

## Persuasive Arguments and Career Decisions Among Grade 12 Learners in Selected Secondary Schools in South Africa

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**ABSTRACT.** The study examined persuasive arguments and adjustment in career decisions among grade 12 learners in selected secondary schools in South Africa. Persuasive Arguments theory guided the research. The design adopted in this research was a multiple case study. The participants comprised 14 learners in grade 12 in two selected secondary schools in South Africa. Data was collected using Focus Group Discussions. Thematic analysis framework was used in data analysis. The findings indicated that persuasive arguments in the form of new information, knowledge from other learners and original information influenced career adjustment among learners. The implication of this finding is that universities reconsider training teacher counsellors on career paths and subject requirements to equip them with the best knowledge on varied careers.

**Key words:** Persuasive Arguments, Career Decisions, Secondary Schools, South Africa

### INTRODUCTION

In psychology, social groups have features namely purpose, interactions, small size, purpose, interdependence, relationships among others, and motivation. In this regard, a group is defined as a collection of more than two people who are interacting face to face, are aware of their membership of the group, strive to attain the common goal of the team, and strive towards positive interdependence

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(Bettenhausen, 1991). From the standpoint of group dynamics individuals in a group gain confidence in collective decisions, there is increased motivation to make decisions, members gain social support from each other, and the members benefit from enhanced interaction with other competent others. Many benefits of making decisions as a group rather than as an individual can be found in previous research in group dynamics. According to Lombard (2020), there are many benefits of group collective decision making including pooled information that an individual does not have. One person's knowledge deficiencies can be covered by another member of the group (Lombard, 2020). According to Kivlighan et al (2012), groups have a wider number of approaches to problem solving than individuals working alone. As a result, there may be as many perspectives and approaches of problem solving as there are group members. During group decision making, there are more possibilities or approaches. As members learn new information from one another about issues being discussed in the group, they become more knowledgeable and understanding of the issues. They can participate together in making decisions on the issue and are thus satisfied with the decision making because it is much more likely to be accurate than by an individual and more likely to address problems more effectively than by individuals working alone (Kivlighan, 2012).

Furthermore, in group decision making, members make use of advantages including access to more alternatives among other members, varied information presented by others, many patterns in decision making and finally best decisions as compared to an individual making decisions alone (Hirschi & Dauwalder, 2015). Group members may integrate information by listening to each other's views to produce varied and best decisions by collecting information from other members and reaching a consensus as compared to what an individual can do (Lombard, 2020). In this regard, in group decision making, individuals learn from each other, there is available new knowledge that members from each other, and the decision arrived at is regarded as best. According to Lee et al (2019), the growing complexity of many judgements necessitates specialized expertise in a variety of fields, which is typically contained by different members in a group as compared to an individual on their own. In addition, individuals in a group support collective decisions because risks of the decision are spread among all members (Lombard, 2020). The more people who approve and commit to a decision, the more probable it is that the choice will be implemented successfully (Lombard, 2020). As a result, groups have much better and more accurate judgement of ideas because the different members bring in expertise and this leads to increased efficacy in the group consensus decision. Members involved in group decision making consider various alternatives and reach best decisions that have compromise stands on the issue being discussed at hand (Hirschi & Dauwalder, 2015).

Group dynamics are regarded as processes and behaviours that occur among members in a small social group. Group decision making is important because it brings together different ideas, knowledge, information and other alternatives that all contribute to discussions leading to a single decision which has benefited from increased alternatives from different members of a group (Lombard, 2020). In groups, individuals' behaviours are influenced by other members in a group from social comparisons and persuasive arguments which result from dynamic interactions among members. Previous research indicates that when others are present, people work more and quicker, and that when an individual is alone, there is likelihood of reduced performance because of lack of social support (Kivlighan, London, & Miles, 2012; Hirschi & Dauwalder, 2015). Individuals are constantly interacting with others elsewhere, as well as within the group and with the group itself. A group is a collection of at least two people who gather for a specific purpose, communicate with each other, influence each other, and rely on each other. A gathering should have common goals and conventions, but they should also recognize themselves as a group (Hirschi & Dauwalder, 2015).

