

**FACTORS INFLUENCING SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS'
CAREER CHOICES AT ONE TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN
LESOTHO**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Ramakatsa Limpho Callixtus Monaheng, declare that the study entitled **Factors Influencing Secondary School Learners' Career Choices in One Tertiary Institution in Lesotho** is my personal effort, and all the sources that I have utilized or cited have been designated and accredited by means of entire references.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated to my spouse, 'Mantsane, and my offspring Tlhompho, Ntsane, and Banyane, for their support and reassurance. I am also bestowing this thesis to my lovely mother, 'Mamonaheng who raised me and supported me throughout all levels of study I pursued.... "Love you Mma"!

ABSTRACT

Amongst the least developed countries, Lesotho is one of the few that has been highly praised for its expenditure on human capital development. The proportion of Lesotho's national budget allotted for education comparable to its GDP is very high and it would be expected that the country has put mechanism to channel these financial resources appropriately. The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) II categorises careers that are a priority for the Government in four segments: agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and creative industries, and technology and innovation. The NSDP II also indicates that the higher education sector should aim at shaping graduates for the labour market demands. From the foregoing, it can be assumed that the country would mainly sponsor the educational programmes that align with the national development plan. Similarly, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) emphasises increase in the intake of Basotho students in technical-related careers in Higher Education Institutions (HEI's). Given the education-related expenditure that Lesotho has proportionate to its GDP, and that every child who qualifies to do a degree in the country and outside gets to be sponsored, it would be expected that there are measures to provide career guidance to secondary school learners to choose careers that fall within the priority needs of the government.

The current study was conceived at the backdrop of trying to examine the extent to which learners at secondary school level are guided to choose careers that fit their competence and skills, but also careers that are fit to the country's needs, or skills shortage. Underpinned by Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making (SLTCDM), which highlights how individuals in different levels of life make choices of educational programmes, careers, and fields of work, the current study sought to explain how government, through the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) provides the relevant support for learners to choose and to succeed in careers that are ear-marked for national development.

The study adopted a qualitative research design and used focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to generate data. The sample consisted of forty-two first-year and seven second-year students, and seven first-year tutors. While recent studies do indicate that

secondary school learners join HEIs to pursue careers that are saturated and therefore not addressing the skills gap in Lesotho, the current study found the same trend. It has been established that the learners' choice of programmes at tertiary education level is informed by the lack of nationally planned strategies to guide them on choosing careers compatible to both their abilities and the national skills shortage. The Ministry of Education and Training has no career guidance programme for secondary schools to guide learners' career choices. As a result, learners' choices are influenced by a variety factors, such as people around them, their experiences or the lack of exposure, as well as their aggregate performance in the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE).

The study concludes that lack of career guidance in schools is likely to negatively affect the goals that Lesotho sets for its national development and grievously undermines the immense investment made annually on tertiary education. There is a need to develop a career guidance policy to inform both the career guidance services in schools and how government awards scholarships at tertiary level. It is also recommended that career guidance centres be established to support secondary schools guide learners in making career choices that address skills shortfalls facing Lesotho, the region and the world at large.

Key Words: Career, career choice, career guidance, parent, teacher, peer, secondary school, influence.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explores the factors that influence the career choices of secondary school learners in one tertiary institution in Lesotho. It does so through retrospective reflections of first-time tertiary students at the National University of Lesotho (NUL). The current research was motivated by the observation of a specific trend where students pursue certain programmes but struggle to find employment after graduation. Lesotho faces a high unemployment rate, with approximately 29.1 percent of youth aged 15-35 being unemployed (Bureau of Statistics, 2019). In 2021, youth unemployment in Lesotho escalated to around 37.44 percent (O'Neil, 2023), highlighting the significant challenge of youth unemployment. Notably, some of the unemployed youth have tertiary qualifications. Lesotho is one of the few least developed countries whose funding of education is applauded. Almost all students pursuing degrees in public and private tertiary institutions local and within the SADC region are fully funded by the government; and the question which remains is the extent to which the country effectively plans its manpower development through career guidance to ensure acquisition of the relevant skills for the labour market. Thabane (2021) argues that Lesotho is experiencing a shortage of skilled labour, particularly in health centres, where foreign medical doctors outnumber Basotho medical doctors. This suggests that the Government of Lesotho sponsors students in careers that fail to address the scarcity of crucial professions needed in the country. Personal discussions with NUL graduates indicate that secondary school students may choose programmes at tertiary institutions that do not meet employers' requirements, due to limited career guidance. Consequently, there is a mismatch between demands of the industry and tertiary institutions in Lesotho, contributing to curricula that fail to address labour market needs. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors influencing students' career choices.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Researchers (Dani & Desai, 2018; Nneka, 2013) consider secondary school to be the stage at which a student's mind is gradually being shaped to transition

into adulthood, and selecting a profession is a significant activity every secondary school student must do in preparation for entering the future job-market after 12 years of schooling (Ulrich, Frey, & Ruppert, 2018). Students need to have extensive career knowledge to aid them in choosing successful and rewarding careers in the future (Carrico, Matusovich, & Paretti, 2019; Nyamwange, 2016; Theresa, 2015). Therefore, knowledge of careers is a prerequisite for students completing secondary school education to make suitable career choices (Sela, Berger, & Kim, 2017).

The availability of career guidance centres in schools aims to help students understand their personalities and the environments in which they fit, based on the experiences they gathered about suitable careers (Falaye & Adams, 2008; Fatar & Fatar, 2013; Abah, Age, & Agada, 2019). These career guidance centres are also designed to enhance students' confidence in exploring an extensive range of occupations obtainable in the job market, while making responsible decisions relevant to their preferred career paths (Roy, 2020). The SLTCDM (Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making) states that students may rely on learned experiences about careers of interest, without taking into consideration that abilities in certain subjects are more important for certain educational programmes (Krumboltz, 1996). Therefore, career guidance is necessary for every secondary school learner, in order to help them improve self-awareness and choose careers that align with their genetic endowments and special abilities (Arold, Hufe, & Stoeckli, 2022).

A genetic endowment is explained as the total of inherited attributes acquired through biological heredity from parents (Arold et al., 2022). The genetic endowments or behaviours learned from parents are likely to be revealed in situations where students feel comfortable in similar activities with one or both parents, such as the shared love for motor mechanics. Special ability refers to a person's proficiency in a specific subject, such as agriculture, or a particular function, such as swimming, as opposed to their overall intelligence (Arold et al., 2022).

Students' socioeconomic backgrounds can also serve as a source of inspiration for career choices as they often seek career-related information from individuals

already working in the same fields, such as parents and other family members. Therefore, career guidance can assist students in identifying work environments that align better with their interests (Oguzie, Ani, Obi, & Onyegirim, 2018; Kunnen, 2013). According to Krumboltz (1996), the environments in which individuals reside influence their adaptation to prevailing conditions and events, shaping their inclination towards specific career environments based on prior learning experiences.

According to Krumboltz (1998), learning experiences are manifested in a person's words and behaviours when it comes to their life choices. Krumboltz (1998) argues that individuals' learning experiences are reflected in their behaviour, which distinguishes them from others and influences their career preferences. The SLTCDM emphasises that individuals have a unique history of life events and they tend to make career decisions based on these experiences. Students possess diverse personalities that shape their behaviours and preferences when it comes to choosing a career. Therefore, it becomes crucial to assist them in understanding their personalities and integrating them with their learned knowledge and their preferred careers. In order to overcome life's challenges, individuals require guidance in making appropriate decisions, including selecting careers that align with their aspirations (Krumboltz, 1998).

Students who are not properly guided on suitable careers are likely to face serious problems leading to a choice of careers that may be wrong and regrettable later in life, especially when they recognise unexpected conditions relating to job environments (Al-Omari & Okasheh, 2017; Lee, Yang, & Li, 2017; Omari, 2014; Carrico et al., 2019). When students feel that their chosen educational programmes are unsuitable, they may quit, leading to high rates of school dropout and possible unemployment (Ogutu, Odera, & Maragia, 2017). Secondary school students must learn about careers they envisage and need to understand the environments in which such careers may place them before the finalisation of career choice (Omoni, 2013).

In this regard, career guidance needs to be part of services offered by secondary schools in improving students' knowledge of self and careers,

because that may help them choose best careers that are most compatible with their personalities (Ogutu et al., 2017; Ogowewo, 2010; Obiunu & Ebonu, 2010; Bikse, Lusena-Ezera, Luokovska & Rivza, 2018; Mtemeri, 2017). Egbo, (2017) argues that secondary school students can understand different careers when properly guided to eventually make well-informed career choices.

Studies (Ulrich et al., 2018; Egbo, 2017) show that the selection of educational programmes among first-time tertiary students can be influenced by parental advises, school career guidance, training opportunities, and personal interests. The context of career choice requires students to seek professional help from career guidance counsellors when assessing different types of careers before making final decisions on the ones they like most (Hiebert, 2009; Liu, Ren, Dong, Pei, Zhu, & Zhang, 2021; Nwobi, Uzoekwe, Ojo, & Odo, 2020), because the failure to get assistance from professional counsellors and/or career guidance teachers has been a serious problem affecting countries around the globe.

Countries in the southern part of Africa experience high rates of youth unemployment between the ages of 15-24 (Cloete, 2015). Youth between the ages of 15-24, according to the World Bank (2022), are fresh from schools and ready to join the workplace for available positions. Institutes of higher learning in South Africa (SA) experience a massive youth dropout ranging from 50 to 60 percent, which contributes to high youth unemployment (Makola, Saliwe, Dube, Tabane, & Mudau, 2021; Fundiconnect, 2021). The report further reveals that high rates of drop-out in SA universities are caused by limited career guidance in schools, which denies learners the opportunity to search for relevant careers aligning with their personal interests (Makola et al., 2021).

Moreover, STATS SA (2014) indicated that limited occupational supervision existing in local schools deterred learners from engaging in well-informed career selections when transitioning to institutions of higher learning and the industrial companies. The same incident takes place in Lesotho where in 2018 the country had 34.98 percent of the youth graduates between the ages of 20-25 (37.44%) of whom were without jobs in 2022 (World Bank, 2022). The report associates the main reason for increased youth unemployment in Lesotho with

absence of career education in the curriculum ([World Bank, 2022](#)). This implies that the absence of professional advice in post-primary level of education contributes to students either failing to continue tertiary education to fulfil their dreams in careers of interest or pursuing careers incongruent with labour market leading to higher rates of unemployment.

During the process of career decision-making, secondary school learners find themselves surrounded by several factors that influence their selection of study subjects leading to their careers. Research ([Tillman, 2015](#); [Hewitt, 2010](#); [Bollu-Steve & Sanni, 2013](#); [Sinkombo, 2016](#)) shows parents as a significant factor influencing children's wishes to select certain careers because parents provide guidance throughout secondary school into tertiary institutions. Expectations of parents about their children's future careers lay a foundation for parents' behaviours and interactions with them ([Okesina & Famolu, 2022](#); [Wachira, 2018](#)). Parents who create a supportive family environment, encourage children in all levels of education; and may inspire them to explore careers that differ from theirs, as they are likely to become familiar with such occupations ([Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014](#); [Okafor, 2012](#)). This emphasises the need for career guidance to introduce children to a variety of available careers, distinct from those occupied by their parents, and to provide them with a balanced view of what is suitable for them.

Children may be influenced to choose careers desired by, or similar to, their parents and may feel uncomfortable pursuing careers that are against their parents' desires ([Nawabi, Javed, Shujauulla, & Ulfat, 2019](#); [Chifamba, 2019](#)). Parental influence cannot easily be avoided but can be part of school career guidance. Involving parents in school career guidance would help them understand that children have their own interests and must be encouraged and supported to pursue careers they desire. Thus, parental guidance is pivotal and should be paired with school career guidance to help students understand a variety of post-secondary opportunities ([Goins, 2015](#); [Theresa, 2015](#); [Jacques & Potemski, 2014](#); [Furbish & Reid, 2013](#)).

Contrarily, when parents are not sensitive to their children's career choices, offsprings may not consider parental advice but instead rely on peers for career

information (Naong & Shumba, 2012; Slovacek, Jacob, & Flenoury, 2015). That is, peers may create a friendly environment in which students feel comfortable seeking answers and advice on different careers before making choices. Mtemeri (2020) observed that students are likely to opt for careers encouraged by peers when parents lack knowledge about careers their children want to pursue and due to weak parent-child relationships. The parent-child relationship encourages the physical, emotional, and social development of every child (Mtemeri, 2020; Slovacek et al., 2020). Thus, a weak parent-child relationship provides a greater opportunity for peer influence because information from peers appears to be more significant when students are struggling to make informed career decisions (Salami & Aremu, 2007; Oduh, Agboola, & Eibhalemen, 2020).

The influence of peers is enhanced by peer gender, which refers to a composition of people of the same gender (Branoe & Zolitz, 2018). Students are likely to discuss careers of interest with peers of the same gender. Research states that peers encourage each other to select careers aligning with their sex, resulting in fewer females in STEM programmes compared to males in U.S. colleges (Yean & Chin, 2019). Female peers who adhere to gender orientated behaviours can influence others to believe that males are more suitable for STEM careers than females. School curricula require teaching of mathematics and sciences to prepare students who can address the technological issues facing the world (Tey, Moses, & Cheah, 2020). The school environment, through its curricula has conditioned boys to perceive and believe that girls are weak in sciences but stronger in non-science careers (Schone, Simson, & Strom, 2020; Branoe & Zolitz, 2018; Zolitz & Feld, 2017).

Males are socialised to be stronger than females and to avoid feminine careers (Giuliano, 2020). Socialisation is a planned activity through which society teaches children to behave and act according to their gender orientation on daily bases (Schone et al., 2020). Hence, the effect of socialisation produces gender stereotypes as a determining factor when students make career choices (Cusack, 2013), and this can negatively affect a country human resource development target. Gender stereotype arise from socialisation, which is the

process by which newborn members of society learn the characteristics of their group norms, values, attributes, and behaviours in their group home settings (John, Stoebenau, Ritter, Edmeades, & Balvin, 2017). Therefore, research reveals that socialisation of male and female children may later determine career choices they wish to pursue (Schone et al., 2020; Branoë & Zolitz, 2018).

Notwithstanding the consequences of gender stereotyping when secondary school learners engage in choosing tertiary careers, social media affects both male and female students alike when considering choice of careers (Ward & Grower, 2020; Horvath-Plyman, 2018). Globally, adolescents are the most frequent users of internet services, such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn, which are commonly referred to as social media (Kyung-Sun & Eun-Young, 2014; Wanyama, 2012; Melany, 2017; Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, & Shamshad, 2014). Social media as a group of internet-based applications is used for various purposes by people in different social domains (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), including youth who use it to search for career requirements and make preferences (Fuchs, 2014). Internet services are a part of the media that provides information about everyday life (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Media is described as the means of communication, which can reach many people and influence their daily decisions (Neeti & Singh, 2017). Radio, television, and newspapers, as part of the media, also play a significant role when secondary school learners engage in choosing tertiary careers. Social media affects the decision-making process of both male and female students (Iyer & Siddhartha, 2021; Di Pietro, 2016; Gehrau, Bruggemann & Handrup, 2016; Kazi, Nimra & Nawaz, 2017). The career information provided through diverse types of media is likely to determine students' perceptions of different careers, underscoring the importance of career guidance.

In Saudi Arabia, the research study by Zafar (2019) revealed that students who used available career guidance facilities were more likely to make well-informed career decisions compared to those who did not show any interest in using career guidance facilities. Similarly, career guidance has been implemented in African countries such as Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Uganda, where it is integrated into secondary school curricula (Chireshe, 2012; Okiror &

Otabong, 2015). Integration of career guidance into curriculum has been proven to be beneficial for students in terms of career choices (Nong, 2016). Therefore, career guidance is considered a valuable tool that enables students to reflect on themselves and align their interests and personality traits with the careers they envision pursuing in life. This suggests that countries with school career guidance and career education programmes are more likely to produce students who are focused on the careers they wish to pursue throughout tertiary education.

It is argued that societies must prepare the younger generation to face different challenges that may influence their choice of careers (Njoku, 2019; Dani & Desai, 2018). Therefore, secondary school learners who aspire to follow careers in tertiary institutions require effective guidance to collate information from multiple sources of influence, including parental aspirations, peer pressure, gender stereotypes, and media. The current study explores factors influencing secondary school learners' career choice in one tertiary institution in Lesotho.

1.3 CAREER CHOICE IN THE CONTEXT OF LESOTHO

As a long-term process, career choice in the context of Lesotho is significant for people of all ages who are still in the ages of participating in the workplace. However, according to the World Bank (2022), Lesotho is facing the challenge of a high youth unemployment rate. The Government of Lesotho (GoL) develops National Strategic Development Plans (NSDP) I (2012/13 – 2016/17) and II (2018/19 – 2022/23) periodically with the aim of achieving improved and sustainable economic growth and social transformation. NSDP I acknowledged that the escalating youth unemployment contributed to high levels of poverty and crime in the country (National Strategic Development Plan I, 2012). After adopting and implementing NSDP I in 2012, the GoL allocated 10 percent of its GDP to prioritize education for Basotho (National Strategic Development Plan I, 2012). Basic education was given priority, aligning with the global concern of ensuring universal access to education (National Strategic Development Plan I, 2012). In response, NSDP I proposed that the curricula of educational institutions should aim to provide educational programmes that align with the demands of employers, thereby expanding youth employment rates. NSDP I

addressed challenges faced by nations worldwide, including Lesotho, where tertiary institutions produce graduates with qualifications that fail to attract the interest of employers ([National Strategic Development Plan I, 2012](#)).

NSDP I further presented a number of strategies to be used by governments in order to decrease high prevalence of youth unemployment, including deploying local and overseas investments, improving the investment climate, encouraging economic change, enhancing the quality and affordability of the workforce, enabling technology transfer and research partnerships, developing infrastructure, particularly in relation to manufacturing centres and marketplaces, facilitating external occupation and encouraging global integration and employment, and promoting the growth of the private sector ([National Strategic Development Plan I, 2012](#)).

Lesotho's mission of promoting Free Primary Education (FPE) aligns with NSDP II, as it ensures that every Mosotho has the opportunity to attend school ([National Strategic Development Plan II, 2018](#)). FPE is in collaboration with NSDP II, enabling individuals who wish to access education at any level to have freedom to attend school ([National Strategic Development Plan II, 2018](#)). Furthermore, the goal of the Education Sector Plan (ESP) is to encourage more students to study science subjects, which can potentially contribute to the economic growth of the nation ([ESP, 2016](#)). On the other hand, the National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS) is a department of Lesotho government which provides funding for Basotho to pursue their desired career at the tertiary level of education, both nationally and internationally. However, the question remains whether the provision of government sponsorship effectively addresses the issue of skilled labour shortages in the country. Skilled labour shortage refers to "the shortfall of workforce with requisite skills" ([Akomah, Ahinaquah & Mustapha, 2020, p. 83](#)), or it is also defined as "a mismatch between worker qualifications and available jobs" ([Barnow, Trutko, & Piatak, 2013 cited in Akomah et al., 2020, p. 84](#)).

According to [Thabane \(2020\)](#), the issue of skilled labour shortage, particularly in the healthcare sector, has been a long-standing challenge, hence, the Government of Lesotho is still relying on the Republic of South Africa (RSA) for

critical patient care. [The World Health Organization \[WHO\] \(2011\)](#) has highlighted a shortage of psychiatric and medical professionals, with only 2 percent of medical practitioners in Lesotho being Basotho ([Asamani, Zurn, Pitso, Mothebe, Moalosi, Maliane, Izquierdo, Zbelo, Hlabana, Bumuzza, AhmatOkoraofor, Nabyonga-Orem, & Nyoni, 2022](#)). The current state of skilled labour shortage reveals an imbalance between tertiary education qualification and government sponsorship, resulting in Lesotho being unable to provide certain medical services and subsequently relying on South Africa. This dependence has significant economic implications for the country.

Lesotho recognises education as a crucial strategy for preparing students of all ages for the workforce ([UNDP, 2015](#)). However, there is lack of literature demonstrating that local secondary schools in Lesotho are adequately preparing students to make well-informed career for both tertiary education and the workforce. According to [UNDP \(2015\)](#), the absence of career guidance in secondary schools in Lesotho has a significant impact on students, leading to a lack of awareness about suitable career paths. In Lesotho the choice of careers among secondary school learners is primarily influenced by the families, especially their parents, who often guide them towards careers desired by their parents rather than own preferences ([Komiti & Moorosi, 2020](#)). Several studies conducted in Lesotho have shown that a majority of students transition to tertiary institutions with little or no knowledge about potential career paths due to the lack of career education in secondary schools they attended ([Komiti & Moorosi, 2020](#); [Thetsane, Mokhethi, & Malunga, 2019](#)). The absence of career guidance in local schools has prompted the current study, which aims to explore how students at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) manage their careers choices.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

At the secondary school level of education, students fail to choose subjects that may lead to educational programmes they envisage at tertiary institutions because of career indecision ([Oztemel, 2013](#)), and there may be a mismatch of personality type and intended careers ([Oguzie et al., 2018](#); [Kunnen, 2013](#); [Al-Omari & Okasheh, 2017](#); [Lee et al., 2017](#)). Failure to provide effective guidance in lower and middle levels of education contributes to indecisiveness

when students transit to post-secondary level of education; and fail to follow programmes leading to professions of interest when joining the workforce (Carrico et al., 2017; Ogutu et al., 2017; Oguzi et al., 2018; Theresa, 2015). In the context of Lesotho, Makhakhane (2010) discovered that students joining tertiary institutions for the first time are not prepared in realising programmes that may challenge them and force them to fail and dropout of school. The current study explores factors that influence secondary school learners' career choice in tertiary institutions in Lesotho through retrospective reflections of first-time tertiary students admitted at NUL.

1.5 STUDY AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.5.1 Aim

Through retrospective reflections of first-year students admitted at NUL, the existing research investigates factors influencing career choice among post-primary learners in tertiary level of education.

1.5.2 Objectives:

The objectives of the current research are as follows:

1. To examine the aspects that inspire the selection of professions among students at NUL.
2. To observe how the students' choices, affect their progression and career outlook.
3. To explore the challenges students, encounter in their chosen careers.
4. To describe how secondary school learners can best be supported in choosing suitable careers.

1.6 STUDY QUESTIONS

The key study question is: Which factors influence secondary school learners' career choice in one tertiary institution in Lesotho?

The current study was directed by the subsequent sub-research questions:

1. Which factors have inspired the selection of professions among students at NUL?
2. To what extent do students at NUL feel content with careers they have chosen?

3. Which challenges do students encounter in their chosen careers?
4. How can secondary school learners be best supported in choosing suitable careers?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study explores the factors that influence secondary school learners' career choice, and the effects of career decisions on individual student and community development. Findings of this study will help inform policy decisions on Lesotho's manpower development plan to align training efforts of the Ministry of Education and Training to labour demand of other ministries and the labour market at large. In addition, it will help the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in developing efficient strategies to empower students with relevant skills to make career choices compatible with their strengths and interests. Future researchers interested in exploring further factors influencing students' career choices in Lesotho will utilise the study as the baseline.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current research adopts Krumboltz's' Social Learning Theory of Decision-Making (SLTDCM) as a framework for exploring the factors that influence career decision-making among secondary school learners in Lesotho. SLTDCM is widely accepted as one of the most comprehensive theories explaining the acquisition of instructional and work-related preferences and skills, as well as the process of choosing educational programmes, careers, and fields of work (Saint-Ulysse, 2017). According to SLTDCM, there are four significant factors that shape students' selection of majors in tertiary institutions which include: (a) genetic (hereditary) endowments and distinct capabilities, (b) ecological circumstances and life actions, and (d) job search tactic skills (Krumboltz, Mitchell & Jones, 1976).

Genetic endowments refer to the characteristics inherited from parents, which can potentially influence children to pursue careers similar to those of their parents. For instance, Yean and Chin (2019) established that children of engineers often selected engineering, which could be attributed to genetic endowments. According to the SLTDCM, special abilities such as playing a piano can also have an influence on students selecting music as a career.

Krumboltz et al. (1976) state that ecological circumstances and life experiences have an impact on students' vocational choices. Significant individuals in children's lives, including parents, peers, and teachers form part of the social environment that can play a role in determining the careers students decide to pursue in life. However, in every decision they make, students draw upon their experiences, which, as the SLTCDM, suggests, are acquired over time. Therefore, learning experiences derived from people and events can influence career decisions of secondary school learners.

Students require self-awareness and knowledge about various career options to make well-informed decisions, which are accessed through what Krumboltz (1998) refers to as job search tactic skills. Job search tactic skills encompass a range of skills that individuals develop throughout their lives, such as problem – solving abilities, work behaviours, emotion responses, and cognitive processes (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). These skills can be shaped or modified as a result of desired or undesired experiences (Kim, 2014). Therefore, it is crucial for students to have a deep understanding of their personalities and characteristics in order to choose careers that align with their interests.

Furthermore, students need assistance in understanding their coping skills, as this can help them overcome negative experiences they may have encountered in their lives. Neglecting to acknowledge such experiences is likely to discourage students from pursuing careers that align with their personal interests (Mohammed, 2019; Adefeso-Olateju & Akowonjo, 2019). Hence, providing support and guidance to students is essential to protect them from making undesirable career choices.

1.9 BRIEF SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research method, which, as highlighted by Tuffour (2017), seeks to comprehend participants and their perspectives within their own context. The following section will commence by discussing the research paradigm that underpins this study.

1.9.1 Research Paradigm

The present research adopts the Interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) which emphasises the idea that

individuals construct knowledge through explanations and reflections on their experiences. Interpretivism/constructivism posits that individuals construct meaning of the world through experiences encountered during the process of social interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Thus, a key aspect of interpretivist/constructivist philosophy is that, each person develops subjective meanings and understandings of their own experiences based on their social and historical backgrounds (Creswell, 2014). The current study aims to examine how students developed unique meanings and understandings of their personal experiences regarding the factors that influenced their career choices prior to tertiary education.

Interpretivists/constructivists emphasise that philosophy should not dictate the study but rather inform it, ensuring that it is built on information generated throughout the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Interpretivism/constructivism demands that the effectiveness of a research paradigm is evaluated based on its alignment with essential assumptions, including ontological assumption, epistemological assumption, methodological assumption, and axiological assumption. Firstly, the ontological assumption focuses on the nature of reality or existence particularly social entities as perceived by individuals in relation to their experiences and the meanings attached to them (Mirriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Secondly, epistemological assumption pertains to the types of knowledge held by individuals about the world they are inhabitants in (Gray, 2014). The current study argues that students are influenced by various factors when making career choices, reflecting different perspectives and knowledge. Qualitative research tools such as focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were employed to gather the data, with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) chosen as the most suitable analysis tool.

Thirdly, methodological assumption is concerned with the discussions of how researchers should approach research methods and determine the most appropriate tools for data collection and analysis (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Qualitative research tools such as focus groups, semi-

structured interviews, and document analysis were employed in gathering data, with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the best tool of analysis.

IPA is a qualitative design, which focuses on providing full examinations of study participants' survived experiences (Alase, 2017). Fourthly, the axiological assumption acknowledges that research results should reflect the values and perspectives of the researcher, who should strive to present a balanced report of the study findings (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Axiology also considers ethical considerations such as human rights which were upheld in this study by ensuring voluntary participation and respecting the rights of the participants during interviews (Aliyu, Singhry, Adamu, & Mu'awuya, 2015). For the current study, I ensured voluntary participation whereby no one was forced to partake in the study, and all participant's rights were respected during data collection process.

1.9.2 Research Approach

The views of selected tutors and detailed documentation were used to achieve the main objective of the current study, which is to explore the factors that influence students' career choices at the institution under investigation. The data collected through focus groups were examined and described, along with the data from other sources, to gain a comprehensive understanding. The current research employed the qualitative study method. Creswell (2014) describes research approach as a strategy that guides the stages of information gathering, examination, and clarification, moving away from rigid expectations towards comprehensive approaches. Qualitative procedures enable the exploration of complex phenomena with depth and richness rather than drawing conclusions based on preconceived ideas (Yin, 2009). Focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were utilised to generate data from participants of the present study. The participants' experiences regarding aspects that influence students' choice of professions at NUL were considered important for enhancing this study. The views of selected tutors and detailed documentation were used to achieve the main objective of the current study, which is to explore the factors that influence students' career choices at the institution under study. The data collected through focus groups were examined

and described, along with data from other sources, to gain a comprehensive understanding. The examination and description of the data collected using focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were done through IPA.

1.9.3 Research Design

Research design denotes forms of investigation by academics within quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014), which include phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, historical, case study, and action research (Creswell, 2014). I used a case study design in this study since I considered it suitable aimed at the setting of NUL as an institute. The current study adopted case study design, which Yin (2014) refers to as a common research strategy normally preferred when conducting research in various circumstances aiming to acknowledge people about issues occurring within their social environments. In addition, I intended to discover factors determining secondary school learners' selection of professions prior to transiting into tertiary institutions. Yin (2009) reveal that case studies help in improving comprehension of individuals' lifestyles in household and communal settings at large. Furthermore, case studies permit researchers to take time with a single person during interviews in order to retain a general insight of how he or she understands what the research requires (Yin, 2009). I spent more time with participants whom I felt provided rich information about the study topic.

1.9.4 Participant selection

First-time tertiary students, their tutors, and the returning students at second-year level of study were recruited through face-to-face interactions, where they were asked to partake in the current study. First-year students were selected in this research, as the investigator believed that they remembered vividly processes they went through when initially choosing careers to pursue in tertiary institutions. Second-year students who have changed their initial educational programmes at NUL were recruited, because they are likely to explain factors that influenced them to switch from their first-choice careers to the ones they are currently pursuing. First-year tutors are considered significant for this study because they deal with new students who struggle to find careers that suit their interests and abilities. This implies that, when students transition

from their initial study programmes to new ones, they typically seek advice from tutors, in accordance with NUL principle (NUL, 2020). Consequently, second-year students who have changed careers can provide insights into the factors that influenced them to consider different career paths from the ones, they initially choose upon leaving secondary school.

Hinsliff-Smith and Spencer (2017) argue that recruiting participants through face-to-face interactions involves approaching potential study participants wherever they may be and informing them about the purpose of the study, while suggesting their participation. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative studies often utilise non-random purposive sampling technique, selecting specific individuals who meet the study's criteria. The National University of Lesotho (NUL) comprises the following faculties: Agriculture, Education, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law, Technology, and Social Sciences. It is important to note that students from each faculty of NUL, were approached and invited to participate in the current study, particularly those whom the researcher believed would provide rich data to address the research questions. As this study employed purposive sampling, one student was selected from each department within each faculty to form a focus group. The same approach of selecting one student from each department was applied across all seven faculties, resulting in a total of seven focus groups.

1.9.5 Data Generation

Data generation is a method employed in research to gather data for research studies (Creswell, 2014). In the present study, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were utilised as they were deemed suitable for examining the experiences and perceptions of participants regarding the factors that influence career choices of secondary school students in one tertiary institution in Lesotho. Triangulation was considered in this study, which, as indicated by Creswell (2014) involves gathering information on the study's topic from various sources such as documents, discussions, artefacts, and observations. In line with triangulation, the current study used interviews and document analysis for data gathering.

1.9.6 Data Processing and Analysis

Data processing refers to the collection of first-hand research information from study participants; and transforming it into a meaningful format for readers (Rahul, Banyal, & Goswami, 2020). In this process, the researcher takes raw data and converts it into a more comprehensible form, including reports (Rahul et al., 2020). The data obtained from participants through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were analysed using two methods: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Content Analysis (CA). IPA is an investigative tool employed by qualitative researchers to understand how individuals construct meaning and interpret their life experiences (Creswell, 2014). I utilised IPA to thoroughly explore how participants made sense of their own and social contexts, by focusing on their experiences and perceptions related to the phenomenon being studied.

IPA was deemed appropriate for the current study for various reasons. It involves detailed assessment of the participants' everyday lives and aims to explore individual experiences as fully elaborated by the participants. IPA helped uncover students' personal perceptions about factors that influenced their career choices when preparing to join tertiary institutions. On the other hand, CA was used to analyse the data extracted from letters written by NUL students who sought transfer from their initial educational programmes to the new ones. Colorafi and Evans (2016) maintain that content analysis is an analytical tool used in qualitative research to analyse relevant sentences in text documents, particularly sentences that address research questions.

1.9.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is described as the transparency reflected in the way data is analysed (Shaw, Howe, Beazer, & Carr, 2019). To ensure trustworthiness and authenticity of generated information the following principles were employed: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Guba, 1981). Korstjens and Moser (2018, p. 121) provide descriptions of these value standards in qualitative research based on the logic of Lincoln and Guba (1985).

First, credibility establishes whether findings of the study represent believable evidence drawn from the participants, and whether such information is

accurately interpreted, reflecting participants' original interpretations. To enhance the credibility of this study, triangulation and member checking were utilised to validate the data. Triangulation is described as a significant method commonly used to ensure the authentication of facts through cross-confirmation from multiple sources (Stahl & King, 2020).

In the current study, credibility was employed to ensure that the perceptions and opinions of participants, collected through focus group interviews and in-depth interviews were presented without and alterations or additions to their words. Harper and Cole (2012) demonstrate that member checking in research is a means to enhance the accuracy, credibility, and validity of data documented during research interviews. For the present study, participants were asked to verify and confirm if the findings accurately reflected the information, they provided throughout the data collection process.

Second, the current study ensured transferability by facilitating the reader's ability to make judgements regarding transferability. This was achieved by ensuring that the researcher had no prior knowledge of the participants detailed backgrounds. Transferability refers to the extent to which research results can be applied to other settings and different group of participants (Stahl & King, 2020). Third, the present research employed the concept of dependability, which pertains to the consistency of findings over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In this study, the participants evaluated the findings, interpretations, and recommendations to determine if they were all supported by the data collected from them.

Therefore, I personally ensured that the findings, interpretations, and recommendations were presented without bias. Fourth, I refrained from exerting any influence on information provided by participants, instead quoting participants' views verbatim to allow data to speak for itself. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), confirmability is the aspect of research concerned with providing evidence that explanations of the findings are not mere constructs of the investigator's thoughts but are clearly derived from the information provided by the study participants.

1.9.8 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations encompass significant issues that safeguard feelings and behaviours of participants in social research (Neuman, 2014). For the current study, I took measures to ensure that the following ethical considerations were not compromised: protection from any form of harm, voluntary participation, honesty in reporting, and seeking of permission. Protection from any form of harm is a standard practice in social research methods when collecting data (Neuman, 2014), and guarantees that participants are provided with the necessary protection to ensure their safety and comfort during the research process. Therefore, I prioritised the protection of participants from any potential harm.

In addition, I ensured that all participants, had the opportunity for voluntary participation, meaning that no individual was coerced or compelled to take part in the current study. This ensured that participation was based on the individual free will and autonomy. According to Flemming and Zegwaard (2018), voluntary participation refers to a situation where the researcher refrains from coercing individuals to take part in a study and allows them to exercise free will in deciding whether to contribute. Confidentiality is a concept that pertains to circumstances where the researcher participants' identities are known to the researcher, but the data collected is not linked to any specific individual (Flemming & Zegwaard, 2018). Throughout the course of the current study, I maintained strict adherence to confidentiality, recognising its significance as an ethical principle. Honesty was a fundamental principle in this study that when reporting results, I took great care to ensure that the participants' perspectives on factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices were not distorted in any way. Prior to collecting data from students and other key informants, I sought permission from the consent authorities of NUL by writing a request to the Registrar for approval to conduct research. According to Flemming and Zegwaard (2018), researchers are required to seek approval from the authority to get access to information pertaining to them.

1.10 DELIMITATIONS

The study was conducted at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) focusing on factors that influence secondary school learners' career choices at tertiary level of education. The focus was on first- and second-year students, and first-

year tutors from the institution under study. The reason for choosing NUL is that, it is the oldest university with the highest number of undergraduate and postgraduate students in the country. I have chosen the institution, because it has a broad number of educational programmes that students can select from during the process of career selection. Since the study was only conducted in one tertiary institution in Lesotho; the results may not be generalisable to all tertiary institutions in the country.

1.11 DEFINITION OF MAIN TERMS

The provision of definitions for the main concepts used in this study aims to alleviate any potential uncertainties that may arise from their application in other studies. The main concepts employed in this study are as follows: (a) influencing factors; (b) career choice; (c) career guidance; (d) secondary schools; (e) tertiary institutions; and (f) educational programmes.

1.11.1 Influencing Factors

Influencing factors in the current study encompasses physical and/or emotional circumstances that can compel or motivate an individual to consider or contemplate something. Various scholars ([Wahid, Warraich, & Tahira, 2021](#); [Liu, Zhang, Ye, & Liu, 2018](#); [Haris, 2012](#)) perceive influencing factors are described as elements that exert a discernible influence on various perspectives, shaping individuals' preferences and choices. These influencing factors may encompass various aspects present in our environments, such as career information, the influence of individuals in one's life, and students' capacity to explore and seek out available career options ([Haris, 2012](#)).

1.11.2 Career Choice

Career choice involves the act of selecting a particular career path based on knowledge of the available options in the job market, taking into consideration specific determining factors ([Md Rami, Arsad, & MohdAnuar, 2021](#); [Desai & Dani, 2018](#); [Tillman, 2015](#); [Mulhall, 2014](#); [Ghuangpeng, 2011](#)). Choosing a career is a common occurrence for individuals throughout their lifetime, as they make decisions about what they aspire to become in their future lives ([Omari, 2014](#)). In the context of this study, career choice refers to the process undertaken by students when deciding to pursue specific educational programs

at tertiary institutions, or alternatively, opting to enter the workforce directly after completing secondary education.

1.11.3 Career Guidance

In the current study, career guidance refers to the provision of advice and information by knowledgeable individuals in various work-related domains. Career guidance is recognised as a significant strategy employed in educational institutions to assist students in making informed career choices (Akhter, Ali, Siddique, & Abbas, 2021; Roy, 2020; Bowen & Kidd, 2017; Amoah, Kwofie, & Kwofie, 2015; Baloch & Shah, 2014). Career guidance initiatives may encompass various career intervention programs, such as career expos events (Menon, Nkumbula & Singh, 2012) and educational field trips (Ali et al., 2019; Makola et al., 2021).

1.11.4 Secondary Schools

In the current study, the concept of secondary schools pertains to educational institutions that encompass grade levels ranging from 8 to 12. Secondary schools are expressed as an intermediate level of education situated between primary school and tertiary institution (Desai & Dani, 2018; Mutungwe, Dondo, Tsvere, & Mumanyi, 2018; Jacob & Lehner, 2011). Secondary schools serve as a preparatory phase for youth before they transition to the workforce (Desai & Dani, 2018). The primary purpose of secondary schools is to equip students with the necessary skills and aptitudes to make informed choices regarding tertiary educational programmes they wish to pursue (Jacob & Lehner, 2011).

1.11.5 Tertiary Institutions

In the current study, tertiary institutions refer to all officially recognised post-secondary establishments that provide educational qualifications beyond the level of the LGCSE. These institutions include colleges, universities, technical training institutes, and vocational schools. A tertiary institution denotes a university, or any other institution acknowledged by employers, offering degree programmes, diploma courses, or teacher education (Lamprey, 2020; Alemu, 2018; Amoo, 2014; Muresan & Gogu, 2012). According to Muresan and Gogu (2012), tertiary institutions play a crucial role in training a highly skilled workforce, that is more employable and productive.

1.11.6 Educational Programmes

In this study, the concept of educational programmes relates to the specific majors or fields of study that students chose to pursue in tertiary institutions. Examples of such majors include Sociology, Economics, Engineering, Education, and others. Several researchers (Nouraey, Al-Abadi, Riasati, & Maata, 2020; Tatum, 2019; Balci, 2018; OECD, 2018) outline educational programme as a collection of subjects taught in schools designed to ensure that students acquire the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes that align with their individual needs. These educational programmes aim to equip students with the abilities require to secure employment in various sectors of the workforce, thereby contributing to the development economy of a better society (Nouraey et al., 2020).

1.12 STRUCTURING OF THE RESEARCH

This research is categorised into six chapters. The initial chapter in this study discusses background to the study. The second chapter discusses factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices. Below the evaluation of literature, this chapter focuses on theoretical framework, factors influencing secondary school learners' career choice such as parents; peers; gender; media; and learners' performance. The second part of literature review discusses the structural factors influencing factors like school career guidance, and teachers. Gap in the literature is also being presented towards the finish line of chapter two. The third chapter details research approaches adopted by the present study. It outlines study paradigm, research approach, research design, scope of the study, sample of the study, and sampling technique. Data collection methods, data analysis processes, and ethical considerations are considered in this chapter. Chapter 4 comprises of presentation where study findings are detailed, and chapter five gives the discussions of findings while chapter six comprises of the study summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a present investigation was to explore factors that influenced career choices of secondary school learners in one tertiary institution in Lesotho. The current chapter examines the literature to determine the factors that play significant roles when secondary school learners embark on the process of choosing careers to pursue in tertiary level of education. In addition, the current chapter sheds light on Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making (SLTCDM) as the lens through which selection of educational programmes for learners preparing to enroll in tertiary institutions needs to be understood. The conceptual understanding of career choices is elaborated in this chapter. The literature is organised under the following sub-headings: influence of parents in career choices, influence of peers in career choices, influence of gender in career choices, influence of mass media in career choices, learning contexts as determinants of professional choices, and the influence of school career guidance in career choosing. The chapter is then summarised.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study is guided by the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making (SLTCDM). First established by Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones in 1976, SLTCDM is considered the appropriate theoretical framework for the present research as it aims to explain the origins and influences of individuals' career choices. SLTCDM was developed to address the question of why people opt for specific educational programmes or occupations, and why they may exhibit different preferences for various professional paths at different stages of their lives. Secondary school students acquire knowledge about different careers by observing the successes and challenges faced by those people in such careers. According to SLTCDM, there are several factors determining how individuals make career choices. The determining factors include (a) their inherited traits and unique talents (b) conditions and events in students' social environments, (c) learning experiences, and (d) job search tactic skills.

2.2.1 Factors Influencing Career Decision-Making

2.2.1.1 Children's Hereditary Endowment and Distinct Talents

According to [Krumboltz \(1976\)](#), the hereditary endowment and distinct aptitudes refer to inborn talents from parents that may influence a child's ability to choose a particular career and develop specific educational preferences in tertiary institutions. This concept aligns with the discussions of nature and nurture put forth by philosophers, such as [Plato \(427-347 BC\)](#) and [Descartes \(1596-1650\)](#) who argued that certain aspect of human beings is innate, and not solely shaped by the environmental influences ([Cherry, 2022](#)). Nature, in this context, pertains to how an individual's characteristics are influenced by genetics ([Singh, 2012](#)). From the moment of birth, children inherit certain traits from their parents, which can impact their inclinations and increase the likelihood of following their parents' occupations ([Madara & Cherotich, 2016](#)).

On the other hand, thinkers like [John Locke \(1632-1704\)](#) argued that human minds start as blank slates, ready to be filled with information ([Cherry, 2022](#); [Nikehasani, 2018](#); [Singh, 2012](#)). However, as children grow up in their households, their minds absorb everything happening in the family environments, leading them to perceive, those experiences as influential factors in their daily lives ([Cherry, 2022](#)). For instance, children of the engineers are likely to be influenced by the exposure to STEM subjects and may consequently pursue careers of engineering ([Yean & Chin, 2019](#); [Madara & Cherotich, 2016](#); [Dasgupta & Stout, 2014](#); [Naz et al., 2014](#)).

Furthermore, the influence of hereditary factors can manifest through inherited traits, such as aptitude for football, or through social practices associated with certain inherited characteristics. For instance, a child of a football player may inherit similar athletic abilities from their father. Another example is of cultural practices, where women face discrimination in predominately male-dominated careers. Female students experience discrimination in STEM fields, particularly in tertiary institutions where these careers are culturally deemed more suitable for male students ([Norberg & Johansson, 2021](#); [Schone et al., 2020](#); [Zhang, Lin, & Wang, 2018](#); [Mozahem et al., 2018](#); [NAWIC, 2013](#)). It can be argued that cultural practices may discourage females from showcasing certain talents, as they are confined to careers considered appropriate for them.

Inherited traits can encompass various aspects, such as gender, physical appearance, and physical abilities (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Male and female children based on their inherent talents, may have different capacities to benefit from environmental learning experiences, which can contribute to their overall knowledge acquisition. For example, girls may be exposed to toys, like dolls while boys are provided with cars and guns. As a result, children grow up adapting to distinct experiences, and developing particular abilities to the toys and musical instruments they interact with. It is expected that distinct skills, such as creative talents arise from the interplay of inherited characteristics and the experiences of specific social activities. A parent who passes on certain genes also create an environment that nurtures those genes (Szyfter & Witt, 2020). For example, an artist might provide musical instruments to foster their child's musical skill. Singh (2012) explains nurture as the influence of one's environment, including lived experiences, on their development. In the case of SLTCDM, it is emphasised that the environment in which a child is raised plays a crucial role in encouraging them to pursue their chosen career path through the conditions and events presented in that environment.

2.2.1.2 Conditions and Events Occurring in Students' Social Settings

The conditions and events that occur within students' social environments, including influential social factors such as family, teachers, and peers have a significant impact on their career decision-making process (Krumboltz, 1998; Kaskaya & Calps, 2017). These environmental factors are beyond individuals' control as they are often associated with people around them (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). Family members, teachers and peers may create an environment that strongly influences students' career choices (Kaskaya & Calps, 2017). From a young age, students observe and absorb various behaviours and preferences exhibited by individuals in their immediate surroundings (Billett, Choy, & Hodge, 2020; Venter, 2019). Consequently, they develop a liking or aversion toward certain careers based on the positive or negative outcomes they observe in others (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, Mylonas, Argyropoulou, & Drosos, 2013). Therefore, it is common for individuals to seek alternative paths to overcome challenges they encounter in their lives until they

achieve their ultimate goal, which, for tertiary students often involves obtaining a degree.

In the current study, a significant number of students who aspired to pursue STEM programmes at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) were affected by an environmental condition, namely their inability to meet requirements for the admission into the Faculty of Science and Technology (FOST) at the institution. The established criteria of attaining pass grades in mathematics and science subjects in local secondary schools strongly influence prospective tertiary students, compelling them to consider alternative avenues to pursue higher education. Therefore, these environmental conditions and events shape the experiences and perspectives of students' leading them to rely on learned experiences when making career choices for universities, colleges, and the workplace.

SLTCDM argues that events occurring in an individual's environment are, largely, influenced by how males and females live and behave in relation to different careers they occupy (Kruboltz et al., 1976). Social environments, such as the household, often assign specific tasks to females, expecting them to focus on caregiving and cooking for family members. Career opportunities are shaped by gender norms and stereotypes where males and females are socially expected to hold and exhibit contrasting attitudes towards decision-making, particularly selection of careers (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou et al., 2013). Gender norms are social guidelines that dictate the behaviour of male and female members of society constraining them to conform to socially acceptable roles (Soylu, Siyez, & Ozeren, 2021).

