

# The Influence of Individual Career Counselling Strategy on Career Choices among Students in Secondary Schools in Homa Bay County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

The Kenya government has a policy for career guidance and counselling which is meant to help provide a robust and professional career guidance and counselling to students. The policy aims at creating adequate human resource and reducing the mismatch between career choices and demand for labour. This is the rationale behind provision of career guidance services to students in schools. Most Secondary school counsellors have adapted individual career counselling strategy to help adhere to the policy. Despite the effort made by the the guidance counsellors to manage career guidance and counselling in secondary school, many school leavers continue to display lack of awareness in kind of career that would be suitable for them after school. The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of the individual career counselling strategy used on career choice among secondary school students in Homa Bay County, Kenya. The study employed ex-post-facto research design and sampled 372 form three students. The Hollands theory of career decision guided the study. Data was collected using questionnaires. The instruments were validated by experts and reliability of .78 obtained. The analysis was by calculating percentages, correlation and regression. Results findings were that individual counselling strategy was frequently used at 47 % in terms of percentages. It was also established that individual counselling strategy had statistically significant influence on career choice with Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.65, which was a strong positive relationship. The coefficient determinant ( $R^2$ ) obtain was 0.4225 which was meant that individual counselling strategy influenced career choice by 42.25%. It was concluded that individual counselling significantly influenced career decision among students in homabay county. This also increased the chance of a student making right decision on career choices by almost 50 percent.

**Keywords:** Individual Counselling; Career counselling; Career Guidance Framework; problem-solving; Career Factors.

## INTRODUCTION

Individual career counselling strategy involves a one-on-one counselling process between a student and a counsellor in a caring, confidential, and safe environment. The aim is to explore feelings, concerns, beliefs, and behaviours of the student and appropriately change their psychological state (Okirigwe, 2020). Argyropoulou (2018) adds that the strategy has several advantages including confidentiality which decreases the chances of judgement from others, and focused attention on a student. Otwine et al, (2022) in his finding agrees personal or individual career counselling helps students to make more profound and right decisions regarding their study program and career. The author argues that a career counsellor has an essential role of facilitating the students to acquire knowledge, attitudes, skills, mind set and behaviour necessary for their overall successful career choices. This means that career counsellor is tasked with guiding the students towards career choices that are not only suitable for their traits but increases their chances of success in the ever-evolving job market.

Okirigwe, (2020) found out that career guidance not only allows individuals to explore opportunities related to work but also help individual mirror their skills qualification, personality, behaviour, and past experiences. The career counsellors achieve this by assisting the students in getting a better grasp of how to plan their careers independently, and how to make tough decisions and get through times of crisis using their counselling

knowledge and skills. Indeed, students who are facing career difficulties in secondary school students, do benefit from professional career counselling (Argyropoulou, 2018).

Lenz (2021) reported that there are several reasons why most students in secondary schools make sub-optimal career decisions. These factors include inadequate career counselling from school counsellors, a lack of interest in the decision-making process, the absence of well-defined goals, financial constraints, and various other variables (Gabriel & Bochco, 2021). Additionally, many students tend to be guided primarily by individuals perceived as role models when choosing their subjects, that leads towards career choices which may limit their options, (Hayes et al., 2019). Such reason informed the current study noting that Homa Bay county schools have enough career counsellors with long experience but still post school leavers with sub-optimal career decision.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to promote career guidance for secondary students, the characteristics and needs of students should be confirmed thoroughly and their needs should be included in the individual counselling program, (Hirschi, 2020). Lenz (2021) argued that Comprehensive delivery of individual career counselling to students can assess their personality and preferences, explore different career fields and develop systematically very realistic and achievable goal that matches their values. The author adds that they enhances skills, knowledge, competencies and desired career of students. They also help the student navigate career transitions and challenges (Mare 2020).

McMahon (2020) in his study observed that increased awareness and utilisation of career guidance and counselling among students improved their career decision making skills. A study by Mare (2020) found out that a Counsellor had a big role in assisting the students to choose their career. The study further indicated that the school counsellor played enormous role that served as an influencing factor. The study continues to report that as part of their duty, they check student's records including their performance. The study further reported that career counsellor, calls students whose performance is not good and has one-on-one guidance with them which resulted in some of them choosing an appropriate career.