### **Persuasive Arguments**

Persuasive arguments are about the type, convincing and credibility of information that is presented by other members of the group and is available for consideration by others (White, Charles & Nelson, 2008). The perspectives on a subject being discussed may change or remain unchanged in group decision making, depending on the type and nature of information that was available for the members for consideration. Information presented during group decision making and is regarded as novel, credible, valid, original and persuasive affect group members' opinions, causing them to change from their previously held position about an issue prior to group meeting to a new position (Zhang, et al., 2020). Furthermore, these elements are related to the communicator or presenter of information, in addition to the material conveyed during the group meeting. If the information presenter in a group is perceived to be an expert or experienced in the issue being discussed, members may be persuaded to abandon their pre-group meeting decisions in favour of new ones because the persuasive member is communicating true or credible information. Making a career choice might be challenging because there are so many possibilities available in the world. It may be difficult to choose the finest career because no one wants to engage in work in a career that they dislike or that does not fit their personal standards. There are several components and strategies that can help people choose the ideal career that they want and like. Because those

settled in their chosen profession put more effort, concentrate more and make more money, which can lead to a happier living and a stress-free existence. When this occurs, they will be able to live a healthy lifestyle (White et al, 2008). Individuals' ability to persuade others is a vital tool in any decision-making process. The capacity to persuade others, provide persuasive arguments, and persuade people to act is a valued quality that can be useful in a variety of workplaces. If you want to learn how to enhance your persuasive skills, you must first understand what the phrase involves.

Persuasion is the process of convincing someone else to do something or agree to something. Persuasion is used in the workplace to sell items, recruit team members, and boost efficiency. A good persuasion skill can persuade people to do well and succeed (Zang, et al., 2020). A convincing employee can also help to speed up and simplify group decision-making. Persuasion is a key soft skill that, when utilized correctly, may have a considerable impact on professional decisions. Good communication skills serve as the foundation for developing other persuasive abilities. Effective communication skills include being able to convey yourself properly, leveraging nonverbal cues, and using vocabulary that the other person understands (Zang, et al, 2020). If you can present your ideas and thoughts in an entertaining manner that appeals to your listener, they will shift their original decisions to support the group agreed one. When listening to alternative arguments from others on job choices, this can cause learners to change their ideas. Another crucial persuasive talent is the ability to detect and comprehend your listener's emotions. Emotional intelligence is an acquired skill that allows you to recognize and respond to the emotions of others. The best method to accomplish this is to speak with them. When utilized for persuasion, it also assists you in tailoring your persuasive approaches to a specific situation or person. For example, while discussing with a group of classmates at school about changing careers because their peers believe it is not right for them. You see that their arms are crossed and that they are avoiding eye contact as you speak to them. When they speak, their phrases are brief and to the point. You should be able to discern if they are upset or intimidated by using your emotional intelligence. With this information, you can change your persuasion strategies to try to calm them down or alleviate their anxieties (Young, 2016).

### **Persuasive Arguments Theory**

Persuasive Arguments Theory (PAT) argues that shifts from individual pre group decisions to post group decisions is attributed to information that is available during group deliberations (Sieber & Ziegler, 2019). This theory argues

that in group decision making, there is a determined pool of relevant arguments from different members involved in the group task. The pre-discussion position held by an individual is assumed to reflect the pro and con arguments that he or she can retrieve from memory. In addition, it is presumed that the pool of arguments is only partially shared among group members. During group discussion, arguments are being stated, some of which are persuasive to individual group members. According to Sieber and Ziegler (2019), the persuasiveness of arguments is determined by the degree to which they are perceived to be original and contain more evidence. During group decision making, individuals have pre-group preferred decisions which are likely to shift after post group decisions because of a more available pool of arguments presented by other members (Sieber & Ziegler, 2019). Therefore, as group deliberations continue, members gain access to more alternatives that are presented, leading to shifts in decisions. On the other hand, persuasive arguments enhance shifts in decisions by members because of the pool of information that is available for the group (Sieber & Ziegler, 2019). Therefore, there is increased demand to listen, process and weigh the options in the persuasive arguments that are presented by other members of the group. Sieber and Ziegler (2019) further argue that the pool of arguments available from other members of the group presents relevant information leading to shifts in original pre group decisions that are possessed by members. Thus, group polarization results from persuasive arguments that are presented by members of the group.

