



Teacher Support and Availability in School Guidance for Personal Goal Pursuit among Primary School Pupils in Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract : School guidance is expected to help primary pupils navigate pressure, wellbeing concerns, and aspirations, yet Tanzanian provision remains constrained by classes, teacher workload, and limited specialist personnel. This study explored school guidance and personal goal pursuit in Kinondoni Municipality. Its main objective was to describe how teacher support and availability influence pupils' pursuit of personal goals. A qualitative approach and case-study design were used. Purposive sampling selected 18 participants—16 Standard Six and Seven pupils and two teachers—from two public primary schools. Semi-structured interviews and pupil focus-group discussions generated the data. Following permission, the researcher scheduled visits, explained voluntary participation, conducted interviews and two focus groups, and recorded notes. Data were analysed thematically through familiarisation, coding, categorisation, theme development, and interpretive comparison across participant groups. Credibility and dependability were strengthened through source and method triangulation, consistent guides, records, contextual description, and reflexive documentation; these strategies supported transferability and confirmability. Ethical safeguards included approval and administrative permissions, informed participation, anonymity, confidentiality, respectful treatment, and secure records. Findings showed that teachers offered valued academic, career, moral, and motivational guidance, often restoring confidence and linking present effort to future aspirations. However, heavy workloads, crowded classes, absent counselling rooms, and no protected guidance time made access informal and uneven, especially for quieter pupils. The study concludes that relationally strong but structurally fragile guidance supports goal pursuit without guaranteeing equitable access. It recommends protected guidance time, trained designated personnel, appropriate space, early identification procedures, manageable workloads, and professional development in mentoring, child support, goal-setting, and referral.

Keyword : teacher support; school guidance; personal goals; primary pupils; Social Cognitive Theory; Kinondoni; Tanzania

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INTRODUCTION

Across education systems, school guidance is being reframed from a remedial service for pupils in crisis into a developmental process that supports agency, wellbeing, belonging, decision-making, and purposeful learning. This shift matters in primary education because children are already forming beliefs about competence, interpreting success and failure, imagining occupations, and learning whether sustained effort can change outcomes. Teacher support is central to these processes. A meta-analysis of 141 studies involving 525,129 learners found a moderate positive association between teacher support and school engagement, with general and emotional support showing especially strong relationships (Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024). Another meta-analysis found that perceived teacher support was positively associated with achievement and that engagement helped explain the relationship (Tao et al., 2022). Contemporary research therefore treats support not as generic kindness but as a multidimensional resource—emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental—that can help a learner translate an aspiration into monitored action. Research with primary pupils further shows that goal setting is not automatically self-generated: children may need teachers to help them formulate realistic goals, reflect on progress, and respond to difficulty without surrendering independence (Ponomariovienė &

Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, 2024). The current global understanding is consequently relational and instructional: pupils pursue goals more effectively when they feel noticed and when adults explicitly teach the processes of planning, monitoring, feedback, and adaptation.

In sub-Saharan Africa, this developmental expectation is placed on education systems already managing teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, uneven specialist services, and growing psychosocial demands. Teachers are often expected simultaneously to deliver the curriculum, manage large classes, identify distress, offer basic guidance, communicate with families, and refer severe cases, even when their preparation and working conditions do not match this expanded role. UNESCO's recent African work argues that learner support cannot be separated from teacher wellbeing and capacity: stress, burnout, limited psychosocial knowledge, and weak referral structures reduce the support teachers can sustain (UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa [UNESCO-IICBA], 2023, 2024). This creates an important contemporary tension. Teacher commitment may protect children where formal systems are thin, but a model based on personal sacrifice is difficult to sustain and can distribute assistance inequitably. Studies in African schools have repeatedly identified insufficient time, heavy teaching responsibilities, limited

facilities, and inadequate training as barriers to guidance provision (Sibandze & Mafumbate, 2019). Thus, the key African policy question is no longer whether teachers matter; it is how systems can preserve the relational value of teacher guidance while providing the time, competence, supervision, and referral support needed to make access dependable.

