



Career Guidance and Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania: A Qualitative Case Study

Flora A. Josiah ^{*1}, Prosperity M. Mwila²

¹ The College of Business Education, Dar es Salaam

² School of Graduate Studies, Saint Augustine University of Tanzania

Correspondence e-mail * : florajosia1@gmail.com

Abstract : Secondary school students face complex education-to-work transitions, yet career guidance in Tanzanian public schools remains irregular and under-resourced. This study examined how career guidance shapes self-efficacy among secondary school students in Ilala Municipality. Its main objective was to assess the contribution of career information services, individual counselling, and career seminars to students' confidence in purposeful career action. A qualitative approach and case study design were used. Sixteen participants – eight students, four teachers, two school counsellors, and two head teachers – were selected through quota and purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions generated data. After permission and consent, sessions were conducted in schools; participants' responses were documented, coded, grouped into themes, and analysed thematically. Credibility and dependability were strengthened through triangulation across participant groups and methods and consistent core questions. Participation was voluntary; confidentiality, informed consent, pseudonyms, and withdrawal rights protected participants. Findings indicated that accurate career information reduced uncertainty and aligned ambitions with abilities; individual counselling strengthened independent decision-making, emotional resilience, and mastery experiences; and seminars expanded occupational knowledge and supplied relatable role models. These benefits were weakened by scarce trained counsellors, heavy teaching workloads, inadequate private space and materials, and infrequent seminars. The study concludes that career guidance supports self-efficacy through complementary informational, relational, and experiential pathways rather than through a single activity. It recommends a continuous school-wide programme, trained personnel, protected counselling time, updated labour-market information, private facilities, and sustained partnerships with universities, employers, parents, and alumni. Future research should test these mechanisms with longitudinal and mixed-method research samples.

Keyword : career guidance, self-efficacy, career information, counselling, career seminars, secondary education, Tanzania

Article info: Submitted : 2026-08-17 | Accepted : 2026-09-13 | Published : 2026-09-14

Copyright © 2026, Authors.

This is an open-access article under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



INTRODUCTION

Across education systems, adolescents are expected to choose subjects, further study, training, and occupations while labour markets are being reshaped by technology, demographic change, and uneven access to opportunity. These choices demand more than awareness of job titles; students must judge their capabilities, compare alternatives, set goals, seek help, and persist when progress is difficult. Recent international evidence shows that career uncertainty among 15-year-olds remains widespread, occupational expectations are concentrated in a narrow range of familiar professions, and social background often predicts educational plans more strongly than demonstrated achievement (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2025). A systematic review of 25 high-school career interventions likewise found that well-designed programmes commonly integrate self-knowledge, occupational information, decision-making, and counselling, with generally positive outcomes for career adaptability, maturity, and decision-related confidence (Wang et al., 2024). These patterns make self-efficacy—the belief that one can organise and perform actions required for a valued outcome—central to understanding whether students merely receive guidance or become capable of using it (Bandura, 1997).

The need is particularly acute in African secondary schools, where expanding enrolment coexists with limited specialist staffing, unequal access to digital and occupational information, and strong family or community influence over career choice. In Uganda, high awareness and reported use of guidance services did not remove structural problems involving limited time, materials, role clarity, and trained personnel (Otwine et al., 2022). In a resource-constrained South African school, students similarly described fragmented provision and a need for structured, context-sensitive guidance linked to actual subject and occupational pathways (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024). Tanzanian evidence echoes these regional tensions. Teachers in Magu District reported shortages of time, materials, professional training, and qualified personnel (Alloph & Msonge, 2023), while an intervention with Tanzanian high-school students showed that structured group career construction counselling could reduce career decision-making difficulties (Maree & Magere, 2023). Thus, African evidence supports guidance in principle but also warns that nominal availability does not ensure intensity, quality, equity, or continuity.

