole & Adeyemo, 2016).

The government has launched initiatives to try and redress the socio-economic status of the majority of South Africans. This was done through the introduction of free education and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) which has increased the number of university entry significantly. According to the Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2015), university enrolment increased to 985,212 students during the 2015 school year, which includes both full-time and part-time enrolments for contact and distance learning. The total number of college graduates per year in 2015 was 191,524, exceeding the expected 181,616 per 9,908 graduates.

There was an significant increase of student enrolment which was 165 995 during 2012, an increase of 15.4% between 2012 and 2015. This means that the system's output has improved, and since the increase in the number of graduates is far more than the increase in new registrations for the same reporting period (DHET, 2015). However, some might still not see the introduction of the NSFAS in a positive light simply because it is not a bursary but rather a loan that has to be repaid with interest.

Perry (2014) argues that the fact that it is a loan might delay or even discourage individuals from seeking entry into institutions of higher education, especially those from low-socio-economic backgrounds. Even if these individuals may be interested to

gain entry into higher education and attain symbols that would qualify them, they might find the long-term financial debt difficult to re-pay and therefore lead them to make other choices that are less expensive. The reality of the average young adult in South Africa is that of turning into a breadwinner and eradicating poverty in their family.

Therefore, the objective of the study was to answer the following research questions:

- How does socio-economic status influence career aspirations of young adults?
- How does an individual's parents' educational background influence their career aspirations?
- How does an individual arrive at deciding what their career aspiration is, taking into consideration their social context?

1.3 AIMS

The study seeks to gain an understanding of the experience of young adults when constructing career aspirations and what is taken into consideration before making the decision to follow a certain career path. In the following sections I will mention the general and specific aims, as well as the aims pertaining to the literature review.

1.3.1 General aim

The general aim was to explore young adults' experience of the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on their career aspirations.

1.3.2 Specific literature aims

The specific literature aims are as follows:

- To conceptualise career, career aspirations and their related constructs.
- To explore career development theories.
- To explore the influence of socio-economic status on the career aspirations of young adults.

- To explore the influence of parental education on the career aspirations of young adults.

1.3.3 Specific empirical aims

- To explore young adults' experience of the influence of socio-economic status on their career aspirations.
- To explore young adults' experience of the influence of parents' educational background on their career aspirations.
- To develop a framework outlining the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on the career aspirations of young adults.

1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

Kuhn (1970) defines paradigms as a set of common beliefs and consensus reached between scholars about how issues could be viewed and addressed. A research paradigm essentially depicts the lens through which they view the world they live in. The theoretical paradigm, empirical paradigm and meta-theoretical concepts in relation to the study will now be discussed.

1.4.1 Theoretical paradigm

The theoretical paradigm adopted in this study was behaviourism. Behaviourism came into use as a term first associated with classical conditioning. With Pavlov's dogs, the effect is linear and one way, i.e. environment controls behaviour (Krapfl, 2016). Behaviourism environment being responsible for how an individual turns out to be. Behaviourism focuses on behaviour that we can observe to better understand the human psyche. At the basis of what behaviourism proposes is that psychology should concern itself with the observable behaviour of people and, not with abstract events that take place in their minds (Walinga, 2014).

Behaviourists are concerned with analysis on nurture over nature in determining human and animal behaviour. They attempt to investigate associations through the use of experiments. According to Thorndike (1913), a man's intellect, disposition, and

skill is the summation of how they tend to respond to circumstances, and it is the different situation-response connections that make up this sum of the world. An individual's life choices are an outcome of the circumstance they find themselves in. Therefore, one's behaviour, as behaviourist would claim, is guided by the influential people in their life.

1.4.1.1 Disciplinary relationship

Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) seeks to launch new knowledge and theories to meet the changing needs of society and organizations and to meet the needs of ever-changing circumstances (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). This field is concerned with the systematic exploration of differences among people in the work environment, including activities such as job analysis; psychometrics, employee selection and placement; talent management; attracting and retaining scarce skills; and facilitating adherence to employment legislation (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010).

Career psychology, as a subfield of IOP deals with the interactions between people and their environment and attempts to explain the characteristics of occupational patterns and the resulting experiences in an individual's life (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). Parents act as role models in their work and provide young people with an important source of work, information, and emotional support.

According to Leung (2008), career choice is a process where an individual has to intercede and mediate the interplay between the self and the environment in making decision about career path. The concept of life role can help explore how culture can make a contribution to the career choice process. Values such honouring parents, family harmony, and allegiance to certain values might have a significant impact on how the personal views themselves, and the prominence and importance of different life and work roles. This simple account, as stated by Super (1953), was important to pinpointing an all too often forgotten point that peoples' careers cannot be explore without taking into consideration, their environments. To fully explore an individual's career, it is imperative that their whole life roles be understood.

1.4.1.2 Meta-theoretical concepts

Career aspirations - Career aspirations are defined as an individual's point in time expressions of educational and occupational goals (Andreassen, 2016; Johnson, 1995).

Socio-economic variables - Measures of an individual or group's standing in the community or society. It usually relates to the income, occupation, educational attainment and wealth of an individual or group (Jamabo, 2014).

Young adult/emerging adults - Emerging adulthood is a new developmental stage, taking place between adolescence and young adulthood. It is defined as a period of identity exploration that takes place before individuals make long-term adult commitments (Arnett, 2000).

Education - The wealth of knowledge acquired by an individual after studying particular subject matters or experiencing life lessons that provide an understanding of something (Kasemsap, 2018).

1.4.2 Empirical paradigm

The interpretive paradigm seeks to understand the world from context of individuals. Within this paradigm, a researcher uses methodologies where meanings can be extracted, these include interviews or participant observation, and these methods depend on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. Within this paradigm the researcher's goal is to explain the story behind certain social occurrences (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Interpretive researchers are of the belief that believe that there is some truth in how people see the world. (Mutch, 2005).

The interpretivist paradigm is based on the following: The belief that there is no single, universal reality, in fact realities are multiple and socially constructed; that taking the context of the individual is required for knowledge acquisition; the belief that findings help in the generation of new knowledge; the need to explore the human mindset and

not dogma; and ‘the belief that contextual factors should be considered in the systematic pursuit of understanding (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017)

Interpretivism was appropriate to this study as it looks at the subjective explanation behind phenomena. The aim of the study was to explore how socio-economic status of a family and the parents’ educational background shape the career aspirations of young adults. Since the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand the “why certain things are the way they are”, it thus makes it relevant to the study.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is the complete plan of action that is used to integrate the different parts of the study to reach the objective of the study. In other words, the research design serves as a blueprint for the collection, analysis and reporting of data wherein the goal is to solve the research problem. (Grey, 2009).

1.5.1 Research approach

In this quest to explore perceptions of career success among young adults, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach to research. The reason behind this is that the study was based on the belief that social and individual variations influence this reality, and that these variations are important (Teherani et al., 2015).

Teherani et al. (2015) further suggest that the qualitative approach tends to be inductive, which means that they develop a theory based on a pattern that has been found in their collected data. The interaction between all of these variables is very interesting. The interaction between an individual and their environment, in this instance, their socio-economic status and their parents’ educational background, is not straightforward; being an academic does not necessarily mean one will give birth to a child who has an interest in academics, an individual’s career aspirations are influenced by a lot of factors which are, but not limited to, what they are exposed to, what their parents or other influential people in their lives encourage and the amount of information they have access to through parents. The interaction of all these variables in forming a whole perception for an individual is very interesting, and an

approach which requires to understand the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), was the most appropriate for the study.

1.5.2 Research strategy

According to Malhotra (2007), the strategy applied in the study was inductive and it proposes that all science starts with an observation, where the researcher uses it as a basis of for knowledge generation. He argues that there is a correspondence between sensory experience and the object of that experience, although it is an extended tool because reality directly affects the senses (Malhotra, 2017).

In psychology and organizational behavior, inductive research is considered a key vehicle for knowledge advancement. Developing a grounded theory requires arduous empirical observation or experimentation over long periods of time (Locke, 2007). Ontologically, the researcher is concerned the nature of being, that is, *what is* (Scotland, 2012). The study seeks to understand career aspirations from the viewpoint of the participant. Methodologically it is concerned with how the researcher goes about finding the knowledge they are looking for, this means the chosen approach to collect and analyse the collected data. (Scotland, 2012). The researcher used interviews as a means to collect data, to find meaning behind certain choices and to get the subjective experiences of the participants. Epistemologically, it is assumed that people's aspirations are determined by what they value, which, according to Scotland (2012), has to do with how knowledge can be created, acquired and transferred.

1.5.2.1 Research setting

The research was conducted among young adults from different socio-economic backgrounds, the main variable to be taken into consideration was their parents' educational background.

1.5.2.2 Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The researcher obtained permission from the individuals who expressed their willingness to participate in the study. It was important that the researcher explain to the participants that they will not be coerced into participation. A very detailed consent form which explains their rights as participants was given to them (see Annexure B). Before signing the forms, most of the participants had questions and wanted clarity on the terms used in the form and the researcher was as explicit as possible in explaining everybody's role in the research process. Interviews were conducted in a professional manner, at a location that was convenient for the participants. The research participants were sourced through social networks and recommendations by acquaintances, the researcher narrowed down to a sample to fit the aims of the study.

1.5.3 Sampling

In a study that is aimed at a specific group of people, the most appropriate sampling method is purposive or judgemental sampling, which occurs when the researcher selects a group of participants deliberately, based on the knowledge they have about the study and the population. When selecting a sample, the researcher always considers the goals of the research. Campbell et al. (2020) proposes that the reason for judgemental sampling is to align the sample with the research objectives, it is based on the researcher's knowledge, and it is that knowledge that guides the sampling procedure, the goal being to improve rigour and trustworthiness of the results. .

Lavrakas (2008) suggests that the main aim of being purposive when choosing participants is to produce a sample that possesses characteristics that are relevant or in line with objectives of the research. In this instance, knowledge about the population is key, so as to select a sample of elements that represents a cross-section of the population in a non-random manner. The study included five participants with the following demographics:

- young adults, both male and female between the ages of 20 and 35
- with parents who possess secondary education and higher;
- from low socio-economic status and affluent families; and
- having career aspirations.

The researcher chose a sample size that was not too large or too small in line with qualitative principles. According to Crouch and McKenzie (2006), qualitative research looks at the quality of the information as opposed to the number of participants in the study. This is because qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning behind phenomena and not just making hypothesis. (Marshall & Rossman, 1980).

1.5.4 Research method

The following section presents the process that was followed in acquiring data, and includes the procedure that was used for data collection, how it was analysed, the method of sampling, how it was reported and the ethical considerations relevant to the study.

1.5.4.1 Data collection

The data collection method applied in this study was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility in collecting data. While they may have come up interviews prior, semi-structured questionnaires allow for unanticipated answers that may add value and new knowledge to the study. (Tod, 2006).

The interpretivist paradigm is concerned with the viewpoint of the participant. In the study, the researcher is not necessarily looking for the *what* and how many. Researchers selected semi-structured interviews to address aspects important to participants and to better understand research questions (Fylan, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allow richer, more textured data from the participants. See Annexure C for the interview guide used during this study.

1.5.4.2 Recording of data

Gill et al. (2008) suggest that interviews should preferably be conducted in environments that have little to no distractions and should sometimes be at places that are convenient for the participants. This allows for participants to be comfortable and fully present during the interview. The researcher had also obtained consent from the participants to make use of a tape recorder during interviews.

1.5.4.3 Data analysis

Researchers used an analysis method called content analysis. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is a technique used when data needs to be interpreted subjectively. It occurs in the process of systematically categorizing coding and identifying themes or patterns. Content analysis provides researchers with a flexible and practical way to develop and extend their knowledge of human experience (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The analytical process involved three main phases, which are: preparation that consists of collecting sufficient data that will be analysed, familiarising one's self with the data, and selecting the unit of analysis (Elo et al., 2014); the organisation phase

involves developing codes that represent the collective labels for the condensed units of data and sorting those codes into clusters that answer the questions Who, What, When or Where? (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017); and the reporting phase consisting of results being described by what those clusters represent, describing the phenomenon based on either a deductive or inductive approach, (Elo et al., 2014).

1.5.4.4 Ensuring quality of data

To ensure the rigor of a study, qualitative researchers ensure the rigor of qualitative results by considering reliability, validity, tolerability, and verifiability as criteria of validity (Anney, 2014; Guba, 1981). According to Mills et al. (2010), credibility speaks to the extent to which a research account is true and correct, reference is made to how similar some response are among participants. The researcher employed member checking as a strategy, this, according to Guba (1981, cited in Anney, 2014), means that data and what it means is tested against what the participants say are continuously tested as they are derived from members of various audiences and groups from which data is solicited.

Although the study was aimed at a specific group of people with certain demographics, generalisability was not necessarily the primary goal; however, to ensure that the study was replicable, the researcher, as reported by Anney (2014), purposeful sampling was used, and detailed explanations were provided by the researcher explaining the entire research process from data collection, study context, and final report creation. 'This will allow other researchers to replicate the study and allows other researchers to compare the context of this study with other contexts where transfer might be contemplated and produce a thick description of the context in order to make a judgment about it fitting in with other possible contexts (Guba, 1981).

Dependability means the stability of findings over time (Bitsch, 2005). To ensure dependability, the researcher applied the code-recode strategy, which involves duplicating coding efforts to check if the same codes come up, letting some time pass before the next coding process. The researcher will then compare the 2 results to see if the outcome will be the same. (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). The researcher made sure that they invest time in coding and re-coding data, sometimes more than twice, to

ensure that other factors such as bias or even fatigue did not affect the analysis process.

Confirmability is concerned with ensuring that the interpretation of the data was not fabricated, that the interpretation represent the collected data. (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The researcher ensured that they kept a journal where they documented the whole research procedure, and this included unexpected events that arose, that might have influenced the research results. Anney (2014) cites that it is advisable for the researcher to keep a journal of occurrences that took place during the research process and reflect on them, such as sounds like “ah” that come up during the investigation.

1.5.4.5 Reporting

The research study was sparked by the researcher’s interest in how variables such as socio-economic status and parental influence can shape a person’s idea of career success. Therefore, it was imperative for the researcher to link the research findings to the research questions; this required that, in the midst of all the data collected, the researcher had to remember the aims of the research. According to Anderson (2010), researchers should choose the citations that are most meaningful or representative of their findings. Including a large portion of the interview in a research paper is optional and often tedious to the reader.; therefore the researcher included bits of the interviews that supported the message the researcher was trying to convey and enabled them to answer research questions.

Themes, inferences and interpretations (O’Brien et al., 2014) that emerged during the analysis process were used; these included verbatim quotes from the interviews to support the research findings. According to Drisko (2005), the qualitative research report must always give a detailed narrative of the project, properly communicate the view point of the participant and what they mean. Furthermore, the discussion may reveal new knowledge or points of interest (what could be done differently, demonstrate how context had an impact on the results, identify differences in processes not mentioned in the literature as a whole.