Tanzania's current policy direction recognizes both holistic learner development and safer, more supportive educational environments. The national Guidelines for Child Care, Counselling and Protection position schools and teacher-training institutions as important sites of prevention, guidance, protection, and response, while the Education and Training Policy of 2014, 2023 Edition emphasizes knowledge, skills, values, inclusion, quality, and learner development (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MoEST], 2020, 2023). Implementation evidence, however, remains uneven. Recent work in Dar es Salaam public primary schools found that counselling was available in several forms but constrained by staffing and infrastructure (Almasi et al., 2025); Tanzanian secondary-school evidence similarly shows that positive teacher attitudes coexist with unclear roles, limited training, and institutional constraints (Mbilyi, 2025). Little empirical work has examined how upper-primary pupils themselves experience teacher availability in

relation to personal goals in Kinondoni Municipality. That geographical, developmental, and experiential gap is consequential in a densely populated urban setting where teachers must support diverse needs within limited time. Based on one objective drawn from a wider dissertation, this article describes how teacher support and availability influence school guidance and personal goal pursuit among pupils in two public primary schools in Kinondoni. Its contribution is to show that the effectiveness of guidance depends on the interaction between relational quality and institutional accessibility: a teacher can be caring and responsive, yet pupils can still face unequal opportunities to receive guidance.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Review

Social Cognitive Theory provides the principal lens for this study. Bandura (1986) conceptualized human functioning as reciprocal interaction among personal factors, behaviour, and the environment. Pupils' aspirations are therefore neither private wishes nor mechanical products of school conditions. Beliefs about competence affect effort; effort produces experiences that revise beliefs; and teachers shape the opportunities, feedback, models, and emotional climate within which these cycles occur. Three concepts are especially relevant. Observational learning explains how pupils learn

persistence, decision-making, and standards of conduct by watching teachers and peers. Self-efficacy concerns a pupil's belief that they can organise and execute actions needed to attain a goal (Bandura, 1997). Self-regulation concerns setting goals, monitoring behaviour and progress, evaluating results, and adjusting strategies. From this perspective, school guidance influences goal pursuit when it helps pupils interpret present performance, see credible pathways to future outcomes, practise manageable steps, and attribute setbacks to changeable strategies rather than fixed inability.

Teacher support can operate through the major sources and processes identified by Social Cognitive Theory. Encouragement and constructive feedback function as social persuasion; a study plan that produces small improvements can generate mastery experiences; exposure to attainable role models can strengthen vicarious efficacy; and calm, attentive conversation can reduce the emotional arousal that makes difficulty feel unmanageable. Recent social-cognitive scholarship continues to connect self-efficacy with motivation, self-regulation, persistence, and goal choice (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). The theory also clarifies why mere advice may have limited effect. Guidance becomes developmentally powerful when a teacher helps a pupil convert a broad aspiration—such as becoming a nurse or engineer—into proximal

actions, monitors progress, and gradually transfers responsibility to the pupil. Zimmerman's (2002) account of self-regulated learning similarly positions goal setting, strategic action, self-observation, and reflection as teachable, cyclical processes rather than stable traits. Teacher availability is therefore theoretically meaningful: reciprocal influence requires sufficient interaction for modelling, feedback, reflection, and adjustment to occur.

The theory nevertheless requires a critical contextual reading. An exclusive focus on efficacy can individualise failure and imply that confidence or effort can overcome any barrier. In under-resourced schools, pupils' agency is bounded by class size, teachers' workload, material scarcity, poverty, safety, and access to trained support. Social Cognitive Theory itself includes the environment, but applications sometimes privilege the personal side of reciprocal determinism. The present study corrects that imbalance by treating teacher working conditions as part of the causal environment rather than as background noise. Recent longitudinal evidence with primary pupils supports this move: teachers' professional recognition, collegial support, and work-related stress were associated with class-level differences in pupils' perceived teacher support (Rautanen et al., 2025). The theory is therefore used here to explain both benefit and constraint. Responsive guidance can strengthen efficacy and self-regulation,

while institutional conditions determine how frequently, deeply, and equitably pupils can access that guidance.

2. Empirical Review

Global evidence consistently links teacher support with desirable motivational and learning outcomes, but it also cautions against simple causal claims. Tao et al. (2022), synthesising 71 empirical studies, reported a small-to-moderate association between perceived teacher support and achievement and identified engagement as a key pathway. Vargas-Madriz et al. (2024) found a moderate overall relationship with school engagement and showed that effects varied by support type, engagement dimension, school level, sex, language context, design, and informant. These moderators matter for qualitative research because what teachers intend as support may not be what pupils experience. Evidence on primary-school goal setting adds specificity. In a 2024 case study, pupils were able to formulate weekly learning and behaviour goals and reflect on results, but some struggled to identify appropriate goals; teacher scaffolding was needed to analyse the previous week, define a feasible next step, and build confidence (Ponomariovienė & Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, 2024). Taken together, these studies support a process model in which teacher attention, feedback, and guided reflection strengthen engagement and

self-regulation, while leaving open questions about how support operates in particular cultural and resource settings.

