The Effect of Classroom Guidance on Career Decision-Making among Grade 11 Students at SMA Negeri 18 Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study examined changes in career decision-making among Grade 11 students after participation in classroom guidance at SMA Negeri 18 Medan. The study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. The population consisted of 274 Grade 11 students in the 2024/2025 academic year, while the sample comprised 31 students selected randomly. Data were collected using a 37-item career decision-making questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.894. Analyses included descriptive statistics, examination of the normality of difference scores, and a paired-samples t-test. The mean score increased from 93.96 at pretest to 126.64 at posttest, representing a mean increase of 32.68 points. The paired-samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores, $t(30) = -14.326$, $p < .001$. The design-based effect size (Cohen's dz) was approximately 2.57, indicating a large effect. The findings suggest that students demonstrated improved career decision-making after participating in classroom guidance. However, because the study used a one-group design without a control group, the findings are interpreted as evidence of change following the intervention rather than definitive causal evidence.

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Introduction

Schools function not only as institutions for academic knowledge transmission but also as developmental environments that help students prepare for educational and occupational transitions. One important developmental task during secondary school is the development of a career direction. At this stage, students begin to face choices that have implications for further study, occupations, and life patterns after graduation. Therefore, the ability to make informed and purposeful career decisions is an important component of students' developmental readiness.

Career decision-making is not a simple process. Students need to integrate self-understanding, information about educational and occupational alternatives, consideration of the consequences of available options, and confidence in their ability to pursue a chosen direction. When career information is limited and understanding of interests and abilities is inadequate, students may experience confusion and become more likely to make choices based on external pressure or influence. Hasdayanti et al. (2024) identified inadequate understanding of interests and talents, limited career information, and environmental influences as factors associated with difficulties in students' career decision-making. Fadlillah and Ruhjatini (2019) similarly reported that limited knowledge of talents and interests and insufficient information about educational options may lead students to follow parental choices, trends, or peers.

These difficulties have broader implications because educational decisions that are not grounded in self-understanding and adequate information may create a mismatch between educational choices, abilities, and career goals. Zulfikar (2021), as cited in the original manuscript, reported a finding concerning the high proportion of university students considered to have selected unsuitable majors. Although this figure should be interpreted cautiously because it is secondary information cited from a popular source, it reinforces the importance of providing career interventions before students enter higher education.

In guidance and counseling, classroom guidance is a service that enables school counselors to provide systematic intervention to students within a class setting. Its major advantage is its reach because it can be delivered to a group of students simultaneously and directed toward common developmental and preventive needs. Prayitno and Amti (2015) describe guidance as a helping process that supports students' self-understanding, attitudes, and skills needed to address developmental tasks, including career planning and decision-making.

Theoretically, career decision-making is also related to students' beliefs about their capabilities, goals, outcome expectations, and environmental supports. Social Cognitive Career Theory positions self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals as important mechanisms underlying career exploration and planning. In a longitudinal study of secondary school students, Rogers and Creed (2011) found that self-efficacy and goals contributed to the prediction of career planning and exploration. Lent et al. (2017) likewise showed that learning experiences, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations are linked to career exploration and decision-making. Thus, classroom guidance that provides information, facilitates self-reflection, and supports planning can be viewed as a relevant intervention for strengthening career decision-making.

Previous studies in Indonesia have indicated the potential of classroom guidance for career development. Aulia et al. (2021) found that classroom guidance could improve self-concept related to career decision-making. Kushendra (2018) reported that classroom guidance could improve students' career planning, while Herga Melka Afriani et al. (2022) demonstrated its benefits for self-understanding, access to career information, planning, and career decision-making. These findings provide empirical support for using classroom guidance in career services.

Nevertheless, an important gap remains. Some previous studies have focused on career planning, self-concept, or work readiness, whereas research directly examining changes in career decision-making scores following classroom guidance among Grade 11 students in a specific school context remains limited. Previous studies have also not consistently connected the process of career decision-making with pre-intervention and post-intervention measurement. The present study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on career decision-making as the outcome and examining score changes using a pretest-posttest design.

The novelty of this study does not lie in classroom guidance as an entirely new technique, but in its structured application as an intervention for career decision-making among Grade 11 students, accompanied by individual pre- and post-intervention measurement and effect-size estimation. This approach provides practical evidence regarding the magnitude of change observed after the service while maintaining an appropriate interpretation of the limitations of a one-group design

Based on this background, problem, and research gap, this study aims to determine whether Grade 11 students at SMA Negeri 18 Medan show changes in career decision-making after participating in classroom guidance. The research hypothesis states that there is a difference in students' career decision-making scores before and after participation in classroom guidance.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. The design involved measurement before the intervention (pretest), delivery of classroom guidance, and a second measurement after the intervention (posttest). The design was selected because the study focused on changes in career decision-making scores after students received the service, but did not include a control group.

