

# Group Career Counselling and its Influence on Students' Career Choices in Homa Bay County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

The society expect students to make career choices that not only make them employable but also suitable by the end of their schooling. According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2024), 75% of the unemployed youth did not know what career would suit them by the time they left school. Making career choices is known to be one of the most difficult decisions. This means that students require guidance and counselling in career failure to which they may end up in unsuitable career with lifelong frustrations. Effort have been made by the school career counsellors to manage career guidance and counselling, however, many school leavers continued to display lack of career awareness in kind of jobs that would suit them after school. The study objective was to investigate the influence of both peer and professional led group career counselling on career choice among secondary school students in Homa Bay County, Kenya. This was a quantitative study that adopted correlational research design. Form three students were targeted and a sample of 379 participants obtained using proportional sampling. Data was collected using a 5-point scaled questionnaire validated by experts and whose Cronbach's alpha calculated reliability was .78. The analysis included calculation of Means, percentages, correlation and regression. It was found that group counselling has statistically significant influence on career choice with correlation ( $r$ ) of 0.50 and ( $R^2$ ) of 0.25. This was interpreted to mean the relationship was positive and moderate and the ( $R^2$ ) value, meant that group counselling strategy influenced career choice by 25%. In conclusion there is a significant positive relationship between group career counselling and career choice. Regression analysis revealed influence of group career counselling on career choice. This suggest that improving counselling strategies also improves student career choices.

**Keywords:** Guidance Counsellors; Career Choices; professional counselling; Career awareness;

## INTRODUCTION

The rapidly changing technology has many consequences on career planning and choices. The situational analysis indicates some of them are positive, and others are challenging therefore leading to career indecision among adolescents. The situation therefore call for great need to help people in shaping their educational and working lives. Various nations have come up with career support systems that are embedded in school curriculum and programmes. Many researches on career guidance and counselling (CGC) which are oriented towards studying career support among young people have been published. Due to changing educational, work and career conditions, the practice of CGC also demands constant reflection, innovation and new knowledge. In view of this, the literature has shown a gap in both knowledge and methodology. Based on this argument, this study made a deliberated effort to fill the found gaps in CGC by narrowing down to influence group career counselling on students' career choices in Homa Bay County, Kenya. Homa Bay County, Kenya was preferred due to availability of data on CGC and employability.

Group guidance and counselling has a potential of offering intervention in the rapidly changing education and career situation. Group career guidance and counselling, is an arrangement in which a group of students, who share similar issues and feelings, are helped to better understand and solve career choice issues by a professional counsellor (Otwine, 2022). It is an activity conducted by counsellors with relevant experience and a professional foundation in a group context. Career counselling groups attempt to create an environment where honest interpersonal exploration occur, (Bieling et al., 2022). To create this environment, participants should understand

their responsibilities and rights and those of the facilitators. facilitator is responsible for discussing with the clients, the primary purpose, setting up of basic guidelines, and highlighting the potential risks and benefits that may arise (Bieling et al., 2022).

Group career counselling offers several distinct advantages, including cost and time efficiency, enhanced opportunities for personalized feedback, improved outcomes in career counselling, reduced feelings of isolation, encouragement of both emotional and cognitive learning experiences and heightened self-exploration among group members (Kim, 2021). This approach has unique advantages in terms of intervention, effects, and concerns. It addresses issues such as career identity, subjective career barriers and low self-efficacy in career decision-making. It has a good effect in estranging students from interpersonal barriers, improving interpersonal skills and coping styles, alleviating anxiety and depression and increasing members' self-efficacy which are paramount in career decision making and choices (Yoon & Yang, 2017).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Most scholars have long advocated for the significance of career counselling conducted in small groups. Jackson (2020) says a key feature of small groups is the development of a shared group identity, evident through informal interactions, interpersonal connections, and discussions centered around achieving a clear objective. Weinberg (2020) also had a similar view. Weinberg added that group career counselling is most widely used as an effective way to guide the careers of individuals. Both Jacksons and Weinberg study were carried in the same year using a qualitative method, their result may have been right then but due to changing technology things might have changed.