Gender norms are neither static nor universal, because every society depends on its unique culture different from those cultures of other societies (Soylu et al., 2021; Hall, Rathbun, & Gonzales, 2020; Valls, Puy, & Alier 2018). Gender norms have influenced majority of boys to prefer educational programmes in STEM-related careers; and girls to be in non-STEM careers when transiting to tertiary institutions (Buser, Peter, & Wolter, 2022) and the workplace (Valls et al., 2018). The societal expectation for males and females to perceive social roles differently is regarded to have also produced gender stereotype

(Eisenclas, 2013). The concept of gender stereotyping explains a preconception about different roles performed by males and females (Ellemers, 2018), which at some points deters females to participate in careers, such as motor mechanics and mining engineering (Makarova et al., 2019).

The gender stereotype produced by the society puts students in the risk of believing that certain careers are tailored for them while others are not fit for them (Makarova et al., 2019). This implies that female students believe they fit well in careers like nursing, office assistants, and teaching while male students think they fit in technically oriented careers (Makarova et al., 2019). Consistently, the Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF) confirms low-male percentages in health programmes and low-female percentages in professions like science and math programmes in tertiary institutions (WEF, 2017). This suggests a persistence gender imbalance and exclusion beginning from the younger age of schooling throughout, which ultimately influences the way students make choices of careers at tertiary institutions and places of work (Makarova et al., 2019). It can be suggested that conditions and events produced by our social environments, which are also perpetuated through gender norms and stereotyping, inspire certain beliefs in male and female students whenever embarking in career decision-making.

2.2.1.3 Learning Experiences

Learning experience mentions any contact, sequence, plan or else additional experiences in which education resumes (Tawfik, Gatewood, Gish-Lieberman, & Hampton, 2021). The current study focuses on learning experiences acquired in different environments, including schools, homes, and through games and interactive software applications, which are likely to influence one's career choice. Schools through career guidance, intervention programmes, and subjects offered may equip students with knowledge of different careers (Akhter et al., 2021). For instance, schools must take the responsibility to employ career counsellors to teach students about occupations they know and do not know through intervention programmes, such as field trips to industries (Makola et al., 2021). This emphasises the datum that school field trips must be guided by professional career counsellors than mere teachers.

[Krumboltz et al. \(1976\)](#) posit that each individual has unique past learning experiences that may have influenced their career trajectories and eventual career choices. Recalling specific details and sequences of these experiences can be challenging, but individuals often remember general conclusions drawn from their learned experiences. Those who derive satisfaction from helping others may readily recall these general conclusions and how they perceive themselves in life. In Lesotho secondary school learners choose careers in tertiary institutions, such as nursing and teaching, because they have genuine desire to assist others. An individual who possesses a strong inclination towards helping others may have had a significant history of learning experiences where efforts were rewarded with appreciation, recognition and other positive social outcomes. Alternatively, they may have observed others receiving similar rewards for their acts of kindness ([Krumboltz et al., 1976](#)).

In SLTCDM, learning skills are separated into two categories, namely; contributory and associatory learning experiences. Instrumental learning includes learning the way in which one's skills can be used to influence the environment in order to yield certain results ([Bouton, 2014](#)). Contributory learning lets a person to engage in action and detect how such act rewards him or her ([Bouton, 2014; Krumboltz et al., 1976](#)). At NUL, students observe their performance in educational programmes they formerly chose, and take an action to change such programmes when they encounter difficulties with them. For example, secondary school learners observe their parents' occupations, learn how they reward them; and decide to choose or avoid following careers that resemble those of their own parents.

Students may choose medicine or engineering because they have learned that graduates from such professions are in demand for employment ([Saraswathy, 2017](#)). Learned experiences give an individual the opportunity to see outcomes relating to different careers and to make career selection based on such outcomes. For the current study, students selected pursuing education at NUL, because they saw their teacher-parents improving their homes and lives in general. So, they regarded teaching to be one of the best professions in Lesotho. In instrumental learning experience, personal performances on the social setting are expected to produce positive outcomes. There are three major

components of instrumental learning experiences: (a) antecedents, (b) behaviour, and (c) consequences (Krumboltz et al., 1976).

Backgrounds include hereditary endowments, special skills, and ecological circumstances and proceedings as well as the characteristics of the specific routine or problem (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). Students consider their family backgrounds and decide to take options in educational programmes that enable them to receive government sponsorship at NUL. As a result, students learned that failure to pass a required number of modules in selected educational programmes at NUL puts them in the risk of losing the scholarship; hence, they switch to programmes that will sustain their participation in the university. Social responses comprise intellectual and expressive responses as well as open and concealed conduct (Krumboltz & Thoresen, 1976).

Behavioural responses may contribute to successful outcomes like good grades in school (Thompson, 2021; Elchert, Latino, Bobek, Way, & Casillas, 2017; Dooley et al., 2016), college graduation (Larose, Duchesne & Chateauvert, 2020), and job satisfaction (Allen, 2021; Nyamwange, 2016), among others. Behavioural response refers to “the manner in which one reacts” (Reader’s Digest, 1987, p. 150), for example, to various circumstances in his or her environment. Students’ career choice in certain careers like STEM is determined largely by pass level (Thompson, 2021). Those who perform satisfactorily and meet requirements of STEM careers pursue them in tertiary institutions while those who fail to meet the requirements are admissible in non-STEM careers in universities and colleges (Dooley et al., 2016). Limited career guidance in secondary schools in Lesotho puts learners in unguided consequences, which later in life put them in wrong careers.

Associative learning constitutes another significant form of learning experience. It allows people to perceive a link between stimuli in the environment. For instance, a good pass in math and science subjects may stimulate a secondary school student to consider pursuing STEM-related careers in tertiary institutions. In this example, the stimuli were science pass and the choice of STEM careers. Students look at careers existing in their environments, and choose those promising good salary for the future jobs (Achim, Badrolhisam, &

Zulkipli, 2019). Ivan Pavlov used a bell in training a dog to know that every time it hears a bell [stimulus] it is going to get food [reward] (Basri et al., 2020).

In associative learning experience, people often observe real or factious models, and they then come to a view of these careers as having positive or negative features (Krumboltz et al., 1979). Secondary school learners in Lesotho prefer choosing and pursuing educational programmes that are similar to careers of their parents. Thus, most students who participated in this study perceived their parents as role models when choosing tertiary careers at NUL. Students' perceptions towards different careers depend on negative and positive career stereotypes in their thoughts. Such labels may be of lifetime and can have important effect on occupational choices. For instance, women cannot dig a tomb or men cannot cook for the funeral ceremony. This belief goes as far as influencing secondary school learners to make choices of educational studies that match their gender when transiting to tertiary institutions (Shafina, 2020). It is obvious that boys and girls believe they are good in different careers where females think they can perform well in nursing and teaching as compared to their male counterparts.

2.2.1.4 Job Search Tactic Skills among Learners

Job search tactic skills are aptitudes that normally enable students to make well-informed selection of careers and ensuring their successes in careers of their choices (Krumboltz & Thoresen, 1976). Job search tactic skills are cultivated reasoning and performance competences applied by individuals in the development of career decision-making path (Krumboltz et al., 1976). These skills include work habits and problem orientation. In SLTCDM, job search tactic skills are usable when students try to manage the social settings, to understand it in relative to self-observation and world-view simplifications, and to develop obvious and hidden estimates around upcoming events.

Job search tactic skills, commonly known as central in career selection process include ability to: (1) recognise a remarkable choice condition, (2) describe a job convincingly, (3) observe and accurately judge self-observations and world-view simplifications, (4) make an extensive variety of substitutes, (5) collect desired information about the substitutes, and (6) gradually remove unpleasant

substitutes (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Recognising an important decision situation is one of the most significant skills in which individuals may decide on doing something they believe will benefit them in the future (MohdZaini, Md Rami, Arsad, & MohdAnuar, 2021).

Secondary school learners in Lesotho choose transiting to tertiary institutions to study educational programmes of their choices, because they want to get employed for high positions. They further search further to find good matching careers that ensure employment after completing chosen educational programmes in universities and colleges (MohdZaini et al., 2021). As they examine and assess self-observations and world-view generalisations, students keep comparing between available careers in their environment to find out if they have made choices of careers matching their interests and personalities (Xing & Rojewski, 2018). People may apply job search tactic skills thoroughly and carefully to occupational choices, but undesirable results are likely to come up (MohdZaini et al., 2021). For instance, a carefully explored decisions to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Economics may be reached before publication of final year secondary school results, but poor pass results may deter student's admission into such programme.

2.2.1.4.1 Subsequent Thoughts, Beliefs, Skills, and Actions

The combined influence of four factors including hereditary endowments and individual talents, environmental conditions and events in students' social environments, learning experiences, and job search tactic skills, permit individuals to form generalisations, or beliefs that represent their own truth (Krumboltz, 1996). Individuals have the ability to consciously refine their perspectives. For example, during interviews students revealed that they chose to pursue an engineering career because it offered better salary prospects after graduation. When presented with a list, individuals can assess the degree to which each belief or interpretation aligns with their personal point of view (Krumboltz et al., 1976). The manner in which people perceive themselves in relation to the workplace affects their style of learning new skills and finally impacts somehow on their desires and actions (Krumboltz et al., 1976). The SLTCDM examines individuals' self-observation and interpretations of the work sector as reflections of their beliefs and world-view.

2.2.1.4.1.1 Self-Observation Generalisations

Self-observation generalisations can be elaborated in two terms: Self-observation and generalisations (Xing & Rojewski, 2018). Self-observation is a person's ability to distinct features of themselves from emersion in their ongoing life, standing apart to see the sources of their behaviour and thinking; and to note the effects they have on others (Xing & Rojewski, 2018). For instance, in self-observation, students may avoid educational programmes in which they are incapable of making good performances. Generalisation may refer to taking something specific and applying it more broadly (Krumboltz et al., 1976). For example, it is a generalisation to say all science students are drunkards.

According to Krumboltz and Hamel (1976), people are continually observant in themselves and weighing their performance in comparison to their own or other's ethics. They also create impressions about the nature of their arrogances and the amount of their skills. These self-observation interpretations may be obvious and secret, like job search tactic skills, as they can stimulate the consequence of new learning experiences, and result from previous leaning experiences. People may form self-observation overviews about whether they hold the essential skills to make some errands well (Krumboltz et al., 1976). For example, students who know they are good in math choose careers in math and Statistics in tertiary institutions. In addition, those who know they are good in English are more likely to study Law in universities.

In SLTCDM, these generalisations may only be as correct as the standards to which they are related. Thus, a student who always scores 90s in math and happens to score less reflects herself a failure in that subject area, whereas a student who normally gets less than a mark of 50 and gets 90 may be jubilant. As a result of learning skills, people make decisions and take a broad view on activities they like and do not like. First-year students at NUL revealed they applied to pursue Nursing, but unfortunately, they were admitted in Agriculture Science. Therefore, they concluded they do not enjoy agriculture. In this regard, it can be argued that when secondary school learners are not guided by counsellors to consider various career options, they are likely to get frustrated in making career decisions.

[Krumboltz et al. \(1976\)](#) argued that in helping students to make well-informed career decisions, counsellors have capitalised extensive energy in controlling the content of these self-observation overviews about interests, largely through the expansion of interest histories. Counsellors use these inventories to ask people to choose between two options regarding available careers, namely; like or dislike. This helps assisting people to express their feelings about careers, where they can be helped to choose those of interest. The subsequent benefits are grounded on self-observation generalisations resulting from their prior learning experiences, however, limited those experiences might have been ([Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996](#)). In the SLTCDM, welfares are one type of self-observation generalisations connecting the fundamental learning experiences with succeeding selections and actions ([Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996](#)). Interests are central in decisions concerning choices of careers, since they offer a comparatively brief and exact summary of individuals' responses to their earlier learning experiences ([Krumboltz et al., 1976](#)).

According to [Krumboltz et al. \(1976\)](#), self-observation generalisations about individual standards are assessments people make about the attractiveness or value of certain actions, events, or results. Psychometric instruments have been built to govern individuals' values and interests. Such speeches as "I must select a medical profession in tertiary institution" and "I want to work in Britain" represent self-observation generalisations about values, and just as with interests, result from learning experiences. One student participant showed that she was able to lead and answer Geography questions during class discussions in secondary school, and that made her believe she had a good geographic skill. As a result, she majored in Urban and Regional Planning at NUL.

2.2.1.4.1.2 World-View Generalisations

World-view generalisations are open and hidden observations about the people's environment, drawing conclusions and concerns for how the same environment is going to behave in the future ([Krumboltz et al., 1976](#)). Field trips are reported to have helped secondary school learners in Lesotho after visiting different work environments as they learned about different careers. The trips helped them to make well-informed conclusions; and deal with existing

concerns on how careers of interest are going to benefit them in future. Because of learning experiences, individuals make explanations about the social settings in which they live, and use these explanations to guess what will occur in the future and in other environments (Krumboltz et al., 1976). For example, students make generalisations about the nature of various careers, such as wishing to study for Chartered Accounting because they have researched that Accountants do not struggle to get jobs; and are paid good salary in most companies. Thus, students who pursue careers in accounting perceive them as promising good lifestyle for the future, and they developed more interest when realising other benefits related to those careers (Cunha, Martins, Carvalho, & Carmo, 2022). World-view generalisations, like self-observation generalisations, may be more or less accurate (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Their correctness rests on the statistics of experiences on which they are based and the representativeness of those experiences (Krumboltz et al., 1976).

2.3 CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF CAREER CHOICE

Career choice is a unique procedure that binds every person to track a vocation of interest (Mulhall, 2014). A concept of career has been described from diverse perspectives. For instance, Shaito (2019) refers to career as staying in the same type of work. Mulhall (2014) suggests that the concept of career incorporates several roles, conditions, and places that people encounter in a lifetime. Career is also referred to as a path explored by individuals when searching amongst available jobs, and finally selecting the ones they developed interest in (Shaito, 2019; Mulhall, 2014). In studying different explanations of a term career, Shaito (2019) has claimed that professions are sole to every being; and are shaped by the person's choice and decision. In other words, decision-making can be perceived as an important process leading to whatever choices people make, including career choice.

Decision-making is a cognitive process that involves selecting a specific career amongst several career alternatives (Shahsavarani & Abadi, 2015). It requires a person to engage in a problem-solving process, which vanishes when a satisfying solution is accomplished (Shahsavarani & Abadi, 2015). Problem solving is a life skill that education systems must not leave to chance; learners

must be taught the skills. Owing to the difficulty surrounding the work sector, secondary school learners are faced with the task of deciding on careers of preferences that would bring them satisfaction in their future life, particularly if they intend to pursue tertiary education (Mudulia, Ayiro, & Kispoi, 2017). Secondary school learners have to transit into tertiary institutions with a definite choice of educational programmes, which has a huge bearing on their life outcomes (Desai & Dani, 2018). Therefore, Theresa (2015) argues that inadequate career guidance in secondary schools makes it difficult for learners to choose careers they know and understand well.

Desai and Dani (2018) contend that decision-making process is more challenging to secondary school learners because they may not be familiar with requirements of educational programmes offered in tertiary institutions. As a result, they are likely to lose focus on what they envisage to be in future and be influenced by various occurring factors in their way of life (Ogutu et al., 2017; Sinkombo, 2016; Tillman, 2015). Hence, the current study examines whether first-year students at NUL were familiar with programme for which they applied; and what informed their choice of such careers. Researchers locate the locus of control in career selection outside learners at secondary school level; and in surrounding environments such as influences from parents, family members, and peers (Sinkombo, 2016; Raheem, Abdulkadir, & Zakkariyad, 2018). As they grow, children learn about various professions from their parents, and they make decisions regarding careers to pursue in tertiary institutions based on the extent to which their parents' careers seem fulfilling (Desai & Dani, 2018). This establishes the importance of learners' career knowledge prior to pursuing tertiary education as this assists them in making choices they will never regret.

The notion of occupational selection means ways in which students work towards professions they envisage to occupy in future (Desai & Dani, 2018; Tillman, 2015). Career decision-making process requires individual students to reflect carefully on their interests, competences, and values in the workplace (Md Rami et al., 2021). The workplace refers to a place made up of things people recognise, including occupations, jobs, employers, employees, pay-check, and promotions (Achim et al., 2019). As a result, learners at high school level need adequate information about the environments in which desired

careers are likely to place them. Career guidance and education during secondary schooling can equip learners with knowledge of educational programmes offered in universities as well as their requirements (Roy, 2020).

On the other hand, the term "career choice" refers to the decision-making process that secondary school learners undergo when selecting a specific educational program in tertiary institutions (Ghuangpeng, 2011). An educational programme for purposes of career choice is a collection of educational activities that are organised to provide certain skills at the end of specified set of education tasks (OECD, 2018). Educational programmes offered in tertiary institutions, including universities give a base for students' career choice, which also prepare students for work environment (Balci, 2018). This emphasises the fact that tertiary institutions provide programmes that address the needs of employers. For example, to qualify for enrolment in the South African workforce, candidates must meet job specifications for advertised jobs (Mncayi & Shuping, 2021). This means there is likelihood for students to follow educational programmes that do not meet job requirements of a particular era (Anand, Kothari, & Kumar, 2016).

According to Bikse, Grinevica, Rivza and Rivza (2022), the fourth industrial revolution requires competence in both specialised career fields and ICT skills. Therefore, failure to meet job requirements may contribute to high rates of youth unemployment (Ohlmann, 2022). Secondary school learners must be helped through school career guidance and career education interventions as sources of self-knowledge and career knowledge (Roy, 2019; Balci, 2018). As mentioned previously, having self-knowledge plays a vital role in secondary school learners' ability to make well-informed career choices, particularly when transitioning to university-level studies (Khan, Rizvi, & Jumani, 2019). Learners who possess self-knowledge are more likely to identify the connection between their personality traits and particular careers. Soto (2018) defines personality traits as enduring patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving may happen for a long across various situations. Self -knowledge holds great importance in the lives of secondary school learners as they undergo a critical stage of transitioning from childhood to adulthood and from secondary to tertiary education (Desai & Dani, 2018). Without self-awareness, learners are prone to

pursuing careers that do not align with their personality traits (Desai & Dani, 2018).

According to Khan et al. (2019), self-awareness is attained when the student knows his or her talent, interests, values, skills, and other personal characteristics they value in the working space. Once students are not able to identify these features, they cannot make career decisions that will benefit them in life (Mubiana, 2010). In one study, Akpochafo (2017) revealed that secondary school learners in the Delta State of Nigeria experience career decision-making difficulties in that, they are not confident in available local careers. This means that, when learners lack information about their abilities, traits, and information regarding career-related preferences, they stand a chance to make wrong career choices. Similarly, Patel (2012) established that the main challenge that South African students encountered when choosing careers included lacking elements of informed self-reflection.

Self-awareness can minimise the effect of influential factors around the learners that may cloud their choices of educational programmes or careers of interest (Abdullah, Abdullah, Jano, Mat, Hussin, & Mustafa, 2014). Learners' choice of careers is influenced by three essential elements, namely; self-analysis, work-related analysis, and the combination of self-information and work-related information (Mubiana, 2010). Self-analysis refers to the situation where an individual engages into a systematic attempt to comprehend his or her own personality without the aid of another person (Romanova, 2022). Self-information refers to the manner in which an individual understands his or her personalities (Tsakissiris & Grant-Smith, 2021). Created through the beliefs and arrogances, standards, reasons, and experiences people use to describe themselves in their real or expected qualified lifetime (Tsakissiris & Grant-Smith, 2021). Several studies (Abdullah, Hussin, QA, & Ghazali, 2018; Abdullah, Abdullah et al., 2014; Mubiana, 2010) revealed that what students know about themselves is the best mechanism assisting them to choose careers matching their interest and personality traits.

Occupational analysis is the process that students may engage in when ensuring they are choosing a career leading to envisaged future lifestyles

(Nyamwange, 2016). During occupational analysis, students search whether careers they want to follow will motivate them in terms of salary, that is, they concentrate on careers that will pay better salary (Mtemeri, 2017). In some cases, students do communicate with people including their parents while on the other hand; they visit relevant offices to acquire information about careers of interest (Uleanya, Uleanya, Naidoo, & Rugbeer, 2021). School field trips to industrial firms and various organisations, including universities and colleges help students to complete occupational analysis activity while preparing to choose careers of interest (Makola et al., 2021; Moriasi et al., 2021; Brew, 2018; Balci, 2017; Behrendt & Frankling, 2014). Field trips involve school organised visits to companies and institutions to educate students about various career options (Claiborne, Morrell, Bandy, Bruff, Smith, & Fedesco, 2020).

Researching different careers provides students with occupational information that help them distinguish between their desired future occupations and those they do not wish to pursue (Saniter & Siedler, 2014). Occupational information is carefully curated information used by school career counsellors to assist students in the process of career decision making. It includes details about the requirements, responsibilities, rewards, service outlook, advancement opportunities and entry requirements of specific careers (Comfort & Morgan, 2018). Furthermore, Thenmozhi (2018), emphasizes that occupational information may encompass job prerequisites such educational qualifications, specialised skills, and personality that make a person a right match for the job. Comfort and Morgan (2018, p. 47) tabulate six sources of occupational information (a) Libraries; (b) information bureaus; (c) field trips; (d) counsellors; (e) mass media; (f) career conferences; and (g) parent-teachers' associations.

According to Comfort and Morgan (Ibid), there are different types of books in libraries that may have a lot of occupational information. Thenmozhi (2018) show that when searching for information on numerous occupations, students can access different types of material, such as books that are specifically on occupations in libraries. There are other organisations, like Information Bureaus in the U.S., which have information collection in different careers. Therefore, disseminating career information in schools visiting these bureaus may assist

students with enough information they can focus on when transiting to vocational schools (Thenmozhi, 2018).

Field trips are another valuable method of obtaining occupational information. This is whereby students visit companies to observe the works and get the opportunity to ask workers to learn about their responsibilities (Comfort & Morgan, 2018). Providing career related information secondary school students towards the end of their final year of schooling is insufficient for making well-informed decisions towards tertiary institutions (CHE, 2015). Therefore, it is important for schools to have counsellors who can assist students in clarifying their career aspirations. Comfort and Morgan (2018) argue that school counsellors play a crucial role in providing students with occupational information. They evaluate different careers on behalf of the students examining their requirements, salaries, and benefits. Through comprehending and differentiating these factors, students are able to make informed career choices and avoid pursuing careers that may not align with their abilities (Abdullah et al., 2018).

School counsellors make analysis of information from various sources, including the mass media. Radio, television, and newspapers are other foundations of job-related information that students rely on in search of careers to follow (Comfort & Morgan, 2018). In the USA, people still rely on mass media to get information regarding career opportunities. Different forms of mass media provide information about career conferences, where specialists talk about different careers to participating people including students (Comfort & Morgan, 2018; Thenmozhi, 2018). During these conferences, specialists from different dimensions of work talk to students about their own occupations, including what is required to qualify in such occupations (Comfort & Morgan, 2018). Conferences on career information are meant for everyone, including parents and teachers so that they acquire information on various occupations (Thenmozhi, 2018). The last type of occupational information includes Parents Teachers Association (PTA), which is a form that can be used by teachers to inform parents about career chances for their children (Comfort & Morgan, 2018).

For instance, learners who are not good in mathematics and science always avoid educational programmes that involve such subjects to an extent that they avoid related careers (Abdullah et al., 2014). This illustrates the concept of self-analysis, which refers to an individual's understanding of their own abilities, including their proficiency in specific educational programmes (Navaneedhan & Kamalanabhan, 2015). The whole process, on the other hand, is well elaborated in the concept of "self-efficacy". Self-efficacy beliefs are sources of information based on an individual's lived experiences, which include observation of people in their social environments and their verbal persuasion in determining choices made on careers of interest (Nasta, 2007). First, past performance accomplishment as a process and source of information signifies things that a person has achieved and seen success or failure in them in life (Bruton, Mellalieu, Shearer, & Rodrique-Davies, 2013). One study cites school field trips that learners engage as contributing positively as past performance accomplishment by the time they intend to start choosing careers (Brew, 2018).

Various studies (Brew, 2018; Chin & Shen, 2015; Reddan, 2015; Bruton et al., 2013) reveal that an individual's previous performance events are the most influential and reliable interpreters of self-efficacy beliefs and serve as reliable indicators. Furthermore, self-efficacy is explained to come from sources that are based on past performance experiences (Brew, 2018). Against this background, students' past performance activities can be considered as reasons that can encourage and/or discourage them in the proceedings of deciding to study or not study certain educational programmes. Important people in a learner's life can refer back to things that seem most achievable by such a learner hence the need for career education. Likewise, influential figures like parents, peers and siblings are likely to render verbal persuasion encouraging choice of certain careers. Verbal persuasion involves a person convincing another to do something because he or she has the capability to perform a task successfully (York & MacAlister, 2015).

Bandura (1971) observed that a person's self-efficacy increases when praised by people around them, leading to improved performance. Advice and guidance from important sources to students, such as parents, peers, and teachers help in recognising areas that need improvement so that future career interests are

easily attained (Tey, Moses, & Cheah, 2020). On the other hand, learners may react differently from pieces of advice and guidance they get from important people in their environments. The reactions may also be determined by emotional arousal (Andrews, 2014). The term emotional arousal refers to responses of people toward evocative stimuli, in terms of finding the expressive meaning of a stimulus, constructing an emotional state, and regulating the sentimental state (Deckert, Schmoeger, Auff, & Willinger, 2020). This includes having strong emotions like anger and fear of something, which can be triggered by what people experienced in their lives (Deckert et al., 2020). Self-efficacy can be influenced by emotional arousal (Bandura, 1971).

Individuals often consider their emotional reactions towards different life events, particularly when they wonder if such events will bring success or downfall in their lives (Bandura, 1971). For example, secondary school learners may prefer not to pursue careers relating to subjects they had trouble with irrespective of how good they passed them. In addition, people may develop fear and anger towards things that trouble their role models, especially those appearing in movies and other things that trouble their parents as well (Myers, 2015). Vicarious learning is a way of learning from the experiences of others through seeing and hearing (Myers, 2015). Therefore, learners' self-efficacy beliefs can be advanced by observing other people's actions and learn from their past and present experiences (Bandura, 1971).

When children observe their parents or any other person in their home environment succeed, they are likely to copy from them. Thus, copying from the positive actions of important others in students' life helps to enhance their preferences among the existing careers, and choose careers that resemble those people. Bandura (1971) purports that people often compare themselves to role models and strive to imitate them. In the end, learners analyse information related to jobs occupied by people they know before choosing the same careers (Khan et al., 2019).

Generally, Roy (2019) argues that knowledge of career is very important for secondary school learners because it helps in the selection of suitable careers. They further recommend provision of career learning in secondary schools to

assist learners look for suitable careers (Balci, 2018) because learners who are guided about the diverse forms of careers, and how such careers can affect them, are able to make fruitful career decisions.

2.4 INFLUENCE OF PARENTS IN CAREER CHOICES

Parental influence is described as the context where parents determine their children's ways of thinking and behaving during the process of choosing careers (Nawabi, Javed, Shujaulla, & Ulfat, 2019). Parents who bear children or give them genes also provide an environment where such genes may flourish (Wachira, 2018). For instance, Ekong (2013) revealed that Nigerian students whose parents are highly interested in music tended to be highly interested in musical studies too. Therefore, without parents saying or doing anything, the children may connect with those careers as the inborn talents are nurtured by their environments (Venter, 2019). In such contexts, children are likely to select careers desired by their parents than to follow professions they want to occupy in future (Barnes, Bimrose, Brown, Gough, & Wright, 2020). In situation where parental influence is strong, it makes children scared of losing their parents' support in various phenomena, particularly during schooling period (Billett et al., 2020). During the years of schooling, children are very eager to win parents' trust and love, which eventually make them to favour things desired by their parents than themselves (Chifamba, 2019).

In most cases, parents give more support and involvement when children choose careers that please them as parents, and less support and involvement when they choose careers not favoured by the parents (Fayadh, Yusr, Alqasa, Alekam, & Yusr, 2017). Parents may inspire offspring's career decision-making by introducing them to desired professions (Vargas-Benitez, 2017), due to high parental ambitions such as robust parent-child relations, open communications, and parents' trust and support, which normally persuade children to make choices that make their parents happy (Fayadh et al., 2017). Parental influence concerning career decision-making may not be easily noticed because it comes as part of various advises given by parents to children on daily basis (Billett et al., 2020). Hence, when parents have consciously tried to remain neutral on careers their children should choose in tertiary institutions or in the workplace, they still unintentionally influence career pathways chosen by children (Billett et

al., 2020). In Nigeria, [Adeyemi and Adeyemi \(2014\)](#) established that the positivity and negativity of students' commitment in educational programmes of their choices was more often discouraged by too much parental involvement, which did not give their children the opportunity to exercise their freedom of choice.

According to [Mtemeri \(2017\)](#), parents do not want their children to choose the same careers they selected, particularly, if such careers are not bringing good outcomes or are a challenge for them. [Singh \(2015\)](#) perceives too much of parental involvement into career choices made by their children as likely to lead to frustration and depression among learners. In India, [Krishnan and Lasitha \(2019\)](#) established that parental involvement in educational programmes chosen by students in tertiary institutions influences their career options as they work hard to please their parents. Children easily get frustrated if they are not independent, particularly in making decisions on their own without the consent of their parents ([Theresa, 2015](#)); as a result, they choose careers likely to appease their parents ([Mtemeri, 2017](#)). This may automatically lead learners to choose careers where they would experience dissatisfaction. The concept of dissatisfaction in careers refers to a lapse in satisfaction where students no longer have interest in a career anymore ([Mudhovozi & Chireshe, 2012](#)).

[Chifamba \(2019\)](#) argues that students from parents who are less educated may find themselves choosing careers they never wished to occupy in the work sector. This, she argues further, happens mostly when parents are not very informed about the career market trends and/or career entry requirements. Students who are not well informed about career requirements encounter dissatisfaction in careers they choose either with or without parents' involvement ([Mudhovozi & Chireshe, 2012](#)). Dissatisfaction in chosen careers leaves students with hard moments of decision-making, particularly when they have interests in careers that are not favoured by their parents ([Mudhovozi & Chireshe, 2012](#)).

[Uka \(2013\)](#) notes that educated parents involve themselves in their children's educational and career ambitions. However, parental involvement in career decision-making is likely to channel students to believe that they should choose

careers that please their parents. Children trust their parents because they grow up under their supervision, which is correct all the time (Sattler, 2021). It is worth noting that students' trust on their parents witnesses those parents as the most influential factor on careers they select to pursue in tertiary institutions (Barnes et al., 2020), as compared to other influencing factors discussed in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

Participants in a Pakistani study reported that educated parents support and encourage their children to work hard at school so that they would have better future with direct or indirect expectations of certain careers over others (Humayon, Raza, Khan, & ulain Ansari, 2018). In Nigeria, Mbagwu, Ajaegbu, Mbagwu and Odinaka (2016) established that students whose parents have gone through tertiary education may have information regarding different programmes offered in tertiary institutions and do not struggle much in choosing what to study. They further revealed that students living with graduated parents are likely to make professional choices in medicine while students living with non-graduated parents are likely to choose business administration programme in institutions of higher learning. Another Nigerian Study by Obiunu and Emakpor (2020) showed that educational attainment of parents, particularly parents who did not have a chance to study in tertiary institutions, may deter their children from considering tertiary education. The same study also indicated that parents' lower-income due to lower educational attainment lessens children's chances of attending tertiary institutions.

Pecjak and Pirc (2020) indicated that educated parents had clear-cut criteria for careers they want their children to pursue in tertiary institutions. First, they gave advice on careers mostly needed in modern work environments. Second, they search through social networks, on behalf of their children, careers that are most demanded by employers. Moreover, Humayon et al. (2018) revealed that the support received by children from their parents is determined by whether or not children choose careers responding to parental expectations. They also showed that Asian children who choose careers desired by parents received more support until they finish schooling. The study concluded that, Asian offspring have excessive receipt of parental authority as well as selection of careers. Another study by Kazi et al. (2017) established that Pakistani fathers

who have a professional degree influenced what their children decided to study as their academic majors. Additionally, the study conducted in India by [Ghuntla, Mehta, Gokhale and Shah \(2012\)](#) confirmed that parents' educational background has a huge influence on educational programmes chosen and pursued by their children in tertiary institutions.

Parental influence in children's lives does not need to be forced because it happens automatically as children consider their parents most important in decisions they make, including career choice ([Sinkombo, 2016; Tillman, 2015](#)). In India, [Abbas et al. \(2020\)](#) reflected that students look up to their parents' status and wish to achieve a similar status. Consequently, parents have expectations about their children's future, especially careers they want them to pursue, which sometimes put them into unfavourable careers ([Sattler, 2021](#)). Indian mothers and fathers were found to have diverse expectations towards careers they want their daughters and sons to pursue without taking into consideration careers of their children's interests ([Letha, 2013](#)). This suggested that children in such contexts are at risk of pursuing careers desired by their parents.

[Grusec \(2011\)](#) affirms that children feel comfortable when they see support from their parents, and when they feel their parents are aware of what they do in response to their expectations. [Adefeso-Olateju and Akowonjo \(2018\)](#) show that the satisfaction experienced by students on advice and guidance they got from their parents when choosing careers to follow in tertiary institutions assisted them in selecting educational programmes in schools. Several things including parental educational attainment, family background, and parental expectations, can perpetuate parental influence in different countries of the world.

The influence of parental educational background shows similar patterns both in developed and developing nations. This is confirmed in studies ([Tillman, 2015; Lloyd, Gore, Holmes, Smith, & Fray, 2018; Sattler, 2021; Adefeso-Olateju & Akowonjo, 2018; Abiola, 2014](#)) conducted in different nations. [Tillman \(2015\)](#) revealed that parents who were teachers by profession provided their children with a lot of information on other careers than teaching after experiencing that

being an educator is one of the lowest paying jobs. The patterns reflect that when parents are educated, they are more likely to involve themselves in activities that motivate learners' choices of careers in tertiary institutions and the workplaces.

[Lloyd et al. \(2018\)](#) established that Australian parents were found to engage in dialogues with their male children regarding STEM careers. Results of the same study indicated that male students were good in mathematics and sciences because they received parental advice and support towards STEM careers compared to their female counterparts. In another Australian study, [Sattler \(2021\)](#) indicates that parents search for career-related information from various sources to find the one that would lead their children to a good working environment in the future. Generally, parents become happy when they realise their capability in assisting own children with career information, because such children will be able to make well-informed career selections throughout schooling ([Barnes et al., 2020](#)).

Parents with at least first-degree qualifications understand how career choice, in terms of educational programmes chosen in universities, determines students' lives ([Sinkombo, 2016](#)). This may force parents to work hard in guiding their children into good careers. In addition, this means parents with tertiary education qualifications, unlike those with primary and secondary school qualifications are more likely to search for career-related information ahead of their children and make it easy for them to plan their tertiary educational programmes in time ([Tillman, 2015](#)). The study conducted by [Adefeso-Olateju and Akowonjo \(2018\)](#) shows that 70 per cent of Nigerian parents who obtained a minimum qualification of Bachelor's degree supported their children in career choices they pursued in colleges and universities without questioning their children's decisions. Another Nigerian study ([Amadi & Pullah, 2020](#)) concluded that parental level of education has an impact on students' careers preferences in tertiary institutions; especially careers that parents have confirmed can benefit them in future.

Consistently, in Norway, [Mordal, Buland and Mathiesen \(2020\)](#) show that parents, also have a major influence on students' career choices. They further

discovered that children born in low socio-economic status families often have less parental motivation in continuing studies in tertiary institutes, and normally tend to dream of careers like those of their parents than those coming from families with a higher socio-economic status. This suggests that when parents have satisfied themselves that their children are following good careers, they are likely to support them throughout their lives.

[Abiola \(2014\)](#) highlights that well-off families have a tendency of instilling a certain understanding and behaviour in how their children should perceive life in general, including careers they should follow. For instance, Abiola's study demonstrated further that in African countries like Nigeria, parents' decisions among other things have the capacity to channel children's career development. [Sinkombo \(2016\)](#) maintains that positive interactions between parents their children from childhood up to the time when children complete secondary schools and transit into tertiary education influence their career choices. Sinkombo believes that when parents encourage and support their children in all their academic activities, they help them develop higher self-esteem and courage to do school-related activities they are capable of, such as performing well in certain school subjects.

The influence of family background seems to be significant in determining students' career choices, which negatively affects the vulnerable population in the rural areas of Lesotho. [World Bank \(2015\)](#) found that 81 percent of household heads have no education; hence, it is likely to contribute to limited or no career advice for their children. Lack of parental career advice for many children from poor family backgrounds in Lesotho contributes as the outstanding factor limiting learners from making suitable vocational selections ([World Bank, 2015](#)). In the context of Lesotho, it is worth noting that choices made by secondary school students in relation to careers they want to follow is highly determined by the family background status.

Moreover, [Sinkombo \(2016\)](#) opines that positive guidance from parents influences career choices of children to higher prospects in terms of jobs that are workable out of their experiences, and what they see in their society. These results imply that parents holding tertiary qualifications are likely to provide

children with information on educational programmes offered in different tertiary institutions. Commonly, educated parents support and encourage their children to work hard at school for them to have better future with direct or indirect expectation of certain careers over others (Humayon et al., 2018). This entails that when parents are educated, they are likely to help students in increasing the awareness about better career opportunities, hence, guide them in making well-informed career choices. The initiative applied by parents in guiding their children to choose decent careers is incorporated in parental expectation (Okesina & Famolu, 2022).

Abbas et al. (2020) claims that when visualizing careers, they want to occupy in future, students refer to their parents' status and aim at professions duplicating those of their parents if not following the same careers. As such, these children are likely to reproduce their parental resources as is highly expected by parents themselves. The existing interrelationship between parents' preferences and occupations are likely to be the ones determining the kind of careers their children choose in life (Kumar, 2016). In Zambia, Mathatha and Ndlovu (2019) revealed that parental occupation has influenced students' desires to be in related careers to those occupied by their parents. This influence is initiated by discussions parents have with their children about careers they occupy. In Kenya, Madara and Cherotich (2016) established that secondary school students with parents in engineering are likely to select engineering programmes in tertiary institutions. For example, they found that 14 percent of Kenyan parents were in engineering-related occupations, hence, they influenced female and male students alike to pursue engineering. More findings showed that students were highly influenced into engineering by the presence of an engineer in a family, and they decided to follow the same path. According to Yean and Chin (2019), parents who continuously discuss careers with their children are regarded as a good source of information, particularly when they encourage them towards STEM professions, which are highly demanded in the world today. This suggests that, a reason why parents support their children is that they expect them to work in highly paying industries of engineering in the world.

Parents have expectations about their children's future, especially careers they want them to pursue. In Nairobi, Kenya, [Mwaa \(2016\)](#) established that 89.3 percent of secondary school learners interviewed agreed that their parents had high expectations for their careers while 65.5 percent of them indicated that parents told them about specific careers, they expected them to pursue. This suggests that parental values and expectations influence children's decision-making in professions they want to pursue in life. However, to enhance results of their expectations, [Wachira \(2018\)](#) discovered that most Kenyan parents offer support to activities that assist their children in exploring careers of interest.

In addition, Wachira's study revealed that parents provide support to their children as they expect them to choose certain careers over others. In Nigeria, [Okesina and Famolu \(2022\)](#) establish that parents' encouragement to students on career decision-making comes from career-related information they give to their children about specific careers. Additionally, parents' encouragement to students on considering various career options is a sign of support in careers chosen by their children. In Romania, [Ramona and Loredana \(2010\)](#) revealed that a psychosocial support from parents improves students' skills and abilities to decide on educational programmes they would like to pursue in tertiary institutions. These parents do this through discussions in which they state their support and express their interest in their children's choice of careers.

Generally, it is argued that parents' support to children in choosing careers in tertiary institutions, while crucial, should not be done in a manner that deprives students their rights to choose what they want ([Humayon et al., 2018](#); [Amadi & Pullah, 2020](#); [Schmid & Garrels, 2021](#)). Parents should consider asking their children about careers they prefer, because that will reduce students' failure to select educational programmes they desire to pursue in universities ([Tran & Dang, 2020](#); [Law, Wu, Chow, Lim, & Tan, 2017](#)). In Kenya, [Njogu, Kibaara and Gichohi \(2019\)](#) indicated that parental aspirations on careers followed by high school students can be attained through deliberate communication, but parents should not coerce students into career they do not like.

Contrarily, a Pakistanian study established that first-time tertiary students are forced by parents to enroll in nursing, which makes it unpopular career option among not only secondary school students, but also many adults (Wachira, 2018). It is, therefore, evident that forcing students into careers they do not like can affect them negatively and they may end up dropping out of tertiary education. While most literature seems to suggest that parental influence is the measure for students' choice of careers, there is literature outlining the significance of peer influence as discussed below.

2.5 INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE IN CAREER CHOICES

Peer pressure refers to the situation where students are influenced and forced to do or take part in any action, such as choosing certain careers because they are gender-oriented, which appears as a confirmation of membership in a group of peers with the same gender (Shafina, 2020). According to Luppino and Sander (2015), peer pressure is visible when learners choose to engage in actions that please age and school mates to fit in a group of friends. Pressure coming from fellow peers frequently coerces students to make choices that are outside the realm of their career interests, but choices favoured by friends (Kala, 2015).

In Malaysia, Hashim and Embong (2015) revealed that secondary school learners always rely on information they get from within their peer groups when making career selections. Additionally, the study showed that peers easily influence each other because they rely on them for provision of support in choices they make, including career choice. Peer-reliance among Malayan secondary school learners may result from inadequate parental support or school guidance assisting them to make beneficial career choices (Raheem, Abdulkadir & Zakkariyad, 2018). When peer influence upsurges, members of the same peer group are more likely to choose the same career to pursue in tertiary institutions (Raheem et al., 2018). On the other hand, a Pakistanian study by Arif, Iqbal and Khalil (2019) discovered that peer group factor may be stronger than any other influencing factor when students choose careers.

Young people at secondary school level form groups that interact on many issues among which are preferred careers that promise a good lifestyle with

recognized statuses (Duku, Bosu, Ansah, Agyapong, BafowahDrokow, & Arboh, 2021). The interaction existing among members of each peer group enhances the likelihood of choosing similar careers (Oduh et al., 2020). In this context, peer interaction refers to relations of children and teenagers within clusters of their own age, which are normally in the schools and neighbourhoods (Dobao, 2016; Sato, & Ballinger, 2016). Peer interaction in groups enables members to assess their fit in most groups as well as how the interaction helps them to make choices of careers that respond to the norms of their groups (Okiror & Otabong, 2015). Hence, students may end up choosing similar careers in order to retain group membership. It can be decided that peer interaction plays a noteworthy character in supporting students to comprehension of diverse vocations in the work environment as well as in tertiary institutions.

The American study by Fizer (2013) established that male and female students who participated in agricultural clubs such as FFA and 4-H, which were not described fully in the study, benefited from the interaction they had with each other. The kind of interaction students experienced with peers in attending these clubs encouraged them in choosing agriculture. The study concluded by suggesting that same gender interaction is reported to be more effective than that of mixed gender. Lukman (2020) revealed that peer pressure can influence choices of careers in the way a particular career looks more attractive than the other, and they easily influence peers in the same group to ignore unfavoured careers and focus on the ones considered presenting the group.

During peer interaction, learners find various opportunities, for example salary and other career-related prospects that are likely to persuade them choose careers (Duku et al., 2021). As Abbasi and Sarwat (2014) observe, individuals are influenced by both financial and non-financial benefits connected to careers and may prefer jobs that pay high salaries. That is, learners may visualise their lives in certain careers without taking into consideration whether they fit or not into envisaged careers. The study conducted in USA by Fizer (2013) found that 25 percent of University of Tennessee students pursued agriculture because of high possible income it provided.

Yean and Chin (2019) revealed that male and female students look at different careers basing their judgement on the salary when discussing careers to choose. Lukman (2020) established that the effect of peer pressure on career choice is massive because they have a way of painting the careers of their choice as the best as against one's own choice. This is where boys and girls tend to choose careers based on salary (Yean & Chin, 2019).

Additionally, Schone, Simson and Strom (2020) boys may choose careers in engineering, motor mechanics, electrical engineering that are believed to pay a better salary as compared to nursing and teaching, while girls feel comfortable in female-dominated careers like nursing and teaching. Naz, Saeed, Khan, Khan, Sheik and Khan (2014) revealed that peers in Pakistan create discussions that are centred on careers that promise employment upon graduation, and those that pay good salary. In their study, Siddiky and Akter (2021) indicated that Indian students' discussions rested on preferences of occupations in both public and private areas because of reasons including job status, job safekeeping, the opportunity of advancement, better wage, and the scope of professional development.

Students who chose a field in agriculture were influenced by discussions among fellow peers to select agriculture-related educational programmes, including agricultural business in tertiary institutions (Fizer, 2013, p. 6) as they were labelled to bear features, such as job prestige and job security. However, many American male students still prefer agricultural engineering as compared to majority of female students who were found in other categories of agriculture than in agricultural engineering were influenced by their male peers (Fizer, 2013). The above finding concludes that peer gender influences students of the same gender to consider certain careers to be appropriate and acceptable for them.

A study by Kimaro and Lawino (2016) revealed that 73.3 percent of Tanzanian females preferred to pursue a career in nursing because they perceived it as appropriate for them. Nursing is perceived to be appropriate for females. The study by Raabe et al (2018) in four European countries, namely, England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden indicated that female students in

European countries prefer to major in educational programmes like arts, Swedish, and English while majority of male students in the above-mentioned European countries prefer to pursue physics and technology. Female peers were in arts, Swedish and English careers while male peers were more represented in careers such as physics and technology.

Correspondingly, a Nigerian study by [Odu, Agboola and Eibhalemen \(2020\)](#) established that differences emanating from female and male peer groups influence students to select educational programmes resembling such groups. They indicate further that the Nigerian female learners (192) reported advanced peer group influence than the Nigerian male learners (114) in community schools. Similarly, [Igbinedion \(2011\)](#) found that Nigerian males and females were significantly influenced by peers of the same gender to choose certain careers over others. [Zolitz and Feld \(2017\)](#) points out that the influence of peer gender in secondary schools is existent, and it plays an important role when secondary school students choose educational programmes in tertiary institutions in preparation of participating as employees in the work sector.

The study conducted in North America by [Wang and Degol \(2013\)](#) held that peer group norms influenced Pennsylvanian students' intentions or desires to pursue science and mathematics. In conclusion, study findings indicated that students' decisions to choose STEM careers were highly influenced by peer belief in which careers they perceive to represent their gender. More males in groups reported pursuing STEM careers than females; and they made such decisions because of the group norms that bind members to do the same things or quit if not. [Odu et al. \(2020\)](#) noted differences among students in consideration of gender influence whereby females prefer female-dominated professions and males prefer male-dominated professions. As a result, gender of peers has a crucial influence on careers chosen by students in schools. The influence of gender is discussed in details in the upcoming subsection.

2.6 INFLUENCE OF GENDER IN CAREER CHOICES

John Money developed the concept of gender in the 1940s in exchange with sex ([Giuliano, 2017](#)). Sociologists view sex and gender as hypothetically distinct ([Tolland & Evans, 2019](#)). They perceive sexuality as a bodily or

biological difference between males and females, including both primary sex features, such as procreative system, and subordinate appearances like height and masculinity (Tolland & Evans, 2019). Sociologists and other social scientists perceive gender as social dissimilarities related with being masculine or feminine (Tolland & Evans, 2019). The social scientists, including sociologists, argue that the differences in careers favoured by boys and girls are results of culture (Giuliano, 2020).