Argyropoulou (2018) reported while reporting an interview with first year student in India (Private board) after attending a career counselling seminar, said that most student agreed that they felt motivated and were able to identify their hidden skills. One student mentioned "I got to know what I have to do and now I can say they motivated me a lot to think about myself....I was told that you should see your talent and how successful you can be. .... before I used to do a lot of art, but I never focused on it... I got [counselling] sessions from there that I should see my interests ... but when I started to do arts ... then I won certificates then I knew that skill that can make me successful."

Many secondary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, have adopted individual counselling as a career guidance approach by school counsellors. (Orewere & Ojochogu, 2020). While most authors have reported that individual career counselling as a career guidance approach is the most popular, Njoku (2019) reports that in Kenyan, individual counselling as an isolated approach has been underexplored. The author adds that there is need to support students' access individual career guidance and counselling during their exploration stage of career development with a hope that it may ease complications related to career decisions. With paucity of data on this counselling approach by career counsellors in Kenyan secondary schools, this study found a gap that required to be exploited in Homa Bay County. The study aimed at determining the presence of individual counselling in schools, in Homa Bay County and to determine its influence on the students' career choice.

This study used Parsons' Theory of Matching Traits to Career Factors as a basis of study. The theory was established by Frank Parsons also known as the "Father of Vocational Guidance" (Nauta 2010). In his theory, Parsons established the importance of the connection between individuals' interests and talents to the career they choose to pursue. According to Nauta (2010), He advocated to fix the problems young people were facing in society by entering the workforce without a plan through structured vocational guidance in the school system. Parsons argued that an individual should clarify a three-phase process in career choice. These are: Phase 1, study yourself; Phase 2, study the world of work; and Phase 3, find a match. In phase 1. Students and career counsellor work together to recognize and clarify students' own abilities, interests, emotions, and boundaries. This includes student's recognition of self-interests, abilities and emotions (Okirigwe 2020).

Phase 2 identify individual's clarification of necessities, conditions, opportunities, advantages and disadvantages of different careers. It also include having information on business world and vocations. Career counsellor provides guidance for information on vocations and the business world (McMahon, (2020). After obtaining information from the individual on vocational choices, the personality traits, abilities, interests and career values then Phase 3 that match the individual's target with careers is studied. The most significant assistance in this phase is to guide the students to organized vocational information and to access it (Okirigwe, 2020). Vocational information catalogues classified based on requirements, educational process, working conditions, working hours, wages, etc. are also availed. In this phase, it is very helpful to provide a written document to the subject that contains a list of Internet forum addresses for various professionals in different fields (Bio& Rio 2018). Concisely this creates a new condition for learning new information and it is assumed that learning can get rid of disorganisation and lead to focus on desired career choice.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Ex-post-facto research design was used to carry out this research. An ex-post facto research design involves a systematic empirical inquiry in which the researcher does not manipulate the independent variable (Meyer and Nelson, 2020). The design explores and clarifies descriptively the relationship between independent and dependent variables. It was considered the best suited for the study since it focused on how individual career counselling strategies influenced career choice among students. Besides that, the design was suitable for this study because it allowed the researcher to merely select the independent variables for analysis of their influence on dependent variables. This was since manipulation had already occurred naturally. The design aloud for prediction of influence through regression analysis between independent and dependent variables.

### Study Setting and Location

The study was carried out in Homa Bay County, Kenya. The county is located in Nyanza region of Kenya. It borders Migori County to the south, Kisii and Nyamira Counties to the southeast, Kericho County to the east, and Kisumu County to the northeast. To the west, it boarded by Lake Victoria, a significant economic feature that shapes much of the counties's livelihood. Fshing plays a vital role in the county's economy. Geographically, the county lies between latitudes 0°15'S and 0°52'S and longitudes 34°E and 35°E. It covers a total area of 3,154.7 square kilometers. It has an estimated population of 1,131,950 people according to the 2019 Kenya census. Despite all this economic potential, the county's poverty index is estimated at 48.4%, meaning nearly half of the population lives below the poverty line.

Apart from high poverty index people here faces limited access to career opportunities. This population density, combined with the region's the high rate of poverty and unemployment, makes this location suitable for this study.

Nevertheless, the county boasts a literacy rate of approximately 87.3%, reflecting ongoing efforts to promote education among its residents. These issues underscore the need for comprehensive career guidance and counselling programmes to help students navigate their academic journeys and make informed career choices. Students who are exposed to these areas through career programs can gain valuable insights into the skills needed in these fields and the potential for pursuing related careers.