A study done by Yoon and Yang, (2017) among Korean students showed that career group counselling program was effective in improving both career identity and career decision self-efficacy of students. The study found out that career identification was considered based on performance factors such as self-understanding, self-confidence, and competence. According to the study career decision, self-efficacy, career information, goal setting, problem solving career planning, and self-evaluation were the sub-factors which were effectively acquired following group career counselling (Yoon & Yang, 2017). The study concluded that career guidance is more effective when done as a group activity than when it is an individual one. Their results showed that there was a more significant relationship between career group counselling and career choices than there was with individual counselling. This was a study done in Korea a society that has a more rapid changing technology. Since this was done in 2017 new knowledge many things may have happened and therefore it is necessary to confirm the situation.

Maree (2020) also highlights some of the advantages of group counselling, which were increase in students' career choices efficacy, peer support, reduced manpower gaps and time saving in comparison to individual counselling. Maree, however contradicted the findings when noting that individual group members develop valuable skills that can assist them in managing various life transitions and career choices differently. The contradiction creates a gap in knowledge that this study intends to sort. Chen et al. (2020) also observed that group counselling benefitted not only students but also counsellors because it helps them to reflect on personal career development. The mutual benefit critically creates a confusion, in a situation of who was helping who. This study to sort out that confusion and come out with clear relationship.

A study by Ojo (2018) also revealed that group career guidance and counselling methods were effective in improving the career planning and career decision-making skills among the secondary school students in Nigeria. Many other researchers also support that when students encounter difficulties in making career choices in schools, many seek guidance from career Guidance and Counselling teachers who prefer to deal with them in groups. Though the study confirmed the universality of these facts it seems to overlook the fact that every country has their own unique education system and therefore unique way of career preparation. The crest study has to this universality by researching in Kenya.

In Kenya, a study done by Thurania et al, (2019) found out that group career counselling approach has been employed in many public schools in Mombasa, Meru, and Kiambu counties. The authors reported that group career counselling activities contributed to increased self-awareness of the students that in turn influences career

choice. A related study by Njogu et al, (2019) observed that in Meru and Kisumu counties, the inadequacy in professionally qualified career Guidance and Counselling teachers pushed most public secondary schools to prefer group career counselling as a career guidance approach to cover a larger number of the students. In case the findings in the two cases are factual, then it is a contradiction of the fact advanced earlier that group counselling is popular. The current study weighs on establishing whether the strategy is popular or is to salvage a situation.

Njogu further reported on another study conducted in Vihiga county which found out that 85.8% of students had chosen their respective careers at form three level courtesy of group career counselling (Njogu et al, 2019). The researcher equally noted that there were some schools where students were left to make career choices on their own since they only considered counselling for discipline and academic performance. The existence of such schools gave the impetus of wanting to know the situation in Homa Bay County. It was therefore paramount to fill the gap by carrying a similar study in Homa Bay County to understand how group career counselling influences career choices. Subsequently, the current study purposed to determine if the group career counselling strategy has any influence of the students' career choices in Homa Bay County, Kenya.

The study adapted Hollands Theory of Vocational Choice as a guide. According to Holland (1959), one's personal code is the result of activities positively reinforced by parents and others through childhood and into adolescence. The personal code is quite stable by the adolescent years, though it can change over the life span if new experiences and positive reinforcement from them cause such changes. Typically, says Holland, individuals strive to develop skills in areas of their interest (Lambie, 2022). Values, later in development, emerge from adopting the values inherent in the work environment selected by an individual. This theory emphasizes the role of the school career counsellor in helping the students cope more effectively with career concerns. This includes helping the individual acquire more accurate self-worth and understanding the effect of their career choice on the job satisfaction. Holland's theory is aimed at identifying the students' wholly in there are of interest. The theory also assumes that most people fit into one or more of the six personality types namely: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Lambie, 2022).

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed *ex-post-facto* research design. According to Meyer and Nelson, (2020) an *ex-post facto* research design involves an empirical inquiry in which the researcher does not manipulate the independent variable. It was appropriate for exploring the influence of group career counselling on career choice particularly since the intervention (counselling) has already occurred. It also clarifies the relationship between study group career counselling and career choices. This design was the best suited for the study since it focused on how group career counselling that had already occurred could influence career choice among students. Additionally, the design allowed the researcher to merely select the independent variables for analysis of their influence on dependent variables. Finally the design allowed for prediction of influence through regression analysis of variables.

### Location of the Study

The study location was Homa Bay County, Kenya. This is one of the 47 counties in Kenya, located in the western region of the country. It shares its borders with 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, the county lies along the shores of Lake Victoria, a significant geographic and economic feature that shapes much of the region's livelihood. 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. Homa Bay County is home to an estimated population of 1,131,950 individuals, according to the 2019 census. This population density, combined with the region's the high rate of poverty and unemployment, makes this location suitable for this study. Other than subsistence farming, fishing plays a vital role in the county's economy due to its proximity to Lake Victoria. Despite its economic potential, the county's poverty index is estimated at 48.4%, meaning nearly half of the population lives below the poverty line. Equally, people here face limited access to career opportunities. Nevertheless, the

county boasts a literacy rate of approximately 87.3%, reflecting an efforts to promote education among its residents. These issues underscore the need for comprehensive career guidance and counselling to help school leavers navigate their career choices.

### Population of the Study

The target population was form three students enrolled in public secondary schools in Homa Bay County. The county has 315 public secondary schools. The accessible population comprised of the 25,473 form three students. The form three students were preferred 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. Similarly, the the population of career guidance and counselling teachers was also set at 315, aligning with the assumption of one guidance teacher per school.

### Instruments used to Collect Data

The study employed students' questionnaires (SQ) and Teachers Interviews Schedule (GCTIS). SQs gathered structured quantitative data on influence of group career counselling strategies on career choices while GCTIS helped investigate specific information and experiences that was in-depth. Both the instruments enabled the study to capture measurable trends and patterns that were useful during analysis. The SQ was divided into two sections. Section A dealt with demographic using multiple choices while Section B sought specific information on the influence of career guidance strategies on career choices on a 5-point Likert scale. The items were constructs and carefully aligned to specified variables in the study. This instruments were the best for the purposes of the study since questionnaires were suited in gathering many data within a short time, and offers less chance for creeping in of any bias and GCTIS investigated in-depth information (Mazhar et al., 2021).

Face and content validity of the instrument determined by experts who evaluated the relevance and clarity of the questions, and adequacy in covering the objectives of the study. Their feedback ensured that the instruments effectively measured what they were intended for. The reliability of the instruments was assessed to ensure that they consistently produce dependable results. It was determined after a piloting on 10% of the sample size, involving 38 students from three schools in neighbouring Migori County. This county was preferred since it shares many of its characteristic with Homa Bay. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha. It showed a reliability coefficient positivity of  $\alpha = 0.78$ . Sürücü and Maslakci, (2020) proposed that a value 0.7 or above implied that there was significant consistency among the items. Consent was obtained from parents to collect data from minors. Anonymity was preserved through coding of every questionnaire and any sensitive information was handled as confidential during questionnaire administration. The ethical approval of the instrument was done by the ethical committee of Tom Mboya University.

### Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Sampling procedure 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. A rule-of-thumb (10% of N) as a practical heuristic rule was used for determining the appropriate sample size of schools. According to this rule, Sample size (n) =  $10\% \times \text{Population size (N)}$

(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.

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

The samples were as in the table 1.

**Table 1: Samples of the Representative Schools from Each Sub County**

Sub County	No. of Schools	Proportion	Sample size
Homa Bay Town	29	0.0921	3
Mbita	33	0.1048	3
Ndhiwa	48	0.1524	5
Rachuonyo East	44	0.1397	5
Rangwe	34	0.1079	4
Suba	33	0.1048	3
Rachuonyo North	53	0.1683	5
Rachuonyo South	41	0.1302	4
	<b>315</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>32</b>

Similarly, the sample for career Guidance and Counselling teachers was also set at 32, aligning with the assumption of one guidance teacher per school.

Students sample size was determined using Fisher's formula. Fisher's formula was used since it explicitly focuses on ensuring robust and meaningful results. The calculation was as indicated below:

$$\text{Sample size (n)} = \left\{ \frac{\left( \frac{z^2 \times (1 - \delta)}{e^2} \right)}{z^2 \times (1 - \delta)} \right\}$$

where;

Population size (N) = 25,473

Confidence Interval 95% Z score (z) =1.96

Margin (e) =5%

Standard of Deviation ( $\delta$ )= 0.5

$$\text{Sample size (n)} = \frac{384.16}{1 + 0.01508}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= \frac{384.16}{1.01508} \\
 &= 378.45 \\
 &= 379
 \end{aligned}$$

After obtaining sample size, the study distributed respondents into categories of schools in order to ensure that all categories are included. The distribution is as indicated in table 2.

**Table 2: Students Sample Size as per School Category**

	School Category						
Sub County	BB	GB	BD	GD	MD	MB	Total
Homa Bay	1	1	1	2	28	2	35
Mbita	2	5	1	2	22	8	40
Ndhiwa	3	3	0	8	28	16	58
Rachuonyo East	4	4	0	0	45	0	53
Rangwe	2	2	0	2	27	8	41
Suba	1	2	1	4	13	19	40
Rachuonyo North	2	2	0	4	35	20	63
Rachuonyo South	2	2	0	2	25	18	49
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>379</b>

Key: BB-Boys Boarding, GB-Girls Boarding, BD-Boys Day, GD- Girls Day, MD- Mixed Day, MB- Mixed Boarding.

Boys' boarding schools received 17 questionnaires, girls' boarding schools 21, boys' day schools 3, girls' day schools 24, mixed day schools 223, and mixed boarding schools 91. Among these, mixed day schools received the highest number of questionnaires, accounting for nearly 223 of the total distribution, while boys' day schools received the least. This allocation reflects the higher representation of mixed day schools within the sampled population since they were the most prevalent.

### Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

The procedure included seeking permit from NACOSTI, after which 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. 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. 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. The questionnaires were identified with a code number to help in tracing them after completion. The code was

randomised to double blind the users. No identifying marks were allowed to be used.

Data collected was coded, keyed in a computer and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 of windows. There was a statistical assumption of normality and homogeneity of variance and linearity of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Data analysis involved categorizing, organizing, manipulating, and summarizing data to obtain interpretable information. To summarize the results into understandable information calculation of means, percentages, frequencies, and standard deviations were done. The nature of the variables also justified the use of Pearson's correlation and regression analysis. The hypothesis was tested at  $P \leq .05$  significance level using one sample t-test which tested whether or not the mean of a population is equal to P-value. Simple linear regression model was used since the goal of the study was to find the best-fitting line that minimizes the sum of squared differences between the observed and predicted values of dependent variables. The results of the analysis was interpreted and presented in tables and figures. Frequency tables were used to present data to enable the reader apprehend the pattern of distribution of the variables and the results.

## RESULTS

The results of this study were based on the objective, that investigated the influence of group career counselling strategy on career choice among secondary school students in Homa bay County, Kenya. The hypothesis to be tested was: Group career counselling strategy has no statistically significant influence on career choice among secondary students in Homa Bay County, Kenya. The 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 group counselling were as shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Influence of Group Counselling Strategy on Career Choice**

Statements on Influence of Group Counselling Strategy on Career Choice	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Group counselling sessions enhanced my awareness of different career options.	4.55%	9.26%	23.00%	38.64%	24.55%
I found the group counselling sessions to be interactive and engaging.	6.82%	8.41%	21.36%	40.00%	23.41%
The group counselling format allowed me to learn from the experiences of my peers.	6.27%	6.78%	16.82%	47.86%	22.27%
I feel more supported in my career decision-making process due to group counselling.	4.55%	8.41%	24.77%	42.05%	20.22%
Group counselling positively influenced my self-confidence in pursuing my chosen career path.	4.55%	6.89%	20.14%	42.05%	26.36%
The group counselling sessions effectively addressed common concerns shared by students.	6.27%	9.69%	19.09%	39.77%	25.18%

I believe that group counselling is beneficial for exploring and deciding on career paths.	6.84%	10.55%	18.52%	36.36%	27.73%
<b>Mean</b>	<b>5.69%</b>	<b>8.57%</b>	<b>20.53%</b>	<b>40.96%</b>	<b>24.25%</b>

The result in table 3 indicate that when students were asked if group counselling sessions enhanced their awareness of different career options, 38.64% of them agreed and 24.55% of them strongly agreed. This means that cumulatively 64.19% of students agreed with the statement. The response to the statement that “I found the group counselling sessions to be interactive and engaging.” had 40.00% agreeing and 23.41% strongly agreeing cumulatively this was 63.41%. The agreement on the statement “The group counselling format allowed me to learn from the experiences of my peers.” was at 47.86% and 22.27% for agreed and strongly agreed respectively. Cumulatively those who agreed with the statement were 70.13%. When the statement “I feel more supported in my career decision-making process due to group counselling” was presented, 42.05% agreed and 20.22% strongly agreed which accumulatively meant 62.27% agreed. This initial result is a confirmation that indeed group career counselling was prevalently used strategy. A further interrogation with the statement “The group counselling sessions effectively addressed common concerns shared by students” produced 39.77% and 25.18% for agreed and strongly agreed respectively totaling to 64.95 %. Lastly, the statement “I believe that group counselling is beneficial for exploring and deciding on career paths.” had 36.36% in agreement and 27.73% strongly agreeing totaling to 64.09%. In conclusion, majority of the respondents agreed with positive statements that group counselling has an influence on career choice. In contrast, few disagreed with the statement. On average the Mean for strongly disagree was 5.69%, disagree was 8.57%, neutral was 20.53%, agree was 40.96% and strongly agree was 24.25%. Cumulatively a total of 40.96% agreed and 24.25% which accumulatively meant 65.21% agreed that group-counselling strategy has significant influence on career choice among students. This is an early indicator of the importance of group counselling strategy.

The research hypothesis tested under this objective was: Group 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 sample mean differs from the population mean. The finding was as shown:

$$t = 1.43$$

$$df = 38$$

$$p\text{-value (one-tailed)} = 0.03$$

Given that the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, which stated that group 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 4.

**Table 4: Correlation between Group Career Counselling Strategy and Career Choice**

Technique	N	Correlation(r)	Sig.
Group Career Counselling	371	. 0.50*	.009

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4 indicates that the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) Correlation between Group Career Counselling Strategy and Career Choice was 0.50 , suggesting a medium positive relationship between group counselling and career choice among students. This shows that group counselling has a notable relationship with students’ career choices. The medium correlation suggests that while group counselling is beneficial, it may not be as



impactful other strategies. Research by Lenz (2021) corroborates these findings, highlighting that group counselling fosters a sense of community and shared learning, which can positively influence career decision-making processes, particularly in enhancing self-confidence and addressing common career-related concerns among students.

The significance of this correlation agrees with a study done among Korean students which showed that career group counselling program was effective in improving both career identity and career decision self-efficacy of students, (Yoon & Yang, 2017). Just like the current findings in Korean situation, career identity in this study was considered based on performance in sub-factors including self-understanding, self-confidence, and competence. It agrees with to career decision self-efficacy theory which suggests that, career information, goal setting, career planning, problem solving, and self are the sub-factors were domains to be effectively followed during career group counselling (Yoon & Yang, 2017). The result supports a study by Karfe, and Ojo, (2019).in Nigeria, which revealed that group career guidance and counselling strategy is effective in improving the career choice making skills among the secondary school students.

To determine the level of influence, regression analysis was done. The purpose was to obtain ( $R^2$ ) that measures how well the statistical model predicts the influence of the outcome. 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 5.

**Table 5: Regression Analysis to Determine the Influence of Group Career Counselling Strategy on Career Choice**

Dependent Variable: Career Choice							
Equation	Model Summary					Parameter Estimates	
	$R^2$	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Constant	b1
Linear	.25	.910	1	27	.034	2.670	.128

Table 5 provided the  $R^2$  value, which represents the coefficient determinant at the value 0.25 for the linear regression. The table further show parameter estimates of 2.670 which meant a significant proportion of career choice is predicted by group career counselling strategy. The slope was .128 was an indication that group career counselling positively influenced career choice, particularly by enhancing decision-making processes. The coefficient determinant value of .25 was interpreted to mean if other factors are held constant group counselling strategy may influence career choice by around 25%. Although this value is relatively small it implies that the regression model significantly predicts career choice based on group counselling strategy in this sample.

To corroborate the results from the questionnaire on influence of group counselling and career choice, the researcher interviewed career guidance and counselling teachers. The results were categorized into themes as

follows: Encourages Peer-to-Peer Learning; Limited Participation in Group Sessions; and Builds Confidence in Career Decision-Making. Some of the responses from the interviews were as follows: Teacher D said, "Group counselling provides a platform where students share their experiences and learn from their peers. It helps them understand different career paths from their classmates' perspectives." Additionally, Teacher E said, "Some students are hesitant to participate in group discussions. They feel shy or are not comfortable sharing personal information in front of others." Teacher F on his part said, "When students hear others express similar career aspirations or challenges, it validates their own decisions and makes them more confident about pursuing their goals." The findings indicate that group counselling positively influences career choice by fostering peer-to-peer learning and building students' confidence in making career decisions. However, its success is occasionally limited by students' reluctance to actively participate in group discussions, which impacts the depth of engagement.

## DISCUSSION

This study found out that group career counselling significantly predicted career choice based on the sample. This agrees with Kim and Lee, (2023) who argued that group career counselling offers several distinct advantages, including personalized feedback, reduced feelings of isolation, encouragement of cognitive learning experiences and heightened self-exploration among group members. Bieling et al., (2022) also adds that this strategy has unique advantages in terms of intervention such as career identity, subjective career barriers and low self-efficacy in career decision-making. Just like in previous studies by Yoon and Yang, (2017), the study found out that structured group career counselling had a good effect on improving interpersonal skills, coping styles, alleviating anxiety, and increasing members' self-efficacy. The  $R^2$  value of 0.25 for the linear regression emphasizes the importance of structured group career counselling. Though differed in methodology the result agreement emphasizes the need for development of policy that favours use of group career counselling.

Equally in agreement is Bieling et al., (2022). Bieling et al argued that most scholars have long advocated for the significance of career counselling conducted in small groups. From the interview carried out, this study found out that a key feature of counselling in groups is the development of a shared group identity, evident through informal interactions, interpersonal connections, and discussions centered around achieving a clear objective which also comparable with others. In the study, Teacher F reported that "Career group counselling is most widely used as an effective way to guide the careers of students. This is comparable to results from another study by Yoon and Yang (2017) which suggested that career guidance is more effective for group activities than for individual ones. The results of both this and Yoon and Yang studies show that there is a significant relationship between career group counselling strategy and career choice making. The deference however is in the level of predictability. While this study showed 25% predictability, Yoon and Yang had a value of 50%. The deference was likely to be due to deference in sample size used and location of study.

According to Maree (2020) who had similar results, some of the advantages like increased students' career choices efficacy, reduced manpower gaps and cost and time saving are more pronounced in comparison to other counselling strategies. Chen et al. (2020) also observed that group counselling benefitted not only students but also teachers because it helps them to reflect on personal career development. Maree (2020) further noted that group members develop valuable skills that can assist them in managing various career choices throughout their lifetimes. All the above compares well with corroborated information from the teacher counsellors. For example, Teacher D said, "Group counselling provides a platform where students share their experiences and learn from their peers. It helps them understand different career paths from their classmates' perspectives." Such response caters for reduced cost and everybody benefiting from the group discussion.

Just like it was noted by Thurania et al, (2019) about other counties in Kenya, this study found out that Homa Bay county, has adopted group career counselling in public schools. Thurania et al, argued that in Mombasa, Meru, and Kiambu counties have embraced group career guidance strategy. They carry out various group counselling activities which contributed to increased self-awareness of the students that in turn influences career choice. Njogu et al, (2019) adds that in Meru and Kisumu counties, the inadequacy in professionally

qualified career Guidance and Counselling teachers has pushed most public secondary schools to prefer group counselling as a career guidance approach to cover a larger number of the students. The fact presented by the researcher here are not far from what this study found out. For instance, Teacher F in this study said, “since we deal with large groups, students prefer sharing their experience. When they hear others express similar career aspirations or challenges, it validates their own decisions and makes them more confident about pursuing their goals.” This in itself shows how the strategy of group career counselling has been embraced.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of group counselling strategy on career choice among secondary school students in Homa bay County, Kenya. The conclusive analysis involved determination of the correlation which suggested a medium positive relationship between group career counselling and career choice. The main finding established by regression analysis shows that group career counselling has a significant influence on students’ decision on career choices. It was established through interviews that one of the primary advantages of group career counselling is the opportunity for students to engage in discussions with their peers about career-related topics. This interaction allows students to explore different perspectives, share their own experiences, and receive feedback from others who are in similar situations. Such exchanges help students gain clarity about their career interests and aspirations, as well as identify common challenges and solutions. This did not mean that there was no other factor that were intervening, however, the focus on group career counselling showed that students benefit more from the encouragement and motivation provided by their peers, which was valuable during career decision-making. The shared experience of exploring career options together can create a supportive network that helped students build confidence and resilience in their career planning. Since we had a moderate relationship, it meant that high number of students who leave secondary school not having decided on career may be due to less prevalence of the application of this strategy. As much as the study findings agree with earlier studies, it is essential to note that the ex-post facto design used has limitations on the extend of generalization of the results. This results though applicable in Homa Bay county it should be cautiously used elsewhere.

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