Within Tanzania, decisions made during Forms Three and Four shape subject combinations and later access to postsecondary pathways. This issue is locally salient in Ilala Municipality, whose schools serve

students with varied social and economic resources. A recent Ilala study found that school-based social and personal guidance influenced science-subject choices across gender, demonstrating that guidance can matter at the precise point where study pathways narrow (Shuma et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the literature has more often measured provision, barriers, subject choice, or career indecision than explained how distinct school practices build students' beliefs that they can act. It also tends to examine information, counselling, or seminars separately. The present study addressed this contextual and explanatory gap by assessing how career information services, individual counselling, and career seminars jointly shape self-efficacy in public secondary schools in Ilala Municipality. By linking participants' accounts to social cognitive theory and contemporary evidence, the study contributes a mechanism-based explanation of what each component adds and why a comprehensive programme is preferable to occasional, interchangeable activities.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Review

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory explains human functioning as reciprocal interaction among personal beliefs, behaviour, and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986). Within that system, self-efficacy is task- and context-sensitive: confidence to choose

subjects, request information, speak in a seminar, recover from a poor examination, or complete an application may differ even within the same student. Efficacy beliefs influence which activities people attempt, how much effort they invest, how long they persist, and how they interpret setbacks (Bandura, 1997). Four principal sources develop those beliefs. Mastery experiences arise from performing challenging actions successfully; vicarious experiences arise from observing credible others; verbal persuasion communicates that effective action is possible; and physiological or emotional states shape how people read anxiety, stress, and readiness. Career guidance should therefore be evaluated not only by information delivered but also by whether it creates these efficacy-building experiences.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) adapts these propositions to educational and occupational development. It proposes that self-efficacy and outcome expectations influence interests, goals, choices, and performance, while contextual supports and barriers affect whether intentions become action (Lent et al., 1994). This framework prevents an individualistic interpretation of confidence. A student may value engineering and believe that effort matters yet remain unable to pursue it if subject prerequisites, application knowledge, fees, role models, or supportive adults are absent. Conversely, school career support can

reduce doubt partly by strengthening career self-efficacy, although family influences and school support do not always operate in identical ways (Cheung, 2024). For this study, career information, counselling, and seminars are environmental supports; shortages of staff, time, privacy, materials, and external partnerships are contextual barriers; and students' reported confidence, goal-setting, help-seeking, resilience, and planning are efficacy-related responses.

The framework also predicts complementarity among guidance modes. Information can reduce uncertainty and make outcome expectations more realistic, but information alone may not produce mastery. Individual counselling can convert a broad aspiration into manageable tasks, regulate anxiety, and encourage a student to attempt actions from which mastery develops. Seminars can provide vicarious learning when professionals disclose routes, setbacks, and strategies, especially when students perceive a role model as similar to themselves. Verbal encouragement crosses all three modes, but its credibility depends on accurate information, trusting relationships, and feasible opportunities. SCCT therefore guides the study's main objective by asking not simply whether career guidance “works,” but which efficacy source is activated, for whom, under what school conditions, and with what limitation. This mechanism-based

reading is appropriate for qualitative evidence because participants can describe how beliefs and actions changed even when causal effect sizes cannot be estimated.

2. Empirical Review

Contemporary international evidence generally favours structured, multi-session career intervention while cautioning against treating all formats as equally effective. Wang et al. (2024) found that group counselling was the most common modality in recent high-school studies, followed by workshops and career courses; successful programmes typically addressed self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, goals, and decision skills. However, only a minority included follow-up, and some gains were not maintained, suggesting that one-off exposure may produce enthusiasm without durable behavioural change. Life-design counselling research similarly shows that guided reflection can strengthen career adaptability and turn diffuse concerns into an actionable narrative (Wang & Liu, 2023). At the systems level, OECD (2025) associates teenage career exploration and first-hand encounters with the world of work with better preparation, while documenting persistent inequalities in participation. Together, this evidence supports sustained combinations of information, reflection, decision practice, and meaningful encounters rather than motivational talks detached from school planning.

African studies add the importance of implementation conditions. Otwine et al. (2022) found that 98.8% of surveyed Ugandan students knew that guidance services existed and 87.0% reported using them, yet delivery was concentrated around career days, class meetings, and the beginning or end of terms. Limited time and incomplete information about training and work opportunities constrained usefulness. Farao and Du Plessis (2024) found a comparable need for structured career guidance in a low-resource South African school, arguing that fragmented support leaves learners dependent on uneven social networks. In Tanzania, Maree and Magere's (2023) group intervention reduced high-school students' career decision-making difficulties, demonstrating that contextual constraint does not preclude positive outcomes when counselling is deliberately designed. These studies collectively shift the question from simple availability toward programme dosage, professional capacity, relational quality, and the conversion of information into decisions.