The population consisted of 274 Grade 11 students at SMA Negeri 18 Medan during the 2024/2025 academic year. The sample comprised 31 students selected randomly from the population. Random sampling was conducted using the procedure stated in the original manuscript. Because only 31 students in a single intervention group were included, the findings are interpreted within the context of the sample and are not treated as definitive causal evidence for all Grade 11 students.

Data were collected using a 37-item career decision-making questionnaire. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.894, indicating high internal consistency. The source manuscript does not report item-level validity coefficients, a detailed blueprint, or the full validation procedure; therefore, these details were not fabricated. Before inferential analysis, the data were examined for the normality assumption relevant to the paired-samples t-test.

Descriptive analysis was used to obtain minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation scores for the pretest and posttest. Differences between pretest and posttest scores were tested using a paired-samples t-test at α = .05. Unlike the original manuscript, homogeneity testing was not treated as a primary prerequisite because the paired-samples t-test analyzes paired scores from the same participants; the relevant assumption concerns the distribution of difference scores. In addition to the p value, Cohen's dz was calculated as t divided by the square root of the number of paired observations ($dz = t/\sqrt{n}$) to provide an estimate of the magnitude of change.

Interpretation of the findings took the design limitations into account. The p value was used to determine whether the pretest-posttest difference was statistically significant, whereas the effect size was used to describe the magnitude of change within the sample. Because there was no control group and no random assignment to intervention conditions, the observed change was not interpreted as definitive causal evidence.

Result and Discussion

Result

At pretest, the 31 students obtained a total score of 2,913, with a mean of 93.96. The minimum score was 70 and the maximum was 109. These data describe the initial level of career decision-making before classroom guidance was provided. According to the categorization reported in the source manuscript, 7 students were classified as low and 24 as moderate. The original manuscript does not provide the numerical cut-off formula for these categories; therefore, the exact cut-off values are not reconstructed in this revised article.

After the classroom guidance intervention, posttest scores increased. The total score was 3,926, with a minimum of 110 and a maximum of 146, a mean of 126.64, and a standard deviation of 7.05. Thus, the mean score increased by 32.68 points relative to the pretest. Based on the mean scores, the relative increase from baseline was approximately 34.78%.

The descriptive comparison of pretest and posttest scores is summarized below:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of career decision-making

Stage	N	Total Score	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
Pretest	31	2,913	93.96	70	109	—
Posttest	31	3,926	126.64	110	146	7.05

The paired-samples t-test produced a mean difference of -32.677, a difference-score SD of 12.700, a standard error of 2.281, t = -14.326, and Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000. With $p < .001$, the results indicate a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores.

The effect size was calculated using Cohen's $dz = t/\sqrt{n}$. With $|t| = 14.326$ and $n = 31$, $dz \approx 2.57$, indicating a large effect within the sample.

Discussion

The findings indicate an increase in students' career decision-making scores after participation in classroom guidance. The mean score increased from 93.96 at pretest to 126.64 at posttest, representing a mean gain of 32.68 points. Descriptively, this indicates that students had higher career decision-making scores after receiving the service than at baseline. This change is important because career decision-making during secondary school requires students to integrate self-understanding, information about alternatives, consideration of consequences, and confidence in their ability to act on their choices.

The baseline condition showed that 7 of the 31 students were in the low category and 24 were in the moderate category. This finding suggests that most students were not yet at an optimal level of career decision-making. It is consistent with Hasdayanti et al. (2024), who identified inadequate understanding of interests and talents, limited career information, and environmental influence as factors contributing to students' career decision-making difficulties. Fadlillah and Ruhjatini (2019) likewise showed that limited information may make students more likely to follow parental choices, trends, or peers. Thus, the need for career services in schools involves not only providing occupational information but also developing a more reflective decision-making process.

The improvement following the intervention can be understood in terms of the function of classroom guidance as a structured learning experience delivered to students simultaneously. In a career context, classroom guidance allows counselors to provide information, direct students to

identify their potential, discuss educational and occupational alternatives, and help them consider the relationship between personal characteristics and career choices. Prayitno and Amti (2015) position guidance as a helping process through which students understand themselves and their environments and make decisions consistent with their developmental tasks. Accordingly, the score change observed in this study can be interpreted as reflecting a service process that provided information while creating opportunities for reflection on career choices.