### **Literature Review**

Literature exists on persuasive arguments on group decisions in different contexts such as business fields, psychology and economics, but there is dearth of literature in educational contexts. Joyal-Desmarais, et al., (2022) indicated that persuasion is enhanced by varied motivations, presence of concrete evidence in the group and the nature of arguments that are presented during the group decision making process. In earlier research in Kenya, Aloka and Bojuwoye (2014) reiterate that persuasion is a critical in the group disciplinary decisions for students. To confirm the above evidence, White, et al., (2008) argues that positive beliefs among members in a group resulted from persuasive arguments that were presented by other persons regarded as senior and older. Reporting on factors that lead to persuasive arguments in a group, Aloka (2021) argued that credible, new, original information that is presented by teachers with long years of teaching experience causes shifts among young teachers leading to polarization in decisions. In another research which also concurs

with the above literature, Weidong and Gwanhoo (2000) reiterate that initial decisions of people shift after persuasive arguments are presented to members of a group.

In another related research, Ta, et al., (2022) indicated persuasive messages are easy to read, shorter, content loaded and relevant, leading to shifts in individual decisions of members of a group. Thus, persuasiveness of messages is understood from psychological and social aspects as critical sources to understand this phenomenon. In another research that investigated organizations decision making processes, Lantz, (2020) indicated that appeals that are persuasive are more likely to influence members of a group to shift decisions. In addition, Hadoux, et al., (2023) argues that a goal argument may, among other things, incorporate an intention to change behaviour, though we accept that there is a difference between have an intention to do something, and doing it. Nonetheless, having an intention to change behaviour is a valuable step towards changing behaviour. Moreover, Aloka, and Mathebula (2022) indicated that the persuasive arguments were regarded depending on whether they were original, from older and more senior persons, and whether the content was strong with more evidence.

To support the above argument, Penczynski (2016) reiterates that shifts in decisions during group deliberations results from factors such as original information, informative arguments and the ability of people to provide more concrete evidence. To reiterate, Vicente, et al., (2025) study indicated that individual decisions are affected by the pool of persuasive arguments that are presented during intervention. In addition, Obermaier and Koch (2024) argues that weak arguments do not lead to shifts in individual decisions because members lack motivation to change their preferred opinions. Similarly, Dawson, et al., (2024) reiterate that a strong social authority in a group deliberation brings more credibility to the information being presented and this is a key driver to shift in decision. Most recently, Hubbart (2025) argues that strong persuasive argumentation boosts leadership capacity, enhances best decisions and promotes effectiveness in communication during group deliberations. From the literature review above, very scanty information is available regarding the educational context in South Africa. Moreover, most reviewed studies have focused on career decisions in general but very little information was available on grade 12 learners.

## **GOAL OF RESEARCH**

The goal of the research was to examine persuasive arguments and career decisions among grade 12 learners in selected secondary schools in South Africa.

## METHODS

### Research Design

A multiple case study research design was adopted to guide this research. The research explored group dynamics on persuasive arguments and career decisions among learners. This research design is about understanding similarities and differences among cases that are studied in almost similar contexts (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2021). This research design was relevant to this study because it ascertained assessing and exploring different contexts of two schools.

### Study Participants

The study participants comprised 14 Grade 12 learners from two selected township secondary schools in South Africa. Thus, 7 participants were obtained in two school contexts with similar characteristics. The participants were selected using simple random sampling techniques. The sample size of 14 learners for qualitative data collection was appropriate because Mason, (2010) study argues that between 10 and 50 research participants are adequate for data saturation in qualitative aspects. The demographic profile of participants is presented in Table 1:

**Table 1.** *Demographic profile of participants*

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Categories</b>		<b>Proportion %</b>
Gender	Males	7	50%
	Females	7	50%
Ages	17 years	1	7.14%
	18 years	8	57.14%
	19 years	4	28.57%
	20 years	1	7.14%
School type	Public	14	100%
	Private	0	0%
Socio-economic status (SES)	Low SES	10	71.42%
	Moderate SES	2	14.28%
	High SES	2	14.28%

The demographic profile of participants is presented in Table 1 above. Regarding the gender of learners, there was equal representation since 50% were males and another 50% were females. Regarding the ages of learners, 8 (57.14%) were 18 years old, 4(28.57%) were 19 years old and those 17 years

and 20 years had 1 (7.14%) each. This indicates that most learners were within the expected age of grade 12 learners with the majority at 18 years. Based on school type, 14 (100%) were in public schools. Finally, based on socio-economic status, most learners 10 (71.42%) were in the low socio-economic status, and 2 (14.28%) were from moderate and high socio-economic status.