### Target Population and Sample Size

The targeted participants were all secondary schools' students in Homa bay County, Kenya. The population was 25,473 form three students in 315 public secondary schools within the county. The form three students were preferred in in this study since they were the latest group that had selected combination of subjects with an objective of targeting particular career of their choice. They were considered to be the class with most recent information concerning career choices and opportunities.

## Data Collection Tools and Procedures

The study employed students' questionnaires (SQ) as data collection instruments. SQs gathered quantitative data on influence of individual career guidance and counselling strategies on career choices. This instrument was considered the best for the purposes of collecting quantitative information for statistical analysis (Mazhar et al., 2021). According to Mazhar et al., (2021) it can be used to gather many data within a short time, similarly it offers less chance for creeping in of any bias. The SQ was divided into two main sections. Section A dealt with demographic information while Section B sought specific information on the influence of individual career guidance strategies on career choices. It required that on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 the respondent indicate the influence of specific career guidance strategies on career choices. The Likert scale was appropriate because it allowed students to self-report the extent of their agreement and disagreement with the given questions.

Procedure for sampling involved the systematic selection of schools and random selection of individuals from the accessible population to represent the whole. This was done at two levels namely: sampling of schools and sampling of participants. The sampling of schools involved stratified random sampling that ensured all eight sub-counties in Homa Bay County were proportionately represented in the study. The schools were first categorized by sub-county, and the number of schools sampled from each sub-county was determined proportionally to the total number of schools in that sub-county. From each sub-county's list of schools, systematic random sampling method was used to select schools that participated in the study.

Cochran's formula and rule was used for determining the appropriate sample size of schools. According to this rule, the sample size is chosen as 10% of the total population size, provided that the sample size does not exceed 1,000 participants. The schools sample size was calculated as shown:

$$\text{Sample size (n)} = 10\% \times \text{Population size (N)}$$

$$(\text{Where Population Size (N)} = 315)$$

$$= 10\% \times 315$$

$$= 0.1 \times 315$$

$$= 31.5$$

$$= 32$$

Proportionate stratified sampling method was employed in selecting the representative schools from each sub county using the formula indicated.

$$\text{Proportion of Schools per Sub County} = \frac{\text{Number of Schools in Sub County} \times \text{total Sample Size (32)}}{\text{Total Number of Schools in county (315)}}$$

## Data Collection and Analysis Strategy

Data collection procedure included seeking permission from NACOSTI, which was granted. After that, permission was sought from County Education officer to visit sampled schools. Letters of introduction were written to the principals of the sampled schools. The researcher then made visits to the sampled schools for prior arrangements on how the instruments were to be administered and interviews conducted. The researcher went ahead to obtain written consent from participants. Parents and guardian gave consent on behalf of underage students. The principals of the schools gave consent on behalf of underage students whose parents could not be reached. The researcher used Likert scale Questionnaires and structured from Form three students. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided and were also informed that they would receive feedback on the study's findings. Following this, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the appropriate participants as planned.

The questionnaires were identified with a code number to help in tracing them after completion. The code was based on the nature of the school; such that a girls' boarding school in sub- county number one was coded SCGB1 while a boy boarding in the same sub- county was coded as SCBB1 and a mixed day would be coded as SCMD1 and mixed day and boarding SCMDB1 respectively. As suggested by Njogu (2019), the instruments that were given to the same school bore the same code number.

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 of windows. Data analysis involved categorizing, organizing, and summarizing data to obtain interpretable information. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the results into understandable information like calculation of means, percentages, frequencies, and standard deviations. Inferential analysis was done by applying Pearsons' product moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis. The hypothesis were tested at  $P \leq .05$  significance level using paired t-test. The results of the analysis was interpreted and presented in tables to enable the reader appreciate the pattern of distribution of the variables and the results.

## RESULTS

This section was guided by objective, which was to establish the influence of individual career counselling strategy on career choice among students in secondary schools in Homa Bay County, Kenya. The hypothesis was that: Individual counselling strategy has no statistically significant influence on career choice among students in secondary schools in Homa Bay County, Kenya. Preliminary findings were obtained by calculating frequencies and percentages of the responses. The main question posed was: Based on your experience on guidance and counselling services please select the number on the scale of 1-5 that best reflects your extent of agreement with the statement. Where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= slightly agree, 3= somehow agree, 4 =mostly agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

The results on influence of individual counselling were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Influence of Individual Counselling Strategy on Career Choice

Statements on Influence of Individual Counselling on Career Choice	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The individual counselling sessions helped me gain a better understanding of my career options.	9.09%	6.82%	2.27%	38.64%	43.18%
I feel more confident in making informed career decisions after individual counselling.	6.82%	2.27%	9.09%	52.27%	29.55%
The individual counselling sessions provided valuable insights into my strengths and interests.	6.82%	4.55%	10.22%	48.86%	29.55%
The counsellor effectively addressed my concerns and questions about career choices.	4.55%	5.68%	12.50%	50.00%	27.27%
Individual counselling positively influenced my perception of various career paths.	5.68%	17.27%	1.14%	39.77%	36.36%
The counsellor provided helpful resources and information during the sessions.	11.36%	10.23%	6.82%	36.36%	35.23%
<b>Mean</b>	<b>7.38%</b>	<b>7.80%</b>	<b>7.01%</b>	<b>44.32%</b>	<b>33.52%</b>



Looking at the result in table1, when students were asked if individual counselling sessions helped them gain a better understanding of their career options, 38.64% of them agreed and 43.18% of them strongly agreed. This means that cumulatively 81.82% of students agreed with the statement. The response to the statement that “I feel more confident in making informed career decisions after individual counselling” had 52.27% agreeing and 29.55% strongly agreeing cumulatively this was 81.82%. The agreement on the statement “The individual counselling sessions provided valuable insights into my strengths and interests” was at 48.86% and 29.55% for agreed and strongly agreed respectively. Cumulatively those who agreed with the statement were 78.41%. when the statement “The counsellor effectively addressed my concerns and questions about career choices” was presented, 50.00% agreed and 27.27% strongly agreed which accumulatively meant 77.27% agreed. A further interrogation with the statement “Individual counselling positively influenced my perception of various career paths” produced 39.77% and 36.36% for agreed and strongly agreed respectively. Lastly, the statement “The counsellor provided helpful resources and information during the sessions” had 36.36% in agreement and 35.23% strongly agreeing. In conclusion majority of the respondents ranging between 38.64% to 52.27 % agreed and between 27.27% to 43.18% strongly agreed with positive statements that individual counselling has on influence on career choice. In contrast between 4.55% and 11.36% strongly disagreed and 1.14% and 10.23% disagreed with the statement. The Mean response was 7.38% for strongly disagree, 7.80% for disagree, 7.01% for neutral, 44.32 for agree and 33.52 for strongly agree. This means that 77.84% of the participants were of the opinion that individual Counselling Strategy influence Career Choices among Students in Secondary Schools in Homa Bay County.

The research hypothesis tested under this objective was  $H_{01}$ : Individual counselling strategy has no statistically significant influence on career choice among students in secondary schools in Homa Bay County, Kenya. The hypothesis testing was done using one sample t-test at  $\alpha = .05$ . The purpose was to evaluate whether the group mean differs from a known value. The finding was as shown in table 2.

Table 18: The Hypothesis Testing for Influence of Individual Career Counselling Strategy on Career Choice

Was Done Using One Sample t-Test at  $\alpha = .05$

Guidance and Counselling Strategy	Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Individual Counselling Strategy	28.88	18.52	.0993	1.0503	1.4564	8.499	370	.000

From the findings in Table 2, it is indicated that there is a significant difference between means ( $t_{370} = 8.499$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Since  $p < 0.05$  value meant that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis adopt which stated that Individual counselling strategy has statistically significant influence on career choice among students in secondary schools in Homa Bay County, Kenya. Further investigation was done by determining the correlation. The results were as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation between Individual Counselling Strategy and Career Choice

Technique	N	Correlation(r)	Sig.
Individual Counselling	371	. 0.65*	.012

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 indicates that the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) for individual counselling was 0.65, indicating that there was a strong positive relationship between individual counselling and career choice among students. This suggests that as the utilization of individual counselling increases, there is a significant positive increase on students' career choices.

To determine the level of influence, and or predictability, regression analysis was carried out. The purpose of doing a regression analysis was to obtain ( $R^2$ ) a number between 0 and 1 that measures how well the statistical model predicts an outcome. The  $R^2$  was interpreted as the proportion of variation in the career choice decision that is predictably influenced by the individual counselling strategy. The simple linear regression model:  $Y = a + bX + u$  was used.

Where:

$Y$  = the variable that you are trying to predict (dependent variable).

$X$  = the variable that you are using to predict  $Y$  (independent variable).