Tanzanian observational studies show both local relevance and a persistent explanatory gap. Alloph and Msonge (2023) documented teachers' lack of professional training, time, materials, and specialist personnel in Magu District. Shuma et al. (2024) found that guidance in Ilala was related to science-subject choices, including students' awareness of links among

subjects, interests, and future work. More recently, Kanyuma et al. (2025) reported that Tanzanian girls' use of guidance information for STEM choices could be impeded by parental influence, leading the authors to call for active parent involvement rather than school-only information delivery. These findings establish that guidance is socially situated, but they do not fully distinguish how information, private counselling, and encounters with professionals generate confidence. Nor do they explain why students may become more self-efficacious even when provision is irregular. The present case study responds by comparing three guidance components within the same setting and interpreting participants' accounts through mastery, modelling, persuasion, emotional regulation, and contextual support.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research approach because the objective required close examination of meanings, experiences, and perceived changes in confidence rather than estimation of a population effect. A case study design bounded the inquiry within selected public secondary schools in Ilala Municipality and allowed the researcher to examine career guidance in its everyday institutional context. The design was suitable for comparing how students, teachers, counsellors, and school leaders understood the same practices.

It also supported attention to mechanisms—what participants believed changed after information, counselling, or seminars—and to constraints that would be difficult to capture through a single standardized score. Because the evidence is interpretive and context-bound, “effect” in the original study title is understood as participants' perceived influence, not experimental causation.

The sample comprised 16 participants: eight Form Three and Form Four students, four teachers, two school counsellors, and two head teachers. Quota sampling was used to secure balanced student representation by form level and sex and to include teachers as a distinct participant category. Purposive sampling selected head teachers and counsellors because their responsibilities gave them direct knowledge of service planning, staffing, resources, and delivery. Students were selected because they had encountered at least one relevant guidance activity and could describe its meaning from the recipient's perspective. The small sample was consistent with an intensive qualitative case study and enabled cross-role comparison, although it was not intended to represent all schools or students in Ilala statistically.

Semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion guides were the principal instruments. Individual interviews with head teachers and school counsellors elicited accounts of programme organisation,

counselling practice, resourcing, perceived student change, and implementation barriers. Focus groups with students and teachers encouraged participants to compare experiences of career information, individual counselling, seminars, subject choice, confidence, and academic persistence. After institutional and school permissions were obtained, prospective participants received information about the study and participation was scheduled to minimise disruption. Interviews and discussions followed the prepared guides; participant responses were documented, organised by source, and prepared systematically for thematic analysis. Using two methods and four participant groups enabled convergence and divergence to be examined rather than relying on a single institutional voice.

Data were analysed thematically through familiarisation, initial coding, comparison of recurring ideas, category development, theme construction, and review against the main objective. Coding remained sensitive to the three service components while allowing unanticipated mechanisms and constraints to emerge. Credibility was supported by triangulating interviews with focus groups and comparing student accounts with those of teachers, counsellors, and head teachers. Consistent core questions and organised records supported dependability, while contextual

description supported judgements of transferability. Ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, informed consent procedures appropriate to participant age, the right to withdraw, secure handling of records, removal of identifying details, and pseudonyms in quotations. Because counselling disclosures could be sensitive, participants were not pressed to reveal private information beyond the study's purpose. Quotations were selected to represent themes without identifying a school or individual. These safeguards aligned data quality with respect for participants and the sensitive school counselling context throughout fieldwork.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main finding is that career guidance strengthened students' self-efficacy when it moved them from vague aspiration to informed, personally credible action. The three components did not operate as substitutes. Career information made pathways intelligible; individual counselling personalised decisions and supported mastery after difficulty; and seminars made futures imaginable through role models and practical exposure. Participants also described a recurring implementation paradox: they could identify meaningful changes from guidance, yet access was too infrequent and uneven to become a continuous developmental programme. The discussion below is

organised around this overall objective and the mechanisms through which the three components jointly influenced confidence.

4.1 Information Made Choices Intelligible and Personally Credible

Participants first connected self-efficacy with access to accurate information about occupations, subject prerequisites, further education, and alternative routes. Students described greater confidence when they could connect present subjects with a future pathway rather than selecting a career because it was prestigious or popular among friends. One student explained: "Before attending career guidance sessions, I wanted to become an engineer simply because my friends talked about it. After learning about different careers and their requirements, I realised that my interests and strengths are more suited to teaching. Now I am confident about my future" (Student A). The major change was not an increase in occupational status or ambition; it was improved fit between self-knowledge, requirements, and choice. Information therefore supported realistic efficacy rather than indiscriminate optimism.