African evidence emphasizes the conditions under which these processes must occur. Guidance is frequently delivered by classroom teachers as an additional duty rather than by a fully staffed professional service. In Eswatini primary schools, implementation challenges included limited time, inadequate preparation, and competing responsibilities (Sibandze & Mafumbate, 2019). Across the continent, UNESCO-IICBA (2023, 2024) has highlighted the expanding expectation that teachers provide emotional support and basic psychosocial response while also documenting stress, competency gaps, and the need for clear referral pathways. This evidence advances a contemporary argument that is highly relevant to the present study: teacher support is not an unlimited personal attribute. It is work produced within an organisational ecology. Availability depends on schedules, class loads, collegial and leadership support, professional recognition, training, and spaces where confidential conversations can occur. When those conditions are absent, informal care can still matter, but access is likely to depend on a pupil's confidence in approaching a busy adult.

Within Tanzania, research is increasingly documenting both the value and the institutional fragility of

school guidance. Almasi et al. (2025) found that selected Dar es Salaam public primary schools used individual, group, developmental, and preventive approaches, while staffing and facilities constrained consistency. Mbilinyi's (2025) multi-region study found that a slight majority of secondary-school teachers held positive attitudes toward counselling, yet it also underscored the importance of role clarity, training, ethical guidance, and supportive structures. Earlier Tanzanian work concentrated mainly on secondary schools, career counselling, or service availability, leaving upper-primary pupils' accounts of personal-goal support underexamined. Furthermore, previous studies often treated availability as the presence of a designated teacher or service. The present study addresses a more practical question: whether a pupil can obtain timely, attentive support when a goal is uncertain or threatened. By focusing on teacher support and availability in two Kinondoni public primary schools, it adds qualitative evidence about how academic advice, career orientation, moral guidance, encouragement, workload, and pupil help-seeking combine in everyday practice. This gap is also conceptual. Service inventories can show whether a school names a guidance teacher, but they do not reveal whether an individual pupil can speak to that teacher before discouragement hardens into withdrawal. Nor do attitude

surveys alone establish whether a supportive intention becomes repeated, confidential, developmentally appropriate interaction. The present objective therefore treats availability as experienced access – timeliness, continuity, approachability, and the realistic opportunity for follow-up. That definition connects institutional conditions to the social-cognitive processes through which guidance is expected to matter.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach because the research question concerned how pupils and teachers experienced, interpreted, and enacted guidance in their natural school settings. A case-study design bounded the inquiry within two selected public primary schools in Kinondoni Municipality and allowed close examination of guidance as a context-dependent practice rather than a decontextualised variable (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The article reports the first specific objective of the wider dissertation: to describe how teacher support and availability influence school guidance and pupils' personal goal pursuit. The study does not claim statistical representativeness or causal effect; it seeks analytic understanding of mechanisms, meanings, and constraints.

Participants were selected purposively because direct experience of upper-primary guidance was essential. The sample comprised 18

participants: 16 pupils in Standards Six and Seven and two teachers from the two schools. Pupils were positioned at a developmental and educational transition when academic self-beliefs, future aspirations, and preparation for secondary education become increasingly salient. Teachers were selected because they provided or oversaw guidance while carrying regular instructional duties. Purposive sampling enabled information-rich participation but also limits transfer beyond settings with comparable characteristics.

Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions. Prepared interview guides maintained alignment with the objective while allowing follow-up questions about access, types of support, responsiveness, workload, aspirations, and persistence. Interviews were conducted at participants' schools and lasted no more than approximately 40 minutes. One focus group of eight pupils was held in each school, with each session lasting about one hour; group interaction allowed pupils to compare common and divergent experiences. The researcher obtained university and administrative permissions, met school leaders to explain the study and schedule visits, provided information about voluntary participation, and kept detailed field notes. Participants were treated respectfully, identifying details were removed, records were kept

confidential and secure, and data were used for academic purposes.