Giuliano (2020) refers to culture as customary beliefs and values transmitted fairly to members of the society. It determines the manner in which members of the society learn to act in an acceptable manner (Block et al., 2018). Cultural distinctions place women in activities mostly performed within the household while men are placed in the outside sphere of the family like participating in certain workplaces with the purpose of supporting their families economically (Giuliano, 2020). Thus, gender reflects what culture requires individuals in every society to do (McNally, 2020).

In this sense, secondary school students may be influenced by gender to prefer certain careers than others as they see men and women occupying different careers (Kiziltepe, 2015). Gender influence is the act of making male and female children to grow up believing that because of their identities they are expected to fit well in certain careers not others (Akinlolu, 2023). Experiences between males and females create different unequal opportunities that cultivate distinct positions in the world of work where women are categorised as a vulnerable group (Allen, Buttler-Henderson, Reupert, Longmuir & Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2021). Feminism activists argue that women fail to meet their elementary desires, because of being excluded in higher positions in the work sector (Davaki, 2016).

Block et al. (2018) elucidated that, boys in the US context, generally, show lower interest in participating in Healthcare, Early Education, and Domestic (HEED) careers, such as nursing and elementary education. These careers were perceived by boys to resemble girls. Resultantly, there are higher percentages of females than males in nursing and teaching professions (Block et al., 2018). Additionally, another study in USA by Yean and Chin (2019)

revealed that women in technology-related fields, such as computer science, changed their careers because of bad treatment they get from their male counterparts, and switched into more acceptable female careers such as nursing and teaching. Generally, [Astorne-Figari and Speer \(2019\)](#) discovered that, recently dissuasion of American female students to persist in STEM careers remains the greatest challenge that forces many of them to change from their initial careers to the ones with higher female population.

Confinement of male and female children into certain careers and not others create a label that deters children to expand their talents and skills into careers they like. This promotes gender stereotype, which is a widespread preconception about qualities and the roles that are supposed to be executed by men and women in the household and the entire society ([Ellemers, 2018](#)). Gender stereotyping begins at the lower levels of education, including secondary school ([Gewinner, 2017](#)). As gender stereotyping takes control, students perceive certain careers as a fit or unfit, and they normally follow those that they feel are appropriate for them ([Ellemers, 2018](#)).

Female students as compared to their male student counterparts encounter more deterrence to career development path, and often take it as normal due to gender stereotypes ([Gewinner, 2017](#)). Women contribute positively towards gender stereotypes discriminating them to participate in male-dominated professions, because they also perceive themselves as a non-fit body in such careers, which automatically places them in low-paying careers ([Norberg & Johansson, 2021](#)). Conventional ideas of what establishes perceptions of women as not a good fit in male-dominated careers like in construction industry is real, and it bears results that show sexual harassment to be a major threat when women talk about their work place ([Norberg & Johansson, 2021](#)).

The status of women in the work force is compromised as they have learned to believe that certain careers are not suitable or comfortable for women ([Wang & Degol, 2013](#); [Obura, & Ajowi, 2012](#); [Farava, 2012](#)). Even when organizations strive to fight against gender inequalities regarding provision of positions, women still experience gender stereotype threats that happen because of gender discrimination in schools and workplaces. [Cadaret, Hartung, Subich](#)

and Weigold (2016) show that stereotype-threat conditions diminish female students' performance in study subjects which are male-dominated, which may include engineering, mechanical engineering, and bricklaying. Wang and Degol (2013) argue that stereotype-threat occurs when a person is seen as not a perfect match for a certain job because she is a female or he is a male, therefore creating uncomfortable environment for them.

Students may consider career switch from their initial careers to new ones when they experience gender discrimination in the classroom making them feel they do not look like the current careers. Mukherjee (2015) maintains that gender discrimination is felt when people are labelled differently as males and females and treat them unequally when providing them with tasks to do. It is also argued that in most incidences' females are denied opportunities to occupy managerial posts in the workplaces, but such opportunities are often taken by males (Mukherjee, 2015). In addressing gender-bias against females, the Feminists work proposes the world to be equal without boundaries for males and females aiming at promoting equality in social settings, including the work sector (Mukherjee, 2015).

In most incidences, male students are more likely to not prefer careers such as teaching and nursing because they perceive them as professionals that are ideal for women while relatively low-paying (Kiziltepe, 2015). The issue of women in low-paying careers exists in every country. For example, Posholi (2012) found that females in the context of Lesotho are influenced by gender stereotypical factors, which probably restrain them to fewer paying careers related to female-dominated occupations. In brief, the study found that managerial positions such as Human Resources, Nursing and Teaching in Lesotho, are still believed to be appropriate for women.

Another study by Komiti and Moorosi (2020) revealed that women are socialised in a way preparing them to occupy careers like teaching, which are commonly known as paying less salary. More findings indicated that Basotho women in the teaching career are likely not to opt-out and look for other jobs that offer better salary than teaching, but they rather seek for promotion into higher position of principalship. Therefore, it can be deduced from the above

results that, career choice in the context of Lesotho is influenced by factors, including gender stereotype and the family (Posholi, 2012; Komiti & Moorosi, 2020).

Students who are at the end of secondary school transit into tertiary institutions with an understanding that pursuing careers that do not correspond with their gender is challengeable in as much as it will provide poor monthly salary (Dani & Desai, 2018). Generally, women are excluded from occupying higher positions in the workplaces, which makes them fit perfectly in the realm of vulnerability (Numans et al., 2020). Division of labour, which is instilled into children through socialisation starts at earlier ages where males and females are made to believe that they fit in certain careers not others (O'Leary, 2017). For instance, young girls dream of joining careers that are social such as teaching and nursing while young boys exclusively aspire to be in careers resembling investigative like engineering (Kans & Claesson, 2022). Even when women try to fit into male-dominated careers, they experience gender-biasness fuelled by their male counterparts, which eventually makes them regret working in such careers (Mutekwe, Modiba, & Maphosa, 2011).

Certain careers are designed for females, and more females seem to be overrepresented in careers such as nursing and teaching among others (McIntosh, McQuaid, & Munro, 2015). Nursing and teaching are considered the most low-paying careers where women feel more comfortable working in than in careers exposing them to stereotyping influences (Schone et al., 2020). However, even in the low-paying female-dominated careers, men still occupy the highest managerial positions than women (Zhang, Lin, & Wang, 2018). According to NAWIC (2013), many challenges confronting women in the construction industry are directly or indirectly related to gender prejudice.

Some studies (Norberg & Johnsson, 2021; Akinlolu & Haupt, 2022; Shrestha, 2016; Mozahem et al., 2018; NAWIC, 2013) have suggested that links in professions of males like construction industry make females feel unwanted or rejected by their male counterparts. This, coupled with the fact that women are less represented in careers including engineering and motor mechanics can hinder the growth of women who have ventured into these professions.

Construction industry is perceived as a low-paying career that normally attracts non- and less-educated males, but not usually women (Shrestha, 2016). This has become part of culture in countries like South Africa where construction careers are still regarded fitting for males (Akinlolu & Haupt, 2022), which give males an identity that they are more appropriate and a fit to construction careers than females (NAWIC, 2013). In Mozahem et al. (2018) it was highlighted that female students had more interest in Child Monitoring Rehabilitative occupations compared to male students who considered such occupation as inappropriate for them, hence they feel comfortable in science-related professions.

Identity can be explained to mean the way people identify themselves according to gender (Astorne-Figari & Speer, 2019). Men and women identify themselves differently towards each other, and they even prefer certain roles than others, particularly those aligning with their gender (Kans & Claesson, 2022). Hence, Hameed and Shukri (2014) argue that gender preferences automatically direct males and females to consider different careers during the period of career decision-making. Female students in educational programmes overpopulated with male students felt discriminated, for instance, in STEM classes when asking questions and their male counterparts together with male lecturers told them they would not understand because they were in wrong professions (Wallace, 2014). University male lecturers sometimes tell female students in their classes that they have made wrong career choices as they are supposed to be in nursing instead of engineering (Kans & Claesson, 2022). All the above-mentioned facts about male-dominance versus female-subordination still posit a number of challenges facing women in technical careers (Astorne-Figari & Speer, 2019).

In order to address inequality between male and female students in industrialised nations like Australia, Canada, and United States of America, schools offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) to male and female students alike to eradicate inequality (Rosen, Visher, & Beal, 2018). Countries that have adopted CTE model promote career advancement for female students (Rosen et al., 2018). Career advancement is the process through which specialists across industries use their skill sets and determination to

attain fresh occupation goals and additional challenging job prospects (Abubakar, 2013). To access all the information regarding requirements and benefits of new careers in the workplace, students use different types of mass media, which are discussed, in the subsequent section.

2.7 MASS MEDIA INFLUENCE AND CAREER DECISION-MAKING

Among other contextual issues influencing young people's career choices, particularly in the epoch of the fourth industrial revolution, is mass media. Mass media influence is the actual coercion applied by media messages to the people, resulting in either a change or reinforcement of their beliefs (Hoag, Grant, & Carpenter, 2017). According to Neeti and Singh (2017), mass media is often used as a channel of general communication, where information can be gathered and disseminated to users in society through television, radio broadcasting, print media, and social media. Wanyama (2012) refers to different types of social media as media technologies, which include television, radio, newspapers, and internet. These tools help in keeping people informed about most issues that concern their lives, including career decision-making (Kearney & Levine, 2020; Kara, 2019; Sharma, 2015).

All types of social media are used for mass communication and are collectively called mass media (Wanyama, 2012). Mass media, which has recently attracted people of different ages and statuses, plays a crucial part in selecting educational programmes by many people including secondary school learners who are ready for tertiary education (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Learners can rely on these media channels during the process of career decision-making (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017; Wanyama, 2012). Most young people use either of the media channels during the process of choosing careers of interest depending on channels they like most (Krishna & Sharma, 2016).

Currently mass media is gaining popularity over other sources of media information with television being used frequently by learners to view role models' occupations (Njogu, Kibaara, & Gichohi, 2019). Secondary school learners perceive the television as an important source of career information because by watching it, they learn about careers of different people their well-established businesses (Di Pietro, 2016). The study by Cooper (2013) revealed

that students perceived media as a source of information portraying real characters in real jobs, which eventually determines learners' career goals. Furthermore, the same study indicated that students could recognize models of professional success in various programmes they watched on television.

According to [Kirkwood and Phillipov \(2015\)](#), young people are often attracted to careers occupied by television role models, such as MasterChef without deep understanding of what it is required for such careers. MasterChef programme influences students to become chefs even though it is not meant for secondary school learners' career guidance per se. Having watched any television programme, students are likely to choose related careers, particularly if they are of interest. Hence, television programmes help to improve knowledge and understanding careers that are foreign in learners' environments ([Terry & Peck, 2019](#)). The awareness of role models appearing in different television programmes influences students when making selections of careers as they may see the successes of the role models ([Kearney & Levine, 2020](#)), because these models' behaviours serve as an example for admirers ([Adejare, 2018](#)).

[Di Pietro \(2016\)](#) indicates that children tend to know more about the reality of life and occupations they see on television than most careers because the television shows off workers performing their duties. Therefore, secondary school learners preparing to join tertiary institutions see on television screens what is done in such occupations ([Di Pietro, 2016](#)). Consistently, [Sharma \(2015\)](#) confirms that careers appearing on television screens probably determine students' decisions, and have a direct influence on envisaged careers. Television viewers seem to portray certain behaviours that are similar to those of television celebrities in soapies and movies as figures that inform their career choices ([Team Zenbusiness, 2020](#)). This means that, the frequent exposure to television can influence students' interest and choice of careers they usually watch ([Terry & Peck, 2019](#); [Hartmann, 2016](#)).

Media impact on viewers suggests that it provides a powerful context for career development, more especially for adolescents ([Sharma, 2015](#)). Youth population is more addicted to media, including the television as compared to their parents ([Apostol & Nasi, 2013](#)). In the USA, [Kearney and Levine \(2020\)](#)

acknowledge that the television role models with whom adolescents identify can advance aspirations about adolescents' envisaged careers, and eventually open future career-related opportunities for them. [Batchelor, Jones, Turner, Dunn, Wiatrowski and Bajac-Carter \(2014\)](#) show that adolescents in advanced states reported less influence of television programmes when they spend less time watching programmes.

Study by [Morgan \(2017\)](#) discovered a substantial rapport between learners' interest and favourite television models in USA, which influenced them to choose careers similar to those of their favourite models. Another US study by, [Team Zenbusiness \(2020\)](#) discovered that television is the most influential media category among the Americans in terms of professional decisions. Additionally, those in the career of marketing and advertising industry are most likely to be influenced by television celebrities and pop culture icons that appear in different programmes ([Team Zenbusiness, 2020](#)).

Radio broadcasting provides career information that students may refer to in order to acquire knowledge about different work environments ([Olumorin, Aderoju, & Onojah, 2018](#)). Radio is perceived as a channel used to express and disseminate information about news concerning social environments, which in the end equip inhabitants, especially those in the working ages, with career knowledge ([Khan, Khan, Hassan, Ahmed, & Haque, 2017](#)). According to [Kigumba \(2017\)](#), radio broadcasting means a transmission of sound by waves intended to reach a wide audience as source of information. Radio listeners, including students in different communities, rely on a wide range of information they get from different types of programmes ([Khan et al., 2017](#)). Therefore, radio broadcasting is a media group from which individuals may rely on for information when choosing careers of interest.

[Hoag and his colleagues \(2017\)](#) see radio broadcasting as significant because it influences vulnerable people in the remotest areas who cannot access any other means of media to make a career choice. The study indicates that in most rural communities of African countries, radio broadcasting has the highest audience compared with television, print media, and other sources of information including social media. In Romania, [Crisan, Pavelea and Ghimbulut](#)

(2015) indicate that students who were not knowledgeable about work events, had their future prospects not related to careers they envisaged pursuing. Hence, they did not have a comprehensible vocational idea and encountered impeding chunks during professional selection processes.

In Kenya, Wanyama (2012) recognized that radio has a significant influence on secondary school pupils' career choice whereby students in private schools reported their access to radio (23.3%) as a crucial means to career information and knowledge. Radio programmes attract a wide audience of listeners, and give information relating to different types of choices made by listeners. Olumorin et al., (2018) establish that most of the presenters, station managers, and producers in Kenya continually present new programmes must determine what programmes to be aired and the quality of the broadcast materials. Thus, radio station authorities' knowledge of programmes that focus on career guidance can aid students to make well-versed professional choice in institutes of learning and the world of work.

Olumorin et al. (2018) discovered that Nigerian students learned about different careers available in their environment. Moreover, this indicates the significance of radio programmes when students are starting to make choices of careers. Therefore, this means occupational information through radio is accessible to many students in Kenya. Students in the remote areas may not witness the real life in careers they envisaged to pursue like those students in the urban areas, but the least they get makes a difference in their lives. It is then concluded that radio broadcasting in remotest areas provides rich information about the extensive array of matters about people's lives for disadvantaged population, particularly, in the rural areas (Wekesa, 2016).

Radio influences the lives of people of all ages in various ways, particularly, as a public education provider (Ullah, Khan, & Khan, 2017). One of the ways a radio can be significant is that, people use information from radio to make decisions in different situations including decisions in career choices (Kigumba, 2017). According to Ullah et al. (2017), where other sources of information are scarce radio can be used to educate people about different ways of realizing career opportunities in their environment. Besides television and radio, print

media has been marked as another basic form of mass communication used for centuries in many countries of the world, though it is reliable and the oldest (Hoag et al., 2017).

The word print media entails sources of paper-information, such as newspapers, weeklies, magazines, monthlies, and other forms of printed journals (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). It is perceived as one kind of media source that leaves a longer impact on the minds of those using it (Wanyama, 2012). It is important to mention that, even though adolescents do not read more of newspapers in normal circumstances, it is confirmed that they read newspapers often during the process of searching for careers to pursue in future (Kazi et al., 2017; Iyer & Siddhartha, 2021; Tavakoli, Rocca, & Thorngate, 2010). When in the search for employment, people buy newspapers targeting Job advertisement sections, where they can compare advertised jobs while considering those that match their qualifications and skills (Kazi et al., 2017). Moreover, when searching through newspapers, students get information, including salary, geographical location where the placement will happen, and a number of working days (Tavakoli et al., 2010).

Career information provided by newspapers might give students a hint on different careers in which they may be interested. Dissanayake and Rajapaksha (2018) established that 800 of Sri Lankan newspapers announcements within six months in 2014 revealed the mainstream of career advertisements reported were in the field of marketing-related careers, such as accounting and operations management. More results indicated further that majority of job advertisements were reported to have attracted many potential candidates because they were either picture-oriented and or coloured posters. The significance of print media, including newspapers and magazines is associated with pictures used to attract attention of the viewers and to elaborate the issue at hand deeply (Iyer & Siddhartha, 2021).

In the Middle Eastern Arab, Wilbur (2013) conducted the study, which concluded that secondary school learners benefited a lot from reading pharmacy-related newspapers. Students felt that after reading a newspaper about roles of the pharmacists, they gained knowledge and understanding on

how their coursework will tailor them to meet skills required of them as upcoming health specialists. [Diamond, Vorley, Roberts and Jones \(2012\)](#) established that the most popular sources of information used by pre-tertiary students in England included prospectus and university's directories and guides.

However, the effective use of print media is overtaken by social media platforms used by students in search of careers they want to pursue ([Melany, 2017](#)). In Spain, [Arecas, Rodriguez-Muniz, Alvarez, de la Roca and Cueli \(2016\)](#) revealed that grade 12 students considered web pages by the universities to search for educational programmes offered, and what such programmes required of them to get admitted. Social media is another informational source that can be used by students to gather further knowledge on different careers. Utilisation of social media by people of different ages has outdated most of the channels of information in our society for its flexibility in responding to immediate questions.

Social media refers to any internet- founded application that people can use to retrieve any type of information, including career information ([Lomborg, 2015](#); [Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010](#)). [Kyung-Sun and Eun-Young \(2014\)](#) indicate that majority of secondary school students may rely heavily on internet services, which are also known as social media for general information, including career information. According to [Melany \(2017\)](#), internet services play a complex character in the lives of youths, their interpretations and choices regarding the workplace. Whether they are aware or not, young people are easily determined by what they see on different platforms accessed on internet services with regard to their career aspirations and continued education ([Melany, 2017](#)). As a result, social media is important in learners' lives since it may introduce them to careers they never knew before, while on the other hand, it is broadening up their career knowledge.

Contrarily, the significance of social media influence on students' career choice may not apply to other places due to certain constraints ([Ruiz-Martinez & Esparcia, 2020](#)). The geographical locations of many rural communities make it very difficult to mount airwave and other technological towers that allow

access to mass media types, such as the internet, which make access even harder during COVID-19 (Moyo-Nyede & Ndoma, 2020). Thus, limited access to internet leaves students from the rural communities disadvantaged with incomplete knowledge of careers (Ruiz-Martinez & Esparcia, 2020). The types of social media used by students to search for career information prior to decision-making include Google, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, Amazon, Twitter, BlogSpot, and LinkedIn (Richardson, 2017).

In Turkey, Kara (2019) revealed that all the students reported that they frequently use internet services to investigate careers they had previously determined. Krishna and Sharma (2016) point out that majority of students use the following types of internet facilities, WhatsApp, Facebook, Gmail, and Hike in search of career-related information. Likewise, Saleem et al. (2014) established that all students learn about different careers offered by tertiary institutions through the use of mass media, in particular, social media. As they frequently read provided career information, students tend to make well-informed choices of careers because of stipulated requirements. Baloch and Shah (2014) found that, in America, social media is very influential when students take part in the process of selecting careers. Sadiku et al. (2018) indicate that social media is generally used by career seekers to see whether careers they wish to follow will pay acceptable wages that improve lifestyle in general.

Likewise, Safian (2012) showed in a study carried out in South Atlantic State University (SASU) that institutional websites made it easy for students to access information about educational programmes of Health Information Management (HIM), which also encouraged many students to pursue HIM as a career of interest. European countries, such as Turkey and Poland have seen a tremendous usage of social media among students in searching for careers to pursue in tertiary institutions (Del-Castillo-Feito, Blanco-Gonzalez, & Delgado-Aleman, 2020; Morphetou & Demetrious, 2017; Sojkin, Bartkowiak & Skuza, 2014).

In Turkey, the research conducted by Morphetou and Demetrious (2017) focused on finding out how social media assist potential students when

searching for information in tertiary institutions. The research also looked at how media was used as an advertisement platform for reputation of the university. Findings revealed that students associated their envisaged careers with famous universities because of their good reputation. In conclusion, [Morphitou and Demetrious \(2017\)](#) indicated that information disseminated through social media platforms about institutes' reputation may force potential students to choose programmes offered in tertiary institutions. Reputation is the credibility and legitimacy of an institution as perceived by people, including students seen on different types of social media ([Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020](#)). Therefore, social media like other influencing factors discussed in this chapter, has proved to significantly inspire career decisions by grade 12 students when transiting into tertiary institutions.

In Poland, [Sojkin et al., \(2015\)](#) discovered the importance of university websites, particularly when high school students prepare for tertiary education. They also revealed that first, students consider institutional reputation and study programmes offered before finalising whether to choose or not to choose offered programmes. Therefore, institutions of education with good reputation are likely to receive a large number of students seeking admission into various offered educational programmes ([Morphitou & Demetrious, 2017](#)). Instead of reading about institutional reputation, it is more interesting to view it through different types of social media ([Sadiku et al., 2018](#)).

[Krishna and Sharma \(2016\)](#) show that amongst existing types of social media, WhatsApp, Facebook, Gmail, and Hike are mostly utilized by students in search of careers to follow in tertiary institutions. The above-mentioned internet applications show websites of universities and educational programmes they offer, which makes it easy for students to choose careers in tertiary institutions ([Krishna & Sharma, 2016](#)). When all web pages are grouped together on a web-server; and are accessed on the internet are referred to as a website ([Garett, Chiu, Zhang, & Young, 2016](#)). Websites come in a nearly endless variety, including social media sides ([Lee & Kozar, 2012](#)). In the current century, institutions of learning advertise educational programmes on websites ([Agrey & Lampadan, 2014](#)). Institutions may use different types of sources that can

disseminate career-related information to people all over the world, including students.

[Ebenezer and Vipene \(2021\)](#) establish that the information gathered by students from university web pages guides them through requirements of different educational programmes offered, how to apply for such programmes, and when is the deadline for submission of applications. Likewise, [Ward and Grower \(2020\)](#) show that pre-tertiary students can use university websites to make comparisons of career prospects such as salary and other related benefits like bonuses. Hence, the emergency of online information and social networks has opened students' eyes on issues relating to available tertiary educational programmes and occupations in the world of work ([Njoku et al., 2019](#)). Limited access to various types of mass media deters students from developing career knowledge relating to various tertiary educational programmes ([Terry & Peck, 2019](#); [Dissanayake & Rajapaksha, 2018](#); [Kigumba, 2017](#); [Kyung-Sun & Eun-Young, 2014](#)), which eventually connects to the effect caused by certain influential factors. It is concluded that secondary school students are faced with variety of challenges in making selections of study programmes to follow in post-secondary institutes. These challenges emanate from influencing factors, including career guidance, career education, parents, peers, gender, and mass media.

2.8 LEARNING CONTEXTS AS DETERMINERS OF CAREER CHOICES

Careers in technology are the most paying and required for the 21st century because of the advancing world of work ([Langdon, McKittrick, Beede, & Khan, 2013](#)). Secondary schools need to produce students with certain skills and knowledge of integrating technological know-how in their daily operations ([Tremblay et al., 2014](#)). However, secondary schools have failed to produce adequate number of students pursuing STEM careers in tertiary institutions because of various reasons ([Thompson, 2021](#); [Dooley et al., 2016](#); [Ost, 2010](#)). The reasons for inadequate number of students qualifying for STEM careers in tertiary institutions include poor mathematics grades, overcrowded classrooms, inexperienced teachers, negative attitude towards STEM subjects, poorly structured laboratories, lack of STEM books in the libraries, and teaching of STEM subjects in a foreign language.

Thompson (2021) argues that students may fail to choose and pursue STEM programmes in tertiary institutions because they did not pass math, which is the most determining subject in undertaking sciences in universities. Kopparla (2019) maintains that successfully completing required mathematics credits is significant to progress through math-intensive programmes like sciences in tertiary educations. Ost (2010) confirms that students who cannot receive A, B, and at least a C in mathematics and the combined science subjects, which are Physics and Chemistry at the end of secondary schooling are coerced to consider non-STEM programmes in tertiary institutions. For example, in USA, Anaya, Stafford and Zamarro (2017) revealed that students' choice of science among tertiary students was influenced by math achievements, which for many was very low.

In Canada, Dooley et al. (2016) revealed that the major determinants of a decision to stay on the STEM preparations path are the students' secondary school end of year examination grades in science and math. In USA, Thompson (2021) showed that students' early STEM grades deter them from majoring in STEM programmes. In the same spirit, Han, Kelley and Knowles (2021) confirm that STEM grades also count when first-year STEM students proceed to the second-year study, where they fail to pass Chemistry, Biology, and Physics. This suggests that students who fail to score higher in math and science stand a better chance of pursuing STEM programmes at the university level of education. Jolif (2018) argues that poor performance at the end of secondary schooling should be taken from the fact that sometimes secondary schools admit students with poor results at grade 8 from primary schools. This emphasises that schools need to encourage students to love mathematics and science subjects from early stages of learning, such as lower secondary school.

In the study conducted in Kenya, Jolif (2018) indicated that sometimes it is significant to assess factors contributing to high rates of failure in meeting science subjects' requirements in tertiary institutions. Moreover, Jolif's study discovered that the reason why students are scoring below the pass mark in sciences at the end of secondary schooling is admission of weak students at Form A, also known as Grade 8 in some countries at the beginning of secondary school level of education. Wang (2012) confirmed that low performance in math

deters high school learners from majoring in technology-related careers, particularly those who did not pass math and science at grade 8 level of learning. Therefore, admission requirements make it harder for students who love STEM-related careers but are deterred by their capability to meet the required number of credits to qualify in tertiary institutions. For instance, in UK, [Romash \(2019\)](#) found that universities require students who consider pursuing STEM programmes to meet extra GPA requirements in specific introductory science courses.

Among other factors that contribute to failure to meet the acquired pass grades in science subjects at the final year of secondary school are overcrowded classrooms, where the teacher may not reach the understanding and participation of every student ([Chowdhury, Arefin, & Ahmed, 2019](#); [Jolif, 2018](#); [King'aru, 2014](#)). A classroom means a physical place in the school environment where teachers interact with students on teaching and learning basis ([Akech, 2016](#)). This says only brilliant students are the most likely to attract the teacher's attention in science-related subjects ([Makondo & Makondo, 2020](#)). In India, [Chowdhury et al., \(2019\)](#) indicated that overpopulated classes had impacted negatively in the STEM secondary school classes. In Uganda, [Amanya \(2018\)](#) found that high numbers of students in classes were the main reasons for poor performance in mathematics, and that was likely to deter students' preferences of STEM programmes in tertiary institutions.

Additionally, overcrowded classes may also be stressful to inexperienced teachers in STEM subjects in secondary schools. For example, studies in different countries ([King'aru, 2014 in Tanzania](#); [Jolif, 2018 in Kenya](#)) showed that factors determining reduced performance in mathematics and science subjects among secondary school students include poor instructional strategies in science education. In Zimbabwe, [Makondo and Makondo \(2020\)](#) showed that lack of qualified mathematics teachers caused poor academic performance in mathematics at grade 12, and reduced a number of students majoring in science-related programmes. In Australia, [Timms, Moyle, Weldon and Mitchell \(2018\)](#) affirmed similar findings due to a limited supply of qualified STEM teachers in secondary schools, students' engagement and performance are declining. [Chowdhury et al. \(2019\)](#) showed that secondary schools have a

tendency of hiring part-time teachers who are not from teacher training colleges, and such teachers can create hindrance in shifting towards STEM teaching. Consequently, contributing negatively to the manner in which learners, performed and failed to pursue STEM programmes in tertiary institutions.

The influence of teaching aids and the availability of well-structured laboratories influence students' attitudes towards school subjects, such as Chemistry (Musengimana, Kampire, & Ntawiha, 2020). Moreover, studies (King'aru, 2014; Jolif, 2018; Chowdhury et al., 2019; Amany, 2018) have indicated that besides limited supply of qualified teachers in math and science subjects, local secondary schools are facing the challenge of poorly structured laboratories, which also contribute into poor exhibitions of experiments. It is confirmed that factors like well-equipped laboratories are the main things that can improve or discourage students' likelihood of choosing to pursue STEM related programmes in tertiary institutions (Halim, Rahem, Wahab, & Mohtar, 2018). It can be deduced that lack of facilities, such as laboratories and chemicals deny students the opportunities of testing and confirming what they read about in books.

Studies (Michael, 2015; King'aru, 2014) revealed that lack of relevant STEM books in secondary school libraries have contributed to poor achievement in STEMS subjects. In Tanzania, Michael (2015) illustrated that the establishment of libraries in schools was meant to improve students' habits of reading and practicing various subjects taught. However, Michael's study found that most secondary school libraries in Tanzania are equipped with old mathematics books contributing negatively to advanced knowledge of mathematics. Another Tanzanian study by King'aru (2014) confirmed that lack of resources, such as books deny students' effective participation in STEM subjects, hence they are likely to perform bad when sitting for secondary school final examinations preparing them for tertiary education. In Rwanda, Musengimana et al. (2020) revealed that failure to use adequate instructional materials and to avail schoolbooks to both students and educators negatively contributes to students' arrogances towards STEM careers by the time of transition to tertiary institutions.

Inaccessibility to relevant books and lack of qualified teachers contribute towards negative attitude to STEM teaching and learning, particularly mathematics, which will eventually limit students' chances of pursuing physics or chemistry in tertiary institutions ([Musengimana et al., 2020](#)). Several studies ([King'aru, 2014](#); [Chowdhury et al., 2019](#)) revealed that because of poor methodology in secondary school science education, students drop-out of STEM subjects into non-STEM subjects. In Uganda, [Lukyamuzi \(2018\)](#) revealed that 45 out of 65 secondary school students had no interest in science subjects because of the continuous failure in the national examinations. This failure attributed to the absence and lack of motivation from their science teachers.

When students are not well-trained in secondary school STEM subjects, they are likely to encounter some difficulties leading to withdrawal in tertiary STEM programmes. For instance, in USA, [Kopparla \(2019\)](#) found that compulsory mathematics subjects among first-time tertiary science students helps and improves their intentions to graduate in STEM careers. Students who did not attain C grade in first-year of tertiary studies switched to non-STEM educational programmes when they encounter difficulties in science programmes. More findings of the same study established that first-year students faced challenges in STEM-related courses, such as mathematics and combined science subjects like chemistry and physics.

Similarly, [Almeda and Baker \(2020\)](#) established that due to change in difficulty level from secondary schools to tertiary institution mathematics, students are likely to receive unexpectedly low grades during their first-year, which eventually leads to change into non-STEM programmes. Specifically, first-year engineering students were academically under prepared; therefore, they changed to non-STEM programmes in high quantities ([Almeda & Baker, 2020](#)).

Secondary school students prefer non-STEM programmes in tertiary institutions because they are not well-prepared, which is not the case in other countries. For example, in USA, [Phelps, Camburn and Min \(2018\)](#) revealed that 42 percent of US secondary schools offer engineering and engineering technology (E&ET) programmes with the aim of preparing secondary school

students to enroll in tertiary education majoring in STEM programmes. [Musengimana et al. \(2020\)](#) indicated that Rwandan students in secondary schools do not get support from the teachers or schools. In consequence, this automatically leads them to have no interest in the Chemistry subject when applying to continue tertiary education. Therefore, [scholars like Nitzan-Tamar and Kohen \(2022\)](#) emphasised that many of STEM programmes, both in secondary schools and tertiary institutions are considered “gatekeeping” subjects as they are meant to separate students with abilities to persist in STEM from those who are incapable.

However, it has been discovered that most students who are not from English-speaking communities still experience challenges in STEM-related programmes, not because they are incapable but because they cannot understand the language used in mathematics and science subjects ([Karikari, Kumi, Achiaa, & Adu, 2022](#); [Behrmann, 2018](#); [Seah, 2018](#); [Njoroge, 2017](#); [Van Ryzin & Vincent, 2017](#); [Smith, 2017](#)). The teaching of mathematics in schools must be provided in a native language so that every student understands what is exactly required in completing, for instance, math formulae ([Almeda & Baker, 2020](#)). According to [Smith \(2017\)](#), language is used to convey information through communication from one person to another. For instance, in Kenya, [Njoroge \(2017\)](#) revealed that teaching mathematics and science using Gikuyu language, one of the local languages, is an effective strategy that improves the performance of the two subjects in schools. In this sense, some literature argues that language affects how students interpret mathematics ideas ([Vukovic & Lesaux, 2013](#)). Hence, [Aronson and Laughter \(2015\)](#) argue that teaching of mathematics for the students ranging from primary to tertiary levels needs to change and consider a new phase of instructing math in a native tongue.

In USA, [Van Ryzin and Vincent \(2017\)](#) indicated that students encounter challenges in passing mathematics and choose STEM-related programmes when advancing to tertiary institutions. For example, another U.S. study conducted by [Smith \(2017\)](#) established further that mathematics was passed at an average of 72 percent by students who speak Standard English as compared to the average of 40 percent scored by students who speak

Jamaican dialect. These scores show that teaching mathematics in a mother tongue improves students' performance (Smith, 2017). In Haiti, Behrmann (2018) discovered that Haitian students who speak Kreyol language poorly performed in mathematics and science as compared to those students who speak Standard English because the national curriculum demands teaching in English.

Students from rural schools where English language is taken lightly are more likely to have trouble in mathematics and sciences taught in a different language from their own. For instance, Karikari et al. (2022) revealed that most rural students are not used to speaking English, and that makes it difficult for them to perform well in mathematics at the end of secondary school. Therefore, it can be deduced that the language in which mathematics and science are taught in schools can influence the choice of STEM programmes in tertiary institutions.

STEM professions are the necessity for the fourth Industrial Revolution, which requires employees with technological know-how aspects. Several studies (Thompson, 2021; Romash, 2019; Jolif, 2018; Anaya et al., 2017; Wang, 2012) revealed the possibility of students who struggle to cope in STEM careers because of poor performance. Other issues including overcrowded classes, poor laboratories, and inexperienced teachers have been shown to contribute in students' poor performance, particularly in STEM subjects. Students who pass mathematics and sciences during secondary schooling are likely to be directed into STEM subjects despite their interest in such careers. Secondary school curricula place every student who performs well in STEM-related subjects in STEM programmes when transiting to universities and colleges. The above allegations point to lack of career guidance existing in secondary schools, which eventually fail to assist students in spotting careers that align with their interest and personality traits.

2.9 INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL CAREER GUIDANCE IN CAREER CHOICES

There are two but closely related concepts that need to be explained when talking about guidance namely, career guidance and career education. From literature, career guidance is a significant tool used by institutions of learning,

including secondary schools, colleges, and universities to assist students' career choices (Bowen & Kidd, 2017; Baloch & Shah, 2014). Career teaching is an educational mechanism intended to collaborate ideas of career development for students at all levels of learning, and equip each student with harmonised educational experiences containing career consciousness, career search, career exercise, assignment, and career leadership (Dandara, 2014).

According to Roy (2020), school job supervision is supposed to support students' anticipation and planning for satisfying careers and to make them aware of the relationships between work habits, abilities and interests, and related characteristics. Akhter et al. (2021) maintain that job leadership has remained a tool used to assist people at any time in life when at school and in the world of work to manage their chosen careers. Career guidance is best performed through intervention programmes. In this regard, learning institutions need to adopt career guidance programmes meant to shape learners to align with careers they envisage from primary schools throughout secondary school level into tertiary institutions (Amoah et al., 2015).

Programmes prepared to guide students when exploring various educational programmes in higher institutes of learning, enhance their career growth by helping them make decisions on careers they like (Salleh, Abdullah, Mahmud, Ghavifekr, & Ishak, 2013). The impact of career intervention courses in schools are important for learners who cannot make a choice of careers they envisage to follow. SACDA (2020) acknowledges that learners are influenced by various factors including parents, peers, and media, which are likely to hinder them from making well-informed career decisions. That is, in cases where learners do not get any help from professional career counsellors and teachers they are likely to be indecisive (Roy, 2020).

In Malaysia, Lam and Santos (2017) found that Malaysian education system is designed in collaboration with various career intervention programmes to address a number of challenges, including parental influence, which can force students to select careers they never envisaged pursuing in their life. It was further revealed that implementation of career intervention programmes in Malaysian schools helped students to make estimations of careers they want

to pursue in future. More findings reveal that prior to intervention, male learners could not be precise about careers they wanted to pursue as compared to their female counterparts, but immediately after career course teachers confirmed the ability of males to make career decisions. [David et al. \(2020\)](#) show that vocational development interference has clearly been an emphasis of school career guidance in the 21st century, which needs to be integrated into curriculum, particularly in lower, middle and higher levels of education.

Scholars ([Pye Tait Consultation & Carol Stanfield Consulting, 2021](#); [David et al., 2020](#)) describe career intervention programme as entailing activities that enable students to grasp career development errands outlined in school career guidance programmes. Integration of career development intervention within the school curricula can make it easy for secondary school learners to make well-informed career choices ([Salleh et al., 2013](#)). Provision of career learning activities from grade 8 to grade 12 can enable students to think about possible career favourites, and how subjects they choose to pursue in tertiary institutions prepare them for employability ([Crause, Watson, & McMahon, 2017](#)).

According to [Miles and Naidoo \(2016\)](#), school career interventions are normally aimed towards improving career planning and opportunities, which need to be illuminated to learners before they attend classes. If pupils can be assisted through career intervention programmes to comprehend expected outcomes of careers they want to pursue, they can achieve their wishes. Various studies ([Ozlem, 2019](#); [Freeman, Lenz, & Reardon, 2017](#); [Lam & Santos, 2017](#); [Miles & Naidoo, 2016](#)) recommended career interventions to be crucial mechanism that can be used in secondary schools as a yardstick to support learners to achieve their career wishes. [Salleh et al. \(2013\)](#) affirms that learners who follow career intervention programmes have a better chance of improved self-efficacy skills, and academic learning motivation, which eventually help them to make informed career decisions in tertiary institutions.

Career intervention programmes are seen as working well in developed countries including America to enable smooth transition of students from secondary schools into tertiary institutions ([Faitar & Faitar, 2013](#); [Gluszynski, 2012](#)). As students are transiting into tertiary institutions, they may need

assistance in choosing educational programmes that ensure employability upon their completion. This can be achieved through effective guidance throughout schooling into the world of work. The education system in the USA is known to give learners the opportunity to access ways of enrolling into careers of interest, including STEM careers when transiting into colleges and universities (Faitar & Faitar, 2013). Largely, the American government ensures access to STEM-related careers by the support and guidance offered through school career programmes that enhance boys' and girls' equal participation in science-related professions (Faitar & Faitar, 2013).

In USA, Freeman et al. (2017) established that career guidance programmes offered in secondary schools positively influenced learners' ability to direct themselves along the career path, specifically improving their career choice inevitability. Bradford, Hickson and Evaniew (2014) indicate that access to career guidance facilities at the younger age of primary school learning helps American learners to better understand themselves in connection of careers they want to follow for the future.

Annually, CHE encourages all tertiary institutions in Lesotho to hold a one-day career guidance intervention for local secondary schools (CHE, 2013). The career guidance intervention takes place once each year aiming at providing senior secondary school students with information regarding careers they can choose and pursue in tertiary institutions (CHE, 2020). Lerotholi Polytechnic College participates annually in career guidance events showing-off its educational programmes to secondary school students through gatherings and electronics devices (Mosebekoa, 2018). It can be concluded that the government of Lesotho, CHE, and local tertiary institutions have realised the negative impact of limited career guidance in Lesotho secondary schools; hence, their initiative to assist students with career information and knowledge.

A one-day career intervention held by CHE and local tertiary institutions may be inadequate to equip students with enough knowledge and understanding of careers provided at tertiary level of education. The present research argues that career intervention in local secondary institutes can help students to realize careers that fit their personality types as they also realize work environments

relating to such careers. It can be argued that the success of career guidance in every country should be the responsibility of all related institutions, including lower-, middle- and higher-standards of education targeting to support students in career choices. A Zambian study by [Menon et al. \(2012\)](#) revealed that 80 percent of secondary school students reported that after attending the career expo event they were able to assess their career options while over 30 percent of these students reported they felt the usefulness of career expo event when performing career-profiling activity.

According to [Ogutu et al. \(2017\)](#), career guidance programmes in Nigerian secondary schools pay less attention to the aspect of career education. This has produced students who do not utilize career guidance services available in their school environment, hence they end-up not selecting careers they wished to pursue in life. Now, one can conclude that limited career guidance fails to familiarise learners with the work sector, which finally makes them focus on careers that exist in their environments without knowledge of an array of occupations available in the job market.

Practicing career guidance activities in schools and other areas, career counsellors need to put more emphasis on assisting learners to explore work environments and give them adequate information about working conditions in relation to careers they want to follow ([Balci, 2017](#)). This can be done by enabling learners to take field trips by visiting workplaces and assessing kinds and processes of jobs that workers in various workplaces do ([Balci, 2017](#)). Field trips can take different forms with the aim of meeting students' needs while informing them about the places of work ([Claiborne et al., 2020](#)). According to [Behrendt and Frankling \(2014\)](#), the intended outcomes of field trips at any level of education is to introduce students to various areas, including providing primary experiences about the workplace so that they see activities performed in careers they may have an interest in. For instance, field trips may influence students' positive attitudes towards science programmes, such as physics in the universities ([Ali, Akhtar, & Arshad, 2019](#)).

In Ireland, [Heggins, Dewhurst and Watkins \(2012\)](#) showed the extent at which field trips inform secondary school students in various professions, including

law-related occupations. They indicated that field trips enhanced students' knowledge of what law is, and what is needed for one to become a Lawyer. Moreover, this trip assisted students in seeing action in the Supreme Court and understood the position of debatable court actions. In USA, [Hanover \(2020\)](#) indicates the significance of career exploration in informing students about various career opportunities in tertiary institutions. It is also indicated that teaching students about tertiary institutions' opportunities helps them to link their preferred educational programmes with future jobs.

Another U.S. study by [Behrendt and Franklin \(2014\)](#) confirm that field trips in schools were encouraged and organised by teachers with the aim of enabling students to advance interest in science, which might lead to improved learning or improved science learning. It can be deduced that exposing secondary school students to science-related organisations may influence them to pursue STEM programmes in tertiary institutions. In UK, [Diamond et al. \(2012\)](#) revealed that students (58.4%) leaving secondary schools into tertiary institutions considered the university visits influential.

In Kenya, [Moriasi et al. \(2021\)](#) established that career trips were good avenues for giving relevant exposure to secondary school students to improve their decisions on their future careers. Another Kenyan study discovered that secondary schools in Kisii and Nyamira counties used field trips as one of the strategies applied by agriculture teachers to influence students' choice of agriculture for study ([Makori, 2019](#)). In the study conducted among senior high school students in Ghana, [Brew \(2018\)](#) found that the foremost career search exercise learners got involved in was industrial site visits. That is, school counsellors mainly orient learners to careers through field trips than other career exploration practices due to financial constraints but would like students to participate in other identified career exploration practices.

Career exploration as a component is a planned educational programme whereby students tour different worksites to learn about different careers, introduces a variety of available careers, and gives children opportunities to participate in internship or learner-ships in governmental and non-governmental organisations ([Mante & Maose, 2021](#)). In Nigeria, [Okirigwe](#)

(2020) revealed that introduction to work environment and existing professions in the form of internship is very essential at the end of grade 12 level of education, when students are expected to decide on what they want to do after completion of secondary education. This placement or internship gives a student an opportunity to explore careers to follow in the future.

Additionally, a study conducted by Mohammed (2019) in two Nigerian universities showed that insufficient services provided by career guidance and counselling units led students to choices of Physical education as a career which they eventually found not matching their personal interests. Obiunu and Ebinu (2010) argue that school authorities in Nigeria contribute to limited career guidance by failing to provide career programmes, such as career day, career week, field trips, and vocational therapy as significant activities for students' career development. Dungey and Ansell (2020) established that one of the teachers' obligations is to assist students' career decision-making in preparing them for secure, socially sanctioned, and salaried work to occupy in the future. Thus, the government of Lesotho implemented entrepreneurship education the curricula of primary and secondary schools aiming to help students interested in this career to grow up knowing what it entails (Dungey & Ansell, 2020) while making informed choices.

Application of vocational education and guidance in post-primary schools joins each element whereby teachers in classrooms and career guidance counsellors enhance learners' understanding and ways of making informed career choices (Lee, Lee, Kim, & Lee, 2021). Counsellors must help students discover careers that fit their abilities through personality traits, as that can match them with appropriate careers, which are easy to follow (Okirigwe, 2020). Career teaching is best provided at the subject level, whereby class teachers advise learners about careers related to subjects they teach (SACDA, 2020). Additionally, instructors are expected to advise students through career learning, since they are conversant in teaching approaches and know their learners well (Welde, Bernes, Gunn, & Ross, 2015). As a result, it is best to integrate career education into school curriculum to encourage teacher participation, particularly in subjects they teach because that is viewed as more beneficial to learners (Welde et al., 2015).

The significance of career education is pivotal to learners' opportunities to learn about differences between occupations, the characteristics of workers, the reward structure, and entry requirements into tertiary institutions and the workplace (Lee et al., 2021). Introducing students to a variety of professions prior to tertiary education makes their life easy by the time they select educational programmes aligning with their interests (SACDA, 2020). Recent literature shows that teachers' responsibilities include imparting career education as an intervention to influence learners' career decision-making (David et al., 2020; SACDA, 2020). Therefore, integration of vocational learning benefits learners' career decision-making at all levels of education.

The aim of vocational learning is to guarantee that students are directed to improved means of acquiring information, skills, and attitudes that support them to access information with clear understanding of what to expect when transiting to the world of occupation (Balci, 2018). To this extent, teachers are viewed to better perform career education as they interact with learners in classrooms (Obe, Mann, Barnes, Baldauf, & McKeown, 2016) by making learners be aware of different careers available in the marketplace (Balci, 2016). Thus, career awareness is an activity guided by a class teacher to assist learners in acquiring knowledge about work environment, and as a developmental course, it also informs students about an extensive variety of job options available to them (Obe et al., 2016). Vocational teaching closely coordinates with professional guidance activities so that exploration activities are organised around those courses in which a learner is interested and potentially capable (Balci, 2018).

The Yorkshire Times (2012) revealed that staff training, and development enabled teachers to inspire learners towards careers of their choices while also serving to bring out greatest opportunities in learners' lives. In addition, the Yorkshire Times testified that educators in their respective learning environments played important role in improving participants' career choices. Kashefpakdel et al. (2018) concur that teachers who participate in various career guidance programmes are better empowered in directing children into careers or jobs that they wish to occupy in the future. Thus, teachers' initiatives

in getting training in career guidance-related programmes make a significant impact in learners' career choices.

Research notes that schools that employ career education teachers mainly for career guidance are reported to have better shaped and prepared learners' career choice process (Mghweno, Mghweno, & Baguna, 2014). In this regard, Kashfepakdel et al. (2018) argue that learners develop trust and love for teachers who manage to align them with career environments that promise future success. Rukewe (2017) revealed that teachers' duties of providing professional teaching enhanced learners' job-knowledge when compared to schools without career guidance interventions in Botswana. Krawczyk (2017) purports the aim of teaching as introducing learners to various careers and what those careers require for one to qualify. Basham (2011) proclaim that teachers are expected to assist learners in making well-informed career choices when transiting to post-secondary education.