1.5.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa College of Economics and Management Sciences (UNISA) prior to data collection (see Annexure A). Participants had to sign a consent form that explained what the study was about, what their role was in the study and what the study seeks to achieve. In the consent form, their rights to anonymity and confidentiality were addressed and the researcher gave a thorough explanation of what each term in the form means to ensure no ambiguity. The principle of informed consent puts emphasis on the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the participants are aware of the different aspects of the research in an understandable language (Hoeyer et al., 2005). For qualitative researchers, it is very crucial that they stipulate beforehand the type of data that they will collect and how the data will be used (Sanjari et al., 2014).

As part of ensuring that the research process complies with the Code of Ethical Conduct, researchers are responsible for ensuring that participants maintain their right to privacy and remain anonymous. According to Hennink et al. (2010), any individual who takes part in a research study can expect that their privacy will be uncompromised. Consequently, no information that can potentially reveal their identity will be shared. There are various ways in which participants' personal information can be protected, e.g. controlling access to data, keeping participants anonymous by not including their biographic details and instead using pseudonyms. (Sanjari et al., 2014).

Gill et al. (2008) suggest that wherever possible, interviews should take place in an environment where interruptions are not likely to occur and possibly convenient for the participants. Therefore, after obtaining the participant's prior consent (refer to Appendix B), the interview was conducted in a safe and convenient place for the participant.

1.6 LIMITATIONS

The limitation to the study was that the researcher might have had biases. According to Malterud (2001), the researcher's context and position has a chance of affecting what they choose to explore, how they will explore it, the methodology which would be

deemed appropriate to apply, the findings considered most appropriate and the manner in which the conclusions will be reported.

The second limitation to the study was that the participants themselves may have been giving answers that were not a true reflection of their feelings but rather what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. Ochieng (2009) proposes that human behaviour is greatly impacted by their environment influenced; therefore, behaviour must be studied within that context. The physical setting, (e.g., schedules, space etc) and the more internal concepts, such norms and values are important contextual variables. Ochieng (2009) further proposes that subjects can become apprehensive and be aware of what the researcher is trying to do and try to tell them what they think the researcher wants to hear. Additionally, participants sometimes do not know how to fully express their feelings thus impacting their ability to respond appropriately.

1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a lot of literature on the effects of gender, personality and cultural background on the career aspirations of individuals. Fouad and Byars-Winston (2006), Jaremczuk et al. (2014), and Schuster and Martiny (2017) thoroughly explain the various factors that influence career choice and aspirations of individuals, but there are very few authors who have conducted research on the influence of parents' educational background on an individual's career aspiration. The researcher would suggest that the study be replicated to generate new knowledge.

1.8 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1 Scientific overview of the study

This first chapter included the background and motivation for the study and gave the theoretical basis for the study. It highlighted the gaps that exist in exploring the role of socio-economic and parents' educational background in guiding the career aspirations among young adults. Chapter 1 also set the tone for how the whole research process was to take place, from inception till the end, and highlighted how the study would

contribute to the field of IOP. The empirical paradigm applied in the study guided the collection and analysis of the data.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The second chapter aimed at achieving the literature aims of the study. This chapter conceptualised and explored career theories and career development theories. It further explored relevant literature that addresses what is available in relation to the influence of socio-economic status and the educational background of parents on the perceptions of success among young adults.

Chapter 3: Research article

Chapter 3 was presented in the form of an article. This chapter includes the theoretical background to the study and motivation to the study which gave the road map of what the reader could expect. The chapter also included the research findings, the implications of the findings and the contribution to the body of knowledge.

Chapter 4: Conclusion, limitations and recommendations

The fourth and final chapter concludes the findings obtained through this study, what they mean and the implications to the field of IOP and young adults. This chapter also emphasises the contribution the study has made to the field of career psychology. In this chapter, the researcher summarised the whole point of the research, and addressed what could have taken a different angle and where there could be potential for future research.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an introduction and background to the study. The background gave the reader the origin of the problem and argued the circumstances that gave justification for the study. It also emphasised the importance of conducting this study and provided a statement of the problem. The research questions and aims guiding the research were explained, as well as the research design, strategy, approach and methodology followed. The chapter concluded with a chapter layout which guides the reader on the format the rest of this dissertation will follow.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Career choice is one of the most crucial issues during the developmental phase of young people because it is reportedly related to positive and negative factors, where socio-economic inequalities can persist well into one's adult life. (Bubić, & Ivanišević, 2016). Lately, the process of choosing a career has become complex, considering the impact of other factors. Yet, making an informed career decision is crucial in creating a life of fulfilment, achieve some level of job satisfaction and stay productive, and in turn contributing the success and sustainability of the organisation (Nyamwange, 2016). Because of how important it is to make the right career choice, it is crucial that individuals not ignore the extent to which other factors may influence the career decision making process. (Nyamwange, 2016).

What was of interest to the researcher was that the individuals view career success with the unconscious reference to their values and knowledge. The aims of the literature review were to explore the concept of career aspiration; career development theories; and the role that socio-economic status and education play in guiding career aspirations. The goal of Chapter 2 was to map and assess the research area to motivate the aim of the study and to place the study within the context of existing literature (Snyder, 2019).

In the following literature review I discuss concepts such as career aspiration, socio-economic status, education, and also different career development theories in detail and how they informed the research process. All of this is done within the context of young adults in post-apartheid South Africa.

2.2 CAREER AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

An individual's career goals will guide their behaviour and decisions in any higher education setting because they serve as a target which is used to motivate them to achieve academic excellence. (Bourdieu, 1994). Career aspiration represents an individual's vision for their future, it is an indication of their career interests. It could also be stated that career aspirations provide information about an individual's preferences and hopes, unencumbered by reality (Hellenga et al., 2002; Madurangi et al., 2019; Rojewski, 1996).

Bourdieu (1994) defines Career aspirations as a set of needs, plans and intentional behaviours that an individual engages in to fulfil their long- or short-term career goals. Based on Bourdieu's theory of social fields (Madhuragi et al., 2019), sees social fields as social environments where career decisions take place. From this perspective, occupation can also be seen as the competition for position in one or more social spheres.

Akosah-Twumasi et al. (2018) and Carpenter and Foster (1977) postulate that an individual's earlier life experiences serve as a foundation of how they conceive career aspirations. These authors' postulations go hand in hand with the principles of SCCT and they developed a three-dimensional framework for classifying factors involved in the career selection process. Carpenter and Foster (1977) propose that the factors that influence career choice can be intrinsically or extrinsically or interpersonally motivated. The intrinsic dimension speaks to an individual's career choice having to do with what role they will fulfil in society. Extrinsic has to do with the need for security and the need for recognition among peers and interpersonal dimension refers to the influence of people surrounding us (e.g. family, role models) (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018; Carpenter & Foster, 1977).

Factors like gender, environment, parents' expectations, socio-economic status have a significant impact on one's career aspirations (Adragna, 2009; Al-Bahrani, et al., 2020; Berzin, 2010; Domenico & Jones, 2006). These factors influence the standards which they use to measure how competent they are based on the goals they are pursuing (Al-Bahrani et al., 2020). It seems that parents' aspirations will strongly

influence their children's aspirations. If parental aspirations are high, their teenager's aspirations tend to be high as well (Al-Bahrani et al., 2020; Schoon & Parsons, 2002).

How parents commit to their children's education and push them academically has shown to have a positive impact on their career aspirations. Therefore, students are prone to internalise their parents' expectations to promote higher career aspirations (Al-Bahrani et al., 2020; Ma & Wang, 2001). Further, parents' level of education and socio-economic status having strong relationship with children's career aspiration.

Vocational self-concept, as proposed in Super (1953) vocational development theory, plays a crucial role in making a career choice that is in line with how they see themselves and is formed as a result of the relation between a person and their environment (Al-Bahrani, et al., 2020). The view of the SCCT sees environmental factors as opportunities resources (financial and knowledge), challenges, parents' attitude towards vocations, and teachers' influence. Self-concept was related to future career projection (Holcomb-McCoy & Young, 2012). Therefore, Anovunga et al. (2021) recognise self-concept as the most crucial construct in the career development process, and deem it a continuous process where one constantly improves the fit between themselves and environmental determinants, they also see it as a process of create harmony between the individual's characteristics and their socio-economic reality (Anovunga et al., 2021).

2.3 CAREER DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

The way in which our career aspirations form from childhood to adulthood is a complex process which involves many different and changing factors. To explore it further, a body of theory is needed and over the years, the theory has increasingly become available over the years.

Jena and Nayak (2020) suggest that it is important to understand these theories so as to determine the strengths, weaknesses, principles and preferred paths which might be operative at the same time as deciding on a career. There are numerous career development theories that focus on different factors, and quite disparate to each another (Jena & Nayak, 2020).

According to Al-Patanni (2019), career theories belong to one of the three categories. There are theories of process, which are related to interaction and change over time. These theories would address stages through which people go through, as they develop; theories of content address to the details of an individual's life and environment they find themselves in. The process through which people go through when planning their careers is significantly influenced by either intrinsic or extrinsic factors from one's social context, both areas are critical and needed an approach that would take both of them into account, so theories of content and process were the answer. These theories are inclusive of both individuals, context and the development and interactive relationship between them (Al-Patanni, 2019).

For the purpose of the study, I looked at two career development theories that give light to the influential factors on the process career decision-making. Two theories serve as lenses through which career development can be viewed, and this is within the context of the current study.

The SCCT was extracted mainly from Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory. Other authors make an effort in trying to extend and explore other features of the theory. Bandura's (1989) theory proposes that people act based on what they believe they are to do and the effect they believe those actions will have (Bandura, 1989). Similarly, the focus of the SCCT is on exploring how individuals make life choices, formulate interests and obtain achievements during their academic and occupational journey.

Jena and Nayak, (2020) and Lent et al. (2002) establish a model with three career development categories that clarify career concerns, career options, performance, and career stability. These three categories highlight personal goals, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations. Personal goals are the expression and active engagement in plans to achieve an outcome. This career choice model suggested in the theory illustrates the interactivity between an individual and the environment as well as how the one influences the other. The theory postulated some challenges and barriers may foster a need for an individual to make compromise, these challenges may be lack of support, cultural beliefs etc (Jena & Nayak, 2020). In other words, SCCT assumes that people are likely to choose and pursue activities based on their belief that they will be

able to perform well in as long as they are adequately skilled and they have support to pursue those activities.

Environmental issues have for the longest time proved to be quite influential on how individuals aspire to follow a certain career path. Mtemeri (2019) agrees with this, and he proposes that parents influence career choices in many ways, such as parental support and encouragement. Parents pass on their values and beliefs to their children directly (through positive parenting, for example), as well as indirectly through daily routines. Parents' work-related attitudes, activities, and guidelines in socialization can lead to adult (adult) attitudes about how to participate in the market economy, how to value work and what is meaningful and relevant at work (Kraaykamp et al., 2019).

Gore et al. (2015) also found that past academic achievements were a powerful factor in determining a student's career orientation rather than socio-economic status, and students with high academic performance are attracted to historically prestigious jobs and aspire towards them, they also found that they weren't convinced about a particular career because of the many options that are at their disposal. Bandura's (1989) Social Cognitive Theory emphasises learning in an unconventional way where individuals learn through indirect sources (e.g. observation). According to the theory, students learn behaviours by observing the behaviours of their parents. (Mtemeri, 2019).

Within the Social Learning Theory (SLT) Krumboltz et al. (1976) explore the influence of four clusters of factors which affect an individual's ability to benefit or access learning experiences. Influencing factors include firstly inherited and special attributes (race, gender, physical appearance etc.); secondly, social context (cultural and political, economic forces); thirdly, learning experiences (instrumental and associative); and finally, skills (work habits, personal standards of performance and emotional responses) (Locklear, 2020).

Krumboltz et al.'s (1976) Social learning theory is where career development professionals began looking at how an individual's knowledge and learning experiences influence career decisions. (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). It stresses the importance of behaviour (actions) as well as cognitions (knowing/thinking) and builds on the cognitive behaviour therapy which holds that learning is mediated by what

people say to themselves, whether consciously or not (Yost & Corbishley, 1987) This theory explains how a person's approach to the tasks of learning, goal setting, values clarification, generating career options and obtaining occupational information depends on the interactions among their genetic endowment, social and cultural environment, and past learning experiences. Similarly, emotional responses result from the interactions among these four sets of factors (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996).

The Social Learning Theory of career decision-making was designed to provide answers to the question of why people choose certain career paths, why they may change career paths, and why they may show interest in different occupational activities at selected points in their lives (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). According to Akosah-Twumasi et al. (2021), the theory also emphasises the dominant influence of variables, such as economic need, family pressures or educational limitations, on adolescents' career decision-making processes. Learning takes place in a social environment through observation, but also includes cognitive processes; this means that students are introspective and understand what they see so they can model the behaviour themselves. This involves the psychological matching of what people think and how they behave based on what they have observed (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018).

According to Edinyang (2016), people are influencing and influencing the world around them. Social learning theory, also known as observational learning, occurs when a person's behaviour changes after observing the behaviour of the model. Human behaviour can be influenced by positive or negative expressions of observed behaviour. In addition, from an interactionist's point of view, Rotter believes that human behaviour is primarily based on people's interaction with the meaningful environment (Edinyang, 2016).

Locklear (2020) suggests that Bandura developed the social learning theory, wherein he describes modelled behaviour as conducted by observing others. Additionally, the principles of Social Learning Theory give an overview of the contextual impact that competence and mastery have on self and society. Social learning theories emphasize that learning and behaviour change through observing and then mimicking actions and behaviours in the environment. Teaching social studies tries to teach a child what is acceptable about norms, values, and attitudes. Social studies education, which mostly

happens through observing others, largely depends on behaviours that are obtainable within a given environment (Edinyang, 2016).

2.4 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Navarro-Carillo et al. (2020) suggest that socio-economic status is a complicated and multifaceted construct, which incorporates each impartial goal characteristics (e.g. occupation) and people's perceptions of social. Socio-economic status is defined as the social standing of and an individual or group in a society where people are ranked according to their access to power, prestige and wealth. (Avvisati, 2020).

Islam and Mustakim (2014) argue that socioeconomic status is paramount in determining livelihoods as it affects knowledge, skills and income levels. People's lifestyles vary by income group, and their spending power also varies by income group. In the words of Kabudula et al. (2017), SES, to a great extent determines affordability of desired resources (e.g money, power, prestige, and connections) these can foster development and increase life chances.

SES has been defined, understood and measured in different ways over the years. Taussig (1920) conceptualizes SES as a father's professional status. Cuff (1934) adopted the view later proposed by Sims (1927) and defined it as a measure of SES. This includes assets that belong to the family, parents' education level, father's profession, and so on. From these early studies, the development of tools to measure SES has become a complex process, including more advanced methods such as model-based approaches. In the 1980s, there was consensus that SES could be a complex variable that measures education, income, and profession. Because these are the three indicators that determine a family's socio-economic status (Brese & Mirazchiyski, 2013; Broer et al., 2019).