$a$  = the intercept.

$b$  = the slope.

$u$  = the regression residual.

The finding was as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Regression Analysis to Determine the Influence of Individual Counselling Strategy on Career Choice

Dependent Variable: Career Choice							
Equation	Model Summary					Parameter Estimates	
	$R^2$	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Constant	b1
Linear	.4225	.915	1	28	.347	2.670	.118

Table 4 provided the  $R^2$  value, which represents the coefficient of determinant at the value 0.4225 for the linear regression. Parameter Estimates of 2.670 as constant and .118 as slope for linear regression are also presented. This was interpreted to mean if other factors are held constant individual counselling strategy may influence career choice by around 42.25%. This a significantly high level of influence.

## DISCUSSION

The regression analysis of individual counselling reveals several key insights into their influence on career choices. Students reported that these sessions significantly enhanced their understanding of career options, which aligns with the high mean value observed. The personalized nature of individual counselling likely contributes to increased confidence in making informed career decisions and choices, as students receive individualized guidance and support.

Additionally, the findings provided valuable insights into students' strengths and interests, helping them to align their career choices with their personal attributes. The effectiveness of the counsellor in addressing concerns and questions further underscores the importance of individualized attention in career guidance and choices. This finding agrees with Maree, (2021) who argued that through individual counselling, counsellors positively influence students' perceptions of various career paths and they provide helpful resources that highlights the comprehensive support offered. Maree, found out that individual counselling gives students a clear understanding

of their strengths and potential careers. The author added that counsellors guide students on one-on-one to match their skills with appropriate professions. This however contradicts Mberia and Midigo (2018) who reported that "The high number of students makes it hard to dedicate enough time to each of them". McMahon (2020) supports the idea by saying "Sometimes, counsellors are forced to rush individual career counselling sessions, which reduces the impact of the career counselling." Argyropoulou, (2018) argued that "We don't have enough trained counsellors in schools, One or two counsellors can't manage the demand for individual counselling among all students." All this contradictory information may be the reason why despite most schools in Kenya having career counsellor, student leave schools without a proper career choice in mind.

All in all, most of the earlier studies results adds to the voice which reveals that individual counselling plays a significant role in improving career awareness among students. The effectiveness of this is however, hindered by challenges such as insufficient time per session and a shortage of trained career guidance and counselling counsellors to meet the high demand for counselling services. Maree, (2020) put it clearer when the author says that there are several reasons why most students in secondary schools make sub-optimal career decisions. These reasons included inadequate career counselling from school counsellors, a lack of interest in the decision-making process, the absence of well-defined goals, financial constraints, and various other variables. Similar sentiments were expressed by McMahon, (2020) who added that, many students tend to be guided primarily by individuals perceived as role models when choosing their subjects, that leads towards career choices which may limit their options.

Mberia and Midigo (2018) when studying factors influencing career choice among undergraduate students in Kenya had the same view where in his study observed that increased awareness and utilisation of individual career guidance and counselling among students improved their career decision making skills. A study by Lenz (2021) and Argyropoulou, (2018) both had similar views on the role of a counsellor in assisting the individual students to choose their Career. Just like their findings, this study found out that the school counsellor played enormous roles through career guidance that served as an influencing factor in the individual student's choice of career.

## CONCLUSION

The objective this study was to establish the influence of individual career counselling strategy on career choice among students in secondary schools in Homa Bay County, Kenya. It was established that individual counselling was the most utilized and potentially impactful counselling strategy. It strategy was found to have statistically significant influence on career choice decisions among students. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) analysis indicated a strong positive relationship between individual counselling and career choice among students. The utilization of individual counselling strategy was found to increase, the chance of a student making right decision on career choices by almost 50 percent. The students preferred individual counselling to other forms during career counselling possibly due to the personalized attention and tailored guidance they receive. The findings however, contradicted the situation on the ground where many school leavers do not make up their mind on the right job which leader to mismatch in career choice. This then call for further investigation on why career choice decision is still a problem among school leavers despite the believe that school leavers are well guided.

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## BIOGRAPHY

Linet Akinyi Elisha is a teacher and education psychology researcher specializing in career guidance and counselling, in Kenya. Currently affiliated with Tom Mboya University, he has a research interest in the educational psychology and counselling psychology, has worked on studies addressing secondary counselling strategies and mental healthcare that is very vital in supporting and strengthening the achievement of educational objectives.