Though teachers are not professionally trained counsellors, they can play significant roles in guiding learners' career decisions, particularly in their teaching subjects. The significant role played by teachers as career teachers is also shown in the African continent with an example of South Africa. Dodge and Welderufael (2014) established that South African tertiary students (68%) admitted that career-related conversations made by their teachers made them realise and love other careers they never envisaged pursuing in life. Sathekge's (2014) study concluded that South African Life Orientation (LO) teachers are the great source of information on careers, related work environment activities, and all the requirements for admissions at tertiary institutions which have helped students when considering selection of educational programmes to pursue in tertiary institutions. It is suggested that teachers need skills in career guidance in order to assist students in their choice of programmes at tertiary education level (Basham, 2011). In this case, it can be articulated that LO teachers and subject teachers are able to support schoolchildren when they are searching for educational programmes to study in tertiary institutions.

Contrarily, it cannot be avoided that some teachers are perceived negatively by students because of the way they approach them. For instance, in Nigeria,

[Akintomide and Oluwatosin \(2011\)](#) showed that the teaching profession was not favoured by many secondary school students, because they perceived it as a low-paying career. The study also attributed students' negative attitude towards teaching career to their assessment of teachers' characteristics, which were adjudged by the students to be repulsive and discouraging. Therefore, there is a great need for secondary schools to employ trained career counsellors to address shortage of guidance services at that level of education. Career guidance interventions, including classroom intervention should always involve a career counsellor to normalise situations where teachers may not be able to inform or positively influence students' career decision-making ([Balci, 2018](#)).

Incorporating career education in secondary schools' curricula could provide a unique opportunity in fostering long-term perspectives for learners ([Abah, Age & Agada, 2019](#)). Classroom interventions regarding career development should start as early as elementary schools where teachers are expected to do several things to improve students' career decisions, especially in relation to subjects they teach ([Abah et al., 2019](#)). Classroom intervention involves a set of steps followed by a class teacher to help their learners to improve in areas of need by removing all the obstacles that may hinder their progress ([Conroy, Sutherland, Algina, Ladwig, Werch, Martinez, Jessee & Gyure, 2019](#)).

In Pakistan, [Yaqooh, Arif, Samad and Iqbal \(2017\)](#) revealed that the role played by secondary school teachers assisted learners to recognize their skills and interests as they are believed to have career knowledge that influenced potential tertiary students to select subjects in Science, English, and Arts. More discoveries exposed that, teachers in Pakistan helped secondary school learners' career choices as they organized educational and career counselling motives to learners. The same study showed further that although teachers were not knowledgeable in providing occupation supervision and therapy, they always acted as career guides. More findings indicated that teachers automatically applied career education as their moral responsibility in classrooms.

Every teacher in her or his classroom has all the powers to encourage students to follow certain career paths, and that can be through the pace of content delivery and regular lesson attendance (Makori, 2019). In USA, Ingram, Sorensen, Warwick and Lawver (2018) indicated that teachers who were specifically in agriculture were influential in students' decision to enrol in agricultural programmes, because teachers would frequently tell them about various agricultural career opportunities after graduating from tertiary institutions. Teacher influence was seen in Ghana to be effective as Bosompem, Kwarteng and Obeng-Mensah (2018) found that students who pursued agriculture were motivated by their secondary school agricultural science teachers to pursue agriculture-related careers in tertiary institutions. The current study argues that career guidance and education cannot be deemed a teachers' optional duty if career awareness has such pronounced benefits for preparing the future workforce.

In contrast, in Kenya, Muchena (2013) revealed that sometimes teachers are perceived by students to contribute to their hatred for agriculture to an extent that they do not want to pursue it further in life. In this case, the same study argued that students may have low interest in agriculture because of dirty. Resultantly, when this correlates with how badly agriculture teachers treat students, it adds to low enrolment in agriculture when students choose programmes to study in tertiary institutions. Another Kenyan study by Chemjor (2016) showed that the enrolment of female students in agriculture is gradually increasing as they apply in large numbers (33%) in pursuance of agriculture in tertiary institutions. Female students' positive attitudes toward choosing agriculture in South African tertiary institutions can be deterred by teachers who do not have good relationships with their students (Dlamini, 2017).

Career guidance provided by schools positively influence students' career decision-making through comprehension occupations, and occupational-related alterations about careers they want to pursue with less pressure from parents and other people (Kimiti & Mwova, 2012). Therefore, career guidance in schools remains the only mechanism that can drive students through the career path till they realise careers that match their interests and personalities (Emmanuel, 2018; Rukewe, 2017; Oigo & Kaluyu, 2016; Mporananayo, 2015).

Career guidance should be a long-term process on which individuals can rely on for making informed career choices (Akhter et al., 2021; Emmanuel, 2018). According to Balci (2016), career guidance is a long-term process, where every student has a right to access without deterrence from any factor. It needs to be provided in collaboration between school counsellors and teachers. Principally, career guidance provides career-orientating activities that are usually taught by school therapists and teachers to aid learners develop awareness of conceivable occupational substitutes through a diversity of facilities such as leadership, counselling, education, assignment, and mentoring (Balci, 2018). Professional management facilities include three key basics namely, career material, vocational counselling, and career education (Akhter et al., 2021).

Career guidance professionals ought to act as career models to learners to make them identify careers they regard as meaningful for their future (Amoah et al., 2015). Without forcing students into careers desired by other people, career guidance experts have to initiate provision of career education in all levels of schooling in order to make students aware of learning, work-related, and additional choices that are existing as they continue through different institute levels and into the job market (Argyropoulou & Andronikos, 2018). Schools should implement career guidance as one of the significant career intervention programmes used to help learners prepare their minds to transit into tertiary institutions and the world of work (Ulrich et al., 2018).

Lack of guidance by secondary schools denies learners the opportunity to recognise careers of interest in time (Nyamwange, 2016). Therefore, failure to introduce career education in secondary schools' curricula of developing countries inhibits learners from making career decisions (Mohammed, 2019; Ogutu et al., 2017; Obiunu & Ebunu, 2010). For instance, one study discovered limited vocational supervision in Lesotho's institutions of education, which places the entire country at risk of training tertiary students without careers that match their personal interests, hence, failure to enjoy career satisfaction (UNDP, 2015). As a result, this calls for career guidance facilities in native school settings to equip students with broader knowledge of other careers existing outside their social environments.

In the same vein, [Rukewe \(2017\)](#) conducted a study in Botswana indicating that absence of career guidance in local schools has negatively affected students' career choices, whereby majority of students did not have enough career information before transiting to tertiary institutions. This means that, local schools with career guidance facilities failed to deliver active occupational intervention programmes and practices to meet students' needs in relation to career choices. [Du Toit and Van Zyl \(2012\)](#) indicated that during information, assembly there was no organisation at countrywide that offers vocational and work-related information, career guidance and counselling services for learners in South African schools.

Literature ([Theresa, 2015](#); [Menon, Nkambula, & Singh, 2012](#)) reveals that inadequate career guidance fails to equip students with career-knowledge that helps them assess closely their skills, interests, and achievements for imagined career choices. [Mutungwe et al. \(2018\)](#) conclude that a delay in offering secondary school learners with early career guidance encourages high rates of school dropouts. An earlier study conducted in Kenya indicates that low career maturity levels among university students were signalled by a lack of preparedness for career decision-making during secondary schooling ([Khamadi, Bowen, & Oladipo, 2011](#)).

[Roy \(2020\)](#) opines that inadequate career guidance is a problem facing not only developing nations, but also those in the developed part of the world. In Canada, [Masdonati et al. \(2017\)](#) established dissatisfaction with initially chosen careers among tertiary students because of limited career guidance provided in their respective secondary schools. [Masdonati et al. \(2017\)](#) further indicate that students opt for new educational programmes in Canadian tertiary institutions, particularly those promising a better salary without knowledge of what careers such programmes are likely to put them in future.

Another reason that triggers career dissatisfaction was found to be personality growth, which was a significant factor that forced students to look at different dimensions of life that required new skills ([Akhter, 2021](#)). In general, when students have negative attitudes towards unsatisfying careers, they change to those that attract their attention. Therefore, [Roy \(2020\)](#) argues that tertiary

education students who do not get adequate career guidance in primary and post-primary levels of their education are likely to choose careers without enough knowledge of those that match both their personality and interest.

[Kashefpakdel et al. \(2019\)](#) conclude that it is important to encourage career education from elementary level of education throughout secondary schooling with the aim of giving learners the opportunity to know about various existing careers in the world of work. Limited vocational management in schools is a global concern ([Mutungwe et al., 2018](#)). [Deni and Desai \(2018\)](#) point out that high schools must aim at providing career education to students immediately when they begin grade 8. It is argued that limited career guidance provided only at 'O'- and 'A'-level stages of secondary schools does not benefit all learners, which contributes to delaying them from making well-informed career decisions ([Mutungwe et al., 2018](#)).

Similarly, [Hilling \(2017\)](#) states that hesitation existing among secondary schools when they have to implement and encourage effective use of career guidance facilities makes it difficult to enhance learners' their career choices. Learners may be required to mention all careers they have explored with those of interest, but if such activity is not well-managed by professional career counsellors it may not reflect learners' real experiences and interests ([Hilling, 2017](#)). Moreover, when learners do not get enough guidance facilities and facilitators in their school environment, they normally perceive such services as non-existent ([Mutungwe et al., 2018](#)). Career guidance services in secondary schools should be supplemented by mentorship programmes where university professors and other experts can visit schools and hold career talks ([Dumulescu, Sarca, & Necula, 2020](#); [Tong & Yuen, 2021](#); [Menon et al., 2012](#)).

2.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter two reviewed on the literature focusing on factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices was reviewed. Specifically, the chapter first presented Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making (SLTCDM) as a theoretical lens for the present study. SLTCDM revealed that choices made by secondary school students regarding professions they wish to follow are prejudiced by four parts, namely; hereditary endowments and

distinct talents, environmental conditions and events in students' social environments, learning experiences, and job search tactic skills. In this chapter, theoretical framework and the literature review have revealed similar confessions about factors influencing secondary school learners' career decision-making. Looking at the factors stipulated in the theoretical framework, they encompass those factors revealed in the literature review, which are parents, peers, gender, and mass media, learning contexts as determiners of career choices, and school career guidance. The relationships of influencing factors are summarized in the subsequent paragraphs.

To start with, the genetic endowments and special abilities discussed in SLTCDM focus on characteristics naturally embedded in parents that make them significant influencers in their children's lives. The genetic endowments and special abilities inherited biologically from parents play a significant role when secondary school learners engage in the processes of choosing careers in tertiary institutions. Consistently, literature revealed students born of engineers as likely to choose STEM-related careers in tertiary institutions, because of genes they inherited from their parents. According to SLTCDM, genes passed from parents to children are the consequences of nature inseparable from those possessing them. Nature requires parents to nurture their children towards conditions and events occurring in their living environments.

As highlighted in the literature, factors like peers, gender, mass media, learners' contexts determiners, and school career guidance produce conditions and events that influence the manner in which secondary school learners make preferences of careers they want to pursue in tertiary institutions. SLTCDM stated that environmental conditions and events are not controlled by individuals, but their existence may be addressed, for instance, through parental advices and support. The literature indicated that parental educational attainment makes it easy for parents to address challenges associated with environmental conditions and events through searching for careers that suit their children. The literature has highlighted that parents, especially educated ones are, more likely to nurture their offspring to fit in the social environments by assisting them when choosing careers.

The literature also expressed that influence of environmental conditions and events is not under students' control. As a result, the impact of these conditions and events imparts certain experiences to students, which are likely to influence the way they consider and choose careers they like. Furthermore, the literature revealed that cultural expectations, which contribute more to the sensitivity of gender differences, have taught male and female students to select professions that correlate with who they are in the eyes of the society. The literature highlighted that due to gender differences, male and female secondary school learners prefer careers that correspond with their different genders. For instance, in tertiary institutions, female students regard building construction courses as a perfect match for male students, while male students regard secretarial courses to be good for females. In this regard, the literature confirmed that gender norms deter students from making choices in careers of interest while automatically confining them to the realms of social expectations. Learned experiences gathered in students' environments, as usually perpetuated by factors including parents, peers, and mass media, can result from the instrumental and associative learning experiences.

The theoretical framework highlighted that instrumental learning experiences are related to the behaviours produced by individuals and organizations in addressing challenges they face in their respective environments on daily bases. For instance, the literature of the current study showed that schools organised career intervention programmes, like field trips to assist secondary school students in choosing careers of interest for the future. The literature suggested the establishment of professional management centres in schools aiming to assist career choices made by students when preparing to transit into higher education.

The literature also highlighted that learners' selection of careers is highly prejudiced by the job opportunities, which are viewed as rewards after years of study. In the same manner, SLTCDM referred to associative learning experiences as things that stimulate an individual to perform a certain role in life for the reward in the end. The SLTCDM also emphasised that engaging different types of learning experiences, helps students to apply task approach skills when perusing across different types of careers, and selecting those that

are best. The literature review stressed the importance of task approach skills when selecting careers, as it highlighted that after learning about their personalities and environments, students use task approach skills to search for various types of careers while investigating those matching both their interests.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented an analysis of the literature on the factors that influence students' career choices. Moreover, the chapter detailed the theoretical outline for the current study, specifically, Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making (SLTCDM). The literature review also highlighted ways in which social, structural and other significant factors influence students' career choices as well as difficulties they encounter when choosing careers for further studies. Chapter three concentrates on the practice applied in the present survey. It commences with a discussion of research paradigm, research approach, and research design adopted for the study. It explains research methods, including the research site, target population, participants' selection, information assembly, facts examination approaches, trustworthiness, and the ethical considerations that were applied for the research study. Finally, the chapter is summarised.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Interpretivist/constructivist paradigm proclaims that individuals shape reality and familiarity of the biosphere through experiencing phenomena and recalling what they went through in a lifetime (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study deployed Interpretivist/Constructivist paradigm to interpret students' opinions on factors that determine their preferences in educational programmes they pursue in tertiary institutions. The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm was established by Edmund Husserl (1859-1838) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) who were German philosophers in the study of explanatory understanding called Hermeneutics (Guillen, 2019). The two German philosophers used the concept of Hermeneutics slightly differently, for instance, Husserlian phenomenological approach was the method of linking all the assumptions, to have a collective understanding of things existing in the universe (Guillen, 2019).

On the other hand, Heidegger's phenomenology argues that human beings find it difficult to link all assumptions, but are only obliged to use words, which constitute language (Shahbazian, 2015). Connecting is a methodological

device of phenomenological review that needs a person to avoid influences of their own belief about the issue being investigated in the research or what they already know about the subject under investigation (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013).

Hermeneutic phenomenology has been explained from its roots in Greek Scholastic and Modern German schools to be concerned with the live world or human lived experiences. Its focus is toward revealing facts and apparently minor characteristics within experiences that may be taken for granted in people's daily living, aiming at generating sense and attaining logic of interpreting the universe better (Shahbazian, 2015). In qualitative research, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, founded by Heidegger is a method that examines the experiences of individuals, and focuses mainly on their single, adapted, human experience as it is lived in this world (Keshavarz, 2020).

The purpose of Hermeneutics, also known as Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Interpretive Phenomenology, is to comprehend human actions inside their social environments, for example, household, workplace, and the community in general (Shahbazian, 2015). Hermeneutics is a practice used in research to assess humans in different spheres of their lives and connect their lived experiences collectively to make sense of things existing in their world (Shahbazian, 2015). Interpretivist/constructivist approaches to research intend to understand human activities and behaviours on a daily basis (Shahbazian, 2015). This suggest that what humans see as reality is something made up in relation to one's own culture (Shahbazian, 2015).

The interpretivist/constructivist researchers tend to depend on information provided by study participants about the situation being studied, and identifies the effect of the information they provide about their own background and experiences (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Constructivist researchers make a design of meanings emanating from all over the research progression (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Oftentimes, they prefer qualitative data gathering approaches and analysis. The foundation of Interpretivist/constructivist model is on people's perceptions and thoughts relating to challenges they face or faced in life (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Interpretivist/constructivist paradigm assumed that NUL students would name different factors that influenced their career decision-making based on their lived experiences in place of the generic ones identified. That is, students revealed things they learned from various situations and people who appeared as role models to them. Hence, the key aim of Interpretivism/constructivism is to understand the interpretations of individuals about things they interact with on a daily basis (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The Interpretivist/constructivist researchers begin their investigation with a prior awareness of the research setting. However, they usually assume that the information they have about the issue to be studied is insufficient due to the difficulty, diversity, and impulsive nature of what is perceived as reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

I remained open to new knowledge throughout the study, and I let the knowledge develop while participants shared ideas on factors influencing students' career decision-making at NUL. Researchers using Interpretivist/constructivist paradigm focus on understanding and reconstructing the meanings that people hold about what transpires in their daily life (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Students at NUL had a deep understanding of factors that influenced their choices of educational programmes when they transited from secondary schools. The reality of experiences encountered by these students throughout the course of professional choice was discussed in relation to four essential philosophical elements, namely, Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology, and Axiology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.2.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology is defined as a logical branch that studies existence of beings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Scotland, 2012). It focuses on expectations of researchers in making sense of a phenomenon studied (Yilmaz, 2013). Qualitative researchers follow the Interpretivist/Constructivist tradition, which rely on the assumption of multiple realities, social construction of ideas, and the holistic reality (Yilmaz, 2013; Slevitch, 2011). Ontology is interested in understanding the meaning emanating from data collected by the researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morgan, 2014). Therefore, I assumed that perceptions about factors influencing secondary school learners' choice of careers at tertiary level of education are differed from one participant to the other.

3.2.2 Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology is the way individuals understand things that they know in their environment, and how they explain such phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Epistemological assumptions focus on providing a logical foundation for determining what sorts of facts are possible and how individuals can confirm their possibilities (Slevitch, 2011). Thus, the function of qualitative research stance in epistemology is to assess interaction existing between the researcher and people, and to find out how possible is it to gain in-depth knowledge of what is investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research design takes into consideration the fact that reality relies in inquirer's mind as it is socially constructed (Slevitch, 2011). Therefore, reality can only be comprehensible through people's perceptions and interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Epistemology impacts positively the investigator's involvement in the study (Slevitch, 2011). Within interpretivist/constructivist perspective, I built a rapport with the participants, and that allowed them to express their opinions freely about the factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices. Thus, the meaning of what transpires regarding factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices was not discovered but constructed.

3.2.3 Methodological Assumptions

The current study aimed at finding out and understanding different contexts within which participants elaborated their lived experiences on how different factors affect the choice of careers among students transiting to tertiary institutions. "Inductive studies put participants' construction of their reality central, which means that, their construction should not be prescriptive" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 42). Therefore, I intermingled with student participants while ensuring they shared their lived experiences, and their insights produced in relation to factors effecting students' selections of professions. I also assembled facts by means of semi-structured questions, which were probed in order to inspire participants to share their opinions and understandings on factors that are likely to influence the choice of careers to allow the study to draw conclusions grounded on personal and shared understanding of their lives. Interpretivist/constructivist paradigm is informed by the hermeneutic, dialectical methodology, which required the researchers to

always give room for assortment of opinions and to interpret information in a way that reflects how participants perceived their world (Bryman, 2012). I allowed participants to talk freely and openly without interference about factors they thought can influence choices of careers among secondary school learners. Importantly, I made sure that I interpreted data accurately as pronounced in order to interpret how study participants perceived their world.

3.2.4 Axiological Assumptions

Axiology refers to the ethical considerations that need the attention of researchers when they begin the establishment of research proposals (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It also requires researchers to give full attention to concepts of right and wrong behaviour when gathering information from research participants (Hassan, Mingers, & Stahl, 2018; Creswell, 2014). Similarly, axiology emphasises that researchers should consider the nature of morals or ethical behaviours before engaging in the process of data collection so that participants feel free to volunteer in research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Studies using the Interpretivist/constructivist paradigm should focus on addressing how constant collaboration of the investigators and participants' values within the social review are recognised, and how their inspiration is managed (Creswell, 2014). In addressing the axiological concern, I strictly considered the ethical rules, and adopted ways of acknowledging the value-laden of the current study, which included discussions of trustworthiness. The axiological assumptions will be discussed in detail when dealing with ethical thoughts and the honesty in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Creswell (2014) describes the research approach as a strategy and process for study that distances the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. For this research, I implemented a qualitative research style to accumulate, scrutinise, and comprehend the data. Qualitative research involves a variety of methods in attention, including a descriptive, truthful method to its subject matter. This means that qualitative investigators study a phenomenon in their ordinary surroundings, trying to make logic of, or understand things in relation of the connotations that individuals attach to them (Maxwell, 2012).

Qualitative studies aim at describing and interpreting problems methodically from the opinions of a single person or people being studied, and to create new ideas and theories (Aspers & Cortes, 2019). Additionally, qualitative research tends to be a residual collection for almost any kind of non-quantitative study (Maxwell, 2013). Also, qualitative research deals more with cases in broader circumstances and drives (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, qualitative methods are integrally unempirical (Jovanovic, 2011; Aspers & Corte, 2019); and that implies qualitative investigators must shape their practices in a summarised language.

Moreover, qualitative research tends to make emphasis on senses and inspirations that trigger social codes, individual experiences, things and complete understanding of development in the community (Aspers & Corte, 2019). In brief, qualitative study focuses on understanding procedure, knowledges, and the connotations individuals allocate to things around them (Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2021). Qualitative research endeavours to gain ideas into precise meanings and behaviours experienced in certain social phenomena over the personal knowledges of the participants (Dooley & Moore, 2017). Hence, I interacted with participants to gain insight into specific explanations through interviews on how they experienced the processes of career decision-making prior to tertiary education.

Qualitative research methods are descriptive in nature because they allow researchers to go deeper into the meanings of data as they interpret perceptions of participants' word-for-word (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). In this case, qualitative studies do not rely on numbers, but they rely heavily on logical reasoning of the participants (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Researchers consuming qualitative explanations do not compromise perceptions of study participants in anyway, but quote every single word they said relating to their lived experiences (Dawadi et al., 2021). Qualitative approach uses symbols and categories, that is, words to explore human experiences and truths from the participants' perspectives (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Therefore, the expressive essence of qualitative study permits the investigator to deliver the picture of members' existed practices, which also sustains or otherwise challenges the theoretic expectations on which the study is constructed (Dooly & Moore, 2017).

Moreover, the expressive nature of qualitative research allows a person who reads to appreciate the meaning attached to the experience, the separate nature of the issue, and the effect of the challenge (Creswell, 2011). Data generation techniques in qualitative approach are non-statistical, and represent in-depth elaboration of participants' perspectives about the study topic (Creswell, 2014). As a result, information gathered through qualitative data gathering tools, such as focus group discussions, semi-structured talks, and document analysis in this study were given clear interpretation without changing views of participants.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Yin (2014) refers to study project as the construction of research. I assumed a case study as a research plan for the current study. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2011), case studies are investigative, expressive, and descriptive in nature. Exploratory case studies try to address questions stereotypically enclosed by the expression 'what' (Yin, 2014). These studies try to find research questions of a succeeding study or to regulate the likelihood of study actions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The explanatory case studies, on the other hand, attempt to begin cause-and-effect relationships controlling the manner in which proceedings happen, and which ones may affect exact outcomes (Hancock & Algozzine, 2014). The purpose of descriptive case studies is to give a broad report of a phenomenon inside its situation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). They concentrate on one occasion in separation to generalise to other circumstances (Yin, 2014; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

The current study used a descriptive case study, which Yin (2014) argues is a technique of generating the data by interviewing a selected sample of individuals. The case in the present study was NUL, which I selected purposefully out of other available tertiary institutions in the country due to its unique characteristics. NUL is the largest university with approximately 10,000 intake of students every year with variety of careers offered. This made the institution under study a suitable case for the current study, because I could select participants from a huge pool of learners in various educational programmes.

Hancock and Algozzine (2011) have a view that descriptive case studies can be used to gather relevant information about people's opinions, attitudes, or habits. Moreover, Yin (2014) suggests that the chief drive of descriptive case studies is to clarify the perceptions individuals have regarding the topic under study. Since the present study sought to describe in detail factors influencing secondary school learners' professional selections in tertiary organisations in Lesotho, particularly NUL, descriptive context study was, therefore, considered appropriate.

3.5 STUDY METHODOLOGY

3.5.1 Research Site

Present research was conducted at NUL; oldest and first university in Lesotho. It is situated in the Roma valley, which is a settlement under the Manonyane Community Council in the Maseru district, approximately 34 kilometres Southeast of Maseru the capital city of Lesotho (NUL, 2020). NUL was established in 1945 by the Synod of Catholic Bishops in South Africa to promote African catholic students' education (NUL, 2020). The institution has gone through numerous stages of change and name variations to where it is today. NUL admits about 43.9 percent of the country's undergraduate student population, and even higher percentage (89.4%) of graduate students (CHE, 2020). The overall figure of students registered in 2017/2018 academic year was 9,349 (CHE, 2020). All these students were admitted into seven faculties of NUL, which are agriculture, education, health, humanities, law, science and technology, and social science (NUL, 2020). Students are admitted into these faculties to prepare for their envisaged career choices, which can be realised with types of educational programmes they choose.

3.5.2 Selection Process

3.5.2.1 Target Population

Casteel and Bridier (2021) refer to target population as a number of people in the entire population with similar backgrounds, who can contribute information concerning the study undertaken. The target population of this study was made up of first year tutors, first- and second-year students at NUL.

3.5.2.2 Sampling

Mudavanhu (2017) refers to sampling as the method of picking members eligible for research. The current study is qualitative in nature hence it accepted a non-probability sampling as an appropriate technique to choose its participants. Research utilised two types of non-probability sampling, specifically, purposive selection and snowballing sampling (Mudavanhu, 2017). Purposive selection is a kind of non-probability selection in which qualitative investigators depend on their own decisions to select study participants that are believed to have satisfactory information for the issue under study (Parveen & Showkat, 2017).

The institution under study was chosen purposively, because it is the oldest university and “still retains the highest market share of 42 percent of total tertiary student population in Lesotho” (Thetsane & Mokhehi, 2020, p. 92), with a reputation of variety of careers demanded in both governmental and non-governmental institutions in the country (Thetsane et al., 2019). I also used snowball sampling to follow up on students that I thought had specific information. Snowball involves a networking delivery of information, which starts from one person leading to many people (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). As a result of its networking features and flexibility, snowball sampling was appropriate for gathering students who were not easily identifiable from the overall population of NUL. The sample of this research was made up of 56 members of NUL community, which were, 7 first year tutors, 42 first-year students, and 7 second-year undergraduates.

3.5.2.2.1 Sampling of Students

For the selection of participants, I adopted judgemental and snowball selection methods to find students who could provide relevant information in this study. I purposively considered first-year students from different programmes to make focus groups of 6 students in each faculty so that they responded to inquiries of the study. In overcoming the challenges of spending time hunting for first-years, I used snowballing on first-year tutors to get connections with first 6 students from each faculty who could form a focus group.

First-year tutors connected me with faculty representatives who organised first-year students entrusted to provide information on factors influencing secondary school learners' career choice when transiting to NUL. This criterion worked perfectly and I was able to have 7 focus groups. Therefore, 42 first year students were interviewed in the current study. Due to the delay in getting approval to conduct this study, I could not get the official list of NUL second-year students who changed their initial educational programmes to their current ones. Therefore, I used snowball-sampling technique again to get a total of 7 second-year students who changed their former careers to the new ones.

Snowballing type of sampling begins with a minor quantity of early interactions, who are suitable for the study measures, and they are asked to take part in the study (Parker, Scott & Geddes, 2020). To identify the first participant, I asked a tutor to help me find one student in the second-year level of study who changed a career. Through snowballing, I was able to find a second-year student in new careers at NUL, and after explaining the purpose of my study to the first student, she helped to identify another student who in turn also did the same (Parker et al., 2020). The process of networking was successful until I reached the last student.

3.5.2.2.2 Sampling of Tutors

At NUL, tutors are lecturers who are given several responsibilities, including giving students' academic and psychosocial support, advise them on what programmes, and courses to select from, as well as process their marks at the end of academic year (Mosia, 2017). I purposively selected first-year tutors because through the interaction they usually have with first-year students they could provide the real picture of factors influencing students' career choices. All seven first-year tutors were selected for the current study because each faculty has a unique admission criterion. Though the study was purposive, no tutor was forced to take part. Purposive sampling requires the researcher to show respect, and to avoid forcing participants to take part in the study if they feel uncomfortable (Campbell et al., 2020).

3.5.2.2.3 Sampling of Documents

Document sampling means gathering of related documents to the research topic that specifically answer study questions (Morgan, 2022). A document is what people can read based on certain aspects of their social environment and/or other places that can stimulate their decisions (Tight, 2019). Documents such as newspapers influence people to choose certain careers through advertisements flagged by different companies at the times of recruiting new or additional staff members (Bowen, 2009). This entails that information either printed or electronic can be selected due to its significance (Bowen, 2009). For the current study, letters that expressed students' decisions to transfer from initially chosen educational programmes into new ones at NUL were considered relevant in providing information on why students choose certain careers over others. I selected only letters that stipulated reasons for changing from one career to the other.

3.6 DATA GENERATION

Data generation is a procedure normally applied when gathering first- and second-hand information, also known as primary and secondary bases of information gathering in research (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

3.6.1 Primary Sources of Data Generation

Primary data refers to information gathered from people for the first time, and that marks its originality and uniqueness (Ajayi, 2017). It is generated with the aim of getting a solution to the current problem (Ajayi, 2017). Primary data sources are mostly interviewing (Ajayi, 2017). To gather primary data, I engaged into negotiations with various groups of first-year students and semi-structured talks with tutors and second-year students.

3.6.1.1 Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is the qualitative research tool used by researchers to gather potential study participants from similar social settings to share their knowledge, understanding, and perceptions on a specific topic of interest (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). FGD is frequently used by qualitative researchers to extract information from participants where they reveal their understanding of the issue under study (Nyumba et al., 2018).

Participants discuss interactively their own views and experiences on a research topic (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). During discussions, group members become active and willing to provide more information when hearing challenges and experiences of other members (Doyle, McCabe, Keogh, Brady, & McCann, 2019). I considered participation of every group member as essential, because what each member has in mind may bring improvement to findings of this study. Therefore, I made sure that every participant talked as I persistently probed them to respond to study inquiries.

FGD is a qualitative data generating technique that aims to gather information from group discussion members rather than from each person at the time slightly than from a statistically illustrative sample of a larger populace (Nyumba et al., 2018). Focus group interview allows members to approve or disapprove with each other so that their perceptions and opinions provide an insight into how they think about an issue under study (Nyumba et al., 2018). In addition, Dilshad and Latif (2013) explain focus group dialogue to be a strategic conversation with a small cluster of persons organised by the researcher to participate in the study. I selected six participants in each of the seven faculties of NUL to take part in focus group interviews.

When embarking into focus group interview procedures, it is significant to plan, which entails contacting target participants in advance, and make them aware of the study objective while selecting the suitable group of people for the focus groups (Ajayi, 2017). Suitable groups of participants were formed separately with first-year students in the seven faculties of NUL. The process of conducting focus groups is regarded as the most complicated, because the researcher facilitates the overall discussions of people with different behaviours and personalities (Ajayi, 2017). That means the researcher has to first ensure a steady rapport with participants, which has to begin at the start of any group discussion during the process of introduction (Ajayi, 2017).

Focus group may be held in native tongue of the participants, or in any language that is understandable to all participants (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). In the present study, I facilitated focus group discussions, which were held in Sesotho and English as they are two official languages of Lesotho. All the interviews were

conducted using Sesotho and English languages in places suggested by the participants. [Dilshad and Latif \(2013\)](#) opine that the qualitative researchers must ask potential participants to suggest time and place for meetings where they feel comfortable to be interviewed. Another important aspect in conducting focus group interviews is time duration, which opines two hours to be the maximum duration. Nonetheless, duration for interviews is highly determined by the researchers' satisfaction with the data ([Dilshad & Latif, 2013](#)). For the present study, the duration for each FGD was 45 to 60 minutes. I personally tape-recorded responses in each focus group discussions.

3.6.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interview is a Face-to-face fact gathering method used by researchers when directly communicating with the participants in accordance with the prepared interview guide ([Neuman, 2012](#)). It is a qualitative interview instrument in which research participants answer sequence of predetermined open-ended queries ([Creswell, 2015a](#)). Open-ended questions give participants the opportunity to discuss some topics in more detail, which means an interviewer has a list of questions with the intention of getting the informants to talk and provide a range of responses ([Creswell, 2014](#)). In the present study, participants responded to the same open-ended queries prepared in the same order and delivered in a standardised manner to share their experiences about factors that influenced students' career choice at NUL. I personally conducted the talks that continued for 45 and/or 60 minutes, where I recorded them with the consent of research participants.

Furthermore, I physically approached second-year students targeting only those who changed their initial educational programmes to the new programmes. After discovering those who changed educational programmes, I also employed face-to-face interviews to stimulate their responses regarding the topic under study. [Neuman \(2012\)](#) purports that stimulating participants' responses during the interviews maximises data quality and measurement reliability in qualitative research exercise. Face-to-face interviews for this study were determined by the participants' confidence and comfort ability in providing more relevant information as I allowed participants to extend the estimated time, particularly when providing needed information. [Adams \(2015\)](#) affirms that

researchers should allow for longer time of interviews because, it allows for probing until they get satisfying responses from study participants.

One-on-one interviews were an advantage for the betterment of this study because it allowed me to probe when the participants' responses were not clear. Neuman (2012) showed that the benefit of using one-on-one interviews is that, researchers can ensure that every question is answered. As a result, I ensured that all selected second-year students responded to all scheduled interview questions regarding factors influencing choices of careers among students in tertiary institutions, specifically NUL. This study also used semi-structured interviews to assemble data from first-year tutors as they expressed their perceptions about aspects that are likely to impact students' choices of educational programmes.

3.6.2 Secondary Sources of Data Generation

Secondary data is the information already found from different documents and channels, such as newspapers, television, radio, and internet platforms (Ajayi, 2017). Secondary data involves examination and explanation for primary facts; hence, it is already existing data collected earlier (Ajayi, 2017; Douglas, 2015). The secondary data collection sources include internal records like letters (Ajayi, 2017). For the current study, I used documentary review technique by collecting transfer letters written to faculty Deans requesting career change.

3.6.2.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a type of qualitative information gathering approach where organised papers are understood to convey meaning regarding aim of the study (O'Leary, 2014). Analysing documents incorporates coding content from relevant documents into themes (Bowen, 2009). Relevant documents analysed in the current study were letters of transfer addressed to Deans of faculties at NUL from the second-year students. O'Leary (2017) indicates that a letter is one of the significant documents that qualitative researchers can review for gleaned data.

In conducting document analysis, researchers have to undergo seven steps, namely; assessing existing documents, and seek permission from the relevant authorities in an institution under study (O'Leary, 2017). For the assessment of

documents, I visited different NUL faculty offices to enquire about any formal communication (letters of transfer) written by second-year students when requesting a transfer from one career to the other. The Deans' offices permitted me access to transfer letters, which I took under strict warning that they were confidential. [Bowen \(2009\)](#) points out that there are documents in institutions and/or organisations which cannot be accessed without getting a permission from authorities to review and analyse them, because of their confidentiality. In research, confidentiality refers to unidentifiable information about people who took part in the processes of data collection ([O'Leary, 2017](#)).

After securing access to the relevant documents, it is important to seek answers to evaluation questions while compiling the documents ([Bowen, 2009](#)). In the current study, I limited my review to only letters that specified reasons for changing the former career to the new career, which reflected factors influencing students' career choices at NUL. [O'Leary \(2017\)](#) purports that evaluation questions focus on data collection, and they are always intended to be answered. It is significant to summarise documents reviewed during the analysis process, and researchers are advised to create a data collection form, which is known to make document analysis easier ([Bowen, 2009](#)).

After reading the transfer letters more than once, I developed a data collection form relating to the type of documents and information I gathered from such letters. [O'Leary \(2017\)](#) maintains that it is important to develop a data collection form after gathering the data from selected documents. I used this form to compile and analyse findings from letters of transfer from one career to the other. The findings from the transfer letters written by NUL second-year students were also triangulated with the data collected using focus clusters and semi-structured discussions for examination.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis entails techniques applied in research when interpreting raw data gathered from study participants' perceptions, thoughts, and opinions to develop new knowledge about the question under study ([Maxwell, 2012](#)). Analysis refers to forming and questioning information in ways that let inquirers to realise designs, find themes, determine relations, develop descriptions, and

make interpretations, mount assessments, or produce concepts (Dooly & Moore, 2017). Scrutiny of qualitative data collected through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were interpreted with the help of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis technique. The study supplemented IPA with content analysis for documents in the data generation.

3.7.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method encompasses thorough examination of the participants' social environments. It attempts to explore lived personal experiences and it is concerned with how each person perceives a problem under investigation (Alase, 2017). IPA entails looking for similar themes from all cases, link the themes together, and make a comprehensible analysis to form meaning (Kawulich & Holland, 2012). According to Alase (2017), the initial step in performing IPA involves reading a transcript several times while drawing a margin along the page to note what is interesting or significant about perceptions and lived practices of the participants in relation to the issue under survey. I studied transcripts and repeated reading them several times to make myself familiar with information on them. As I familiarised myself with gathered information, I drew boxes on a separate page, labelled them with themes, and placed relevant information of interest in each box. The next step focuses on the emergent themes, which may be listed on a sheet of paper or in any manner that the researcher is comfortable, and the researcher starts looking for connections between themes (Smith & Osborn, 2007). I registered themes in a sequential way, meaning I listed them based on the order with which they emanated in the transcripts.

In continuing analysis, Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 73) maintain that each transcript can be written up as a single case study in its own for better understanding of the core interpretation of what is being studied. I fully considered each transcript on its own for interpretation, and lastly discovering patterns of common advanced order of qualities across cases, noting idiosyncratic instances. Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 76), highlights the write up of results to be a significant stage as "it elaborates deeply the experiences of the research participants about the questions of the study". This stage requires the investigator to understand the information without interjecting personal

experiences into participants' lived experiences (Alase, 2017). In the writing up of the results, I interpreted accurately the information as narrated by the study participants to avoid interruption, which might finally compromise the authenticity of the findings. In that regard, Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 76) indicate, "The analyst becomes expansive again, as the themes are explained and illustrated..."

3.7.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a method used when reducing the volume of raw data into groups based on effective understandings in qualitative studies (Shava, Tlou, Shonhiwa, & Mothonsi, 2021). I used content analysis to analyse words and phrases from letters of transfer written by NUL second-year students when they sought change of career and transferring from one faculty to the other. Basically, content analysis relies significantly on the coding process (Moretti, Fan Vliet, Bensing, Deledda, Mazzi, Rimondini, Zimmermann, & Fletcher, 2011). Content analysis ensures understanding of what the study aims to unfold, knowledge about phenomenon under study (Schreier, 2012), and it is applied to analyse the text facts (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Content analysis has three categories that qualitative researchers consider significant when analysing descriptive studies (Mayring, 2014). These are: (a) conventional content analysis, (b) directed content analysis, and (c) summative content analysis.

Shava et al. (2021) illustrates that conventional content analysis involves coding categories of data gathered from study participants in response to research questions. It actually focuses on describing opinions and perceptions of partakers (Mayring, 2014). Conventional content analysis permits the investigator to record the information appearing from the transcript repeatedly to reach an in-depth understanding of information provided by participants (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Schreier, 2012). After gathering targeted letters, with specific reasons for change of a career, I read them several times word-for-word to understand them. I perused deeply in the letters to grasp newly emerging ideas. Reading repeatedly over letters of transfer assisted me in preparing for development of codes and themes, which are discussed in direct content analysis below.

Direct content analysis involves primary coding, which starts with a philosophy of applicable study results (Shava et al., 2021). That means, the direct content analysis can be utilised to give more description of incomplete phenomenon or something that would benefit from additional explanation (Mayring, 2014). In the process of direct content analysis, qualitative researchers are bound to read more and more until they are able to spot different and similar themes emerging from the transcripts (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Schreier, 2012; Moretti et al., 2011). I continuously spotted similar themes from the letters as I read more before coding. Direct content analysis can offer signs about variable quantity of attention or about relations among variable quantity, thus serving to govern the original coding links between codes (Schreier, 2012). I created codes depending on the type of reasons given by students regarding their switching from former educational programmes to the new ones. Words used frequently in letters written by students were of interest in the new programme, difficulty of the previous programme, and failure to do well in the chosen programme. These words were counted as they appeared frequently in letters. The process of word counting is discussed in summative content analysis.

Summative content analysis refers to the counting of words appearing in manuscripts and exploring their practice (Mayring, 2014). Its goal is to explore the utilisation of words in an inductive way (Shava et al., 2021). Summative content analysis begins with classifying and counting arguments frequently appearing in phrases made by participants during data collection period (Mayring, 2014). I counted words in letters written by students when they sought permission to switch from one programme to the other. Understanding of words used in transfer letters, such as interest, difficulty, and failure helped me to understand their usage in student participants' context. Shava and colleagues (2021) point out that summative content analysis extends beyond counting of words appearing in the manuscripts to encompass hidden scrutiny. Hidden scrutiny means interpretations of the manner in which words are uttered by participants, thus, discovering the hidden meaning of words (Mayring, 2014). After analysis of this study, I checked with the participants if interpretation of their information still held to the sense of the arguments they used throughout discussions.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of sureness in facts generation and interpretation approaches organised to confirm the excellence of research (Polit & Beck, 2014). Evaluating the correctness of qualitative answers is a difficult task, but there are possible strategies normally used by qualitative researchers to enhance the trustworthiness (Stahl & King, 2020). However, honesty is crucial in qualitative research for the usefulness and integrity of the study findings (Kyngas, Kaariainen, & Elo, 2020). Four elements of quality criteria commonly applied to assess the honesty of qualitative study findings were used to test authenticity of the current study. These are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.8.1 Credibility

According to Polit and Beck (2014), credibility refers to the amount of the truth-value of qualitative research, or whether the study discoveries are precise and correct. Stahl and King (2020, p. 26) argue that “credibility asks how congruent are findings with reality?” Another way of ensuring credibility is through triangulation, which entails using several sources of information such as document analysis and interviews (Stahl & King, 2020). Triangulation enables the researchers to understand different perspectives of realities (Heale & Forbes, 2013). This is because reality may not be a fixed phenomenon that allows a deeper comprehension of a matter (Elmusharaf, 2013).

Another method of promoting credibility is a member check, where participants' involvement is required to confirm the researcher's interpretations of study results (Stahl & King, 2020). It was critical to guarantee the trustworthiness of the findings, because being a member of the students' union (SU) at NUL, I could easily be biased; and let my familiarity with career choice processes interfere with participants' knowledge. In consequence, I grouped the facts, copied them first, and then deliberated consultations with the participants for them to check and prove if they agreed with the recorded information as reflecting their understandings. Stahl and King (2020) confirm that member checking is the process that allows participants to check and verify whether information they gave out during the processes of data gathering was not tampered during transcribing.

3.8.2 Transferability

Another issue for trustworthiness is transferability, otherwise termed applicability, which means the extent to which outcomes of qualitative research are stimulated to other backgrounds, settings, times, and residents (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability allows researchers to compare findings of their studies with other existing findings, and check if their background can fit the context of their outcomes (Stahl & King, 2020). For this study, I provided some details such as students' career choice, students' comfort in chosen careers, and factors that persuaded them to change their careers.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability discusses the steadiness of study results and the level at which study events are recognised, permitting somebody who was never in the research to track, review and analyse the investigation measures (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Stahl and King (2020), dependability is consent with checking how one can detect if findings of the investigation would be reliably constant if the investigation were replicated with the same respondents in the same area. Dependability can be accomplished over rich and full explanations that show how certain actions and views are entrenched in and established out (Stahl & King, 2020). It can also be achieved when the gathered data are not interfered in any way, but are freed to speak contextually for themselves (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Thus, to achieve dependability, the researcher used the actual quotes of participants to express their real perceptions about the question under study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2016). The transfer letters written and opinions of students, together with tutors' perceptions about factors influencing students' career choice at NUL were quoted appropriately.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability denotes the step to which the outcomes can normally be established or verified by other people (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). More clarification indicates confirmability as the degree to which outcomes of the research reproduce personal opinions of the study subjects (Hays & Singh, 2012). To achieve confirmability, the researchers must show that the findings can be tracked, and as a procedure simulated (Stahl & King, 2020). Thus, the criteria should be communicated following exactly what participants reveal to

be their understanding of the problem researched (Hay & Singh, 2012). As a result, I clearly distinguished between the actual statements and views of participants regarding the issue relating to the study and how they were interpreted.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations are significant issues that protect participants in social research (Neuman, 2012; King, 2010). They are the route that researchers are supposed to follow when conducting research activities in a morally defensible way (Neuman, 2012). Therefore, researchers have to ensure remarkable respect towards research participants, and to places in which the study is conducted (King, 2010). The present study took into consideration the following ethical issues: (a) seeking permission, (b) informed consent, (c) confidentiality, (d) protection from harm, and (e) right to withdraw.

3.9.1 Seeking Permission

First, the research proposal was cleared by the faculty allowing me to start the data collection process. Once the study was cleared, I started with the process of engaging the selected institution and participants. According to Pettigrew (2013), social researchers interact with human beings whenever gathering data, hence they need to seek permission from the authorities and/or potential participants in order to fulfil aims of their studies. Prior to data collection, I sought permission from the NUL Registrar in writing, detailing the aim of my study on the 31st of January 2022, and written approval was granted on the 22nd February 2022. After getting approval from the Registrar, I started conducting participants for the current research.

3.9.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent is one of the ethical considerations, which requires researchers to inform participants about aim of the study as well as making them aware that they have a right to refuse taking part in such study (Maseko, 2018; Willman, 2011; King, 2010). This means that participants have the right to know what the research involves, and how it is going to help them. All study participants, that is, first-year students, second-year students and first-year tutors were given time to consider the risks and benefits of taking part in the

study as well as deciding whether to participate without being forced. The aim of the current study was explained together with possible harm or risk that might be encountered during the process of data collection.

3.9.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality means non-exposure to information relating to an individual without seeking permission to do so (Bos, 2020; Hays & Singh, 2012; King, 2010). The identification of participants was not disclosed in discussing the findings of the current study. Moreover, I used different labels like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 to refer to student and tutor participants.

3.9.4 Protection from Harm

Protecting participants from any form of harm during the procession of data collection is one of the principles of ethical considerations (Hays & Singh, 2012; Walliman, 2011). To obey this principle, I ensured that participants were protected from any type of injury, be it physical, psychological, and emotional harm by not asking personalised questions during interviews. The interview schedule was also cleared by the faculty of education to have questions that were less likely to traumatise participants. I also provided them with sufficient information to encourage their informed decisions. To win their trust, I assured them that the data would not be disclosed to any other person without their consent and as students discussed in groups, the principle of shared confidentiality was discussed with each group.

3.9.5 Right to Withdraw

The ethical considerations permit participants to pull out from the research without explanation (King, 2010). Right to withdraw refers to a situation where a participant may not be interested in the study and decides to exit (Creswell, 2013). Before engaging participants into research action, it is the responsibility of the researcher to inform them that, they are free to pull out from the research at any point in time without giving reasons for withdrawal (King, 2010). After ensuring participants' satisfaction to participate in my study, I told them about the reasons that triggered me to conduct it, and why they were selected. I made all the efforts to explain the study aim, because it was right to do so to increase the possibility of getting honest responses from the participants.