In low and middle-income communities, one common way of measuring SES One of the most widely used SES measures is a composite index taken from household asset lists (Kabudula et al. et al., 2017; Minujin & Delamonica, 2004). This index is often referred to as the “wealth index” or the “asset index” (Howe et al., 2012; Kabudula et al., 2017), and the household wealth from which it is derived is composed. durable

goods, housing characteristics, sanitation and access to services. Howe et al. (2012) explained why the wealth index is used as the preferred SES measure in low- and middle-income establishments over "direct" measures such as wages, expenses, and assets. family financial assets (e.g. savings and pensions). Support reasons range from reliability to time and cost effectiveness. For example, the index calculations are conducted using data that is easy to collect thus saving money and time. Additionally, in low and middle-income households, treasured property offer a higher illustration of a family's wealth in comparison to facts on salaries; this is because earnings differ according to seasons, multiple incomes that may result from informal activities, are prone to reintroduce bias and misreporting (Kabudula et al, 2017). Some researchers, like Gore et al. (2015), Jamabo (2014), and Obiyo and Eze (2015) suggest that both knowledge and financial resources influence career aspirations.

2.4.1 Socio-economic status as a determinant of the self-concept

The Gottfredson's theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation (1981) is a career theory that explains how children and adolescents' careers develop throughout their life course. The theory explains people's view of themselves and affirm who they are, and the confidence in their capabilities impacts their aspirations and outcomes. Eremie and Ikpah (2017) and Gottfredson (1981) further indicated that a person possesses the ability to elevate themselves in terms of their aspirations and merge their career goals with how they see themselves.

Super (1953) was widely known for his theory of self-concept. His career-oriented emphasis cannot be exaggerated. He defined self-concept as a person's perception of a person's personality, abilities, possibilities, and preferences. Super (1953) further pointed out that self-concepts change and evolve over time as individuals gain experience and learn how they differ from others. (Eremie & Ikpah, 2017). Umar and Imam (2019) proposes that self-concept includes plans about the self and interacts with self-esteem, self-knowledge, and the social self to form the whole self. It includes past, present, and future selves, where the future self (or possible self) represents each individual's idea of what he or she might become, what they want to be or what they fear becoming.

These ideas, as stated by Manstead (2018), can be heavily influenced by the conditions in which people find themselves, which is what they know, what they are exposed to and what seems possible at that point in time. Manstead (2018) states that the material conditions under which people grow and live have a significant impact on their personal and social identities, which are essential to their thinking and feelings about the social environment and their social behaviour. Manstead (2018) also gives an example about the lower class and suggests that compared to the group of proletariats, they are less likely to define themselves based on their socio-economic status and are more likely to have complementary self-concepts; they also tend to gravitate towards a belief that situations are beyond their control.

Because Super (1953) defined self-concept as one's own idea of what one can and cannot do, Stephens et al. (2014) have conducted an analysis of how social class models the self-concept through the gateway contexts of the home, school, and work environment. Stephens et al. (2014) maintain that with fewer resources and opportunities for control and influence, those that find themselves in the middle class context are prone to understand that they have an interdependent relationship with their environment.

Social class leads to culture-specific patterns of self and thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. One type of self is called hard interdependence. This is characteristic of people who grew up in a low-income working class environment (Manstead, 2018). Stephens et al. (2014) agree that the "hard" aspect of this self is a result of the resilience that is required to get through adversity. The other type of self is called the "expressive independence", which is proclaimed mostly found among people who grew up in more affluent contexts.

When comparing to the working-class people, people that develop up in middle-class families aren't probably to fear approximately making ends meet or overcoming adversity. Instead, middle-elegance families permit human beings the gap to behave in methods that replicate and assist the impartial cultural ideal, exploring their non-public preferences, influencing their surroundings, hanging out from the rest, and growing their personal interests. Stephens et al. (2014) in addition observe quite a number paintings on socialisation that helps their argument that the paintings, faculty and domestic surroundings domesticate those extraordinary self-concepts. They additionally advocate that middle-elegance colleges and offices use expressive independence as a general for measuring success, after which create inequality in phrases of possibilities for upward social mobility.

2.4.2 Socio-economic status as a shaper of aspirations

Vocational and educational aspirations are key in reflecting students' school-related values, plans and hope, as well as intentional behaviours. During the adolescent phase, young people begin to think about their future and make choices that are in line with their vision, which become more refined as they progress (Gottfredson, 1981; Plenty & Jonsson, 2021). This choice process does not only reflect the context young people were socialised into and interests, but also what options they believe they have and opportunities for attaining their goals, which are affected by their socio-economic status. (Plenty & Jonsson, 2021).

SES plays an important role in the conceptualisation of aspirations of individuals. SES determines access to quality education that can be provided to the young people. How far they can go in terms of studies as well as the type of courses they can afford to commit to depends on the SES. As the individuals become more aware of the economic status of their family, they may understand how they can go in terms of education. They may become aware of the financial challenges their family experiences and how possible (or impossible) it would be for them to enrol in various courses. As a result, they may modify vocational and educational aspirations based on the options presented to them. (Salgotra & Roma, 2018).

Jamabo (2014) agrees with this, and argues that adolescents from affluent families tend to choose careers that they believe are in line with their family's status even when such a career path is not related to their personal interest or aptitude, while those from less privileged homes are left to choose from the list of careers that are within the financial capacity of their parents regardless of their own interest or capacity. In large families, the socio-economic pressure is such that children have to drop out of school so as to help support the family and then pursue higher education through more strenuous, long distance learning routes (Jamabo, 2014)

From a sociological perspective, parents with high-paying jobs have more human capital (e.g knowledge), social capital (e.g. connections), and financial resources that can be used to assist with their children's career development (Bryant et al., 2006).

A study in the United Kingdom found that children from households in which parents were employed were more likely to follow in their parents' footsteps than children from households engaged in skilled or manual labour (Croll, 2008; Lee & Byun, 2019). In another study of a large sample of American Midwestern adolescents, Howard and Walsh. (2011); Lee and Byun (2019) reported that students from wealthy families were more likely to crave respectable jobs than students from families with low SES. Theories and results from previous literature have shown that higher family SES is associated with higher job aspirations and job status.

The situation in South Africa is no different. Fadiji and Reddy (2020, p.2) cite that In South Africa, the educational aspirations of no-fee school students appear to be growing. "On the one hand, 1 in 5 students had low academic aspirations and 5% planned to finish their studies in the ninth grade. 16% plan to complete their education in grade 12.

2.5 EDUCATION AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

The dominant view in the Western world based on human capitalism views education as an ordinary investment, and the main reason people spend time and money on higher education is that people expect high wages. Labour market entry bonus. (Becker, 1993; Kromidas, 2017). Idris et al. (2012) suggest that education is a very important tool for success in an individual's life. This can have a significant impact on

an individual's ability to improve their quality of life. Education is considered the cornerstone of a society that provides economic well-being, social prosperity and political stability. Because education contributes to an individual's quality of life, socioeconomic status depends on the level of education achieved by an individual. In many ways, it helps fight poverty and helps build harmonious and democratic societies. AlShuaibi (2014) defines education as an intentional process of gaining knowledge and information that leads to a successful future.

Education in every respect is one of the key elements of development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without investing in human capital (Ozturk, 2001). Education empowers people with knowledge about themselves and the world. It fosters economic stability and leads to benefits for individuals and for society as a whole. Education promotes skill development, uplifts people by fostering creativity, and promotes entrepreneurship and technological progress. In addition, it plays a very important role in the creation and progress of modern society (Ozturk, 2001).

Education is a decisive factor for economic growth, employment and income. Ignoring the economic benefits of education will jeopardize the well-being of future generations, with far-reaching consequences for poverty, inequality and the sustainability of welfare systems (Woessmann, 2016). Nowak and Dahal (2016) agree with this and propose that education is both theoretically and empirically proven to be relevant in alleviating poverty, creating more employment opportunities, and in the end socio-economic development.

Nowak and Dahal (2016) further state that education is important for the promotion of agency, which serves the purpose of fighting poverty in rural settings. An educated individual is prone to find a job, but also has the capability to use the resources they own more logically. Educated and informed people have a greater chance of choosing valuable objectives in life, for instance having stable access to basic necessities.

2.5.1 Parental education and socio-economic status

Parental guidance plays a crucial role in the life of children and has a strong influence on them, especially on two important life events, that is marriage and their career

choice. The literature shows that parents, even though it is not their intention to influence certain vocational choices, are active agents in helping refine their children's choices during their career development process (Nawabi & Javed, 2019).

Erola et al. (2016) argue that parents have significant influence over how the lives of their children turn out through endowment and investment. Any parental characteristics that can be of advantage to children are called endowments. In addition to economic and tangible resources, examples of endowments would be human or cultural capital, networks, as well as inherited attributes that influence cognitive skills, non-cognitive traits and physical characteristics. Investments refer to parents' behaviours that are aimed at impacting their child's outcomes. They include the money that parents invest in their children's development, as well as the amount of time and effort they put in the supervision and support of their children (Erola et al., 2016).

Li and Qiu (2018) report that the cultural capital theory emphasises the extent to which family environment and resources determines children's educational aspirations and performances. Compared to families with lower social strata, parents with rich cultural capital know better school rules, invest more cultural resources, and use their time and energy to develop children's educational aspirations and help children in school. Work and achieve outstanding academic achievement (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Li & Qiu, 2018).

At home, learning takes place either directly or consciously, often informally. Parents coach their children from an early age and teach them skills, attitudes and core values necessary for everyday life (Mathatha & Ndlhovu, 2018). The unwritten rules passed on by parents to their children are specific and to some extent specific. Parents who focus on issues can help their children cope successfully with the demands of their immediate environment (Mathatha & Ndlhovu, 2018).

A survey in Latin America on the influence of the family found that parental education had an impact on what a child learns about work. Additionally, parental education reflects parents' views of school and work, which in turn have a lasting impact on young adolescents' career choices, decisions, and plans (Mathatha & Ndlhovu, 2018; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Other studies have shown that parental factors such as low

professional status, attitudes toward and personal biases, financial problems, rules, and expectations toward one's own and others' activities influence a student's career development (Lusk & Fazarro, 2006; Mathatha and Ndlhovu, 2018). Many people make career related decisions by observing the environment around them and try to match themselves with it (Zahedani et al., 2016).

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The literature review aimed to conceptualise career, career aspirations and their related constructs, to explore career development theories, to explore the influence of socio-economic status on the career aspirations of young adults, and to explore the influence of parental education on the career aspirations of young adults.

CHAPTER 3

ARTICLE

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND ON CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS

RESHOKETSWE LEDWABA

Department of Industrial/Organisational Psychology

UNISA

SUPERVISOR: Dr A van Niekerk

ABSTRACT

Orientation: As individuals, we all have a desire to be successful, to have careers that are fulfilling to us, and this can be reflected in the career choices we make. However, how we define career success depends on several factors, which include one's immediate environment and the kind of information they are exposed to in that environment. The Social Learning Theory is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. Separately, by observing the behaviours of others, people develop similar behaviours. After observing the behaviour of others, people assimilate and imitate that behaviour, especially if their observational experiences are positive ones or include rewards related to the observed behaviour (Nabavi, 2012). Understanding the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background and the career aspirations of young adults in South Africa will inform better career choices.

Research purpose: The purpose of the research was to explore the link between socio-economic status, parents' educational background and young adults' career aspirations and to develop a framework of the career aspirations of young adults and

how their career aspirations are influenced by their socio-economic status and parents' educational backgrounds.

Motivation for the study: In South Africa, the type of education to which an individual has access is proportional to their socio-economic status. The interplay between young adults' socio-economic status and the role that parents play in influencing what career choices are adequate for their children are factors that play a significant role in planning one's career. When we better understand the extent to which these factors influence career aspiration, the process of career planning and career development initiatives can address individuals' future needs and establish better fit between person and career.

Research design, approach and method: This qualitative interpretive study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with five (5) purposively selected participants. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using content analysis. The findings were reported narratively and supported by verbatim quotations.

Main findings: The main findings of the study suggest that socio-economic status does not hinder a person from aspiring towards a certain career path; rather, a person's socio-economic status may influence their drive to engage in activities that are aimed at achieving those career aspirations. Secondly, low socio-economic status often results in launching a sense of resilience and motivation to live better. Finally, access to knowledge and resources increases the confidence to follow the career to which a person aspires.

Practical Implications: The study serves to increase knowledge and a deeper understanding of the extent to which social context, i.e. socio-economic status and parents' educational background, can influence career aspirations among young adults.

Contribution/value add: The study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of young adults' experience of the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on their career aspirations to better inform future career development

initiatives implemented by career counsellors and industrial and organisational psychologists to ensure more effective career counselling practices.

Key words: Young adults; career aspirations; socio-economic status; education; qualitative research; content analysis; interpretive paradigm.

INTRODUCTION

Key focus of the study

Transition into adulthood in South Africa comes with opportunities to focus on making serious career decisions and thus enter either institutions of higher education or (un)employment (Maree, 2013). These decisions are generally made based on one's aspirations of a better life, to fulfil higher roles, to be wealthy or to be recognised in society or among peers (Roman et al., 2015). The developmental period is a critical part of a young person's life, after completion of their education, the process of choosing a career starts, then they start pursuing that career path, develop new, stronger relationships, and embark on journeys that help set them on the path to a healthy and productive adult life (Olenik-Shemesh et al., 2018). Although young adults come off as possessing a high level of energy, talent, creativity, and hopefulness, both in tertiary institution classrooms and workplaces, they tend to experience stresses over how unpredictable life can be and confront difficulties that come with transitioning to adulthood (Bonnie et al., 2015).

A part of the challenges these young adults face is choosing the right career for themselves, a career that matches with their overall goals. In choosing a career path, young adults are also faced with striking a balance between fulfilling their career dreams and what is realistically accessible to them (Mann et al., 2019). Among young adults, aspirations about the future play a crucial role in building their self-determination, as young adulthood is a period when individuals' aspirations get assessed by checking if those aspirations are attainable (Oana et al., 2011). This assessment is moderated by an individual's socio-economic status and the influential people in their life, such as their parents and role models. Their reality at the time can either encourage or impede their will to pursue those career goals. Sawitri and

Suryadi (2020) cite Lent et al. 1994) and argue that setting goals and pursuing them are intimately tangled with, and affected by, the individual's contextual supports and challenges.

Flores et al. (2017) support this and propose that the most important contextual influence is socio-economic status, which forms a very important part of one's identity, influences individuals' future hopes, and restricts the means-end processes available to achieving desired goals.

Background to the study

From an early age, we are asked the question: What do you want to become when you grow up? This is when your career aspirations start. Throughout our lives, as we become exposed to different environments, we become more aware of and are influenced by our surroundings, resulting in our future aspirations changing. In Chinese culture where social norms value network, interdependence, and honouring of elders, family for support is a very important factor throughout their lifetime (Xing & Rojewski, 2018).

The African context is no different, according to Nawabi et al. (2019), parents, even though they do not necessarily attempt to show favour towards certain occupational choices, serve as active agents in influencing their offspring in a broad range of areas in the career development process. Although schools, peers, and the students' community all influence the young adults' self-identity and career choice, expectations that are placed upon them by parents play a crucial role in shaping their career choice. (Nawabi et al., 2019).

Parental involvement in school education is understood as the act of the parents being involved in their children's school activities, helping them develop academic skills, engaging in and out of school learning activities, being invested in the training process, providing the required learning material, and providing relevant learning experiences (Slovacek et al., 2015). Prior research has shown that a family's socio-economic status is directly related to academic and occupational attainment (Hällsten & Thaning, 2018; Lee & Byun, 2019; Li & Qiu, 2018; Thomson, 2018).

Young people from underprivileged communities are doing less well in school, express lower vocational aspirations, drop out of school and are less likely to enter professional careers than their peers from more affluent communities (Schoon, 2006). Perry et al. (2016) support this and report how underprivileged children often have less exposure to higher education and to occupations requiring university degrees than peers whose parents attended college or whose schools place a greater emphasis on college preparation.

Maqsuel (1979) and Obot et al. (2020) express the opinion that education has an impact on career choices of people by giving access to some occupations which otherwise would have been closed. It can do this in various ways, including providing awareness of occupations of which they had no previous knowledge, by arousing and encouraging interest. A study on high school students showed that parental educational level contributed to young people's educational and vocational aspirations and parents with prestigious professions are prone to encourage their children to aspire to their professions (Uka, 2015).

According to Maree (2018) the crucial issue of forming an identity in childhood, described as the sense of self, derived from one's development of an occupational career which makes up an important part of one's overall identity, as well as the importance of reinforcing an individual's sense of self and underlies many career theories. A 'healthy' sense of career identity is the "glue that holds workers' career live stories together and enables them to navigate repeated work life transitions that occur beyond their control" (Maree, 2018, p. 421).

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) recognises the influence of external factors on young peoples' development. Background contextual variables (environmental factors that occur before an active period of career decision-making, for example socio-economic status) shape learning experiences. In turn, individual interpretations of these experiences shape the development of self-efficacy (beliefs about one's capability to attain goals) and outcome expectations (beliefs about the consequences of actions taken to attain goals) (Sawitri & Suryadi, 2020).

In South Africa, the academic ambitions of learners in no-fee schools, which are also a proxy for low socio-economic status, seem to lie at the extremes. On the one hand, one in five learners had low academic aspirations, with 5% planning to end their academic careers at Grade 9 level; 16% planning to complete their education at Grade 12 level. On the other hand, a surprising 34% of learners in no-fee schools aimed to complete a doctoral degree (Zuze et al., 2017).

Research purpose

The average adult spends most of their time at work. The type of work in which one engages is crucial in that individuals' personal identities are developed and expressed through their work (Lee & Byun, 2019; Super, 1953). Thus, determining the factors that affect vocational choices has been the number one goal in career development research for the past decades (Lee & Byun, 2019).

Lee and Byun (2019) further state that adults' vocational choice is not an abrupt event, but a result of continuous development throughout childhood and adolescence. During the developmental process of a person's career, personal characteristics and environmental factors come into play (Lee & Byun, 2019). Obiyo and Eze (2015) draw on how the influence of parents' educational background and socio-economic status may constitute challenges to reaching a student's career goals. The students may not have the resource needed, such as knowledge about careers, if their parents are illiterate, which limits awareness of career options they can choose from.

There is a lot of literature that has addressed career aspiration and its influence among adolescents and students in institutions of higher education (Migunde et al., 2015; Schoon & Polek, 2011). In terms of the influence of parents' educational background on their children's career aspirations, especially in today's world of work, limited literature seems to be available (Dubouw et al., 2009; Mathatha & Ndlhovu, 2018; Sewell & Shah, 1968).

In their study, Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) found that educated parents have high educational expectations for their children, which often lead to them engaging in discussions with their children on setting life goals and what steps to implement to

achieve these goals. Mathatha and Ndlhovu (2018) report that parental educational levels also influence parents' beliefs and behaviours, which in turn influence children's skills and values, which then influence children's engagement in the variety of activities at home.

How young people think about and narrate their futures unfolds differently for youth depending on their socio-economic position and the extent to which they have access to resources and opportunities (McDonald et al., 2011). Socio-economic class is considered a relevant variable with regard to the process of social hierarchisation, specifically, subjective social class has been found to have a positive relationship with the self-efficacy of persons (Quiroga et al, 2018). Considering the above, the purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the perceived influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background and young adults' career aspirations.

The specific literature aims were to:

- Conceptualise career, career aspirations and their related constructs.
- Explore career development theories.
- Explore the influence of socio-economic status on the career aspirations of young adults.
- Explore the influence of parental education on the career aspirations of young adults.

The specific empirical aims of the study were to:

- Explore young adults' experience of the influence of socio-economic status on their career aspirations.
- Explore young adults' experience of the influence of parents' educational background on their career aspirations.
- Develop a framework outlining the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on the career aspirations of young adults.

TRENDS FROM LITERATURE

Regardless of the actual career choice, it is of crucial for young people to know what they want their future to look like, as well as what and who they think they will be in that future (Ulrich et al., 2021). The process of choosing a career does not happen outside of one's idea of who they are, what they believe they are capable of and what is available to them, all of which are what the context they find themselves in will encourage. Ulrich et al. (2021) suggest that the constructing the self-identity goes hand in hand the expectations of the environment, and the corresponding everyday practices that support that construction are taught in families during the socialisation process. In the following section an exploration is provided of what is known in literature about careers, career aspirations and career development theories.

CAREER AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

A career is described as a sequence of associated jobs inside an agency or exceptional jobs inside numerous organisations (Madurangi et al, 2019). Career decision-making is made up several domains and complex processes. Abe and Chikoko (2020) draw from Gelatt's (1962) decision-making model to understand how career decisions are made. Gelatt's decision-making model shows the decision-making as an ongoing process rather than a static activity, this process is characterised by changes that occur as the individual acquires of additional knowledge, for example a young learner who is exposed to their father fixing cars could learn how fix them and decide over time to choose a career that is related to fixing cars (Abe & Chikoko, 2020).

Madurangi et al. (2019) and Bourdieu (1994) define career aspiration as a an accumulation of individual needs, motivations, and behavioural intents. express in terms of different career paths. Simply put, vocational aspiration represents an individual's interest in a desired career goal within what they regard as ideal conditions. Career aspirations are seen as one of the most important motivation variables in the study of career psychology, and more specifically, within career development, whilst being connected to an individual's career-related goals, intentions or perceived and

available options (Khampirat, 2020). These aspirations are influenced by a theory that focuses on the basic questions that address the importance of self-determination, the three psychological needs of ability, autonomy, and psychological connectivity (Khampirat, 2020). Zakaria et al. (2015) Career-Oriented or Career Goals provide a structure that motivates adults to plan their careers and achieve their career goals, thus providing continuous or time-series age, physiological development, or. A model that proposes to be intertwined with adult development in terms of integrated age.

Career aspiration is determined by numerous factors, such as environmental factors (which refers to people around the individual) (Shumba & Naong, 2012), especially the socio-economic status of a family seems to have a positive correlation with career aspiration (Prasetyo, 2005). Other than that, parents' education and vocations become factors that drive children's career aspirations (Sutha, 2019). Further, Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) have found students from rural schools delayed their career decisions and that it is the parents, teachers and friends who seem to have an impact on these students' career choices. Various researchers (Al-Baharani et al., 2020; Khampirat, 2020; Sawitri & Suryadi, 2020) believe that family and socio-economic status have a significant impact on career aspirations of young adults. In fact, the above-mentioned researchers found that people from affluent backgrounds are more likely to be knowledgeable and go to the extent of choosing a professional occupation for their offspring. Educated parents have the same high professional expectations for their children as hired parents.

Career development theories depict various ways in which individuals tend to follow during their development process and in their pursuit for job satisfaction and goal achievement (Jena & Nayak, 2020). While career development is seen as a process that has phases through which an individual experiences transitions, the role of theories helps us to understand people's behaviours in relation to their careers and guide us on relevant intervention. In the next section I will discuss a number of theories that are in line with the objectives of the current study. In short, Matthews (2017) suggests that theory enables us to step back from the nitty-gritty details and see the bigger picture.

Super (1990) established that career development and career choice are related with and individual's view of themselves (Jena & Nayak, 2020). A self-concept is like a mental picture of one's self, which mental and physical development, environmental characteristics, and personal experiences, to name a few. Super (1990) established a framework for life stages including growth, discovery, establishment, maintenance, and detachment. A person goes through the development of their vocation according to their chronology.

Super (1990) sees career as a lifelong development, not an event. There are many factors that influence the career development process around the world. These factors are interrelated, influencing each other and strengthening or impeding an individual's professional status. People develop career goals through the integration and interaction of life roles and events that occur in the journey of life (Gysbers et al., 2003).

Super (1990) also emphasises the impact of the interactive roles of life stages and life roles described in Living Spaces and Life Theory and how important this is in career selection and development processes. For example, he argues that the interplay of life roles such as workers, students, parents, citizens and housewives influences the career development process (Anovunga et al., 2021).

The sample covered by the study falls between the stages of exploration and establishment, where introspection and the pursuit of (higher) education are central traits (Dries, 2013). During this stage, an individual makes critical decisions, and that are guided by the context in which they find themselves. the young adult then enters their first job and establishes their place in the world of work. Career development tasks in this stage involve finding stability in an organisation; solidifying one's position; and advancing up the career ladder (Dries, 2013).

Pillay and Barnes (2020) propose that in South Africa and other parts of the world, it is clear that many students enter higher education and training without sufficient information on their career interests. For some young people, this is due to the unfavourable circumstances in which most of the population lives. Although many students believe that getting an education will get them out of poverty, they still have inadequate information on which path to follow, what career options they have or what

employment opportunities and market powers exist in the areas they are considering (Pillay & Barnes, 2020). This may result in a young adult aged 30, for example, having to re-visit the exploration stage to find out what they are meant to do. Decisions made at a tender age maybe related to fantasy because they are likely to get in touch with the realistic factors later on in life (Anovunga et al., 2021)

According to Rezaei et al. (2014), Social Learning Theory is based on the fact that behaviour can be seen as the flow of the lessons learned and not to be considered as internal processes. Krumboltz et al. (1976) argue that the learning experiences we experience model our career choices and identify three types of such experiences. An instrumental learning experience is one in which an individual directly engages in a learning situation in which behaviour is modified by reward or punishment. Associative experiences occur when we associate a previous event with a subsequent positive or negative reinforcer. Finally, fake learning occurs as people learn either directly or indirectly by observation, or through, for example, social networks and the Internet (Krumboltz et al., 1976).

Ghuntla et al. (2012) support this, as they propose that an individual is connected with their family as well as society. In society, it is there is an expectation for a person to improve financially after acquiring a formal education. Bandura (1977b) emphasizes the importance of acquiring new knowledge and skills by observing behaviours, storing observed information, reproducing observed behaviours, and strengthening them to continue the learned behaviours (Yarberry & Sims, 2021).

Horsburgh and Ippolito (2018) propose that learning in a social setting consists of four stages. The first step is the attention students should observe their behaviour. They really need to see the behaviour they want to reproduce. Then comes in the internalisation of the observed behaviour. This involves cognitive processes the individual makes sense and mentally rehearses the learned behaviour. Next, they need opportunity to reproduce the observed behaviour. Finally, motivation to repeat observed behaviour comes into play. These motivations arise through reinforcement, and Bandura (1977b) suggests three types of reinforcement: direct reinforcement, surrogate reinforcement, and self-reinforcement (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018).

According to Lent et al. (2002), social cognitive career theory (SCCT) is a relatively new theory aimed at explaining three interrelated aspects of career development: methods how vocational interests develop; the process of making a career choice, and how academic and career success is attained. The theory incorporates various concepts such as interests, abilities, values, and environmental factors that earlier career theories draw from, and have been found to influence career development (Lent et al., 2002).

Hart et al. (2016) suggest individuals can relate their desires to what they believe they are able to achieve, or they might set aspirations more ambitiously and aim for that which is above what they would normally aim for. Some individuals might aspire for something that is not specific, for example one would aspire for a better life, whereas others might have specific intentions for social change, such as a change in the law (Hart et al., 2016). Simply put, SCCT posits that for people to have interests in particular career path, their environment must allow them to get access to opportunities of learning, either vicariously, or otherwise. (Hacket, 2006).

Personal goals play an important role, but external influences also make a significant contribution to this process. This is because it views career choice as a multi-step process determined by individual and environmental factors, it serves as an appropriate theoretical framework for studying the development of career choices in sustainable development (Lent et al., 2002). Based on the above, the SCCT guides the researcher in attempting to understand the influence of environmental factors (which, for the purpose of the study, will be socio-economic status and parental level of education) on career aspirations.

Socio-economic status in relation to career aspiration

Socio-economic status has, for a long time, been looked at as one of the factors that influence career choices. In South Africa, where of poverty in communities is at an all-time high, career choices are more likely driven by the need to relief poverty as quickly as possible, rather than by pursuing a career based on interest. This seems to be supported by research conducted by Dalton et al. 2016), who confirm that in South

Africa, poverty poses challenges on the poor and aggravates adverse effects of behavioural bias in young adults' career aspirations.

Dalton et al. (2016) further state that those challenges are not just financial, they include other effects of poverty that make it harder for the poor to achieve particular goals, be it fewer role models or less access to relevant knowledge. Pillay (2020) agrees and considers it important to recognise and consider the fact that the consequences of poor career planning or lack of career guidance and counselling services are more than just affecting individuals. The economic impact on the rest of society is significant. Young people who enter higher education and begin their studies without a full understanding of the job prospects, the labor market and future employment opportunities, and the jobs that fit their personality may find themselves in a difficult situation later (Pillay, 2019).

Simply put Savitri and Suryadi (2020) found that individuals with high and low SES develop different behavioural responses because they are shaped by experience to generate different responses to cope with resource scarcity, and that these responses generalise to slightly different approaches to life.

RESEARCH DESIGN

De Vaus (2006) defines research design as overall plan that a researcher follows to integrate the different parts of a study with the goal of answering the research question. A research design serves as a picture for the research, outlining the research approach, research strategy and research methodology to be followed (De Vaus, 2006).

Research approach

This study adopted a qualitative, interpretive research approach as it sought to explore young adults' experience of the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on their career aspirations. Subsequently, the study also adopted an inductive approach to compress raw text data into a brief,

summary format and to relate the findings clear with the research objectives. The inductive approach reflects frequently reported patterns used in qualitative data analysis (Thomas, 2006).

The nature of the study was such that it attempted to explore the relationship between socio-economic status, parents' educational background and young adults' career aspirations. This means an interpretive paradigm which aims to explain the subjective experiences, reasoning and meaning making within the social context of a person (Thomas, 2010) was appropriate for this study. The interpretive paradigm seeks to understand the world as it is through the eyes of individuals (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Walsham (1993) argues that in the interpretive tradition there are no "right" or "wrong" theories. Instead, they should be judged according to interest and meaning. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) further argue that the interpretive paradigm is based on the belief that reality is not universal, it is actually socially constructed and is based on one's social contextual.

From an ontological perspective, the researcher was interested in better understanding the nature of the reality of young adults' career aspirations and how it is affected by their social context and parents' educational background (Hammerburg et al., 2016). Epistemologically, the researcher aimed to establish a relationship with the young adult participants and create a space where they are free to share their experiences and how their socio-economic status and parents' educational background informed their career aspirations. Methodologically the researcher aimed to practically study the lived experiences of the participants by adopting a qualitative, interpretive research design and approach (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

Research strategy

According to Mack et al. (2005), qualitative research has an ability to provide multiple descriptions people's experiences on a particular research issue. It provides insight on the individual's subjective experience of an issue that is the often-contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative answer questions about subjective experience, meaning attached to certain experiences and perspective, most often from the viewpoint of the participant (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Research method

The following section will present the process that was followed in acquiring data, and includes an explanation of the method that was used to collect data, how it was analysed, the method of sampling, how it was reported and the ethical considerations relevant to the study.

Research setting

The aim of the study was to explore the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on the career aspirations of young adults. To explore this, it was imperative to take into consideration the background of participants, and the researcher included participants from both high socio-economic status and low socio-economic status to see if there would be any disparities. Secondly, Uka (2015) suggests that education plays a vital role in the future career plans of young people. Higher levels of education have been said to relate to higher prestigious professions, higher wages and higher standard of living. Shumba and Naong (2012) believe that career choices of tertiary students from underprivileged schools are negatively impacted by a lack of financial resources, inadequate career information, low academic performance and poor career counselling service. But is it really that black-and-white? The researcher believes there is always a story behind people's decisions, and for this reason, which also justifies the qualitative approach, the study sought to explore the influence of these factors from the perspectives of the participants and to gain insights into people's feelings and thoughts (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of participants to gain insight into their lived experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Word of mouth was used to find research participants, and the researcher shared information about the research with peers and colleagues and then received referrals. The researcher contacted the potential participants, and from there on she probed in an attempt to understand the background of the potential participants and also explained why this was important. Once the participants indicated they were interested in participating, the researcher ensured that they all complied with the sampling inclusion criteria.

Sampling

The targeted population was that of young adults. Erikson (1998) believes the stage of young adulthood lasts between the age of 18 to 40 (Chung, 2018), and Arnett (2000) proposes that young adulthood is considered to be the unimpelled years, as they offer the most opportunity to explore one's identity in the areas of love, work, and worldviews. At this time, people begin to develop the qualities necessary for self-sufficiency, enter mature and committed relationships, assume more adult roles and responsibilities, and begin to receive levels of education and training that are the basis for adult employment. (Wood et al. et al., 2018).

For the purpose of the study, the researcher targeted participants from both high and low socio-economic statuses. This is why the sampling process was intentional. For this study, qualitative samples were purposive, that is selected on the basis that of they will provide richly textured information that are in line with the aims of the research (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

Purposive sampling was used as tool to select participants who possess relevant characteristics for the study. The method was used to identify and select information-rich cases related to the study (Palinkas et al, 2016). This involved identifying and

selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about the topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The sample included young adults between the ages of 20 to 35. This is because the purpose of the research was to explore the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on the career aspirations of young adults. Purposive sampling was chosen for the study because the logic and power of targeted sampling lies in the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth investigation (Patton, 2002). Beroot et al. (2016) Intentional sampling goals may be relevant, primarily because researchers are exploring the complexity of different perspectives rather than looking for a single "correct" answer. I don't think it's a comprehensive search for all the work. Therefore, this type of review requires variation to generate a new understanding.

The sample size included five participants. The nature of the sample was such that educational background of the parents was a big factor in determining the family socio-economic status. Therefore, three of the five participants were from affluent families, with parents who are educated, while two of the participants came from a background where parents had little to no education. According to Burmeister and Aitken (2012), the quality of the information counts more than the quantity of participation, the intention is to gain each a clinically and statistically vast end result and making sure that studies sources are used successfully and ethically.

This is not to say the smaller the sample size, the better; however, large amounts of Data can complicate the transition from descriptive or aggregate analysis to more interpretive analysis (Ames et al., 2019). Benoot et al. (2019) cite that the interest of is not to extract the 'right' answer, but rather in examining the complexity of different conceptualisations. Furthermore, Ames et al. (2019) suggest that the more data a researcher has to synthesise, the lesser the quality of information and the less they are likely to be able to extract from the data; exhaustive searching and inclusion can undermine this understanding, as qualitative synthesis seeks to achieve conceptual and not statistical generalisability.

Table 3.1

Participants' demographics

PARTICIPANT	AGE	SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND	PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
LL01	27	Affluent	Educated
PM02	31	Low socio-economic	Non-educated
KM03	35	Low socio-economic	Non-educated
ZM04	30	Middle Class	Educated
NL05	35	Affluent	Educated

Data collection methods

This study adopted semi-structured interviews as data collection method. As this study adopted the interpretive paradigm, semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the world through that participants' lens (De Jonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables but looks at the full complexity of how people make world (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). According to De Jonckheere and Vaughn (2019), interviews are attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to explore the meaning of people's experiences, to reveal their lived world before applying scientific explanations. Therefore, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain a rich understanding of the extent to which participants' social context influences their career aspirations (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003). In the study, an interview guide was used (see Annexure C) to guide the semi-structured interviews which were conducted face-to-face.

Recording of data

Once the participants gave consent, the interviews were audio-recorded, where after the recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher before data analysis could begin (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The researcher also made notes during the interviews. This allowed the researcher to take note of environmental contexts, behaviours (e.g body language), and non-verbal cues (smirks, grins) that may not have been properly captured through the audio-recording (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Data analysis

The goal of analysing the data collected was to reduce the volume of text collected and put it into categories to create meaning (Bengtsson, 2016). In line with the interpretive paradigm, this study adopted content analysis as its data analysis methodology. Content analysis attempts to follow a process in which sense is made of unstructured content, or the voices of the participants through the verbatim text and audio-recordings. Content analysis therefore aims to make meaning from text (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017).

The process of content analysis followed the following six steps.

- Data familiarisation: This stage consists of the researcher reading the collected data repeatedly after transcribing the recorded data. Bengtsson (2016) suggests that the researcher must understand and acquaint themselves better with the data, meaning they have to take a thorough look at the transcribed text to obtain the essence of the whole, that is to learn “what is going on?”
- Formulating initial codes: This stage involves breaking the information down into smaller units, and making meaning out of it. Each identified meaning unit is labelled to identify preliminary codes, which should be make sense based on the context of the study (Bengtsson, 2016).
- Searching for themes: A theme is a collection of codes that means the same thing (Nowell et al., 2017). During this stage, the generated codes get sorted into categories. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) propose that one does this by comparing codes determining which codes seem to belong together, thereby

forming a category. The researcher made use of sticky notes to categorise coded information.

- Reviewing themes: During this stage, the researcher had to review the coded data extracts for each theme to check if those themes form a pattern (Nowell et al., 2017). The most crucial question the researcher has to ask themselves during this stage is if the themes are relevant to the context of the entire data set (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).
- Defining and naming themes: This is the final part of the data analysis process, the researcher has to develop a clear understanding of each theme and conduct a thorough analysis of it, the rule of thumb is that each theme has to fit into the bigger picture (Nowell et al., 2017).
- Writing up a report: This part consists of connecting the dots to create the full picture of what the data says (Nowell et al., 2017). It is more than just a presentation of codes and themes but rather, as Braun and Clarke (2012) put it, it create a narrative that provides a clear, concise, and logical account for the researcher's interpretation of the data, but also why their selection of themes and interpretation of the data are important and accurate.

Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Credibility establishes whether the findings of a study actually reflect the participants' original data and are correct interpretations of the participants' original views (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In simpler terms, the purpose was to ensure that the results, from the perspective of the participants, are not extracts from the researcher's imagination (Forero et al., 2018). The sample size was such that it allowed the researcher to revisit participants, and reflect on the results, to verify with participants if the results are a true representation of their views.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be used in a different setting (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This was done through providing a thorough description of the context in which the study took place, so that it is easily understood by an outsider. The study was conducted among young adults with opposite social contexts (i.e. high and low socio-economic status as informed by their parents' educational background).

Dependability is important to trustworthiness because it is concerned with how consistent and reliable the research findings are. To achieve dependability, researchers can ensure that there is audit trail in the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004), meaning every part of the research be documented. The researcher chose to document the research process by keeping records of the raw data, field notes and transcripts (Nowell et al., 2017).

Confirmability represents how objective the researcher was in the interpretation of data (Chowdury, 2015). The purpose of confirmability is to extend the confidence that the results can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Forero et al., 2018). The involvement of the research supervisor during the initial data analysis phase to guide the neutral analysis of data was an important step in achieving confirmability.

Methods to ensure ethical research principles

Ethical clearance was obtained from the UNISA College of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Reviews Committee (see Annexure A) prior to the collection of data. Participants had to sign an informed consent form (see Annexure B) prior to the data collection phase. This informed consent form explained the purpose of the study and what the participants' roles would be during the research project (Vanclay et al., 2013). In the consent form, the researcher also explained the rights of the participants; these include the right to withdraw at any point. It was important that the researcher explained to the participants why they have been chosen for the research and assure them that the information collected during the study would be kept confidential and that their privacy and anonymity would be ensured.

To protect the identity of the participants, the researcher used pseudonyms which were made of their initials and their participant number, for example my name is Reshoketswe Ledwaba and I am the 6th participant, my pseudonym would be RL06. The raw data, transcripts and recordings will be kept in an electronic password-protected file which would only be accessed by the researcher and the supervisor. After five years all hard and soft copies of the data will be permanently destroyed.

Reporting

According to O'Brien et al. (2014), reporting of qualitative research results should convey the main findings. These findings often involve interpretation and contextualisation. This means reporting key findings under each main theme, using quotes from participants findings from the analysis of data. (Burnard et al., 2008) The researcher provided evidence in the form of examples, verbatim quotes, or text excerpts, to support the main analytic findings (O'Brien et al., 2014).

FINDINGS

The goal of the study was to explore the relationship between socio-economic status, parents' educational background and young adults' career aspirations. From the results derived from conducting semi-structured interviews, four main themes emerged, each with their own sub-themes and related properties (see Table 3.2). These themes, sub-themes and properties will be analysed and supported with verbatim quotes from the collected data to support the understanding of the findings and interpretation thereof.

Table 3.2

Findings

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Career aspiration	Means to an end
	Plan for the future
Social context	Available resources
	Environment
Motivational factors	Passion and sense of fulfilment
	Money and prestige
Role of education	Access to information

Theme 1: Career aspiration

The first theme that emerged from the data was career aspiration, in which the participants expressed their views of career aspiration and shared the factors which influence these and how it impacts on one's lifestyle. Two sub-themes emerged within this theme, namely means to an end and plan for the future.

Means to an end

The first sub-theme that emerged was means to an end. When asked how they define career aspirations, many participants spoke to it being a means to an end. For most of the participants career aspirations are associated with choosing a career in accordance to a specific plan and purpose which will enable them to earn an income that will permit them to secure a decent living. Participant PM02 especially noted how this should be a career that was not too demanding. For Participant KM03 and Participant PM02, having a career meant they would change their current situation, lead a better life and end poverty.

To me it means what is it that I want to do, what will it benefit me in future (Participant KM03).

It's something ... as for me, it's something I would like to do, that can give me an income ... I don't have to sweat, I don't have to fight (Participant PM02).

It is also worth noting how Participant KM03 explained how they grew up in situations of survival and explained how she has had to find ways to make money in order to afford basic necessities. She has had to understand from a young age that nothing comes easy, and one has to work hard for it. She narrates that she has had to start selling sweets and things at school to afford toiletries, so her career aspirations had more to do with what she could get out of it than anything else.

Plan for the future

The second sub-theme that emerged from the findings was that participants felt a career aspiration was a plan for the future, outlining how they wanted their lives to look like going forward. It is something you aspire towards.

I think career aspiration means the things I wanna achieve in my career ... uhm ... maybe like, a plan. It's a plan basically, so this is who I am, this is what I wanna do I my work and this is what I wanna achieve (Participant ZM04).

... what ... what you eventually want to do with your life, in the future ... what you want your every day to look like in terms of your professional life (Participant LL01).

These are things you aspire to, your career, right ... uhhh it's an occupation that you are aspire to, career wise (Participant NL05).

Theme 2: Social context

The second theme identified through the data analysis was social context. Social context seemed to be noted by the participants as a shaper of reality and how the participants define career aspirations. Within this theme, two sub-themes emerged, that is available resources and environment. The availability of resources and the nature of the environment they find themselves in seem to impact significantly on their career aspirations, what they are exposed to and what is encouraged by the family and within their social settings. For the purpose of the research, social context refers to the participants' immediate family and people in their community, including their teachers, neighbours and parents.

Available resources

Availability of resources, in this instance, refers to information about career options one could have, the means to explore, and to a great extent, support system. While passion, interests and values form part of the career decision-making process and can

be explored to assist in the process, knowledge about the option of career paths is required.

Participant LL01 noted how her access to resources assisted her in her choosing of a career. Their career aspiration was to work with numbers, and that has always been her passion, but she was not sure how her career path would unfold. However, because her mother was a teacher, and her mother recognised Participant LL01's confusion, she assisted her in finding more information. In addition, Participant LL01 also noted how she feels her life was a lot easier than most others as they never struggled to make ends meet.

My mother knew about all things academics and she never limited me in terms of what I wanted to do, she showed me where the information was and then she let me figure it out for myself, so I think because of the knowledge that she had ... when she told me about whatever she knew and she showed me where I could go to find these things out (Participant LL01).

As with Participant LL01, Participant NL05 also had the benefit of her mother's knowledge and connections. In addition she also noted how media played a significant role in helping her to decide on a career, and noted how seeing the lifestyle people live within certain career paths contributed to their career choice.

My mother always knew someone who either had information or knew someone who did ... when I chose to study B.Com Finance, she took me to one of her students who was in the same field (Participant NL05).

Seeing things on television, you know, people have money, success, they look a certain way, they look better than you ... they lived a better life than you, so I saw those people and got to know about chartered accounting ... (Participant NL05).

On the other hand, Participant PM02 did not have access to people resources but rather a resource in the form of a brochure which assisted him.

Everybody wanted to do something, so I wanted to do something different, so I saw metallurgical and I ... I didn't know what it was all about so I saw a brochure when I was in Grade 11 and I was like ... (snaps fingers) that's what I was going to do. And when I got to matric, spoken to my brother ... 'I want to do metallurgical engineering', he asked me what that is all about and I didn't know, he did a research and he told me ... I wanted to do it (Participant PM02).

For Participant ZM04, the initial chosen career path changed as more knowledge was obtained about other career options becoming available.

I registered for a Bachelor in economic sciences and when I got there, I realised that it's more maths and uhm ... there was one elec ... Marketing was an elective I chose for points, like ugh let me just do this to add my points and, and, and ... When I was doing the course, I realise that hey, I actually like this. That is what made me change from economics to marketing (Participant ZM04).'

Environment

For some, career aspirations have nothing to do with a title, or even interests, but rather to change the socio-economic situation in their homes or environment influenced by numerous aspects and people. Environment in this study is predominantly influenced by parents, teachers and anyone who serves as a role model of career behaviours. The saying "it takes a village to raise a child" rings true and is confirmed through the voices of the participants. Participant PM02 alludes to how one's environment can be a significant influencing factor when it comes to making a career choice, especially driven by the need to change one's current conditions. Also, even though you do not have educated parents, access to role models such as teachers can be greatly influential.

You know some situations can mess up with your confidence, hence some people, I think sometimes ... people fall into that trap where they just wanna do something so that they can come out of this stigma that their background has actually placed them in (Participant PM02).

Yeah some teachers have a positive effect ... maybe ... I remember my maths teacher, Mr xxx, he motivated me a lot, the way he used to teach and ... wow ... I remember I cried when he had to leave the school and later on, he couldn't leave, I loved the guy You know ... I never told him that ... (laughs) but yeah ... maybe it came from that, but I'm always teaching wherever I'm at (Participant PM02).

Within this sub-theme, Participant KM03 especially also shared many personal experiences and spoke extensively about the environment in which one grows up and how this environment influences one's way of thinking and help form or direct your career aspirations in a certain direction.

Participant KM03 then described her preoccupation with becoming a teacher ever since she could remember and how it played out in her playing with friends. She believed it would give her the platform to enact change amongst the socio-economic situation of others in her neighbourhood. However, it seems her mother and aunt were discouraging her.

Looking at myself growing up, I used to play with other kids, and we'd play house and I'd make sure that I'm the teacher, I'd teach them, I'd mark I'd give them reports, it was very interesting on my side, but my mom was very arrogant. She would say 'KM, don't make yourself a better person stop what you're doing, don't do that ...' I wanted to be a teacher but I was discouraged by one of my aunts ... she was a teacher, she studied teaching and she was unemployed for 10 years, she told me not to do it because you won't get any employment (Participant KM03).

KM03 further elaborated on her aspiration as a child to become a teacher. Because of how she grew up, Participant KM03 felt a need to become a teacher as she felt through this position, she could serve as someone who could inspire and provide knowledge and the possibility for a better future to children in her community.

You know, I wanted to make a difference in our community, especially the disadvantaged families whereby there's no one to motivate them, you know poor people mostly, they don't talk, mostly disadvantaged communities, they never tell their kids, motivate them, they'll never even tell them about role model, so as a teacher,

you'll be able to motivate kids even if they are coming from disadvantaged families, but the information you give to them, it will last forever, it can change their lives for the better (Participant KM03).

It is also very interesting that later Participant KM03 moved in with her uncle and aunt on her paternal side, who were both more educated, and she shares the important role they played in providing her with knowledge, emphasising the importance of education in a young person's life and encouraged her with her studies.

Luckily I went to my uncles in Limpopo, from my father's side I stayed there. He is educated, my aunt is educated, every day I would do my homework, if I don't understand things, they would explain to me, I would get used to a new schedule of studying, we study (Participant KM03).

Although coming from a different environment than Participant KM03, Participant LL01 also noted how a conducive environment is important. Participant LL01 shared how her environment allowed her the free will to make decisions about career paths that would better serve her desires.

I guess the environment that I grew up in at home made it seem like it was possible to get into whatever career I want, I never felt like I was limited to anything (Participant LL01).

Then Participant ZM04 shared how he merely observed what was going on in the environment around him and how what he saw seemed to have propelled him into wanting to become an achiever in order to ensure a better life than the one they had.

... so I always wanted to get out of the township so I'd look at what was happening and the biggest thing that happened that propelled me to want to achieve certain things academically and actually career wise was seeing what was happening around me and I was like 'I don't wanna be here' (Participant ZM04).

Theme 3: Motivational factors

The third theme that emerged from the data was the experience of participants of factors that motivate people to aspire towards a certain career path. Two sub-themes stood out, that is passion and sense of fulfilment, as well as money and prestige. Most participants concurred that a career is something driven by passion or purpose and a sense of fulfilment. However, money is a very important motivational factor, because the reality of life is that we need money to survive, and it is almost impossible to think about career aspiration without considering the financial outcomes of it. The difference is how much importance one places on money and prestige. However, it should be noted that it is not to say that young adults from low SES had extrinsic motives that drive aspirations and those from high SES had intrinsic motives; in fact, the findings indicate a sense of resilience among young adults from low SES.

Passion and sense of fulfilment

For the purpose of the current study, we define fulfilment as the perception of having reached one's most important career goals (De Olivera-Silva et al., 2019). From the voices of the participants it became evident it is almost impossible to explore career aspirations without considering the role of passion and sense of fulfilment. Participants alluded to how one has to look within oneself and search for what makes one get up in the morning and from there passion arises. In an ideal world, everyone would simply seek to find their passion, then choose a career based on that and the world would be a better place. However, as participants shared, the reality is that some people only realise their passion at a later stage, when they have already entered the workplace.

Participant PM02 shared how he attested his initial career choice as it was not his passion and he seemed not to have gotten any fulfilment from it. He then further shares how he made a change:

... later on I ended up at UJ doing engineering, completed it, worked at Chubb as a technician ... argh ... Indians made my life hell and I was like (profanity) I was not born for this, plus I was forever tired, I was forever tired and dirty, I was like 'that's not me', it felt like I was being dragged every day when I wake up ... and I did engineering, not

because I wanted to do it, it was because I could do it ... after that I resigned and I went ... 2011, I went back to school and I did teaching from scratch, I didn't know about PGCEA and had I known I would've done 1 year but I went and I started teaching all together ... I wanted to work with people ... aaand ... yeah ... I wanted to help, I looked at my childhood basically, and I wanted to be in a place where I can assist people who were once like me (Participant PM02).

Another example of passion being the driving force behind career aspiration would be from Participant LL01 who expressed his early knowledge that he loves working with numbers and how this informed his career aspirations.

From Grade 7, I just knew I love to work with numbers, and I didn't know how or what that would include or what that would look like and then it evolved into ... it's been evolving into ... being specific in terms of how I would like to work with numbers but its always just been that I want to work with numbers, analysing numbersmy reasons were that this is what I love so this is what im going to so, it was never because I felt I needed an income, I mean yes an income, sure, but that wasn't the main reason for choosing the career, it was totally based on doing something that I love doing (Participant LL01).

This is the same experience Participant KM03 experienced. The passion to sell directed Participant KM03 in a career in business management within the retail sector.

I then switched to retail business management, which is something that I have been doing even in high school, yeah so, it's something that I love, I love selling, even now, I am unemployed but through selling, I love business, through business, I'm able to buy things for me, for my daughter, I can even pay for my car ... so unemployment rate is very high, still I can conquer (Participant KM03).

Money and prestige

As participants indicated, in order to survive or provide for essential needs, one needs money. This is why for some participants money that will enable them to provide for their needs seemed to be a primary source influencing their career aspirations. For

Participant NL05 and Participant PM02, money and prestige were even more important, driven by the humble socio-economic context they wished to escape from.

I wanted to study Chartered Accounting because I saw on TV how much money chartered accountants had (Participant NL05).

I have a job and I left. Why? Because I was not happy, I felt disrespected and I wanted something that will make me an important part of society (Participant PM02).

Interestingly, Participant KM03 viewed his poor socio-economic environment differently and saw an opportunity in it to make money.

A huge amount of money goes to taverns, why don't I sell alcohol in our home so that they can support (Participant KM03).

Theme 4: Role of education

The fourth theme which emerged from the research was the role of education. The role of education and access to information, the sub-theme within Theme 4, was already alluded to earlier by participants. One often hears people say "Education is the key to success". In all the interviews conducted with the participants, the role of education as a theme emerged. Education, not only in the sense that one would attend an institution of higher education, but also education that comes in the form of life experience and connecting with sources of knowledge, seems to be vital in directing a young adult's career choice and influence their career aspirations.

According to Participant ZM04, having a strong education in place seems to be the first door providing one access towards a better life.

I think my parents' educational background influenced the choice to get further education but not necessarily my career, so it was very important to get an education, but nothing was specified, as long as you get an education, it didn't matter in what. I was given the freedom to study whatever I want to study ... I think that because of her education, I saw that yes, having education is great but it's not everything because

there's more things that you can pursue, having an education is the key to the first door, all the other doors you open for yourself is purely ... (Participant ZM04).

Participant LL01 shared how he witnessed how education became an enabler, opening up more opportunities for one, irrespective of which career one chose.

I saw what education did for them and so, that's what it seem like whatever I wanted to do was that I could do whatever I wanted to do and nothing seemed like .. I wasn't limited to say maybe, any other career, whatever career I chose, I would be able to do (Participant LL01).

Finally, as shared by Participant NL05, having access to information enables a person to gain knowledge as to all career choices available. He shared how while completing his graduate training he became aware of many other options.

I discovered other careers when I was in another path when I was actually doing my graduate training, so it's about information (Participant NL05).

DISCUSSION

Main objective of the study

The objective of the study was to explore young adults' experience of the influence of socio-economic status and parent's educational backgrounds on their career aspirations. Career, career aspirations and career development theories were explored. This study also explored the influence of socio-economic status and parental educational background on the career choices of young, aspiring adults. Furthermore, the aim of the research was to gain insight into the lived experience of participants and to explore young adults' experience of the influence of the socio-economic status and how parents' educational background influenced their career choices and aspirations.

Main contributions of the study

As children get older, they are more likely to describe their career choice as a results of the interplay between their developmental stages and the prevailing environmental circumstances (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018; Howard & Walsh, 2011). It is important for young people to go through a reality check, that establishing an understanding of which career choice appeal to them and what options are they presented with during the process of making a career decision. (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018; Porfeli & Lee, 2012). Outcome expectancy is one of the major constructs that inform career decision-making. It involves the anticipated outcomes of performing specific actions, including considering “if I do this, what will happen?” (Abe & Chikoko, 2020). In established frameworks such as the SCCT, career outcome expectancy is positioned as a key mediator of occupational and academic interest and skill development (Nugent et al., 2015). In addition, there is empirical proof that outcome expectancy, career interest, and self-efficacy to a great extent, influence intentions regarding to career choice (Abe & Chikoko, 2020).

This study presents participants’ lived experiences of how the socio-economic background they come from and the educational background of their parents impacted on their career aspirations. Participants emphasised how career aspirations are shaped by achieving a means to an end and the importance of planning for the future to enable one to escape from poor socio-economic conditions. This study also shares how the availability of resources and the nature of the environment in which they grow up in influenced their career aspirations and subsequently influenced their career choices. Participants also shared how passion and a sense of fulfilment, as well as money and prestige became motivational factors which informed career aspirations. The role of education and access to career-related information also seem to be vital in informing how a person thinks about and forms their career aspirations.

Finally, the findings of the study contribute further to the field of career psychology by providing more insight into the factors that influence the career aspirations and subsequently career choices of young adults. These factors can be considered by career counsellors and industrial and organisational psychologists when they engage in career counselling and development initiatives, especially amongst young adults.

Developing career counselling strategies should consider the findings of this research to ensure that initiatives are strategically focused on providing young adults with the necessary knowledge and information they need to make informed career decisions. Also, presenting career counselling programmes within communities, linking young adults with professional associations, and enabling the involvement in learnership and internship programmes might allow young adults to gain the necessary knowledge and experience to make better career choices (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Roulin & Bangerter, 2013).

Integration of findings with literature

Anovunga et al. (2021) suggest that during the exploration stage of career development, are characterised by a preparatory process. Exploratory behaviour or action and thinking that increase self-knowledge about work values, vocational interests, and occupational abilities (Anovunga et al., 2021).

Based on the findings from the study, certain assumptions can be made and these are discussed below. Duffy et al. (2011) and Jackson and Wilton (2017) highlight the crucial role of family expectations, needs and levels of support, as well as life circumstances and significant life events play. The findings suggest that career aspirations are an expression of a person's own interests and what they attach meaning to. These aspirations are established despite their circumstances. However, the decision to follow the career they aspire to follow is heavily influenced by the support they receive early on within the environment in which they grow up and live.

Parents are the most influential people in a child's life. It has a lasting impact on a child's personality and career development from childhood (Nawabi et al., 2019). Parents with different demographic and psychographic characteristics have different expectations from the education of their children which eventually influences their children's behaviour towards career choice (Nawabi et al., 2019).

Halim et al. (2018) agree and suggest there are parents put high hopes on and aim for their children to lead successful lives, so they push them to pursue career paths that are not in line with their interests. Thus, it is important for parents to establish

relationships where children can express their own career interests and for parents to keep up with their development, so that appropriate actions can be taken to improve the ability of their children in their future careers (Hamil et al., 2018).

The findings further suggest that the environment in which an individual finds themselves has a significant influence of career aspirations of a young adult. However, it is not as black and white as we think it is. While some literature (Gore et al., 2015) suggest that individuals from low socio-economic environments may have lower aspirations, the findings from this study suggest differently. The findings suggest that poverty may be a motivational factor driving an individual to secure a better future that will enable them to get out of these poor socio-economic circumstances and thus informs their career aspirations. Furthermore, elements present in the environment in which a person grows up, such as school, the neighbourhood and even media, such as television, also play a significant role in shaping a young adult's career aspirations. Young adults aspire to what they observe around them and if they see something better, they aspire to it.

Literature indicates that different high and low SES individuals will respond differently to circumstances because their experiences generate different adaptive responses to cope with adversity. (Obiunu & Emakpor, 2020) High SES young people are advantaged developmentally (Hackman & Farah, 2009), achieve higher educational achievement (Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Obiunu & Emakpor, 2020). They develop a greater sense of control, are more self-focused and independently minded, perceive they have more power to exercise, give preference to their own goals and needs, and do not prioritise short-term goals over long-term benefits (Destin et al., 2017). They also see themselves as having the ability to meet their educational and career goals, and they exhibit more motivation for school and for achieving later occupational success (Obiunu & Emakpor, 2020).

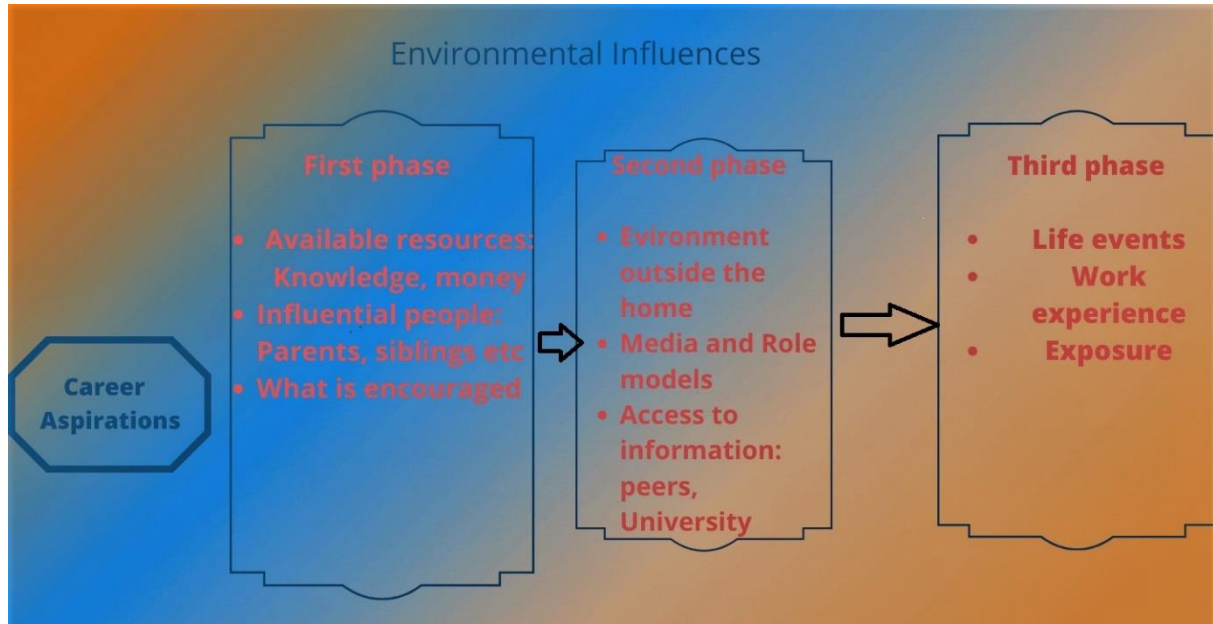
According to Schoon et al. (2004), not all individuals from low-income families fail to succeed in school. A number of studies across many nations have shown that people posse the capacity to overcome the challenges that life brings, in fact, humans tend to find a way to adapt during in the face of adversity, this is called resilience. (Luthar & Cichetti, 2000; Masten et al., 1990; Rutter, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1982)

Lastly, the findings suggest that career aspirations could be inspired by a need one has at the time. Maslow's theory focuses on a set of fundamental individual needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualisation. Physiological needs, such as being thirsty, are the most important. If people are deprived of basic things like food and water, their focus will be on satisfying that particular need at the time and will overshadow their other needs (Friedman, 2014). When a person chooses to start a business and even follows a career path in business management so that they can quickly relieve themselves of their lack of resources, then we can conclude that their motivation to choose a certain career path was driven by their needs at the time. In their study, Baslevent and Kirmanoglu (2013) found that people place the greatest importance on job security, meaning the promise of a steady income satisfies a more basic need, being able to afford necessities. Further, Baslevent and Kirmanoglu (2013) found that having a secure job is paramount, especially for those who experienced unemployment in the past and those who come from low income households.

All participants can agree upon one thing, that career aspirations are not formed randomly and that they are not static. In fact, career goals are dynamic, and come from people's own judgement of the career, and can be modified based on life events. In addition, some career goals may require investment of more time for experience and maturity, so people can be fulfilment in their occupation not only by achieving all their goals, but also by examining if they are well on their way to achieving their goals, which would happen through doing something that contributes to their career goals (De Oliveira-Silva et al., 2019). In fact, Anovunga et al. (2019) suggest that an individual may wish to change their career as a result of knowledge and time. Figure 3.1 gives an illustration of this:

Figure 3.1

How Career Aspirations are formed



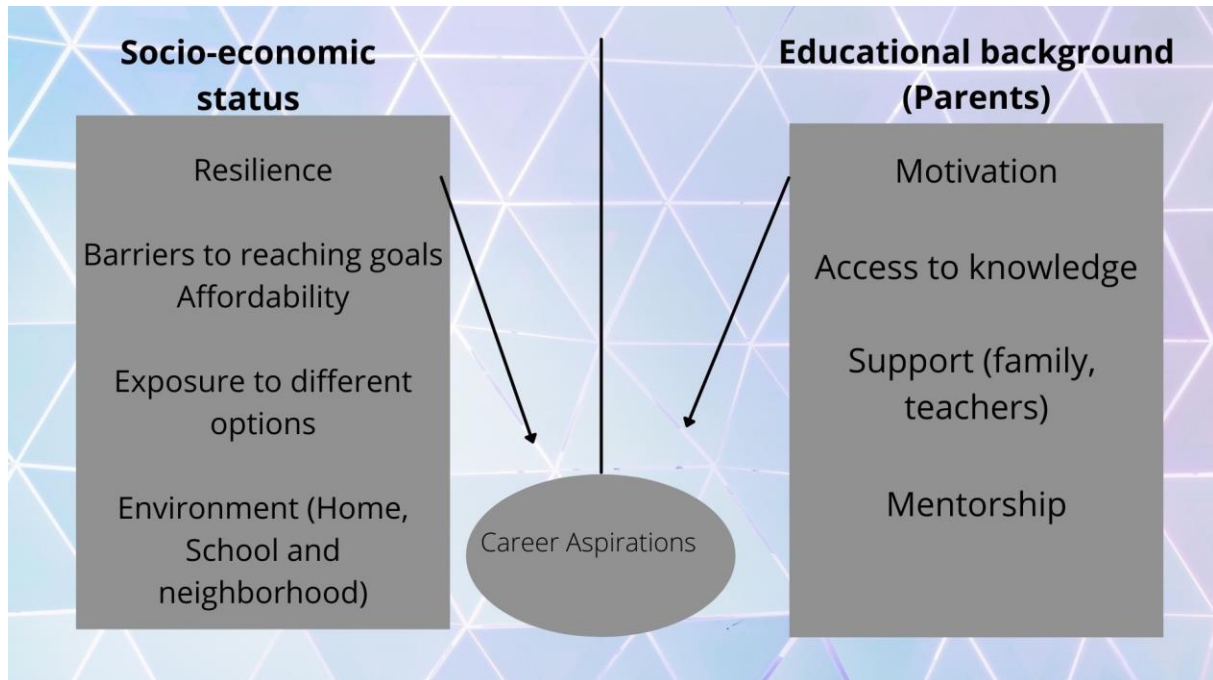
Framework for career aspirations

The career development process starts with an interest or aspiration towards a certain career path and is unique to every person. Kosine and Lewis (2008) state that factors such as gender, socio-economic status, family, geography and opportunity all, to varying extents, impacts the development of one's career path. For the purpose of this study, geography and socio-economic status are seen as having a significant impact on the process of career aspiration.

Kosine and Lewis (2008) further state that Super (1990) acknowledges that there are a lot of components that form part of the career development process, such as social learning experiences, personality, and abilities. For young adults, what they are exposed to and how they perceive their environment impact on their career development process. Figure 3.2 outlines the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on the career aspirations of young adults.

Figure3.2

Framework for career aspirations



Limitations and recommendations

The first limitation could be in the diversity of the sample. While the participants of the study were relevant for the study, part of the sample could have included participants that were more knowledgeable about the influence of socio-economic status on the career aspirations of young adults, such as career counsellors and industrial and organisational psychologists.

The second limitation deals with researcher bias. The researcher could relate with some of the participants due to them being from the same social context as the researcher. This may have affected the objectivity with which the researcher engaged with the data. However, the researcher was continuously mindful of this bias and attempted to distance themselves as much as possible and by building in measures to ensure that they validated the voices of the participants during the data collection and data analysis, and that it was not their own voice that dominated. The researcher's supervisor also assisted with this.

Quite a few recommendations emanated from this research. It is imperative for career counsellors to be aware that individuals from poor socio-economic backgrounds and who grew up in social settings where parents did not have well-developed educational backgrounds, face numerous career development issues. These can include, but are not limited to them having to leave school and not attaining their career goals, as compared to the general population (Harless & Stoltz, 2018). One of the participants cited that the social context in which one finds themselves can affect their level of confidence to participate in career development initiatives or even aspire to be greater. Firstly, industrial and organisational psychologists and career counsellors can empower young adults with knowledge about career options that are at their disposal, how beneficial it would be for them to explore these options and where information about careers and financial aid can be found. Secondly, a lack of parental support plays a significant role in enabling and shaping career behaviours of young adults. According to Xing and Rojewski (2018), socio-economic status is normally a reflection of parents' educational and occupational attainment, as well as resources at their disposal (e.g. educational, financial, and social networking opportunities) that young people can access. Career counsellors and industrial and organisational psychologists can provide support to individuals who lack parental support in their pursuit for career goals by providing them with the necessary knowledge and access to resources to make informed career choices.

For young adults, making good career choices should start with attaining knowledge about themselves. That includes insight into their skills, abilities and interests. In recent years, there has been a shift in career development, which shows an inclination towards meaningful work and career satisfaction, which are related to the concept of vocation as a "calling". Meaningful work involves conducting an introspection and listen for those internal signals that signify "deep interests" and then allowing the interests to lead to work that is aligned with a "core self" (Imel, 2002; Zakaria et al., 2015). From then on, young adults can engage in activities that enhance knowledge about their career goals. These activities include going to career fairs, using the internet and social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, to connect with other individuals who are in the same career path they are aspiring towards. Strauss et al. (2012) propose that employees with career aspirations in particular engage proactively in skill development behaviours and networking behaviours and proactively seek career guidance to help

plan for their careers. Despite the self-interested career focus, some of these behaviours (i.e. skill development and networking behaviours) could have a positive impact on climbing the career ladder.

Finally, while various authors (Mudhovorzi & Chireshe 2012; Shumba & Naong, 2012; Obiyo & Eze, 2015) believe that low socio-economic status equals low or no career aspirations and vice versa, the findings from the study suggest otherwise. Very interesting findings emerged, where resilience was one of the factors that would sustain an individual's career aspirations in spite of their circumstances. In light of that, future researchers can explore the role of resilience or flexibility in the career paths of young adults. This could shed light onto other factors that influence career aspirations.

More research could be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between career aspirations and parents' educational backgrounds within the context of South Africa. For instance, future researchers could look into career aspirations of children of business owners who were expected and trained to take over their fathers' businesses. The career development process is unique to every person. variables such as personality, socio-economic status, family background, and opportunity all, to varying proportion, play a role in the development of one's career path (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

Conclusion

The findings suggest that education can determine the family's socio-economic status, and that parents who have the resources allow their children the free will to choose whichever career path they show interest in and they provide knowledge and resources to explore their options. The findings also recognise the significance of the environment in which a young adult finds themselves and influences one's beliefs about whether their career aspirations are attainable or not. Career development is a lifelong process, that is influenced by what the individual is exposed to and what they make of their experience, with each stage, new knowledge acquired, and career decisions are made in light of that new knowledge.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following chapter summarises the purpose of the whole research and addresses the conclusions, limitations, contributions and recommendations from the study towards the field of industrial and organisational psychology and, more specifically, the sub-field of career psychology. The conclusions are drawn from the findings of the study, from then on the researcher explains limitations that presented themselves during the research process and in relation to the aims of the study. Contributions to the body of knowledge and recommendations for young adults, career counsellors and future research are made in this chapter.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this section was to assess the aims of the study in terms of the literature review and empirical findings of the study.

4.1.1 Conclusions drawn from the literature review

The following points outline the specific aims of the literature review study of this research.

- To conceptualise career, career aspirations and their related constructs.
- To explore career development theories.
- To explore the influence of socio-economic status on the career aspirations of young adults.
- To explore the influence of parental education on the career aspirations of young adults.

4.1.1.1 *Conceptualising career and career aspirations.*

The different social systems in which people find themselves result in many young people having limited awareness of available career options (Du Plessis & Ahmed,

2020). They have limited options, especially in marginalised contexts. The individual's environment, that is the lived social context and culture, play a crucial role in human development (Du Plessis & Ahmed, 2020).

Career aspirations are an individual's point-in-time expressions of academic and vocational goals. They are an important indicator for the understanding of the individual's self-concept, career decisions and future career goals and attainment. The ideal aspirations reflect career goals based on their dreams and have an unrealistic element to it, while realistic career aspirations represent the perceived likelihood for entering a given occupation (Andreassen, 2016). Agbo et al. (2015) suggest that career aspiration is a lifelong process that requires one to be realistic about their capabilities.

4.1.1.2 Exploring career development theories.

Krumboltz (1979) states that learning occurs through direct observation and experiences, thus having an influence on career development and choices. Examples might include heredity and specific abilities, societal conditions and life events, and task approach skills. An individual is more likely to make informed career choices when they have to learn from their experiences (Krumboltz, et al., 1976; Walker-Donnelly, 2019).

Krumboltz (1979) asserts one does have to have a rigid career plan, because unplanned events or detours often lead to good careers. Indecision can be expedient as it allows one to benefit from unplanned opportunities and helps to establish a sense of open-mindedness (McClellan et al., 2018; Walker-Donnelly et al., 2019). This is evident with Participant ZM04, as all of their high school life they thought she wanted to be an economist, but when they got to tertiary, they fell in love with one of their electives and realised that is what they wanted to do for the rest of their life. We only know as much as we are exposed to. A person's context plays a major role in what is learned. Krumboltz (2009) has made a convincing case for the power of the environment in controlling human behaviour. He points out how even good people can be corrupted the social and physical environments in which they find themselves (Krumboltz, 2009).

Career Construction theory (CCT) reflects a postmodern approach to career development (Brown, 2016; Walker-Donnelly, 2019). This comprehensive theory explains the what, how, and why of career development. Basically, viewing career as socially constructed, individuals assess their ideal self-concept by creating their own narratives (Walker-Donnelly, 2019). Savickas (2005) and Taylor et al. (2018) see an individual's career path as formed by personal meaning, memories, learning experiences, and future goals. The CCT enables researchers' discovery of participants' personal and vocational identities, as well as understand the decisions and values behind career choices as they are situated in socially constructed realities (Taylor et al., 2018). CCT cannot predict career paths but can provide insight on the decisions and choices made by individuals (Hancock & Hums, 2016; Taylor et al., 2018). The complex nature of decision-making related to career development and other life choices can help us understand why people make certain career decisions (Savickas, 2005).

According to the Self Determination Theory (SDT), aspirations are an intrinsic motivation that satisfies basic needs (Niemić et al., 2009), whereas goal-oriented outcomes are extrinsic motivations that indirectly satisfy such a need. The essence of SDT is that as individuals progress from the school environment that informs extrinsic motivations, their motivation becomes less conditioned and more self-driven (Niemić et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This does not mean that the possible influence of brain maturation on intrinsic motivation and aspiration formation in young people can be neglected (Ernst, 2014; Niemić et al., 2009).

4.1.1.3 Exploring the role of socio-economic status in relation to career aspiration.

The literature shows that socio-economic status was a dominant indicator of how occupational aspirations are formed. Furthermore, Olayinka (1983) proposes that there is a correlation between socio-economic status and vocational aspiration. The financial pressure on the parents of large families is such that their children, have to drop out of school so they can contribute to taking care of the family (Amoako et al., 2020; Olayinka, 1983).

According to Ali et al. (2005), socio-economic status has a strong impact on the way individuals perceive their opportunities and affects how much access they have to knowledge and resources. Studies found that participants from affluent family backgrounds expressed more interest in work for personal satisfaction, better self-concepts, greater access to resources, and more career adaptability than did underprivileged participants (Ali et al., 2005; Blustein et al., 2002).

4.1.1.4 Role of education on career aspiration

Literature suggests that parents' educational background affords them access to information and resources to support their children's career aspirations. This influence is such that they encourage some careers and discourage other through their attitudes. SheehySkeffington and Rea (2017) and Amoako et al. (2020) For example, parents noted that they influenced their children's academic success, access to knowledge in a variety of occupations, beliefs and attitudes toward occupations, and professional skills acquired. Some of the ways they do this are the attitudes and behaviors they deem appropriate, their hopes for their child's academic goals, the impact they have on the children around them, and the opportunities they provide for learning and development. And what kind of parent-child relationship they had.

Amoako et al. (2020) and Echebe (2000) note that development of interest in occupation starts in the home environment. Echebe (2000) stresses that the parents' occupations and other key factors in the individual's family influence the occupational choice of such an individual. In the same light, parental occupations may have an impact on how students perceive the value of certain school subjects. Examining this further, if occupation is seen as an indicator of parental skill use, then it means that students whose parents worked in more prestigious positions also performed better (Amoako et al., 2020; Echebe, 2000).

4.1.2 Conclusions drawn from the empirical study

Intergenerational transfer of socio-economic status is conveyed more commonly but not entirely by the direct handover of wealth and the indirect handover of social capital through the education system and labour market (Kay et al., 2017). Most people

assume that people who come from a lower socio-economic status have lower career aspirations, but research proves otherwise. Kay et al. (2017) suggest that “psychological processes related to socioeconomic status may have an impact in replenishing the social structural differences in SES in their impact on early career achievement”. Among these psychological processes, beliefs about factors that lead to success in society can influence young people's behaviour regarding career choices” (Kay et al., 2017, p. 2169).

The findings of the study suggest that socio-economic status does not influence career aspirations of young adults in the way that we think it does. While socio-economic status can have an impact on how one sees themselves and their view of the world, it does not necessarily mean that it would be the determining factor of an individual's career aspiration. Lower socio-economic status does not predict lower aspirations amongst young adults; in some instances, as per the findings of the study, lower socio-economic status might be the motivating factor and might launch a sense of resilience in an individual to change their current status for the better. Nicoll (2014) suggests that because resilience plays a role in children's self-image, it can contribute to the improvement of aspirations.

The findings of the research recognise the role of other people who are outside the home. The findings recognise the role of teachers, relatives and even media in an individual's process in forming career aspirations and making a career decision. In terms of parents' educational backgrounds, studies have shown that education has an influence on parenting styles and the investment a parent will make into their child's education (Chen et al., 2018; Mtemeri, 2019; Roubinov & Boyce, 2017). A study on high school students revealed that parental educational levels contributed to students' academic and vocational aspirations and parents who fulfil higher occupational roles were more likely to encourage their children to aspire to their professions (Uka, 2015). According to Mbagwu and Ajaegbu (2016), some parents from low socio-economic backgrounds may have encouraged their children to join their family business since they would want their children to be more successful than they are, whereas some other parents who are well educated may demand that their children follow their own professions or go into another profession based on what they think will enhance the family image in future.

In light of the two factors mentioned above, the final presuppositions that can be drawn from the study are as follows:

- Career aspirations are established based on the individual's beliefs and not their social context.
- Socio-economic status does not influence aspirations as much as the steps taken to reach those aspirations.
- Parents who are educated communicate the value of education and normalise educational achievement and thus make it seem attainable for their children.
- Making career goals and committing to attaining them is influenced by resilience and the belief that they are achievable.
- Parents who are educated afford their children access to information about whichever career path they would like to follow.

4.2 LIMITATIONS

The following section will be addressing limitations of the literature review and the study.

4.2.1 Limitations of the literature review

Very few studies seem to be available that focus on describing the influence of socio-economic status and parents' educational background on the career aspirations of young adults, from a qualitative perspective, even though the influence of socio-economic status on career aspirations among young adolescents and high school students has been an ongoing topic of interest since the times of Kuppuswamy (1959) until very recently (Amoako et al., 2020; Eremie & Ikpah, 2017; Li & Qiu, 2018). Whilst most of these studies are quantitative in nature, it also seems their common area of interest is within career choice, career aspirations and career development behaviours among children at secondary level until high school and thus excludes young adults.

The second limitation addresses the scarcity of literature that covers the influence of parents' educational backgrounds and career aspirations of young adults, again, from the subjective experience of the individual. Ghuntla et al. (2012) conducted a quantitative study on the effect of parents' education on career aspirations, and later on Febriani et al. (2017) demonstrated the level of parental education as one of the factors that affect the aspirations of a child's career. Febriani et al. (2017) further suggest that parents who are educated are more likely to create a child who has personally constructed the desire to obtain a successful career in the future. However, not enough research has been conducted on the topic.

4.2.2 Limitations of the empirical study

Firstly, because the aim of the study was to gain insight into the lived experience of participants on the topic, only a sample of five participants was considered. A small sample of people answer interview question in the same way in spite of their different context. Sometimes this happens because their experiences have a common and an overwhelming significance in their lives and this might influence the findings of the study (Daly & Lumley, 2002).

The second limitation would be in that some participants came from social contexts that make them relatable to the researcher, and this might affect the way data is collected, analysed or reported. The researcher needs to be mindful not to report on the data in a manner which attempts to prove their own presuppositions. The researcher ensured that they stay neutral at every step of the process and relied on her supervisor to assist in this process. The researcher aimed to remain neutral and objective whilst engaging with the participants, analysing and interpreting the data and when presenting the results. Thorough descriptions, where clear, descriptive language is used to provide adequate information about the context, enable the reader to determine rigor in the study (Johnson et al., 2020). Another way to eschew researcher bias was transparency and using a journal to reflect on the events of the research process, from the data collection phase, to analysis and report writing (Borowska-Beszta, 2017).

4.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

The following section assesses the contributions of the study as it relates to the researcher, career counsellors, industrial and organisational psychologists and young adults.

4.3.1 Contributions to the researcher

During the research process, the researcher learned that the process of career development starts informally from a young age and goes on only for as long as an individual is engaged in the process and is conscious of every career decision they make and how it impacts on their career goals. This process of career development is unique to everyone, depending on their environment (which includes their home, teachers, parents, role models, media, etc.) and how they perceive and engage with their environment. Because of the uniqueness of each person's journey, it is quite perilous to assume that "this environment causes that", without considering the intricacies of career aspirations.

4.3.2 Contributions to career counsellors

The study hopes to contribute towards providing career counsellors with better insight into the lived experiences of young adults and the factors that impact on their career aspirations and eventual career choices. Through this insight, it is believed career counsellors are better equipped to design effective career development programmes and better supporting young adults in their career journeys, by taking into consideration the unique context of each young adult and aligning it to the organisational strategic objectives.

4.3.3 Contributions to industrial and organisational psychologists

There is an assumption that committing to career goals and plans is guaranteed to result in acquisition of the desired job that may contribute significantly to a person's happiness and financial security. The statement could be true, provided that career goals are set with enough knowledge about the career path and the decision to follow

a specific career path, whilst taking into consideration a person's strengths, skills, values, etc. When there is enough knowledge about one's skills, values and motivation, to name but a few, industrial and organisational psychologist can better guide young adults in their career aspiration journeys and make better career decisions. Similarly, within the role of the industrial and organisational psychologist, the knowledge acquired through the shared experiences of the participants will enable the industrial and organisational psychologist to better advice organisations, on a strategic level, pertaining to their human capital.

4.3.4 Contributions towards young adults

The study highlights how environments can impede or encourage some career decisions. This study hopefully will aid in showing young adults the importance of being aware and mindful of the environments in which they grew up and how these environments influence their career aspirations and career choices. It also aims to show young adults that even though one's parents have not been blessed with a great educational background, many resources are still available that one should consult to see what can be offered in terms of career choices. This will enable young adults to aspire to better career choices and in doing so counter the limitations of their current environments and resources to which they have access.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the literature and empirical study, recommendations for career counsellors, industrial and organisational psychologists, young adults and future research will be discussed below.

4.4.1 Recommendations for Industrial and Organisational Psychologists and Career Counsellors

The following recommendations can be made:

- Industrial and organisational psychologists can better inform organisational strategic decision-making by incorporating the findings of the study into better

understanding career aspirations of young adults and how this subsequently affects their career choices. This in turn leads to the design of more robust and effective career development programmes, which are mindful of all the diverse factors which impact on a young adult's career, and more specifically the socio-economic environment they come from and/or live in.

- Career counsellors can contribute more effectively to the design and implementation of career development programmes and support practices offered towards supporting young adults. This can be done by better understanding the factors that inform their career thinking, and also exploring the skills, strengths, values and interests of these young adults, to help guide and match them towards career paths in which they can flourish and attain all their goals, such as bettering their lives and getting away from the poor socio-economic environments they come from or find themselves in.

4.4.2 Recommendations pertaining to young adults

The following recommendations are made for young adults:

- Young adults can use networking as a tool to explore their careers of interest by interacting with people who are in the same field to which they aspire.
- Young adults can engage in self-discovery activities, where they can identify their strengths, interests and abilities so they can make career choices that are in line with their strengths and interests.
- Using the internet, media and career counsellors, young adults can find more knowledge about their careers of choice and how they can go about achieving their career goals.

4.4.3 Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations are made with regard to future research:

- Future researchers could further explore in more depth how not having access to educated parents influences a child's career aspirations and how they think about career choices.

- Future researchers could also further explore how having access to good educational resources and well-educated parents influence their children's career aspirations towards attaining careers that will enable them to flourish.
- Attention could be paid to resilience as a moderator of career decision-making.
- Further research can also be conducted with the same aims as outlined in this study; however, by including other role-players as participants, other than just young adults. These could include obtaining the experiences of career counsellors and industrial and organisational psychologists as acquired in the process of counselling and advising young adults on career choices.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of the chapter was to discuss the conclusions, limitations, contributions and recommendations derived from this study. Conclusions and limitations were discussed as derived from both the theoretical and empirical findings of this study. Finally, this chapter concluded with the contributions and recommendations derived from this research as it pertains to young adults, career counsellors, industrial and organisational psychologists, and finally future research.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA CEMS/IOP RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

04 October 2019

Dear Ms. Reshoketswe Ledwaba,

NHREC Registration : N/A
ERC Reference # : 2019_CEMS/IOP_022
Name : Ms. Reshoketswe Ledwaba
Student Number : 50548905
Staff # : N/a

**Decision: Ethics approval from
04 October 2019 to 04 October
2022**

Researcher(s): Name: Reshoketswe Ledwaba
Address: 200-Block-F, Paul Mgidi Street; Soshanguve; 0152
E-mail address, telephone: shoxled@gmail.com, 0787039525

Supervisor (s): Dr. Annelize Van Niekerk
Email address, telephone: Vnieka2@unisa.ac.za, 0823327377

The influence of Parental educational level and socioeconomic status on the career aspirations of young adults.

Qualification: Masters- Post graduate degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for **THREE YEARS**.

The low risk application was reviewed by the CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee on the 25th September 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was approved on 04 October 2019.

The proposed research may only commence with the provision that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: The influence of parental level of education and socioeconomic status on the career aspirations of young adults.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Reshoketswe Ledwaba and I am doing research with Dr. Annelize Van Niekerk, a Senior lecturer in the Department of Industrial/Organisational Psychology and I am studying towards a Master's degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled the influence of parental level of education and socioeconomic status on the career aspirations of young adults.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research in order to find out if there is a relationship between how young adults choose career aspirations and their socioeconomic status and their parents' educational background.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

The study seeks to find out information about career aspirations among young adults. The field of Industrial/Organisational Psychology is very broad, and one of the concerns is to explore the interplay between individuals and their environments, and ultimately how these environments influence their decision to follow a certain career path. You are invited to participate in the study because the study is targeted at individuals that are between the ages of 20-35 and involves them reflecting on the journey to making a decision about their career aspirations.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The participant will be required to participate in an interview which will take place at a place that is convenient for them and will last for +/- 1 hour. A tape recorder will be used to gather information while the participant answers questions pertaining to their background, their parents' educational background and their career aspirations.

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 consent to participation. 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 at any point, even after giving consent, the participant decides that they no longer want to participate in the study, they are free to withdraw, there will be no penalty resulting from their withdrawal.

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

As there is no funding for the research, the participants will not have to pay anything and there will be no incentive that will be given for participating in the study. The willing participants will have an opportunity to reflect on their career decisions and hopefully review and align their future goals with what they are doing now. Secondly, the participant could be encouraged to engage in skills-development and networking behaviours that will assist in achieving their goals.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

Depending on the concentration span of the participant, potential risks that could come would be that the participant might experience boredom and fatigue during the interview, should this occur, a short break will be taken to ensure that the participant is refreshed. Secondly, participants might experience some level of discomfort, fear or embarrassment sharing information about their background. The researcher will ensure that rapport is established at the beginning of the interview and ensure that any information acquired during the interview will be treated with the utmost confidence.

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

The interview will be conducted face to face and there will be no third party that will be present during the interview. The information will be recorded on a tape recorder and a pseudonym will be used instead of the participant's actual name to protect their identity. This means that only the researcher will know the participant's identity, therefore the information from the interview will not be linked to the participant's identity.

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

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked safe, in the study at the researcher's home in Pretoria for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored, the data will be saved on encrypted files that will also be stored on google drive. This helps in that, should the equipment used to collect data be damaged, the researcher will still be able to access the data on any other device.

Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. When necessary, hard copies will be shredded and disposed, while electronic information will be destroyed using relevant software programs.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

As mentioned above, participation in the study does not require any cost from the participant. There will be **NO** financial incentive that will be awarded to the participant.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the (CEMS) UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

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


If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Reshoketswe Ledwaba on 0787039525. The findings will be available in a journal article. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, or the link to the article please contact Reshoketswe Ledwaba on e-mail: shoxled@gmail.com or on my mobile:0787039525.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Annelize Van Niekerk on:012 429 8231 or **E-mail:** vnieka2@unisa.ac.za.

Contact the research Ethics and Integrity Advisor, Dr Marianne Engelbrecht on e-mail: engelm1@unisa.ac.za

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

Thank you.


Reshoketswe Ledwaba



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane

ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title: The influence of parental level of education and socioeconomic status on the career aspirations of young adults.

- What does a career aspiration mean to you?
- What are your career aspirations?
- Have you always wanted to be a (name of occupation)
- When did you realise that you wanted to be a (name of)? Why?
- Were there any individuals or role models that may have inspired you to follow this career path?
- How would you describe your family's economic status?
- Would you say that your economic status has had an influence in you wanting to become a (name of occupation)?
- What were your Parent(s)' reaction when you shared your career aspirations?
- Have you parents always been supportive of your career aspirations?
- Do your parent(s) have any formal education?

May I propose the following questions and structure?

1. What does the concept career aspiration mean to you?
2. What have your career aspirations been since you can remember?
3. Would you say your parents' educational background influenced your career aspirations?
4. Please tell me more about your parents' educational background and how you believe this influenced your career aspirations.
5. Do you believe your socio-economic status influenced your career aspirations?
6. Please elaborate for me on how you believe your socio-economic status influenced your career aspirations.
7. Finally, is there anything else pertaining to your socio-economic context which you believe influenced your career aspirations that you want to tell me about?