The findings are also consistent with Aulia et al. (2021), who found that classroom guidance can improve self-concept related to career decision-making. Self-concept is important because mature career decisions require an understanding of abilities, interests, and personal characteristics. The present findings also support Kushendra (2018) and Herga Melka Afriani et al. (2022), who reported that classroom guidance can support career planning, self-understanding, access to career information, and readiness for future choices. The convergence of these findings strengthens the position of classroom guidance as a practical form of career intervention in schools.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings can be explained through Social Cognitive Career Theory. Rogers and Creed (2011), in a longitudinal study of secondary school students, found that self-efficacy and goals were important predictors of career planning and exploration. Lent et al. (2017) likewise showed that learning experiences are associated with self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which in turn relate to career exploration and decision-making. In the present study, classroom guidance may provide learning experiences that help students obtain information, evaluate their capabilities, understand possible outcomes of choices, and establish goals. These processes are theoretically relevant to more purposeful career decision-making.

Recent evidence also indicates that adolescents' career decision-making is closely related to beliefs and psychological resources. Şeker (2025), in a study of high school students, reported associations among career indecision, career decision-making self-efficacy, and locus of control. This supports the argument that career interventions should not simply increase the amount of information available to students but should also strengthen their confidence in managing the decision-making process. Career adaptability provides another relevant perspective. Savickas and Porfeli (2012) conceptualize concern, control, curiosity, and confidence as psychosocial resources for managing developmental tasks and career transitions. Thus, classroom guidance can be designed not only around choosing an occupation but also around developing resources that prepare students to make choices and adapt to changing educational and occupational pathways.

The magnitude of change in the present study also deserves attention. Based on $t = -14.326$ and 31 paired observations, Cohen's dz calculated as $t/\sqrt{n}$ is approximately 2.57, representing a large effect. Thus, the pretest-posttest difference was not only statistically significant but also substantial within the sample. Nevertheless, this effect size should be understood as an estimate of change in a one-group design. Without a comparison group, it cannot establish that the entire change was caused solely by classroom guidance; history, repeated testing, maturation, or experiences outside the intervention may also have contributed.

From a guidance and counseling practice perspective, the findings suggest that school counselors can use classroom guidance as a universal service for strengthening students' career decision-making. The service can be structured progressively, beginning with self-understanding, followed by exploration of educational and occupational options, evaluation of alternatives, decision-making, and development of an action plan. Such an approach is also consistent with career adaptability because students need not only to make a current choice but also to develop readiness to manage future changes in educational and occupational pathways. Research on career adaptability identifies concern, control, curiosity, and confidence as important resources for career transitions (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Despite the positive findings, several limitations should be stated explicitly. First, the one-group pretest-posttest design does not provide a control group, leaving potential threats to internal validity. Second, the sample included only 31 students from one school, limiting generalizability. Third, the source manuscript does not provide detailed instrument-validity procedures or the numerical cut-offs used for the reported categories; these details should be supplied from the original research documentation before final submission. Fourth, the study measured change immediately after the intervention and therefore cannot establish whether the improvement persists over time. Future research should use a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group, larger samples, follow-up measurements, and analysis of mechanisms such as career

decision-making self-efficacy or career adaptability.

Overall, the 32.68-point mean gain, statistically significant paired-samples t-test, and large effect size provide empirical evidence of positive change in students' career decision-making following classroom guidance. The contribution of this study lies in strengthening practical evidence that classroom guidance can be used to intervene in career decision-making among Grade 11 students while highlighting the importance of linking the service to self-understanding, career information, self-efficacy, goals, and career adaptability. Nevertheless, causal effectiveness should be examined further using stronger research designs.

Conlusion

The study found an increase in career decision-making among Grade 11 students at SMA Negeri 18 Medan after participation in classroom guidance. The mean score increased from 93.96 at pretest to 126.64 at posttest, representing a mean gain of 32.68 points. The paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference, $t(30) = -14.326$, $p < .001$, while Cohen's dz of approximately 2.57 indicated a large effect. These findings support the use of classroom guidance as one approach for strengthening students' career decision-making. However, because the study used a one-group design without a control group, the observed increase cannot be interpreted as definitive causal evidence. Future studies should employ quasi-experimental or experimental designs, larger samples, follow-up assessments, and relevant psychological variables such as career decision-making self-efficacy and career adaptability.

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