Thematic analysis followed an iterative sequence of familiarisation with notes, initial coding, comparison of recurring and contrasting ideas, grouping into categories, development and review of themes, and narrative interpretation against the objective and theory (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Pupil and teacher accounts were compared rather than collapsed, allowing convergence and tension to remain visible. Interviews supported individual explanation, while focus groups surfaced shared norms and disagreements; using both reduced, but could not eliminate, the risk that sensitive or minority experiences would remain undisclosed in a group. Trustworthiness was addressed using criteria associated with qualitative validity and reliability: credibility was supported by triangulating interviews, focus groups, pupils, and teachers; dependability by consistent guides and a documented procedural record; transferability by describing the participants, setting, and methods; and confirmability by reflexive documentation of assumptions and analytic decisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical procedures included approval and permissions from relevant university, regional, municipal, ward, and school authorities, informed and voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, respectful treatment, and secure storage. Because the report

concerns children, the absence of detailed documentation in the dissertation about caregiver consent and child assent procedures should be addressed explicitly in any journal submission or future replication. Findings are consequently presented as contextually grounded perceptions and mechanisms, not prevalence estimates for Kinondoni or causal effects attributable to guidance alone.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The major finding was that teacher-provided guidance in the two schools was relationally strong but structurally fragile. Teachers were perceived as caring, responsive, and willing to provide academic, career, moral, and motivational support. Yet that support was rarely protected by formal timetables, dedicated personnel, counselling space, or manageable caseloads. Guidance therefore operated through brief conversations during breaks, after lessons, or when a problem became visible. This arrangement produced real benefits for pupils who obtained attention, but it could not guarantee timely or equitable access. The central analytical distinction is thus between *responsiveness* and *availability*: teachers often responded meaningfully once engagement occurred, while the conditions for initiating and sustaining that engagement remained unreliable.

Holistic Support Connected Present Effort to Future Goals

Pupils and teachers described support that extended beyond syllabus delivery. Teachers encouraged effort, explained the relationship between current schoolwork and future occupations, advised pupils about subjects associated with particular careers, helped them identify strengths, and reinforced values such as respect, honesty, discipline, and perseverance. One teacher explained that the role involved helping pupils see “the connection between what they are doing in class today and that future they are imagining” (teacher interview). This was not described as a single career talk. Teachers portrayed it as continuing mentorship in which they checked progress and revisited pupils’ plans.

This finding supports a broader conception of primary-school guidance as the integration of academic, personal, moral, and emerging career development. It also fits the mechanism proposed by Social Cognitive Theory. A distant aspiration has weak regulatory power unless pupils can connect it to present actions and believe those actions are achievable. By identifying a strength, specifying a relevant subject, and reinforcing persistence, teachers provided social persuasion and a pathway for proximal goal setting (Bandura, 1997). Their own conduct also supplied models of disciplined action. The finding is consistent with Ponomariovienè and

Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė (2024), whose primary pupils benefited when teachers helped them examine difficulty and define an attainable short-term goal. It also complements meta-analytic evidence that informational, appraisal, and emotional support are all associated with engagement, rather than assuming that encouragement alone is sufficient (Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024).

The Kinondoni evidence adds a contextual point to this literature. Goal guidance did not occur mainly through formal worksheets or specialised programmes; it was embedded in everyday teacher–pupil relationships. This informality made guidance culturally and practically accessible, but it also made quality dependent on individual teacher skill. A contemporary approach should preserve the conversational and holistic character of support while strengthening it with simple, age-appropriate tools: pupils might formulate a goal, identify the next action, anticipate a barrier, name a source of help, and review progress with a teacher. Such structure would translate teachers' existing mentorship into teachable self-regulation without turning guidance into another examination subject.

Heavy Workload Converted Guidance Into Rationed Attention

Both participant groups identified workload and time as the main limits on guidance. Teachers

carried full teaching loads, marking, classroom management, and administrative duties while also responding to pupils' personal and academic concerns. Large classes meant that one-to-one conversations were difficult to schedule and easily interrupted. Participants also reported a shortage of personnel trained specifically for guidance, no protected guidance period, and no dedicated counselling room. A teacher stated that even when a pupil needed to talk urgently, the teacher might be teaching or preparing for another lesson; the conversation could be delayed until the need had lost its immediacy. The teacher nevertheless tried not to turn a child away because even a short break-time conversation might help.

The finding should not be read as evidence of low teacher commitment. It shows that commitment was being used to compensate for institutional scarcity. This distinction matters because recommendations focused only on attitude or motivation would misdiagnose the problem. Tanzanian secondary-school teachers in Mbilinyi's (2025) study generally recognised the value of counselling, yet effective delivery still depended on training, role clarity, and organisational support. Almasi et al. (2025) similarly identified staffing and infrastructural constraints in Dar es Salaam primary schools. The present study extends those findings by showing how constraints alter the temporal quality of guidance: support

becomes reactive, compressed, and contingent rather than predictable and developmental.

Recent international evidence helps explain why this matters. Rautanen et al. (2025), using three waves of data from 1,879 primary pupils and their teachers, found that teachers' professional support and work-related stress were associated with class differences in pupils' perceived teacher support. UNESCO-IICBA (2023, 2024) likewise argues that asking stressed, under-supported teachers to absorb expanding psychosocial duties is not a sustainable learner-support strategy. In Social Cognitive Theory, environmental opportunity is part of reciprocal causation. If the environment prevents repeated feedback and monitoring, pupils have fewer chances to convert encouragement into mastery experience and self-regulated routines. Protected time, supervision, and manageable workload are therefore not administrative extras; they are mechanisms through which guidance can influence goal pursuit.

Informal Access Generated a Quiet-Pupil Equity Problem

The informal system favoured pupils who were able and willing to seek help. Pupils explained that several classmates might be waiting for the same teacher during a break and that reserved children could keep problems to themselves. One pupil recalled postponing a question about future

subject choices because the teacher was marking and preparing for the next lesson; by the time a conversation became possible, the original question had nearly been forgotten. This illustrates a hidden selection process. Where there is no scheduled access or proactive identification, the pupils most likely to receive guidance are those who can articulate a concern, approach an authority figure, wait, return, and compete for limited attention.

This finding qualifies the common claim that an "open door" makes support accessible. Physical or interpersonal approachability is important, but accessibility also requires predictable opportunity. The meta-analysis by Vargas-Madriz et al. (2024) showed that associations between teacher support and engagement vary across learner and study characteristics. The present qualitative evidence suggests one mechanism behind such variation: support may be available in principle yet unevenly perceived and used because help-seeking itself demands confidence. This is especially important for pupils whose low self-efficacy, poor performance, family stress, or fear of embarrassment may already inhibit approach behaviour. A system that waits for self-referral can therefore reproduce the very disadvantage guidance is intended to reduce.

Social Cognitive Theory makes the circularity visible. A confident pupil approaches a teacher, receives

feedback, experiences improvement, and becomes more confident; a discouraged pupil remains silent, receives less feedback, and gains fewer opportunities to revise negative beliefs. Teacher initiative can interrupt that cycle. Schools could institute brief periodic check-ins, class-based goal reviews, referral prompts, and confidential ways to request support. These need not replace individual counselling or turn teachers into clinicians. They would create multiple entry points so that access depends less on assertiveness. The contemporary policy implication is an equity principle: guidance should be designed not only for pupils who ask, but also for pupils whose withdrawal, declining performance, absenteeism, or changed behaviour signals a need that they may not verbalise.

Equity also requires caution about assuming that one access strategy works for every child. Sex, disability, language, poverty, family circumstances, and prior relationships with authority may shape whether pupils regard a teacher as safe and whether a public class exercise feels supportive or exposing. The present sample was too small to compare these dimensions systematically. Even so, participant accounts justify an inclusive design principle: schools should offer more than one route to support, combine universal class-based guidance with confidential individual access, and review participation

patterns to identify who is repeatedly absent from guidance opportunities.

Timely, Attentive Response Restored Efficacy and Persistence

Despite structural constraints, pupils described teacher interventions that changed how they interpreted setbacks. One pupil reported performing poorly, concluding that they were “not smart enough,” and considering giving up. A teacher noticed the discouragement, reframed the examination as one result rather than a fixed verdict, helped prepare a simple study plan, and checked progress weekly. The pupil reported that confidence and performance gradually improved. This account is important because it identifies a plausible sequence rather than merely asserting that guidance was beneficial: observation of distress, private conversation, cognitive reframing, planning, monitoring, incremental progress, and renewed persistence.

The sequence closely matches social-cognitive mechanisms. The teacher’s reassurance provided social persuasion, but persuasion was paired with strategy. The study plan enabled manageable performance attempts, and weekly review made progress visible as mastery experience. These experiences could revise self-efficacy and sustain effort (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). The account also resembles Zimmerman’s (2002) cycle of forethought, performance, and self-reflection.

Recent goal-setting research similarly concludes that some primary pupils need teacher support not only to formulate goals but to achieve and reflect on them while confidence develops (Ponomariovienė & Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, 2024).