This finding adds nuance to arguments that guidance should raise aspiration. Self-efficacy is not confidence that every option is equally attainable; it is a grounded belief about performing specific actions. By clarifying requirements and alternatives, information helped students evaluate whether effort,

subject choice, and further training could plausibly lead to a preferred outcome. The result is consistent with SCCT, in which learning experiences shape efficacy and outcome expectations, which then influence interests and goals (Lent et al., 1994). It also corresponds with OECD (2025), which reports that adolescents' occupational expectations often remain narrow and poorly aligned with labour-market demand. In the Ilala case, broader information did not simply add occupations to a list. It enabled students to question peer-led assumptions, compare aspirations with strengths, and take ownership of a decision.

Students and teachers also associated career information with academic motivation and goal-setting. Once students understood that particular subject combinations, grades, or application steps were required, daily schoolwork acquired an instrumental meaning. Teachers observed stronger commitment among students who had participated in guidance, while students described concentrating on subjects relevant to their intended pathways. This mechanism aligns with the Ilala evidence of Shuma et al. (2024), who found that school-based guidance influenced science-subject choice by helping students connect subjects, personal interests, and the world of work. It also reflects the intervention synthesis of Wang et al. (2024), in which career knowledge is most useful when

combined with self-knowledge and decision practice. The present study extends those findings by showing that motivation was generated through a visible sequence from present action to future outcome.

Information further reduced uncertainty and anxiety, especially for students whose knowledge had been restricted to medicine, teaching, law, engineering, or other highly visible careers. Yet access was inconsistent. Participants reported few current materials, limited digital access, irregular interaction with professionals, and dependence on already overburdened teachers. These constraints echo Alloph and Msonge's (2023) Tanzanian findings and Otwine et al.'s (2022) Ugandan evidence that awareness of a programme may coexist with poor timing and thin occupational information. They also create an equity problem: where school information is weak, students with educated relatives or well-connected families can compensate, while others rely on peers, stereotypes, or outdated knowledge. Career information should therefore be treated as maintained educational infrastructure, not a packet delivered near examinations.

Individual Counselling Turned Encouragement into Mastery

Individual counselling was the component most strongly endorsed by participants because it linked career choice with academic difficulty, emotion, and personal circumstance.

Students valued a confidential opportunity to articulate fear, receive tailored feedback, and convert a problem into manageable action. Student H stated: “During counselling I was able to explain my fears about failing examinations. The counsellor encouraged me and helped me develop a study plan. Since then I have become much more confident, focused on my studies, and less worried about examinations.” This account shows more than verbal reassurance. The counsellor helped the student plan behaviour, which could then produce evidence of control. In Bandura's (1997) terms, persuasion may initiate action, but mastery experiences provide the stronger basis for durable efficacy.

Another student described being encouraged to participate in discussions and school activities until speaking became less threatening. The change occurred gradually: attempted participation reduced nervousness, successful performance altered self-perception, and the student began expressing ideas more freely. Counselling thus supported emotional regulation and graded mastery. It mattered that the advice was tied to an observable task rather than a general message to “be confident.” This interpretation is consistent with recent life-design counselling, which uses reflection and purposeful action to reconstruct career concerns (Wang & Liu, 2023), and with evidence that school career support is related to lower career doubt through career self-

efficacy (Cheung, 2024). Although those studies differ in participants and design, they support the present mechanism: relational support becomes consequential when it changes how a student understands and performs an action.

Counselling also strengthened independent academic decision-making. Student J explained: “My counsellor helped me understand why choosing subjects according to my abilities is more important than following my friends. That advice changed my attitude completely. I became more confident in making my own choices and started thinking carefully about my future career.” The result parallels the information finding but adds a relational dimension. A counsellor could ask why a student preferred an option, challenge borrowed assumptions, and interpret requirements in light of personal performance and interests. This is particularly important in socially embedded career decisions. Kanyuma et al. (2025) found that parental influence could impede Tanzanian girls' use of STEM guidance information; counselling cannot dismiss family relationships, but it can help students articulate reasons and invite parents into more informed dialogue.