3.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In chapter three, I discussed the paradigm used in this study by highlighting philosophical assumptions, which are ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the study technique, study strategy, selection and instance choice, information gathering technique, which was completed using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and documents review. Data analysis was done using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) and Content Analysis (CA). Trustworthiness ensured the excellence of the information gathered in the current study. Finally, to obey ethical considerations' requirements, rights of the participants were given the first priority by not forcing them to take part in the study without being forced and/or threatened. This implies that NUL students and tutors were purposively selected to provide their perceptions about factors that influence secondary school learners' career choice at tertiary institutional level of education in Lesotho.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 provides results of this research, which explored aspects influencing secondary school learners' career choices in one tertiary institution in Lesotho. The chapter presents findings on retrospective reflections of students at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) about influences on their career choices, findings from first-year academic tutors on their experiences supporting first-year students on their careers, and document analysis on reasons students change programmes. The findings are presented in themes identified during data analysis as outlined in chapter three. The analysis identified four themes to describe findings of the present study. These are: (a) factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices; (b) factors influencing programme changing; (c) school career guidance; and (d) support for students in choosing careers.

Participants responded on the succeeding study inquiries:

1. Which factors have influenced choices of careers for students at NUL?
2. To what extent do students at NUL feel content with careers they have chosen?
3. Which challenges do students encounter with their chosen careers?
4. How can secondary school students be supported to choose suitable careers?

4.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' CAREER CHOICES

This section discusses factors that determine secondary school learners' choices of professions at NUL. The factors discovered in the current study to have influenced students' career choice at NUL are: (a) parents; (b) teachers; (c) peers; (d) mass media; and (e) learning contexts as determiners of career choices.

4.2.1 Influence of Parents in Vocational Choices

The current study established that parental influence can be experienced through three different levels when students make choices of careers, namely, parental educational attainment, parental occupation, and parental support.

4.2.1.1 Parental Educational Attainment

Parental educational attainment was reported in this study to have influenced choices of careers made by secondary school learners when transiting to NUL. Some students indicated the effect of parental educational attainment as a key motive that inspired them into tertiary careers they like. First-year student 3 FOE elaborates:

My mother is a holder of first degree from the university, and she is working and earning good monthly salary. I think the educational level she attained plays an important role in our lives, including the career I'm currently pursuing which I chose with her assistance.

A first-year student 2 FOA states:

I think I grew up in an agricultural family because my father was a holder of Diploma in Agriculture. I want to believe that skills he acquired from school helped me to know better about farming, hence, I chose pursuing crop-farming at NUL.

She adds:

I think the way my father would explain things in agriculture for me, made me aware that educated people can make things manageable, especially in agriculture as he'd google, for example, some pesticides and other things on farming.

Information gathered from participants of the current study indicated that though parental educational accomplishment influenced some students into careers they like, other learners were not satisfied with careers they pursued at NUL.

For example, first-year student 3 FOST argues:

Sometimes it is not easy to argue with parents when they force you to choose careers that they like than the one you like, because for example, I believed the fact that my parents are graduates they know careers that can best suit me. I wanted to pursue Law, but my parents swayed me into something.

She adds:

I think it's always wise to take parents' advice to maintain their support during the study period, even though it is painful to be in something you don't like. To be honest, I'm not 100% satisfied with what they've wanted me to study at varsity, because of my good symbols they forced me into sciences.

Findings of this study showed that it is not only children from educated parents who can feel coerced into careers they do not like, but even children from less educated parents felt the pressure of pursuing professions desired by their parents. For example, first-year student 3 FOE clarifies:

I never envisaged pursuing education as my profession at tertiary level of study, but the fact that my mother was still hanging on the old belief that being a teacher is a good profession, I didn't want to disappoint her, however, I still feel uncomfortable into teaching profession.

A first-year student 2 FOHS narrates:

My mother doesn't hold an educational certificate above grade 11, but she kept telling me that I'm going to be a nurse after completing secondary school, because she told me that I have features of a nurse who helped her while she gave birth to me. When I passed LGCSE exams she told me to go and pursue nursing.

She adds:

I can't say my mother understood characteristics needed for one to be a nurse, because of her educational status, which is low, I'm sure she just pushed me to choose the career she liked without considering whether I had interest or not. Honestly, I'm not comfortable in this career.

In the same vein, first-year student 2 FOA expresses:

I think I chose agriculture just to make my father proud, not necessarily, because I liked it. Actually, I wanted to study nursing at NUL, which was discouraged by the way my father would describe it as a female profession. My father isn't

educated as he only has grade 7 certificate, but he succeeded in forcing me into farming.

Two first year tutors showed that parental influence is significant when secondary school students begin to think of careers they want to pursue in tertiary institutions, because students do not get any career assistance in local secondary schools. Therefore, they revealed that it is their responsibility to see that their children are in rewarding careers. For example, the first-year tutor FOL explains:

As a parent, I don't like anything that puts my children's life in a mess, so I always try my best to advise them to consider good paying professions when time arrives for them to pursue tertiary education.

Similarly, the first-year tutor FSS expresses:

I want my child to consider technically based educational programmes when transiting into tertiary institutions, because those are the only careers with good salaries currently. Therefore, I've started advising him to do engineering after passing secondary education.

Additionally, first year tutor FOA narrates:

I think it's my responsibility as a parent to assist my children get what will benefit them in future.

She adds:

Yes, I can force my child into a career that has a bright future, because I've seen people in the same careers prosper.

The findings reveal that parental influence is determined by certain factors, for example, parents force their children into professions they think will benefit them in future. Educated parents look at the good pass mark of a child at the end of secondary school and decide on careers that are suitable for a child. This is likely to happen despite the career envisaged by the student, which in the end places a student into confusion and uncomfortable status. Therefore, most students from both educated and less educated parents displayed lack of interest in professions their parents coerced them to follow at NUL.

4.2.1.2 Parental Occupation

The present study discovered that students are more likely to develop interest in professions resembling those of their parents once they decide to continue tertiary education. This was reported by respondents to be associated with the bond existing between parents and their children. In the same vein, first year student 1 FSS states:

My mother is working at Bureau of Statistics, and she built our house and bought a car. All these have influenced me to want to pursue the same career as hers. I know I'm good in mathematics, therefore, I'd be in a better chance of performing well in statistics I'm doing now at NUL.

First year student 2 FOH says:

My mother and father graduated in Psychology, and I grew up loving the kind of life they led. It's only now that I realize my parents influenced me into psychology, which unfortunately is only offered as a module in humanities.

He adds:

I feel bad for not studying psychology because it's like I've disappointed my father who would always tell me I should study it at the university.

Another first-year student 4 FOE indicates:

My mother is a secondary school teacher, and she motivated me largely because she would always ask me to mark with her maths assignments for her class. That influenced me to love teaching very much.

Similarly, first-year student 1 FOL narrates:

My father is a Lawyer, and he likes reading too much, so I copied his behaviours, and ended up envisaging pursuing Law at NUL.

She adds:

I think he motivated me because he'd always say he wanted a female Lawyer in his house. I'm happy I made him proud.

The study revealed that learners were influenced by their parents to choose certain careers over others at NUL; and the following are some of the participants' responses. Three first-year students revealed that they chose to pursue careers that are similar to those of their parents. First-year student 1 FOE narrates:

My mother taught us English Literature at Secondary school, every student liked her because she was the best English teacher, and I passed her subject. Hence, I wanted to be like her, that is why I'm in the Faculty of Education.

Similarly, first-year student 2 FOE also illuminates:

My mother would share with me all the topics she taught at school for a day, and she kept on telling me how beautiful it is to be a teacher, teaching innocent children about life. All these, and many school-related activities she would do influenced my love for teaching.

Interviewed tutors participating in the study highlighted that parental occupation influences several students towards the path of occupational decision-making at NUL. Findings showed that students are more likely to take occupations parallel to those of their parents. In confirmation of the above facts by students, first-year tutor FOH expresses:

I think most first-year students choose careers through identity borrowing, which can be explained as choosing a career that is identical to that of one or both parents, particularly when such parents have tertiary qualifications.

He further elaborates:

Parental educational attainment, as a result, increases the chances of students to choose careers that are similar to those of their parents.

First-year tutor FOHS also expounds:

I often interact with students who ask if it would be possible to pursue nursing, for example, one first-year student once

told me she chose a nursing career because her mother is a nurse.

He adds:

Wishing to pursue careers that are similar to their parents is a sign of how powerful parental influence can be to children.

First-year tutor FOE articulates:

I had students who withdrew from our faculty to other faculties, even to other local tertiary institutions in the country just because they wanted to pursue careers similar to those of their parents.

In an exemplary manner, first-year tutor FOL articulates:

When one of the parents is a Lawyer and earns a lot of money, a child is likely to pursue the same career at a university believing that Lawyers have money, and therefore, he'll also have money when pursuing the same career.

Research demonstrates that parents inspire children in different ways to choose careers they desire. When children choose careers desired by parents, there is a likelihood of happiness, especially from educated parents that raises a spirit of hard working among supported children to prosper in their choices. The study also discovered that parental educational attainment has a significant influence in educational programmes chosen by secondary school students when transiting to NUL. First year student 2 FOST states:

My father holds a degree in Engineering, and I've been wishing to be in the same career, particularly when I first noticed his successes in the family. Therefore, I'm happy that I'll be an Engineer if I don't meet any challenges in the long run.

Likewise, first year student 1 FOA iterates:

I grew up in a farming family and fell in love with animals and farming at large. My mother graduated in Agriculture, and she would always tell me about the importance of farming, which I couldn't ignore because although self-employed, she

fed and took care of us with money from her farming production.

Interest in parents' occupations is common among secondary school learners in Lesotho. Mothers seem to be more influential and learners are more likely to choose similar professions to their mothers' than their fathers' occupations. Students who want to look like their parents are likely to select careers that resemble those of the parents; and this is more visible among female students. Learners are conversant that picking a similar career to a parent calls for relentless support during the process of professional selections to tertiary institutions. It can be concluded that parents feel proud and happy to see their children in the same professions as theirs, hence, they are more likely to support career choices made by those children.

4.2.1.3 Parental Support

The present study found that even though parents were in good careers, some do not force their children to follow the same professions as theirs, but support them in any career of their choice. As a result, some NUL students pursued different careers from those of their parents. For example, first year student 2 FOL states:

My father is a motor mechanical engineer who supported me in wanting to be a Lawyer in my future; and because I never wanted to study the same programme in tertiary institution other than Law, I don't remember hearing him discouraging me in my career wish.

Another first-year student 4 FOE explicates:

I chose education at NUL because of my mother who fed me with adequate information regarding the same programme. Nevertheless, honestly, I didn't know much about other programmes besides education during the process of applying to NUL, but I like education.

She adds:

I think my mother gave me the support I wanted though she's in a different occupation, which she never asked me to follow.

Similarly, a first-year student 3 FOL expresses:

I never wanted to take the same careers as my parents, because I think career has to align with a person's interest and what he or she knows better. In addition, lucky enough my parents never forced me into the same careers as theirs.

She adds:

My father is an Electrician while my mother is a teacher, but they encouraged me and supported my choice in law.

First year student 3 FOHS states:

I still remember well, after passing LGCSE exams, my parents asked me about what I want to study in tertiary institution, after telling them that I like nursing they said if it's what I like they support my choice.

First year student 1 FOST narrates:

I can't say my father forced me verbally to choose the programme I'm studying at NUL, but I can say things he would do to show his support for my studies at secondary school indirectly influenced me to choose engineering.

She further expresses:

My father would bring me magazines of female engineers in South Africa, and told me that women make very good engineers. Therefore, I think indirectly he influenced me to pursue engineering at NUL, as he never told me to pursue it in tertiary institution.

Likewise, a first-year student 2 FSS articulates:

I wanted to pursue any science-related programme in tertiary because my results were very good, but my parents asked me who'll take control of family businesses if I don't do any

business-related course at NUL. I think I felt pressurized to an extent that I ended up choosing BA Commerce and Accounting.

Support of parents during the process of choosing careers in tertiary institutions enhances students' self-efficacy. Thus, students who are given the opportunity to make own decisions learn fast to take responsibilities of their life conditions, and make choices that align with their interests and personalities.

4.2.2 Influence of Teachers in Career Choices

Students indicated that the little knowledge they had about educational programmes offered by local tertiary institutions in Lesotho made them consider any advice shared by their secondary school teachers without critical comparison of other possible programmes, particularly at NUL.

4.2.2.1 Role of Teachers' Advice in Career Choices

This study found that students' good performance in certain subjects was influenced by advice they got from their class teachers. Tutors revealed that teachers' advice becomes very crucial in cases where such teachers know strengths and weaknesses of their students in different school subjects. They further indicated that it is easier to influence students' career choice in what they know than in something they like but cannot perform well. First year tutor FOHS expresses:

I think the influence of secondary school teachers in careers chosen by students at NUL can be strong because they know every student's character, which means they can even advise such students to avoid certain careers and choose those careers that align with their skills and abilities.

She adds:

Even us here, we time and again have students coming to us and tell us about educational programmes they want to change to. As a result, I personally advise them, especially students I teach to choose certain programme because, for example, I know they can do well in careers with maths than reading theories.

First-year tutor FSS expresses:

In the classes that I teach, I know students who have strengths and weaknesses in some topics, and for sure, I can see those who can get good credits at the end of the academic year.

She adds:

I think secondary school teachers cannot avoid to advise and influence students to choose certain careers over others because they know exactly careers in which such students can fit well.

In relation to the advice from teachers in subjects that students excel, students confirmed that they were influenced by secondary school teachers to pursue careers in subjects they perform well. For example, first year student 4 FOST expresses:

My science teacher would always tell me that I'm good in sciences, therefore, he advised me to study engineering in tertiary institution after winning a first prize in science fair event.

In the same manner, a second-year student 2 FOHS narrates:

Teachers' influence in careers we choose is associated with what they know we're strong in. No teacher will ever talk about careers in which they know you're not good at.

He further explains:

One of my secondary school teachers advised me to pursue STEM-related programmes when I proceed to tertiary education.

Second-year student 3 FSS states:

My teacher wanted me to major in English and Literature when I considered applying to study at NUL, because of my fluency in English. However, I changed my study programme to Sociology after proceeding into second-year because I felt English was not my favourite subject at the university level.

The first-year student 6 FOE reflects:

When in secondary school I understood and passed Geography more than other subjects, and I remember my Geography teacher telling the whole class that if I can teach it, my students will always pass.

With confidence, she adds:

I could answer and explain most of the questions asked to the class, and that's when I realized I liked geography. I, therefore, decided to pursue B. Education at NUL majoring in geography.

For instance, first-year student 1 FOH indicates:

My teachers were as important as my own parents, therefore, every advice they provided to students was taken very seriously, and I would make sure that I take every teacher's advice. I'm pursuing English and Literature because of my secondary school English teacher.

Similarly, a first-year student 3 FOE expresses:

I remember well that every time our math teacher would be absent from class, he would ask me to spend the whole period explaining some formulae to my fellow students. That made me realize my capability in teaching, and I decided to apply and study B.Sc. Education at NUL.

In the same manner, first-year student 1 FOE elucidates:

My teacher treated me like her child, that is, she loved me and that made me rely more on her advices. I also passed her subjects like any other subject.

As a result, first-year student 1 FOA concludes:

Influence of teachers becomes significant in our lives when they inspire us into careers, we already have interest in, and that plays a major role in careers we choose in our lives.

The findings indicate teachers' advice to be important in assisting students' choices of careers. Teacher advice encourages students to ask questions on careers of interest. Students who rely on advises of teachers are comfortable in programmes they pursue at NUL. Secondary school teachers would provide career guidance sufficiently if they are taken to workshops helping them to engage students in career guidance activities.

4.2.2.2 Choice of Agriculture as Determined by Teachers

The current study revealed that students from other faculties at NUL were not as influenced by teachers as students in the FOA about their careers. First-year student 3 FOA elucidates:

I think my agriculture teacher played a crucial role in influencing my choice of agriculture at NUL. She would tell the whole class that they should apply for educational programmes that aligned with subjects they excelled in most at secondary school.

Consistently, first year student 4 FOA clarifies:

My agriculture teacher told me straight that if I want to enjoy life, I must pursue agriculture should I pass and go to the university. I liked and passed it more than other subjects pass.

In the same vein, first year student 5 FOA expounds:

Our school had some pigs, which were the responsibility of students doing agriculture, and after school every week I would clean the pigsty before going home, and that's when my teacher told me that the love I had for animals showed I could do well in agriculture. I took that advice, and here I'm the faculty of agriculture.

Students elaborated that some of their teachers established their own farming projects in the school compounds, where students would easily get involved and ended up loving farming. First year student 3 FOA states:

My agriculture teacher had her own pigs and a piece of land where she produced crops. He'd frequently take us to those

places during his teaching period for demonstration. Honestly, he inspired my love of agriculture.

Similarly, second-year student 1 FOA clarifies:

When in secondary school, I learned to love agriculture because our teacher would make us grow a lot of crops and sell in the community. That's when I realized the wealth aligned with crop farming.

Although agriculture teachers in secondary schools were significant in students' choice in the same field, some students who loved agriculture while in secondary school level education revealed a negative feeling towards them. For instance, first year student 6 FOA narrates:

My agriculture teacher told me in front of the class that I was not capable of pursuing agriculture, but because I liked it and had a feeling that she hated me, I worked hard and passed agriculture that I'm pursuing now at NUL.

Correspondingly, a first-year student 4 FOL narrates:

At the beginning of secondary school, I liked Agriculture, but unfortunately, I didn't pass it at the end of secondary school because my teacher made it very difficult. The way she explained different terms was not easy for secondary school students to understand.

Also, first-year student 4 FOST clarifies:

I still like agriculture even though I'm in different career here at NUL. I failed agriculture because my secondary school teacher was very lazy, and made this subject very difficult. Therefore, I hated and failed it because of him.

First-year student 5 FOST argues:

I liked agriculture with all my heart when in secondary school, but unfortunately my teacher would mock me in front of other students because my agricultural projects were never her favourite. So, she was not interested in whatever I'd do in her class.

The findings reveal that teachers are placed strategically to influence students' lives. The influence can either be positive as in inspiring students to work harder in a subject and ultimately choose a related career, or they can invoke students' hatred of a subject. In this study some students loved teaching while others hated it because of teachers' emotional reaction to students' learning. Another student passed in order "to prove a teacher wrong." It can be concluded that teachers must be made aware of their roles and responsibilities on students' career choices so that their interactions with learners is supportive, and their influence is controlled and professionalised.

4.2.3 Influence of Peers in Career Choices

Findings from the current study indicate that peers play a significant role in influencing types of careers preferred by secondary school students. Peers can be a source of career information at secondary school and tertiary level as presented below. The effect of peer groups joined during a secondary schooling period may have positive circumstances when students embark in the process of choosing what to study in tertiary institutions. First-year student 2 FOA expresses:

I performed well in agricultural studies while in secondary school, and it happened that five of my friends from high school ended up in agriculture when arriving at NUL. That is where we influenced each other to study agriculture if we succeed in the final examination, and own big fields where we can sell agricultural products for better living.

First-year student 1 FSS narrates:

Friends I made in secondary school became my great peer group members whom we would discuss economics together, and it happened that we passed well and the four of us are in economics at NUL.

She adds:

All I can say is that, peer relationships developed during secondary schooling don't only force students into careers

they don't like, but can as well prepare in making final decisions on what to pursue in tertiary institutions.

In the same vein, first-year student 6 FOH relates:

I heard my friends talking about psychology at NUL, and that was when I decided to apply and pursue psychology at the same institution, I realized after being admitted that it is only a module offered in B.A. Humanities.

The study further established that peer groups developed in secondary schools are effective, and can easily influence students to choose and pursue careers they do not really like. Participants' views are presented in the following quotes.

Second-year student 1 FOE explains:

Initially I was admitted into Public Administration because two of my best friends from secondary school influenced me to choose it, but I had to delete it at some point and chose education in second-year of my study.

He adds further:

Peer pressure in adolescent stage was very hard to control as compared to now when I know what I want. I'm in education because it's of my interest.

First-year student 3 FOL expresses:

I remember we planned with my friend that we want to pursue Law at NUL even before the end of grade 11, and we intentionally applied to pursue Law at NUL.

Another first-year student 1 FOL explains:

I still want to thank my secondary school friends for making me believe that Law is for me, because when at grade 12 I was still undecided about what I wanted to do at the university, but I listened to them and applied to pursue law.

In the same tone, first-year student 1 FSS articulates:

Peer influence can be very strong to everybody, and I'm saying this because I was influenced by my secondary

school peers to change my former programme into political sciences.

First-year student 6 FOA States:

I'm admitted to the same programme with my secondary school peers, and that makes us still belong together.

The study revealed that peers who transited from the same secondary schools and pursued similar educational programmes at NUL used to discuss future jobs. For example, first-year student 3 FOST narrates:

In our group when in secondary, we used to discuss what types of jobs we prefer for the future, and fortunately, we all dreamt of becoming engineers.

He adds:

Luckily, we're all admitted into the Faculty of Science and Technology.

Some students revealed that they were living with their extended family members who never attended tertiary education. Therefore, relied more on career-related information they got from peers when preparing to transit to NUL.

Second-year student 2 FOE states:

I relied on my peer group than anyone when having questions about careers offered at different tertiary institutions, because my aunt [guardian] never attended even secondary school level of education. Having smart friends helped me.

He adds:

All I can say is that, information from my friends assisted me to think and choose education because it's a career I like most.

In addition, a first-year student 6 FOHS articulates:

I was raised by my grandmother, and she'd always encourage me to take my school work seriously so that I could be in the university like so and so, but she wouldn't tell

me about what to study at tertiary level of education. Therefore, I relied heavily on my peers for career-related information.

First-year student 4 FOHS narrates:

I'm living with my grandmother who knows nothing about school life, so everything that I want to know about careers to follow in the university was sourced from my secondary school friends.

In the same tune, a first-year student 3 FOE narrates:

I lived with my uncle who didn't even finish his primary school level of education, and he never cared whether children go to school or not. Lucky enough we all liked school, and it was seriously not easy to get his opinion about anything relating to school. As a result, I trusted all the information I gathered from my peers about careers in tertiary institutions.

The information received by first-time tertiary students from their first-time fellow peers in tertiary institutions may tempt them to want to follow the same educational choices as those of their university peers. A first-year student 3 FOL articulates:

I have my best friend who is in the first-year of Law, and he keeps pushing me to change from education to the faculty of law. I think he is pressurizing me to an extent that I'll end up in law. I like the way he reasons, so I want to be like him.

First-year student 3 FSS articulates:

After NUL admissions, I became fonder of Economics because of more and interesting information about what I can be in the future if I graduate in Economics.

Likewise, second-year student 1 FOH expresses:

Actually, I was not knowledgeable about most of the programmes offered at NUL, let alone what they entailed, but my discussions with friends I met in this institution opened my eyes widely regarding programmes offered here.

Interestingly, views of the first-year tutors affirmed the influence of peer groups developed in tertiary institutions. Tutors' views were considered seriously because they might have experienced the same influence when in tertiary institutions. First-year tutor FSS states:

Newly established peer groups may have different information, which may make sense than the one associated with secondary school level of education.

First-year tutor FOH believes:

Every individual's belief is always determined by their statuses, and you can see some changes in their way of perceiving things. Therefore, I still want to believe that students are likely to rely more on information they get from new friends in tertiary institution than keeping career-related information from secondary school peers.

He further expresses:

Honestly speaking, I know from experience that new friends I met when arriving at NUL as a first-year student put me into a serious situation where I nearly pursued similar programmes to the ones they pursued.

This study also indicated that peer groups established at NUL were more influential than the ones formed at secondary school level of study as they became more helpful in informing students from different places in Lesotho about the university life. A first-year student 2 FOA states:

We students from the rural areas don't normally come to NUL in large numbers like those in urban areas, and it's rare to have more than five students from your secondary school here, and new friendships we start here influence either staying or quitting from chosen careers into new ones.

First-year student 3 FSS states:

I'd say I relied more on information I gathered from my classmates and roommates at NUL, which informed me about Sociology programme while I was initially admitted into

Social Work. I thank my newly established peers who made me realize other interesting programmes like Sociology.

In the same vein, second-year student 7 FOL expresses:

I was admitted in languages at NUL, but after learning from friends about the required pass mark to study Law, I decided to leave my previous programme, which was Economics to Law.

In addition, a first-year student 4 FOA expands:

After registering and pursuing tertiary education, I realized that advises from my tertiary friends make sense than the ones I got from secondary school peers.

She adds:

At least tertiary education peers talk and give advice to each other about how programmes they're following can be beneficial in the future, which makes it easy for one to check if there's any need to continue with or abandon such programmes.

Secondary school students perceive peer influence as a significant strategy that can enhance students' career-knowledge. Peer influence has helped the majority of secondary school learners to make well-informed careers even when they have transited to tertiary institutions. Peer interaction at all levels of education needs to be guided by career counselling professionals in order to help students focus on careers aligning with their interests.

4.2.4 Influence of Mass Media in Career Choices

Findings of the current study showed that the influence of mass media in secondary school learners' career selection is moderately based on print media, social media, and the radio to some extent.

4.2.4.1 Print Media

Print media such as prospectuses and pamphlets contribute less in informing learners' preferences of majors at NUL. The current research established that NUL produces prospectus and brochures, which students can have physical

access to, only if they can go to and collect them from NUL. For instance, second-year student 1 FOST expresses:

I went to the faculty office and requested a prospectus, which explained every requirement for me to change my former educational programme.

She adds:

I think the information I read on the prospectus helped me a lot when I was applying to NUL.

In the same fashion, a first-year student 3 FOHS says:

After getting NUL prospectus and reading through it, I realized so many things, including the possibility of changing a programme at any time when feeling like I don't feel content in my previous one.

In addition, a second-year student 1 FOST articulates:

I accessed all the information regarding educational programmes offered at NUL through the prospectus, which provided me with straightforward information that I can keep for myself to refer to when I want to. Therefore, I can say the prospectus was very helpful to me.

Similarly, first-year student 5 FOA advocates:

I personally relied on NUL prospectus when preparing to apply to pursue tertiary education. The information offered on the prospectus regarding B.Sc. Social Sciences was elaborated clearly. I think if students could get the same source, they would have gained adequate career-knowledge, and made programme choices they may not regret later in life.

Additionally, first-year student 2 FOST expresses:

I personally feel comfortable with information I read from a book or a paper, therefore I decided to travel from my home Teya-Teyaneng to get a prospectus so that I could also check other programmes.

The above views suggested that print media was a reliable source of information for the majority of students when they were in the process of choosing careers at NUL. Print media is one of the most significant ways of advertising, which can even reach parents, students, schools, and other interested institutions. However, the study reveals that the NUL prospectus is not readily available in secondary schools, each student had to travel to NUL to get the prospectus. For example, first-year tutor FOE expresses:

Prospectuses are significant to students in the sense that they are there, and don't require anybody to seek for second access once one has it in hands.

She further states:

I think availability of prospectuses in secondary schools can help as a mechanism meant to teach students about available programmes offered at NUL, which to my knowledge are not delivered to local secondary schools.

A first-year student 3 FOHS expands:

I think NUL should distribute prospectus to secondary schools so that students at exit level could be told about educational programmes they can choose to pursue at NUL. The prospectus helped me to realize that there is a bridging programme meant to upgrade students' results; and I attended this programme.

Findings revealed that print media, which in this study refers to prospectuses produced by the university to inform the public about offered educational programmes is not readily accessible. The university would benefit secondary school students if it distributes prospectuses to schools aiming at advertising their programmes. When prospectuses are delivered to schools, it may be advantageous for teachers to talk to students using evidence from written documents.

4.2.4.2 Social Media

The current study revealed that secondary school students access social media, and they consider it to be a reliable source of career-related evidence.

They access social media through free Wi-Fi from nearby companies and institutions, such as NUL and through purchasing data bundles from local companies like Vodacom and Econet. However, students reported they rarely utilise social media to search for careers to pursue in tertiary institutions, including NUL. For example, first-year student 2 FOH extrapolates:

I had a smart phone during my secondary schooling, but I don't remember using it to search for anything in relation to career. I would spend my time talking to my friends and reading about celebrities.

Similarly, second-year student 5 FOL states:

When in secondary school I didn't worry much about what I want to study as I already had decided to pursue law should I pass, so I used social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp to communicate with my friends.

Another second-year student 1 FOA indicates:

Data bundles are very expensive for students like us from the rural areas where open Wi-Fi is not easily accessible, so I logged into social media when I talked to my mother working in South Africa and only people I knew.

First-year student 1 FOST articulates:

I grew up in the Roma valley and completed my studies at St. Mary's High School. We used to come closer to NUL to access its open Wi-Fi, but I remember spending most of the time chatting with my friends than searching for careers offered at NUL.

First-year student 6 FOA states:

It's true we accessed open Wi-Fi in our environment, but I remember searching for careers offered at NUL once, and didn't get enough information regarding how to make choice of what I wanted to pursue.

For instance, a first-year student 4 FOA states:

The information disseminated by NUL concerning credits required for students applying for science programmes was not reliable; I'm saying this because when I arrived at NUL to seek clarification I was told a different story about requirements of students who want to pursue science subjects.

He further argues:

The information I got from NUL website concerning requirements into science-related programmes stated that, for example, one can qualify to pursue nursing with a C credit in mathematics, but when I got here, I was told I had to have B credit in math.

First-year student 1 FOA narrates:

I applied to NUL knowing that I qualified for nursing, but unfortunately, I was placed in agriculture without any explanation. Hence, I felt that online information about programmes offered in this university is not as said.

Further, the study established that unlike secondary school learners in the urban areas of Lesotho where internet services are easily accessible, learners from the rural secondary schools, experience challenges in accessing any type of social media due to different reasons as stipulated by the participants below.

First-year student 5 FSS explains:

I come from Mantsonyane in the Thaba-Tseka district, and I can say there are many students who complete secondary school education without owning a cell phone. This says that students in the mountainous region of Lesotho may not even know or use social media.

In the same manner, first-year student 6 FOE clarifies:

We students from the mountains of Lesotho become familiar with social media after getting a loan bursary from NMDS, and that's when we can buy cell phones and be able to access internet services.

She adds:

Sometimes after buying a cell phone for the first time, it takes time for a mountain girl like me to know how to use it, and to log into different internet platforms. Therefore, I don't think social media has a place in influencing rural students' choice of careers in tertiary institutions.

Second-year student 1 FSS expresses:

Last year when I first set my foot at NUL, I had no cell phone, and I couldn't even think of buying it before I buy clothes to look like a university student. Cell phone was the last thing I bought. As a result, I could hardly use it to search for appropriate careers, and I had to learn using it with my friends when searching for school reading material online.

Results of this study indicated that social media platforms used by learners are mostly Facebook and WhatsApp for other reasons than searching for careers offered in tertiary institutions.

4.2.4.3 Radio Broadcasting

Lesotho has a number of radio stations and a national television where tertiary institutions can advertise their educational programmes. This will enable people have access to educational programmes on offer to select from. The current study found that NUL does not use local radio stations to disseminate information regarding its educational programmes. For example, first-year student 6 FOE illuminates:

I never heard NUL talk about programmes they offer on the radio, or maybe it was because we listen to radio stations of our interest. Therefore, I think NUL can use all local radio stations to teach the nation about educational programmes offered.

He adds:

During the period of COVID-19 I was very confused and worried because I wanted to go to the university, but it wasn't easy to visit NUL and ask about the requirements in the

programme I envisaged pursuing. So, I believe using radio stations and the national television would have been of great help for students' career choice at NUL.

A second-year student 1 FOH narrates:

I think NUL should buy some slots in different radio stations in the country, and talk about the importance of pursuing tertiary education, and how to make choice of educational programmes it offers.

Contrarily, other students indicated that they heard about different educational programmes offered at NUL through some local radio stations. For example, second-year-student 1 FOHS narrates:

I think the presence of COVID-19 pandemic made the university to go to radios and talk about educational programmes, and how students would access application forms.

In the same manner, second-year student 2 FOH states:

I remember hearing NUL presenting about how students could apply online in one of the famous radios in the country. Information on how one should make choice of educational programmes was briefly narrated.

Similarly, first-year tutor FOH expresses:

If I can recall, I remember we've recently established a team that recently went out to one of the local radio stations talking about programmes we offer in the Faculty of Humanities.

He adds:

And, personally I want to believe that if all the faculties would adopt this as a career intervention programme used towards informing potential students about their programmes, we'd have students who at least have career-knowledge regarding NUL.

First-year tutor FOL narrates:

I haven't heard much about the university visits to local radio station to teach secondary school students about offered educational programmes, but I think that can be great, because it'll inform and encourage students to choose NUL for studying programmes they've learned about their availability.

NUL does not usually use local radio stations to inform the listeners in and outside the country about educational programmes on offer for potential students.

4.2.5 Learning Contexts as Determiners of Career Choices

In order to get admitted in post-secondary institutes, students have to pass Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) examinations. For instance, NUL has regulations determining admissions of secondary school learners who wish to pursue its programmes. Therefore, secondary school students wishing to pursue degree programmes of their choice at NUL have to satisfy certain admission regulations (AR) to be considered. For example, AR 2.05 regulation for first-time tertiary students at NUL states that a student:

Students must have obtained a Cambridge Overseas School Certificate in the 1st or 2nd class pass, with a credit in English Language, math and combined science subjects, which include Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and integrated science. Admission in certain courses in the Faculty of Social Sciences, for example, also requires a good pass in math.

4.2.5.1 Students' LGCSE Performance and Entrance Requirements in Desired Programmes

The current research established that secondary school learners who wish to study technical courses at the university level of education, which in this case was NUL, were restricted by their performance in STEM subjects at LGCSE. First-year student 2 FOA speaks out:

I wished to pursue B. Engineering at NUL, but I didn't have a good grade in mathematics. I had to supplement it, which wasn't possible at all because of some financial constraints.

Therefore, I opted for agriculture, not because I liked it but only because I wanted to come to university.

Similarly, second-year student 3 FOE articulates:

For all my secondary schooling years, I've envisaged studying Civil Engineering at tertiary level, but I couldn't because I had little knowledge on the exact pass mark in sciences and mathematics.

He adds:

After scoring Cs in sciences and mathematics, I thought I'd get admitted and pursue my dream career as a civil engineer, but I was told I'd be admitted if at least I had a B in science and math.

A first-year student 5 FOH relates:

I still believe if I passed math and science subjects well at the end of secondary school, I could have chosen B. Pharmacy at NUL other than languages.

First-year tutor FOA expresses:

Some of our students come to NUL with great expectations, and again without a clear understanding of what is needed to qualify in science programmes. They don't know the passing grades they should've scored in order to qualify in STEM careers.

Also, first-year tutor FOL stipulates:

Sometimes the fact that students had decided to pursue STEM-related careers in the university before sitting for LGCSE examinations really affects them badly when they find they have failed and have to supplement or choose something different from what they like.

First-year tutor FOA states:

I've realized that most first-year students at NUL did not have the love for agriculture before they were admitted. This was

because they did not get enough and clear explanations regarding what agriculture entails, as they applied for STEM-related careers, but weren't admitted because of poor LGCSE results.

She further clarifies:

But because of LGCSE results which deterred students from pursuing science programmes, such as engineering, nursing and others, the students easily opt for Agricultural Sciences.

Moreover, the study found that since NUL does not make some visits to inform secondary school students about offered careers, the students end up opting for careers they do not qualify in. First-year student 6 FOH expresses:

I think if the university could have visited us during our secondary school, people like me would have gained knowledge of careers they want to pursue in the future, meaning one could have worked hard enough to get a good pass knowing what he or she is aiming at.

Students face the challenge of fulfilling their dreams in STEM careers, because of failure to perform well in STEM-related subjects in high schools. The study indicates that high school learners who had to consider choice of non-STEM programmes were not satisfied in the alternative study programmes. For instance, second-year student 2 FOE indicates:

I applied to pursue Computer Science, but I was told that my average scoring, particularly in science subjects was low, hence I opted for education.

Likewise, first-year student 5 FOH expresses:

I envisaged studying Pharmacy at NUL, but I didn't perform well in STEM-related subjects, which are math and combined sciences. Therefore, I opted to pursue English Language and Literature.

In the same way, second-year student 3 FOE narrates:

I never thought of following education, particularly at NUL, but my dream was to follow the profession of Engineering because I was capable in math and science subjects at secondary school level. But my LGCSE results were not as good as I anticipated.

Second-year student 3 FSS explains:

Because of good passes I scored in LGCSE examinations, I applied to pursue Computer Science at NUL, which I couldn't sustain, because there's a lot of science and math involved in them.

He adds:

I think I was slightly influenced by the marks; hence I knew I wasn't that brilliant in science related subjects.

First-year student 5 FOH illustrates:

I'm not sure if I'll end up feeling comfortable in humanities, because I wanted to pursue Engineering, and I wasn't admitted because I failed math.

Similarly, first-year student 2 FOH expresses:

After completing my grade 12 I was ready to study Chemistry or Physics in the university, but after admission into theology, I was very disappointed because I discovered that one of the best options after graduating is to become a religious teacher.

In the same vein, second-year student 1 FOL states:

I never liked law, but because I had an A in English Language after sitting for LGCSE examinations, which changed my dream of becoming a doctor. My intention was to study nursing and later medical doctorate.

For many students, mathematics was the most difficult subject to pass at the end of secondary school. As a result, they opted for non-STEM careers at tertiary level which they were interested in. The issue of opting for careers they

never envisaged to pursue after completing secondary school education has placed most students in careers they are not comfortable in. First year tutors alike also confirmed this fact. For example, first-year tutor FOL highlights:

I don't think secondary school students in our country are prepared to face several challenges that frequently put them in careers they don't like.

She adds:

There're first year students who are not satisfied with careers they are pursuing in this institution, because they didn't pass math and science satisfactorily. So, these students still believe that they can be allowed to study, for instance, nursing.

First-year tutor FSS expresses:

It should be understood that students who lack career guidance, like our secondary school students here are likely to choose careers they don't fit in just to be in the university.

First-year-tutor FOH argues:

Not taking into consideration what students wanted to pursue in life before transiting to tertiary institutions, and not asking them about their contentment in educational programmes they pursue in tertiary institutions, they are likely to spend their working period unsatisfied.

He adds:

Since secondary school students come to the university with little knowledge of what is expected of them in studying STEM programmes in tertiary institutions, I think NUL should revise its responsibilities in provision of career guidance to first time tertiary students.

Students and tutors revealed that the reason why many students do not pass mathematics and science subjects in secondary is because they are taught in English, a language they do not understand. For instance, first-year student 2 FOL argues:

I don't think we fail math and science because they are difficult, but I believe terms used in teaching these subjects are not understandable, hence many secondary school students fail them.

Similarly, first-year student 4 FOHS expresses:

If math and science subjects were taught in Sesotho, I'd have passed with flying colours.

First-year student 6 FOST narrates:

My math teacher used deep English during the class, and that contributed in making math a nightmare, because I couldn't understand some things, and asking her wasn't easy because of her arrogance.

First-year tutor FOH explains:

I think all subjects would be enjoyable and achievable if they'd be presented in a native language.

He adds:

Every profession has its own terminology, and the fact that the jargon in math and science changes along the way makes it difficult for learners to cope up to grade 12.

In the same vein, first-year tutor FOA states:

There're students who change from agriculture to pharmacy because they can't understand something in this profession, so I think language plays the most important part for learners to pass or fail.

Brilliant students performing well in secondary school mathematics and science subjects usually aim higher and envisage pursuing STEM programmes in tertiary institutions. However, students fail at the end of the year because they claim lack of understanding of the examination questions. After scoring low marks in mathematics and science subjects they feel uncomfortable with non-STEM programmes chosen for them at tertiary institutions. Local secondary

schools prepare students to pass with good credits, but fail to prepare the same students to choose programmes that align with their skills.

4.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING PROGRAMME CHANGING

Having established that students are not exposed to career guidance, and are restricted from choosing certain programmes by their results, it was important to find out if students stick with or perform well in those programmes. The study found that students change programmes for a variety of reasons. These include; interest, difficulty and failure. Students decided to change their former educational programmes when they proceeded into the second-year level of study, because of interest they developed in their current programmes. This finding revealed that at second-year level of education students are well-informed about careers they want to pursue at NUL. Second-year student 2 FOHS expresses:

When I arrived at NUL I discovered that changing from one programme of study to the other is allowed, especially if you qualify for admission to another programme. I therefore decided to change to Environmental Sciences as a career of my interest.

Similarly, a second-year Student 1 FOE articulates:

I had opted for B.A. Humanities, but due to interest in Inclusive Education I requested transfer to the Faculty of Education to pursue B.Ed.

Another second-year Student 2 FOE expresses:

I've discovered of late that I was most passionate with teaching sciences than pursuing agriculture; therefore, I decided to follow my interest as a science teacher at secondary school level of education.

In the same fashion, a second-year student 1 FOL elaborates:

I was studying Sociology, but I wrote a letter seeking change to the faculty of Law. After doing some introspection from my experience with studying Sociology, I concluded that Law is

more alignment and resonates more with the career I would like to pursue in future.

Findings of this study indicated that difficulties encountered by NUL students in programmes, particularly STEM programmes, forced them to change into non-STEM educational programmes in the second-year level of study. A second-year student 1 FOH indicates:

At first-year, I was admitted into BSc Computer Science, but at the end of the academic year, I decided to change into B.A. Development Studies, because I could not perform satisfactorily as expected.

Another second-year student 1 FSS states:

I applied for B. Engineering, with which I encountered some difficulties, and realized that I passed unsatisfactorily and had to repeat a year. Therefore, I changed into Economics with minor in Statistics.

In the same vein, a second-year student 1 FOE narrates:

I applied to the faculty of education with the aim of becoming a science teacher after completion of my studies, but after completing the first year, which is commonly completed within FOST, I didn't perform well and decided to change a programme within the same faculty of education, but focusing on languages.

Moreover, second-year student 1 FOL points out:

I was initially admitted into first year FOST programme with an intention of pursuing Pharmacy, but at the end of first year, I realized I never enjoyed science-related subjects as I encountered some difficulties leading to poor performance. I therefore changed a programme of study.

The issue of changing a programme can happen in two ways, that is, where students change completely from STEM to non-STEM fields as highlighted above, and where they can change their programmes within the realm of STEM

fields as indicated below. For example, a second-year student 1 FOHS expresses:

I've been passing math and sciences in secondary school, and I told myself that I wanted to study Engineering in tertiary institution, however, I found these subjects more challenging in Engineering and I changed into Nursing when transited to second-year. I'm now comfortable in nursing.

Another second-year student 2 FOA argues:

I've been in Computer Science for the whole year, but after encountering some difficulties, like not understanding what is called programming in this course, I decided to switch to Agricultural Science.

Similarly, a second-year student 1 FOA narrates:

Well, I changed a programme from Soil Sciences to Crop Sciences because I struggled to deal with soil than I thought would be in crops. As a result, what I can say is, soil science for me is very difficult than crop sciences.

Despite the frequency of programme changing among NUL students, the institution does not consider provision of career guidance for students transferring across faculties in search of suitable careers. For example, second-year student 1 FOL illustrates:

I spent my first year at NUL still not comfortable in the programme I was studying, and at the beginning of second-year I decided to seek for professional advice because I chose to pursue a new programme. Unfortunately, there was no such help.

In the same vein, second-year student 1 FSS expands:

When choosing a career for the second time at NUL after encountering difficulties in FOST, I had to seek opinion from many people, including my tutor before reaching a decision about what I could change into.

She adds:

This says to me, NUL has to establish career guidance centre to assist returning students' choice of careers.

Results of this study revealed that students frequently changed from one programme to another, because they would have learnt about more appealing programmes. This highlighted a mismatch between learners' aptitude and choice of programmes.

4.3.1 Requirements on Changing Educational Programme at NUL

As previously emphasised in the current study, change of a programme at NUL may happen because of student's interest in new programme or because such student is encountering some difficulties in a programme. As stipulated in university statutes, NUL requires every student to write a letter to the Dean addressing his or her wish to change from one programme or faculty to the other, and to stipulate reasons for changing. However, provision of reasons for change of programme is not a must at NUL, implying that a student can just inform relevant authorities in writing about their intentions to change programmes. Second-year student 1 FOST narrates:

Changing a programme isn't a problem here as nothing strange is required, but I remember my first-year tutor only told me to write a letter specifying that I want to change my former programme of Computer Science to Agriculture, where I majored in Soil Sciences.

He adds:

Very importantly, she told me that I should go and find if there's space for me before she could grant me permission to change.

Second-year student 1 FSS explicates:

When changing from Engineering to Economics, I was a bit nervous because I thought I'd be required to reapply, but the only thing that was asked was to write a transfer letter to the Dean showing I'm willing to be in Economics.

She adds:

I thought I'd be asked to stipulate serious reasons why I was quitting my previous programme to the new one, because that involved also faculty transfer.

Another second-year student 1 FOA expresses:

When seeking permission to change from soil sciences to crop sciences, I remember well I didn't stipulate reasons, and I was allowed to transfer to the career of my choice.

The study showed that the students decide the issue of transferring from one career to the other, but tutors may want to know why a student wants to transfer from the initial career to the new one. For example, first-year tutor FSS articulates:

I don't think students are strictly required to mention reasons why they are transferring from the first chosen programme to the other, ok; requirement is only that if the student wants to transfer, he or she must find out whether there is space, and whether they qualify in the new programmes of interest.

She further expresses:

The student can write a letter to the faculty Dean, but it doesn't matter whether he or she gives reasons. All that matters is the request to transfer from one faculty to the other.

First-year tutor FOH narrates:

It is true that students are not forced to give reasons of transfer, but I always want to know why they want to transfer. Some of the reasons are clear and understood while other students do it for their friends in order to be in the same programme.

He adds:

I think the university needs to be careful about this habit of programme changing among students; and sit down to check if reasons given by students are valid.

First-year tutor FOA clarifies:

There's nothing wrong when students change programmes because they can be influenced by various factors, but I think the institution needs to know valid reasons leading to that change.

Students intending to change their former study majors are required to write a letter to the Dean seeking permission to transfer. The requirements for change of programmes do not ask students to give reasons of transfer.

4.3.2 Tutorship at NUL as a Means to Support Students' Careers

This study discovered that a tutor at NUL is some kind of students' adviser who is a lecturer by profession given an additional responsibility over students' welfare through the Ordinance No. 8 of 1979. The Ordinance specifies the appointment of tutors at NUL, and their responsibilities in their respective faculties. *The faculty shall elect the faculty tutor for a period of two years with the duty of assessing with, and coordinating the orientation, registration, counselling, and preparation of academic results of students. The duties of the personal tutors shall be to give advice to their students, particularly on the choice of courses available to them, on their overall academic process, and on post-graduate studies and careers* (Ordinance No. 8, promulgated on 29th September, 1979).

The present study also brought to light that NUL tutors are involved in various activities, including assisting students' changing of educational programmes, which entails choice of careers. However, first-year tutors are not fully aware of their responsibilities as tutors. For instance, first-year student 1 FOL explains:

When I wanted to change my first chosen educational programme, I sought advice from the tutor, who asked me why I wanted to change a programme. I told her, and I remember getting advice that I needed to be sure if that's what I wanted.

In the same vein, second-year student 2 FOHS narrates:

Even though tutors are not career guiders, I think they're playing a crucial role in choices we do while in the university.

The study also found that lecturers elected for the position of tutoring were not familiar with most of the guidelines that ensure their effective provision of tutoring at NUL. For example, first-year tutor FOH expresses:

To my knowledge, NUL doesn't give any sort of a written document that guides tutors to work uniformly, and I don't believe there's even a single tutor who can say there're clearly stipulated job descriptions about tutoring.

In addition, first-year tutor FOE expounds:

Even though there're no clearly stipulated job descriptions for tutors at NUL, I think that every tutor knows that he or she has to ensure, among others, that students are in programmes they have been admitted into, and have selected the expected number of courses in their programmes.

Moreover, she adds:

One other thing that every tutor has to do is to present students' results to Senate.

First-year tutor FSS spells out:

As a tutor, my duties include giving advice to students who transfer from other faculties to my faculty, which is, telling them what they should expect once they study programmes offered by this faculty.

Likewise, first-year tutor FOE expresses:

I have to counsel students on issues concerning their career wishes, like changing from one educational programme to the other.

Though they have statutory responsibilities, tutors seem not inducted on their responsibilities as they claimed not to know them. Given that students are not asked to give reasons for their change of programmes at NUL, the change can still be misguided as noted below. Lack of career guidance for students who are already registered with NUL does not help students to choose programmes

they feel content in, instead it contributes in advancing choice of unplanned for future careers. For instance, first-year student 3 FOL expresses:

When changing an educational programme because of certain reasons, NUL does not help us into careers that will match our interest and personalities as students so that we can enjoy the world of work in the future.

First-year students 2 FOE narrates:

I changed my former programme into another one just because I couldn't perform as well as I expected, and I transferred into Law which I still doubt I made a right decision because I don't like reading essays. As a result, I think it is important if we'd be given some counselling when changing programmes so that at least we understand what is likely to face us in the next career.

She also adds:

I think it is important if NUL give some counselling to changing students so that they are aware of requirements in programmes they are willing to pursue.

First-year student 3 FOA states:

It's difficult to realize potential job opportunities when one decides to change from one programme to the other, because tutors can't guide us when deciding to change. This put us in the risk of failing to spot careers that fit our interests.

Second-year student 1 FOH argues:

Choosing a programme of study at NUL is no difference from when choosing for the first time after completing secondary school, because there's no career counselling offered to students so that they can at least choose with full understanding of what they choose.

Though faculty tutors are expected to provide counselling to students when choosing educational programmes to pursue at NUL. However, the majority of first-year tutors did not understand the role of providing career counselling as

they indicated that, such needs training. This concludes that advice given to students by tutors when in the process of choosing educational programmes at NUL does not entail informed guidance on which programme to select and which one to ignore. Therefore, tutorship in this institution does not address the issue of career guidance.

4.4 SCHOOL CAREER GUIDANCE

This section presents the effect of career education and provision in the context of Lesotho. The presentation of findings starts by focusing on whether career guidance in secondary schools support learners in career choices when transiting to tertiary institutions, including NUL. In addition, the presentation looks at provision of career guidance at NUL, and how it assists students' understanding of careers they pursue at tertiary level of study.

4.4.1 Career Guidance in Secondary Schools

The current research recognised non-existent of career leadership in local high schools aiming at preparing students in career decision-making before they transit to tertiary institutions. First-year tutors at NUL witnessed lack of career guidance in schools around the country. For example, first-year tutor FOA narrates:

To my knowledge, our secondary school curriculum doesn't provide any kind of career education. Therefore, it's hard for me to believe that our secondary schools have career guidance services.

Similarly, first-year tutor FOH explains:

All I can say is, there're no career guidance facilities in our secondary schools, and therefore, this has continued to make it difficult for students to make well-informed career decisions at NUL.

First-year tutor FOHS states:

As far as I know, secondary schools in our country don't educate students about available careers in universities and colleges, or even alert them for the work environment. Our

students are only prepared to pass LGCSE and further their studies in tertiary institutions.

Similarly, First-year tutor FOL states:

The way students show frustration after being admitted at NUL indicates they've never been informed about educational programmes offered at NUL. They usually want to choose again when seeing some programmes for the first time.

First-year tutor FOA clarifies:

For a couple of years, even before I became a tutor, I've seen first time tertiary students wishing to change their initial educational programmes during registration period. That alone affirms the fact that secondary school students make choices of programmes they know little about.

First- and second-year students at NUL also reported limited or no career guidance in Lesotho secondary schools. First-year student 1 FOE confirms:

The secondary school I attended didn't have any kind of career guidance services, and I never heard any of my teachers talking about careers at school.

In the same vein, first-year student 3 FOST expresses:

There was no career guidance in my school, and no one would talk or inform students about life after secondary school.

She adds:

That says absence of career education in our schools put students at the risk of making wrong career decisions when transiting into university or deciding to go straight to work.

Also, a second-year student 1 FOE narrates:

The problem with secondary schools is to take for granted the fact that the very same student they are preparing for the future world needs to be helped to focus on what he wants

to do after completing schooling. Unfortunately, this student is prepared to pass required number of subjects and go to the universities or work without any kind of guidance in making selection of educational programme.

Absence of vocational guidance services in secondary schools negatively affect students, particularly during the process of choosing programmes to pursue at NUL. Provision of career guidance as a subject in teacher training institutions can equip in-service teachers with skills that can be used to prepare secondary school learners for right choices of careers by the time they transit to universities and colleges.

4.4.1.1 School Trips as a Means of Career Counselling

The study revealed that school trips to different tertiary institutions and industries helped secondary school learners' choice of careers because they gathered knowledge in various educational programmes and jobs. First-year student 4 FOHS expresses:

When in grade 11, my school took a trip to Motebang Hospital in Leribe, where we learned about different duties of nurses and doctors. That's where I learned about the two professions.

He further elaborates:

If it weren't of such school trip, I wouldn't be knowledgeable about the requirements for being in such professions.

Second-year student 3 FOHS elaborates:

When in grade 10, we'd a one-day trip to NUL where we learned about different educational programmes offered. That's when I saw and learned about the faculty of health sciences.

Similarly, first-year student 1 FOA confirms:

I think visiting different companies with the aim of learning how they operate, and what kind of people are employed helped me and other students to pursue careers they know in tertiary institutions. The school trip we took to Katse in

2019 influenced my love for water engineering as our tour guide explained it.

She expresses further:

If NUL was offering water engineering, I'd have chosen to pursue it, because I supplemented and passed math and sciences before admission.

Second-year student 1 FOST articulates:

While still at secondary school, we visited Lesotho Flour Mills and gained how different machines worked, and that was the most fascinating experience to see that all machines were operated through the computer.

On the other hand, first-year tutors opined that school field trips can have a significant influence when secondary school learners are in the process of choosing careers to pursue in tertiary institutions. For instance, first-year tutor FSS articulates:

I wish secondary schools would frequently organize trips to different companies in the country where students can see various careers, and what types of people are engaged in them.

She also indicates:

When students see the calibre of people in different careers, including careers of their interest, it becomes easier for them to make informed career decisions than when they lack information.

Correspondingly, first-year tutor FOA clarifies:

Students believe in what they see, and learn to love or have it. Therefore, I think parents have to play a big role in collaboration with schools in helping students to visit industrial sites and see what is happening there.

The fact that local secondary schools do not provide career guidance services to students when transferring to tertiary institution, it can be argued that field

trips organised by schools introduce various careers in different institutions to students so that they can make well-informed career choices. This concludes that trips to industrial areas can be used in secondary schools as a way of career management meant to introduce learners to the world of work.

4.4.1.2 Role of Annual Career Expo in Students' Career Choices

In order to address absence of occupation leadership services in schools, CHE is encouraging educational institutions to provide professional guidance for secondary institutes in Lesotho. The current study revealed the annual career expo organised by CHE as a beneficial activity for secondary school learners' career choice to some extent. For example, first-year student 3 FOE states:

When I was in grade 11, I attended a career guidance activity held in Maseru by tertiary institutions where they showed-off programmes they offered, and how we should choose those, we envisaged pursuing.

Likewise, first-year student 4 FSS states:

I envisaged pursuing Economics after getting information related to it when in grade 11 during career expo as I regarded as a good match for my interest.

She adds:

What I can say is, career guidance activity held by local tertiary institutions helped me to make the choice of a programme I liked when preparing to transit to NUL.

First-year tutor FOE narrates:

I think we should give a big applause to CHE and local tertiary institutions for encouraging secondary schools to attend a one-day career expo, because that's how they address lack of career guidance services in secondary schools.

She further states:

Although the period for this expo is very limited, at least it's shown a good move towards alerting students about what they should expect in tertiary institutions.

Second-year student 1 FOST explicates:

I was informed about educational programmes offered at NUL during one-day career expo. The expo assisted me to know for the first time some programmes offered by NUL as I was familiar with very few of them.

He further stipulates faculties he never knew prior to attending career expo:

For instance, I didn't know programmes such as Humanities, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences are offered at NUL until I got that information while attending career expo event held in Maseru.

However, the study found that students learned about careers of interest during the procession of career expo event. For instance, second-year student 2 FOHS clarifies:

Career expo assisted me to notice careers that I could choose from, that is, careers I thought would match my interest.

Another student, for example, second-year student 1 FOL elucidates:

I developed interest in law since secondary school, particularly after attending a one-day career expo while in grade 11.

In the same vein, first-year student 1 FOHS expresses:

During secondary schooling, I was already fascinated by Pharmacy, and my love of it was strengthened by information I received from career expo event held annually for secondary school students by tertiary institutions.

First-year student 4 FOST proclaims:

I knew I wanted to study B.Sc. Education at NUL, but I didn't know what it entailed. But, after attending one-day career expo I learned that there was a bridging programme offered by NUL for students who wanted to upgrade their LGCSE results.

Another first-year student 1 FOST also indicates:

I think, I was certain about what exactly I wanted to study at NUL after attending career expo. Before attending the expo, I had so many things in my head.

Likewise, first-year student 2 FSS elaborates:

I'm sure that career expo is significant in students' lives, but what I didn't get a chance to ask questions I had about Economics though I decided prior to sitting for LGCSE that if I pass, I'm going to study Economics at NUL. Time allocated for that activity was inadequate.

This study also found that students opined that career expo event needs to be extended as students go back to their secondary schools without enough information about careers in tertiary institutions. For instance, first-year FOE tutor expresses:

In the year 2019, I attended career expo, which was held in the Maseru district as usual. What I noticed during that good intervention was that, students attended in large numbers, and it was very difficult for institutions' representatives to attend to every student's needs.

She adds:

I think students need time to ask questions, and get satisfying responses regarding careers of interest as that can help them to weigh their strengths and weaknesses in such careers.

In the same fashion, first-year FOH tutor articulates:

If things were done properly, taking into consideration absence or limited career guidance in secondary schools, career expo was supposed to be performed for seven conservative days of the week in order to give students enough time to ask questions in careers of interest.

Similarly, first-year FOL argues:

It is true that students know about law as a career, but it is common that they don't know what it entails, and after being admitted into law they quickly transfer or change into other educational programmes because of difficulties they encounter.

She also states:

I personally think it is wise for secondary schools, tertiary institutions, and other involved stakeholders, like CHE to sit down and reschedule periods for career expo so that at the end it benefits students.

Likewise, first-year tutor FSS narrates:

Because of regulations about social distancing and travelling, the event was not held for the period of the pandemic.

The first-year student 5 FOST states:

I haven't had an opportunity like past students to attend career guidance expo held in Maseru because of COVID-19 restrictions. So, we missed a lot, and I think NUL could have spent a week disseminating the same information they would have provided during one-day career expo after admissions.

In the same manner, first-year student 4 FSS articulates:

While in junior secondary schools I already knew about career guidance provided by local institutions to senior secondary school students, and I was personally looking forward to attend, but unfortunately, COVID-19 measures couldn't allow such activity to commence.

In the same fashion, first-year student 3 FOA indicates:

My school couldn't attend career expo due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, which I think affected most secondary schools in Lesotho.

Other discoveries in this study indicated that NUL has no professional guidance structure to help its students to make career decisions. This implies that students who encounter any sort of challenge in making choices of educational programmes are forced to consider other sources of information, such as tutors.

First-year tutor FSS states:

To my knowledge, there're no career guidance facilities at NUL, and not unless someone can tell me otherwise.

In the same mood, first-year tutor FOA expresses:

NUL doesn't offer career guidance to students, but all I know is the counselling unit, which I don't think guide students on how to make choice of educational programmes to pursue at NUL.

First-year tutor FSS expounds:

No, NUL doesn't assist in students' choice of educational programmes, which I think contributes negatively to choices they make every time they change programmes.

She adds:

I think the slightest opportunity that NUL gets in guiding students is only during a one-day career expo that is annually held in Maseru with other institutions.

Annual career expo conducted by CHE and tertiary institutions in Lesotho for secondary school learners assist and prepares them to make well-informed career choices, especially when preparing to transit to tertiary institutions, including NUL. However, the majority of learners showed that this expo does not give answers to questions they have on professions they want to follow in tertiary level of education, hence, they keep choosing careers they do not fully understand.

4.4.2 Provision of Career Guidance at NUL

This study established that NUL has no structured career guidance centre to help registered students' understanding of careers they are pursuing. In this case, students from local secondary schools come to NUL with little or no knowledge of educational programmes provided by this institution. As a result,

first-year students are likely to continue with programmes they have little or no knowledge of where they are taking them. Even after gathering information on different programmes, no one assists them to understand their choices. First-year student 3 FOA states:

The issue of knowing little about careers offered at NUL continues even when we're registered, because at the time when one wants to change from one programme to the other it becomes a problem as no proper career guidance is offered.

A second-year student 1 FSS expounds:

I want to consider another career in the faculty of education if I can get clear information about what exactly I should expect when leaving the career I'm already in to the new one.

She argues:

I think absence of career guidance facilities at NUL puts a lot of us in the risk of pursuing careers we don't really understand. Therefore, I really think NUL should think otherwise about establishing career guidance unit.

Second-year student 1 FOL states:

I think NUL should've established career guidance services many years ago because it's the oldest university in the country. This says to me; the institution has produced many graduates who weren't helped to align with careers of their match.

Absence of career guidance facilities at NUL has also been confirmed by tutors who perceived it as a challenge that encourages production of personnel that fail to compete in the world of work because of lack of knowledge in careers they had pursued in the universities, such as NUL. First-year tutor FOH expresses:

The issue of career guidance at NUL brings a huge challenge on both students and tutors. Therefore, a little guidance we provide to students is sometimes taken as career guidance,

especially when they want to change from one programme to the other.

He adds:

It must be understood that we're not career counsellors by profession, and I can't say advices I always gave to students helped them to make well-informed career decisions.

In the same way, first-year tutor FOL argues:

Even though we can act as if we're assisting students in selecting programmes to follow while in our faculties, of course the university expects us to offer therapy to students; the remaining fact is that, I think we contribute in a wrong way because we're not in a position to guide students about selecting educational programmes.

She adds:

Therefore, all I can say is that, provision of career guidance to students by NUL isn't effective, be it during the annual career expo or when students are already registered in this institution. All I can say is, our students are not guided to understand programmes they've registered for.

First-year tutor FOE explains:

We've recently established groups of lecturers in our faculty who visited schools and sensitized secondary school students about NUL, and the faculty of education.

She adds:

I think the continuation of that initiative can benefit secondary school students who want to become teachers in the future.

Study participants opined that provision of career guidance is very limited at NUL, and that fails to narrow the gap of unknowledgeable students when coming to career choices at NUL. Tutors indicated that even though they are expected to provide career guidance to learners as highlighted in Ordinance

No. 8 of 29th 1979 of NUL, they did not feel confident that they could provide career guidance.

4.4.2.1 Career Guidance Intervention of NUL Orientation Activity

At the beginning of each academic year, NUL holds a one-week orientation for first-year students. This activity enhances learners' career knowledge, particularly about different educational programmes offered in tertiary institutions. The current study established that a one-week orientation session held by NUL annually does not help students to embark in the process of career decision-making when already admitted. For example, first-year tutor FOH explains:

The core business of orientation session includes introducing first-time tertiary students to the Senior Management Team of NUL, which normally comprises of Officers, Deans of the faculties as well as the university Directors.

He elaborates more:

Orientation starts, with among others, rooms allocation at the residences to the first-tertiary students before the core business.

The study also discovered that in this session, relevant authorities ensure students that NUL is taking the responsibility of doing anything and everything to make sure that they realize their dreams. For example, in welcoming the 2021/2022 the Pro-Vice Chancellor narrated:

We will try to understand who you are, what your dreams are, and how you achieve them.

Additionally, the Dean Student Affairs clarified:

My office ensures that you enjoy your life at NUL with availability of various facilities, such as clinics, sports, and recreation centre, careers and counselling and welfare centres (social growth).

First-year student 6 FOA clarifies:

I think orientation session is okay as it helps first year students to understand varsity life, which I can tell it's totally different from the one in secondary schools. However, I still believe it'd be of great help if it focuses more on choices made by students, and helps them to align with their choices.

NUL holds orientations annually aiming to help first-time tertiary students to settle in a new environment; be it their residences, hall rooms, the classrooms or the library, not assisting them on how to make well-informed choice of study programmes. For example, first-year tutor FOHS narrates:

I don't think NUL's orientation assists first year students in making career choice because by the time we meet with them they had already made choices.

Moreover, first-year tutor FOL expresses:

When meeting with first year students here, we always think they've made choices of careers they like most, and what we do is to teach them with an understanding of helping them to fulfil their career expectations.

The current study revealed that the orientation session did not help first-time NUL students to make career choices because they chose such careers before admissions. First-year student 5 FSS clarifies:

I don't think orientation session plays any important role in shaping students' career choice, because it normally takes place when most of us are in the process of registration. Therefore, we still begin classes without clear understanding of educational programmes we're about to pursue at NUL.

Also, first-year student 1 FOE argues:

Orientation session does not help us understand programmes we've chosen, and I realized that students can't ask questions about their programmes. We're just told what is expected of us, and the next week we're expected to attend classes.

Despite the fact that NUL is providing first-year students with a long-week orientation, this initiative does not provide any information to students so that they can be informed, and change their careers before the academic year begins. The main purpose of orientation session is about familiarising first-year students with NUL management, halls of residence, and procedures for existing programmes that they have applied for.

4.5 SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS IN CHOOSING CAREERS

Findings of the current study revealed absence of career guidance facilities in local high schools in Lesotho, hence a great need for integration of career education in secondary school curriculum. For example, first-year student 6 FOL clarifies:

Career guidance must be aimed at preparing students for both the workplace and tertiary education as that helps students to transit to university with what they've developed in early years.

Similarly, first-year student 6 FOE suggests:

Secondary schools must establish occupational leadership as an independent subject, which is meant to equip learners with skills allowing them to make informed career selection. I think this can help students during the processes of career choice for tertiary education.

Additionally, second-year student 1 FOL illuminates:

I think career guidance should start earlier than Grade 11 because some students don't even finish secondary schooling due to various reasons, so that even those who won't go to universities are helped to make career choices.

The study indicated further that integrating career education in school curricula can improve the support needed by students when making career decisions on what they want to study at tertiary level of education. For instance, first-year tutor FOL expresses:

It's important to ensure that secondary school students are supported in making career choices, and I think the best way is to introduce career education in Form 4 and Form 5.

She adds:

I'm talking about these two grades, because this is where students are prepared for choices of further studies, and they need to know challenges of careers they want to pursue.

First-year tutor FSS articulates:

I thought the new secondary school syllabus would consider the importance of career education, because it's new to both teachers and students. I still think there's a great need to integrate career education in the curricula of both teacher training institutions and secondary schools as a tool preparing students for future careers choices.

In the same vein, first-year tutor FOA states:

I think secondary schools have to create some slots where every teacher is given the opportunity to inform her class about job activities relating to his or her subject, and also tell students about challenges they can face in choosing such careers.

In addition, she says:

But I still want to believe that even teacher training institutions in the country, which to my knowledge are NUL and LCE need to support secondary school learners' career choice by integrating career education in their curriculum. This will ensure that every student is under the supervision of trained career teachers.

A first-year student 3 FOE narrates:

There was a male teacher at my school who'd always tell us about challenges and advantages of teaching, and I think that's a good way of providing career education, which I think it played a supportive role for me because I came to study

education knowing what I should expect in the world of teaching.

As highlighted earlier, local secondary schools do not provide career guidance and counselling services. This has been confirmed by study participants. For example, first-year student 6 FOST expresses:

I think secondary schools need to establish career guidance facilities, which can be used to help students in understanding how careers they choose can align with their interests.

First-year student 4 FOA explains:

Establishment of career guidance facilities or at least employing teachers with guidance skills can be of great use to students, because such teachers can spot students' abilities in certain programmes and in understanding their choices even before they can apply for them in tertiary institutions.

In the same way, first-year tutor FOH expresses:

I think establishment of career guidance services can help students in comparing among all educational programmes that they envisage to pursue in tertiary institutions, and choose accordingly.

This study revealed that the easy way of enhancing career guidance in secondary school, especially where there are no structured career guidance centres like in Lesotho, is organising frequent field trips. First-year tutor FOE states:

I think organization of frequent field trips by secondary schools may introduce students to what is really happening in the workplace, so that they make well-informed career choices.

Second-year student 7 FSS expresses:

I think the effectiveness of field trips can be felt if such trips may happen four times a year, that is, each quarter so that it becomes part of learning in secondary schools.

He adds:

Yes, well-organized field trips, such as those that introduce students to STEM careers are very important, because they may increase the number of students joining STEM programmes in universities.

Second-year student 1 FOH states:

I've seen that students performing fine in math and science lose interest because of non-exposure to related companies and colleges. This doesn't inspire students to work hard in STEM-related careers.

She adds:

Taking students to institutions like Leloaeng, NUL, and Lerotholi Polytechnic can inspire secondary school learners, because they can see the environments in which students; for instance, pursue engineering and other related programmes.

This study established a need for tertiary institutions in Lesotho to frequently visit local secondary schools, and inform them about educational programmes they offer. First-year tutor FOL narrates:

There's a silo existence between secondary schools and tertiary institutions which affect the manner in which tertiary institutions must disseminate information regarding educational programmes offered.

In the same fashion, first-year tutor FOH explains:

It's true that rural students may not be familiar with educational programmes offered at NUL, therefore, I want to believe that in order to address this situation our institution can distribute pamphlets informing secondary school students about its programmes.

First-year tutors FOE states:

We've already started to visit secondary schools where we inform them about programmes offered in the Faculty of Education, though this initiative is still in the beginning.

She adds:

I think if this becomes a routine, it can help a lot of students to understand and consider choice of education when transiting to NUL.

Similarly, first-year tutor FOA expresses:

I think visitation of secondary schools should be organized on the basis of career guidance, where every faculty of NUL is represented so that the overall information is presented to learners.

This research also indicated that secondary school educators must be given the opportunity to attend basic training in career guidance. First-year student 3 FOE expresses:

After completing my diploma certificate in teaching, I spent some years teaching at secondary school level, and I think teachers need training in career guidance through workshops.

He adds:

Children at secondary school level keep asking question regarding life after secondary schools, and that needs a teacher who can advise and tell students what is expected both in tertiary institutions and the world of work.

First-year student 6 FOA states:

Teachers who understand the significance of career guidance can effectively guide students, and enjoy spending time talking about careers in her or his class.

Second-year student 1 FOL narrates:

Training in-service teachers about career guidance can positively influence students' choice of careers, because they'll make well-informed careers in tertiary institutions.

Provision of workshops for in-service teachers was also revealed by two first-year tutors as important in supporting secondary school students during the process of making career decisions prior to tertiary education. For instance, first-year tutor FOH explains:

I think when teachers are knowledgeable about career guidance, they can help students better than when they don't have any idea.

He adds:

I want to believe that workshopping secondary school teachers on career guidance issues can bring a huge change in a way students choose programmes in tertiary institutions.

First-year tutor FOST articulates:

When teachers know that they're responsible, it becomes very easy for them to even ask individual students about careers they envisage following in life.

She adds:

Therefore, I think there's a great need to equip secondary school teachers with career guidance skills for the benefit of students' knowledge of careers.

Findings of this study indicated that even though secondary school teachers have been regarded as reliable sources of career-related information by some learners, they do not have knowledge on how to engage learners into career guidance activities. For example, first-year tutor FOL articulates:

Teacher training institutions in the country don't teach career education, and that make me believe secondary school teachers are not familiar with career guidance activities.

Similarly, first-year tutor FOH expresses:

It is evident that because learners come to the university with little or no knowledge of careers offered, they didn't get the opportunity to come across teachers who engaged them into career guidance activities.

He adds:

To my knowledge, NUL and Lesotho College of Education as institutes providing potential teachers with training, don't have a course on career guidance, hence, I'm certain that secondary school teachers may not be knowledgeable about career guidance.

In the same vein, first-year tutor FSS states:

My child is in one of the English Medium Schools in town, and among subjects taught in that school, I've never seen anything talking about career supervision. That made me believe that no teacher is capable of providing career guidance to students from grade 8 upwards.

As highlighted in the current study, secondary school students transit into tertiary institutions with little or no knowledge of programmes offered, hence, they are in the risk of choosing careers that fail to match their interests and personalities.

4.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

It has been discovered that secondary school learners in Lesotho are affected by a lot of issues during the process of choosing careers to pursue at NUL. Educational background of parents is one of the factors that play an important part in influencing students' choices of careers, particularly when parents have tertiary qualifications. Graduate parents are able to gather information regarding educational programmes of their children's interests. They also have a tendency of discussing possible careers with their children, which contributes to parental guidance. All career-related information gathered by parents from different sources is a sign of support, which is likely to influence children to make choices of educational programmes that resemble their parents' occupations.

Students with less educated parents and/or guardians rely heavily on career information provided by teachers, because they perceive such teachers as the resemblance of their parents. In this regard, secondary school teachers also have a great influence on choices of careers made by students when preparing to continue tertiary education. Teachers may associate certain subjects with some students depending on their strengths and weaknesses. For instance, teachers give advice and motivation to students in careers that they know such students can pass. That means advises of teachers and motivation to pursue certain careers at the university help in channelling students into careers that align with their skills.

This study highlighted that though advices from teachers on career-related issues was significant, it is not always that learners follow such advises. It is true that students can choose programmes advised by teachers when registering for tertiary education, but they are likely to change to new programmes at the beginning of second-year of studies at NUL. Sometimes students develop hatred towards other careers because they feel that teachers teaching related subjects are arrogant. Teacher arrogance has deterred students from choosing certain educational programmes at NUL. A first-year student from the Faculty of Education (FOA) developed a negative attitude towards agriculture, even though he used to pass it in secondary school, just because of the arrogant approach of his agriculture teacher towards students.

Students who hardly get career-related information from teachers rely on peers as another important factor that can influence their choices of careers in life. Interaction of peers and their discussions serve as a significant platform where students get information regarding educational programmes offered at NUL and other tertiary institutions. Peer groups established in secondary schools have influenced students to choose related programmes in the university, even though some students may find that secondary school peers have influenced them into careers they do not like. Findings of the current study have indicated that students seem to understand better some careers even those they never knew about before coming to the university when they make new friends in the university.

The fact that students know about other programmes after enrolment shows inadequate information from the local mass media, which includes print media, social media, and radio broadcasting. The above-mentioned forms of mass media in Lesotho do not contribute in helping students when in the process of choosing careers of interests at NUL. Students are able to access different forms of social network, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and others, but they spend most of the time communicating with friends and families, instead of searching for offered careers at NUL. The university under study has not yet considered advertising its programmes through radio broadcasting, which according to some first-year tutors, that can increase students' knowledge of programmes available at NUL. The institution has its own radio station broadcasting within the Roma valley demarcations, but the two students who were born and completed their secondary school in the valley did not mention any career guidance programme aired from the campus radio.

Secondary school students wishing to pursue science-related programmes at NUL are denied such an opportunity by poor LGCSE results. For instance, students who envisage pursuing STEM programmes at NUL get frustrated when they score lower than the required grade of C, and cannot be admitted in the Faculty of Science and Technology (FOST) at NUL. The campus admits students who obtain at least C and above into FOST in preparation of STEM programmes in the following years. Participants revealed that non-existent of vocational leadership in high schools produces learners who have less knowledge of careers available in industrial work sector. Even career intervention programmes organised for secondary schools, such as educational field trips and annual career expo do not fully engage students into a learning process of careers of their match. Against this background, students come to the university with many questions unanswered regarding careers they want to follow.

Findings have shown that in addressing the challenge of admitting secondary school students who have not been guided when choosing programmes to pursue, NUL engages tutors to provide career counselling support for students who change from a certain programme to another one. First-year tutors are not certain about their duties, which include providing guidance to students when

changing programmes. The study found that first-year tutors are only sure about duties, such as presenting students' marks to the Senate, and seeing that students have registered for expected credit hours. This concludes that NUL tutors do not practice career guidance activities when students are faced with challenges that coerce them to change their former study programmes into the new ones. This is followed by another finding, which claimed that there is no particular activity at NUL that can assist students' choices of careers.

If the students are not guided with regards to carrier choices that fit their personalities and interests, tertiary students will develop a high tendency of shifting across programmes, which from findings of the current study was chief among male students shifting from STEM programmes to non-STEM programmes compared to female students. This has been blamed on the Lesotho education system that has never anticipated integration of career education in secondary schools. Change of programmes among NUL students is not guided as reported by the participants who pointed out that a common procedure for shifting from one programme to the other requires writing of a letter to relevant authorities tabulating reasons for transfer. Transfer is approved based on the availability of space in the new faculty. Therefore, this concludes that students' career choices are not monitored from secondary schools throughout tertiary institutions, and this places students at the risk of making wrong career choices.

Having discovered that secondary school learners' choices of careers have not been taken seriously by the Government of Lesotho and schools' authorities, the current study indicated a great need for support of students in choosing suitable educational programmes in tertiary institutions. This support should be based on integration of career learning in high schools, frequent educational field trips to local industries and organization, and provision of career counselling in secondary schools, with workshops for teachers on career-related issues so that they can engage students in career guidance activities.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter five discusses findings of the present study. The chapter starts by expounding the theoretical viewpoint that supports this research, and it applies the theoretical lens for explaining the discoveries. Furthermore, the current chapter discusses results of this research under four comprehensive clusters: (a) factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices; (b) factors influencing programme changing; (c) school career guidance; and (d) support for students in choosing careers.

5.2 THEORETICAL LENS

The current study accepted Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-making (SLTCDM) as its lens to direct interpretation of information from NUL undergraduates and tutors. SLTCDM advocates for academic and job-related selections students get exposed to before transiting into work sector (Saint-Ulysses, 2017). Choices of careers among secondary school learners is determined by various influencers, such as parents (Mathatha & Ndlovu, 2017; Nawabi et al., 2019; Chifamba, 2019; Lloyd et al., 2018; Sarkodie & Asare, 2020), teachers (Mordal et al., 2020; Abah et al., 2019; Javed, 2018; Yaqoob, 2017; Dodge & Welderufael, 2014), and peers (Oduh et al., 2020; Duku et al., 2021; Arif et al., 2019; Naz et al., 2014; Yean & Chin, 2019), which in the end may lead them into regular changing of educational programmes at universities and colleges (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Change of programmes is common among NUL students, which according to Abubakar (2019), is a common issue facing learners from secondary schools that do not help in supporting their choices of careers in tertiary institutions. The findings start with factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices.

5.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' CAREER CHOICES

This study revealed that students' career choices at NUL are influenced by factors, such as parents, teachers, peers, mass media, and school career guidance facilities. Learning context as a determiner of career choices is another significant factor that influence learners' career decision-making at

NUL. This section starts by discussing the influence of parents on students' careers choices.

5.3.1 The Role of Parents in Learners' Career Choices

The study found that learners' choice of careers is influenced by various factors such as their parents' educational attainment, occupation, and support.

5.3.1.1 Parental Educational Background as Stimulus for Career Choices

With regard to contextual or social influences to career choices, this study found that parental educational achievement played an imperative part in NUL undergraduates' selections of educational programmes. Parents holding college or tertiary qualification are capable of offering career supervision to their children, which allowed them to pick programmes they understood at NUL. Students understood programmes they were following because of related-information provided by their parents. These findings are supported by studies conducted elsewhere, for example, [Mbagwu et al. \(2016\)](#) in Nigeria; [Uka \(2013\)](#) in USA; [Humayon et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Kazi et al. \(2017\)](#) in Pakistan; and [Lan and Ngoc \(2020\)](#) in Vietnam revealed that, secondary school learners whose parents have reached advanced level of education are steadier, and do not meet problems in making vocational selections when equated to learners whose parents have low academic experience. Since the present study was not specifically interested in parental education, it did not make judgements on how the educated, less educated, and non-educated parents do control learners' career selections.

Moreover, this study revealed that educated parents accessed different foundations of information, mainly internet where they logged into websites and copied programmes accessible in universities and colleges. Students from the current research confirmed selections of educational programmes under the stimulus of parents' control, particularly when notifying them about accessible programmes in universities and colleges in Lesotho. It is, therefore, vital to mention that educated parents can dig deeper to search for programmes that guarantee learners' employability after successfully completing studies. These findings are in line with [Agyiri \(2020\)](#) who indicated that educational levels of parents have enormous power on professions pursued by adolescents,

because parents can check for the requirements of existing programmes while considering them in judgement of their children's strengths and weaknesses.

The current study showed that students had parents who know their weaknesses and strengths, hence, they helped them to avoid programmes assumed to challenge them at tertiary level of education. In association with the above finding, [Barnes et al. \(2020\)](#) point out that educated parents are able to distinguish school subjects that challenge their children, hence, they encourage children to choose subjects they understand well. In this study, undergraduates who were in the professions of teaching and law expressed that they had supportive parents who endeavoured to identify professions that match their interests when applying for admission at NUL. The above statement is consistent with [Theresa's \(2013\)](#) research, which argued that each caring parent can take responsibility to search for occupations that match their children's attention and talents. Alike, [Tillman \(2015\)](#) revealed that educated parents are able to compare certain careers with their children's characteristics and happiness, which empowers them to give direction to their children on predictable consequences of programmes they wish to see them following. Therefore, it can be argued that parents who have access to information about programmes obtainable in tertiary institutions become the most reliable source of information in assisting their children to make well-informed vocational adoptions before applying to universities and colleges.

[Nawabi and Javed \(2019\)](#) revealed that parents need to be in good relationships with their children so that they appreciate and feel free to discuss information they get from outside sources. An essential issue revealed by findings of the present study was that, parent-child discussions from a family of educated parents encouraged children to ask questions about various educational programmes they wanted to pursue in tertiary institutions. This was stated by NUL first-year students who revealed that frequent discussions with their parents helped them to better understand professions they wanted to pursue after secondary school education. These findings align with the study carried out by [Sinkombo \(2016\)](#), which showed that educated parents can create a friendly environment that gives their children freedom to ask them about different professions available in the labour market. He made an example

of Zimbabwean parents who inspired their children's choice of highly demanded jobs in their country.

Though it was not in the interest of this study to compare influences of mothers and fathers, findings of the current study, as reflected in participant's views, showed her father as major inspirer in educational programme she followed. She revealed further that her father would often bring magazines with people in different professions, and that inspired her to study French at NUL. These results were supported by [Lan and Ngoc \(2020\)](#) and [Humayon et al. \(2018\)](#) who found that parents with tertiary degree; especially fathers, usually bring adolescents books and/or magazines portraying jobs they want them to follow, especially professions in engineering. In relation to findings of the current study, several studies from different countries ([Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017 in Pakistan](#); [Obiunu & Emakpor, 2020 in Nigeria](#); [Lloyd et al., 2018 in Australia](#); [Sinkombo, 2016 in Zambia](#)) indicate that educated parents can purchase magazines and newspapers that represent character models in desired professions, because they want to unwittingly shift children's interest into such careers, specifically those that are in demand by employers. This says that parents have influence in whatever is best for their children, including top jobs in the world of work.

Enlightened parents never get tired to provide advice for things they think will be of significance for their children's future ([Clutter, 2010](#)). Student participants in the current study showed that their parents always advised them to consider programmes, such as engineering, computer science, and electrical engineering, because they provide higher chances of employability after graduating. Interestingly, findings of this study discovered that female students in technical professions at NUL were from mothers in technical jobs. These results are in line with [Ardies, Dierickx and Van Strydonck \(2021\)](#) who revealed that mothers in technical professions influenced their girl-children than boy-children to pursue STEM careers in tertiary institutions. This happens because educated parents can advocate on how technical careers improve one's lifestyle. Findings from the current study further showed that parents, particularly the mother, inspired their children into technical professions because they can easily be self-employed other than waiting for the government to employ them. This statement is in association with [Letha \(2013\)](#)

who indicated that parents who know their children's capabilities, for instance in mathematics and science subjects, make sure that their children achieve high scores in the said subjects, and take STEM majors at the university level of study. It is further argued that parents persuade children to aim high at best educational programmes offered in tertiary institutions, predominantly those that promise employment and better salary (Barnes et al., 2020).

Some participants showed concern of being persuaded by their parents, specifically mothers, to be in certain programmes at NUL. For example, one male student in the faculty of education confirmed that his mother forced him into the profession as he indicated his dissatisfaction in a teaching job, which may result in low performance academically. In relation to these testimonies, scholars like Sattler (2021); Billett et al. (2020); Tillman (2016); Singh (2015); and Theresa (2015) argue that even though parents have a right to select vocations they desire for their children, they do not have a right to force children into professions they do not like. Distinctly, Theresa (2015) observed that parents who force children into professions without children's consent are contributing to indecisiveness leading to high rates of class bunking, failure, and dropouts. It is important to realize that pressurising children into vocations they do not like, whether parents are educated or not, may place students into confusions leading to removal from university education.

The present study also showed that parents who did not reach university education are likely to force students into certain programmes without first asking about their interest in such programmes. Findings further revealed that students who were coerced by parents into study programmes they did not like reported too much confusion and stress. These findings are in line with Adeyemi and Adeyemi's (2014) study which found that comforts of Nigerian parents delayed students from making their choices, because they wanted them to pick only recognized professions as teaching and nursing. Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2014) disclosed that majority of Nigerian students who were pursuing careers desired by parents than themselves were under enormous stress and discontent.

Participants at NUL indicated that living with less educated parents was disadvantageous because it denied them an opportunity to get the first-hand career-related information from people who raised them. This also denied them a chance to gain knowledge from their parents regarding the most required qualifications in the workplace. As a result, they revealed that having lower educated parents was a hindrance, particularly when they wanted to distinguish between available programmes that they could study at NUL. In relation to these results, [Mordal et al. \(2020\)](#) argue that parents with lower education are usually in low-paying jobs, and that may affect their children differently from the way parents with tertiary qualifications and better occupations can affect vocational choices for their offspring. Collaboratively, [Obiunu and Emakpor \(2020\)](#) showed that lower parental education can discourage students' professional growth, and interfere with their probabilities of continuing tertiary education, or of achieving an expert goal, which essentially determines their occupational choices.

5.3.1.2 Impact of Parental Occupation on Learners' Career Choices

The current study revealed that there were some first-year students pursuing programmes similar to what their parents studied in tertiary institutions. For instance, students whose mothers were teachers indicated that they selected teaching profession because of their parents. It is worth noting that they were not forced by their parents to pursue teaching profession at NUL, but were attracted by the love of their parents for teaching profession. The above findings are in tandem with several studies ([Kumar, 2016](#); [Hashim & Embong, 2015](#); [Agyiri, 2020](#); [Sinkombo, 2016](#); [Amadi & Pullah, 2020](#)), which showed that parental work can inspire selections of vocations made by secondary school learners, especially when parents talk positively about their occupations. Also, Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making (SLTCDM) displayed that personality qualities that offspring inherit from their biological parents are probable to stimulate their favourite vocations comparable to those of their parents, whether parents talk positively or negatively about their jobs ([Yean & Chin, 2019](#); [Madara & Cherotich, 2016](#); [Dasgupta & Stout, 2014](#)).

Another result of this study indicated that male students pursued professions in sciences taking after their fathers. This finding is in line with [Kumar \(2016\)](#) who

recognized that Ethiopian male students were biased by jobs occupied by their fathers when deciding on careers to follow in colleges. Similarly, [Yean and Chin \(2019\)](#) revealed that male students whose parents are engineers were likely to follow the same calling. Findings of the present study showed again that male students with educated fathers perceived them as their role models, and that made them to prefer similar careers. In consistence with this observation, [Komiti and Moorosi \(2020\)](#) showed that students' adoption of professions that are parallel to their fathers are noticeable among students who see their fathers as role replicas. Several studies ([Giuliano, 2020](#); [Schone et al., 2020](#); [Hameed & Shukri, 2014](#); [Wallace, 2014](#); [Posholi, 2012](#)) affirmed that boys normally prefer professions that look like those of their fathers.

In contrast, results of the present study demonstrated that female students were also influenced into engineering by their fathers' occupations, which showed an interesting pattern eliminating a general belief that female children prefer careers resembling those of their mothers. These findings are consistent with [Clutter's \(2010\)](#) research which indicated the importance of fathers in influencing girl learners into certain study majors, particularly when they want them to follow male-dominated professions. It can be argued that parental understanding of equal rights of children can help in the advancement of children's orientation to the technological epoch counteracting the unfair gender differences between boys and girls in schools and the workplace.

The current study highlighted distinctively the influences of mothers and fathers on their children's professional choices. This study showed that some male and female undergraduates were influenced by their mothers into the same professions. This was observed in students pursuing professions in arts and social sciences at NUL. These results are in line with earlier studies ([Hashim & Embong, 2015 in Malaysia](#); [Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017 in Pakistan](#)), which established that the mother is more powerful than the father in inspiring children to choose vocations resembling theirs. This suggests that, because mothers spend more time with their children, they stand a better chance to inspire them. Some students in this study reported relentless support from their mothers than their fathers, which revealed some father's inadequate involvement in their children's life. This finding is in line with [Bates \(2015\)](#) who showed that mother's

inspiration was stated to overpower father's stimulus as most Nigerian students perceived their mothers to be the most influencers when they made selections of careers to follow.

This study also uncovered that male and female students in a teaching profession were directly attracted into the teaching profession by their mothers who eventually inspired them to pursue education at NUL. This finding is in tandem with [Sinkombo \(2016\)](#) who revealed that Zambian parents, including mothers who were in professions, such as teaching, Businesses, Nursing, Computer Studies, Army, Air Force, Police services, and agriculture encouraged their children to pursue similar careers to theirs. In the same fashion, [Mathatha and Ndlovu \(2019\)](#) also recognized that Zambian learners are fond of jobs occupied by their parents, because they learn how their parents are fond of their professions. In Asia, [Nawabi et al. \(2019\)](#) established that parental encouragement can either motivate children to explore professions or stick to a pathway they think their parents will support. This suggests that parents are more likely to inspire their children to pick professions similar to theirs, or careers they like.

The current study showed that parents who occupied senior work positions with higher salary have countless prospects about the future jobs followed by their children at NUL. In association with the above discovery, numerous studies ([Abbas et al., 2020](#); [Humayon et al., 2018](#); [Lloyd et al., 2018](#); [Adefeso-Olateju & Akowonjo, 2018](#); [Ghuntla et al., 2012](#)) established that parents in senior ranks anticipated seeing their children in the vocations of high calibre. The present study discovered that most students whose parents were in senior positions at work anticipated pursuing the identical programmes to their parents' vocations at NUL. In line with this finding, [Ghuntla et al. \(2012\)](#) revealed that parental hopes on their children's choice of careers are dependable on socio-economic status (SES) of the household, hence, children from well-off SES are more likely to choose careers that are similar to those of their parents. Occupying high socio-economic status in the society mechanically drives several learners to wish they can be in jobs like those of their parents in future ([Sattler, 2021](#); [Lan & Ngoc, 2020](#); [Barnes et al., 2020](#); [Amadi & Pullah, 2020](#); [Mbagwu et al., 2016](#); [Sinkombo, 2016](#)). As per findings of the current study, NUL students from

families owning big businesses in the country were eager to complete studies in Business Management so that they can continue growing family businesses from the hands of their parents. This indicates children who envisage keeping high standard of family businesses and retain the same profession like their parents.

This study found that two students learning in the faculties of education and social sciences at NUL specified they were content to be in similar professions with their parents, because they see development in their parents' lives. Therefore, when children believe that their parents' jobs are decent enough to make them live securely with their families, they are never embarrassed in taking study programmes resembling their parents' professions. These results are supported by [Madara and Cherotich \(2016\)](#) who established that, Kenyan students with parents in engineering jobs pursued the same professions in tertiary institutions, because of remunerations attached to such professions. It can be concluded that NUL students envying professions occupied by their parents ended up joining university education because they aimed at occupying similar professions with them.

5.3.1.3 Support of Parents in Learners' Career Choices

Parental support has been reported by first-year students to be important in their selections of professions at NUL. In support of the above finding, [Pecjak and Pirc \(2020\)](#) revealed that involvement of parents in children's academic scope shows persistent support in several dimensions, including choice of vocations. In the same vein, [Lukas \(2015\)](#) confirmed that parents need to get involved in empowering their children physically, mentally, and emotionally as that helps them to feel free to ask their parents about occupations they do not know. This study unfolded that learners who had seen their single parents striving to maintain good life, have experienced massive parental support. This finding agrees with SLTCDM, which preserves that learning experiences encourage children's vocational choice as they can recall what their parents told them about certain professions ([Zainudin et al., 2020](#); [Saraswathy, 2017](#)). Thus, through lived experiences, learners are likely to recall that picking professions desired by their parents is likely to win parents' support in career-related issues ([Tawfik et al., 2021](#); [Carter, 2014](#)).

The present research showed that parents gave relentless support to their families, specifically when offspring have considered following programmes that reflected parents' hopes and wishes. This is confirmed by Indian researchers ([Krishnan & Lasitha, 2019](#)) who found that optimistic parental support has empowered Indian students' professional achievement, for the reason that, these parents are looking onward to seeing their children in careers that promise employment after progressing from the universities. Some participants showed that selecting a vocation that is not preferred by parents is unenjoyable and is likely to lead to failure in life.

Furthermore, participants indicated that they feared to choose careers, which are not favoured by parents because they may not get their support in times of repeating an academic year at NUL. When repeating an academic year, students have to pay their tuition fee, which is paid by the Government under normal circumstances. In reflecting experiences from Zambia, [Sinkombo \(2016\)](#) stated that disappointing parents is really intolerable in African cultures, as most children can still draw a separation of admiration between themselves and parents. Another study by [Akosah-Twumasi, Emeto et al. \(2018\)](#) revealed that parents may hardly support children who go against their wishes, and that puts many students under a threat of losing financial support from their parents. Therefore, it can be argued that students may pick vocations that are their parents' favourites to please them. Some participants in the current study said their parents were pleased with their vocational selections at NUL.

Contrarily, some students in this study selected educational programmes without too much pressure from their parents, which according to them indicated parents' support and encouragement. This result is in tandem with [Schmid and Garrels \(2021\)](#) who indicate that parental support to programmes studied by their children enhances offspring's self-efficacy leading to good performance in those careers. Moreover, the current study discovered that students who were free to seek information from their parents about occupations they wish pursuing, stated inspiration from parents as an aid in knowledge of relevant professions delivered at NUL. This declaration echoes findings from [Mtemeri \(2017\)](#), [Choy et al. \(2020\)](#), [Okamopelola \(2014\)](#), [Billett et al., 2020](#); [Choy et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Vargas-Benitez \(2017\)](#) who showed that

parents can make all it takes to inspire their children for particular professions. This study found that some parents endorsed programmes preferred by their children at NUL. These results were in collaboration with [Njogu et al. \(2019\)](#) who revealed that parental aspirations in careers selected by their children was confirmed by mainstream of Kenyan parents and as such, they intentionally communicated their expectations to their children without overly persuading them into different vocations.

Some students in this study showed that they acknowledged their parents for being sympathetic with their first-choice careers at NUL without trying to persuade them to other professions. Moreover, they indicated that parents stimulated them to work hard during high schooling to ensure fulfilment of their own expectations in life. These results agree with [Okesina and Famolu \(2022\)](#) who indicated that parents' reassurance throughout vocational decisions was reported as a sign of support for their children's professional preferences. This study also found that, though some parents did not force their children into certain programmes, they could not hide their expectations in connection to programmes they wanted them to follow at NUL. This finding compares with results from [Tey et al. \(2020\)](#) who indicated that Asian parents offered support and sponsorship to their children in STEM-based vocations, because they wanted their children to be in sciences when transiting to institutions of higher learning. Through the support shown by their parents, Asian children felt that their parents were well-informed about diverse STEM careers existing in their own environments, hence, they valued the support provided by their parents in selecting STEM professions ([Tey et al., 2020](#); [Abbas et al., 2020](#); [Humayon et al., 2018](#); [Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017](#); [Letha, 2013](#)).

Some students perceived teaching as a vocation of interest at NUL because of related discussions they had with their parents, particularly their mothers who are teachers by profession. [Hashim and Embong \(2015\)](#) also found that the Malaysian mothers spend more time than fathers discussing diverse jobs with their children, and how pursuing similar educational programmes can benefit them in the future. Though secondary school students reveal their career wishes, some parents may encourage them towards vocations that cannot help them to fulfil their dreams ([Hashim & Embong, 2015](#)). On the other hand,

parental influence has significantly aided learners to consider selections of educational programmes leading to comfortable future occupations. Studies (Ghuntla et al., 2012; Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2014) show that important people in learners' lives, such as parents and teachers, contribute severely to learners' selections of study programmes. Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2014) conclude, the inspiration of influential people in children's lives should not be extreme, since too much of it may channel students into professions they may not like in the long run.

5.3.2 Teacher Influence on Career Choices

This section presents participants' thoughts about teacher inspiration in professions selected by NUL undergraduates. Learners' opinions concerning influence of teachers are presented in two significant themes: (a) the role of teachers' advice as per choice of educational programmes; and (b) choice of agriculture as determined by teachers.

5.3.2.1 Teachers' Role in Learners' Choice of Careers

The current study revealed that students' educational programme selections at NUL were, to a certain extent, influenced by information received from their secondary school teachers. Similarly, Faitar and Faitar (2013) revealed that students who did well in mathematics were advised by their STEM teachers to pursue STEM-related professions in colleges. This research exposed that not all teachers have an interest in speaking to learners about upcoming jobs, but those who encouraged them to take certain courses were applauded by students to be the most helpful. Teachers who advised students about vocations to target when transiting to higher institutions of learning were labelled by NUL undergraduates to have selfless love for other people. Dungey and Ansell (2020) similarly note that explorative teachers identify every learner's weakness and strength, which makes it easier for them to advise learners in accordance with professions that are appropriate or inappropriate for them.

This study revealed that although teacher-learner relationship is critical for inspiring learners to certain careers, the relationship is not always cordial. Students revealed that they sometimes feared teachers and the fear led to

learners with poor grades, due to hostility between learners and teachers. In this regard, [Cuff \(2017\)](#) revealed that teachers' direction concerning learners' choice of professions in England is grounded upon what a specific learner likes and finds valuable about the teacher. If teachers' conduct leads to negative attitudes towards subjects they teach, learners are less likely to pursue the same subjects in tertiary institutions ([Musengimana, Kampire, & Ntawiha, 2020](#)). It can be decided that, the habits through which teachers treat individual learners may affect the extent that learners consider similar careers in higher levels of education ([Musengimana et al., 2020](#)).

5.3.2.2 Teachers' Influence in the Choice of Agriculture as a Career

Findings of the current research mentioned very few teachers who would show interest in sharing knowledge of occupations existing in industries. In support of these findings, [Mordal et al. \(2020\)](#) showed that in Norway teachers usually spend a lot of time during class sessions talking to schoolchildren about obtainable occupations aiming at equipping them with skills on how to make well-informed choices. [Makori \(2019\)](#) found that agriculture teachers spent most of time inspiring pre-university students to work hard and pass if they want to pursue BSc. Agriculture in universities. Moreover, [Makori \(Ibid\)](#) indicated that high school learners who did well in Biology were encouraged by their class teachers to study agriculture in tertiary institutions.

Similarly, this study discovered that agriculture teachers played the most important role in motivating learners who were studying agriculture at NUL. This finding echoes the results from [Lawver and Torres \(2011\)](#) who revealed that in USA, teachers have a chance to encourage students' choice of agriculture for tertiary learning by generating debates in their respective classrooms about the importance of producing farming crops for economic growth. Also, the study carried out in Ghana revealed that teachers knew topics in which individual pupils could do well, and that gave these educators the opportunity to provide pertinent information leading to programmes that align with learners' strengths and interests ([Javed, 2018; Cuff, 2017; Bossman, 2014](#)).

The current study found that discussions and advices given by agriculture teachers to learners contributed in their love of studying agriculture at NUL.

Comparatively, [Mordal et al. \(2020\)](#) disclosed that the Norwegian teachers communicated about chances students might have in learning about jobs they liked best. The same research also revealed that teachers encouraged learners to take educational programmes they understood and passed well after sitting for grade 12 final examinations. In line with above findings, [Ingram et al. \(2018\)](#) revealed that post-primary school learners in USA were inspired by teachers to follow agriculture as they transited into universities and colleges. This research aligns well with findings from current study, which found that NUL undergraduates regarded high school teachers as role models; and they attached high value to their advice towards pursuing certain programmes over others.

Students were conscious of profits originating from vending agricultural crops, which they noticed from projects started by their teachers. These findings were in tandem with the study directed by [Carroll, Buck master and Knobloch \(2011\)](#) in the US, which indicated that college students registered in seven different agriculture options, because they recognized the opportunity of becoming self-employed after graduating from tertiary institutions. This study, on the other hand, revealed that agriculture teacher motivation improved learners' desires to consider teaching agriculture after completing studies at NUL. This finding is in line with the study carried out by [Ingram et al. \(2018\)](#), which acknowledged agriculture teachers for encouraging secondary school students in openly considering become agriculture teachers in future. Similarly, the current study showed that, many first-year undergraduates specified that they want to teach agriculture at secondary school level after obtaining degree.

Other findings revealed that secondary school learners were regularly told by some teachers that they were not career guiders when asked about careers in their classrooms. The findings compare with several studies ([Boysen et al., 2020](#); [Egwu, 2015](#); [Akintomide & Oluwatosin, 2011](#)) showed that some teachers were not in the position to give advice or to influence students into any profession. This says that teachers led learners to abhor subjects they teach. [Again, Egwu \(2015\)](#) argues when revealing that Nigerian students see teaching as a low paying job, full of folks who continuously treat students like criminals. For that reason, learners barely consider teacher guides important for their

future work life. Again, some researchers ([Boysen et al., 2020 in America](#); [Akakpo, 2014 in Ghana](#)) indicated that bad approaches of teachers towards schoolchildren discourage learners from following their interest and love of selecting teaching career in the colleges and universities.

Teachers' negative approach to students did not only make them dislike subject they taught, but it also contributed in high rates of failure at the end of secondary schooling. For instance, NUL students in various programmes stated that most secondary school teachers treated them like animals, hence, they did not like professions similar to theirs. These findings are in line with the study conducted by [Muchena \(2013\)](#) in Kenya, which revealed that teachers' negative attitudes towards learners contributed to lower enrolment in agriculture, particularly when secondary school students applied for tertiary education. Another Kenyan study ([Chemjor, 2016](#)) showed that female interest in agriculture is slowly increasing in secondary schools, and most female students are discouraged to major in agriculture in colleges and universities, because some male agriculture teachers discriminate against females in the same profession.

The current study found that students who claimed being hated by secondary school teachers were males, and they emphasized their hatred to subjects taught by those teachers. In association of results generated by this study, a South African scholar, [Dlamini \(2017\)](#) concludes that teachers' negative conduct towards learners contributes negatively towards programmes they instruct when potential learners register for various professions in the universities and colleges. However, findings of the current research highlighted that some students selected professions they wanted to follow at NUL despite the attitude of their former teachers, because they were confident about their envisaged careers. Therefore, some students pursued agriculture at NUL because they liked it and met requirements.

5.3.3 Peers Influences on Career Choices

Peer influence can be determined by several factors when learners are making selections of professions they want to study, both in post-primary and -secondary levels of learning. This study disclosed that peer power at secondary school level is stronger than at tertiary level of education. [Dani and Desai \(2018\)](#)

argue that learners at secondary level of education are not yet independent, therefore they are most susceptible to peer pressure influence. Similarly, studies (Hashim & Embong, 2015; Nneka, 2013) have designated that peer inspiration on callings imagined by learners after completing high school education is actual, and most possible to sway students into professions they never imagined. Ouano, Torre and Japitan (2019) argue that though peer influence may often channel learners into wrong careers.

The current study revealed that peers' communications assisted many learners in gathering information concerning educational programmes accessible at NUL. This finding is in line with a number of scholars' works, for example, Hashim and Embong (2015) revealed that schoolchildren depend on career-information they get from their peers because they believe such information is true. Dani and Desai (2018) argue that during school learning everything told by significant people may be authentic to schoolchildren. Hence, Ouano et al. (2019) establishes that students with similar interests are always in the similar clusters, which encourage them to follow the same careers without asking themselves whether they are suitable or not. In the same manner, Okiror and Otabong (2015) indicate that peer interaction has a significant influence because it supports students to debate intensively about diverse occupations.

The present study also revealed that students who were from the same peer groups in secondary schools preferred similar professions as they transited to NUL. The result is reinforced in the study conducted in America by Fizer (2013), which found that peer relations helped associates who joined agricultural clubs to study agriculture as their common profession in the university. This indicates that when peers have a similar motivation on what they are interested in, they are likely to inspire each other to feel happy in their selected profession. This shows the importance of peer communication in the choice of vocations.

The study also marked a risk that peer influence can inject into students' academic life if they are not assisted by career experts during secondary school period. This may lead to a danger of compelling students into callings they are not prepared to face. And, this channels students into professions they may not like in the end. These findings agree with results from a study by Raheem and

Zakkariyah (2018) in Malaysia, which established that due to incomplete career-knowledge, peers in most environmental domains appear to depend on information they get from each other than their parents. In every level of life, including tertiary level of education, there is peer pressure affecting individuals differently (Ruiz-Martinez & Esparcia, 2020).

First- and second-year undergraduates affirmed they came to the university with limited information regarding programmes offered at NUL but after meeting new counterparts, they discovered new programmes they never knew. This helped them to decide whether to continue with former majors or change them to new ones. These findings are in line with several studies (Ruiz-Martinez & Esparcia, 2020; Terry & Peck, 2020; Kigumba, 2017; Crisan et al., 2015; Kyung-Sun & Eun-Young, 2014), which revealed that first-time tertiary students count on their fellow first-year undergraduates on information regarding programmes in the university. Majority of first year students who came to NUL with insufficient knowledge regarding available programmes were informed by their roommates during the registration period. Similarly, several scholars (Mtemeri, 2020; Okiror & Otabong, 2015; Migunde et al., 2012; Kimiti & Mwowa, 2012; Alike, 2010) note that peers met in tertiary institutions are different from those formed in secondary schools because they support students to overcome challenges happening in a new learning environment.

Having underlined the reputation of peer influence for students while picking professions at tertiary, this research discovered that not all first-time tertiary students came to NUL with no knowledge of existing programmes. Some first-year undergraduates came to NUL fully informed about programmes of study they envisaged following because of support from their parents about obtainable educational programmes offered at NUL. These answers are in tandem with an Australian study by Reddan (2015), which established that notwithstanding the impact of peers, student participants specified they were able to set and develop tactics to attain vocational goals, because of information they got from their parents. This also means that, students became alert of their individual strengths and weaknesses in relation to employability following the professions; hence, they totally did not depend on peer influence for making selection of occupations they like.

5.3.4 Assessing how Mass Media affects Learners' Career Choices

This research discovered dissimilar sorts of mass media, which are stated to be powerful for high school learners' vocational selections in Lesotho. These are print media, social media, and radio broadcasting; and are discussed thoroughly in the subsequent unit.

5.3.4.1 The Role of Print Media on Learners' Career Choices

The current study showed that print media, which in the case of NUL included prospectuses and pamphlets, was not considered powerful by many students when selecting professions at NUL. However, a small proportion of them perceived prospectus to be a dependable basis of evidence about programmes presented by NUL. The study also revealed that after reading through NUL prospectus, first-year undergraduates developed interests on certain programmes they never recognized before getting access to prospectus. In relation to above discovery, [Wilbur \(2013\)](#) specified that after understanding requirements of pharmacy on local newspapers, post-primary learners in Romania established interest in selecting pharmacy as a profession in tertiary institutions. The above study showed that adolescents profited a lot from reading news in a local newspaper. Students gained gratitude on how their coursework would apply to skills required of them as upcoming health experts. In the same tone, the study by [Wanyama \(2012\)](#) revealed that the majority of potential students in Kenya relied more on career information they got from newspapers when making decisions in applying for university admissions.

Distributing pamphlets showing career-related information to secondary schools can help learners to comprehend better educational programmes in tertiary institutions ([Wanyama, 2012](#)). This study discovered that NUL does not distribute prospectus and pamphlets to local secondary schools, hence, majority of students do not know existing programmes other than those they have interest in. This may prevent majority of prospective students to make well-informed choices about educational programmes at NUL. These results echoed a study by [Kimaro and Lawuo \(2016\)](#) who established that the majority of Kenyan students could not make well-informed vocational choices, because local tertiary institutions did not make an exertion to visit secondary schools and

distribute university pamphlets to inform learners about their study programmes.

5.3.4.2 Effects of Social Media on Career Choices

The current study established that students appreciated the importance of social media as a probing instrument, which helped them to search for whatever they sought knowledge about while in secondary schools. However, this study discovered that students never used social media to search for careers offered at NUL. Comparatively, some researchers ([Oguguo et al., 2020](#); [Tayo et al., 2019](#); [Areces et al., 2016](#)) showed that social media is becoming commonly used in schools for various reasons, which embrace communicating with friends, family members, sometimes doing schoolwork. It can be deduced that the above declaration highlights that schoolchildren are conversant with social media platform. Consenting, [Fuchs \(2014\)](#) discovered that accepting social media means amongst other things to involve with diverse methods of sociality on the internet.

This study revealed that secondary school learners in Lesotho may own contemporary devices that permit them to access Wi-Fi from organizations with free Wi-Fi connections. More results in the current research revealed that some high schools in the country have free Wi-Fi accessible by learners, even though learners do not search for various programmes offered in local and international universities. It was also discovered in this study that secondary school learners could also access the internet through school computer labs, which gave them another opportunity to use social media. [Hanmoglu \(2018\)](#) also showed that using technology in school environments has numerous benefits to students, such as learning and searching for career-related information. An Indian study ([Krishna & Sharma, 2016](#)) claimed that learners' usage of several social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Gmail, and Hike makes it easy for them to hunt for any kind of information, including vocational information.

The present study discovered that, in spite of the fact that secondary school learners in Lesotho access social media facilities specified above, including LinkedIn and Twitter, they hardly ever use these internet platforms to explore for professions to follow in tertiary institutions, particularly NUL. This finding is

in line with the study by [Tayo et al. \(2019\)](#) which indicated that social media platforms frequently used by post-primary school learners in Nigeria were WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and You Tube, but were mainly used for socialization, information, and academic purposes.

It was further discovered by the current study that, the majority of participants used WhatsApp, Facebook to connect with their friends and not necessarily to search for careers offered in tertiary institutions. This finding emphasizes that students in Lesotho barely search for programmes offered at NUL through any type of social media, especially while in secondary school level. On the other hand, [Oguguo et al. \(2020\)](#) established that the Nigerian students only visited social media sites to get their assignment done, communicate with their friends, and get information that support their education rather than searching for educational programmes offered in local universities. Contrarily, [Hoag et al. \(2017\)](#) revealed that susceptible residents in the rural areas cannot access social media due to inaccessibility of internet facilities for exploration of professions, hence they rely typically on radio information for existing jobs in their environments.

5.3.4.3 The Role Radio Broadcasting on Career Choices

The current study found that schoolchildren from the rural areas trusted local radio stations for any vital information, including information about educational programmes obtainable in local tertiary institutions. This finding concurs with [Kimaro and Lawuo \(2016\)](#) who affirmed that a famous source of career information among students in disadvantaged families in Tanzania is a radio, which offered career intervention programmes. The study also showed that students could not get any information about programmes offered at NUL on radio, because the institution does not use local radio stations to promote its programmes.

[Khan et al. \(2017\)](#) indicates that poor people depend on radio broadcasting for social information, including job information. Similarly, this study discovered that daily programmes aired on radio play a significant role on listeners by providing them with information about their environments and other environments. Furthermore, study results indicated that people in the rural

areas may listen to advertisements on careers available in various companies. Some participants note that they heard about educational programmes offered in tertiary institutions like Limkokwing and Lerotholi Polytechnics on local radio stations. In the same way, [Wanyama \(2012\)](#) indicated that radio programmes broadcasted daily may attract a wide audience of people in the disadvantaged communities when deciding on professions to pursue in universities.

Findings of the present research confirmed that radio broadcasting provides listeners with recent information, which would be appreciated if it includes professional talks. In collaboration with students' views, [Olumorin et al. \(2018\)](#), [Crisan et al. \(2015\)](#), [Wekesa \(2016\)](#), [Ullah \(2017\)](#), and [Kigumba \(2017\)](#) showed that ensuring various habits of educating schoolchildren through radio programmes about careers offered in universities must be a repetitive activity since it can improve students' familiarity of the world of work. Therefore, it can be argued that use of radio broadcasting by tertiary institutions in Lesotho can help students' choice of careers when transiting to universities and colleges.

5.3.5 Influence of Learners' LGCSE Performance on Career Choices

Study findings indicated that learners in the last level of secondary schooling have to pass all required subjects of LGCSE, including mathematics and combined sciences in order to qualify for STEM programmes at NUL. Nonetheless, undergraduates in the Faculty of Science and Technology (FOST), and in other faculties explained that secondary school educators, particularly females turned mathematics and sciences into a disaster, because of the way they taught them. They further indicated that female teachers do not like to be asked questions, and that leads to students failing and disliking such subjects. These findings are in consistent with discoveries in [Mahdi's \(2014\)](#) study, which revealed that learners' negative attitudes (66.7%) towards chemistry discouraged them from studying chemistry in tertiary level of education. Correspondingly, researchers ([Musengimana et al., 2020](#); [Chowdhury et al., 2019](#); [Koppar, 2019](#); [Lukyamuzi, 2018](#)) established that any condition that contributes in making mathematics and sciences frightening subjects, which occasionally may be teachers' attitudes and the difficulty of the subjects themselves, are most likely to deter learners from selecting them in tertiary institutions.

The current study highlighted that since mathematics and sciences are taught in English only, it appears that most students cannot understand concepts used, hence, they fail to score required marks. It was shown again in this study that some teachers speak “deep” English when presenting mathematics and science subjects, and most of the times they get bored when learners ask questions. These findings are supported by several studies ([Njoroge, 2017](#); [Smith, 2017](#); [Behrmann, 2015](#); [Vukovic & Lesaux, 2013](#)), which established that most students from non-English speaking societies score very low in mathematics and sciences because they delay to figure out what questions demand. Consistently, [Karikari et al. \(2022\)](#) revealed that the proper teaching of mathematics and sciences can steadily increase enrolment in university STEM programmes.

Additional finding from this study disclosed that absence of teaching and learning resources in the laboratories denied learners a chance to make some of science tests and that affected students in final examinations when they had to clarify similar trials. This finding is in line with [Payne et al. \(2016\)](#) who revealed that poorly designed science laboratories do not permit teachers to perform certain experimentations for learners. This becomes hard for learners to answer certain questions, which need them to give examples ([Dinah, 2018](#)). This study revealed that local post-primary learners are not ready to major in mathematics and science at the university level of study due to lack of preparation in secondary schools. The whole situation forces learners attending tertiary education for the first-time to derail from STEM programmes at NUL. These findings compare with [Anaya et al.'s \(2017\)](#) study which revealed that poor mathematics attainment among high school learners underprivileged them to study STEM programmes in tertiary institutions.

Students who were negatively affected by LGCSE marks wished to get admission in STEM programmes at NUL, but because of their poor performance in mathematics and combined science subjects they had to consider non-STEM programmes. [Lukyamuzi \(2018\)](#) showed that instruction and learning of mathematics in schools are influenced by among other factors poor teaching settings and students’ poor background in mathematics. Correspondingly, [Tata \(2013\)](#) indicate that one of the effects contributing to

learners' impossibility to qualify for STEM programmes in universities is negative attitude toward mathematics, fear of mathematics, and insufficient capable teachers.

This study revealed that learners spent time in high schools envisaging to pursue sciences in tertiary institutions even though they realized their incapacibilities. They easily get disappointed when scoring lower marks in sciences and mathematics, which definitely hindered them to qualify for technological professions at NUL. In this regard, [Anderton \(2017\)](#) indicates that pupils who could not pass mathematics and sciences (Chemistry and Physics) at the end of secondary school examinations were described to have significantly lower GPAs, thus discouraging them from taking STEM programmes in higher learning institutions. This suggests that high schools need to sensitise learners to consider professions in which they are competent, and stop wishing to follow programmes they cannot succeed in.

Students who want to follow STEM professions at NUL are required to pass mathematics and combined sciences, at least with A and/or B credits with other subjects relating to programmes they want to pursue. In relation to the above outcome, [Romash \(2019\)](#) indicates that students who envision pursuing STEM programmes in tertiary institutions are required to complete specific preliminary science and mathematics arrangements in the first year of study in order to meet the requirements as scientists. The current study revealed that extra requirement for students who wish to follow STEM programmes at NUL is that, they have to spend and pass FOST general first-year, which is aimed at preparing them to cope with STEM at the deeper level. In support, [Barr et al. \(2010\)](#) indicated that, in USA, the typical order of STEM programmes necessitates learners to complete a year of introductory Chemistry and Calculus, with Biology and Physics for the second-year of study.

5.4 INFLUENCES ON PROGRAMME CHANGE AMONG STUDENTS

The research findings showed tendency of programme changing among first- and second-year undergraduates at NUL. According to [Maina \(2020\)](#), alteration of programme of education and arrangement is when a learner has made the unique choice from a list of what is obtainable, but changes that choice and

makes a new selection altogether. Maina further reported that worldwide tendencies on changes of programmes of study among undergraduate students are mutual in nations like USA, Canada, and Middle East. This seems to be a universal condition that affects learners alike in the globe, because people have various choices in their lives. The same state was reported in Lesotho where interviewed undergraduates at NUL changed programmes when realizing they were pursuing professions of no interest.

This study showed that after getting information on courses they envisage pursuing, some students switched to new programmes. The above consequences are supported by [Kochung and Migunde \(2011\)](#) who showed that students' adoptions of professions are constantly prejudiced by own interest. [Zafar \(2013\)](#) indicated that some students change their initial programmes because it is their first time to hear about the new programmes when they arrived in colleges and universities. In the same fashion, several scholars ([Ahmed et al., 2017](#); [Jaradat & Mustafa, 2017](#); [Marade, 2015](#); [Seymour & Serumola, 2016](#); [Bartlj & Polanec, 2012](#)) indicate that new information for certain professions can capture students' interest, and motivate them to switch to programmes that make them content in the long-run.

The current study found that some students at NUL changed from programmes of origin to education because they wanted to be teachers. The study also revealed that female students who changed in large numbers were from STEM programmes to non-STEM programmes, because of interest in female-dominated programmes like teaching, offered at NUL. These findings affirm with several studies from different places, for instance, in North America, [Conti \(2011\)](#) showed that female learners may feel uncomfortable in STEM programmes because of how they are treated, or because of how they identify themselves in those programmes. Another study supports findings of the current study was by [Astorne-Figari and Speer \(2017\)](#), which established that the existing culture in STEM programmes discourages females from liking STEM programmes because of discrimination coming from their male counterparts. Therefore, female students in USA changed professions, such as civil engineering into non-STEM professions like nursing and teaching.

Interestingly, few female students who were interviewed in the present study reported coming across any type of challenge in STEM programmes. They were no longer interested in these programmes, but interested in other faculties like agriculture, humanities and social sciences. In support of this finding, [Astorne-Figari and Speer \(2017\)](#) found that when undergraduates change programmes of study, they often change to those that resemble their characters, which makes it a norm among female learners in USA to prefer programmes like those in social sciences and humanities. Another supporting study by [Waite and McDonald \(2019\)](#) indicated that women are excessively underrepresented among full-time STEM workers in many countries, including the advanced ones, such as USA not because they cannot do well in STEM programmes, but because they do not feel comfortable in such programmes.

In addition, this research found that, some students encountered difficulties in former chosen careers at NUL, and that compelled them to programme changing. This finding compares with that of [Jaradat \(2017\)](#) who found that students in the Middle East universities were changing programmes because of inability to perform well. Consistently, a study conducted in China by [Chen \(2013\)](#) revealed that more students admitted in universities pursuing STEM programmes change to non-STEM programmes because of difficulty and failure to make a progress in class work. The current study revealed that some NUL students change professions in their first- and second-year, especially when experiencing difficulties in former ones. This result is in collaboration with the research conducted in United Arab Emirates by [Jaradat \(2017\)](#), which indicated that pupils in their third-year were changing study programmes because their prior educational programmes that were difficult.

This study established that students who encountered difficulties in STEM-related programmes at NUL stated poor preparation in high school forced them to switch among courses. They normally change to non-STEM programmes, including Sociology, Humanities, and Law after scoring lower in science subjects at the end of common first-year. In agreement with these findings, [Cuff \(2017\)](#) found that English students who were not well-prepared from secondary schools to pursue STEM programmes always encounter some difficulties leading to failure at the university level of study. In the same vein, [Koppar \(2019\)](#)

indicated that first-year mathematics course-taking experiences influenced students' retention, specifically students who received lower than a C grade in first-year semester math were highly likely to drop-out of their STEM programmes to other programmes outside STEM. As a result, students who cannot score A, B, C grades in STEM programmes start searching for non-STEM programmes as they normally perceive themselves not matching in STEM careers (Ost, 2010).

The current study did not exactly designate gender as having the power on students' vocational selections at NUL; however, this research discovered that mainstream of male students than female students in STEM programmes were more likely to change to non-STEM programmes, particularly when encountering some complications. This finding is in tandem with the study conducted in Arabian Peninsula, Asia by Sohali and Mostafa (2018), which found that female students were interested in Computer Science programmes and were less likely to change to non-STEM programmes as compared to their male counterparts. This invalidates the leading insight of Computer Science as a male-dominant profession. It can be argued from the findings of this study that female students joining NUL are becoming interested in technology as gender beliefs do not affect their career wishes.

The current study indicated that many male students who switched from STEM professions to non-STEM professions were pressurised to do so by reasons, such as meeting difficulties leading to failure in passing STEM programmes. These results suggest that the majority of students formerly registered in STEM programmes are less likely to graduate in the same professions. These findings are in consistency with Sithole, Chiyaka, McCarthy, Mupinga, Bucklein and Kibirige (2017) who showed that mainstream of students registering in STEM-related educational programmes do not graduate with a STEM degree. The general important contributing influences impeding undergraduates to graduate in STEM programmes have been lack of logical and scientific skills, which are highly required to succeed in STEM curricula (Mattern, Radunzel, & Westrick, 2015). After they have tasted university life, students do not want to go back to their homes without tertiary qualifications; therefore, they rather change to other programmes.

Findings of the present study showed that the tendency of changing educational programmes among NUL undergraduates is also perpetuated by the institute itself, because it does not help learners to improve their academic work. This says, students who fail to get assistance in their schoolwork are likely to opt for programme changing as they know no-one will stop them from doing so. Alteration of programmes at NUL is made under specific requirements whereby transferring learners are expected to write a letter to the Dean mentioning their intentions to select fresh programmes. The current study found out that students were also required to inform and discuss with faculty tutors their intentions to transfer to other faculties prior to writing a transfer letter to the Dean. The aim of informing tutors about learners' transfers is to let them to deliver vocational therapy to students as specified in Ordinance No. 8 of 29th October 1979. Tutors' errands at NUL are discussed later in the subsequent section.

5.5 GUIDANCE OF LEARNERS IN CAREER CHOICES

The influence of professional leadership in learners' vocational selection in Lesotho is discussed in this study from two points of view, namely, from the secondary school point of view, and from tertiary point of view.

5.5.1 The Outcome of Career Management in Secondary Schools

The present study established absence of vocational management in local secondary schools in Lesotho. It was also indicated in this study that students could not be able to choose a career due to lack of vocational leadership programmes in their schools. In line, [Sun and Yuen \(2012\)](#) stated that absence and limited vocational management in secondary schools are causing havoc in students' readiness to make vocational selections by enhancing their skills, and eventually denies them the opportunity to plan their professions and successfully transit into job market. In the same vein, [Mordal et al. \(2020\)](#) showed that failure of career leadership to enhance awareness and support among learners when choosing educational programmes in schools contributes to incompetent future workforce. The causes of incompetent labour force are likely to include potential employees who cannot pass interviews because they are in professions they cannot comply with.

Other findings indicate that limited career management among secondary schools in Lesotho adds in denying schoolchildren the opportunity of knowing educational programmes accessible in local tertiary institutions, including NUL. This says post-primary learners in this country transit to the universities without vocational choice support, which makes it hard for them to pick out suitable educational programmes corresponding with their interests. These findings are in line with [Dusu and Adangabe \(2020\)](#) from Ghana, who indicated that inadequate career leadership in lower secondary schools raise learners who know little or nothing about its significance in their lives. As [Theresa \(2015\)](#) argues, wrong vocations taken by learners are the consequences of career management programmes that are not given prominent consideration for the full advantage of learners in secondary schools.

Secondary school learners in Lesotho begin to know certain programmes during the process of filling application forms for tertiary education. They spent secondary schooling not aware of other programmes they could apply for if they want to join higher education. This reflects a negative impact of limited career guidance in local high schools. These findings correlate with [Dusu and Adangabe \(2020\)](#) when arguing that inaccessibility of career leadership services in secondary schools has disadvantaged students from knowledge of educational programmes existing in university level of study. Similarly, Kenyan researchers ([Lugulu & Kipkoech, 2011](#)) revealed in their study that the reasons for secondary school learners' lack of knowledge in programmes offered in tertiary institutions is because vocational management services were not encouraged from early school years.

In the case of Lesotho, secondary schools prepare learners to pass a required number of subjects in order to be admitted in tertiary institutions without seeking to know and understand types of professions learners may want to follow in life. Hence, it is emphasized that local secondary schools fail to offer vocational supervision assisting learners to make sound career choices that they will be proud of in future. These findings are in consistency with the study conducted by [Makola et al. \(2021\)](#), which revealed that South African students stated they failed to make sound selections of professions when transiting to universities and colleges, because they were inadequately prepared. They further claimed

that inadequate professional leadership in high schools totally contributed into failure to gather correct information for their vocations. Another study in line with results of the current study by [Du Toit and Van Zyl \(2012\)](#) confirmed that lack of career management in South African high schools attributed to failure in altering learners who can face challenges relating to professional selections hence, they end up as dropouts. As a result, [Dusu and Adangabe \(2020\)](#) agreed that a wrong vocational selection due to lack of career control could result in unemployment.

5.5.1.1 Field Trips as a Means of Career Counselling in Secondary Schools

Participants of this study perceived field trips as a means of vocational education meant to familiarise learners with various forms of factories in Lesotho. Regular visits to these factories give learners a chance to compare and contrast among career alternatives. The above statements are in line with [Mordal et al. \(2020\)](#) who argued that educational field trips are meant to expose students to different types of industries, with the aim of helping them to understand types of jobs done there. The present research indicated that when learners see by themselves what it takes to be in a certain occupation, they easily make decisions relying on what they advocated. Study results revealed that after paying a visit to hospitals and noticed the situation at emergency ward, students realized they were not a fit for the nursing profession. In relation to above, [Brew \(2018\)](#) perceived educational field trips to be professional supervision survey practices, which benefit students' excellent professions and give them the opportunity to decide whether to follow or not follow certain professions. Correspondingly, [Makori \(2019\)](#) found that Kenyan secondary school learners decided to study agriculture after taking educational field trips to agricultural locations where they saw how agricultural projects were managed.

The current study indicated that visiting local companies provided learners with an opportunity to learn about new jobs, and also helped them to ask for clarification on vocations they already knew but could not know what was needed for one to qualify. In support of school field trips, [Heggins, Dewhurst and Watkins \(2012\)](#) showed that field trips taken with students in Dublin City

University involved visits to significant law formations in the city of Dublin, including the Supreme Court, the training institutions of barristers and solicitors in Ireland, and a best legal firm. These visits were regarded significant as they enlightened pupils in law-related jobs for picking law in tertiary institutions. Field trips to companies and other workrooms are beneficial in informing schoolchildren about professions they can focus on when transiting to higher learning institutions.

This research revealed that NUL students who were in STEM programmes reported they were captivated by what they saw while visiting the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, hence, they chose pursuing engineering at NUL. In support of the above findings, [Garrity et al. \(2010\)](#) support the above position by uttering that STEM careers are becoming increasingly demanded by employees. Therefore, it is important for schools to regularly visit such places, as they can be used to encourage students' love of STEM jobs. Brilliant students may choose non-STEM professions only because they are not properly directed towards entrance of such professions ([Garrity et al., 2010](#)). Moreover, [Xie et al. \(2019\)](#) argued that, if field trips are organised only once in a year, they may be unsuccessful as they miss to assist students' choosing of educational programmes in tertiary institutions and the workplace.

The current study found that field trips resembled career education, which is not taught in local secondary schools, and that means learners' perceptions about field trips were positive. In USA, [Hanover Research \(2020\)](#) revealed that field trips organised through Career and Technical Education (CTE) target to expose students to a diversity of professions and businesses, which eventually assist them in making well-guided vocational choices. Even though findings of this study indicated that educational field trips assisted students about jobs they never knew, and those that they thought were not easy to follow, the fact that such trips were conducted occasionally made it less important. Therefore, it can be settled that regular visits to industrial areas and tertiary institutions can boost the way in which learners make selections of vocations.

5.5.1.2 The Role of Annual Career Expo in Learners' Career Choices

The present study revealed that an annual career expo occasion prepared by CHE and local tertiary institutions in Lesotho helped secondary school learners' vocational adoptions. This finding is in line with [Mtemeri \(2017\)](#) who revealed that vocational management, specifically job exhibition times, had a positive influence on Zimbabwean secondary school learners' styles of selecting professions they like. Similarly, [Makola et al. \(2021\)](#) indicated that South Africa as a country aims at developing youth's interest in STEM majors; and has proposed for long-term plans that support vocational fair activities to improve learners' knowledge of existing jobs in the job market.

The current study established that annual career exhibition held in Lesotho for secondary school learners was led by lecturers and employers who were not experts on how careers should be selected. As such, they could not answer some of the questions asked by learners. In relation to above finding, [Balci \(2018\)](#) indicated that the importance of school career therapists is to aid students understand their capabilities, welfares, ethics, and character styles in relation to callings they want to follow. But, in the cases where job therapy is provided by teachers, the aim of enhancing students' job decision-making may not be satisfied ([Balci, 2018](#)). Several academics ([Makola et al., 2021](#); [Roy, 2020](#); [Lam & Santos, 2017](#); [Amoah et al., 2015](#); [Faitar & Faitar, 2013](#); [Salleh et al., 2013](#)) argued that vocational fair proceedings should be led by professional occupational therapists in schools than by people who are not knowledgeable about vocational supervision.

The current study also showed that students joining vocational direction exhibition reported they could not get full clarifications regarding the reputation of professions they wanted to pick, but were told about requirements needed for various professions. In response to this finding, [Balci \(2018\)](#) confirms that career guidance provided by individuals with no experience fails to assist learners in making decisions that will channel them to satisfying professional choices in future. Generally, school vocational control interferences, which include a qualified career therapist, are more effective than those that are conducted by teachers only ([Balci, 2018](#)). Notwithstanding the fact that yearly vocational expo event helped students in deciding on educational programmes

offered at NUL, all interrogated learners indicated that the occasion should be lengthy, at least to a week instead of one day.

It was also discovered that some students could not describe entirely the requirements of professions they were interested in while attending career expo event, and unfortunately, they still could not get clear explanation from tertiary institutions' employees. In support of the above findings, [Freeman et al. \(2017\)](#) indicate that career involvement sequencers made in a short space of time do not meet schoolchildren's wants, such as equipping them with knowledge of occupations they can take in the universities. Consistently, [Ogutu et al. \(2017\)](#) argued that Nigerian students made educational programme selections that failed to meet their interests because of ineffective vocational exhibition that also failed to reply to their questions about jobs they wanted to pursue in future.

The current study took into considerations recommendations made by interviewed undergraduate learners regarding career expo events in Lesotho. They argued that professional leadership interference programmes, such as annual calling expo event held by CHE and tertiary institutions in Lesotho; and educational field trips should be set to help secondary school learners. Moreover, study participants suggested that CHE and local institutions should hire skilled occupational therapists who must play a bigger role in guiding secondary school learners during the career expo event to help them more in making well-informed vocational decisions in tertiary institutions, including NUL. It can be concluded that learner participants in this occasion experienced insufficient information about educational majors they want to follow in tertiary institutions, because of inadequate knowhow among people leading career expo event.

5.5.2 Limited Provision of Career Guidance at NUL

The present study revealed that NUL does not have vocational management centres helping undergraduates to understand programmes they preferred at the institution. This says, lack of career-knowledge among undergraduates at NUL is highly contributing to unpredictability in what students want to achieve. These statements are in association with [Eurostat \(2020\)](#), which maintained that limited readiness is likely to remain haunting students throughout university

learning, and it is likely to sway them towards wrong professions. This study also indicated that, even though NUL admits first-time tertiary students into its faculties, it fails to make them adapt to their preferred educational programmes, hence they keep switching between programmes.

As a result of sketchy career choices, first-time tertiary undergraduates at NUL make mistaken picks of programmes, which eventually expose them to the risk of pursuing professions that are likely to fail satisfying their future prospects. These findings are in tandem with [Crisan et al. \(2015\)](#) who showed that when learners are poorly informed, they do not have a coherent occupational idea, hence they encounter main obstructions in their professional pathways. In the same vein, [Rukewe \(2017\)](#) conducted a study in Botswana indicating that due to non-appearance of career leadership in schools, mainstream of learners did not have adequate job information as expected of apprentices at their final stage of secondary education. Similarly, the current study found that lack of career information in educational programmes offered at NUL, has negatively affected the effective career decision-making among secondary school learners arranging to continue tertiary education.

Therefore, it can be stressed that NUL students are likely to graduate still not knowing the situation in which programmes they pursue may put them when transiting into work environment. These findings are in line with a Kenyan study ([Khamadi et al., 2011](#)), which revealed that low career maturity among university undergraduate learners was due to lack of readiness for making professional selections prior to admission dates in the university. They further stated that Kenyan university undergraduates selected educational programmes answering to their parents' needs rather than theirs. More results exposed that the perceptibility of incomplete vocational management facilities at NUL have been evidenced by the frequency of programme shifting happening among first- and second-year undergraduates. This finding is in collaboration with two studies conducted in Kenya ([Oigo & Kaluyu, 2016](#); [Lugulu & Kipkoech, 2011](#)), which established that negligible career guidance services offered by the university resulted in poor selections of educational programmes followed by students. As a result, [Amani and Sima \(2015\)](#) show that negligible career leadership depicts low pupils' self-awareness and

absence of both adequate professional therapy facilities, which finally discourage the effective delivery of career control and counselling for first-time tertiary students who are not conversant with the environment. In relation to above finding, [Kinnen \(2013\)](#) reveals that lack of readiness to making professional selection emanates from ineffective vocational leadership in lower and middle schools, which is likely to result in frequent programme changing among undergraduates in the universities.

Other findings revealed that absence of career guidance facilities at NUL makes the institution more likely to produce future workers who cannot contest in the workplace, because they progressed in professions they never understood. These finding states that NUL like local secondary schools does not prepare its alumnae for the world of work, and that is likely to contribute to high rates of youth unemployment in Lesotho. These findings agree with [Amani and Sima \(2015\)](#) who revealed that Kenyatta University does not provide career leadership meant to help students to know the world of work, and that has produced graduates who do not attract employers. The current study assumes that NUL is likely to produce graduates who contribute to high rates of unemployment because they pursued unguided programmes that also failed to match their personality traits and interests. This statement is in collaboration with the Eurostat data showing that youth unemployment within the European Union stems from the fact that young graduates pursued university programmes that failed to meet the requirements of the work sector ([Eurostat, 2020](#)).

5.5.2.1 The Role of Career Guidance Intervention of NUL Orientation Activity

The current study revealed that NUL holds orientation sessions for first-year undergraduates every year with an intention to update and acquaint them with the university life in general. Nevertheless, the study discovered that the orientation action is not destined to report professional selection strategies that students can use to pick appropriate vocations at NUL. This action does not also support students to comprehend upcoming outcomes of programmes they are about to follow in the institution under study. The above conclusions are correlating with [Ari et al. \(2009\)](#) who revealed that if orientation session held by

tertiary institutions fails to address students' specific abilities, or does not equip learners with skills that assist them to make choices of professions that correspond with their interests, it is useless in academic arena. Likewise, [Amani and Sima \(2015\)](#) indicated that many Tanzanian students reported they were only provided with general guidance about social welfare and university by-law during the orientation session, but little information was given regarding the chosen programmes.

The current study found out that instead of assisting first-year students' professional choices, a one-week orientation session held by NUL helps them to familiarise themselves with new environment, including residences, rooms, the classrooms or the library within NUL campus. These results are in line with some studies conducted in different countries ([Okirigwe, 2020 in Nigeria; Amani & Sima, 2015 in Tanzania](#)), which confirmed that orientation provision is intended to familiarise first-time tertiary students with the university environment. They further revealed that orientation session is a procedure of introducing learners to school environment, and of teaching them about guidelines, regulations, and everyday routines, as an instruction to the university.

5.5.2.2 Tutorship as a Means to Support Students' Careers at NUL

This study established that NUL tutors are directed by the Ordinance number 8 of 29th October 1979, Section 5, which says, among other things, tutors shall give information to students about courses obtainable for them. That means the university is expecting tutors to support students' selection of programmes; and, when students wish to take new programmes. The ordinance specifically indicates that tutors must support students' selections of programmes among other things. These discoveries are reinforced by [Jelfs, Richardson and Price \(2009\)](#) when showing that a tutor's role is to offer support to students, especially on academic issues, including decisions on educational programmes they envisage pursuing.

Contrarily, the current study discovered that most tutors at NUL hardly advice students, particularly when they wish to transfer from former majors to the new ones. This signals that tutors at NUL are not oriented before resuming duties

as tutors, therefore, they may not be familiar with their daily duties, and they are likely to take learners' switching reasons for granted. In confirmation of the above statements, findings of the current study confirmed instead of asking students for motives that make them change to new programmes, tutors would only ask them to confirm the availability of space in new programmes. If there is space, a tutor advises for approval into a new programme. These findings are not in consistent with [Menary \(2012\)](#) who reveals that tutors are dedicated to the morals of caring, which often have an emancipatory component in that they want their pupils to develop, attain, and be successful. This implies that, tutors must be worried about challenges facing students in new programmes and try to prepare them to deal with related issues.

Moreover, findings of this study showed that it is not every first-year tutor who would support undergraduates when they envisage transferring into a new programme. Only a very few of them would strictly want to know why students changed their professions, and advise them about challenges they may meet in new programmes. This shows a necessity for NUL to revise the way in which it places and monitors tutors' responsibilities for the sake of overcoming negative influences connecting to insufficient ways of supporting learners' vocational decisions. In connection to the above incompetence, [Menary \(2012\)](#) shows that a tutor is accountable to reply to students when seeking career assistance. It can be settled that the role played by tutors at NUL fails to associate with the requirements of Ordinance Number 8 of 29th October 1979, which specifies the predictable roles of NUL in assisting undergraduates' selections of educational programmes once registered with the institution.

5.6 STRATEGIES USED TO SUPPORT LEARNERS IN CHOOSING CAREERS

It was previously highlighted in this study that secondary school learners in Lesotho transit to universities and colleges with little or no knowledge of educational programmes offered in tertiary institutions, particularly at NUL. Many participants in the current study indicated that vocational leadership should begin in primary and continue through post-primary schools to enhance learners' career development. They further showed that provision of vocational help may benefit students as they grow-up focusing on professions they know

and understand. These conclusions are in tandem with the [Norwegian Education Act \(2014\)](#), which established that career management should take place as a continuous process starting in junior secondary school level throughout.

According to [Buland, Mathiesen, Aashid, Hangsbakken, Bungun and Mordal \(2011\)](#), professional leadership in Norway starts in junior secondary schools in 8th grade, and it aids learners to make well-informed professional decisions in tertiary institutions. [Crause et al. \(2017\)](#) approves that teaching vocational education from primary throughout post-primary schools can help learners who know professions matching their interest and personalities in tertiary institutions. Some findings from the current study suggested that ex-students must be invited to secondary schools to inform learners about their professions as that may motivate learners. This finding is in tandem with [Mordal et al. \(2020\)](#) who found in their study carried out in Norway that some of the school vigorously used past apprentices in the professions of Engineering and the Ecology to visit classes and acknowledge students about these professions.

Interpretations of first-year tutors on how secondary school learners can be helped out to make well-informed occupational selections for university education showed a greater necessity for incorporation of career teaching in local secondary schools. Tutors showed that the failure to incorporate career learning in secondary school curriculum remains a serious challenge resulting in misguiding learners selecting programmes they may not enjoy. In support, [Galliot and Graham \(2015\)](#) revealed that secondary schools without career education are likely to produce students who are indecisive about future professions. Likewise, [Shen \(2021\)](#) points out that secondary schools providing vocational teaching improve learners' career-planning knowledge and skills that assist them to make intelligent selections corresponding with their interests and strengths.

The study showed that high school teachers must be equipped with basic training in career teaching so that they can involve their learners in vocational choice activities. Participants in this study claimed that these trainings will be of importance, because teachers must also play a role in further discussing

educational programmes learners can apply for in universities and colleges. In affirmation, [Mtemeri \(2017\)](#) indicated that secondary school teachers must be equipped with career supervision skills for them to be able to assist students' choices of educational programmes and professions. Students must be helped to perceive career guidance as a significant subject in a syllabus, which must also be passed like other subjects ([Mtemeri, 2017](#)).

Results of the present study indicate that institutions that train future teachers in Lesotho do not provide a stand-alone course on career education or guidance. This compares with [Angelista's \(2018\)](#) research which found that many teachers in high schools cannot provide career guidance for their classes, because the aspect is missing in their training. Therefore, it is emphasised through findings of this study that teachers in local secondary schools do not know career guidance, hence, could not provide learners with information regarding educational programmes offered at NUL. This finding is in tandem with [Angelista \(2018\)](#) who revealed that secondary school teachers have little knowledge about careers, and because of that, they provide little or no vocational supervision to their learners.

Furthermore, the study indicated that parents should be invited to come and motivate learners about their own professions as part of vocational interference strategies. In agreement with vocational interference plans in secondary schools, several scholars ([Koivisto, Vinokur, & Vuori, 2011](#); [Xie, Kong, Skaggs, & Yang, 2019](#); [Chiesa, Massei, & Guglielmi, 2016](#); [Stipanovic, Stringfield, & Whitherell, 2017](#)) have shown that schools with vocational learning programmes profit from workshops led by specialised job therapists, where parents also give information about own professions. More findings from the current study revealed that ex-students, who may be parents in most cases, must be invited to secondary schools and inform students about their professions as part of motivation. This finding is in tandem with [Mordal et al. \(2020\)](#) who found that some of the schools in Norway vigorously used past apprentices in the professions of Engineering and the Ecology to visit classes and acknowledge students about these professions.

First-year tutors at NUL suggested that secondary school management must employ qualified career therapists and pay them like paying part-time teachers and argued for the need to avoid relying on ordinary teachers for career counselling. These findings are in collaboration with recent studies (Balci, 2018; Kapur, 2018; Rukewe, 2017; Oigo & Kaluyu, 2016), which discovered that application of career management centres and employment of expert career therapists in secondary schools help in guiding career development of students, which eventually assist them in making well-informed career decisions. In Finland, Koivisto et al. (2011) revealed that workshops held for learners as part of professional instruction by qualified career teachers assisted them to advance their occupational plans.

The study indicated further that unlike some teachers in the classrooms who may not be interested in assisting students with career information, trained vocational therapists, who may be teachers by profession, are more likely to feel obliged in improving learners' career-knowledge. These discoveries are in line with Mugenzi (2018) who showed that career guidance by school career counsellors assisted many Kenyan secondary school students in developing knowledge about labour market and educational programmes offered in tertiary institutions. Career counsellors had daily schedules, which were only meant for provision of career education, and that assisted many learners to understand careers they envisaged pursuing in universities and colleges (Mugenzi, 2018). In the same fashion, Shen (2021) indicated that guidance by qualified career counsellors helps students' career planning, and also assist them to avoid mismatch of careers and interests.

The current investigation recognized that absence of well-structured vocational control centres with professional counsellors in lower and middle schools fail to help learners in making good choices of professions. Therefore, participants showed that other than teachers who normally give professional guide to pupils they teach, qualified career therapists and career education teachers can give more detailed and reliable career information that can help students' career choices. In support of the above conclusions, Amoah et al. (2015) revealed that school therapists, in most developed countries include career teachers, and are

mostly expected to be trained professionals who know different steps to follow in helping clientele.

First-year tutors revealed in this study that career supervision provided by untrained persons may have negative consequences, because they are likely to fail in making follow-ups on students' professional developments. Despite the absence of career guidance centres and career educators in local secondary schools, it is recommended that regular career exhibition events be organised for the benefit of the learners, to provide accurate and helpful information about different career options. This research indicated that Vocational management exhibition activities facilitated annually by local tertiary institutions developed secondary school children's knowledge of programmes obtainable in local tertiary institutions. These findings are in tandem with studies ([Crause et al., 2017](#); [Freeman et al., 2017](#); [Brandford et al., 2014](#); [Faitar & Faitar, 2013](#)), which revealed that professional interference strategies, such as occupational fairs and placements can benefit learners' preferences of jobs if frequently organised throughout the year.

It was highlighted in the present study that other mechanism workable for supporting secondary school learners' choices of career is field visiting. The study indicated that visiting important work sites in Lesotho is one of the strategies secondary schools can use in support of learners' career choice processes. Interviewed students stated that secondary schools must schedule for four field trips annually, that is, one field trip per quarter aiming to familiarise students with what is happening in various work sectors. In collaboration with above results several studies ([Mante & Maose, 2021](#); [Moriassi et al., 2021](#); [Claiborne et al., 2020](#); [Hanover, 2020](#); [Behrendt & Franklin, 2014](#); [Heggins et al., 2012](#)) indicated that secondary schools need to perceive field trips to industrial sites as an important activity exposing learners to various professions. More research ([Ali et al., 2019 in India](#); [Behrendt & Franklin, 2014 in USA](#); [Heggins et al., 2012 in Ireland](#)) showed that several field trips can assist students to decide whether they want to continue higher education in professions they know or they want to join the workforce immediately. [Moriassi et al. \(2021\)](#) concluded that various field trips taken by junior and senior secondary school learners can help in enhancing their career-knowledge as

well as understanding professions they want to pursue in universities and colleges.

Participants of this study also showed that schools should organise with authorities of local organizations for frequent visits aiming at introducing learners to diverse types of occupational environments in the country. They further revealed that NUL, together with other institutions, need to visit secondary schools to disseminate information about its educational programmes. This finding is in line with various studies (Bevan, Dillon, Hein, Macdonald, Michalchik, Root, Rudder, Xanthoudaki & Yoon, 2010), which concluded that tertiary institutions have to effectively disseminate career information to lower institutions of education with an aim of inspiring learners into critical professions, such as STEM.

The current study revealed specifically that NUL, as the oldest university in the country must set an example of frequently paying educational visits to local secondary schools and inform students about educational programmes offered. This attempt is likely to attract high enrolment of potential learners into programmes they understand, hence, curbing regular programme changing among NUL undergraduates as highlighted earlier. In consistency with these findings, Mtemeri (2017) revealed that colleges and universities should plan for regular visits to high schools and explain the relationships of educational programmes they select with jobs existing in the workplace. Compatibly, Lee, Anderson and Burnett (2015) showed that active mentoring should be facilitated by university professors who can enlighten students about programmes offered; and how they can be helpful for their future job planning.

5.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discussed the findings of the present study. The current study highlighted that secondary school learners' professional selections for higher education, predominantly NUL, are inclined to a greater extent by persuasive influences. The persuasive influences are found to be parents, teachers, peers, mass media, learner contexts determiners in vocational selections, and school career leadership. Motivation of parents was discovered to be a strong influencer in preferences made by students as they trust their parents more

than anyone in their lives. Parents with post-secondary credentials appeared in this study to be trusted because they occupied better positions in the workplaces, which made it easier for them to become role models respected and liked by their children. In this case, educated parents stimulated students' professional decisions at NUL to a degree that they took professions comparable to those of their parents or even better ones.

Apart from being educated and occupying careers of high calibre in different organisations, educated parents have been stated in the current study to have been involved in adolescents' academic life, hence provided them with persistent support during the process of selecting professions to study in the university. Therefore, secondary school learners in Lesotho rely on supervision provided by their parents when choosing professions to follow after passing post-primary level of education. It was suggested in this study that parents' involvement in their children's school work makes it easy for learners to refer to them for vocational advice. It is emphasised in the present research that parental influence is important in students' professional decision-making. Furthermore, secondary school teachers were reported by NUL undergraduates as important agents of socialisation after parents, and they motivate and inspire learners into certain majors, particularly during instructive activities. As a result, information gathered through this research has shown that Basotho students in secondary schools rely on teachers as comparable to their parents for selection of educational programmes of interest at NUL. This is confirmed by agriculture students who specified that their love for agriculture was enhanced by secondary school agriculture teachers who recommended them to follow the same profession in the university. They further revealed that they perceived teachers as their second parents whom they could rely on for all information regarding picking of professions.

In contrast, the current study stressed that other undergraduates from NUL held responsible secondary school teachers who made them hate subjects they taught, including mathematics, science, and agriculture among others. This hatred deterred learners from selecting the same professions at NUL, because they could not put much effort on subjects taught by teachers they hated. For instance, students stated their hatred for agriculture to an extent that they

decided not to pursue it at NUL despite the fact that they passed it after sitting for LGCSE. This study further revealed that one of the contributing factors in failing to meet requirements in some programmes is that, learners did not perform well in subjects instructed by problematic teachers. Given learners' opinions about teacher influence, it can be argued that teachers' negative attitude towards students may deter them from selecting important professions needed for the country's economy and curbing employment of the youth.

However, this study established that teachers who approached learners with parental attitude were mostly accepted and trusted than those who treated learners badly. These teachers positively stimulated learners' selection of professions envisaged pursuing in tertiary institutions. Alternative factor highlighted in this study to have influenced secondary school learners' professional selections at NUL was peers, which also helped them to pick educational programmes of interest before and after admissions. Also, discussions emanating from inside peer groups at post-primary and post-secondary levels of education in Lesotho, helped learners to digest career-related information and made clear decisions about professions to strive for in life. While there seems to be no organised career guidance programme at secondary school level, NUL also does not have a career guidance programme. Students do not get sufficient support when they change from one programme to another despite doing this swap through the facilitation of tutors; tutors are either oblivious of their duties or not sufficiently trained to provide career guidance.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The current study explored factors that influenced secondary school learners' career choices in one tertiary institution in Lesotho. Chapter six reviews the context of the problem stated in chapter one, review of the literature, and research methodology, and summary of the findings. The chapter also presents conclusions and recommendations for establishment of career guidance in local secondary schools for well-informed learners' career decision-making processes. Furthermore, the chapter makes specific recommendations for NUL, and finally it ends with recommendations for additional studies.

6.2 A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Chapter one emphasised that career choice is one of the most significant events that many people involve in throughout their lives (Nyamwange, 2016; Theresa, 2015). As such, learners need to be assisted through career leadership in high schools to make well-informed career decisions when transiting to tertiary institutions (Dani & Desai, 2018; Nneka, 2013). During secondary schooling, learners are not yet mature enough to stick on selections they make, hence they can be inclined by several issues, which are likely to lead them into wrong professions if not directed through career leadership activities (Dani & Desai, 2018; Oztemel, 2013).

As revealed in chapter one, studies conducted in Lesotho (Mokitimi & Moorosi, 2020; Thetsane et al., 2020; Ts'eane, 2018; Makhakhane, 2010) observed factors discouraging students' selections of professions in tertiary institutions, but they did not look at factors influencing secondary school learners' vocational choices. This stresses that factors determining secondary school learners' choice of programmes in tertiary institutions are not known by students, parents, and schools in Lesotho. Therefore, results of this study can help in understanding the extent at which leading reasons, such as parents, peers, mass media, and learning contexts act as determiners of career choices. Wrong career choice in a country such as Lesotho, which invests hugely on tertiary education equals poor investment. Hence, secondary schools in Lesotho

should provide vocational management to prepare learners in making well-informed career selections in universities and colleges.

Moreover, chapter one indicated that secondary school learners who are not guided in career decision-making are likely to face some challenges when they have to take a single career out of many careers accessible in universities and colleges (Carrico et al., 2019). Secondary school learners in Lesotho transit to tertiary institutions with little or no knowledge of educational programmes offered. The current state of learners with little or no knowledge of programmes offered by tertiary institutions is answerable to the absence of career guidance facilities in local secondary schools. As shown in chapter one, career guidance in schools is meant to ensure that students are assisted to make well-informed career decisions in life (Abah et al., 2019). The current study explored factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices in Lesotho in retrospective of first-year students at NUL.

6.3 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature stated that parents (Sinkombo, 2016), peers (Odu et al., 2020), gender (Kans & Claesson, 2022), mass media (Freeman et al., 2017), and school career guidance (Akhter et al., 2021) were influential on secondary school learners' career selections for tertiary education. Several studies (Okamopelola, 2014; Mtemeri, 2017; Sinkombo, 2016; Humayon et al., 2018; Lloyd et al., 2018; Adefeso-Olateju & Akowonjo, 2018; Mwaa, 2016; Wachira, 2018) established that parents have a great influence in students' choice of professions. The literature also revealed that in Pakistan (Hakim, 2018; Law et al., 2017; Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017), in Nigeria (Adefeso-Olateju & Akowonjo, 2018; Abiola, 2014), in Kenya (Mwaa, 2016; Wachira, 2018), in India (Abbas et al., 2020; Letha, 2013), and in Australia (Lloyd et al., 2018; Sattler, 2021) parents played the most significant role in influencing secondary school learners' career adoptions.

Literature established several aspects that relate to parental influence when students embark in the process of career decision-making. These are parental educational attainment, parental occupation, and parental support. The influence of parents' educational background was noted in the literature, for

example, Chifamba (2019), Uka (2013), Mbagwu et al. (2016), Lam and Ngoc (2020), Ghuntla et al. (2012), Sattler (2021), Barnes et al. (2020), and Sinkombo (2016) revealed that parents with tertiary credentials have an optimistic influence in professions envisaged by their children.

The literature revealed that parents with tertiary qualifications are likely to be in high positions within different companies (Ali & Jalal, 2018), which may be a reason for children to envisage pursuing educational programmes resembling their parents' vocations (Okesina & Famolu, 2022). Occupational status of parents, particularly those who have university and college qualifications, was also found to be powerful when students pick programmes to pursue in tertiary institutions (Abbas et al., 2020; Kumar, 2016; Mathatha & Ndlovu, 2019; Madara & Cherotich, 2016). Several studies (Ramona & Loredana, 2010; Yean & Chin, 2019; Wachira, 2018; Dasgupta & Stout, 2014; Okesina & Famolu, 2022) established that occupations of parents can motivate students to take occupations that are comparable to those of their parents.

Another vital factor in the literature that seemed to have influenced secondary school learners' selections of vocations was peers. Several studies (Hashim & Embong, 2015; Fizer, 2013; Siddiky & Akter, 2021; Kimaro, 2016; Odu et al., 2020; Wang & Degol, 2013; Igbiniedion, 2011; Raabe et al., 2018) confirmed that secondary school learners relied on their fellow peers when in the process of career choosing, and that informed them about the careers they wanted to pursue. The influence of gender on students' career choices was also noted in the literature (Block et al., 2018; Yean & Chen, 2019; Astorne-Figari & Speer, 2018; Rosen et al., 2018). A study in German (Branoe & Zolitz, 2018) affirmed gender influence on students' career choices, particularly peers in the parallel gender. The literature (Schone et al., 2020; Block et al., 2018; Ellmers, 2018) revealed that male students in the same groups are likely to follow same gender-oriented careers, while female students in the same peer groups are likely to choose female-oriented careers in tertiary institutions (Raabe et al., 2018; Kimaro & Lawino, 2016; Fizer, 2013).

An American study (Yean & Chin, 2019) also revealed that gender of students influenced their preferences on certain careers than others, because of gender

politics (Mudhovozi & Chireshe, 2014). For instance, Astorne-Figari and Speer (2018) revealed that American male students believe it is acceptable to major in STEM-related careers, such as engineering while their female counterparts think they fit well in non-STEM careers like nursing. Several studies (Kans & Claesson, 2022; Komiti & Moorosi, 2020; Astorne-Figari & Speer, 2019; Wallace, 2014) have shown that gender imbalance in STEM careers can only be addressed if mathematics and science subjects are taught in native languages, because that makes it easy for teachers and learners to comprehend one another. Then, majority of students will be able to understand and be affectionate of mathematics and science alike. In Lesotho, Komiti and Moorosi (2020) also revealed that gender influence was one of the determining factors, because majority of females indicated that terms used in mathematics and science discouraged them from liking science-related subjects. Unfortunately, in the present study gender was not a significant factor as it was not mentioned by students to have an influence in careers they chose at NUL.

Hoag et al. (2017), Kearney and Levine (2020), and Comfort and Morgan (2017) in USA; Wanyama (2012) in Kenya; Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) in Pakistan; Krishna and Sharma (2016) in India; and Di Pietro (2016) in UK established that mass media influenced career choices of secondary school learners. Studies in USA (Batchelor et al., 2014; Team Zenbusiness, 2020; Taylor & Parsons, 2011) showed that diverse types of mass media influenced students to pick careers based on the popularity of different types of mass media in their environments. For example, Taylor and Parsons (2011) indicated that social media is one of the most used cyberspace podiums among the youth in the U.S., and its influence during the process of selecting careers supports students in making decent career selections. Another American study by Freeman et al. (2017) recognized that access to career intervention programmes aided secondary school learners to elect careers they had been envisaged pursuing in life.

Studies carried out in Kenya (Kigumba, 2017; Wekesa, 2016) confirmed the influence of mass media on students' career choosing. The influence of school career guidance was also emphasised in the literature, for example, different studies (Roy, 2020; David et al., 2020; Lam & Santos, 2017; Faitar & Faitar,

2013; Ulrich, 2018; Balci, 2017) established a significant role played by career control facilities in assisting students' career adoptions. Moreover, a Ghanaian study (Brew, 2018) indicated that school career guidance helped learners to make well-informed choices of careers, especially when they continued higher education in colleges and universities. The literature also recognized that poor performance of learners after sitting for final secondary school examinations deters them from pursuing careers of interest in tertiary institutions (Thompson, 2021; Anaya et al., 2017; Jolif, 2018; Romash, 2019; Dooley et al., 2016). Studies in African countries (Jolif, 2018 in Kenya; Dinah, 2018 in Uganda; King'aru, 2014 in Tanzania; Makondo & Makondo, 2020 in Zimbabwe; Musengimana et al., 2020 in Rwanda) showed that poor performance of secondary school learners in mathematics and sciences always hinders them from pursuing STEM-related programmes in tertiary institutions.

Correspondingly, a study in USA (Anaya et al., 2017) affirmed that influence of poor performance in science-related subjects during secondary schooling and in the beginning of first-year at tertiary level stops students from pursuing STEM programmes in the universities. In Canada, Dooley et al. (2016) revealed that students who encountered problems in passing high school mathematics and science are in non-STEM programmes in the institutions of higher learning. An Australian study by Timms et al. (2018) found that poor performance in secondary school science and mathematics subjects contributes to low enrolments in universities' STEM programmes. Some studies, for example, Dooley et al. (2016) and Timms et al. (2018) concluded that a limited number of qualified teachers in secondary schools is one of the effects influencing learners' choices of programmes whereby they may not pursue careers they envisaged for in universities. This asserts that pass mark in every subject determines careers chosen by students in tertiary institutions and the workplace as well.

The literature revealed the importance of career teaching aspect in secondary schools as a career intervention programme that helps learners when selecting careers (Amoah et al., 2021; David et al., 2020; Dandara, 2014). Career teaching in secondary schools has been perceived to be a method used to direct learners' adoption of educational programmes when transiting to tertiary

institutions (Dandara, 2014). Moreover, literature underlined that provision of career education equips learners with skills on how to search and pick careers that align with their interests (Amoah et al., 2021; Roy, 2020; Baloch & Shah, 2014). Career guidance in schools needs to be performed while engaging learners into various activities that eventually inform the manner in which they make career decisions towards tertiary education (Akhter et al., 2021; David et al., 2020; Lam & Santos, 2017; Salleh et al., 2013).

As highlighted in the literature, career intervention programmes common in Lesotho include career exhibition events normally held by tertiary institutions for secondary school learners to make them aware of educational programmes they offer (CHE, 2020; Mosebekoa, 2018; CHE, 2013). Another career intervention programme used in some countries is field trips, which is meant to inform students about the world of work (Moriasi et al., 2021 in Kenya; Hanover, 2020 in USA; Brew, 2018 in Ghana; Diamond et al., 2012 in UK; Heggins et al., 2012 in Ireland). The current study also discovered that secondary schools in Lesotho engage in field trips to introduce learners to diverse types of jobs in different workplaces. The literature highlighted that in order to enhance career supervision in high schools, teachers must be equipped with skills to supervise learners in all career-related activities, including educational trips to industrial areas and institutions of higher learning (Lee et al., 2021; Dungey & Ansell, 2020; SACDA, 2020; Welde et al., 2015).

6.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Influences of the above-mentioned factors were assessed through the research methodology discussed in chapter three informed by interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. Interpretivist/constructivist paradigm in the current study focused on participants' views about factors influencing secondary school learners' choice of careers in one tertiary institution in Lesotho, which was NUL. The data was collected through the use of the qualitative approach with a sample of 42 first-year students, 7 first-year tutors, and 7 second-year undergraduates. Focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews, and documentary analysis were used to generate the data for this study. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and content analysis were considered for the analysis of research results.

6.5 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

6.5.1 Research Question 1: Which Factors Have Inspired Selections of Professions among Students at NUL?

The current study found that selections of careers among secondary school learners in Lesotho is influenced by several factors discussed below, starting with parents' influence.

6.5.1.1 Inspiration of Parents in Selected Educational Programmes

It emerged from findings of this study that parents are influencing secondary school learners' choices of educational programmes in tertiary institutions in Lesotho from different dimensions. These influencers are: parental educational attainment, parental occupation, and parental support. Parental educational background is confirmed to play a significant role in determining professions selected by students at NUL. The current study showed that parents who at least attained tertiary level of education inspired students' selection of educational programmes at NUL. Some students in this study showed a big concern that their graduate parents forced them into educational programmes they never envisaged pursuing at NUL. This means, the majority of students at NUL are likely to be in educational programmes against their will and interest in order to please their parents.

The current research found that some students whose parents have tertiary qualifications and parents with non-tertiary qualifications, both felt coerced into professions only desired by their parents. Another interesting finding from this study showed that, even though some students were against parents who forced them into careers they did not like, majority of the interviewed first-year tutors at NUL stressed that parents have a right to lead their children to better professions. They further indicated that, through experience, parents know what is best for their children. This study revealed that most students were hauled into careers similar to those of their parents.

Likewise, findings of the present study also indicated that when choosing tertiary programmes, some newly graduated secondary school students preferred programmes resembling careers of their parents, which may result from support given by parents to their children. It also seemed in this study that

parental support inspires students' choices of careers to a larger degree. This transpired when NUL students testified that their parents were happy with programmes they selected. Hence, this study established that parents as first-time socialisers in children's lives are always regarded as a trusted source of information when students choose professions at universities. Some first-year students interviewed in the present study revealed that they were satisfied with careers advised by their parents when transiting to NUL.

6.5.1.2 Teacher Advice on Careers Chosen by Students

The present study revealed that secondary school teachers influence career choices among learners. The current study showed that learners in local secondary schools depend on teachers' advice in many things, including selection of careers to pursue in tertiary institutions. It also emerged in this study that influence of teachers on programmes chosen by students in tertiary institutions hang on interactions existing between themselves and learners. This study discovered that learners at secondary school level are more likely to take advises of teachers with good reputation and love of children than those teachers who are unapproachable. More findings showed that students hated subjects that were taught by arrogant and unapproachable teachers to an extent that they did not prefer studying similar programmes at NUL. Despite that, many students indicated appreciation of pursuing careers that were suggested by teachers who treated them with respect in tertiary institutions.

Additional findings showed that teachers advised learners to pick careers relating to subjects they excelled in during high school level of learning. For instance, the current study found that agriculture teachers in local secondary schools were more influential in learners' choice of agriculture at NUL. In contrast, some students had a negative attitude towards agriculture teachers to an extent that they did not select agriculture at NUL despite the good score they obtained in final secondary school examinations. It can be deduced that learners can take careers advised by teachers they like than careers advised by teachers they do not like.

6.5.1.3 Peer Encouragement on Careers Persuaded by Students

It occurred from the present study that secondary school learners in Lesotho are influenced by peers in actions they perform daily, including career choices. The current study indicated that peers influence learners' choice of educational programmes to study at NUL through discussions taking place within their respective peer groups. This study revealed further that peer groups are more beneficial to learners who come from parents with inadequate knowledge of study programmes provided by universities and colleges in Lesotho. It also arose in the findings of this study that some students, particularly those with parents who only obtained secondary school credentials and those who cannot discuss career information with their parents, are highly reliant on career information given by other learners within their peer groups. The current study found that knowledgeable peers, specifically from parents with tertiary qualifications, are mostly informative about educational programmes available at NUL, hence, they are regarded as a reliable source of information.

Other findings of the present research showed that majority of learners who were in the same peer groups while in secondary schools are in similar educational programmes at NUL. For example, it was discovered that female peers influenced each other to study Economics, and this was confirmed by three students pursuing this profession who claimed to be in the same peer group in high school. The findings also indicated that after transiting to NUL, students are experiencing advanced peer influence, which direct them into programmes pursued by roommates and other learners they meet in different associations and clubs in the university. The above findings showed the power of peer influence at different levels of life, and the extent at which it can determine one's career decision-making.

The current study revealed the affirmation of NUL first-year tutors on the significance of peers met on campus, and how they are more influential than those established in secondary schools. Tutors revealed that peers formed at NUL influenced students to change from their initial educational programmes to the new ones, because of interest developed through peer interaction and discussions. It was further highlighted that the power of peers at NUL is valuable because of information about certain programmes from their

roommates, which most of the times update them about requirements for being in the same programmes. It can be emphasised that peer groups formed in high schools inform and influence learners to choose certain educational programmes without enough information, while peers who meet in tertiary institutions help each other to change programmes to the new ones. This is important because it may be the period when students weigh in the experiences from their careers, and decide to pick the ones they think match their interests.

6.5.1.4 Stimulus of Mass Media on Students' Professional Choices

Findings of the present study showed that mass media has limited influence on educational programmes selected by students at NUL. The study found out that learners knew several types of mass media that can inform them on existing educational programmes at NUL. These are: 1) print media, which in the case of the present study are university prospectus and pamphlets; 2) social media accessed mostly through utilisation of cell phones by learners; and 3) radio broadcasting from different radio stations in the country, including NUL campus radio. The current study showed that NUL has different types of print media, which are prospectus and pamphlets, but the two are not easily accessible for learners in secondary schools. The same study found that the reason for NUL print media's inaccessibility is because the same institute does not distribute prospectus and pamphlets to local schools.

The study discovered that some learners in the country can access social media, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, but none of them use these types of social media platforms to search for programmes offered in tertiary institutions, specifically NUL. However, this study revealed that secondary school learners in Lesotho do not use social media platforms to search for educational programmes to pursue at NUL. Secondary school learners with access to internet, rather use social media to chat with friends and other important people in their lives.

The study also found out that internet usage in remotest areas in Lesotho is rare because some students have no access to smart phones, and that means they are not familiar with social media. The study found that inaccessibility to different types of social media leave rural learners with no alternative, but to

rely on career-related information from people around them. It also appeared in findings of this study that NUL infrequently disseminate career-related information on local radio stations, hence, participants of this study revealed that secondary school learners cannot consider radio broadcasting as an effective source when making decisions of educational programmes to follow at NUL. Findings emphasised that NUL does not advertise its study programmes on local radio stations to enhance students' knowledge about educational programmes it offers. Generally, mass media does not influence first-time tertiary students' selections of careers at NUL.

6.5.1.5 Knowledge Backgrounds as Causal factor of Professional Choosing

It emerged from results of the current study that secondary school learners who envisaged pursuing STEM careers at the university level of education are more affected by poor academic performance, particularly in mathematics and combined science subjects than those who never wished to be in sciences at NUL. Reasons for poor mathematics grades at the end of secondary school level, include learners' negative attitude towards STEM subjects, which eventually influence pursuance of choice of non-STEM programmes at NUL. This study indicated that poor learners' preparations from secondary schools in making well-informed selections of careers has a negative impact in the way students are making career selections. Further results of the present study revealed that lack of career guidance in high schools contributes in learners who mistakenly prefer taking STEM majors at the university level without considering their personal skills and aptitudes in such programmes.

The study also discovered that learners who scored C grade in mathematics and science subjects at the end of secondary schooling are most likely to change from STEM programmes to non-STEM programmes when proceeding to the second-year level of study at NUL. This does not happen with learners who scored an A and/or B symbols in secondary school examinations, because they do not change programmes. In addition, the study indicated that when students fail to accomplish their dreams in pursuing STEM careers at NUL, they consider non-STEM careers, such as Sociology, Economics, and Theology, for example, which they never prepared themselves for. It also emerged that

choosing non-science programmes at NUL are problematic among students because they fail as they never prepared themselves for reading programmes. Therefore, the present study confirms that in Lesotho the majority of secondary school students who cannot be in STEM programmes make hasty decisions leading to wrong careers as they do not get career guidance support both in high schools and NUL.

6.5.1.6 Effect of Limited Professional Leadership in Schools

The present study revealed lack of career leadership in all stages of schooling in Lesotho. It is further discovered that due to limited career guidance in local secondary schools, learners are transiting to tertiary institutions with poor knowledge of educational programmes obtainable. This study indicated further that learners' little or no knowledge of programmes offered at NUL perseveres despite the fact that schools still organise career-related activities, such as educational field trips, and career expo events for secondary schools in Lesotho. Educational field trips are reported to happen once per annum, usually to local industrial companies than to tertiary institutions. Hence, educational field trips may not effectively benefit high school learners' selections of careers in Lesotho.

The current study argued that limited visits to tertiary institutions denies students the opportunity to access knowledge of what is actually happening in universities and colleges, including NUL. Students are likely to feel frustrated when seeing, for instance, a lecture theatre for the first time while they could have known that before transiting to tertiary institutions. Therefore, it is concluded from findings of this study that local secondary schools do not often organize educational field trips to NUL in order to introduce students to programmes offered, and this leaves them with a likelihood of choosing undesirable majors.

In general, field trips organised by local schools had a little impact on students' career decision-making because they were not sustainable, and left learners with many questions unreciprocated. It occurred in this study that, even though CHE and local universities and colleges inform students about different educational programmes they can apply for after passing the last grade of high

school, such event does not effectively help them. That is, career exhibition organised by CHE and institutions of higher learning in Lesotho are not frequently held, and that means they are not so helpful to majority of secondary school learners. Therefore, career exhibition fails to adequately answer to students' questions concerning detailed requirements on educational programmes offered at NUL and other local tertiary institutions.

6.5.2 Research Question 2: To What Extent Do Students at NUL Feel Content with Careers They Have Chosen?

The study discovered that admission of first-time tertiary students in NUL educational programmes is determined by the number of subjects passed in secondary school final examinations, and how good they are passed. Moreover, the current study revealed that students compromise following programmes in which they can be admitted for the sake of being in tertiary institutions. It occurred in this study that admission of students at NUL is determined by Admission Regulation (AR) 2.05, which stipulates all the requirements for first-time tertiary learners to be admitted into existing programmes. AR 2.05 indicates that students must pass a certain number of subjects relating to educational programmes they want to pursue at NUL.

Furthermore, the present research exposed that AR 2.05 affects learners who wished to follow STEM-related careers in the faculty of science and Technology more than those who envisaged following programmes in social sciences and humanities. It also occurred in this study that most programmes outside the science profession at NUL do not strictly require mathematics, for example, the Faculty of Social Sciences requires that a student must have minimum of six subjects in LGCSE examinations with at least a C or better in four subjects including English Language and mathematics, and a D or better in the remaining two subjects (NUL, 2020). It was highlighted in the findings of the present study that high schools in Lesotho fail to guide learners on careers that fit their abilities and talents, hence, learners spend most of their learning time focusing on subjects they struggle most to pass, like mathematics and science. It can be emphasised that learners who see themselves performing good in high school mathematics and science subjects are likely to think they can also do well in university sciences, which is normally not easy.

It further occurred in this study that when freshman learners fail to get admission in envisaged careers like engineering at NUL, they experience stress and confusion as they have to consider programmes in other faculties. The study found that learners who envisaged pursuing STEM programmes, and could not succeed because of low marks scored in secondary school mathematics and science subjects do not feel content in programmes outside STEM. Contrarily, this study showed that most of NUL undergraduates who never wished to study STEM programmes are comfortable in educational programmes they are pursuing. Therefore, this study found that undergraduates who are not happy in their current programmes at NUL are likely to switch to other programmes or drop-out of school if not helped to find matching programmes.

6.5.3 Research Question 3: Which Challenges Do Students Encounter in their Chosen Careers?

Findings of this study revealed that because some undergraduates at NUL are not content in their preferred study programmes, they often change from the former programmes to the ones they think are easy to follow. More findings indicated that students are content in educational programmes they select for the second time at NUL. However, the present study discovered three major reasons compelling students at NUL to change from one programme to the other namely, interest, difficulty, and failure. NUL undergraduate students tend to change programmes in second-year, and they do so particularly when they discover new study programmes that capture their interest. Another finding from this study revealed that majority of students who usually change programmes at NUL are those registered in science programmes, and they switch when encountering difficulties with progressing in their initial majors. The present study also found that students who experience difficulties in their initial study programmes face possibilities for failure; therefore, the research showed that when students encounter difficulties in science programmes, they quickly decide at the beginning of second-year of study to switch to non-scientific majors.

The present study indicated that NUL students who change from one programme to the other are required to write a letter to the Dean of faculty,

seeking permission of transfer. Moreover, it also emerged in this study that a letter should show why a student wishes to change a career, which is always not the case. The current study discovered that students at NUL are not bound to stipulate reasons for transfer, hence, many letters were found during data collection written to Deans were without reasons, but learners were granted permission to transfer.

Findings of this study also showed that Ordinance No. 8 of 1979 mandates tutors to guide and advice students' selections of programmes and other related academic issues. However, this study discovered that the majority of first-year tutors were not familiar with set principles appearing in the Ordinance No. 8 of 1979. Therefore, the present study found that tutors were unsure of the strategies to put in practice when assisting students during the process of choosing new programmes at NUL. The study concluded further that NUL appoints tutors without inducting them, hence, they have little knowledge of what is expected of them when learners wish to change professions.

6.5.4 Research Question 4: How Can Secondary School Learners Be Best Supported to Choose Suitable Careers?

As highlighted earlier in the results of this study high school learners in Lesotho are not supported to make well-informed selections of professions in tertiary institutions. The existing research revealed that secondary school syllabus does not include information on post-secondary careers because there is no programme for such dissemination of information. These findings show that local secondary schools have not yet seen the importance of providing and teaching career subjects as a means to support learners' selections of future professions. As teachers are not taught career management in local tertiary institutions providing teacher training, secondary school teachers in Lesotho cannot assist learners in making selections of professions they want to follow at NUL.

The current study showed that educational trips to diverse organisations and businesses in the country are among the mechanisms used by secondary school teachers in place of vocational guidance practices. Hence, this research showed that attendance of educational field trips, though very limited, enhanced

learners' knowledge of careers to choose and follow after completion of secondary school learning. Moreover, the current study revealed that, organisational visits must be taken at least twice per annum, that is, in the beginning and towards end of the year when grade 12 learners are preparing to transit into tertiary institutions.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS

The current study concludes that secondary school learners in Lesotho, are influenced by several factors namely, parents, teachers, peers, mass media, learning contexts to choose careers as there is no organised school career guidance within the basic education context. Another causal factor in learners' selection of educational programmes in the country is support for students in choosing careers that best suit their interests at tertiary level of education, which for the current study is NUL. It is the decision of this research that parental educational attainment, parental occupation, and parental support determine the manner in which secondary school learners in Lesotho make selections of educational programmes in tertiary institutions, specifically NUL.

Moreover, this research settles that high school teachers can either influence learners to study certain educational programmes or discourage them from pursuing similar subjects to the ones they teach when proceeding to NUL. Another conclusion from the present study shows that peer influence is effective both in high schools and tertiary level of education when students are in the process of selecting professions of interest. The current research concluded that the peer factor influenced some learners to find careers that match their interest and skills, while the same factor also channelled other students into careers that they do not fit in. However, this study finalises that peer influence is important for learners who may not get parental and teacher guidance when transiting to NUL.

This study further accomplishes that mass media has no significant influence in careers chosen by secondary school learners when transiting to NUL. Specifically, this study realises that learners use social media as part of mass media in other businesses, like talking to friends than searching for careers to pursue at NUL. Another conclusion drawn from findings of the present study is

that, radio broadcasting and NUL prospectus have a minimal effect when high school learners need information about educational programmes offered by the above-mentioned tertiary institution. Learners have access to NUL prospectus when already admitted into programmes of their choices.

It is also settled that learning contexts, such as good and bad academic performances in secondary school subjects channel learners into careers they never wanted to study at the university level. High school learners in Lesotho are either admitted in educational programmes they like or not admitted in such programmes by NUL, due to pass marks obtained in final secondary school examinations. This study also indicated that the majority of learners are in programmes they do not like or are less likely to enjoy in the university, hence, they experience a lot of stress. It is decided that the majority of NUL undergraduates are in professions they never wished pursuing as they do not meet requirements.

The study found that the misguided choice of professions influences high rates of programme change for NUL students. Most students who change educational programmes are those initially admitted in the Faculty of Science and Technology (FOST) to non-scientific programmes. The current study shows that lack of learners' support for choice of suitable careers affects them negatively, because they choose programmes unsuitable for their skills. Generally, the current study revealed that secondary school learners admitted at NUL are at the risk of selecting professions they may not enjoy in the future, because there is no strategy used to prepare them to face challenges that may be brought along by variety of influencing factors, such as parents, peers, teachers, social media, and lack of career guidance facilities in high schools. Therefore, nothing is in place in Lesotho to assist students during the processes of selecting careers; and this is a terrible mistake given the investment the country makes in tertiary education.

6.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The present study sought to investigate factors that influence secondary school learners' professional selections when intending to pursue higher learning education in Lesotho, specifically, at NUL. Lesotho is one of the few least

developed countries which invests heavily in education from basic to tertiary education. Given this kind of investment, it would be expected that the country would put strategies to guide children to choose professions needed for national development. However, this study gives insight into the country's lack of plan in human capital development despite ample evidence that it lacks critical skills in engineering, medicine etc. Teachers must be tasked to account for holistic learner development, including learners' choice of vocation.

With findings of the current study, the Government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) must launch a career instruction syllabus for tertiary institutions training future teachers in the country. Teachers must be aware that subjects they teach are significant in students' future jobs, and make it their responsibilities to encourage learners to consider professions in subjects they perform best. Furthermore, this study will contribute in showing the importance of integrating career education in secondary schools in Lesotho as a tool that can assist learners to make well-informed career choices in tertiary institutions and workplaces.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Constructed on the conclusions of the study on factors influencing secondary school learners' career choices at NUL, the following recommendations are made:

6.8.1 Training of Parents and Guardians in Career Guidance

- This study recommends that parents and guardians be equipped with vocational supervision knowledge.
- Training of parents and guardians should be targeted for parents' meetings, which may be held quarterly, or when a need arises.
- Parents and custodians should obtain occupational supervision exercises by career guidance experts who are supposed to be hired by secondary schools as per the recommendation of this study.

6.8.2 Combination of Vocational Education in Teacher Training Curricula

- It is recommended that job-related teaching be combined in the syllabus of all teacher training institutions in the country, which in the present are NUL and the Lesotho College of Education (LCE).

6.8.3 Integration of Vocational Education in Secondary School Curricula

- The current study recommends evaluation of national secondary school syllabus taking into thought factors that may affect schoolchildren during the process of career selection in tertiary institutions and the offices.
- There should be obviously specified rules compulsory for career educators as the sole providers of vocational leadership in schools to ensure that students are correctly directed to spot professions that align with their interest.
- It is recommended that career education be facilitated by only qualified career teachers in secondary schools.

6.8.4 Establishment of Career Guidance Centres in Schools

- The current study recommends that career management centres be established in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Lesotho.
- The study also recommends employment of expert therapists in schools to facilitate professional supervision.
- It is recommended that NUL build a career guidance facility for both possible and registered students.

6.8.5 Teaching and Learning of STEM Subjects in Native Language

- It is recommended that mathematics and science subjects be taught in Sesotho to upsurge pass and enrolment rates in colleges and universities.
- Local curricula for high schools must be revisited in order to increase mathematics and science pass rates in secondary schools.

6.8.6 Direct Recommendations to NUL

- The study recommends that the National University of Lesotho (NUL) must come up with regulations that force students to show reasons of transfer as that gives tutors the opportunity to assess whether students have clear reasons for change of educational programmes.
- It is further recommended that NUL must frequently use its own radio station and others in the country to disseminate information regarding programmes available for students who have just graduated from secondary schools OR who are still in secondary schools.

- The current study recommends that NUL must prepare radio programmes informing the nation about its educational programmes.
- It is recommended that NUL must ensure distribution of prospectuses and brochures to local secondary schools to equip and improve students' knowledge of careers offered in this institution.

6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The subsequent are recommendations made from discoveries of the current study:

- It is recommended that further research be conducted in all tertiary institutions in Lesotho as the current study focused only on choices of careers at NUL.
- Other studies can be carried out to establish satisfaction of learners in professions studied at NUL.
- It is recommended that more research be conducted, specifically, concentrating on how gender affects schoolchildren's vocational adoptions in Lesotho.
- It is recommended that additional studies are carried out on the importance of educational field trips as a source of occupational information to find out the extent at which they can improve learners' professional preferences in the context of Lesotho.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TUTORs

1. Which factors do you think influence secondary school students' choice of careers?
 - a. To what extent are secondary school students, across the country, familiar with programmes at NUL?
 - b. Besides career guidance offered by NUL and other local institutions, what else do you think influence students' choice of careers?
2. Which challenges do you think first time tertiary students encounter in choosing careers at NUL?
 - a. Do you think local secondary schools prepare students enough for career choice in tertiary institutions?
 - b. Are there any career guidance services NUL offers first year students in the first few weeks or months after admissions?
 - c. How do you think NUL can assist new entrants to tertiary to adjust within their chosen careers or to re-evaluate whether the choices fit their interest and personalities?
3. How normal is it for students to change a programme of study at first- or second-year level in your faculty?
 - a. What factors influence the change of programme?
 - b. Are there requirements for students to give reasons (in writing) for their change of programme? May I have access to some of the request for change of programme?
 - c. What type of counselling do students get during the process of programme changing?
4. How do you think secondary school students must be supported in choosing careers in tertiary institutions?
 - a. At what level of study do you think career guidance must be started, and why?

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

1. Which factors influenced you to choose your career (Chosen programme of study)?
 - a. How familiar were you about possible and suitable careers at tertiary while you were at secondary school level?
 - b. To what extent have your friends influenced your choice? Elaborate
 - c. To what extent have your parents influenced your choice? Elaborate
 - d. To what extent have your teachers influenced your choice? Elaborate
 - e. To what extent have financial constraints affected your choice of career?
2. How do you feel about the career you have chosen at NUL?
 - a. What type of assistance did NUL provide you with when choosing a career (educational programme)?
 - b. What makes your current/chosen career better for you than other possible careers?
 - c. Had you not chosen this career, which another career would you have chosen? Elaborate
 - d. Have you ever considered transferring from your current programme?
 - e. If yes, did you ever seek advice for the second choice of a career?
 - f. From whom did you seek advice?
3. Which challenges have you encountered in your chosen career?
 - a) To what extent has NUL provided assistance to overcome the challenges? Elaborate?
 - b) Has the support given by the university been satisfactory? If yes, elaborate; if no, explain how?
4. How do you think first time tertiary students should be assisted in choosing careers (educational programmes) at tertiary level?
 - a) At what level would you like students to get assistance in choosing a career?
 - b) Had you been guided in secondary school; do you think you could have chosen another career or you would still be in the current one?
 - c) How do you think the state of career guidance in secondary school affects learners' career choice?

APPENDIX C: FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

1. Which factors influenced you to choose your career (initially chosen programme of study)?
 - a. How familiar were you with educational programmes offered at NUL when you applied?
 - b. What challenges did you encounter in your chosen careers?
2. What then influenced you to change that programme to the new one?
 - a. When did you know the possibility of changing an educational programme within NUL?
 - b. To what extent did lecturers contribute to you choosing the current career (Educational programme)?
 - c) What type of guidance did you get from your tutor when switching to a new programme at NUL?
 - d) To what extent did your peers/friends influence your choice of the current major/educational programme?
3. To what extent do you feel content with a career you have now chosen?
 - a. Do you think the current career aligns with your interests? Elaborate
 - b. What makes you comfortable with the present career?
4. Which are challenges attached to the processes of changing one educational programme into another?
 - a. What type of communication did you engage in when requesting to change a programme?
 - b. What type of assistance did you get at NUL when thinking of changing your initial educational programme?
5. Describe how secondary school students can best be supported to choose suitable careers.

APPENDIX D: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The National University of Lesotho

Telephone: +266 22340601



Faculty of Education

P.O. Roma 180

Lesotho

31st January 2022

The Registrar
National University of Lesotho
P.O. Roma 180

Dear Sir

RE: MR RAMAKATSA MONAHENG (199700801)

As Head of Educational Foundations Department, I wish to introduce Mr. Ramakatsa Limpho Callixtus Monaheng as a PhD student in the Faculty of Education who is at an advanced stage of his research. Mr. Monaheng is conducting PhD research on “**Factors Influencing Secondary School Learners’ Career Choices in One Tertiary Institution in Lesotho**” and he wishes to collect data from approximately 34 students and 7 tutors at the National University of Lesotho. He will attach to this letter, his request and explain which participants have been sampled for his study. The Department will be highly grateful if his request is honored.

Yours faithfully

Paseka A. Mosia (D.Ed.)
Associate Professor of Inclusive Education
Head of Department – Educational Foundations
National University of Lesotho
P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho
Cell: +26658969867
Email: mosia296@gmail.com/ pa.mosia@nul.ls

APPENDIX E: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Ha Makhalanyane
P.O. Box 363
Roma 180
Lesotho

16th January 2022

The Registrar
National University of Lesotho
P.O. Roma 180
LESOTHO

Dear Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY RESEARCH AT NUL

I, Ramakatsa Limpho Callixtus Monaheng student number 199700801, am a registered student with the National University of Lesotho (NUL) in the Faculty of Education pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) in Education. I wish to conduct a study on **Factors Influencing Secondary School Learners' Career Choices in One Tertiary Institution in Lesotho** through retrospective reflections of a sample of first- and second-year students at NUL. The envisioned participants of this study are first year students, second-year students, and first year tutors. All the participants will be selected using purposive sampling technique. Six first year students will be selected from each faculty of the three faculties, namely social sciences, education, and science and technology. As a result, there will be 3 focus groups each from selected faculties. Five second-year students (who transferred from programme of faculty to another) will purposively be selected from each of the three faculties for in-depth face-to-face interviews. First-year tutors from each of the seven faculties form the sample of the study.

Findings of this study will be of great benefit to NUL, other tertiary institutions, and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in relation to how first time tertiary students make choices of careers. The findings of the present study will also highlight the importance of implementing career guidance facilities in secondary schools in Lesotho.

Ethical protocols will be followed so that selected participants for this study participate voluntarily without being coerced to do so, and would be free to withdraw from the study even if initially agreeable. The study will protect identity of participants to be strictly confidential and for data to be cited anonymously in the writing of the study.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours Faithfully

Ramakatsa L.C. Monaheng (Mr.)

APPENDIX F: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

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P.O. Roma 180

Lesotho

Africa

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

22nd February 2022

REF: REG/ADM-1.37

LML/hymI

Mr. Ramakatsa L. Monaheng
Ha Makhalanyane
P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho

Dear Mr. Monaheng

Re: Request to conduct research at the National University of Lesotho

The National University of Lesotho (NUL) is in receipt of your application to conduct research at this institution. The title of the Study is "Factors Influencing Secondary School Learners' Career Choices in One Tertiary Institution in Lesotho".

After careful consideration of all relevant facts, the University has agreed to allow you to continue with your research as requested. It is hoped that the research outcome will be beneficial to both the institution of Higher learning and the country at large.

By copy of this letter, Faculty Deans, First-year Tutors, First and 2nd Year Students are requested to assist you to carry out your assignment.

Yours sincerely

L. Maqalika-Lerotholi

Registrar

Cc: Faculty Deans and 1st Year Tutors
1st and 2nd Year Students in seven faculties