The evidence must nevertheless be interpreted proportionately. This was a small qualitative case study, and pupils' retrospective accounts cannot establish that teacher guidance alone caused improved performance. Other influences may have contributed, and the study did not follow pupils longitudinally or measure goal attainment independently. The value of the account is explanatory: it shows how participants understood teacher response as supporting persistence and identifies a mechanism worthy of later testing. It also indicates that quality can partly compensate for limited duration. A brief interaction may matter when it is timely, specific, respectful, and followed up. Yet this should not become an argument for leaving the system informal; the intervention succeeded because a teacher noticed the pupil, and not every pupil was equally likely to be noticed.

Professional Identity Sustained Guidance, But Goodwill is Not a System

Teachers understood mentorship as part of being a teacher rather than an optional assignment. They spoke of shaping pupils' "whole journey," attending to difficulties at

school and home, and preventing talented children from disengaging when timely guidance might restore direction. This professional identity explains why meaningful support persisted despite limited infrastructure. It also helps reconcile the apparently contradictory findings: teachers could be hard to access because of workload and still be deeply responsive when contact occurred. The issue was not indifference but capacity.

The distinction strengthens and updates the dissertation's contribution. Contemporary evidence does not support a binary choice between classroom teachers and specialist counsellors. Primary pupils benefit when everyday teachers create supportive climates, model persistence, notice changes, and teach goal-regulation skills; some needs, however, require protected confidential time, specialist competence, safeguarding procedures, or referral beyond the classroom. MoEST's (2020) guidance and protection framework and UNESCO-IICBA's (2023, 2024) psychosocial-support work both imply a tiered approach: universal relational and developmental support for all pupils, targeted school-based help for emerging needs, and referral for concerns beyond teachers' competence. Teachers need to know both how to help and where their role ends.

Overall, Objective One was answered by a conditional finding. Teacher support influenced personal goal pursuit by connecting present

action to future aspiration, reinforcing self-belief, modelling persistence, offering moral and career direction, and helping pupils plan after setbacks. Teacher availability determined whether these mechanisms could operate consistently. In the two schools, formal availability was restricted by workload, class size, limited training, absent space, and lack of scheduled time; informal availability depended on teacher initiative and pupil help-seeking. The result was valuable but uneven guidance. Social Cognitive Theory explains the relational mechanisms, while the empirical evidence requires the environment in reciprocal determinism to be taken seriously. Pupils' agency grows through interaction, and equitable interaction must be organised rather than left to chance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that teacher support is a meaningful resource for personal goal pursuit among upper-primary pupils in the two selected Kinondoni schools, but its benefits are constrained by the way guidance is organised. Teachers offered holistic academic, career, moral, and motivational support and, in some cases, used timely encouragement, planning, and follow-up to restore confidence after failure. These practices are consistent with social-cognitive pathways of modelling, social persuasion, mastery experience, and

self-regulation. However, teacher workload, crowded classes, lack of protected time, absence of dedicated counselling space, and limited specialist preparation made guidance episodic and dependent on goodwill. Pupils who could approach teachers benefited most readily; quieter pupils risked remaining unseen. The study therefore rejects both an individualistic conclusion—that pupils only need more confidence—and a voluntaristic policy response—that committed teachers will somehow find time. Goal pursuit is relational, but equitable relational support requires institutional design.

Schools should formalise a feasible tiered guidance system in policy and practice: every class teacher should be equipped to provide basic developmental guidance and notice warning signs; a trained designated teacher or team should have protected time, confidential space, records, supervision, and clear referral pathways; and concerns beyond school competence should move promptly to appropriate child-protection, health, or psychosocial services. School leaders should schedule short, recurring goal-review opportunities and proactive check-ins so access does not depend solely on pupil self-referral. Pre-service and continuing professional development should include child-centred communication, ethical boundaries, safeguarding, career awareness, goal-setting, self-regulated learning, basic psychosocial support,

and referral. Municipal and national authorities should account for guidance duties in staffing and workload decisions, monitor implementation of existing counselling and protection guidelines, and resource schools according to enrolment and need. Implementation should be monitored through practical indicators such as protected hours delivered, pupils reached, follow-up completed, referrals made, confidentiality maintained, and pupil-reported accessibility—not merely whether a school has named a guidance teacher. Future research should document consent and assent procedures clearly, include more schools and diverse pupils, examine gender and disability, and follow pupils over time to test whether structured access improves goal clarity, persistence, wellbeing, and educational transitions. Comparative work should also assess whether gains come from the designation of specialist personnel, lower teacher workload, structured goal-review routines, or the interaction among these components.

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