The capacity to recover from setbacks was another prominent counselling outcome. Teachers and counsellors described students who initially interpreted poor examinations

as proof of permanent inability but regained motivation after discussing causes, strategies, and alternative goals. This shift illustrates the difference between a global judgement—"I am not capable"—and a task-specific interpretation—"my present strategy did not work, but I can change it." It also helps explain why career counselling can influence academic behaviour even when no immediate occupational decision is required. Maree and Magere (2023) found that a structured group career construction intervention reduced career decision-making difficulties among Tanzanian high-school students. The Ilala accounts agree with the value of structured reflection but suggest that private sessions add space for emotionally sensitive concerns that students may not disclose in a group.

The strength of counselling was undercut by its scarcity. Participants reported that one counsellor could be responsible for more than 500 students, commonly while carrying a full teaching timetable. Private rooms were limited, and sessions were often concentrated around examinations or crises. These conditions narrow counselling from developmental support to emergency response and can weaken confidentiality, continuity, and trust. They also reproduce the professional-capacity problems documented in Magu District (Alloph & Msonge, 2023) and the wider implementation barriers identified in African schools (Farao & Du Plessis,

2024; Otwine et al., 2022). The implication is not that every student requires frequent therapy. Rather, a tiered programme should make universal guidance available to all, targeted small-group support available for shared needs, and confidential individual counselling accessible when personal barriers or decisions require it.

Seminars Supplied Possibilities, Models, and Procedural Knowledge

Career seminars broadened students' occupational horizons and exposed them to pathways that routine classroom experience did not reveal. Student O reported: "During the career seminar, professionals explained careers I had never heard of before. I discovered that there are many opportunities depending on one's interests and abilities. The experience opened my mind and helped me think more carefully about my future career choices." This finding reinforces the informational mechanism but adds immediacy: students could ask questions of people who performed the work and hear how education, training, and employment were connected. Such encounters respond to the narrow concentration of teenage aspirations described internationally by OECD (2025) and to regional demands for guidance that reflects actual education-to-work transitions.

The most distinctive seminar mechanism was vicarious experience. Student Q stated: "Listening to an engineer who studied in a public school

like ours motivated me. I realized that my background does not determine my future." The speaker's credibility rested not only on occupational success but on perceived similarity. Bandura (1997) argues that observing a comparable person succeed can alter judgements of one's own capability, especially when the observer is uncertain and the model's route appears attainable. Participants also valued professionals who discussed obstacles and recovery, because a flawless success story could seem remote while a narrated struggle supplied strategies. Seminars therefore work best when speakers represent diverse backgrounds and describe decisions, setbacks, support, and daily work rather than offering prestige-centred speeches.

Seminars also strengthened academic commitment and procedural planning. Students learned about subject combinations, university applications, admission requirements, scholarships, vocational alternatives, and the sequence of steps needed to pursue a goal. Student U explained: "Career seminars taught us how to prepare for university applications and choose subjects according to our career interests. They helped us understand admission requirements, plan ahead, and make better subject choices. This guidance made us feel more prepared and confident about university." Confidence here was prospective and procedural: the pathway seemed manageable because it had been broken into actions. This supports Wang et al.'s

(2024) conclusion that effective interventions combine occupational knowledge with planning and decision skills rather than relying on information alone.

However, participants described seminars as infrequent and dependent on budgets or external organisations. Schools lacked durable partnerships with universities, employers, professional bodies, and former students, so exposure could depend on a single visit. This weakness matters because the recent intervention literature favours repeated engagement and notes that gains may fade when follow-up is absent (Wang et al., 2024). Alumni are a particularly feasible resource: they often provide socially credible models, understand the school context, and can explain recent application or training experiences. Digital sessions can widen access, but they should supplement rather than replace interaction and must account for unequal connectivity. Seminars should culminate in guided reflection or an individual action plan so that inspiration becomes goal-directed behaviour.

Complementary Pathways and the Implementation Paradox

Across themes, career information, counselling, and seminars influenced self-efficacy through related but distinguishable pathways. Information improved cognitive clarity by linking abilities, subjects, qualifications, and occupations.

Counselling personalised that knowledge, regulated anxiety, and supported action after setbacks. Seminars expanded possibilities and supplied vicarious models and procedural knowledge. Verbal persuasion appeared in every component, but its effect depended on credibility: encouragement was strongest when supported by accurate requirements, a trusting relationship, a relatable example, or an achievable task. The findings therefore support SCCT's reciprocal account of persons and environments rather than a simple input-output model. Guidance altered beliefs, those beliefs encouraged action, and action could create new mastery evidence; at the same time, resource barriers restricted which cycles could begin or continue.