### **Research Tools**

The study adopted a focus group discussion guide for data collection. According to Guest et al., (2016), focus groups discussions of two groups and above are recommended for saturation of qualitative data. The validity and reliability of focus group discussion guide and the data obtained was ascertained by using a peer to provide an overview of the transcribed data, member checking to ensure that accurate data was collected, and finally peer debriefing after data collection where participants had access to the data to confirm their authenticity (Nowell, et al., 2017).

### **Procedure**

Upon receiving ethical clearance from the university, permission was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education. The researcher made appointments with the principals of the two selected secondary schools, and the participants were identified. Each of them completed and signed the consent form. Thereafter, the 7 learners were assembled in an office for the focus discussion which took approximately one hour 30 minutes. The data was audio recorded. Thereafter, the learners were debriefed after the session of data collection.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data obtained was analyzed by using thematic framework. According to Nowell, et al., (2017), thematic analysis process involves six phases. First, the researcher familiarized himself with the data obtained to get an overall sense of what the content was about. Secondly, the researcher generated initial codes from the transcribed data by analyzing the words that feature prominently all through. Thirdly, the researcher searched for themes that emerged from the data, and codes were also merged to assist in creating the themes and confirming them. Fourth, the researcher reviewed the themes, confirming their accuracy. Finally, the researcher defined, named the themes and wrote the report which also included interpretation of the presented data (Nowell, et al., 2017).



## RESULTS

The study examined persuasive arguments and adjustment to adjustment in career decisions among learners in secondary schools. Group members' perceptions on a subject being discussed may alter or remain intact depending on the nature of the discussion (Feinstein et al., 2013). The discussion below presents the themes on the influence of group discussion on Grade 12 learners' career decision making.

### **Sub-theme 1: *Influence of group discussion***

The influence of group conversation is defined as the impact that a debate among peers and friends can have on one's career decision-making process. For example, if one individual in a group has a different opinion, it is quite probable that the individual's opinion will trump that of other members of the group to the point that a member may desire to change an already made decision to adhere to that of the group. Group discussion is a technique for learners to express their thoughts on a particular subject. Most participants indicate that group discussions have little influence on their career selection. Participant 3 stated that having a friend who values the same things as you can be a helpful effect on the career decision-making process. This usually provides learners with directions and the ability to discuss career-related difficulties with people who share the same values:

*"When it comes to peers for instance, I have two friends and we are in a debating club together. Debate has to do with speaking and we also work together. I do debate because I want to do Law, my other friend is doing debate and he is also good in physical science, and that has to do with science he's quite good at it. He wants to be a doctor. The second friend is also debating but he has a different perspective because he is interested in another thing. If you have a positive company that you are able to influence each other positively. If you are able to get what you want to do and do it, you don't have to copy the second person and that will be a positive influence but you must follow your passion and one should not allow negative influence."* (Participant 3)

Participant 5 echoed what some of the participants said and mentioned that *"I think it has a very huge positive influence."* (Participant 5). Participant 3 also supported other participants' assertion that group discussion indeed influenced their career decision.

*"It has influenced me in a positive way because my friend who knows better than me has been able to influence me positively."* (Participant 3).

Participant 4 expresses an opinion that differs from most of the participants. Participant 4 believed that group discussions had a negative impact on career decisions because the participant believed that having such an argument with friends or peers can cause confusion, derail one's initial plan, and reduce a learner's

focus, especially for those who struggle to decide on their career of choice, as indicated by the participant: *"I have a slightly different opinion because I will say it has a negative influence on me..."* (Participant 4).

Participants 2 and 4 noted a lack of information in making professional decisions at a specific point in their academic experience. Most participants stated that professional information usually came late after they had made their career decisions, usually when they were in Grade 12, rather than being a progressive thing that should lead their journey towards making their career decisions. The participants observed the priority placed on their pass rate while ignoring discussions that could help their life. However, participant 4 emphasized family influence, explaining that having the group discussion would make no difference to some of them because their career paths would be determined for them by their family. In certain cases, learners must follow family traditions when it comes to career choices, with families failing to examine their children's talents and shortcomings. The following excerpts reflect participants' views on the influence of group discussions on career decisions:

*"Such discussions mostly happen after grade 12. It is quite unfortunate that we are usually focus on our results pass rate and not necessarily on what a group is saying. Instead of having a quality conversation like this we usually compete with ourselves."* (Participant 1).

*"Unfortunately, we don't share information among ourselves. We are always thinking about what people are going to say about us and instead of us standing our ground firmly. Sometimes it's a family decision for some of us. The family decides this is the career path you must follow."* (Participant 2).

*"I think lack of information is what influences our careers decision making. For instance, I want to study supply chain management and I really wish I knew all that I know now since last year."* (Participant 4).

Participating in career discussions can occasionally help learners who are struggling with career decisions by giving them ideas on what to choose while listening to some of their friends' perspectives on career. Three of the participants claimed that the group conversation had no influence on them since their career decisions are based on their strengths and experiences and are not influenced by peer discussions. One of the participants believed that most of their career discussion should focus on inspiring one another to grow themselves rather than being a competition, as expressed by the participants in the following extracts:

*"I feel like, fine my strengths, but I mostly do experience myself but I also gain something from my friends too, like so each and every friend is a different breed. So, once we come together like the discussion becomes good, we learn from ourselves in the process it's your progress and not mine if you are able to gain something good from the discussion. But that doesn't mean that when I express*

*myself and my abilities it counts to what I do, so I feel like it's all about empowerment and how we're going about it to achieve our goals, but at the same time, career decisions are all about individuality. If I can do this, you can do it and we never want to see someone else behind us."* (Participant 12).

*"I made my career decisions based on my strengths and abilities on what I'm interested in. Because I am me and I stand alone."* (Participant 9).

*"... if I decide to do something then it is what it is. Something that I would do regardless of anyone else's opinions or anything."* (Participant 13).

*"Interesting. So, I can make a decision based on what I can do but then I feel like she is better than me, and then I want to put myself in her position knowing well that I don't have the potential she possesses. We are all going to get something. So, like, it's not a competition where you make yourself do what others are doing and that's where it gets twisted cause a lot of people especially teenagers, like I can feel jealous cause she's making a better decision, and then I'm looking at her life. Yeah. But then she's got that potential, when I look at my grades and I feel like maybe I'm dumb, like, we shouldn't do that. Like, you should, like, build yourself to get where you want to get and stop feeling like we are in competition with ourselves."* (Participant 6).

*"I feel like empowerment is like one of the best tools we can use, like empower me as a friend and I empower you back. Let's not make it feel personal and we're not competing. We all want to get somewhere in life, but it's mainly in your mind what you tell yourself. Wake up every day and tell yourself you are great. You are not competing with anyone and you are enough, once you feel like enough, like you get to the goals you set for yourself. And with that comes like a high self-esteem as well as self. Awareness of knowing. That you are capable of doing whatever you want. So, like I might be competing with them, you can change the low self-esteem and however, I feel like I have power over others, but then it's not like that. She knows what she wants. She knows where her strength and interest lie, and I know mine that is, so it's just a matter of fixing yourself to get where you want to, and then the rest is sorted."* (Participant 9).

While it is crucial for Grade 12 learners to participate in career discussions, participants 12 and 13 said that social community and experience are components that demand specific attention in career decision making:

*"I feel like it's a broad open discussion, but then we have to keep in mind the social community, experience in communities. I mean, if I have an ambition and a fair dream, it's just based on like everyone's dream. But some of us, like our backgrounds, are not the same. Especially teenage pregnancy, like a lot of things contribute so badly, so I feel like your career could be based on what you want to see yourself actually, how you look in the shoes of another person. You have to put yourself in your own shoes. You can look back sometimes and not be limited to your environment."* (Participant 12).

*"That in order for you to achieve your dreams or get out of the situation that you're in, you have to depend on yourself instead of relying on others because those people aren't going to be there forever. And you, relying on them, now puts you at a disadvantage because you are going to always be dependent on them and when they leave, you might fall and you want to be independent rather than being dependent on somebody."* (Participant 13).

Participant 10 presented a different perspective on the impact of group discussions as something that is so perplexing because most of the time the discussions are on the type of career that can be pursued based on individual strengths and abilities combined with the marks obtained in learners' subject choices that match the individual learners' preferences. However, the participant described the situation as confusing in most instances rather than helping towards making an informed career decision. Participant 14 believes that consistency is essential in all of these discussions and that every individual should be consistent with their career choice and not alter their career every time they have career discussions with their peers.

*"These discussions are confusing because today you want to be a doctor tomorrow you want to be another thing and now you want to be a Nurse. You don't even know what to do. So, it tells me that you don't even know the route to take because now you are confused. Once you put something in your mind that I want to be this. Now you don't know the specific route to take and you force yourself to do a subject that you are not good at like Physics, when you get to matric you can't even like to mix anything, not even A&B."* (Participant 10).

*"You get to a point where you might think, oh, I want to be a firefighter, but I want to be a soccer player because I can play soccer. So that means such arguments do not apply to me at all, it doesn't affect my career decision. I want to be a soccer player. I have nothing more than that."* (Participant 1).

*"I also feel like I'm going to go back to her point that consistency is key. If you're consistent, this argument won't be confusing to me, since you know what you want to be, and that's where you stand."* (Participant 14).

From the findings presented above, it is apparent that some learners were influenced to make their career decisions through group discussion with their peers. The grade 12 learners perceived these discussions as helpful towards shaping their respective career decisions. The next sub-theme interrogates the career decision adjustment of learners based on the arguments or discussions with their friends or peers.

### **Sub-theme 2: Career decision adjustment**

The transition from school to work is a critical stage in most people's professional lives. This transition begins with a career decision process and concludes with a process of adjustment towards making the final career decision. Career choices are mostly influenced by self-efficacy expectations and are

anchored in social situations (White et al., 2008). Work adjustment research focuses on the process by which young people become socialised and involved in persuasive arguments that lead to a change in their career choices. Engaging in career conversations can sometimes be influential in both positive and negative ways. Most participants are of the view that, considering the present economic condition in the country, it is inevitable to implement changes to their career choices often until they reach their desired destination. The fact that changes that are happening around the country have an effect on the career choices made is a concern for most of the participants, as they mentioned that it is necessary for them to adjust their decisions based on these changes as they affect their choice, which could not allow them to be consistent with their decision because it is important to always weigh one's options when deciding on a career. This is evident in the following discussions with the Grade 12 learners.

*If we knew all these before now, one might have acted differently. There are times some of us are academically strong, but we are not exposed to the realities of career decisions. We are simply not equipped. (Participant 1).*

*The conversation I had with my friend made me start something on the side just in case my choice of career doesn't favor me in the long run. So, I'll say it has a high influence on us. (Participant 3).*

*"Personally, I feel like consistency is key regardless of what you do but when you have the patience you can build up, like in terms of regenerating income, you can invest, you can buy shares. There are always good things to do and grow. I just feel like once you have an income, a stable income, it just generates from there. So, some people might see a career path that you just want to make money instantly, like, right now, some of us see it as progress. We have to start from somewhere. So, like every obstacle you have to face and then you have to celebrate opportunities in any little way that it comes. Because even if you just start a business now, you might not have hopes that it would develop. But if you like putting the hard work and the effort and your heart into it, you will get where you want to get. That, and yet we are here and we still feel like it's not enough. So, I just felt the little we have you can expand so like you just feel like you need to trust the process, but then you have to have faith in yourself and you have to put yourself 1st and you have to think even how hard it gets you have to like to stay consistent." (Participant 12).*

*"...but we should also look at our circumstances. Like the economy that we're in, the inflation rates, it's such things that influence what you want to be. I mean, who wants to work, maybe let's say 8 to 9:00 every day and then not be able to make ends meet. No one wants to be in that situation, so hence the careers that will pay you more is what you might possibly choose, even if it's not what you wanted to do, you just have to choose." (Participant 14).*

*"You cannot be consistent when the economic rate and the situation is not consistent or stable. So, you change as the economic changes." (Participant 11).*

*"...change is..., it's mostly coming from the heart, something we haven't thought about if, like, actually teach your person if you want to be a doctor. For instance, if you want to be a teacher, then explaining something to others is easy. But you must think like when you are making the career decision, like, can you really believe and trust your ability. It's not really basically about changing your career based on arguments that were made in class. If the picture is clear to you on what you want to do, then go ahead." (Participant 10).*

*"Like if you're in a job that relates to your interest. Then you will produce a great quality of work. If you are there for the money, then nothing will happen." (Participant 13).*

Participant 9 recalls how the group conversation influenced her career choice. The participant described how one of the arguments in class caused her to question a career choice she had made before the conversation. The debate has prompted the participant to revise the initial career decision that was reached as a result of knowledge presented during the discussion with the peer as against the prior decision.

*"We once had an argument in class. We were talking about teachers and doctors, people were saying teachers don't get a lot of money and people were saying doctors get a lot of money. And by that I was like, ohh okay, it's like this. I had to make up my mind, because once when growing up, I wanted to be a teacher, but then when I got to matric and hearing the arguments between the learners, I was like ohh so, teachers don't earn a lot of money and I don't want to be in those shoes. I want to make a lot of money. Yes. So, I was like, no these arguments are changing my decision, so I have to make a list of changes. I have to make small changes or see if I do want to continue being a teacher or maybe make another decision or maybe be a doctor or a lawyer or something else, that has happened in the past." (Participant 9).*

According to the preceding extracts, career adjustment is clearly important, as participants in this study stated. The participants expressed their discontent with the country's economic position, which they claim has a negative impact on their career decisions as young adults, forcing them to make changes as frequently as feasible. In fact, it can be deduced that some participants consider their abilities while contemplating a career change, while others consider the financial benefits associated with their choices.

## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that if one individual in a group has a different opinion, it is quite probable that the individual's opinion will trump that of other members of the group to the point that a member may desire to change an already made decision to adhere to that of the group. This finding agrees with Joyal-Desmarais, et al., (2022) which indicated that persuasion is enhanced by varied motivations, presence of concrete evidence in the group and the nature of arguments that are presented during group decision making process. In agreement with the findings, Aloka (2021) reiterates that persuasion is critical in the group disciplinary decisions for students. Moreover, Weidong and Gwanhoo (2000) agree that persuasion significantly affects the formation of users' initial perceptions, attitude toward, and intention to adopt information technology. Ta, et al., (2022) provides a more parsimonious understanding of the social psychological pathways to persuasion as it operates in the real world through verbal behavior. Lantz, (2020) indicated that appeals that are persuasive are more likely to influence members of a group to shift decisions. In addition, Hadoux, et al., (2023) argues that a goal argument may, among other things, incorporate an intention to change behaviour, though we accept that there is a difference between having an intention to do something, and doing it. Nonetheless, having an intention to change behaviour is a valuable step towards changing behaviour.

In agreement with the findings, Aloka and Mathebula (2022) indicated that the persuasive arguments were regarded depending on whether they were original, from older and more senior persons, and whether the content was strong with more evidence. Finally, this finding agrees with Sieber and Ziegler (2019) theoretical assertion that the persuasiveness of arguments is determined by the degree to which they are perceived to be original and contain more evidence. During group decision making, individuals have pre-group preferred decisions which are likely to shift after post group decisions because of a more available pool of arguments presented by other members. In addition, the findings concur with Penczynski (2016) which reiterate that shifts in decisions during group deliberations results from factors such as original information, informative arguments and the ability of people to provide more concrete evidence. Moreover, Vicente, et al., (2025) study indicated that individual decisions are affected by the pool of persuasive arguments that are presented during intervention. In agreement to the findings, Hubbard (2025) argues that strong persuasive argumentation boosts leadership capacity, enhances best decisions and promotes effectiveness in communication during group deliberations.

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that if one individual in a group has a different opinion, it is quite probable that the individual's opinion will trump that of other members of the group to the point that a member may desire to change an already made decision to adhere to that of the group. The study further concludes that students should adjust their decisions based on changes as they affect their choice, which could not allow them to be consistent with their decision because it is important to always weigh one's options when deciding on a career. The findings of the study have implications for teacher counsellors and grade 12 learners in secondary schools. The teacher counsellors should provide adequate career training to grade 12 learners in secondary schools. Moreover, the Department of Education should train teacher counsellors on career paths and subject requirements to equip them with the best knowledge on varied careers.

### Limitations of the Study

The study had one limitation in that only 14 participants were involved. However, the study still achieved its goal being a qualitative one, in which it did not intend to generalize findings but to achieve in depth findings during interviews.

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