This synthesis also explains why replacing one component with another would weaken provision. A website or booklet can distribute information efficiently but cannot respond fully to fear, family pressure, or a recent academic setback. Private counselling can tailor support but cannot alone represent the diversity of occupations or role models available outside school. A seminar can inspire many students at once but may leave individual misconceptions and constraints unresolved. The systematic review by Wang et al. (2024) similarly indicates that effective high-school programmes use multiple contents and modalities, while Farao and Du Plessis (2024) show why structure matters in resource-

constrained schools. Comprehensive provision does not require expensive duplication; it requires sequencing universal information, group exposure, guided planning, and targeted individual support around shared learning outcomes.

The implementation paradox is that participants observed benefit despite limited provision, but that evidence should not be used to justify the status quo. Irregular sessions may produce memorable turning points for students who attend, while leaving others unreached and offering little reinforcement. Scarcity also makes access reactive: confident students may seek help, whereas those with low self-efficacy may avoid it. A school can therefore report that guidance exists while reproducing inequity in who receives meaningful support. Otwine et al. (2022) demonstrated this distinction between high awareness and structural quality, and Kanyuma et al. (2025) showed that information may not be used when social influences are unaddressed. The Ilala findings call for continuity, active outreach, parent engagement, and monitoring of participation by form, sex, disability, and socioeconomic vulnerability.

Viewed programmatically, the findings suggest a sequence rather than a collection of events. At the universal level, students need recurring classroom-based information and guided self-assessment before choices become urgent. That foundation allows a seminar to deepen rather than

introduce career knowledge, because students arrive prepared with questions and can compare speakers' experiences against known requirements. Immediately afterwards, a brief planning exercise can require each student to identify one goal, one prerequisite, one source of support, and one next action. Teacher-counsellors can then use those plans to identify students who need small-group clarification or individual counselling. Follow-up returns students to their plans, makes progress visible, and supplies the feedback from which mastery beliefs grow. This sequence is an inference from the convergent themes rather than a tested intervention, but it converts the study's mechanisms into an implementable model. It also uses scarce specialist time more strategically: universal information and group activities meet common needs, while individual sessions are reserved for complex decisions, emotional barriers, or circumstances requiring confidentiality. Such sequencing fits Wang et al.'s (2024) finding that interventions usually combine several contents and modes, and it addresses OECD's (2025) concern that advantaged students participate more often in beneficial career-development activities. Equity requires schools to invite rather than wait for help-seeking, offer materials in accessible formats, and review who completes each stage. In this way, comprehensiveness means connected experiences with purposeful

follow-up, not simply a larger number of disconnected events.

The findings must be interpreted within the study's design. Sixteen participants provided detailed, triangulated accounts, but the case study cannot estimate the magnitude of change, compare guided and unguided students, or establish long-term causation. Participants may also recall especially positive or negative experiences.

Nevertheless, convergence across students and staff, the specificity of behavioural examples, and alignment with Tanzanian, African, and international studies strengthen the plausibility of the proposed mechanisms. The study's contribution is analytical rather than statistical: it identifies how modest school practices may build confidence and why staffing, time, privacy, information quality, and partnerships condition their value. These propositions can guide programme development and larger longitudinal or mixed-method evaluation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that career guidance can strengthen self-efficacy among secondary school students in Ilala Municipality when students receive more than isolated advice. Accurate information helped them replace peer-led or stereotyped choices with reasoned judgements about interests, abilities, subjects, and pathways. Individual counselling

created a trusted space in which fear and setbacks could be translated into plans, graded action, and mastery. Career seminars enlarged the range of imaginable futures, provided relatable models, and clarified practical transitions to further education and work. The central contribution is therefore a differentiated explanation: information produces clarity, counselling enables personalised agency and resilience, and seminars provide modelling and procedural exposure. Their value is greatest when they are deliberately connected.

The findings also show that confidence is not solely an internal student trait. It is enabled or constrained by the organisation of school support. Heavy counsellor workloads, competing teaching duties, lack of private space, outdated or scarce information, limited funds, and dependence on occasional visitors reduced both reach and continuity. A policy that merely assigns counselling responsibility to a teacher is insufficient if the role has no preparation, protected time, materials, referral system, or monitoring. The Ministry responsible for education and local authorities should establish minimum expectations for a developmental career-guidance programme across secondary forms, provide practical training and supervision for teacher-counsellors, protect time within school schedules, and track whether students actually participate in sequenced activities.

At school level, provision should follow a tiered and continuous model. All students should receive age-appropriate career education covering self-assessment, subject-career links, postsecondary and vocational routes, financial aid, emerging occupations, labour-market realities, and decision skills. Small-group activities can address common concerns and convert seminar learning into written goals. Confidential individual counselling should be available for students facing indecision, anxiety, family conflict, disability-related barriers, or academic setbacks. Schools should identify a private space, maintain clear confidentiality and referral procedures, update both printed and accessible digital resources, and schedule guidance before key subject and application decisions rather than only near examinations.

Partnerships should be institutional rather than occasional. Universities, vocational institutions, employers, professional associations, community organisations, and alumni can contribute speakers, workplace encounters, mentoring, and current pathway information. Speakers should represent varied genders, backgrounds, educational routes, and occupations, and should discuss setbacks and strategies as well as success. Parents should be engaged through concise information sessions and student-parent planning activities because family influence can support or override school guidance. Every

seminar or visit should end with guided reflection, a question period, and a feasible next step so that exposure generates action rather than temporary excitement.

Finally, implementation should be accompanied by evaluation. Schools can monitor reach, student satisfaction, knowledge of pathways, confidence in specific career tasks, completed action plans, and referral use without turning counselling into a high-stakes assessment. These monitoring data should be used formatively, not to rank schools or label students, because self-efficacy is context-specific and developmental. Their purpose is to reveal gaps in access, guide resource allocation, and ensure that guidance reaches students before high-stakes choices close pathways. Regular review can then refine timing, content, partnerships, and referral pathways across forms. Future research should include larger samples across urban and rural Tanzanian settings, validated self-efficacy measures, comparison groups, and follow-up across subject choice, application, and transition points. Mixed-method and longitudinal designs could test whether the informational, mastery, modelling, and emotional-regulation pathways identified here predict durable behaviour and whether effects differ by gender, socioeconomic position, disability, or school resources. Such evidence would move career guidance from a valued but episodic service

toward an equitable component of secondary education.

REFERENCES

- Alloph, J. M., & Msonge, E. (2023). Challenges facing teachers in the provision of career guidance services to secondary school students in Magu District, Tanzania. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 6(2), 171–181. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.6.2.1277>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.
- Cheung, F. (2024). Career self-efficacy as a mediator between career-specific parental behaviors and school career support on career doubt. *BMC Psychology*, 12, Article 39. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01536-9>
- Farao, A., & Du Plessis, M. (2024). The need for structured career guidance in a resource-constrained South African school. *African Journal of Career Development*, 6(1), Article a116. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v6i1.116>
- Kanyuma, L. S., Kassim, M., & Sambaiga, R. F. (2025). Factors impeding use of guidance and counselling information for STEM careers choices: A study

- of secondary school girls in Tanzania. *Alexandria: The Journal of National and International Library and Information Issues*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09557490251400548>
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), 79–122. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027>
- Maree, J. G., & Magere, G. M. (2023). The influence of group career construction counselling on Tanzanian high school students' career decision-making difficulties. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 28(1), Article 2190809. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2023.2190809>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2025). *The state of global teenage career preparation*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/d5f8e3f2-en>
- Otwine, A. T., Matagi, L., Kiweewa, J. M., & Ainamaani, H. E. (2022). Efficacy of career guidance and counselling among secondary schools in Uganda. *African Journal of Career Development*, 4(1), Article a55. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v4i1.55>
- Shuma, C. J., Gwajekera, F. D., & Rubeba, A. M. (2024). Science subject choices among secondary school students in Ilala-Dar es Salaam: The influence of school-based social and personal guidance. *Huria Journal*, 31(Special Issue), 70–88.
- Wang, D., Li, Y., & Wang, G. (2024). A systematic review on career interventions for high school students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1461503. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1461503>
- Wang, D., & Liu, X. (2023). Intervention and evaluation of the life design counseling: A case study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 1045898. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1045898>

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization : All Authors;

Methodology : All Authors ;

Investigation : All Authors ;

Writing original draft preparation : All Authors ;

Writing review and editing : All Authors ;

Visualization: All Authors.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript